A Post-historic Primitivism

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1. The Problem of the Relevance of the Past

History as a Different Consciousness

H. J. Muller's classic *The Uses of the Past: Profiles of Former Societies* presented us with a paradox: "Our age is notorious for its want of piety or sense of the past… Our age is nevertheless more historically minded than any previous age."[1]

Two decades later, with the publication of Herbert Schneidau's *Sacred Discontent,* the paradox vanished in a radical new insight.[2] For Schneidau History was not simply a chronicle, nor even an "interpretation," but a new way of perceiving reality, one that set out to oppose and destroy the vision which preceded it. It does not refer to readers' understanding but to a cognitive style.

History, he said, is the view of the world from the outside. It was "invented" by early Hebrews who took their own alienation as the touchstone of humankind. Especially did they conceive themselves as outside the earth-centered belief systems of the great valley civilizations of their time. Central to those beliefs was cyclic return and its paradigmatic and exemplary stories linking past, present, and future with eternal structure. Schneidau calls this the "mythic" way of life. Alternatively, the view created by the Hebrews and later polished by the Greeks and Christians was that time may produce analogies but not a true embeddedness. All important events resulted from the thoughts and actions of a living, distant, unknowable God. There could never be a return. The only thing of which we could be sure is that God would punish those deluded enough to believe in the powers of the mythic earth or who fell away from the worship of himself.

A perspective on Schneidau's concept of pre-history can be gained from recent studies of a style of consciousness among living, non-historical peoples. Dorothy Lee, describing the Trobriand Islanders, refers to the "non-linear codification of reality"; space which is not defined by lines connecting points: a world without tenses or causality in language, where change is not a becoming but a new are-ness; a journey, not a passage through but a revised at-ness. Walter Ong calls it "an event world, signified by sound," a world composed of interiors rather than surfaces, where events are embedded instead of reading like the lines of a book. Of Eskimos, Bogert O'Brien says, "The Inuit does not depend on objects for orientation. One's position in space is fundamentally relational and based upon activity. The clues are not objects of analysis… The relational manner of orienting is a profoundly different way of interpreting space. First, all of the environment is perceived subjectively as dynamic, experiencing processes… Secondly, the hunter moves as a participant amidst other participants oriented by the action."[3]

For the Hebrews who invented History, the record of the linear sequence of ever-new events would be the Old Testament. By the time we get to Herbert Muller that record has the density of civilized millennia, and could be projected back upon the whole 5,000 years of written words and such records as archaeology offers.

Muller's paradox, of our obsession with and obliviousness toward history, vanishes because we can begin to understand that the passion is an anxiety with our circumstances and our identity, which only grow thicker, like layers of limestone, as we burrow into that vast accumulation. The hidden truth of history is that the more we know the stranger it all becomes. It is human to want to know ourselves from the past, but History's perspective narrows that identity to portraits,

[1] Herbert J. Muller, *The Uses of the Past,* Oxford University Press, New York, 1952, p.38.
[2] Herbert Schneidau, *Sacred Discontent,* University of California, Los Angeles, 1976.
[3] Bogert O'Brien, "Inuit Ways and the Transformation of Canadian Theology," mss., 1979.

ideology, and abstractions to which nation states committed human purpose. True ancestors are absent. Our search simply sharpens desire.

The meaning for our lives, of nature, of purposeful animals, of simple societies, of everything in this "past," is in doubt. We do not feel our ancestors looking over our shoulders or their lives pressing on our own. The past is the temporal form of a distant place. Our view is that you cannot be in two places or two times at once. I speak of this as a "view" in the sense of Ong's observation that the modern West is hypervisual, and my own conviction that what it considers a "view" is a perceptual habit. From this viewpoint we can see mere "oral tradition" as a nadir from which it was impossible to know that water in time's river runs its course but once and that you can no more recover the primordial sense of earth-linked at-homeness than a waterfall can run backward. And further, once we have shaken off that mythic immersion, and put on the garment of dry History, we are unable to shed the detachment and skepticism that define the Western personality, embodied in the written "dialogues" which Robert Hutchins defined as the central feature of the Western civilization.[4]

History not only envisioned, it created sense of the moment. Its content is sometimes delectable, sometimes horrible, but always irretrievable except as beads on the string from which we now dangle. It deals with an arc of time and of measured location; its creative principle being external rather than intrinsic to the world; deity as distant, unknowable and arbitrary. Central to History is a subjectivity which also distances us from our ancestors.

The legacy of History with respect to primitive peoples is threefold: (1) primitive life is devoid of admirable qualities, (2) our circumstances render them inappropriate even if admirable, and (3) the matter is moot, as "You cannot go back."

"You can't go back" shelters a number of corollaries. Most of these are physical rationalizations—too many people in the world, too much commitment to technology or its social and economic systems, ethical and moral ideas that make up civilized sensibilities, and the unwillingness of people to surrender to a less interesting, cruder, or more toilsome life, from which time and progress delivered us. This progress is the work of technology. When technology's "side effects" are bad, progress becomes simply "change," which is, by the same rote, "inevitable." Progress is a visible extension of the precognitive habit of History that influences concept and explanation by modulating understanding. It was not only the mathematicians, astronomers, and philosophers of the modern era who gave us the theoretical basis of progress.

All of these objections—and they seem insurmountable—seem to me to imply a deeper mind-set which does not have to do with the content of history. It is more a reflex than a concept. We care little for its theories or inventions since the time of Francis Bacon or for the moods in Christendom which reversed the older view that things only get worse.

Its true genesis lies in the work of Hebrew and Greek demythologizers. They created a reality focused outside the self, one that could be manipulated the way god-the-potter fingered the world. In rooting out the inner-directed, cyclic cosmos of gentiles and naive barbarians, they destroyed the spiraled form of myth with its rituals of eternal return, its mimetic means of transmitting values and ideas, its role in providing exemplary models, its central metaphor of nature and culture, and most of all as a way of comprehending the past. It began the deconstruction of the

[4] Robert Hutchins, Preface to Mortimer J. Adler's Hundred Great Books Series, *The Great Ideas*, Encyclopedia Britannica, Chicago, 1952.

empirical wisdom of earlier peoples, and culminated in the monumental Western view of reality whose central theme was the outwardness of nature.

Along with pictorial space and Euclidean time goes the phonetic alphabet as inadvertent "causes" of estrangement.[5] But these are not simply inventions of the post-medieval West. They are markers in the way the world is experienced. Their antecedents occur in the Bronze Age Mediterranean where much of what we call "Western" has its roots.

Elsewhere I have tried to describe this history as a crazy idea, fostered not as a concept so much as the socially sanctioned mutilation of childhood, the training ground of perception, by the blocking of what Erik Erikson called "epigenesis."[6] But, whatever its dynamic, History alters not our interest in the past (witness Muller's observation that we moderns seem more interested than ever), but the work of attention itself, the deep current of precomprehension that runs silently beneath our spoken thoughts.

History and Ambiguity

If we attempt to recover the difficult and "distant" art of tool-flaking we may do so over the objections of modern rationality that denies that the pterodactyl can fly since no one has seen it do so. That is, you cannot know the ancient technique. Not only does History define it as beyond access, but incomprehensible. History thinks its own process is an evolution separating us by our very nature from our past—medieval, Neanderthal or primate.

Central to History is the notion of a fixed essence, an inner state that persists in spite of the contradictions of appearance, that our visible form not only fails to inform but can be made to deceive. Shifting appearance is dangerous, larval forms signify evil. The question of our primate or Neanderthal past cannot be addressed except as alternatives to our present identity. We are predisposed by the immense cultural momentum of History to dismiss such ambiguous assertions as one of a larger class of moot points in which categorical contradiction, the simultaneous reality of two opposing truths about ourselves, is denied.

Equally paradoxical is the matter of being in two times at once, even though our senses tell us that we are not today what we were yesterday. This movement from one state or one thing to another is not so much a problem for human consciousness as for meaning. The liminal or boundary area of categories heightens cognitive intensity. In the historical world, such transformations have been handled by accepting reality as made up of fixed identities, oppositions, and beyond them, transcendent meaning, declaring one of the appearances to be illusory, or by seeing them as good and evil. In all cases except the last the surface or apparent contradiction is cast into doubt in favor of some deeper, hidden, more real reality. Mostly this problem has been met in the West by denying appearance—especially when it shifts or is a larval state—as the true identity and instead postulating essences and spirits within or seeking principles and abstractions as the enduring, unchanging reality, despite outward shape.

In non-Western, non-industrial, and largely non-literate (hence non-historical) societies, external form is dealt with quite differently. Edmund Carpenter cites our difficulty with the visual duck/rabbit pun as our loss of the "multiplicity of thought," a collapse of metaphor in a mind-set related to phonetic writing.[7] A. David Napier has traced the matter in elegant detail in connec-

[5] Ivan Illich and Barry Sanders, *The Alphabetization of the Popular Mind,* North Point, San Francisco, 1988.

[6] Paul Shepard, *Nature and Madness,* Sierra Club Books, San Francisco, 1982.

[7] Edmund S. Carpenter, "If Wittgenstein Had Been an Eskimo," *Natural History* 89 (4), Feb., 1980.

tion with the ritual use of masks as the perceptual means of assenting to a universal principle of shape-shifting. Coupled with dance, this is humankind's central means of reconciliation with a world of changes.[8] The many shapes in such masked dances testify also to a world in which abstractions are given lively form. Ahistorical peoples usually live in worlds where power is plural, as in egalitarian small societies in which leadership is not monopolized but changing and dispersed. The concrete or given model for this discontinuity of emphatic and exemplary qualities is the range of natural species. To varying degrees the animals and plants are regarded as centers, metaphors, and mentors of the different traits, skills, and roles of people. In polytheistic worlds there is no omniscience and no single hierarchy, although there may be said to loom a single creative principle behind it all. Insofar as they model diversity and the polytheistic cosmos, the animals provide metaphors of forms and movements that can be brought ceremonially into human presence, as interlocutors of change. Their heads as masks, the animals in such rites become combinational figures created to give palpable expression to transitional states. The animal mask on the body of a person joins in thought that which is otherwise separate, not only representing human change but conceptualizing shared qualities, so that unity in difference and difference in unity can be conceived as an intrinsic truth. And some animals, by their form or habit, are boundary creatures who signify the passages of human life. Finally, in dance these bodies move to deep rhythms that bind the world and bring the humans into mimetic participation with other beings.

The sophisticated Greeks after the time of Pericles ridiculed these predications, and the Jews and Christians rejected them. The thinness of music and dance in temples, churches, and mosques indicates the minimalizing of what was and is basic to hundreds of different, indigenous religions marked by "mythic" imagination.

The nature of the primitive world is at the center of our dilemma about essence, appearance, and change. Since we are not now what we once were—we are not bacteria or quadruped mammals, or apish hominids, or primitive people living without domesticated plants and animals—the dichotomy is clear enough. We each know as adults that we are no longer a child, yet we are not so sure that our being doesn't still embrace that other self who we were. We are attached to that primitive way of understanding, of double being, in spite of our modern perspective. Depth psychology has led us to understand that this going back is going into ourselves, into what, from the civilized historical view, is a "heart of darkness." Clearly a threat of the loss of self-identity is implied, swallowed by a second nature which is hidden and unpredictable.

As born anti-historians, our secret desire is to explicate the inexplicable, to recover that which is said to be denied. It is a yearning, a nostalgia in the bone, an intuition of the self as other selves, perhaps other animals, a shadow of something significant that haunts us, a need for exemplary events as they occur in myth rather than History. If not a necessity, it is a hunger that can be suppressed and distanced. The experience of that past is in terms of something still lived with, like fire, that still draws us. We cannot explain it, but it is there, made fragile in our psyche and hearts, drowned perhaps in our logic, but unquenchable.

It has been said that those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it, and yet by definition it cannot be repeated. Presumably such repetition means analogy. One does not really "go back," but merely discovers similar patterns. To ask the question in the perspective of

[8] A. David Napier, *Masks, Transformation, and Paradox,* University of California, Los Angeles, 1986. And see Steven Lonsdale, *Animals and the Origin of Dance,* Thames and Hudson, New York, 1982.

pre-history: what are we to learn from history? The answer: history rejects the ambiguities of overlapping identity, space and time, and creates its own dilemmas of discontent and alienation from Others, from non-human life, primitive ancestors, and tribal peoples. Failing to enact pre-history, we can live only in history, caught between captivity and escape, afflicted with Henry Thoreau's "life of quiet desperation," now called neurosis. Since history began, most people most of the time have lived under tyrants and demagogues (Mr. Progress, Mr. Collectivity, Mr. Centralized Power, Mr. Growthmania, and Mr. Technophilia). No empire lasts, and when states collapse their subjects are enslaved by other states.

The crucial question of the modern world is, "How are we to become native to this land?" It is a question that history cannot answer, for history is the de-nativizing process. In history "going native" is a madman's costume ball, a child's romp in the attic, a misanthrope's escape.

Unlike History, pre-history does not participate in the dichotomy that divides experience into inherited and acquired. Nor does it imply that our behavior is instinctive rather than learned. It refers us to mythos, the exemplifications of the past-in-the-present. Ancestors are the dreamtime ones, and their world is the ground of our being. They are with us still.

The real lesson of history is that it is no guide. By its own definition, History is a declaration of independence from the deep past and its peoples, living and dead, the natural state of being which is outside its own domain. Indeed, History corrupts the imperatives of pre-history. What are the imperatives? What are we to learn from pre-history? Perhaps as Edith Cobb said of childhood, "The purpose is to discover a world the way the world was made."[9]

2. Savagery—Once More

After 2,500 years of yearning for lost garden paradises in Western mythology perhaps one of the most outrageous ideas of the 20th century was the advocacy of a hunting/gathering model of human life. Much of the world is still caught up in making a transition from an agrarian civilization. A writer for *Horizon* proclaims that "An epoch that started ten thousand years ago is ending. We are involved in a revolution of society that is as complete and as profound as the one that changed man from hunter and food gatherer to settled farmer."[10] He alerts us to the colossal struggle to go forward from the tottering institutions of agricultural life, and I am suggesting that we do move ahead to—of all things—hunting/gathering!

Among the problems that plague the "uses of the past," as H. J. Muller called it, the search for a lost paradise seems to resist the "facts" of history. One wonders whether it is even possible to write about the deep past without nostalgia, or without creating a world that never existed. Its images are a mix of dreams and visions, infantile mnemonics, ethnographic misinformation, and attempts to locate mythological events in geographical space and recorded history. History, indeed, is not exactly anti-myth, dealing as it does with "origins" and recitations of the significant events of the past. But its "past" is radically different from the one shaping human evolution.

It was great fun working on a book on hunter-gatherer people in the early 1970s because almost everything that the layman generally thought to be true of them was wrong. In writing *The Tender Carnivore*[11] I tried to avoid the snare of idealism by disarming my critics in advance.

[9] Edith Cobb, *The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood,* Columbia University Press, New York, 1978.
[10] J. H. Plumb, *Horizon* 41 (3), 1972.
[11] Scribners, New York, 1973.

I avoided the beatifying language of Noble Savagery and I engaged Fons von Woerkom to draw chapter headings, as his art was anything but romantic. Even so, the incredulity with which it was greeted was puzzling. Looking back, I now see that the objection was not only that primitive life was inferior and irrelevant, but in the lens of historical memory, inaccessible.

For two centuries the ideology of inevitable change had set its values in contrast to fictional images of the lost innocence of deprived and depraved savage. Forty years ago George Boas traced the history of that idea of the primitive over the last 2,000 years, from early attempts to associate tribal peoples with Biblical paradise, various views of perfection, and the saga of evolving mankind.[12] For the Greeks anyone who lacked civil life in a polis and spoke incoherently (babbled) was a barbarian. Hostility to the idea that we have anything to learn from savages has as long a tradition as the dream itself. Skepticism about the full humanity of the Hyperboreans and Scythians among some Classical authors was opposed by the idealizing of the Celts, the Getae, and the Druids by Herodotus and Strabo.

The Christians got their ideas on prehistory from Plato's Laws via the Romans, which portrayed the pagans as childlike. Spanish endeavors to associate American Indians with European *sylvestres homines,* the wild man, and the legacy of the Greek *barbori* have been reviewed by Anthony Pagdon. He makes some distinctions between Franciscan and Jesuit perception of the Indians, the Franciscans determined to destroy Indian culture in order to Christianize and the Jesuits ignoring the "secular" side of the culture as irrelevant—an ironic twist on holism.[13] Oddly enough, it was the "unnaturalness" of the native peoples rather than their "naturalness" that justified decimation. Natural men, for example, did not eat each other.

In neo-Classical times Dr. Johnson observed that the hope of knowing anything about the people of the past was "idle conjecture." Horace Walpole derided antiquarians' fantasies. Locke and Hume gave us images of slavering brutes as an alternative to Rousseau's fictions of innocence and integrity. Admiral Cook's Polynesia would not look benign after the untamed sons of Adam did him in on the beach at Oahu. The images were part of the heritage of the Roman idea of barbarians, the Christian notion of pagans, and 18th century political philosophy of the benighted savage. Von Herder, Hegel, Compte, and Adelung all strove to disassociate mankind from the "laws of nature," to identify culture with History, to see conscious intellect identified with urban life, property, law, government, and "great art," as the final flowers in the human odyssey. The tradition continues. As M. Navarro said as late as 1924 of the South American Campa, "Degraded and ignorant beings, they lead a life exotic, purely animal, savage, in which are eclipsed the faint glimmerings of their reason, in which are drowned the weak pangs of their conscience, and all the instincts and lusts of animal existence alone float and are reflected…"[14] Or, closer to home, is the testimony of Will Durant, the historian: "Through 97 per cent of history, man lived by hunting and nomadic pasturage. During those 975,000 years his basic character was formed—to greedy acquisitiveness, violent pugnacity and lawless sexuality."[15] Quite apart from anthropology this conglomerate idea of the primitive remains the central dogma of civilization held by modern humanists.

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[12] *George Boas,* Essays on Primitivism and Related Ideas in the Middle Ages, *Johns Hopkins, Baltimore, 1948.*

[13] Anthony Pagdon, *The Fall of Natural Man,* Cambridge, New York, 1982, p. 78.

[14] M. Navarro, *La Tribu Campa,* Lima, 1924, quoted in Gerald Weiss, "Campa Cosmology," *American Museum of Natural History Anthropological Papers,* 52, Part 5, New York, 1975.

[15] Dr. Will Durant, "A Last Testament to Youth," *The Columbia Dispatch Magazine,* Feb. 8,1970.

By the end of the 19th century there emerged in the United States a substantial body of admiration for Indian ways. I remember as a boy in the 1930s meeting Ernest Thompson Seton in Santa Fe. He ran a summer camp in which boys came to his ranch to be tutored by local Navajos, bunked in tepees, and lived out the handcraft and nature study ventures of *Two Little Savages.*[16] The image of the American Indians in this dialectic has been reviewed by Calvin Martin, who observes that by the late 1960s the image of the "ecological Indian" was being articulated by Indians themselves, notably Scott Momaday and Vine Deloria. Arrayed against them in postures of "iconoclastic scorn" are experts who pursued an old line in anthropological guise—debunkers of the image of the Noble Savage, which they said merely masked a knave who was not nature's friend but who typically over-killed the game at every opportunity.[17]

Oddly enough, science did not rapidly resolve what seemed to be a question of facts. Geology after Lyell, evolution after Darwin, and archaeological time after Libby's atomic dating complicated but did not settle much. With a slight twist evolution could be the handmaiden of Progress. "It began to look," says Glyn Daniel, "as if prehistoric archaeology was confirming the philosophical and sociological speculations of the mid-nineteenth century scholars."[18] Anthropology idealized value-free science and cultural relativism, thwarting European chauvinism but throwing out the baby with the bath water.

I was, of course, not the first to try to formulate the meaning of hunting-gathering for our own time. But not all efforts to clarify the description of hunters were applied to ourselves. Knowledgeable writers tiptoed among the ferocious critics, pretending that hunting signified only a remote past, as in Robert Ardrey's *Hunting Hypothesis*[19] or John Pfeiffer's *The Emergence of Man.*[20] Nigel Calder's *Eden Was No Garden*[21] and Gordon Rattray Taylor's *Rethink*[22] stirred the pot, but could hardly be said to have influenced, say, the civilized dogma of the modern university. Scholarly silence greeted the English translation of Ortega y Gasset's *Meditations on Hunting*[23] as though an imposter had inserted an aberration in his works.

The message is clear: Advocacy of a way of life that is both repulsive and no longer within reach seems futile. Time is an unreturning arrow. The hunting idea is a barbaric atavism, unwelcome at a time when aggression and violence seem epidemic. The idea is obviously economically impractical for billions of people and incongruent with the growing concern for the rights of animals. Animal protectionists and many feminists seem generally to feel that hunting is simply a final grab at symbolic virility by insensitive, city-bred male chauvinists, or one more convulsion of a tattered and misplaced nostalgia. Less and less, however, is hunting condemned as the brutal expression of tribal subhumans, for that would conflict with modern ethnic liberation.

The idea of inherent "nobility" of the individual savage was laughed out of school a century ago, properly so. Hunter-gatherers are not always pacific (though they do not keep standing armies or make organized war), nor innocent of ordinary human vices and violence. There is small-scale cruelty, infanticide, inability or unwillingness to end intratribal scuffling or intertribal

[16] Ernest Thompson Seton, *Two Little Savages,* Doubleday, New York, 1903.
[17] Calvin Martan, *Keepers of the Game,* University of California, Los Angeles, 1978.
[18] Glyn Daniel, *The Idea of Prehistory,* Penguin, Baltimore, 1962, p. 57.
[19] Robert Ardrey, *The Hunting Hypothesis,* Athenaeum, New York, 1976.
[20] John Pfeiffer, *The Emergence of Man,* Harper and Row, New York, 1972.
[21] Nigel Calder, *Eden Was No Garden,* Holt, New York, 1967.
[22] Gordon Rattray Taylor, *Rethink, a Paraprimitive Solution,* Dutton, New York, 1973.
[23] José Ortega y Gasset, *Meditations on Hunting,* Scribners, New York, 1972.

vengeance. From the time of Vasco da Gama Westerners have been fascinated by indigenous punishment for crimes and by cannibalism (although cannibalism is primarily a trait of agri-cultures). Hunter-gatherers may not always live in perfect harmony with nature or each other, being subject to human shortcomings. Nor are they always happy, content, well-fed, free of disease, or profoundly philosophical. Like people everywhere they are, in some sense, incompetent. In "Little Big Man" the Indian actor Dan George did an unforgettable satire on the wise old chief who, delivering his rhetoric of joining the Great Spirit, lies down on the mountain to die and gets only rain in the face for his trouble. Given a century of this kind of scientific dis-illusioning, what is left?

It has been uphill and downhill for the anthropologists all along. The 19th century "humanist anthropologists" like Edward Tylor and Malinowski dismissed native religious rites as logical error, although they allowed that ritual may work symbolically. As to the veracity of their religion, an "embarrassed silence" has marked anthropology ever since, say Bourdillon and Fortes.[24]

Against these relativists there has also been an eccentric group of anthropologists who were not neutral about the tribal cultures. A. O. Hallowell, W. E. H. Stanner, Carleton Coon, and Julian Steward walked a narrow line between science and advocacy. Claude Lévi-Strauss rescued the savage mind. Coon's courage was exemplary. He scorned the "academic debunkers and soft peddlers," including those who spoke of "the brotherhood of man" as contradicting the reality of race.[25] Stanner was perhaps the most eloquent, describing Aboriginal thought as a "metaphysical gift," its idea of the world as an object of contemplation, its lack of omniscient, omnipotent, adjudicating gods—a world without inverted pride, quarrel with life, moral dualism, rewards of heaven and hell, prophets, saints, grace, or redemption. All this among Blackfellows whose "great achievement in social structure" he said was equal in complexity to parliamentary government, a wonderful metaphysic of assent and abidingness, "hopelessly out of place in a world in which the Renaissance has triumphed only to be perverted and in which the products of secular humanism, rationalism and science challenge their own hopes."[26] If any modern intellectuals read him they must have thought he had "gone native" and left his critical intelligence in the outback.

After twenty centuries of ideological controversy it may be impossible to enter the dialogue without trailing some of its biases and illusions. But there is perspective from different quarters—from the study of higher primates, hominid paleontology, paleolithic archaeology, ethology, ecology, field studies of living hunter-gatherers, and direct testimony from living hunter-gatherers.

A turning point was a Wenner-Gren symposium in Chicago and its publication as *Man the Hunter* in 1968.[27] The essays therein reported scientific evidence that the cave man as well as the noble savage was so much urban moonshine. It was a meeting of field workers who had studied living tribal peoples in many parts of the world, coming together and finding common threads that linked diverse hunter-gatherer cultures to one another and to paleolithic archaeology. This shift toward species-specific thinking benefitted from "the new systematics," an evolutionary perspective based on genetics and natural selection articulated by G. G. Simpson, Ernst Mayr, Julian Huxley, and others. *The Social Life of Early Man*[28] was indicative of the new level of continuity

[24] M. F. C. Bourdillon and Meyer Fortes, eds., *Sacrifice,* Academic Press, New York, 1980.

[25] Carleton Coon, *The Story of Man,* Knopf, New York, 1962, p. 187.

[26] W. E. H. Stanner, *White Man Got No Dreaming,* Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1979.

[27] Richard B. Lee and Irven DeVore, eds., *Man the Hunter,* Aldine, Chicago, 1968.

[28] Sherwood L. Washburn, ed., *The Social Life of Early Man,* Aldine, Chicago, 1961.

among primitive societies, afterwards given cross-cultural generalizations in George Murdock's ethnographic atlas.[29]

Although a few bold voices had been heard among them, such as Marshall Sahlins' *Stone Age Economics,*[30] their own evidence did not make anthropologists into advocates of a new primitivism. Their restraint was no doubt the result of a hard-won professional posture, the 20th century effort to overcome two centuries of ethnocentrism. But it was also the outwash of three generations of cultural relativism by mainstream social science, pioneered by Boas and Kroeber,[31] recently voiced with imperious assurance by Clifford Geertz that "there are no generalizations that can be made about man as man, save that he is a most various animal."[32] Catch them saying that any culture is better than another!

In any case, such a judgment would be irrelevant, since even present-day hunter-gatherers are, by its historical logic, part of an irrecoverable past. Melvin Konner, a Harvard-bred anthropologist, spent years studying the !Kung San of the Kalahari desert of Africa, wrote a fascinating account of his study showing the marvelous superiority of their lives to their counterparts in Cleveland or Los Angeles, and then pulled the covers over his head by saying, "But here is the bad news. You can't go back."[33] One can only be grateful for Loren Eiseley[34] and Laurens van der Post[35] in their admiration of the same Kalahari Bushmen. Perhaps they anticipated what Roger Keesing calls the "new ethnography," which seeks "universal cultural design" based on psychological approaches. "If a cognitive anthropology is to be productive, we will need to seek underlying processes and rules," he says, observing that the old ethnoscience has been undermined by transformational linguistics and its sense of "universal grammatical design." He concludes that "the assumption of radical diversity in cultures can no longer be sustained by linguistics."[36]

So to return to the question—just what is it that is so much better in hunter-gatherer life? How does one encapsulate what can be sifted from an enormous body of scientific literature? It is not only, or even mainly, a matter of how nature is perceived, but of the whole of personal existence, from birth through death, among what history arrogantly calls "pre-agricultural" peoples. In the bosom of family and society, the life cycle is punctuated by formal, social recognition with its metaphors in the terrain and the plant and animal life. Group size is ideal for human relationships, including vernacular roles for men and women without sexual exploitation.[37] The esteem gained in sharing and giving outweighs the advantages of hoarding. Health is good in terms of diet as well as social relationships.[38] Interpenetration with the non-human world is an extraordinary achievement of tools, intellectual sophistication, philosophy, and tradition. There is a quality of mind, a sort of venatic phenomenology. "In a world where diversity exceeds our mental capacity

[29] G. P. Murdock, *Ethnographic Atlas for New World Societies,* University of Pittsburgh Press, 1967.

[30] Marshall Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics,* Aldine, Chicago, 1972.

[31] Derek Freeman, letter, *Current Anthropology,* Oct., 1973, p. 379.

[32] Clifford Geertz, "The Impact of the Concept of Culture on the Concept of Man," in Stanley Diamond, *In Search of the Primitive: A Critique of Civilization,* Transaction Books, New Brunswick, 1974, p. 102.

[33] *Melvin Konner,* The Tangled Wing: Biological Constraints on the Human Spirit, *Harper and Row, New York, 1983.*

[34] Loren Eiseley, "Man of the Future," *The Immense Journey* Random House, New York, 1957.

[35] Laurens van der Post, *Heart of the Hunter,* Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1980.

[36] Roger M. Keesing, "Paradigms Lost: The New Ethnography and New Linguistics," *South West Journal of Anthropology* 28: 299—332, 1972.

[37] Ivan Illich, *Gender,* Pantheon, New York, 1982.

[38] Gina Bari Kolata, "!Kung Hunter-Gatherers: Feminism, Diet, and Birth Control," *Science* 185: 932—34, 1974.

nothing is impossible in our capacity to become human. "[39] Custom firmly and in mutual council modulates human frailty and crime. Organized war and the hounding of nature do not exist. Ecological affinities are stable and non-polluting. Humankind is in the humble position of being small in number, sensitive to the seasons, comfortable as one species in many, with an admirable humility toward the universe. No hunter on record has bragged that he was captain of his soul. Hunting, both in an evolutionary sense and individually, is "the source of those saving instincts that tell us that we have a responsibility towards the living world."[40]

To make such statements is to set out the game board for the dialectics of our intellectual life. Graduate students, religious fundamentalists, economists, corporate executives, and numerous others, including a gleeful band of book reviewers, will leap to prove differently. I have a wonderful set of newspaper book reviews of *The Tender Carnivore* with headings like "Professor Says Back to the Cave" and "Aw, Shoot!" And there is always an anthropologist somewhere to point to a tribe which is an exception to one or another of the "typical" characteristics of hunter-gatherers, hence there can be no "universals," and so on.

The most erudite essay on hunting, ancient or modern, is José Ortega y Gasset's *Meditations on Hunting*. He conceives the hunt in terms of "authenticity," especially in its direct dealing with the inescapable and formidable necessity of killing, a reality faced in the "generic" way of being human. He also refers to the hunter's ability to "be inside" the countryside, by which he means the natural system—"wind, light, temperature, round-relief, minerals, vegetation, all play a part; they are not simply there, as they are for the tourist or the botanist, but rather they function, they act." Ultimately, this function is the reciprocity of life and death. The enigma of death and that of the animal are the same, and therefore "we must seek his company" in the "subtle rite of the hunt." In all other kinds of landscape, he says—the field, grove, city, battle-ground—we see "man travelling within himself," outside the larger reality.

The humanized and domesticated places may have their own domestic reality, but Ortega refers to generic being. Ortega's is a larger understanding; he attends to human "species-specific" traits, and escapes the cultural relativism and social reduction that have dominated anthropology. A biologist turned philosopher/historian, Ortega links "primitive" hunter-gatherers to ourselves. This is because there are characteristics of humankind, as Eibes-Eibesfeldt tells us,[41] as well as shared characteristics of hunter-gatherers, present and past.

What has been learned about the nature of our own problems in the past twenty years?

Item: Health disorders are increasingly traced to polluting poisons and to a diet of domesticated (i.e., chemically altered or chemically treated) plants and animals. More people every year eat the meat of wild animals, seek "organic" vegetables, and seek alternatives to chemicalized nature.

Item: Evidence indicates that the small, face-to-face, social group works better in the quality of social experience and decision-making for its members and in its efficacy as a functional institution.[42]

Item: Percussive music and great intervals of silence are evidently conducive to our well-being. A meditative stillness, suggests Gary Snyder, was invented by waiting hunters.[43] Perhaps

[39] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind,* University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1966.

[40] C. H. D. Clarke, "Venator—the Hunter," mss., n.d.

[41] Irenaus Eibes-Eibesfeldt, *Love and Hate,* Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1971.

[42] Jane Howard, "All Happy Clans Are Alike," *The Atlantic,* May, 1978.

[43] Gary Snyder, quoted in Peter B. Chowka, "The Original Mind of Gary Snyder," *East-West* June, 1977.

this reflected the poised and ruminating hush of mothers of sleeping infants. High levels of sound have been directly linked to degenerative disease in urban life.

Item: Regular exercise, especially jogging, rare in 1965, was common by 1980. The sorts of exercise for men and women (aerobics, jogging, stretching) correlate with certain routines of life in cynegetic societies. The benefits are not only physical but mental.[44]

Item: One of the hardest stereotypes about the savage to die is gluttony. In arguing that Pleistocene peoples were responsible for the extinctions of large mammals, Paul Martin projected urban greed on the ancient hunters.[45] This preposterous theory ignores fundamental ecology, comparative ethnography, and the anthropological distinctions between people who maximize their take and those who optimize it.[46] Given the whole range of Pleistocene extinctions it is a poor fit in the paleontological and archaeological record.

Item: Childhood among hunter-gatherers better fits the human genome[47] in terms of the experience and satisfaction of both parents and children. I refer to the "epigenetic" calendar, which is based on the complex biological specialization of neoteny, to which human culture is in part mediator and mitigator.

Item: That advanced intelligence not only arrived with hunting and being hunted, but continues to be the central characteristic of the hunt, is still hard to accept for those who think of predation as something like a dogfight. Knowledge is of overwhelming importance in accommodating the whole of society to a "watchful world" and structuring the mentality of the hunter. There are three evolutionary correlates of large cerebral hemispheres: large size, predator-prey interaction, and intense sociality.[48]

Item: The cosmography of tribal peoples is as intricate as any, and marked by a humility which is lacking in civilized society. For example, two of the "principles of Koyukon world view" are "each animal knows way more than you do," and "the physical environment is spiritual, conscious, and subject to rules of respectful behavior."[49] The essays in Gary Urton's *Animal Myths and Metaphors in South America*[50] describe myths of the sort depicted in Huichol yarn paintings of Mexico—visual evocations of stories that integrate the human and non-human in dazzling, sophisticated metaphor.

The Paradox of the Civilized Hunter

There is no room here to review current ideas about hunting by modern, urban people, except to observe that the argument for hunting links primitive and civilized people, past and present. One can split this distinction and say with Barry Lopez that hunting is OK for ethnic groups but not for modern people. I think that view is based mistakenly on the notion that there are

[44] A. H. Ismail and L. B. Trachtman, "Jogging the Imagination," *Psychology Today,* March, 1973.

[45] P S. Martin and H. E. Wright, Jr., eds., *Pleistocene Extinctions: The Search for a Cause,* Yale University Press, New Haven, 1967.

[46] Donald K. Grayson, "Pleistocene Avifaunas and the Overkill Hypothesis," *Science* 195: 691—93, 1977. Karl W Butzer, *Environment and Archaeology,* Aldine, Chicago, 1971, pp. 503ff. Michael A. Joachim, *Hunter-Gatherer Subsistence and Settlement: A Predictive Model,* Academic Press, New York, 1976. Marvin Harris, "Potlatch Politics and Kings' Castles," *Natural History,* May, 1974.

[47] Melvin J. Konner, "Maternal Care, Infant Behavior and Development Among the !Kung," in R. B. Lee and I. DeVore, *Kalahari Hunter Gatherers,* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1976.

[48] Joachim, op. cit., p. 22. Harry Jerison, *Evolution of the Brain and Intelligence,* Academic, New York, 1973.

[49] Richard Nelson, *Make Prayers to the Raven,* University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1983, p. 225.

[50] Gary Urton, ed., *Animal Myths and Metaphors in South America,* University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City, 1985.

vicarious alternatives and reflects a kind of despair over the practical question of how the sheer numbers of people now living could gain the benefits of hunting-gathering.

Anti-hunters are outraged by "sport killing" as opposed to ethnic tradition, pointing for example to the diminished presence of wildlife and to old photographs of white African hunters with numerous dead animals. Who would consider defending such "slaughter"? What is sometimes regarded as vanity needs to be understood in the context of the traditional laying out of the dead animals. One of the most thoughtful modern hunters, C. H. D. Clarke, writes, "The Mexican Indian shamanic deer hunt is as much pure sport as mine, and the parallels between its rituals, where the dead game is laid out in state, and those of European hunts, where the horns sound the 'Sorbiati,' or 'tears of the stag,' over the dead quarry, are beyond coincidence."[51]

Fanatic opposition to hunting suggests that some other fear is at work. Neither the animal protectionists, the animal rights philosophers, nor the feminists hostile to vernacular gender have ecosystems (including the wildness of humans) at heart. When anti-hunters heard that "a Royal Commission on blood sports in Britain reported that deer had to be controlled and that hunting was just as humane as any alternative, these people wanted deer exterminated once and for all, as the only way to deliver the land from the infamy of hunting." In America we have similar ecological blindness regarding the killing of goats on the coastal islands of California and wild horses in national parks. I once heard a nationally known radio commentator, Paul Harvey, complain that the trouble with the idea of national parks protecting both predators and prey animals was that "mercy" was missing. Clarke concludes that the "rejection of hunting is just one in a long list of rejections of things natural," and that hunting will linger as one of the human connections to the natural environment "until the human race has completed its flight from nature, and set the scene for its own destruction."[52]

3. Romancing the Potato

Seventeen years after the publication of *The Tender Carnivore* there is still only speculation among scholars about the "cause" of the first agriculture. It is clear now as it was then, however, that recent hunting-gathering peoples did not joyfully leap into farming. The hunter-gatherers' progressive collapse by invasion from the outside is typified in Woodburn's description of the Haida.[53] For ten millennia there has been organized aggression against hunters, who themselves had no tradition of war or organized armies. The psychology of such assault probably grew out of the territoriality inherent in agriculture and farmers' exclusionary attitude toward outsiders, land hunger growing from the decline of field fertility and the increase in human density, and, with the rise of "archaic high civilizations," social pathologies related to group stresses and insecurity in an economy of monocultures (i.e., grains, goats), and the loss of autonomy in the pyramiding of power. Hunting-gathering peoples have been the victims of these pressures that beset farmers and ranchers, bureaucratically amplified upward in the levels of government.

The old idea that farming favored more security, longer life, and greater productivity is not always correct. For example, Marek Zvelebil, in the *Scientific American* in 1986, says, "Hunting-and-gathering is often thought of as little more than the prelude to agriculture. A reevaluation

[51] Clarke, op. cit.
[52] Clarke, ibid.
[53] James Woodburn, "An Introduction to Hadza Ecology, in Lee and DeVore, *Man the Hunter.*

suggests it was a parallel development that was as productive as early farming in some areas."[54] As for modern agriculture, C. Dean Freudenberger says, "Agriculture, closely related to global deforestation by making room for expanding cropping systems, is the most environmentally abusive activity perpetuated by the human species."[55]

At least six millennia of mixed tending and foraging followed the first domesticated wheat and preceded the first wheel, writing, sewers, and armies. In varying degrees local, regenerative, subsistence economies blended the cultivated and gathered, the kept animal and the hunted. Before cities, the world remained rich, fresh, and partly wild beyond the little gardens and goat pens. Extended family, small-scale life with profound incorporation into the rhythms of the world made this "hamlet society" the best life humans ever lived in the eyes of many. It is this village society of horticulture, relatively free of monetary commerce and outside control, that most idealizers of the farm look to as a model. Perhaps that image motivated Liberty Hyde Bailey in his turn-of-the-century book, *The Holy Earth.* Yet, his feeling for the land seems betrayed by a drive to dominate. Bailey says, "Man now begins to measure himself against nature also, and he begins to see that herein shall lie his greatest conquests beyond himself; in fact, by this means shall he conquer himself,—by great feats of engineering, by complete utilization of the possibilities of the planet, by vast discoveries in the unknown, and by the final enlargement of the soul; and in these fields shall he be the heroes. The most virile and upstanding qualities can find expression in the conquest of the earth. In the contest with the planet every man may feel himself grow."[56] Tethering the neolithic reciprocity with a nourishing earth, he suddenly jerks us into the heroic Iron Age. In the same book, however, he says, "I hope that some reaches of the sea may never be sailed, that some swamps may never be drained, that some mountain peaks may never be scaled, that some forests may never be harvested."[57] Inconsistent? No, it is an expression of the enclave mentality, the same one that gave us national parks and Indian reservations, the same that gives us wilderness areas.

The ideal of hamlet-centered life is represented by *Mother Earth News,* a search for equilibrium between autonomy and compromise. It is difficult not to be sympathetic. So too do Wes Jackson and the "permaculture" people seem to seek the hamlet life.[58] Their objective of replacing the annual plants with perennials seems laudable enough. Yet they are busily domesticating through selective breeding more wild perennials as fast as possible. They are making what geneticist Helen Spurway called genetic "goofies," the tragic deprivation of wildness from wild things.[59]

Who among us is not touched by the idyll of the family farm, the Jeffersonian yeoman, the placeness and playground of a rural existence? Above all, this way of life seems to have what hunting-gathering does not—retrievability. The yearning for it is not from academic studies of exotic tribal peoples, but is only a generation or two away—indeed, only a few miles away in bits of the countryside in Europe and America. After all, it incorporates part-time hunting and gathering, as though creating the best of all possible worlds. Like many others, I admire Jefferson as

[54] Marek Zvelebil, "Postglacial Foraging in the Forests of Europe," *Scientific American,* May, 1986.

[55] C. Dean Freudenberger, "Agriculture in a Post-Modern World," mss. for conference, "Toward a Post-Modern World," Santa Barbara, California, January, 1987.

[56] Liberty Hyde Bailey, *The Holy Earth,* Scribners, New York, 1915, p. 83.

[57] Ibid., p. 151.

[58] Wes Jackson, *New Roots for Agriculture,* Friends of the Earth, San Francisco, 1980.

[59] Helen Spurway, "The Causes of Domestication," *Journal of Genetics* 53:325, 1955.

the complete man and share the search for peace of mind and good life of its modern spokesmen like Wendell Berry.

Of course, most agriculture of the past five millennia has not been like that. The theocratic agricultural states, from the early centralized forms in ancient Sumer onward, have been enslaving rather than liberating. Even where the small scale seems to prevail, such conviviality is not typical in medieval or modern peasant life with its drudgery, meanness, and suffering at the hands of exploitive classes above it.[60]

The primary feature of the farmer's concept of reality is the notion of "limited good." There is seldom enough of anything. By contrast, the hunter's world is more often rich in signs that guide toward a gifting destiny in a realm of alternatives and generous subsistence. Since they know nature well enough to appreciate how little they know of its enormous complexity, hunter-gatherers are engaged in a vast play of adventitious risk, hypostatized in gambling, a major leisure-time activity. Their myths are rich in the strangeness of life, its unexpected boons and encounters, its unanticipated penalties and mysterious rewards, not as arbitrary features but as enduring, infinitely complex structure. Gathering and hunting are a great, complex cosmology in which a numinous reality is mediated by wild animals. It is a zero-sum game, a matter of leaning toward harmony in a system which they disturb so little that its inter-species parities seem more influenced by intuition and rites than physical actions. Autonomous, subsistence farming or gardening shares much of this natural reverence for the biotic community and the satisfactions of light work schedules, hands-on routines, and sensitivity to seasonal cycles.

But agriculture, ancient and modern, is increasingly faced with a matter of winners and losers, dependence on single crops. Harmony with the world is sustained by enlarging the scope of human physical control or by rites of negotiation with sacred powers, such as sacrifice. The domesticated world reduces the immediate life forms of interest to a few score species which are dependent on human cultivation and care—just as the farmers see themselves, dependent on a master with human-like, often perverse actions. Theirs is a cosmos controlled by powers more or less like themselves, from local bureaucrats up through greedy princes to jealous gods. No wonder they prefer games of strategy and folktales in which the "animals," burlesques of their various persecutors, are outwitted by clever foxes like themselves. The world does not so much have parts as it has sides substructured as class. From simple to complex agriculture these increase in importance as kin connections diminish.

The transition from a relatively free, diverse, gentle subsistence to suppressed peasantry yoked to the metropole is a matter of record. The subsistence people clearly long for genuine contact with the non-human world, independence from the market and the basic satisfaction of a livelihood gained by their own hands. But this distinction among agricultures has its limits and was not apparently in mind when Chief Washakie of the Shoshones said, "God damn a potato." Sooner or later you get just what the Irish got after they thought they had rediscovered Eden in a spud skin.

We may ask whether there are not hidden imperatives in the books of Wendell Berry obscured by the portrayal of the moral quality, stewardship syndrome, and natural satisfactions of farm life. He seems to make the garden and barnyard equivalent to morality and esthetics and to relate it to monotheism and sexual monogamy, as though conjugal loyalty, husbandry, and a metaphysical principle were all one. And he is right. This identity of the woman with the land is the agricultural

[60] Jack M. Potter, *Peasant Society,* Little, Brown, Boston, 1967.

monument, where the environment is genderized and she becomes the means of productivity, reciprocity, and access to otherness, compressed in the central symbol of the goddess. When the subsistence base erodes this morality changes. Fanaticism about virginity, women as pawns in games of power, and their control by men as the touchstone of honor and vengeance has been clearly shown to be the destiny of sub-equatorial and Mediterranean agriculture.[61] Aldous Huxley's scorn of Momism is not popular today, but there are reasons to wonder whether the metaphors that mirror agriculture are not infantile.[62] (For hunter-gatherers the living metaphor is other species, for farmers it is mother, for pastoralists the father, for urban peoples it has become the machine.)[63]

In time, events and people seem to come back in new guise. I keep thinking that Wendell Berry is the second half-century's Louis Bromfield. Bromfield was a celebrated author and gentleman farmer, known for his conservation practices and the good life on his Ohio farm. He could prove the economic benefit of modern farming by his detailed ledgers. But it was his novels that made him wealthy, and the dirt farmers who were invited along with the celebrities to see his showplace could well ask, "Does Bromfield keep books or do the books keep Bromfield?"

Berry writes with great feeling about fresh air and water, good soil, the sky, the rhythms of the earth, and human sense in these things. But those were not invented by farmers. They are the heritage of the non-domesticated world. Much that is "good" in his descriptions does not derive from its husbandry but from the residual "wild" nature. He accepts Biblical admonishments about being God's steward, responsible for the care of the earth. None of the six definitions of "steward" in my dictionary mentions responsibility toward that which is managed. It refers to one who administers another's property, especially one in charge of the provisions; another way of saying that the world biomes need to be ruled, that nature's order must be imposed from the outside.

Alternatively, one could pick any number of Christian blue-noses, from popes to puritans and apostles to saints, who wanted nothing to do with nature and who were disgusted to think they were part of it. The best that can be said about Christianity from an ecological viewpoint is that the Roman church, in its evangelical lust for souls, is a leaky ship. Locally it can allow reconciliation of its own dogma with "pagan" cults, as when the Yucatan Indians were Christianized by permitting the continued worship of limestone sinks, or *cenotes,* making the Church truly catholic.[64] Similar blending may be seen in eccentrics like St. Francis or Wendell Berry, who voice a "tradition" that never existed.

The worst is difficult to choose, although its shadow may be discerned behind the figure of Berry himself in *The Unsettling of America*, humming his bucolic paeans to the land and clouds and birds as he sits astride a horse, his feet off the ground, on that domestic animal which more than any other symbolized and energized the worldwide pastoral debacle of the skinning of the earth, and the pastoralists' ideology of human dissociation from the earthbound realm. No wonder the horse is the end-of-the-world mount of Vishnu and Christ. As famine, death, and pestilence, it was the apocalyptic beast who carried Middle East sky-worship and the sword to thousands of hapless tribal peoples and farmers from India to Mexico.

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[61] Jane Schneider, "Of Vigilance and Virgins: Honor, Shame, and Access to Resources in Mediterranean Societies," *Ethnology* 10:1—24, 1971.

[62] Aldous Huxley, "Mother," *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow,* Harper and Row, New York, 1952.

[63] *Shepard,* Nature and Madness.

[64] Robert Redfield, *The Folk Cultures of Yucatan*, University of Chicago, Chicago, 1941.

Dealing with Death

Joseph Campbell, who clearly understood the hunter-gatherer life, tried to have it both ways. The hunters' rituals, he said (capitulating to the 19th century anthropological opinion that primitive religion is simply bad logic), tried to deny death by the pretense that a soul lived on. "But in the planting societies a new insight or solution was opened by the lesson of the plant world itself, which is linked somehow to the moon, which also dies and is resurrected and moreover influences, in some mysterious way still unknown, the lunar cycle of the womb."[65] The planters did indeed lock themselves to the fecundity and fate of annual grains (and their women to an annual pregnancy). But according to Alexander Marshack the moon's periodicity had long since been observed by hunters. In any case it was not seen by the early planters of the Near East as a plant but as a bull eaten by the lion sun.

Campbell regards sacrifice as the central rite of agriculture's big idea that the grain crop is the soul's metaphor. Sacrifice—the offering of fruit or grain, or the ritual slaughter of an animal or person—is a means of participating in the great round. But in agriculture participation turns into manipulation. The game changes from one of chance to one of strategy, from reading one's state of grace in terms of the hunt to bartering for it, from finding to making, from a sacrament received to a negotiator with anthropomorphic deities. This transition can be seen in a series of North Asian forms of the ceremony of the slain bear, from an egalitarian, *ad hoc* though traditional celebration of the wild kill as a symbolic acceptance of the given to the shaman-centered spectacle of the sacrifice of a captive bear in order to deflect evil from the village.[66]

The transition from bear hunt to bull slaughter has been traced by Tim Ingold.[67] Sacrifice does not seem to me to accommodate the "problem of death" but to domesticate it. It reverses the gift flow idea from receiving according to one's state of grace to bartering, from the animal example of "giving away" to the animal's blood as currency.

The changes that take place as people are forced from hunting-gathering to agriculture are not conjectural, but observed in recent times among the !Kung.[68] Their small-group egalitarian life vanishes beneath chiefdoms, children become excessively attached and more aggressive, there are more contagious diseases, poorer nourishment, more high blood pressure, earlier menarche, three times as many childbirths per woman, and a loss of freedom in every aspect of their lives.[69] The farmer remains lean if he is hungry, but otherwise his body loses its suppleness. One might well wonder who benefits from all this, and of course the answer is the landholders, middlemen, bureaucrats, white-collar workers, and corporations. It is their spokesmen who echo C. H. Brown's blithe view that "a major benefit of agriculture is that it supports population densities many times greater than those that can be maintained by a foraging way of life." He adds, "Of course, this benefit becomes a liability if broad crop failure occurs."[70] He does not say who bene-

[65] Joseph Campbell, *The Masks of God*, Viking Press, New York, 1959, vol. 1, p. 180.

[66] Paul Shepard and Barry Sanders, *The Sacred Paw*: *The Bear in Nature, Myth and Literature*, Viking Press, New York, 1985.

[67] Tim Ingold, "Hunting, Sacrifice, and the Domestication of Animals," in *The Appropriation of Nature*, University of Iowa Press, Iowa City, 1987.

[68] Kolata, op. cit.

[69] Patricia Draper, "Social and Economic Constraints on Child Life among the !Kung," in Lee and DeVore, *Kalahari Hunter Gatherers.*

[70] C. H. Brown, "Mode of Subsistence and Folk Biological Taxonomy," *Current Anthropology 26* (1): 43—53, 1985.

fits from the bigger population density, and he is wrong about the "if" of crop failure—it is only a matter of "when."

Today most of us live in cities but the left-over ideology of farming is the basis, ever since the Greek pastoral poets, Roman bucolics, and later the European rustic artists, of the nature fantasies of urban dwellers. Its images of a happy yeomanry and happy countryside are therapeutic to the abrasions of city life. This potato romance is not only one of celebrating humanity surrounded by genetic slaves and freaks, but of perceiving the vegetable world as a better metaphor. The heritable deformity of cows and dogs is inescapable while carrots and cereal grains seem fresh from the pristine hand of nature. This post-Neolithic dream lends itself, for example, to the recovery of the paradisiacal ecological relations of a no-meat diet.

The Vegetarians

The ethical-nutritional vegetarians, the zucchini-killers and drinkers of the dark blood of innocent soy beans, argue for quantity instead of quality. The Animal Aid Society's "Campaign to Promote the Vegetarian Diet" calculates that ten acres will feed two people keeping cattle, ten eating maize, twenty-four munching wheat, and sixty-one gulping soya.[71] The same space would probably support one or fewer hunter-gatherers. There is nothing wrong with their humane effort "toward fighting hunger in the Third World" of course, but what is life to be like for the sixty-one people and what do we do when there are 122 or 488? And what becomes of the Fourth World of tribal peoples or the Fifth World of non-human life?

The quantitative-mindedness links them philosophically with the nationalistic maximizers who assume that military advantage belongs to the most populous countries, with the politics of growth-economists and with the local greed for sales. Nutritionally, energy increase is no substitute for protein quality, nor adipose fats for the structural fats necessary for growth and repair, nor calories over immune system needs, or over the proportions of vitamins and essential minerals found in animal tissues.

Apart from their demographic and ecological short-sightedness, the vegetarians rightfully reject the fat-assed arrogance of piggish beefsteak-eaters, but they become slaves to protein hunger, by striving to get eight of the twenty amino acids that their own bodies cannot make and that meat contains in optimum amounts. The search leads to cereals and legumes, the first are low in lysine, the second in methionine. Humans with little or no meat must get combinations of legumes and grain (lentils and rice, rice and beans, corn and beans), and they must locate a substitute source for vitamin B-12, which comes from meat.

Just this side of the vegetarians are various degrees of meat eating, and the same chains of reasoning carry us from red to white meats and from meat to eggs and milk. Neither domestic cereals nor milk from hoofed animals are "natural" foods in an evolutionary sense; witness the high levels of immune reaction, cholesterol susceptibility, and the dietary complications from too much or too little milling of grains.

Except for a tiny minority, people everywhere, including farmers, prefer to eat meat, even when its quality has been reduced by domestication. Marvin Harris has summed up the evidence from ethnology and physiology: "Despite recent findings which link the over consumption of

[71] "Campaign to Promote the Vegetarian Diet," (leaflet), Animal Aid Society, Tonbridge, England, n.d.

animal fats and cholesterol to degenerative diseases in affluent societies, animal foods are more critical for sound nutrition than plant foods."[72]

Nutritionally, little detailed comparison has been made between domestic and wild meats. Long-chain fatty-acids, found only in meat, are necessary for brain development. These come from structural rather than adipose fat. You can get them in meat from the butcher, but domestic cattle often lack access to an adequate variety of seeds and leaves to make an optimum proportion of structural fats.[73] The latter are richest in wild meats.

Theories that attempt to center human evolution around something like the role of female chimpanzees or to link gathering with a gender-facilitated evolution by reference to the "vegetarian" diets of primates, neglect the protein-hunger of primates and their uptake of meat in insect and other animal materials. The argument that humans are physiologically "closer" to herbivory than to carnivory, somehow placing women closer to the center of human being, is a red herring based on a mistaken dichotomy. It simply ignores human omnivory, signified not only in food preferences but physiologically in the passage time of food in the gut (longer in herbivores because of the slow digestion of cellulose-rich and fibrous foods, shorter in carnivores). In humans it is half-length between gorillas and lions.

Among most tribal peoples most of the time meat comprises less than fifty percent of the total diet, the bulk being made up of a wide variety of fruits and vegetables. But meat is always the "relish" that makes the meal worthwhile, and close attention is always paid to the way meat is butchered and shared. Vegetarianism, like creationism, simply re-invents human biology to suit an ideology. There is no phylogenetic felicity in it.

As for the alternatives in turning from the cholesterol of domestic meats, not everything comes up yogurt. Many European restaurants now offer a separate menu of game animals (reared but not domesticated). S. Boyd Eaton and Marjorie Shostak, an M.D. and an anthropologist, comment, "The difference between our diet and that of our hunter-gatherer forebears may hold keys to many of our current health problems… If there is a diet natural to our human makeup, one to which our genes are still best suited, this is it."[74]

4. Cultural Evolution

The casual misuse of "evolution" in describing social change produced enough confusion to mislead generations of students. Every society was said to be evolving somewhere in a great chain of progress. Beginning in a Heart of Darkness in the individual and at the center of remote forests humankind advanced to ethics, democracy, morality, art, and the other benefits of civilization. This ladder probably still represents the concept of the past for most modern, educated people. It is a direct heritage of the Enlightenment and its industrial science, its spectatorship (as in the art museum or at the play), elitism, and the cult of the *polis*.

Recently there have appeared new versions of lifeways that refute a universal yearning toward civilization, from savagery through nomadic pastoralism and various agricultures to a pin-

[72] Marvin Harris, *Sacred Cow, Abominable* Pig, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1985,p.22.

[73] Robert Allen, "Food for Thought," *The Ecologist*, January, 1975.

[74] Stanley Boyd Eaton and Marjorie Shostak, "Fat Tooth Blues," *Natural History* 95 (6), July, 1986.

nacle of urban existence.[75] The revised version also denies a hierarchy of inherent physical or mental differences among the peoples of different economies.

One modified view presents us with shifts in which societies are compelled to change not so much as an advance as a result of circumstances beyond their control—increased population density and the struggle for power and space. It offers a "circumscription theory." Societies at the denser demographic end show a hierarchical, imperial domain and the loss of local autonomy in which symbols of participation in the larger system replace real participation for the individual. Such societies subjugate or are conquered by others.

In a recent book Allen Johnson and Timothy Earle cite specific examples from first to last.[76] They begin with a description of hunting-gathering at the family-level of economy, characterizing them as low in population density, making personal tools, engaged in annual rhythms of social aggregation and dispersion, informally organized with *ad hoc* leadership, collectively hunting large game, lightly assuming tasks of gathering, without territoriality or war, and with numerous alternatives in "managing risk."

Such easy-going societies continue with minor introduction of domestic plants and animals, at the same time consciously resisting life in denser structures. In villages, however, men begin to fight over "the means of reproduction" and depart from the "modesty and conviviality" found in family-level societies. As "geographical circumscription" closes around them, leaving nowhere to go, there is more bullying, impulsive aggression, revenge, and territoriality. "Scarcity of key resources" and war become "a threat to the daily lives" of these horticulturalists and pig-raisers. As the economy "evolves" the "domestication of people into interdependent social groups and the growth of political economy are thus closely tied to competition, warfare and the necessity of group defense."

As villages get bigger, Johnson and Earle continue, "Big Man" power appears, ceremonial life shifts from cosmos-focused family activity to public affirmation of political rank. Dams and weirs and slaves and food surplus and shortage management occupy the leaders. But "the primary cause of organization elaboration appears to be defensive needs." Among typical yam-growers of the South Pacific "half a mile beyond a person's home lies an alien world fraught with sudden death."

Meanwhile, the pastoralists also "evolve." Their lives are increasingly centralized under patriarchal systems based on "friends" who "help spread the risk" of resource depletion and defense needs. As cattle become currency, raiding and banditry increase in a "highly unpredictable environment." Chiefdoms are subordinated by greater chiefs, who allocate pasture and travel lanes, manage "disagreement resolution" locally, and negotiate alliances and conflict externally. Life is lived in camp, i.e., "a small nucleus of human warmth surrounded by evil." Their equivalents in sedentary towns are concerned with crop monocultures and massive tasks of "governing redistribution," regulating the bureaucracy and management of field use and irrigation works.

When we get to the first true or archaic states, vassalage, standing armies, and taxes make their appearance. "Social circumscription" is added to geographical circumscription. Religion and staple food storage are centralized. As the state matures the peasants emerge with "no end of disagreement and even disparagement" among themselves. They often "live so close to the

[75] Daniel, op. cit.

[76] Allen W Johnson and Timothy Earle, *The Evolution of Human Societies*: *From Foraging Group to Agrarian State,* Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1987.

margin of survival that they visibly lose weight in the months before harvest." As we approach the modern state the authors say, "peasant economics provide a less satisfactory subsistence than the others we have examined," with poor diet, undernourishment, extreme competition, and a meager security experienced as vulnerability to markets controlled from the outside or the arbitrary will of patrons.

Johnson and Earle conclude, at the end of this long road to a "regional polity," that the record is one of endless rounds of population increase and "intensification," producing societies symbolized by their dependence on "starchy staples." All hail the potato.

The authors are careful to remain mere observers. If a book can have a straight face while taking off civilization's pants, here is a wonderful irony, although probably a competent synthesis of the record. Yet euphemisms and semi-technical phrases abound. For "diminished resources" one should read "collapse of life support" or "failed ecosystems." For "local slave management" read "tyranny," for "risk management" simply "debacle." The increasing need for "defense" is frequently mentioned, but who is doing all the offense? How casually and with value-free candor we move from many options in "risk management" to few, from personal tools to work schedules, from ad-hoc leadership to hierarchies of chiefs. Little is said about children, women, the source of slaves, the loss of forests and soil, the scale of tensions between farmers and pastoralists. One has to interpolate the relevant changes in the role and status of women, the lives of children, or the condition of the non-human fellow-beings. The book seems to achieve its objective of combining "economic anthropology and cultural ecology," making disaster humdrum and so inevitable. The recitation of the "evolution of culture" in such expressionless fashion is in fact enormously effective, for the authors seem oblivious to the horrors they describe. I am reminded of academics who reply to descriptions of the biotic costs of civilization with murmurings about how difficult life would be for them without Beethoven, cathedrals, and jurisprudence. But then, it was a tiny elite who benefitted from this "evolution" all along, and I suppose that they can easily imagine that others, in their benighted state, cannot possibly appreciate the gains.

For twenty years my students and colleagues have responded to this scenario by asking why people changed if the old way was better, and then refuse to believe that the majority were compelled by centralized force in which power and privilege motivated the few. Zvelebil says, "The stubborn persistence of foraging long after it 'should' have disappeared is one of the qualities that is contributing to a fundamental reassessment of post-glacial hunting and gathering."

The idea of cultural change as a paradoxical "development" can also be seen in a comparison of American Indian tribes. John Berry and Robert Annis studied differences in six northern Indian tribes using George Murdock's classifications of culture types, "a broad ecological dimension running from agricultural and pastoral interactions with the environment through to hunting and gathering interactions." They describe a corresponding psychological differentiation, defined along this axis.

Agriculture tends to be associated with high food accumulation, population density, social stratification, and compliance. At the other end of the series are the low food accumulators—hunter-gatherers—with a high sense of personal identity, social independence, emphasis on assertion and self-reliance, high self-control, and low social stratification. Berry and Annis see these differences in terms of "cognitive style," "affective style," and "perceptual style."[77] These studies

[77] John W Berry and Robert C. Annis, "Ecology, Culture and Psychological; Differentiation," *International Journal of Psychology* 9: 173—93, 1974.

are consistent with the work of Robert Edgerton, who found distinct personality differences between farmers and pastoralists.[78]

What we come to is an uneasy sense of economic determinism. There is a profound similarity of hunter-gatherers everywhere. This convergence demonstrates the niche-like effect of a way of life. The possibilities for human cultural mixtures can be seen in the variety of peoples in the modern world. There seems to be no end to the anthropological exploration of their differences. Still, the surprising thing is not their dissimilarity but the extent of common style. Something enormously powerful binds living hunter-gatherers to those of the past and to modern sportsmen.

They are all engaged in a game of chance amid heterogeneous, exemplary powers rather than in collective strategies of accumulation and control. Their metaphysics conceives a living, sentient, and dispersed comity whose main features are given in narrations that are outside History. Their mood is assent. Their lives are committed to the understanding of a vast semiosis, presented to them on every hand, in which they are not only readers but participants. The hunt becomes a kind of search gestalt. The lifelong test and theme is "learning to give away" what was a gift received in the first place.

There are also convergent likenesses among subsistence farmers, pastoralists, and urban peoples. The economic constraints seem to transcend religions and ethnic differences, to surpass the unique effects of history, to overstep ideology and technology. The philosophies as well as the material cultures of otherwise distant peoples who have similar ecologies seem to converge.

5. Wilderness and Wildness

Wilderness

How are we to translate the question of the hunt into the present? One road leads to the idea of wilderness, the sanctuaries or sacrosanct processes of nature preserved.

The idea of wilderness—both as a realm of purification outside civilization and as a place of beneficial qualities—has strong antecedents in the Western world. In spite of the recent national policies of designating wilderness areas, the idea of solace, naturalness, nearness to fundamental metaphysical forces, escape from cities, access to ruminative solitude, and locus of test, trial, and special visions—all these extend Biblical traditions. As for wildness, I suppose that most people today would say that wilderness is where wildness is, or that wildness is an aspect of the wilderness.

Wilderness is a place you go for a while, an escape to or from. It is a departure into a kind of therapeutic land management, a release from our crowded and overbuilt environment, an esthetic balm, healing to those who sense the presence of the disease but who may have confused its cause with the absence of the therapy. More importantly, we describe it to ourselves in a language invented by art critics, and we take souvenirs of our experience home as photographs. Typically, the lovers of wilderness surround themselves with pictures of mountains or forests or swamps which need not be named or even known, for they are types of scenery. But it is emphatically not scenery which is involved in either the ceremonies of Aborigines or the experience of the hermit saints. Something has intervened between them and the *zeitgeist* of the calendar picture. That something is the invention of landscape.

[78] Robert Edgerton, *The Individual in Cultural Adaptation,* University of California, Los Angeles, 1971.

Wilderness remains for me a problematic theme, intimately associated in the modern mind with landscape. It is a scene through which spectators pass as they would the galleries of a museum. Art historians attribute the origins of landscape (in the Occident) to 16th century perspective painters, but I find a strange analogy to the descriptions of Mesolithic art, where "we are evidently approaching a historical sense… The tiny size of these paintings is something of a shock after the Paleolithic. The immediate impression is of something happening at a great distance, watched from a vantage-point which may be a little above the scene of the action. This weakens the viewer's sense of participating in what is going forward. There is something of a paradox here, for in the graphic art of the paleolithic, though man was seldom shown, he was the invisible participant in everything portrayed, while now that he has moved into the canvas and become a principal, there is a quite new detachment and objectivity about his portrayal."[79] In other words, the first appearance of genre and perspective in pictorial art is Neolithic, and probably expresses a new sense of being outside nature. Something like modern landscape reappears later in Roman mosaics, prior to its rediscovery by Renaissance art, and I take this as evidence of renewed "distancing" and an expression of the Classical rationality that made possible the straight roads across Europe, based on survey rather than old trails.

I owe to David Lowenthall and Marshall McLuhan a debt for diverting me from writing and thinking about wilderness. Graduate work on the history of landscape, published as *Man in the Landscape,* left me susceptible to McLuhan's devastating analysis of 17th century science and art. Linear/mathematical thinking and the representation of places as esthetic objects distanced the observer from rather than connected him to his surroundings.[80] The place was framed. This was the esthetic origin of pictorial vision, of which wilderness is a subject matter.

Lowenthall did not describe so much as embody the humanist position, in which the "love of nature" is understood as an esthetic experience, and any esthetic is a "congeries of feelings," a cultural ripple that can come and go in the dynamics of taste and fashion.[81] Lowenthall is wrong. He misunderstands the truly radical aspect of romanticism, misconstruing it as esthetic or iconographic rather than an effort to reintegrate cognition and feeling in an organic paradigm. But he may be right about landscape. It was the means of perceiving nature according to criteria established by art criticism, the avenue of "landscape" by which people "entered" nature as they did a picture gallery. As long as pictures were regarded as representations, the enthusiasm for landscape could still penetrate all areas of culture, in spite of the estrangement described by McLuhan. By the end of the 19th century the art world moved on to non-objectivity, leaving wilderness with the obsolescence and superficiality with which Lowenthall confused it.

The landscape cannot escape its origins as an objectifying perception, although it may be misused as a synonym for place, terrain, ecosystem, or environment. Photos of it are surrealistic in the sense that they empty the subject of intimate context. As pictures age they add layers of a cold impulse like growing crystals, making the subject increasingly abstract, subjecting real events to a drifting, decadent attention. When 19th century painters discovered photography they were freed, as Cezanne said, from literature and subject matter. Susan Sontag has it right about surrealism: disengagement and estrangement. It is, she says, a separation that enables us to examine dispassionately old photographs of suffering people.[82] It is a form of schizophrenia,

[79] N. K. Sandars, *Prehistoric Art in Europe,* Penguin, Baltimore, pp. 95—96.

[80] Marshall McLuhan, *Through the Vanishing Point,* Harper and Row, New York, 1968.

[81] David Lowenthall, "Is Wilderness Paradise Now?" *Columbia University Forum 7* (2),1964.

[82] Susan Sontag, *On Photography,* Dell, New York, 1973.

a final effect of splitting art from its origins in religion. It becomes seeing for its own sake, what Bertram Lewin has called "neurotic scopophilia."[83] To this I add the photography of nature, which anti-hunters want to substitute for killing and eating. Pictures of nature exactly embody what is meant by wilderness as opposed to that wildness which I kill and eat because I, too, am wild.

Wildness

Thank God Thoreau did not say, "In wilderness is the preservation of the world." Wildness, ever since Starker Leopold's research on heritable wildness in wild turkeys in the mid-1940s and Helen Spurway's "The Causes of Domestication,"[84] has for me an objective reality, or at least a degree of independence from arbitrary definitions.

Wildness occurs in many places. It includes not only eagles and moose and their environments but house sparrows, cockroaches, and probably human beings—any species whose sexual assortment and genealogy are not controlled by human design. Spurway, Konrad Lorenz's observation on the bodily and behavioral forms of domesticated animals, and the genetics of zoo animals provide substance to the concept. The loss of wildness that results in the heritable, blunted, monstrous surrogates for species, so misleading because the plants and animals which seem to be there have gone, are like sanity's mask in the benign visage of a demented friend.

What then is the wild human? Who is it? Savages? Why … it is us! says Claude Lévi-Strauss. The savage mind is our mind.[85] Along with our admirable companions and fellow omnivores, the brown rat, raccoon, and crow, not yet deprived of the elegance of native biology by breeding management, it is us! Some among us may be deformed by our circumstances, like obese raccoons or crowded rats, but as a species we have in us the call of the wild.

It is a call corrupted not only by domestication but by the conventions of nature esthetics. The corporate world would destroy wildness in a trade for wilderness. Its intent is to restrict the play of free and selfish genes, to establish a dichotomy of places, to banish wild forms to enclaves where they may be encountered by audiences while the business of domesticating the planet proceeds. The savage DNA will be isolated and protected as esthetic relicts, as are the vestiges of tribal peoples. This includes the religious insights of wild cultures, whose social organization represents exotic or vestigial stages in "our" history or "evolution," their ecological relations translated into museum specimens of primeval economics. My wildness according to this agenda is to be experienced on a reservation called a wilderness, where I can externalize it and look at it.

Instead my wildness should be experienced in the growing of a self that incorporates my identity in places. See Fred Myer, Roy Rappaport, D. H. Stanner, or Gary Snyder on the way the self exists in resonance with specific events in particular places among Australian peoples.[86] The Australian outback is not a great two dimensional space, not a landscape, but a pattern of connections, lived out by walking, ritually linking the individual in critical passages to sacred

[83] Bertram Lewin, *The Image and the Past,* I.U.P., New York, 1968.

[84] Spurway, op. cit., 1968.

[85] Lévi-Strauss, op. cit., 1968.

[86] Fred Myer, *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self,* Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., 1986. Myer is following a path laid out by A. Irving Hallowell. For example see Hallowell, "Self, Society, and Culture in Phylogenetic Perspective," in Sol Tax, ed., *The Evolution of Man,* Aldine, Chicago, 1961.

places and occasions, so that they become part of an old story. To be so engaged is like a hunger for meat, irreducible to starches, the wild aspect of ourselves.

Wild Versus Domestic Metaphysics

The bones I sometimes think I have to pick with Gary Snyder are surely those remaining from a shared hunt and meal, pieces to be mulled over—to mull, from a root word meaning "to grind" or "to pulverize" which I take to mean that we are sitting at a fire together, breaking femurs to get at the marrow or the pith.

He has said that the intent of American Indian spiritual practice is not cosmopolitan. "Its content perhaps is universal, but you must be a Hopi to follow the Hopi way." A dictum that all of us in the rag-tag tribe of the "Wanta-bes" should remember. And he has said, "Otherworldly philosophies end up doing more damage to the planet (and human psyches) than the existential conditions they seek to transcend."[87] But he also refers to Jainism and Buddhism as models, putting his hand into the cosmopolitan fire, for surely those are two of those great, placeless, portable, world religions whose ultimate concerns are not just universal but otherworldly. Yet, without quite understanding why, from what I have seen of his personal life, there is no contradiction. I suspect that Snyder in the Sierra Nevada, like Berry in Kentucky and Wes Jackson in the Kansas prairie, is not so much following tradition but doing what Joseph Campbell called "creative mythology."

When I am sometimes discouraged by the thought that Gary Snyder has already said everything that needs to be said, as in, for instance, "Good, Wild, Sacred,"[88] I reawaken my independence of spirit by thinking of his faith in agriculture and Buddhism, even though in reality he carefully qualifies both. No matter how benign small-scale garden-horticulture may be, at its center is the degenerating process of domestication, the first form of genetic engineering. Domestication is the regulated alteration of the genomes of organisms, making them into slaves that cannot be liberated, like comatose patients hooked without reprieve to the economic machine.

As for coma, the excessive use of slave animals in experimental laboratories, their fecundating overspill as pets into city streets, and their debasement in factory farms has generated the "humane" movement, the dream of animal rights groups that by kindness or legislation you can liberate enslaved species. The clearest analogy is the self-satisfied, affectionate care of slaves by many pre-Civil War gentry. In our time, a huge, terrible yearning has come into the human heart for the Others, the animals who nurture us now as from our beginnings. Our gratitude to them is deep—so deep that it is subject to the pathologies of our crowded lives. In our wild hunger for the recovery of animal presence we have made and given names to pets, moulded their being after our cultural emphasis on individuals. Our hunting past tells us that the species is the "individual," each animal the occasion of the species' soul. Our humane movement personalizes them instead, losing sight of the species and its ecology. Worse, that self-proclaimed "kindness" marks the collapse of a metaphor central to human consciousness, replacing it with the metonymy of touch-comfort; hence the new jargon of "animal companion" for pet in the new wave of "animal facilitated therapy." It is a massive, industrial effort among an amalgam of health workers, veterinarians, pet food manufacturers, and institutions. The effects of the therapy are undoubtedly

[87] Gary Snyder, "On 'Song of the Taste,' " The Recovery of the Commons Project, Bundle #1, North San Juan, Califonia, n.d.

[88] Gary Snyder, "Good, Wild, Sacred," *The Co-Evolution Quarterly,* Fall, 1983.

genuine, but its "cognitive style" connects at one end with the hair-splitting philosophical rationality of the animal ethicists and at the other with the maudlin neuropath keeping thirty cats in a three-room city house—an abyssal chaos of purposes and priorities.

The lack of ecological concern in almost all animal ethics is strangely similar to that "embarrassed silence" in anthropology—the posture of detached respect by which all ethnic rites are interpreted as serving social and symbolic functions for an erroneous religion. Animal ethics comes from the same Greek source as all our philosophy, passionately reasoning but grounded in detachment and skepticism. There seems to be no real feeling there for the living world. They simply do not ask whether the Holy Hunt might indeed be so.

As for killing animals to eat, in *The Tender Carnivore* I suggested, taste buds and tongue in cheek, that in an overpopulated world we could free the animals, including ourselves, make hunting possible, and terminate the domestication of multicellular life by eating oil-sucking microbes (which is entirely feasible). To my surprise I find that this is our direction, in our yogurt and cheese rush to avoid killing "higher" animals by substituting down a chain of being, killing asparagus instead of cows or yeasts instead of asparagus. But there is no escape from the reality that life feeds by death-dealing (and its lesson in death-receiving). The way "out" of the dilemma is into it, a way pioneered for us in the play of sacred trophism, the gamble of sacramental gastronomy, central myths of gifts, and chance, the religious context of eating in which the rules are knowing the wild forms who are the game. You cannot sit out the game, but must personally play or hide from it.

This brings us back to Buddhism. I remain a skeptical outsider, unnerved by the works of Gary Snyder and Alan Watts, whose combined efforts I consider to be a possible library on how to live. Still, the Hindus disdained Buddhism when they discovered how abstract and imageless it was, how shorn of group ceremony, the guiding insights of gifted visionaries, and the demonstrable respect for life forms represented in their multitudinous pantheon. The Hindus at least saw personal existence as a good many slices of *dharma* in a variety of species before the individual finally escaped into the absolute, while the Buddhists argued that all you needed was the right discipline and you could exit pronto.

The Buddhists' contemporaries and fellow travelers, the Jains, famous for *ahimsa* (harmlessness), are familiarly portrayed moving insects from the footpath. But this is not because they love life or nature. The Jains are revolted by participation in the living stream and want as little as possible to do with the organic bodies, which are like tar pits, trapping and suffocating the soul. Historically, it would appear that both Buddhists and Jains got something from the Aryans who brought their high-flying earth-escaping gods from Middle East pastoralism. In the face of these invasions, the Hindus and their unzippered polytheism survived best in the far south of India where the Western monotheists penetrated least.

At a more practical level, everywhere the "world" religions have gone the sacred forests, springs, and other "places" and their wild inhabitants have vanished. The disappearance of respect for local earth-shrines is virtually a measure of the impact of the other-worldly beliefs.

Can there be a world religion of bioregions, a universal philosophy of place, an inhabitation of planet Earth with plural, local autonomy?

Perception as the Dance of Congruity

Rene Dubos once observed that humans can adapt (via culture) to "starless skies, treeless avenues, shapeless buildings, tasteless bread, joyless celebrations, spiritualess pleasures—to a life without reverence for the past, love for the present, or poetical anticipations of the future. Yet it is questionable that man can retain his physical and mental health if he loses contact with the natural forces that have shaped his biological and mental nature."[89] But, unless these "forces" are the characteristics he mentions, what are they? His list is made up entirely of acts within a social and cultural milieu, by customary definition not "natural." Something "natural" looms behind all this, mediated by culture.

Dubos' statement is preceded by the observation that the human genetic makeup was stabilized 100,000 years ago. He quotes Lewis Mumford, "If man had originally inhabited a world as blankly uniform as a 'high rise' housing development, as featureless as a parking lot, as destitute of life as an automated factory, it is doubtful that he would have had a sufficiently varied experience to retain images, mold language or acquire ideas."[90]

What is this something natural necessary to become cultural? What is between culture and nature, betwixt the phenomenal or palpable world and the conceptual and ceremonial expressions of it? Connecting the cognition and the outer world is the event/structure, linking entity and environment. It is perception, the pre-cognitive act, mostly unconscious, which directs attention, favors preferences, governs sensory emphasis, gives infrastructure. Lee and Ong's distinctions between an "acoustical event world" and the "hypervisual culture" is just such a prior mode, giving primordial design to experience, limiting but not formulating the concepts and enactments by which events are represented.[91] Phonetic alphabet, pictorial space, and Euclidean theory are not only ideas and formulas, but frames supporting a kind of liminal foreknowledge of assumptions and inclinations.

Emphasis on perception does not mean that we shape our own worlds irrespective of a reality, or that one person's perceptual process is as reliable as another's. Perception is not another word for taste. In this, says Morris Berman, it transcends "the glaring blind spot of Buddhist philosophy."[92] Its truest expression "by test" (my criteria: quality of life; ecological integrity) in the world is the empirical effect of its contiguity. It is the process of the first steps of directed attention and vigilance. Perceptual habit is style in the sense that Margaret Mead once used the term, to mean a pattern of movement and sensitivity, the lively net of predisposition emerging from our early grounding, finally affecting every aspect of one's expressive life. In our wild aspect such unconscious presentations are centered in dance and narration, surrounded by innumerable and wonderfully varied moral and esthetic presences. It presents us with an intuition of rich diversity whose "forces" are purposeful and sentient. From Dubos' treeless avenues to Mumford's parking lot, it is not a view that is absent, or things or wilderness. It is a way of expecting and

[89] Rene Dubos, "Environmental Determinants of Human Life," in David C. Glass, ed., *Environmental Influences,* Rockland University Press, 1968.

[90] Ibid., quoted from Lewis Mumford, *The Myth of the Machine,* Harcourt Brace, New York, 1966. Mumford probably got it from Loren Eiseley's "Man of the Future" in *The Immense Journey.*

[91] Walter J . Ong, "orld as View and World as Event," *American Anthropologist* 71:634—47. Dorothy Lee, "Codifications of Reality: Lineal and Non-Lineal," *Psychosomatic Medicine* 12 (2), 1969.

[92] Morris Berman, "he Roots of Reality" (a review of Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varelas, *The Tree of Knowledge*), *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 29:277—84, 1989.

experiencing, encountering inhabitance by a vast congregation of others unlike us, yet, like our deepest selves, wild.

6. The Mosaic

We must now close the circle to that sweeping, four-word dictum which is intended to close the door on access to the primitive: "You can't go back."

The Structural Dimension

The hereditary material is organized as a linked sequence of separable genes and chromosomes. This genome is a mosaic of harmonious but distinct entities. This structure makes possible the mutation of specific traits and the independent segregation of traits, the accumulation of multiple factors, and both the hiding and expression of genes.

The structure of the natural community, the ecosystem, is likewise an integrated whole composed of distinct species populations and their niches. The fundamental concept of modern biology is its primary characteristic as a composite of linked and harmonious but separable parts. The whole is neither the sum of its parts nor independent of any of them. As with genes, substitutions occur. A given species can be totally removed by extirpation or introduced into new communities. Witness for example the constitution of the prairie without the buffalo and the continuity of ecosystems after the successful introduction of the starling into North America.

Human culture, being genetically framed and ecologically adapted, is also an integrated conglomerate. Stories, dances, tools, and goods are sometimes completely lost from a society At others they move from culture to culture, sometimes trailing bits of the context from which they come, sometimes arriving rough-edged and isolate, but being assimilated, modified or not, as a part of the new whole.

There is a common characteristic of each of the above examples from the genome of the individual, the material or expressive culture of a people, and the tapestry of the natural environment. The specific entity involves both a distinct portability and a working embeddedness. The reality is more complex but the principle is true: the capacity for a part to be transferred. It is then part of a new whole. The rest of the totality adjusts, the organism accommodates, the niche system stretches or contracts, the culture is modified.

Societies and cultures are mosaics. They are componential. Their various elements, like genes and persons, can be disengaged from the whole. Contemporary life is in fact just such an accumulation representing elements of different ages and origins, some of which will disappear, as they entered, at different times than others. The phrase "You cannot go back" can only mean that you cannot recreate an identical totality but it does not follow that you cannot incorporate components.

"You can't go back" is therefore a disguise for several assumptions, which in turn may hide ways of perceiving or preconstructing experience. One is the paradigm of uni-direction, the idea that time and circumstances are linear. Yet we "go back" with each cycle of the sun, each turning of the globe. Each new generation goes back to already existing genes, from which each individual comes forward in ontogeny, repeating the life cycle. While it is true that you may not run the ontogeny backwards, you cannot avoid its replays of an ancient genome, just as human embryology follows a pattern derived from an ancestral fish. Most of the "new" events in each

individual life are only new within a certain genetic octave and only in their combinations. New genes do occur, but the tempo of their emergence is in the order of scores of thousands of years. The difference between the genomes of chimpanzees and humans is about one percent. Of the 146 amino acids of the Beta chain of blood hemoglobin the gorilla differs from humans at one site, the pig at ten, the horse at twenty-six.[93]

A paradox is evident: newness yet sameness; repetition and novelty, past and present. Recall that the historical consciousness of the West rejects this as illusory ambiguity. The rejection is a characteristic perceptual habit. In tribal life, such matters of identity ambiguity are addressed ritually in the use of animal masks and mimetic dances, on the grounds that we are both animal and human, a matter "understood" by certain animal guides. Genes are not only "how-to" information but are mnemonic, that is, memories. Ceremonies recall. The reconciliation of our own polytheistic zoological selfhood is inherent in our ritualized, sensuous assent of multiple truth. It denies the contradiction, abolishes the either-or dichotomy in the simultaneous multitude that we are. Our primitive legacy is the resolution of contradiction by affirmation of multiplicity, plurality, and change.

In advocating the "primitive" we seem to be asking someone to give up everything, or to sacrifice something: sophistication, technology, the lessons and gains of History, personal freedom, and so on. But some of these are not "gains" so much as universal possessions, reified by a culture which denies its deeper heritage. "Going back" seems to require that a society reconstruct itself totally, especially that it strip its modern economy and reengage in village agriculture or foraging, hence is judged to be functionally impossible. But that assumption misconstrues the true mosaic of both society and nature, which are composed of elements that are eminently dissectible, portable through time and space, and available.

You can go out or back to a culture even if its peoples have vanished, to retrieve a mosaic component, just as you can transfer a species that has been regionally extirpated, or graft healthy skin to a burned spot from a healthy one. The argument that modem hunting-gathering societies are not identical to paleolithic peoples is beside the point. It may be true that white, ex-Europeans cannot become Hopis or Kalahari Bushmen or Magdalenian bison-hunters, but removable elements in those cultures can be recovered or recreated, which fit the predilection of the human genome everywhere.

Three Important, Recoverable Components: The Affirmation of Death, Vernacular Gender, and Fulfillled Ontogeny

Our modern culture or "mosaic" is an otherworldly monotheism littered with the road kills of species. Road kills—such trivial death contrasts sharply to that other death in which circumspect humans kill animals in order to eat them as a way of worship.

This ancient, sacramental trophism is as fundamental to ourselves as to our ancestors and distant cousins. The great metaphysical discovery by the cynegetic world was cyclicity. It emerged in the context of the rites of death, both human and animal, as part of this flow. It is as old as the Neanderthal observation of hibernating bears as models of life given and recovered, and as new as Aldo Leopold's story "Odyssey"in *A Sand County Almanac* telling of an atom from a dead buffalo moving through the chain of photosynthesis, predation, decay, and mineralization. These

[93] Emile Zuckenkandle, *Scientific American* 212: 63, 1960.

concepts are about the nutritional value of meat in human metabolism as a reflection of a larger "metabolism," and about the gift of human consciousness in a sentient world in which food-giving symbolizes connectedness. Animals on the medicine wheel of the Plains Indians were said to be those that know how to "give away." "'Each dot I have made with my finger in the dirt is an animal,' said White Rabbit. 'There is no one of any of the animals in this world that can do without the next. Each whole tribe of animals is a Medicine Wheel, in that it is the One Mind. Each dot on the Great Wheel is a tribe of animals. And parts of these tribes must Give-Away in order that they all might grow. The animal tribes all know of this. It is only the tribes of People who are the ones who must learn it."[94]

William Arrowsmith, observing that in our time "we cannot abide the encounter with the 'other,'... We do not teach children Hamlet or Lear because we want to spare them the brush with death... A classicist would call this disease *hybris*... The opposite of *hybris* is *sophrosyne*. This means 'the skill of mortality.'"[95] It is the obverse side of the "giving away" coin, the way of momentarily being White Rabbit, reminding the human hunter that he too once was a prey and, in terms of the cosmic circling-back, still is.

The difficult question of interspecies ethics centers on death-dealing. Death is the great bugaboo. How we resent its connection to food—and to life—and repress the figure of the dying animal. Gary Snyder's reply: "All of nature is a gift-exchange, a potluck banquet, and there is no death that is not somebody's food, no life that is not somebody's death. Is this a flaw in the universe? A sign of the sullied condition of being? 'Nature red in tooth and claw'? Some people read it this way, leading to a disgust with self, with humanity, and with life itself. They are on the wrong fork of the path."

Joseph Campbell has argued rightly that death was a great metaphysical problem for hunters, and concluded wrongly that it was solved by planters with their sacrifices to forces governing the annual sprouting of grain. But it was control, not acquiescence to this great round, that the agriculturalists sought. In the Neolithic, says Wilhelm Dupre, "The individual no longer stands as a whole vis-à-vis the life-community in the sense that the latter finds its realization through a total integration of the individual—as is the case by and large under the conditions of a gathering and hunting economy."[96]

"Hunters" is an appropriate term for a society in which meat, the best of foods, signifies the gift of life, the obtaining and preparation of which ritualizes the encounter of life and death, in which the human kinship with animals is faced in its ambiguity, and the quest of all elusive things is experienced as the hunt's most emphatic metaphor.

Vernacular Gender

And so we bring to and from the mosaic of lifeways the hunt itself. Some feminists object that too much is made of it. But they misunderstand this killing of animals as an exercise of vanity, which they see as characteristic of patriarchy. They note that only a third of the diet is meat, the rest from plants, mostly gathered by women, as though there were a contest to see who really supports the society. In this they merely reverse the sexist view. Like so much of extremist feminism it is just a new "me first." They point out that in most hunting-gathering

[94] Hyemeyohsts Storm, *Storm Arrows,* Harper and Row, New York, 1972.
[95] William Ayres Arrowsmith, "Hybris and Sophrosyne," *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine, July,* 1970.
[96] William Dupre, *Religion in Primitive Cultures,* Mouton, The Hague, 1975, p. 327.

societies the women gather most of the food that is eaten. This view has the same myopia as that of the vegetarians—the tendency to quantify food value in calories. In any case they are wrong, as meat is so much higher in energy that the net energy gained from hunting is as great as that from gathering.[97]

While it is true that the large, dangerous mammals are usually hunted by men in hunting-gathering societies, it has never been claimed that women only pluck and men only kill. The centrality of meat, the sentient and spiritual beings from whom it comes, and the diverse activities in relationship to the movement of meat and the animal's numinous presence through the society, entail a wide range of roles, many of which are genderized. Insofar as the animal eaten is available because it has learned "to give away," there is no more virtue in the actual chase or killing than the transformation of its skin into a garment, the burying of its bones, the drumming that sustains the dancers of the mythical hunt, or the dandling of infants in such a society as the story of the hunt is told.

Meat, says Konner, is only thirty percent of the !Kung diet, but it equals the nutritional value of the plant foods and produces eighty percent of the excitement, not only during the hunt but in group life. The metaphysics of meat. The hunt itself is a continuum, from its first plan to its storied retelling, from the metaphors on food chains to prayers of apology, this carnivory takes nothing from woman, though it clarifies the very different meaning that different kinds of foods have in expressive culture. Broadly understood, the hunt refers to the larger quest for the way, the pursuit of meaning and contact with a sentient part of the environment, and the intuition that nature is a language. Hunting is a special case of gathering.

A critical dimension of the hunt is the confrontation with death and the incorporation of substance in new life, in all forms of sharing and giving away. Women are traditionally regarded as keepers of the mystery of death-as-the-genesis-of-life, hence the hunt is clearly connected with feminine secrets and powers, and we are not surprised to see Artemis and her other avatars, the archaic "Lady of the Beasts," and the Paleolithic female figurines in sanctuaries where the walls are painted with hunted game. More value is placed on men than women only as the hunt is perverted by sexism and war. Indeed, it is possible that sexism comes into being with the doting on fertility and fecundity in agriculture and the androgenous "reply" of nomadic, male dominated societies of pastoralism.

Hunting has never excluded women, whose lives are as absorbed in the encounter with animals, alive and dead, as those of men. If in some societies the practices of vernacular gender tend more often to relegate to the men the pursuit of large, dangerous game, it relegates to the women the role of singing the spirit of the animal a welcome, and to them the discourse at the hearth where she is the host. Roles and duties are divided, but not to make inequality. Among the Sharanahua of South America, the women, being sometimes meat-hungry, send off the men to hunt and sing the hunters to their task. They are commonly believed to transform men into hunters. Janet Siskind says, "The social pressure of the special hunt, the line of women painted and waiting, makes young men try hard to succeed." Women also hunt. Gathering, like hunting, is a light-hearted affair done by both men and women. The stable sexual politics of the Sharanahua, "based on mutual social and economic dependence, allows for the open expression of hostility," a

[97] Kevin T. Jones, "Hunting and Scavenging by Early Hominids: A Study in Archaeological Method and Theory," Ph.D. Thesis, University of Utah, 1984.

combination of solidarity and antagonism that "prevents the households from becoming tightly closed units."[98]

Martin Whyte, comparing "cultural features in terms of their evolutionary sequence," concluded that as civilization evolves, "women tend to have less domestic authority, less independent solidarity with other women, more unequal sexual restrictions and perhaps receive more ritualized fear from men and have fewer property rights than is the case in the simpler cultures."[99]

All in all a far cry from the more strident views, whether of feminists, the obsolete social evolution of the neo-Marxists, or the flight from life of the humane animal protectionists. On the whole, plant foods are not shared as ceremoniously as meat. They do not signify the flow of obligations in the same degree. But this is not a statement about women as opposed to men.

The Temporal Mosaic: The Episodic Character of Individual Life

Being individuals slow to reach maturity, we are among the most neotonic of species. This resiliency makes humans prime examples of"K" type species evolution (education, few offspring, slow development). "Culture" constitutes the social contrivances that mitigate neotony. The transformation of the self through aging is inevitable, but whether we move through successive levels of maturity and the fullest realization of our genome's potential depends on the quality of the active embrace of society in all of the nurturance stages. Incomplete, ontogeny runs to the dead end of immaturity and a miasma of pathological limbos.[100]

The important nurturant occasions are like triggers in epigenesis. Neoteny, the many years of individual immaturity, depends on the hands of society to escape itself. This mitigation of our valuable retardation is in part episodic and social, a matching of the calendars of postnatal embryology by the inventions of caregivers. Occasions make the human adult. If culture in the form of society does not act in the ceremonial, tutoring, and testing response to the personal, epigenetic agenda, we slide into adult infantility—madness. This fantastic arrangement is foreshadowed in the nucleus of every cell. It is an expectancy of the genome, fostered by society, enacted in ecosystems.

Two of the transformative stages of human ontogeny have been studied in detail among living hunter-gatherers—infant/caregiver relationships and adolescent initiation. The archaeological record leaves little doubt that we see in them ancient patterns which may be incompletely addressed in ourselves. Foremost is the bonding/separation dynamic of the first two years. The interaction of infant and mother and infant and other caregivers emerges as a compelling necessity, perhaps the most powerful shaping force in the whole of individual experience. The "social skills" of the newborn and the mother's equally indigenous reciprocity create not only the primary social tie but the paradigm for existential attitudes. The lifelong perception of the world as a "counterplayer"—caring, nourishing, instructing, and protecting, or vindictive, mechanical, and distant—arises here.

The process arises in our earliest experience and is coupled to patterns of response. Hara Marano says, "Newborns come highly equipped for their first intense meetings with their parents, and in particular their mothers… Biologically speaking, today's mothers and babies are two to

[98] Janet Siskind, *To Hunt in the Morning,* Oxford University Press, New York, 1976, p.109.

[99] Martin King Whyte, *The Status of Women in Preindustrial Societies,* Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1978.

[100] Arnold Modell, *Object Love and Reality,* I.U.P., New York, 1968. Chap. 5, "he Sense of Identity: The Acceptance of Separateness."

three million years old… When we put the body of a mother close to her baby, something is turned on that is part of her genetic makeup.[101] Details of the socially embedded rhythms of parenthood vary from culture to culture, but they can hardly improve on the basic style or primary forms found in hunter-gatherer groups. Studies of babies and parents in these societies reveal that the intense early attachment leads not to prolonged dependency but to a better functioning nervous system and greater success in the separation process.[102]

Something of the same can be said for the whole of ontogeny, especially those passage-markers by which the caregivers celebrate and energize movement across thresholds by the ripe and ready. Notable among these is adolescent initiation, a subject to which a vast body of science and scholarship has been devoted. Yet again it has fundamental forms for which individual psychology is endowed. Much of modern angst has its roots in the modern collapse of this crucial episode in personal development.

Early experience has this formative and episodic quality, with varying degrees of formality in its context. The hunt is one, bringing into play in the individual the most intense emotions and sense of the mysteries of our existence, to be given a catharsis and mediating transformation. The hunt is a pulse of social and personal preparation, address to presences unseen, skills and strategies, festive events and religious participation. We cannot become hunter-gatherers as a whole economy, but we can recover the ontogenetic moment. Can five billion people go hunting in a world where these dimensions of human existence were played out in a total population of perhaps one million? They can, because the value of the hunt is not in repeated trips but a single leap forward into the heart-structure of the world, the "game" played to rules that reveal ourselves. What is important is to have hunted. It is like having babies; a little of it goes a long way.

Endemic Resources and the Design of a Lifeway—a Post-Historic Primitivism

In her book, *Prehistoric Art in Europe,* N. K. Sandars identifies four strands of the primordial human experience: (1) "The sense of diffused sacredness which may erupt into everyday life," (2) "an order of relationships the categories of which take no account of genetic barriers and which will lead to ideas of metamorphosis inside and outside this life," (3) "unhistorical time" and (4) "the character or position of the medicine man or shaman."[103]

These are not, of course, removable entities as such, but they constitute aspects of the Paleolithic genius, emergent gestalts from the separate and portable elements of a culture. As ideals not one of these is a regression to obsolescence but a forward step to Heidegger's *dasein,* Merleau-Ponty's and Whitehead's event world, Eliade's centrality of the rites of passage, Odum's redaction of ecological entities as process and relationship. It is not a matter of what ought to be done or how life could be, or even of greater meaning and understanding, but of the nature of experience. I would summarize these "experiences" as follows:

1. Therio-metaphysics. Animals as the language of nature, a great Semiosis. Reading the world as the hunter-gatherer reads tracks. The heuristic principle and hermeneutic act of nature and society as the basic metaphor. Eco-predicated logos.

[101] Hara Estroff Marano, "Biology Is One Key to the Bonding of Mothers and Babies," *Smithsonian,* February, 1981.

[102] Melvin J. Konner, "Maternal Care, Infant Behavior and Development Among the !Kung," and Patricia Draper, "Social and Economic Constraints on Child Life Among the !Kung," in Lee and DeVore, *Kalahari Hunter Gatherers.*

[103] Sandars, op. cit. p. 26.

2. The Voice of life. Sound, drum, song, voice, instrument, wind, the essential clue to the livingness of the world. It is internal and external at once, the game told as narrative, the play of chance. In story, Snyder has called it "the primacy of together-hearing."

3. The Fledging and Moulting principle. Epigenesis as the appropriate and sequential coupling of gene and environment, self and other. The ecology of ontogenesis as a resonance between bonding and separation that produces identity. Transitions marked by formal acts of public recognition.

4. Sacramental Trophism. The basic act of communion, transformation, and relatedness, incorporating death as life. It is centered on the act of bringing death and of giving to death as the central celebration of life.

5. The Fire Circle. All forms of social connection in relation to scale. Vernacular gender. Examples: Homeostatic demographic units. The dialectical tribe in Australia: family, band, and tribe affiliation. Sizes 25/500. "In terms of conscious dedication to human relationships that are both affective and effective, the primitive is ahead of us all the way," comments Colin Turnbull.[104]

6. Vocational Instruments. Dealing directly with the means of subsistence by hands-on approach. Tools are a gestural response to life, subordinate to thought, art, and religious forms. Marshack speaks of "the demands of fire culture" as one of lore and skills in which the tale is a "metaphysical gift" making the world "an object of contemplation."

7. Place instead of Space, Moments replace Time, Chance instead of Strategy. Place is at once an external and internal state in a journey home. The place is a process, not coordinates, yet a specific geology, climate, and habitat.

8. Occasions of the Numinous in the relocation of the signs of sacred presence, the mystery of being, and the participatory role of human life, not as ruler or viceroy but as one species of many, in a mood not of guilt or conflict but of affirmation.

9. The escape from domestication, a liberation of nature into itself, including human nature, from the tyranny of the created blobs and the fuzzy goo of emotional—and epoxic glue of ethical—humanism.

Primitivism does not mean a simplified or more thoughtless way of life but a reciprocity with origins, a recovery misconstrued as inaccessible by the ideology of History. In the latter view one puts on costumes and enacts another culture as the French aristocracy imitated shepherds during the Renaissance or as middle class "dropouts" in the 1960s put on gingham gowns and bib overalls.

From the ahistoric perspective you cannot "go back" to recover "lost" realities, nor can you completely lose them. So long as there is a green earth and other species our wild genome can make and find its place. Like many difficult things the transformation cannot be made solely by acts of will. One can simulate the external features of a primitive life—for example, the limitation of possessions and the non-ownership of the land—but something precedes the outward form

[104] Colin M. Turnbull, *The Human Cycle,* Simon and Schuster, New York, 1983.

and its supporting ideology. That something is the way in which the sensuous apprehension is linked to the conceptual world, the establishment early in life of a mode by which experience and ideas interact, in perception.

It is, of course, a cyclic matter in which childhood experience leads to appropriate thought and custom, which in turn mentors individual genesis. Breaking into the circle is hard, as we urban moderns can only start with an idea of it. Rare are those who can make that leap from the idea to the mode without early shaping. As a result most of us get only glimpses of what we might be were we truer to our wildness, among them some of the anthropologists who study tribal peoples. Or, we get intimations from the archetypes arising in our dreams or given in visionary moments.

In sum it is an archetypal ecology, a paraprimitive solution, a Paleolithic counter-revolution, a new cynegetics, a venatory mentation. Whatever it may be called, our best guides, when we learn to acknowledge them, will be the living tribal peoples themselves.

Notes

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