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My question is: why does society persist in destroying its habitat? I have, at different times, believed the answer was a lack of information, faulty technique, or insensibility. Certainly intuitions of the interdependence of all life are an ancient wisdom, perhaps as old as thought itself that is occasionally rediscovered, as it has been by the science of ecology in our own society. At mid-twentieth century there was a widely shared feeling that we needed only to bring businesspeople, cab drivers, homemakers, and politicians together with the right mix of oceanographers, soils experts, or foresters in order to set things right.

In time, even with the attention of the media and a windfall of synthesizers, popularizers, gurus of ecophilosophy, and other champions of ecology, and in spite of some new laws and indications that environmentalism is taking its place as a new turtle on the political log, nothing much has changed. Either I and the other "pessimists" and "doomsayers" were wrong about the human need for other species and about the decline of the planet as a life-support system; or our species is intent on suicide; or there is something we overlooked.

Such a something could be simply greed. Maybe the whole world is just acting out the same impulse that brought an 1898 cattlemen's meeting in west Texas to an end with the following unanimous declaration:

> "Resolved, that none of us know, or care to know, anything about grasses, native or otherwise, outside the fact that for the present there are lots of them, the best on record, and we are after getting the most out of them while they last."[1]

But it is hard to be content with the theory that people are bad and will always do the worst. Given the present climate of education, knowing something about grasses may be the greedy course if it means the way to continued prosperity.

The stockmen's resolution might have been in response to newfangled ideas of range management. Conservation in the view of Theodore Roosevelt's generation was largely a matter of getting the right techniques

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[1] Hervey Kieckly, The *Masks of Sanity* (St. Louis. Mosby, 1976).

and programs. By Aldo Leopold's time, half a century later, the perspective had begun to change. The attrition of the green world was felt to be due as much to general beliefs as to particular policies. Naturalists talking to agronomists were only foreground figures in a world where attitudes, values, philosophies, and the arts — the whole *weltanschauung* of peoples and nations could be seen as a vast system within which nature was abused or honored. But today the conviction with which that idea caught the imagination seems to have faded; technology promises still greater mastery of nature, and the inherent conservatism of ecology seems only to restrain productivity as much of the world becomes poorer and hungrier. The realization that human institutions express at least an implicit philosophy of nature does not always lead these institutions to broaden their doctrines; just as often it backs them into a more rigid defense of those doctrines.

In the midst of these new concerns and reaffirmations of the status quo, the distance between Earth and philosophy seems as great as ever. We know, for example, that the massive removal of the great Old World primeval forests from Spain and Italy to Scandinavia a thousand years ago was repeated in North America in the past century and proceeds today in the Amazon basin, Malaysia, and the Himalayan frontier. Much of the soil of interior China and the uplands of the Ganges, Euphrates, and Mississippi rivers has been swept into their deltas, while the world population of humankind and its energy demands have doubled several times over. The number of animal species we have exterminated is now in the hundreds. Something uncanny seems to block the corrective will, not simply private cupidity or political inertia. Could it be an inadequate philosophy or value system? The idea that the destruction of whales is the logical outcome of Francis Bacon's dictum that "nature should serve man," or René Descartes's insistence that animals feel no pain since they have no souls, seems too easy and too academic. The meticulous analysis of these philosophies and the discovery that they articulate an ethos beg the question. Similarly, technology does not simply act out scientific theory, or daily life flesh out ideas of progress, biblical dogma, or Renaissance humanism. A history of ideas is not enough to explain human behavior.

privation or tribal organization. The civilized ways inconsistent with human maturity will themselves wither in a world where children move normally through their ontogeny.

I have attempted to identify crucial factors in such normal growth by showing what might have been lost from the past. Some of this, such as life in a small human group in a spacious world, will be difficult to recover-though not impossible for the critical period in the individual passage. Adults, weaned to the wrong music, cut short from their own potential, are not the best of mentors. The problem may be more difficult to understand than to solve. Beneath the veneer of civilization, in the trite phrase of humanism, lies not the barbarian and the animal, but the human in us who knows what is right and necessary for becoming fully human: birth in gentle surroundings, a rich nonhuman environment, juvenile tasks with simple tools, the discipline of natural history, play at being animals, the expressive arts of receiving food as a spiritual gift rather than as a product, the cultivation of metaphorical significance of natural phenomena of all kinds, clan membership and small-group life, and the profound claims and liberation of ritual initiation and subsequent stages of adult mentorship. There is a secret person undamaged in each of us, aware of the validity of these conditions, sensitive to their right moments in our lives. All of them are assimilated in perverted forms in modern society: our profound love of animals twisted into pets, zoos, decorations, and entertainment; our search for poetic wholeness subverted by the model of the machine instead of the body; the moment of pubertal idealism shunted into nationalism or otherworldly religion instead of an ecosophical cosmology.

We have not lost, and cannot lose, the genuine impulse. It awaits only an authentic expression. The task is not to start by recapturing the theme of a reconciliation with the earth in all of its metaphysical subtlety, but with something much more direct and simple that will yield its own healing metaphysics.

In this sense, history is characterized as the self-contradictory will to recover the grace and poise of the mature individual, initially reduced to a shambles by the neolithic, without giving up the booty. For example, the psychology of self-actualization, group dynamics, and personal therapy, aimed at healing individuals deprived of appropriate adolescent religious experience, though helpful to the individual, is basically antagonistic to the modern state, which needs fearful followers and slogan-shouting idealists. Thus, the culture counters these identity therapies, and the philosophical realism of a cosmopolitan and sophisticated kind that could result from them, with prior wounds — damage to the fetus and neonate in hospital birth, through the anxieties of the distraught mother; asphyxiation; anesthetics; premedication; the overwhelming sensory shock of bright lights, noisy surroundings, and rough handling; impairment of delivery by the mother's physical condition and delivery posture; and separation of the infant from the mother — all corroding the psychogenic roots of a satisfactory life in a meaningful world.[4]

What can one say of the prospect of the future in a world where increasing injury to the planet is a symptom of human psychopathology? Is not the situation far worse than one of rational choices in an economic system or the equilibration of competing vested interests?

In some ways the situation is far more hopeful. An ecologically harmonious sense of self and world is not the outcome of rational choices. It is the inherent possession of everyone; it is latent in the organism, in the interaction of the genome and early experience. The phases of such early experiences, or epigenesis, are the legacy of an evolutionary past in which human and nonhuman achieved a healthy rapport. Recent societies have contorted that sequence, have elicited and perpetuated immature and inappropriate responses. The societies are themselves the product of such amputations, and so are their uses and abuses of the Earth.

Perhaps we do not need new religious, economic, technological, ideological, aesthetic, or philosophical revolutions. We may not need to start at the top and uproot political systems, turn lifeways on their heads, emulate hunters and gatherers or naturalists, or try to live lives of austere

[4] Joseph Chilton Pearce, *The Magical Child* (New York: Dutton, 1977), pp. 45–50, 56–60.

Once, our species did live in stable harmony with the natural environment (and in some small groups it still does). This was not because people were incapable of changing their environment or lacked acumen; it was not simply on account of a holistic or reverent attitude; rather, there was some more enveloping and deeper reason. The change to a more hostile stance toward nature began between five and ten thousand years ago and became more destructive and less accountable with the progress of civilization. The economic and material demands of growing villages and towns are, I believe, not causes but results of this change. In concert with advancing knowledge and human organization it wrenched the ancient social machinery that had limited human births. It fostered a new sense of human mastery and the extirpation of nonhuman life. In hindsight this change has been explained in terms of necessity or as the decline of ancient gods. But more likely it was irrational (though not unlogical) and unconscious, a kind of failure in some fundamental dimension of human existence, an irrationality beyond mistakenness, a kind of madness.

The idea of a sick society is not new. Bernard Frank, Karl Menninger, and Erich Fromm are among those who have addressed it. Sigmund Freud asks, "If the development of civilization has such a far-reaching similarity to the development of the individual and if it employs the same methods, may we not be justified in reaching the diagnosis that, under the influence of cultural urges, some civilizanons — or some epochs of civilization — possibly the whole of mankind — have become neurotic?" Australian anthropologist Derek Freeman observes that the doctrine of cultural relativism, which has dominated modern thought, may have blinded us to the deviate behavior of whole societies by denying normative standards for mental health.

In his book *In Bluebeard's Castle,* George Steiner asks why so many men have killed other men in the past two centuries (the estimate is something like 160 million deaths). He notes that, for some reason, periods of peace in Europe were felt to be stifling. Peace was a lassitude, he says, periodically broken by war, as though pressures built up that had little to do with the games of national power or conflicting ideologies. He concludes that one of those pressures found its expression in the Holocaust, motivated by unconscious resentment of the intolerable emotional

and intellectual burden of monotheism. Acting as the frenzied agents for a kind of fury in the whole of Christendom, the Germans sought to destroy the living representatives of those who had centuries ago wounded the mythic view of creation, stripping the Earth of divine being and numinous presences, and substituting a remote, invisible, unknowable, demanding, vengeful, arbitrary god.

Steiner approaches these seizures of extermination in terms of collective personality disintegration; his framework has something to offer the question of the destruction of nature. What *is* indicated by the heedless occupancy of all earth habitats; the physical and chemical abuse of the soil, air, and water; the extinction and displacement of wild plants and animals; the overcutting and overgrazing of forest and grasslands; the expansion of human numbers at the expense of the biotic health of the world, turning everything into something human-made and human-used?

To invoke psychopathology is to address infancy, as most mental problems have their roots in our first years of life, and their symptoms are defined in terms of immaturity. The mentally ill typically have infantile motives and act on perceptions and states of mind that caricature those of early life. Among their symptoms are destructive behaviors through which individuals come to terms with private demons that would otherwise overwhelm them. To argue with the logic with which people defend their behavior is to threaten those very acts of defense that stand between them and a frightful chasm.

Most of us fail to become as mature as we might. In that respect there is a continuum from simple deprivations to traumatic shocks, many of which act on fears and fantasies of a kind that normally haunt anxious infants and then diminish. Such primary fantasies and impulses are the stuff of the unconscious of us all. They typically remain submerged, or their energy is transmuted, checked, sublimated, or subordinated to reality. Not all are terrifying: besides shadows that plague us at abyssal levels with disorder and fear, there are chimeras of power and unity and erotic satisfaction. All send their images and symbols into dreams and, in the troubled soul, into consciousness. It is not clear whether they all play some constructive part in the long trail toward sane maturity or whether they are just flickering specters lurking beside that path,

adult cannot possibly see them holistically. Some of these omissions and impairments enhance the individual's conformity to certain cultures, and the culture acts to reward them, to produce them by interceding in the nurturing process, and so to put a hold on development. In this way, juvenile fantasies and primary thought are articulated not only in the monosyllables of the land scalper, but in philosophical argument and pontifical doctrine. Irrational feelings may be escalated into high-sounding reason when thrown up against a seemingly hostile and unfulfilling natural world. The West is a vast testimony to childhood botched to serve its own purposes, where history, masquerading as myth, authorizes men of action to alter the world to match their regressive moods of omnipotence and insecurity.

The modern West selectively perpetuates these psychopathic elements. In the captivity and enslavement of plants and animals and the humanization of the landscape itself is the diminishment of the Other, against which people must define themselves, a diminishment revealing schizoid confusion in self-identity. From the epoch of Judeo-Christian emergence is an abiding hostility to the natural world, characteristically fearful and paranoid. The sixteenth-century fixation on the impurity of the body and the comparative tidiness of the machine are strongly obsessive-compulsive. These all persist and interact in a tapestry of chronic madness in the industrial present, countered by dreams of absolute control and infinite possession.

There are two ways of seeing this overall sequence. One is as a serial amputation of the maturing process, in which the domesticated world deflects adolescent initiation and rigidifies the personality into clinging to the collective loyalties, feats of bravery, and verbal idealism of pubertal youth. The era of Puritans and machines fixated on childhood anxiety about the body and its products. The urban/industrial age keyed on infantile identity diffusions, separation fears, and the fantasies of magic power. These truncations of epigenesis are progressive amputations, first at infancy and finally at adolescence.

Alternatively, the initial domestication may be seen as a calamity for human ontogeny, against which subsequent history is marked by cultural efforts to recover a mature perspective without giving up the centralization of power made possible by unleashed fecundity and urban huddling.

and polluted surroundings. Blurry aspirations are formulated in concealed infantilisms and mediated in spectator entertainment, addiction to worldwide news, and religious revivalism.

Much of this has been said before, but not so often in terms of the relationship of the human to the nonhuman. Even as socially intense as we are, much of the unconscious life of the individual is rooted in interaction with otherness that goes beyond our own kind, interacting with it very early in personal growth, not as an alternative to human socialization, but as an adjunct to it. The fetus is suspended in water, tuned to the mother's chemistry and the biological rhythms that are keyed to the day and seasonal cycles. The respiratory interface between the newborn and the air imprints a connection between consciousness (or wisdom) and breath. Gravity sets the tone of all muscle and becomes a major counterplayer in all movement. Identity formation grows from the subjective separation of self from not-self, living from nonliving, human from nonhuman; it proceeds in speech to employ plant and animal taxonomy as a means of conceptual thought and as a model of relatedness. Games and stories involving animals serve as projections for the discovery of the plurality of the self. The environment of play, the juvenile home range, is the gestalt and creative focus of the face or matrix of nature. Initiatory ordeals in wilderness solitude and the ecological messages conveyed by myth are instruments in the maturing of the whole person.

Only in the success of this extraordinary calendar does the adult come to love the world as the ground of his being. For the child, immersed in the series of maternal/ecological matrices, there are inevitable normal anxieties, distorted perceptions, gaps in experience filled with fantasy, emotional storms full of topical matter, frightening dreams and illusions, groundless fears, and the scars of accident, occasional nurturing error, adult negligence, and cruelty. The risk in epigenesis is that the nurturers and caretakers do not move forward in their role in keeping with the child's emerging stages. If such deprivations are severe enough, the normal fears and fantasies can become enduring elements of the personality. The individual continues to act from some crucial moment in the immense concerns of immaturity: separation, otherness, and limitation. Wrestling with them in juvenile and primary modes, even the

waiting for our wits to stumble. Either way, the correlation between mental unhealth and regression to earlier stages of mental life has been confirmed thousands of times over.

The passage of human development is surprisingly long and complicated. The whole of growth through the first twenty years (including physical growth) is our ontogenesis or ontogeny, our "coming into being." Dovetailed with fetal life at one end and adult phases at the other, ontogeny is as surprising as anything in human biology. Anyone who thinks the human creature is not a specialized animal should spend a few hours with the thirty-odd volumes of *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* or issues of *The Journal of Child Development.* In the realm of nature, human ontogeny is a regular giraffe's neck of unlikely extension, vulnerability, internal engineering, and the prospect of an extraordinary view from the top.

Among those relict tribal peoples who seem to live at peace with their world, who feel themselves to be guests rather than masters, the ontogeny of the individual has some characteristic features. I conjecture that their ontogeny is healthier than ours (for which I will be seen as sentimental and romantic) and that it may be considered a standard from which we have deviated. Their way of life is the one to which our ontogeny has been fitted by natural selection, fostering cooperation, leadership, a calendar of mental growth, and the study of a mysterious and beautiful world where the clues to the meaning of life were embodied in natural things, where everyday life was inextricable from spiritual significance and encounter, and where the members of the group celebrated individual stages and passages as ritual participation in the first creation.

This seed of normal ontogeny is present in all of us. It triggers vague expectations that parents and society will respond to our hunger. The newborn infant, for example, needs almost continuous association with one particular mother who sings and talks to it, breast-feeds it, holds and massages it, wants and enjoys it. For the infant as person-to-be, the shape of all otherness grows out of that maternal relationship. Yet the setting of that relationship was, in the evolution of humankind, a surround of living plants, rich in texture, smell, and motion. The unfiltered, unpolluted air, the flicker of wild birds, real sunshine and rain, mud to be tasted and tree

bark to grasp, the sounds of wind and water, the voices of animals and insects and humans — all these are not vague and pleasant amenities for the infant, but the stuff out of which its second grounding, even while in its mother's arms, has begun. The outdoors is also in some sense another inside, a kind of enlivenment of the fetal landscape (which is not so constant as was once supposed). The surroundings are also that which will be swallowed, internalized, incorporated as the self.

From the start, the experience of such a world is one of constancy. Following an easy birth in a quiet place, the mother is always there, a presence in the tactile warmth of her body. For the infant there is a joyful comfort in being handled and fondled often, fed and cleaned as the body demands. His is a world of variation on rhythms, the refreshment of hot and cold, wind like a breath in the face, the smell and feel of rain and snow, earth in hand and underfoot. The world is a pungent and inviting place with just enough bite that it says, 'Come out, wake up, look, taste, and smell; now cuddle and sleep!'

It is a world of travel and stop. At first the child fears being left and is bound by fear to the proximity of his mother and others. This interrupted movement sets the pace of his life, telling him gently that he is a traveler or visitor in the world. Its motion is like his own growth: as he gets older and as the cycle of group migrations is repeated, he sees places he has seen before, and those places seem less big and strange. The life of movement and rest is one of returning, and the places are the same and yet always more.

There is a constancy of people, yet it is a world bathed in nonhuman forms, a myriad of figures, evoking an intense sense of their differences and similarities, the beckoning challenge of a lifetime. Speech is about that likeness and unlikeness, the coin of thought. The child begins to babble and then to speak according to his own timing, with the cooperation of adults who are themselves acting upon the deep wisdom of a stage of life. Initially it is a matter of rote and imitation, a naming of things whose distinctive differences are unambiguous. Nature is a lexicon where, at first, words have the solid reality of things.

In this bright new world there are as yet few mythical beasts, but real creatures to watch and to mimic in play. Play is an imitation, starting

All Westerners are heir, not only to the self-justifications of recent technophilic Promethean impulses, but to the legacy of the whole. We may now be the possessors of the world's flimsiest identity structure, the products of a prolonged tinkering with ontogenesis — by Paleolithic standards, childish adults. Because of this arrested development, modern society continues to work, for it requires dependence. But the private cost is massive therapy, escapism, intoxicants, narcotics, fits of destruction and rage, enormous grief, subordination to hierarchies that exhibit this callow ineptitude at every level, and, perhaps worst of all, a readiness to strike back at a natural world that we dimly perceive as having failed us. From this erosion of human nurturing comes the failure of the passages of the life cycle and the exhaustion of our ecological accords.

In the city-world of today, infinite wants are pursued as though the environment were an amnion and technology a placenta. Unlike the cultures of submissive obedience, those of willful, proud disengagement, or those obsessed with guilt and pollution, this made world is the home to dreams of omnipotence and immediate satisfaction. There is no mother of limited resources or father of rigid discipline, only a self in a fluid system.

The high percentage of neuroses in Western society seems often to be interpreted as a sign of a highly stressful "life-style." If you add to it — or see it acted out as — the insanities of nationalism, war, and biome busting, it seems a matter less of life-style than of an epidemic of the psychopathic mutilation of ontogeny. Characteristic of the schizoid features of this immature subjectivity is difficulty differentiating among fantasy, dream, and reality. The inability to know whether one's experiences originate in night dreaming, daydreaming, or veridical reality is one of the most familiar disabilities of seriously ill mental patients. Drug use and New Age psychedelic athletics in search of a different reality, even the semantics of using "fantasy" as synonymous with creative imagination and "dream" with inspiration, suggest an underlying confusion. They are like travesties of the valid adolescent karma that expresses the religious necessity of transcendence. The fears associated with this confusion in adults are genuinely frightening. The anguished yearning for something lost is inescapable for those not in psychiatric care or on weekend psychic sprees, but who live daily in time-serving labor, overdense groups,

uses the symbiotic, literal world as a prefigured cosmos, the adult cannot choose the forest and the owl. The self is still at the center of a juvenile reality. It may be true that the purpose of the childlike pleasure in the outdoors is an end in itself; it is also necessary to the further work of the self going beyond the self.

But I have oversimplified the choices in order to make a point. There is not a choice between the owl and the oil well at all. In our society those who would choose the owl are not more mature. Growing out of Erik Erikson's concept of trust versus nontrust as an early epigenetic concern and William and Claire Russell's observation that the child perceives poor nurturing as hostility — a perception that is either denied and repressed (as among idealists) or transferred in its source so as to be seen as coming from the natural world instead of from the parents (as among cynics) — there arises an opposition that is itself an extension of infantile duality. Fear and hatred of the organic on one hand, the desire to merge with it on the other; the impulse to control and subordinate on one hand, to worship the nonhuman on the other; overdifferentiation on one hand, fears of separation on the other — all are two sides ofa coin. In the shape given to a civilization by totemically inspired, technologically sophisticated, small-group, epigenetically fulfilled adults, the necessity to choose would never arise.

The effects of the historical march away from nature, resulting in socially assimilated deprivation, can be seen in key elements of the European American personality. The American is not the profligate anti-European; he is, in respect to certain characteristics, the full embodiment of Western, classical, Christian human, enabled by the colossal richness of an unexploited continent to play out the wrenching alienation that began five to ten thousand years ago, with the advent of agricultural practices. Careless of waste, wallowing in refuse, exterminating enemies, having everything now and new, despising age, denying human natural history, fabricating pseudotraditions, being swamped in the repeated personal crises of the aging preadolescent: all are familiar images of American society. They are the signs of private nightmares of incoherence and disorder in broken climates where technologies in pursuit of mastery create ever-worsening problems-private nightmares expanded to a social level.

with simple fleeing and catching, going on to mimic joyfully the important animals, being them for a moment and then not being them, feeling as this one must feel and then that one, all tried on the self. The child sees the adults dancing the animal movements and does it too. Music itself has been there all the time, from his mother's song to the melodies of birds and the howls of wolves. The child already feels the mystery of kinship: likeness but difference. Animals have a magnetic attraction for the child, for each in its way seems to embody some impulse, reaction, or movement that is "like me." In the playful, controlled enactment of these comes a gradual mastery of the personal inner zoology of fears, joys, and relationships. In stories told, their forms spring to life in the mind and are represented in consciousness, training the capacity to imagine.

The play space — trees, shrubs, paths, places to hide and climb — is a visible, structured entity, another prototype of relationships that hold fast. It is the primordial terrain in which games of imitating adults lay another groundwork for a dependable world and prefigure a household, so that, for these children of mobile hunter-gatherers, no house is necessary to structure and symbolize social status. Individual trees and rocks that were also known to parents and grandparents are enduring counterplayers having transcendent meanings later in life.

To be sure, there is discomfort that cannot be avoided. The child sees with pride that he can endure it, that his body profits by it so that on beautiful days he feels wonderful. He witnesses sickness and death, but they are right as part of things and not really prevalent (how could the little band of fifteen continue if there were dying every day?).

The child goes out from camp with playmates to imitate foraging and then with adults to actually forage. The adults show no anxiety in their hunting, only patience; one waits and watches and listens. Sometimes the best is not to be found, but there is always something. The world is all clues, and there is no end to their subtlety and delicacy. The signs that reveal are always there. One has only to learn the art of reading them.

In such a world there is no wildness, as there is no tameness. Human power over nature is largely the exercise of handcraft. Insofar as the natural world poetically signifies human society, it signals that there is no great power over other people except as the skills of leadership are hewn by example and persuasion. The otherness of nature becomes accessible

to humans in fabulous forms of incorporation, influence, conciliation, and compromise. When the male juvenile goes out with adults to seek a hidden root or to stalk an antelope, he sees the unlimited possibilities of affiliation with the environment, for success is understood to depend on the readiness of the prey or tuber as much as on the skill of the forager.

The child is free. He is not asked to work. At first he can climb and splash and dig and explore the infinite riches about him. In time he increasingly wants to make things and to understand what he cannot touch or change, to wonder about that which is unseen. His world is full of stories told; hearing of a recent hunt, tales of renowned events, and epics with layers of meaning. He has been bathed in voices of one kind or another always. Voices last only for their moment of sound, but they originate in life. The child learns that all life tells something and that all sound, from the frog calling to the sea surf, issues from a being kindred and significant to himself, telling some tale, giving some clue, mimicking some rhythm that he should know. There is no end to what is to be learned.

The child does not yet philosophize on this; he is shielded from speculation and abstraction by the intimacy of his psyche with his environment. The child is free, much as the creatures around him — that is, free to be delicately watchful, not only of animals but of people, among whom life is not ranked subordination to authority. Conformity for him will be to social pressure and custom, not to force. All this is augured in the nonhuman world, not because he never sees dominant and subordinate animals, creatures killing other creatures, or trees whose shade suppresses the growth of other plants, but because, reaching puberty, he is on the brink of a miracle of interpretation that will transform those things.

At the end of childhood he comes to some of the most thrilling days of his life. The transition he faces will be experienced by body and ritual in concert. The childhood of journeying in a known world, scrutinizing and mimicking natural forms, and always listening has prepared him for a whole new octave in his being. The clock of his body permits it to be done, and the elders of his life will see that he is initiated. It is a commencement into a world foreshadowed by childhood: home, good, unimaginably rich, sometimes painful with reason, scrutable with care.

Cultural anthropology has often been used as evidence of this contemporary notion of heroic flexibility. A great many ethnographic studies do impress us with the various ways of being human, but few of them emphasize the inexorable direction in all human societies: what all cultures seek is to clarify and confirm the belongingness of their members, even at the expense of perpetuating infantile fears, of depriving their members of the object of their quest for adaptedness, and making their only common ground their nonrootedness.

In this connection it is no surprise that the "adaptability society" celebrates childhood, admires youth, and despises age, equating childhood with innocence, wisdom, and spiritual power. Its members cling to childhood, for their own did not serve its purpose. To those for whom adult life is admixed with decrepit childhood, the unfulfilled promise cannot be abandoned. To wish to remain childlike, to foster the nostalgia for childhood, is to grieve for our own lost maturity, not because maturity is synonymous with childhood, but because then it was still possible to move, epigenetically, toward maturity.

Wide-eyed wonder, nonjudgmental response, and the immediate joy of being are beautiful to see; I hope some kernel of them remains in the heart of every adult. They are sometimes presented as appropriate models for adult attitudes toward nature. But the open ecstasy of the child has its special purposes: a kind of cataloging, preconscious order finding, and cryptic anthropomorphizing that have to do with personality development — at least for the child with a good mother bond. The poorly bonded child, even though troubled, goes through this nature-wonder period, for it is a new "maternal" reality and perhaps is therapeutic. In any case, there is no figurative nature for the child; all is literal. Even in pretending, there is only one reality. The children playing delightedly on the green grass or in awe at an owl in the woods will grow up oblivious to the good in nature if they never go beyond that momentary fascination. When, as adults, they will weigh the literal value of the owl (already realized, for it taught them the name and owlness) against other literal values, such as replacing the forest with a hospital, a sewage system, or an oil well, their judgment is likely to be for progress. With poor initial mother symbiosis, with an inadequate or lackluster place-and-creature naturizing, or without the crucial adolescent religious initiation that

our time is that no cultus exists, with its benign cadre of elders, to guide and administer that transition.

And so we come to our own time. The same questions are asked: To what extent does the technological/urban society work because its members are ontogenetically stuck? What are the means and the effects of this psychological amputation? We inherit the past and its machinations. White, European American, Western peoples are separated by many generations from decisions by councils of the whole, small-group nomadic life with few possessions, highly developed initiation ceremonies, natural history as every person's vocation, a total surround of nonhuman-made (or "wild") otherness with spiritual significance, and the "natural" way of mother and infant. All these are strange to us because we are no longer competent to live them — although that competence is potentially in each of us.

The question of our own disabilities of ontogeny cannot be answered simply as the cumulative momentum of the past coming to bear on the present. The culture of urban technicity works out its own deformities of ontogenesis. Some of these are legacies, while others are innovative shifts in the selective perpetuation of infantile and juvenile concerns. Many aspects of the urban hive are shaped by the industries of transportation, energy use, and state-of-the-art synthesis of materials and products. On the other hand, the city is shaped, designed consciously and unconsciously, by identity cripples, who are deprived in various social and ecological dimensions, yet who are also cripples in the sense of potential capacity, the possibilities of personal realization in the archaic and magnificent environments of the deep past.

Whether blindness is pathological to those living in a cave depends on whether you think of it in terms of personal adaptability or of the inherent potentialities of every member of our species. My view is the latter, but adaptability is the more vaunted trait-adaptability, that is, in the sense of flexibility, a readiness to change jobs, addresses, or beliefs — celebrated by the technocratic ideal of progress in convenience, comfort, safety, insulation, and the stimulus of novelty. This kind of adaptability is not of a citizenship that transcends place and time, but of not yet being adapted, of never finding one's place or time.

The quests and tests that mark his passage in adolescent initiation are not intended to reveal to him that his love of the natural world was an illusion or that, having seemed only what it was, it in some way failed him. He will not put his delight in the sky and the earth behind him as a childish and irrelevant thing. He will graduate not out of that world but into its significance. So, with the end of childhood, he begins a lifelong study, a reciprocity with the natural world in which its depths are as endless as his own creative thought. He will not study it in order to transform its liviness into mere objects that represent his ego, but as a poem, numinous and analogical, of human society.

Western civilized cultures, by contrast, have largely abandoned the ceremonies of adolescent initiation that affirm the metaphoric, mysterious, and poetic quality of nature, reducing them to aesthetics and amenities. But our human developmental program requires external models of order — if not a community of plants and animals, then words in a book, the ranks and professions of society, or the machine. If the ritual basis of the order-making metaphor is inadequate, the world can rigidify at the most literal level of juvenile understanding and so become a boring place, which the adult will ignore as repetitive or exploit as mere substance.

Harold Searles's remark is to the point: 'It seems to me that the *highest* order of maturity is essential to the achievement of a reality relatedness with that which is *most unlike* oneself." Maturity emerges in midlife as the result of the demands of an innate calendar of growth phases, to which the human nurturers — parents, friends, and teachers — have responded in season. It celebrates a central analogy of self and world in ever-widening spheres of meaning and participation, not an ever-growing domination over nature, escape into abstractions, or existential funk.

The twenty-year human psychogenesis evolved because it was adaptive and beneficial to survival; its phases were specialized, integral to individual growth in the physical and cultural environments of the emergence of our species. And there is the rub: it is to those environments — small-group, leisured, foraging, immersed in natural surroundings

— that we are adapted.[2] For us, now, that world no longer exists. The culmination of individual ontogenesis, characterized by graciousness, tolerance, and forbearance, tradition-bound to accommodate a mostly nonhuman world, and given to long, indigent training of the young, may be inconsistent in some ways with the needs of "advanced" societies. In such societies — and I include ours — the persistence of certain infantile qualities might help the individual adapt better: fear of separation, fantasies of omnipotence, oral preoccupation, tremors of helplessness, and bodily incompetence and dependence. Biological evolution cannot meet the demands of these new societies. It works much too slowly to make adjustments in our species in these ten millennia since the archaic foraging cultures began to be destroyed by their hostile, aggressive, better-organized, civilized neighbors. Programmed for the slow development toward a special kind of sagacity, we live in a world where that humility and tender sense of human limitation is no longer rewarded. Yet we suffer for the want of that vanished world, a deep grief we learn to misconstrue.

In the civilized world the roles of authority — family heads and others in power — were filled increasingly with individuals in a sense incomplete, who would in turn select and coach underlings flawed like themselves. Perhaps no one would be aware of such a debilitating trend, which would advance by pragmatic success across the generations as society put its fingers gropingly on the right moments in child nurturing by taking mothers off to work, spreading their attention and energy too thin with a houseful of babies, altering games and stories, manipulating anxiety in the child in a hundred ways. The transitory and normally healthful features of adolescent narcissism, oedipal fears and loyalties, ambivalence and inconstancy, playing with words, the gang connection, might in time be pathologically extended into adulthood, where it would be honored in patriotic idiom and philosophical axiom. The primary impulses of infancy would be made to seem essential to belief and to moral superiority, their repressive nature masked by the psychological defenses of repression and projection. Over the centuries major institutions and

[2] Kenneth Kenniston, "Psychological Development and Historical Change," in Robert Jay Lifton, ed., *Explorations in Psychohistory* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974).

metaphysics might finally celebrate attitudes and ideas originating in the normal context of immaturity, the speculative throes of adolescence, the Freudian psychosexual phases, or in even earlier neonatal or prenatal states.

Probably such ontogenetic crippling carries with it into adult life some traits that no society wants but that ours gets anyway, because such traits are coupled in some way with the childish will to destroy and with other sometimes useful regressions, fellow travelers with ugly effects.Perhaps there is no way to perpetuate a suckling's symbiosis with mother as a social or religious ideal without dragging up painful unconscious memories of an inadequate body boundary or squeamishness about being cut loose.

In our time, youthfulness is a trite ideal, while the idealization of youth becomes mischanneled into an adulthood of simplistic polarities. Adolescent dreams and hopes become twisted and amputated according to the hostilities, fears, or fantasies required by society. Retarded in the unfolding of his inner calendar, the individual is silently engineered to domesticate his integrity and share the collective dream of mastery. Changing the world becomes an unconscious, desperate substitute for changing the self. We then find animal protectionism, wild-area (as opposed to the rest of the planet) preservation, escapist naturism, and beautification, all of which maintain two worlds, hating compromise and confusing complicated ecological issues with good and evil in people.

The trouble with the eagerness to make a world is that, because the world is already made, what is there must first be destroyed. Idealism, whether of the pastoral peaceable kingdom or the electronic paradise of technomania and outer space, is in the above sense a normal part of adolescent dreaming, like the juvenile fantasies of heroic glory. Norman Kiell observes that the "pubescent" is called on to reform while his precognitive self is at the world center, and hence acts to "save mankind from his own nonhuman status" — that is, from the temporary identity vacuum in the transition from juvenile into adult life.[3] The difficulty for

[3] Norman Kiell, *The Universal Experience of Adolescence* (New York: International Universities Press, 1964).