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BIRTH AND DEATH OF HUMAN CULTURES

[This is the concluding portion of Arthur E. Morgan's study of the effects of urban life.]

II

IF the cities took from the villages only an average cross-section of the population, there would be little to be concerned about. But that is not the case. Migration from village to city tends to be selective. While some people from every class migrate, the movement is strongest among the more intelligent, the educated and the well-to-do. As they steadily leave for the city, the village population becomes less virile, more inert. Its cultural resources are impoverished.

From students of Indian history we gain the impression that up to 150 or 200 years ago the cultural life of India was widely distributed through the villages, to a degree which is not the case today. The great classical literature of India, it appears, was mostly produced by village people 0f 5,000 years or more ago. Could the villages of today produce these classics? Even though native capacity may be present, the background of cultural tradition has been sadly reduced.

In some respects the universities of India are not in the main current of the national life. About 85 per cent of Indians live in villages. The university indirectly draws its students from the village, but does not send them back. With agriculture the chief source of wealth, most of the fundamental support of the university comes directly or indirectly from the villages, but, except through irrigation works, very little benefit has been returned.

The pattern and culture of the university are from a foreign land and are not rooted in the native soil. This is not wholly bad, for the human family is fundamentally one, but to have the faces of educated men turned away from more than three quarters of the population is a great national disaster. How great a loss is entailed we are only now coming to realize.

As to what the characteristics of an ancient Indian village were, we have reliable statements by early travellers. In the seventh century A.D., Hiuen Tsiang wrote that "the ordinary people are upright and honourable. In money matters they are without craft, and in administration of justice they are considerate." Seven hundred years later, Marco Polo wrote of the merchants of Gujarat: "They are the most honourable merchants that can be found. No consideration whatever can induce them to speak an untruth even though their lives should depend on it."

The extremely high and discriminating level of integrity one repeatedly finds in men and women of all ranks in India, across the centuries, bears witness to a standard of honor which has been native to India and which can be again the prevailing attitude. Men of free villages tend to be honest men.

In Egypt, the same contrast between city and village has been evident. When General Gordon employed people from small villages to transport freight for his campaign in the south, he found them strictly honest. The freight was transported without loss, and without spies to watch over it.

Many ancient records show the integrity of primitive people. From the uniform honesty of the present inhabitants over the whole of northernmost Canada, it is evident that their ancestors had been honest people for thousands of years past. I formerly thought of these people as exhibiting a high degree of intrinsic character since they differed so greatly from larger centers of population. However, it is doubtful that this is the case. Where the whole of the sparse population had inherited a common background, honesty was probably a natural way of action. When there

were no strangers and the same information was available to all persons, for any individual to endeavor to practice deception would mark him as lacking in sense, since a dishonest person would automatically lose his status as a reliable citizen. The honesty which prevailed universally among uniformly primitive and scattered people was simply the common culture.

When aboriginal man occupied the earth, honesty was not so much a virtue as a necessary habit. Dishonesty would be a breach of custom among people in communities who knew each other intimately. With the development of cities which housed armies and groups of strangers, dishonesty could be "successful." In dealing with strangers, one might find dishonesty profitable.

Therefore, in the larger communities which became the centers of life and variety of experience, dishonesty could become a typical ingredient of human culture. This occurred in scores of centers of greatly mixed population. The simple honesty of the early primitive man came to be regarded as evidence of stupidity. This result was the same in relatively large population centers. Small stable groups of particularly intimate people would maintain honesty, but in the large, relatively unorganized masses of population, involving dealings among partial strangers, there evolved the arts of dissimulation. Meanwhile, among small groups of people, simple, unadulterated honesty continued to be held as a dominant virtue. And scattered through urban populations there remained a few men who never surrendered their primitive integrity, and who saw its potential value even in total populations.

Thus personal integrity may have a scarce but lingering presence in even dense populations. For such persons, integrity and related characteristics joined to produce a new element of value which slowly began to characterize attitudes toward character, aspiration, and commitment. Religious denominations, especially those with persisting close relationships (such as early communities of Mennonites, Amish, Brethren and Quakers, and followers of other Christian sects), kept their associations strong and alive by thorough-going honesty.

Looking, however, at the general population, we may ask: How many people are there in American industry and labor, living under what they regard as standard conditions of employment, who are not consistently honest, though they might prefer to be so? How many secretaries type letters involving falsehood, when they would prefer to record true statements? How many salesmen lie to their customers because the trade demands it, yet wish they could sell with honesty products they could believe in? How many union employees restrict production below a reasonable level because the demands of the union or fellow workmen seem to make this necessary? How many employers are dwarfing their own lives and the lives of their employees because they think they must follow prevailing industrial practices?

Only men of some positive character retain honesty. If honesty comes again to be nearly universal, it will not be because people are simple-minded and know no better, but because the value of universal honesty is rediscovered and deliberately made the basis of character. So this trait, which began as a commonplace primitive custom, has been gradually struggling to a new existence with far-reaching characteristics, along with the hope of becoming dominant in company with other individual and cultural traits of value.

Numerous human civilizations have failed to follow a steady course of development. One might identify as many as a hundred human cultures which, beginning as simple societies in which goodwill and confidence were the rule, rose to measurable strength and achievement. Then, after periods of varying duration, they were overtaken by a process of deterioration and loss of excellence, which finally ended in corruption, leading to either barbarism or extinction through large-scale involvement with strangers and the military.

Some of these civilizations have been rather small, leaving behind no record or history except possibly a few great buildings, buried as in parts of India, or as in Yucatan in unpopulated forests. In Persia and Syria, Egypt, Mexico City, or in Western South America, we find fragments of former glory, while on isolated Pacific Islands little remains of former greatness except occasional massive stone images or the floors of palaces. This erasure of the past has happened over and over again. Does it not seem that we should become aware that human community must be preserved through self-regenerative processes, if any civilization is to endure?

If new populations come, the cycle of rise and fall may be repeated. But without invigorating migration, what was a large city succumbs to jungle. The great Inca cities of Peru are now nearly empty or uninhabited. In Central Asia there are vacant remains of great cities. The new cities nearby are not populated by the descendants of those who built the earlier cities, but grew from fresh migration.

A number of the temples of ancient Greece have disappeared because new arrivals found them standing empty and used the marble columns for lime. The massive arena and other majestic buildings of Rome, erected when it was a city of a million people, lay crumbling for centuries after Rome had shrunk to a small town. When Cortez invaded Mexico, he found a large city, but it had not been built by its Aztec inhabitants. Its great pyramids go back to the older Toltecs, who were by then only a vague tradition. Most of the large cities of Europe today are not continuations of the famous cities of antiquity, but recent aggregations of the past two or three centuries. The few great cities which have survived for many centuries are historic cultural or national centers. Istanbul was the head of the Eastern Catholic world for more than a thousand years, and then became head of the Moslem world. Rome was head of the Roman Empire and is still the center of the Catholic Church. London, Madrid, and Paris survived as national capitals. These are the only large European cities which have had populations of about ten thousand or more for over five hundred years.

Surely this historic passage from greatness to decline in culture and city life constitutes a warning that the same cycle is now under way among ourselves, and calls for corrective measures. The substance of such a warning, in relation to the cultural roots of civilization, was well expressed by Alfred North Whitehead, the eminent British philosopher and educator, in his *Atlantic* article of June, 1936, entitled "Memories":

> The age of vast subject populations, deaf and dumb to the values belonging to civilization, has gone. Also the old civilizing influence of the Church has passed. It has been replaced by secular schools, colleges, universities, and by the activities of the men and women on their faculties. In the age to come, how will these new agencies compare with the ecclesiastics, the monks, the nuns, and the friars, who brought their phase of civilization to Western Europe?
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> At the present time, the system of modern universities has reached its triumphant culmination. They cover all civilized lands, and the members of their faculties control knowledge and its source. The old system also enjoyed its triumph. From the seventh to the thirteenth century, it also decisively altered the mentalities of the surrounding populations. Men could not endow monasteries or build cathedrals quickly enough. Without doubt they hoped to save their souls; but the merits of their gifts would not have been evident unless there had been a general feeling of the services to the surrounding populations performed by these religious foundations. Then, when we pass over another two centuries, and watch the men about the year fifteen hundred, we find an ominous fact. These foundations, which started with such hope and had performed such services, were in full decay. Men like Erasmus could not speak of them without an expression of contempt. Europe endured a hundred years of revolution in order to shake off the system. Men such as Warham, and Tillotson, and Tait struggled for another three centuries to maintain it in a modified form. But they too have failed. With this analogy in mind, we wonder what in a hundred years, or in two hundred

> years, will be the fate of the modern university system which now is triumphant in its mission of civilization. We should search to remove the seeds of decay. We cannot be more secure now than was the ecclesiastical system at the end of the twelfth century and for a century onward. And it failed.
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> To my mind our danger is exactly the same as that of the older system. Unless we are careful, we shall conventionalize knowledge. Our literacy criticism will suppress initiative. Our historical criticism will conventionalize our ideas of the springs of human conduct. Our scientific systems will suppress all understanding of the ways of the universe which fall outside their abstractions. Our modes of testing ability will exclude all the youth whose ways of thought lie outside our conventions of learning. In such ways the universities, with their scheme of orthodoxies, will stifle the progress of the race, unless by some fortunate stirring of humanity they are in time remodeled or swept away. These are our dangers, as yet only to be seen on the distant horizon, clouds small as the hand of a man.
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> Those of us who have lived for seventy years, more or less, have seen first the culmination of an epoch, and then its disruption and decay. What is happening when an epoch approaches its culmination? What is happening as it passes toward its decay? Historical writing is cursed with simple characterizations of great events. Historians should study zoology. Naturalists tell us that in the background of our animal natures we harbor the traces of the earlier stages of our animal race. Theologians tell us that we are nerved to effort by the distant vision of the ideals, claiming realization. Both sets are right.

A major handicap of the work and study program at Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio (as well as at other colleges or universities with work-study programs), has been that the working opportunities available to students have been, not in small towns where they could learn the arts of community and integrity, but in large cities where they tend to continue the ancient cycle of migration and decline and perhaps to be submerged in its influence.

Is there not yet still time to replace the methods of the repetitive cycle, in education, industry, and social life, and to find how to turn humanity into a species which had learned how to progress without succumbing to habits which always produce decline?

Would it be possible, now, to develop new communities or to revise old communities of good quality in which it would be normal to act with honesty and fairness—ignoring, if necessary, certain conventional patterns of industry, and recognizing employees as friends and associates? Would it be possible for teachers in a local school system to welcome carefully considered new ideas and relationships with students and parents? Would it not be exciting to live and work in such a community?

Pioneer American educators pictured the achievement of universal literacy as bringing an end of crime: others saw in the coming of the phonograph and radio a universal access to great ideas that would displace local triviality. Such results have not followed. In fact, the television, radio, and cinema do little more than spread the triviality of the city to the small community. Recently a prominent psychiatrist said that he considered the harm of our present cultural habits to be irreparable, with far-reaching degeneracy on the way. We may be certain that restoration lies in integrity and goodwill in human relations, in simplicity and self-discipline in living, and in appreciation and respect for cultural values. Difficult as these qualities are to secure, they must be assumed to be a part, if not the foundation, of the good community. Economic, cultural, and ethical education must go together. The mechanical devices for extended seeing and hearing do not improve the quality of what we see and hear, but tend to vulgarize and restrict the cultural diet.

Man has yet to learn how to manage populations and cultures. One may reasonably suppose that there are various arts of living that we have not yet adequately learned. To confidently assume that mankind will successfully accommodate itself to large city living when, throughout history, it has never done so is wholly without warrant, scientifically untenable, and bad

statesmanship besides. Should not education explore and discover principles of growth and development which would lead to the adoption and dominance of qualities of character which prove permanent, so long as they pervade the common way of life? Should not education and culture create a process which unifies such traits with valid technical culture?

Could a commitment to "wholemanism" become stronger and more general than the elements of decadence promoted by Watergate methods of government and by the trivialities of the mass media? Having before us the record of more than five thousand years of the successive failures of cultures and civilizations of great promise, the need of far-reaching change should be apparent. Current human culture is dominated by decadent themes, disgraceful political standards, and an economics of mere habit—all tendencies which through the centuries have guided the civilizations of the past into a cycle of precipitous decline.

We have yet to learn and to adopt ethical principles giving the foundations for permanent forms of human culture, for an enduring species not subject to self-extermination.

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REVIEW
THE FIRST EMANCIPATOR

WHAT was the meaning of the American Revolution? The question has not lost its importance in these days of diminished national dignity and weakened self-respect. On the contrary, a renewal of the vision of two hundred years ago may be essential to the restoration of lost ground and to preparation for whatever changes in purpose and structure the future may make possible for this society. Readiness for change may be largely dependent upon appreciation and understanding of the past, since awareness of continuity is a requirement of clear judgment during the processes of far-reaching decision.

In commemoration of the Bicentennial of the American Revolution, the Library of Congress has been issuing various texts, among them *Fundamental Testaments of the American Revolution* (Library of Congress, 1973, $3.50), in which contemporary scholars discuss such documents as the Declaration of Independence, Tom Paine's *Common Sense,* the Articles of Confederation, and the Treaty of Paris of 1783. The tone of this work is indicated by the first paragraph of the Introduction by Julian P. Boyd;

> The era of the Founding Fathers was to government what the age of Pericles was to art and the age of Elizabeth was to exploration and discovery. In a favored land and on the foundation of ancient dreams, that remarkable generation dared to erect a new kind of society. Its unprecedented wager was that, under the governance of reason and the guiding principles of equality and justice, man's humane dispositions would triumph over his propensities for evil. This was a gamble of awesome proportions. Jefferson correctly described it as "an age of experiment in government" and the statesmen who were elevated to power and sustained by a politically astute people were very conscious, as historians are now discovering, that they were introducing a new era in human history.

How should we characterize that era at its outset? Had it first principles, fresh conceptions of the nature of man, change-inspiring ideals of human good?

In the first essay in this book, Bernard Bailyn seeks and finds answers in the pages of *Common Sense* by Thomas Paine. An Englishman who had been in America only fourteen months before his pamphlet series began publication, Paine seemed to realize better than anyone else what could and should happen on the vast continent of the New World. Shrill and wrathful he may have been at times, but what stands out above all other qualities in Paine's writing is a revolutionary conception of the capacities, rights, and responsibilities of all men. Ben Franklin, who had originally suggested to Paine that he come to America, asked him to write a history of the Anglo-American controversy. Instead, Paine composed a "passionate tract for American independence."

What made his work so great? "It burst from the press," said Benjamin Rush, "with an effect which has rarely been produced by types and papers in any age or country." It should be remembered that while the war had been going on for some months (*Common Sense* first appeared on Jan. 10, 1776), not one of the colonies had instructed its delegates to declare for independence. They wanted to persuade Parliament to do the right thing, and to redress their grievances. "All the most powerful unspoken assumptions of the time," says Mr. Bailyn "—indeed, common sense—ran counter to the notion of independence."

> There was open warfare between England and America, but though confidence in the English government had been severely eroded, the weight of opinion still favored restoration of the situation as it had been before 1764, a position arrived at not by argument so much as by recognition of the obvious sense of the matter, which was rooted in the deepest presuppositions of the time.
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> In the weeks when *Common Sense* was being written the future—even the very immediate future—was entirely obscure; the situation was malleable in the extreme. No one then could confidently say which course history would later declare to have been the right course to have followed.

Considering the impact of Paine's work on the Americans, Mr. Bailyn says:

> What strikes one more forcefully now, at this distance in time, is something quite different from the question of the pamphlet's unmeasurable contribution to the movement toward independence. There is something extraordinary in this pamphlet—something bizarre, outsized, unique—quite aside from its strident appeal for independence, and that quality, which was recognized if not defined by contemporaries and which sets it off from the rest of the pamphlet literature of the Revolution, helps us understand, I believe, something essential to the Revolution as a whole. A more useful effort it seems to me, than attempting to measure its influence on independence is to seek to isolate this special quality.

Paine wrote, Mr. Bailyn shows, with what then seemed outrageous confidence in the ability and right of human beings to govern themselves. His work was a magnificent *tour de force*. It reached into the minds of the people with surgical penetration, feeling about for their unexamined assumptions; and then, having grasped the hidden possibilities of an age, gave them articulate release. As Bailyn says:

> The great intellectual force of *Common Sense* lay not in its dose argumentation on specific points but in its reversal of the presumptions that underlay the arguments, a reversal that forced thoughtful readers to consider, not so much a point here and a conclusion there, but a wholly new way of looking at the entire range of problems involved. For beneath all the explicit arguments and conclusions about independence, there were underlying, unspoken, even unconceptualized presuppositions, attitudes, and habits of thought that made it extremely difficult to break with England and find in the prospect of an independent future the security and freedom they sought. The special intellectual quality of *Common Sense*, which goes a long way toward explaining its impact on contemporary readers, derives from its reversal of these underlying presumptions and its shifting of the established perspectives to the point where the whole received paradigm within which the Anglo-American controversy had until then proceeded came into question.

Paine, in short, established—one might say, compelled—a new stance. He abandoned the last trace of traditional respect for the monarchical institution. His prose was armed with lancing ridicule:

> In England a king hath little more to do than to make war and give away places; which in plain terms is to impoverish the nation and set it together by the ears. A pretty business indeed for a man to be allowed eight hundred thousand sterling a year for, and worshipped into the bargain!

His exhortations rose to sublime heights:

> O ye that love mankind! Ye that dare to oppose not only the tyranny but the tyrant, stand forth! Every spot of the old world is overrun with oppression. Freedom hath been hunted round the globe. Asia and Africa have long expelled her. Europe regards her like a stranger, and England hath given her warning to depart. O! receive the fugitive, and prepare in time an asylum for mankind.

Paine made his analysis of the defects of the British Constitution the platform, not for reform or mending, but for revolution in thinking about government. He cried out for simplicity to replace obscurity and confusion. The virtues of government in England, he affirmed, were owed to the *people* and their qualities, not to the constitution. "No one, at least in America—" says Mr. Bailyn, "had made so straightforward and unqualified a case for the virtues of republican government."

> This was Paine's most important challenge to the received wisdom of the day, but it was only the first of a series. In passage after passage in *Common Sense* Paine laid bare one after another of the presuppositions of the day which had disposed the colonists, consciously or unconsciously, to resist independence, and by exposing these inner biases and holding them up to scorn he forced people to think the unthinkable, to ponder the supposedly self-evident, and thus to take the first step in bringing about a radical change.
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> So the question of independence had always been thought of in filial terms: the colonies had once been children, dependent for their lives on the parent state, but now they had matured, and the question was whether or not they were strong enough to prosper alone in a world of warring states. This whole notion was wrong, Paine declared. On this, as on so many other points, Americans had been misled by "ancient prejudices and superstition." . . . The whole concept

> of England's maternal role was rubbish, he wrote, and rubbish, moreover, that had tragically limited America's capacity to see the wider world as it was and to understand the important role America had in fact played in it and could play even more in the future. . . .

Paine took an entirely new position, strong in self-confidence and dignity, founded on a vision ready to be born. He embodied the vision and developed its implications. "Paine attacked the fears of independence not defensively, by putting down the doubts that had been voiced, but aggressively, by reshaping the premises on which those doubts had rested." While he effectively assembled points in favor of independence, his fundamental achievement was in shifting "the premises of the questions." He "forced thoughtful readers to come at them from different angles of vision and hence to open for scrutiny what had previously been considered to be the firm premises of the controversy." Other writers performed logical analyses, too, but Paine's objective was "to tear the world apart" and reconstitute it on a higher ground.

Paine was the visionary and incendiary of the Revolution. Thomas Jefferson was more a practical architect. But both these men of the early days of the American Republic speak clearly to the present age—one as prophet, the other as planner and builder. In the chapter on the Dedaration of Independence Cecelia Kenyon selects for quotation a passage from a letter written by Jefferson in 1787:

> This reliance [on the judgment of the people] cannot deceive us, as long as we remain virtuous; and I think we shall be that, as long as agriculture is our principal object which will be the case while there remain vacant lands in any part of America. When we get piled upon one another in large cities, as in Europe, we shall become corrupt as in Europe, and go to eating one another as they do there.

Jefferson had prophetic insight, too.

COMMENTARY
OUR IMMATURE MATURITY

GROWING UP, quite evidently, requires judgment, wisdom, and self-restraint, along with enterprise, ingenuity, and hard work. Good judgment apparently has little to do with what we call "progress." Jefferson (see Review, page 8) believed that Americans would be well-governed so long as the people lived and worked on the land. The truth of this prediction is made unmistakably clear, today, by what Arthur Morgan says about cities (where people "go to eating one another"), and by what Wendell Berry says (see "Children"). The caustic observations of Frances Lappé indirectly support Jefferson's anticipations (see Frontiers).

Tom Paine wanted Americans to grow up. He ridiculed the filial attitude of the colonists toward the English king. He ridiculed kings in general. The people, he maintained, were competent to govern themselves. They needed no guidance from a "mother country." The colonists were not children, the parent was a tyrant, and the umbilicus had to be cut.

Paine's vision, now recalled and repeated in the matrix of what grown-up Americans have done with their freedom, produces embarrassment and some wondering. So does Jefferson's expression of hope that we would "remain virtuous." This is an old word, a stuffy word, hardly applicable to the sort of achievements that are familiar and up-to-date. We don't know how to apply the old-fashioned meanings of "virtuous" to the decisions we have to make. We don't approve of thieves and liars, but thought about morality and virtue remains feebly ineffectual when focused on everyday practice. In a newspaper article last fall Wendell Berry quoted a university agricultural expert who applauded the elimination of a thousand Kentucky dairymen who failed in business in 1973 because they wouldn't use "modern methods" to compete with the big producers. The expert thought that bigness and efficiency were the only "virtues" worth talking about. This was the "grown up" American way of looking at things. Commenting, Berry said:

> The results are a drastic decline in farm population and political strength; the growth of a vast, uprooted, dependent and unhappy urban population. Our rural and urban problems have largely caused each other. The result is an unimaginable waste of land, of energy, of fertility, of human beings.

What is the foundation of the no longer plausible delusions that lead to such results?

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
STYLE AND CHARACTER

IN *A Continuous Harmony*—a book we often turn to for fresh starts in thinking—Wendell Berry discusses current shibboleths of popular speech, among them the expression, "life style," which he calls "a particularly clear example of the way poor language can obscure both a problem and the possibility of a solution." Berry's analysis deserves notice, even by those who use "life style" only as a convenient shorthand for more cumbersome expression. He says:

> Compounded as "alternate life style," the phrase becomes a part of the very problem it aspires to solve. There are, to begin with, two radically different, even opposed meanings of style: style as fashion, an imposed appearance, a gloss on superficiality, and style as the signature of mastery, the efflorescence of long discipline. It is obvious that the style of mastery can never become the style of fashion, simply because every master of a discipline is different from every other; his mastery is suffused with the nature of his own character and his own materials. Cézanne's paintings could not have been produced by a fad, for the simple reason that they could not have been produced by any other person. As a popular phrase, "life style" necessarily has to do only with what is imitable in another person's life, its superficial appearances and trappings; it cannot touch its substances, disciplines, or devotions. More important is the likelihood that a person who has identified his interest in another person as an interest in his "life style" will be *aware* of nothing but appearances. The phrase "alternate life style" attempts to recognize our great need to change to a kind of life that is not wasteful or destructive, but stifles the attempt, in the same breath, by infecting it with that superficial concept of style. An essential recognition is thus obscured at birth by the old lie of advertising and public relations: that you can alter substance by altering appearance. "Alternate life style" suggests, much in the manner of the fashion magazines, that one can change one's life by changing one's clothes.

One could of course argue that it is possible to give "life style" a better meaning, but Mr. Berry's point is that this is working against the grain. The phrase drips with the wrong kind of ambiguity for conveying serious meaning.

However, it is not necessary to agree with him to appreciate the *kind* of criticism he offers. This, surely, is the way we ought to think about the words we use. Habits of speech go deeper than language. As Emerson said: "A man's power to connect his thought with its proper symbol, and so to utter it, depends upon the simplicity of his character, that is, upon his love of truth, and his desire to communicate it without loss." A contemporary writer, Doris Lessing, says that today words "can no longer be used simply and naturally." In consequence, instead of present-day novelists, she reads continuously Tolstoy, Stendhal, Balzac, "and the rest of the old giants." Why does she read these authors? She reads them, she says, for the strength of their language, the ardor of their commitment. In their books she found "the warmth, the compassion, the humanity, the love of people which illuminates the literature of the nineteenth century and which makes all these old novels a statement of faith in man himself." Doris Lessing is not trying to escape into the nineteenth century, but to enrich the present with the qualities on which civilized human life depends.

Wendell Berry considers at some length the stereotyped outlook which has shaped conventional America for several generations:

> The entire social vision, as I understand it, goes something like this: man is born into a fallen world, doomed to eat bread in the sweat of his face. But there is an economic redemption. He should go to college and get an education—that is, he should acquire the "right" certificates and meet the "right" people. An education of this sort should enable him to get a "good" job—that is, short hours of work that is either easy or prestigious for a lot of money. Thus he is saved from the damnation of drudgery, and is presumably well on the way to proving the accuracy of his early suspicion that he is *really* a superior person.
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> Or, in a different version of the same story, the farmer at his plow or the housewife at her stove dreams of the neat outlines and the carefree

boundaries of a factory worker's eight-hour day and forty-hour week, and his fat, unworried paycheck. They will leave their present drudgery to take the bait, in this case, of leisure, time, and money to enjoy the "good things of life."

We might reflect that, simply because Mr. Berry is able to describe this state of mind so clearly, it is on the way out. Why bother to write about it, then? For the very good reason that changes in this attitude have barely begun, and for the further reason that there has been too little thinking about what to put in its place. If the following conceptions could become widely familiar, the coming generations of the young would suffer far less pain and confusion:

> In reality, this despised drudgery is one of the constants of life, like water only changing its form in response to changes of atmosphere. Our aversion to the necessary work that we call drudgery and our strenuous efforts to avoid it have not diminished at all, but only degraded its forms. The so-called drudgery has to be done. If one is "too good" to do it for oneself, then it must be done by a servant, or by a machine manufactured by servants. If it is not done at home, then it must be done in a factory, which degrades both the conditions of work and the quality of the product. If it is not done well by the hands of one person, then it must be done poorly by the hands of many. But somewhere the hands of someone must be soiled with the work. Our aversion to this was once satisfied by slavery, or by the abuse of a laboring class; now it is satisfied by the assembly line, or by a similar redundancy in bureaus and offices. For decades now our people have streamed into cities to escape the drudgery of farm and household. Where do they go to escape the drudgery of the city? Only home at night, I am afraid, to the spiritual drudgery of factory-made suppers and TV. On weekends many of them continue these forms of urban drudgery in the country.

Mr. Berry exposes the fraud in the claim that, by removing the burdens of hard labor, technology enables us to enjoy "culture"—the arts and literature. When work is meaningless, trivial, unsatisfying, so are the occupations of leisure. Work that is both arduous and necessary opens other doors:

> The principle was stated by Thoreau in his *Journal:* "Hard and steady and engrossing labor with the hands, especially out of doors, is invaluable to the literary man and serves him directly. Here I have been for six days surveying in the woods, and yet when I get home at evening, somewhat at last . . . I find myself more susceptible than usual to the finest influences, as music and poetry." That is, certainly, the testimony of an exceptional man, a man of the rarest genius and it will be asked if such work could produce satisfaction in an ordinary man. My answer is that we do not have to look for long for evidence that all the fundamental tasks of feeding and clothing and housing—farming, gardening, cooking, spinning, weaving, shoemaking, carpentry, cabinetwork, stonemasonry—were once done with consummate skill by ordinary people, and as that skill indisputably involved a high measure of pride, it can confidently be said to have produced a high measure of satisfaction.
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> We are being saved from work, then, for what? The answer can only be that we are being saved from work that is meaningful and ennobling and comely in order to be put to work that is unmeaning and degrading and ugly.

It would not be easy to talk about the "life style" of the people Mr. Berry writes about here. The deep qualities he is concerned with can't be made superficial in response to intellectual fashions. They represent the natural pleasure and contentment which grow from simplicity of character.

FRONTIERS

Facts About Food

WHAT are the facts about world food supply? Well, there are facts and facts. There are facts that can be changed, altered, or improved only over a long period of time, and there are other facts that can be transformed by acts of resolute decision. In her article on food supply and nutrition in *Harper's* for February, Frances Moore Lappé, author of *Diet f or a Small Planet,* deals mainly with facts we can do something about, almost immediately. To spur this action she begins by saying that the food shortages in the world today are more our fault than anyone else's.

The story, as she tells it, began about thirty years ago when agricultural productivity in America grew by leaps and bounds as a result of the green revolution. Involved were better seeds, a lot of fertilizer, and pest-killers. Various grains and other crops increased beyond what could be profitably sold, making the problem of agriculture a "disposal" problem. We now find ourselves, Frances Lappé says, "trapped in a system that institutionalizes waste—a systematic waste, so ingrained in our agricultural practices and in our attitudes and nutritional doctrine that we are all but blind to it."

What did we do with all the extra grain we had learned how to grow? We fed it to beef cattle—the American steer.

> The average steer is able to reduce twenty-one pounds of protein in feed to one pound of protein in the expensive steak or roast on our plates. The other twenty pounds? It becomes inaccessible to us: the animal uses it to produce energy and make parts of its own body (such as hair) that we don't eat, or excretes it as manure. The Department of Agriculture has estimated that the manure from American livestock contains as much protein as our entire highly prized soybean crop.

After the steer is grown we spend more than a ton of grain and hundreds of pounds of protein feed, to fatten it up on a feed lot. Meat marbled with fat brings the highest price. Half our agricultural land now grows feed for animals—feed that anywhere else would be called *food,* since it includes "not only highly nutritious grain and soybeans but considerable quantities of milk products, fish meal, and wheat germ as well." By 1973 livestock in America consumed "the protein equivalent of six times our human consumption." Every year our livestock eats as much grain as all the people in China and India.

Not only do we waste valuable protein by feeding it to animals when it would support human life more efficiently: after the animals get the protein we eat twice as much meat as we actually need. American beef consumption doubled after 1950; result—

> Americans eat so much unnecessary protein that we could reduce our livestock population by one-quarter and still feed every one of us half a pound of meat a day—enough to meet our entire protein allowance from meat alone (not to mention the protein we also get from dairy and grain products, beans, nuts, and vegetables).

Present talk of "food shortages" is based on keeping on with our present practice and persuading other people to copy what we do. As Mrs. Lappé says:

> In fact, we are so far from seeing that our whole system is constructed on waste, that we have actively promoted our "efficient" agriculture as a model for the poor countries to follow. A tragic illusion. The world is well beyond the point of being able to support its population with the level of waste on which our diet is based: there is currently only about one acre of arable land per person left in the world, compared with the three-and-one-half acres necessary to sustain our meat-centered diet.

We eat so much meat and import so much food that food prices remain high for everybody in the world. And to make sure all that extra meat now produced is disposed of, we pay "nutritionists" high fees to instruct us in the *necessity* of eating large quantities of it in order to stay well. Comment by Mrs. Lappé:

> The pious feeling that we are all facing scarcity helps us hide from ourselves the fact that we are actually helping to *create* scarcity. Read the daily paper's report on the global food situation—it is hard to avoid its frightening image of the poor world's

> heavy burden on the common food supply, isn't it? In reality, though, it is we—the rich world—who place the greatest burden on the Earth's agricultural productivity. Although industrialized nations comprise only one-third of the world's population, they consume two-thirds of the world's food.
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> We tend to think of the poor world as heavily dependent on the rich for imports of food for survival. In the poor world as a whole, however, only 7 per cent of domestic consumption is supplied by imports. The rich countries are the major food importers. . . . The United States, known worldwide for its Texas round-ups, is in reality the world's leading importer of beef. We are also a net importer of milk products.

In her conclusion Frances Lappé outlines steps that will have to be taken to provide sufficient food for the growing population of the world. First order of business is to stop feeding cattle grain that humans can eat. She lists various waste materials that would be nourishing to cattle but are not now used as feed. Then, it will be important to see that the resulting increase in available grain reaches the countries where it is really needed by humans, instead of being sold to European livestock producers.

Another necessary step is to enable the poor countries to improve their economies. Mrs. Lappé has common sense suggestions on how to do this. Helping the small farmers in other lands is one obvious need:

> Norman E. Borlaug, the chief green revolutionist (and Nobel Prize winner) recently stated: "I have a lot of respect for the small farmer (in the poor world). . . . Almost invariably when you look at what he's doing with his land you find he's producing the maximum under the situation he has to work with. The thing is that he usually doesn't have much to work with." Borlaug is right. Of all World Bank loans in 1974, only 18 per cent went to agriculture. In a sample of fourteen Third World countries, agriculture received only II per cent of investment. . . . Scientific farming can be practiced on one- or two-acre, family-worked plots without large-scale machinery powered by fossil fuels. It has been proven in countries such as South Korea and Taiwan that the small farmer *will* respond, given an adequate credit system, extension services, and a marketing and distribution system that will ensure him a return for his effort. . . .
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> What about plows, material for constructing wells irrigation ditches, storage facilities, roads, research facilities? Surely this sort of farm aid is cheaper (and more stabilizing) than sophisticated fighter planes and other high-priced weaponry. If we are contributing $9.5 billion a year in military assistance to many of these same countries, the problem of cost is not insoluble.

This article by Frances Lappé ought to be made into a pamphlet and circulated in all the schools.

Meanwhile, sound information is filtering through the better newspapers to the general public. As an answer to high meat prices, an article in the *Christian Science Mon*itor (Jan. 16) recommends sensible changes in diet:

> A vegetarian diet, for example, reeks of economy. There's nothing new about vegetarianism. It goes back to ancient Hebrew days and early Greek civilizations. It thrived later in 19th-century Europe.
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> Its adequacy was proved in Denmark during World War I when people lived mostly on whole grain bran bread, barley porridge, potatoes, greens, and dairy products.

The article continues with much good counsel about vegetarian eating and variety, and almost a page of ingenious recipes are provided.

Another *Monitor* article of the same date gives dozens of uses of soybeans, the high-protein food that costs 35 cents a pound—called "meat that grows on vines" in America and the "chicken without bones" in China. Two pounds of soy flour contain as much protein as five pounds of boneless meat, six dozen eggs, 15 quarts of milk, or four pounds of cheese, and soy flour is almost starch free.

Incidentally, the Danish response to a vegetarian diet during World War I was considerably more than "adequate." According to Mikkel Hindhede, who supervised the change in what the Danes ate, the death rate in Denmark during the year of vegetarian eating fell from 12.5 to 10.4 per thousand—"the lowest mortality figure that has been registered in any European country at any time."