



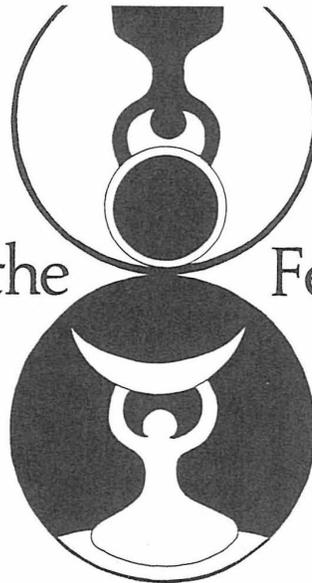
Explorations

The two articles in this section reflect a continually expanding network of which we feel New Alchemy to be a part. A major factor in the extension of this network is our friendship with the Lindisfarne community. It has been through it that we met both Richard Falk and Evelyn Ames who wrote the papers included here. Dick Falk is Milbank Professor of International Law at Princeton and a Senior Fellow of the Institute for World Order. His article traces and binds together many of the disparate threads that form the main body of the resistance to what seems the dominant direction of this culture. His discussion of a politics of conscience points out the underlying political nature of actions not always construed as such, and the fundamental agreement of those acting directly on behalf of people who are suffering and those whose efforts are directed toward apparently ecological concerns.

Author and poet Evelyn Ames' article on "A Return to the Feminine Principle" brought a mythological dimension to my own thinking. Since the publication of "Women and Ecology", I have seen many articles querying along comparable themes. The oppression of women, the alienation of men and resultant unhappiness of all of us in a culture of unsettlingly rapid flux is a recurring theme these days. Like a chronic itch, it's always there. Understanding for all of us comes slowly, and contributions, large and small, are very much needed. A major one has been Elise Boulding's book, "The Underside of History", which brings new insight on long-ignored feminine participation in history. Jean Baker Miller's book, "Toward a New Psychology of Women", is a new and popular book which reaffirms the value of the affiliative and communicating aspects of the feminine experience. Like both of these books, Evelyn Ames' article sheds light on little comprehended and often thickly veiled aspects of the human experience.

Return to the Feminist Principle*

— Evelyn Ames



Perhaps the greatest paradox of our time is what might be called the failure of success achieved in the modern industrialized world. As, one after another, the excesses of that success bring crises and dire warnings, there are deepening misgivings that the driving masculine principle is on the rampage and that, if its dominance continues unchecked, we shan't survive. The very existence of such misgivings is cause for at least some hope; and, although it is too early to see anything that might be called a trend, there are signs that that dominance of the masculine may have peaked out and a new age begun in which the feminine principle will again be re-honored, though in a new way.

It might be helpful to begin with the meaning of the terms feminine and masculine principle and to say at once that they apply to both men and women and that the whole subject is much bigger than any single woman, any man. It isn't even women, or Woman, that is meant by the feminine principle but a part of the psyche shared by both sexes, only more intrinsic to women, and the opposite pole of the principle intrinsic to men. This is well illustrated by the ancient Chinese philosophical symbol of Yin and Yang, those two interwoven forms of black and white in which each element at its fullest contains the seed or spark of its own opposite; night and day, yielding and firm, water and fire, feminine and masculine — all the complementary opposites are represented by it. Because the feminine is associated with night and the moon, Yin, the dark half of the circle, represents the feminine and Yang the bright and masculine half.

In Pathan, one of the ancient capitals of Nepal, there is a stone figure of the Lingam — the symbolic

phallus — standing upright in the Yuni, a horizontal circle with a channeled opening — symbol of the womb. To the Hindu these forms represent Creativity and Fertility, or else Power and Nature: in combination, the Creative Energy of the Universe. For both principles, it should be noted, are energies. There is a danger of confusing the feminine principle with stereotypes of supposedly feminine qualities such as being passive, the weaker sex, coy and seductive and so forth, rather than the nourishing, loving and protecting element of the feminine — which, in action, it hardly needs saying, exacts great energy, work and imagination.

In the cave temple of Elephanta, near Bombay, dedicated to the god Shiva, there are two especially outstanding sculptures. One, the hermaphroditic Shiva, is divided, not like Greek and Roman versions of Hermaphroditus but vertically through the entire body; it represents very movingly the two principles in harmony, in one being. The other, the famous triple-headed Shiva, has on one side the face of the god's masculine energy — here shown in its furious destructive aspect; on the opposite side, the face of feminine creative energy (as one is told) and, in the middle, the transcendent union of both. If that phrase "creative energy" following "feminine" is startling, it is because the whole concept of the feminine principle has become weakened, for reasons I hope to make clear.

In an attempt to discover what I could about the feminine principle at first hand, I experimented by presenting to myself in a period of free meditation the question "what is the feminine principle?" After a time a series of mental images appeared, one after another or becoming the other, as clearly as if I were looking at a slide show. There is nothing definitive or particularly clever about this: what is interesting

*Adapted from a lecture given at Wainwright House Center for Development of Human Resources



is that these images rose out of the unconscious, that they were right there and I hadn't known it.

I saw first a large earthenware jar — one of the recognized symbols of the “Great Mother”, more specifically the symbol both of emptiness and of containment; of receptivity. Next came a fountain: givingness, overflowingness; quickly followed by the image of someone playing a harp — muting the strings with outstretched hands and laying an ear against them: the listener to resonances. Suddenly, then, I was in a primitive country and saw a woman carrying water in a jar balanced on her head: the water-carrier, a sustainer of life. The jar being very full, some water spilled on the ground and a strange thing happened: she set down the jar, kneeled on the earth and rubbed mud from the spilled water onto her face. Aside from the obvious connotations of her being in touch with the earth, this puzzled me. Then I read in an account of the recent coronation of King Birenda of Nepal that one part of the ceremony consisted in smearing him with mud to symbolize his awareness of the land and closeness to his people. My water carrier also laid her ear to the ground — she tuned into the earth — and dissolved into the last image of a girl holding a giant conch shell to her ear and listening to the sea — symbol, of course, of the unconscious. Receiving, giving, listening, supplying, getting into touch with the earth and the unconscious: though only some of the attributes of the Feminine Principle still they all belong to it.

Weeks later, under very different circumstances, a free meditation on the masculine principle produced the following, also extremely vivid images: first, a javelin-thrower in the act of hurling the javelin in a contest which, I'm sorry to say, turned into a figure holding a rock over his head with both hands and about to smash it down on a victim. Then to my intense interest, came a building superintendent at the Pyramids, ordering lines of slaves and assigning them work; and a ruler? judge? (I wasn't sure which) anyway, a thoughtful figure seated in a raised place as if weighing evidence. The next scene was inside a submerged submarine where a man sat reading instruments and adjusting dials. The submarine became damaged; it surfaced; men leaped overboard and were marvelously rescued by helicopter. Last I saw swarms of workers around a cathedral. Quickly summarized, what have we got but a competitor in skills; a killer; an organizer; a leader; an engineer and explorer of ocean depths (interesting that it was that and not outer space); heroic rescuers; builders.

There they are: two very different kinds of energy — two forces which, combined, are the creative force of the universe as are all opposites when they are held in balance or in creative tension. It is illuminating to consider how the balance between these two energies, these principles, has shifted through history and then to examine the shift occurring right now, but before doing so, there is one more footnote, as it were, which

seems worth mentioning. That is the origin of the words lord and lady. *Hlaf* is the Old English for loaf, and lady, or *blafdig*, is the loaf-kneader — she who kneads and makes the bread. Lord is the *blafweard* or loaf-warden — he who guards the bread which in primitive societies was probably a lot more important than guarding the gold at Fort Knox. There is a suggestion in these words, and their origins, of the feminine and masculine in cooperation which seems to me beautiful.

Readers with any knowledge of Jung will know that the masculine is identified with ego and with consciousness, the feminine with the unconscious, and that each of us carries in the unconscious the archetype — or psychic pattern — of the other. What Jung called the “anima” represents to the man the eternal feminine in him, his Yin; what Jung called the “animus” is the woman's Yang or the masculine principle within herself. Finally, each of us repeats in his or her own development the entire experience of the species — those shifts of balance we are about to consider — which means that a girl must dissolve her natural unconscious wholeness in order to become a complete person: she must relate to the masculine in herself; and a boy must detach himself from the mother, not just his actual mother but the relationship to the Great Mother, in order to become himself. He then tends to relate from the distance of the conscious world — as Jung's follower Neumann put it; in fact masculine self-discovery depends on the separation of the conscious and unconscious systems. Which is exactly what happened in the early period of humanity.

Early societies were matriarchal — not necessarily structurally but, more importantly, psychically; matriarchal consciousness, in harmony with the earth and the unconscious, dependent on favorable moon-periods for planting and harvesting — a patient, waiting kind of awareness — was predominant. The basic formula was this: woman = body = vessel = world. The Great Mother was worshipped and women were priestesses (in some cultures they ruled, as well) but the significant thing is that humanity went through a phase in which the feminine principle and the unconscious dominated the masculine principle and consciousness. In the eastern Mediterranean one sees remnants of this in the Minoan civilization of Crete which then merged — became married, as it were — to the Mycenaean. Greek mythology resulted from this collision of matriarchal pre-Greece with the aggressive, patriarchally minded Achaeans who invaded Greece from the North.

Humanity, or the part of it with which we are most familiar, moved out of the unconscious just as the individual boy detaches himself from the mother to become whole — and moved into consciousness which then became patriarchal; these were successive psychological phases. Gods replaced goddesses, except for Athena, whose citadel of Athens held out against the patriarchal tide; men ruled; society evolved the hero,

rescuing the maiden from impossible dangers, and reduced the earth goddess — the Great Mother — to a wife in the home. And with that reduction, the concept of female creative energy gradually diminished. (Incidentally, patriarchal marriage is about as old as our historical knowledge — for the very good reason that writing and record-keeping are achievements of the evolution of consciousness.)

We know all too well the next stage, our Judaeo-Christian heritage in which the body, nature, sexuality and women became of the devil, the feminine principle was seen as pure evil and witches were burned at the stake. Nor was there any feminine Godhead left, except for the Virgin Mary, whose presence in the Catholic Church is therefore of far more than theological importance. With the Reformation, even she disappeared from Protestant societies; the feminine principle was totally gone from the church; there were no women in heaven. And of course this process of relegation to the devil, this making a witch or monster out of someone or some idea, is exactly what we do as individuals or societies when we are trying to break away from or out of a situation and move into the new. (It should be added, too, that the negative, shadow-aspects of the Great Mother and of the Feminine Principle are indeed monstrous: devouring, engulfing, bringing death as well as life, like the Hindu goddess Kali with her apron of skulls.)

Coming to this country and nearer our time, there was one particular period in the development of our frontiers when women were partners of their men and the two principles co-existed in remarkable balance and harmony. There is a beautiful book about this called “Westward the Women” by Nancy Wilson Ross, celebrating those exceptional women (there must have been many of them) who shared their men’s dangers and hardships while still cherishing and nourishing the feminine and cultural values. One marvels how they did it. Perhaps it was because a part of their psyches found itself returned to the familiar matriarchal consciousness which lives in accord with seed-time, the earth, the moon. In wild and foreign territory their spirits were at home.

With the arrival of the Industrial Revolution, what Bronowski calls the Drive for Power, we recognize where we are: the masculine principle in full and omnipotent control; goals barely formulated before they are achieved; the earth — and that includes some of its evils, its diseases — conquered, as we say; every imaginable, and unimaginable product produced, the solar system beginning to be explored. We must never forget that the masculine principle and patriarchal consciousness have, quite literally, produced and developed Western civilization, and that consciousness is an extraordinary “organ of adaptation and accomplishment” as Neumann calls it: it gets results, it by-passes nature’s slow workings and telescopes time

by transferring information. When one tries to grasp what has been achieved it boggles the mind. Today, particularly in our own country where the symbolic javelin was hurled the farthest, we are suffering from the excessive success of the masculine principle while everything in us that is tender, thoughtful, caring, is crying out in anguish and despair. The feminine principle has been shut away, devalued, and if not exactly thrown a bone, then its equivalent: placated with another electric gadget.

The English author, J. B. Priestley, writing from Texas in the mid-fifties in the book called “Journey Down a Rainbow”, said it was easy to see why America is described as a matriarchy: women have much of the money, there is all this fuss about Mother, and their adornment is the basis of a stupendous industry; also they are often very aggressive, and demanding and dictatorial. But this misses the point, he claims: America is dominated by the masculine, not the feminine principle; the values of our society are masculine, not feminine. If women have become aggressive it is because they are struggling to find satisfaction in a world that is not theirs: they are like the inhabitants of an occupied country, compelled to accept values and standards alien to their deepest nature.

“Woman wishes to take root (he writes); this society is uprooted. She is deeply conservative; this society is nothing if not progressive. She wants slow but certain growth; this society is restless and for ever changing. She desires an erotic personal relationship... what she gets is a muddle of hasty sex, social partnership and a tangle of legalities... She wants a securely rooted family tree; there are fewer and fewer of them. She believes, in the ancient wisdom of her heart, that nothing matters except the quality of personal experience, what real men, women and children are feeling about life; but this society attends to everything except that.... Her essential nature cries out for a devoted lover, healthy children, a home filled with easy intimate talk, laughter, absurd or charming ceremonies, and nothing whatever out of cybernetics and science fiction, buildings two thousand feet high, travel at five hundred miles an hour and dinners arriving in capsules.... So she takes her revenge.... bringing to the conflict her willpower and hysterical energy. She will be hard on men because it is they — or the principle they represent — who are responsible for her feelings of deep unease, frustration, insecurity... she will often be unfair...”

That is a pretty dreadful picture but, speaking for myself I can only say that in recent years everything feminine-principled in me has been revolted by the wasteful, mechanized aspects of our society and its cost to our deeper humanity. Consider that one phrase it has produced: “built-in obsolescence”. Could any concept go more deeply against the grain of the creature who for hundreds of thousands of years has





cared for the cooking-pots and water-jars and garments which were so painstakingly made? Even more, whose anatomy, physiology and psyche have all evolved to nurture and protect the built-in life *expectancy* of the species? How she is outraged by billions being allotted to 'better' wars, and not just for weapons superseding a hurled rock or bullet but total species and planet destroyers! Woman = body = vessel = world. Something way beyond the personal is threatened. The masculine "drive for power" principle having fulfilled itself to the brink of suicide, the feminine life-and-earth principle is in all-out revolt. As the poet Robert Bly puts it, the Great Mother is moving again in the psyche.

The feminist movement and "fem lib" revolution are inevitable, almost predictable, results, though what is happening there makes for a confusing picture and one must be extremely careful in judging it. The understandable criticism is made that in this movement woman (so far) has chiefly emancipated herself from her own femininity; the fear is that if women, in their rush to achieve certain human rights become too much like men — are too animus-propelled — the balance is upset, the Yin-Yang polarity lost. Certainly the expressions "militant feminists" and "radical fem-libbers" are contradictions in terms, for warlike and combative is what the feminine principle is not. Yet I have to recognize that in my own life it was when the feminine in me was — for whatever reason — blocked, or I felt it threatened, that I have become combative. As Florida Scott Maxwell puts it, when a woman feels beleaguered and beset, what does she do but "yell down the castle walls and call up every handyman in the place to help" — and this, of course, is the man in herself. So I think we must realize two things here: that the feminist movement is one, very necessary part of a much bigger phenomenon, that of the return to the feminine principle — and, secondly, that in establishing the human rights of women in society, the women who have led and are leading the movement have perhaps had to sacrifice the feminine in themselves for the sake of the rest of us. It is thanks to them that women are at last beginning to have a right to their own bodies and what happens to them; that they are able to pursue their own careers if they want to — although there is still much, very much to be done, for it remains extremely difficult for women to carry both home and career without help, financial and otherwise. But we are beginning to have women cabinet ministers, governors, even prime-ministers and women can and do achieve great things while still acting under the inspiration of the feminine principle. You know such women and so do I and if there has been, so far, more of an emancipation from the feminine than toward it, the movement is still very young. Françoise Giroud, new State Secretary for the Condition of Women in the French Cabinet, says that the present evolution of women and the way it will turn out is — to her mind —

the most profound revolution that highly developed societies will have to contend with.

Nor is it without reason that this present wave of the revolution came at the same time as the general awakening to the environmental situation and our new understanding of the planet after seeing it from the moon. The two phenomena are intimately related. For the sense of surroundings, of interior space — of home, if you will — is deeply embedded in the feminine psyche and "home" is now becoming enlarged to include the whole earth. The basic formula of woman = body = vessel = world which obtained in the early period of the species has taken on new dimensions, new meaning; it is returning, but on a different, *conscious* level. In fact, matriarchal consciousness has never disappeared: it still exists in those layers of the psyche that belong to the early periods of history, and it continually plays a part in men's lives as well as women's — in their inspiration, intuitions, hunches.

Other fascinating forces seem to be at work. In the collective unconscious of our time, there has been a growing awareness of a man's relationship to his own unconscious, feminine side and of a woman's relationship to her animus — or Yang. Surely the very fact that such minds as Jung's, Neumann's, Freud's and Erickson's, all the many pioneers and explorers of inner space, emerged in this particular epoch, is highly significant. It has also been pointed out that the hidden tendency of the life-process itself seems to be toward creating a more complex feminine psychology; some mutation in consciousness is taking place. Could this be because of women's long experience in relating to the dominant masculine principle? Has there been a subtle cross-pollination?

Meanwhile there are innumerable outer signs of these inner developments. Perhaps the most conspicuous one is the new feeling about the planet and the speed with which this planetary awareness is growing — paradoxically helped along by the masculine principle's great triumph in reaching the moon, and the sudden energy crisis and shortages resulting from the masculine principle's great excesses. The rate of growth of an ecological conscience — in itself related to the feminine — is almost breathtaking. One fascinating example was recently reported in the press in Brazil where a hundred and seventy million acres of forest have been eliminated, and from near Sao Paulo, the fastest-growing modern city in the world. In an outlying town, three people climbed into a single tree they didn't want cut down and stayed there till the police put them in jail. Yet that isn't the end of the story; the whole town rose in revolt, there were riots and demonstrations. All over one tree, after billions of destroyed trees! At some point, people do take a stand.

New-old life-styles begun by protesting young people in the violent sixties are also on the increase: less eating of meat (less killing); more articles being made by

hand; more individuals and families growing and preserving their own food than have done so since before agriculture became big business; in fact, one hears that home gardening equipment and seeds have now become big business. A striking change is in young people's appearance — their perceptibly gentler presence — and the sharing of work in the home: fathers caring for children, husbands helping wives with housework and the whole phenomenon of role-shedding and blending of roles formerly associated with one sex only. This movement seems to be much bigger than giving women greater freedom, big as that is; it is really an honoring of feminine values in both men and women, thereby enriching their joint lives, putting them in touch again with life's roots and secret processes. Also, and even in spite of ourselves, shortages and rising costs are driving us into a new-old attitude toward more moderate consumption and care for what we have. One evidence of this is the outstanding new trend in architecture toward what is called adaptive use and multiple use of buildings. Instead of automatically tearing old buildings down, running the bulldozers in and building enormous new structures, good old buildings — like the Wainwright Building in St. Louis, the old City Hall and Chickering Piano factory in Boston — are preserved and restored to new usefulness as apartments, shops, community centers. Practicality seems to be returning along with the old fashioned virtue of *thrift*, that fine old word which is no less than the substantive, noun form of the word *thrive*.

Another movement which has accelerated amazingly is the interest in Eastern systems of thought and meditation and the growth of Yoga, Tai-chi, Sufism and other esoteric disciplines — now even advertised on boardings along our pavements — all a great turning toward the spirit, and the unconscious, toward body disciplines and greater balance between the masculine and feminine principles.

Finally, and combining each of the above-mentioned changes, is the phenomenon of the intentional communities springing up and growing here and there in many parts of the world, experiments in an alternative, small community way of life. These are not the communes of the sixties, although communes may well have been their first, wilder seeds. What we are considering here are highly disciplined, carefully planned and organized communities for all ages, founded on principles of sound ecology, hard work and, in most cases, around the central core of a religious or spiritual practice. Where they differ from past Utopian communities is that they are not isolated from the world around them and, in those with which I am familiar, a very realistic view of world-wide trends has made their leaders and members choose a way of living more in keeping with the way things *are* and where they seem to be going. In fact, one might well say that the rest of us, going our merry or not-so-merry

way or dependence on an increasingly complex civilization are the Utopians — still continuing to assume that this tremendous and fantastically ingenious structure is going to survive and improve — technology will take care of that — we will learn how to “harness the atom” (what a phrase!), we may even be able to engineer an improved human species and so forth.

I am on the board of one such new age community — Lindisfarne, founded by William I. Thompson who wrote “At the Edge of History” and “Passages About Earth”, and I have visited and worked at another, longer established one — Findhorn, in northern Scotland, which has attained some notoriety through its portrait in “The Secret Life of Plants”. Not only the extraordinary vegetables and flowers they grow there, but everything I saw and experienced, related to the feminine principle — to the earth, and to reverence for life in all its forms; to caring — for the people you are with, the vegetables you are raising, the kitchen equipment with which you prepare them. To paraphrase Blake, the motivation seems to be “everything that *is* is holy”. There is no luxury, but there is comfort, order and beauty; there are studios for different fine crafts — not as hobbies or occupational therapy, but articles made for the community to use or to sell. Though the location is in a wild and rather desolate region of northern Scotland, one feels anything but isolated: visitors come from all five continents and Community members make use of the finest audio-visual equipment to produce cassettes and slide shows for their own educational and entertainment facilities and to broadcast to the world what they themselves are doing. To be there even for a few days is to feel yourself in a planetary village.

In the director's office at Findhorn there is a huge map of the world, probably six by nine feet across, bristling all over with different colored pins. It looks like those war-maps on which facts about ally and enemy are all marked out, but these pins either represent other new-age communities or individuals of outstanding practical or spiritual insight who are already living in the new age. It is not a map of peace as opposed to war, but a map of faith — in an emerging new principle. To give that principle a single name such as planetary is too simplistic, though it does indeed recognize the planet in the old way as our Great Mother and in a new way as the source of energies we have still to learn about. And it isn't fossil fuels or atomic power that are in question, but the existing natural ones, including those little known electro-magnetic forces which surround the world and of which we and consciousness are a part.

In thinking and speculating about the new age we are entering, several things stand out. The life-styles I've mentioned are a new-old way of living; the interest in esoteric spiritual disciplines is a new return to very old practices; the Findhorn and Lindisfarne kind of





community is a return to the extended family or tribe of early cultures, the new thing about it being that it is voluntary, planned, chosen — and there lies all the difference. This is a conscious choice, not an unconscious inevitability, just as all these manifestations are new forms of very old situations. They are quite literally re-turns — not in the sense of arriving back somewhere, which, in our usual masculine, goal-oriented way we usually associate with that word return, but of going once more in a given direction, around a center. As much as it is possible to think of the evolution of humanity and of consciousness, one can visualize it as a spiral (like that shell held to the girl's ear) and guess that we are perhaps at a point on a curve swinging in a familiar direction but at another level. This is inevitably different because, in spite of the claim that human nature doesn't change, hasn't improved and so forth (all of which may well be true) certainly our situation is vastly affected by our greater numbers and our enormously greater knowledge. The environment in which we are now living, says William I. Thompson, is *information*. The patriarchal consciousness which has dominated for anywhere from four to six thousand years has evolved to the point that it is making the intuitive fairy-tales of early peoples come true; see and hear at a distance, we get to the moon and planets and order technological jinn to bring us information about them; the unconscious dreams and experiences of early times are now being consciously carried out. But — says Neumann — “when patriarchy has fulfilled itself or gone to absurd lengths, losing its connections with Mother Earth” a reversal occurs: patriarchal consciousness re-unites with the earlier more fundamental phase.

It is enticing to speculate and to extrapolate. And it seems possible, even probable, that humanity is due, not for a going back to matriarchal consciousness since nothing in life does go back — but for a conscious turning again to the natural wisdom of matriarchal consciousness and the feminine principle. Unlike the pre-Greek marriage of two kinds of consciousness which produced Greek myths, (perhaps even the glory of Greece), the long predominant masculine principle may now combine consciously and by choice with a long dormant feminine principle. The Sleeping Beauty fairy-tale carried out? Perhaps — for it seems as though we now long for a balanced consciousness as well as desperately needing it.

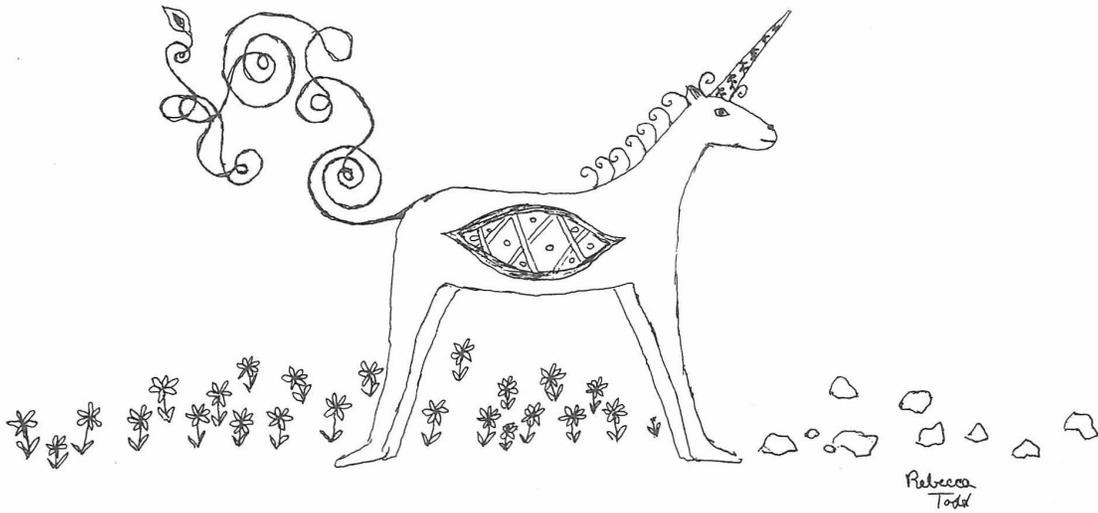
Really there is no other choice: the present path is suicidal as we all know. That “extraordinary organ of adaptation and accomplishment” has adapted to conditions it shouldn't adapt to. But this return will take doing, and it will take above all trust and mercy. What man must do is not fear being submerged again in the Great Mother; man has been there, done that, but he pulled himself out with such long effort that he still fears it and even tries to make his wife more rational,

more like himself. As Professor Higgins sang in “My Fair Lady”, “Why can't a woman be more like a man?” But this is precisely what she must not do. We women must, in fact, beware of our Yang, our own masculine principle, taking us over; we need to become *more*, not less inspired by the feminine values. And we mustn't forget that symbolically, the seat of matriarchal, of mother consciousness, is the heart, not the head. The ego of the masculine principle, that familiar head-ego, often knows nothing of what's going on in the deeper center, in the heart, and we must make it our business to listen to the heart. “The modern woman” wrote Jung, “stands before a great cultural task which means, perhaps, the beginning of a new Era.”

What would Jung observe if he were alive today? He was deeply excited by the significance of the Marian Year, celebrated in the Catholic world in 1954 — and so much has happened since! One can feel changes ever in the last two or three years and those with an ear to the ground of the Women's Movement may now hear not only the loud media-noise of those who are acting out all women's ancient hurt and anger, but the subtle appearance and growth of a new, affirming process. In many parts of the country, in consciousness-raising groups and support groups of various kinds as well as in women's clubs and intimate talk between friends, what might be called a leit-motif is being given voice. The old anger may still be part of it but what is newly heard is a deep sense of the importance of the feminine to the world as a whole. Women are waking up to their particular gifts and powers and there is a note of excitement in the discovery equally if not more compelling even than the demands for equality. They are beginning to feel — not just to see — how the feminine's emphasis on being rather than doing, and the unconditional quality of its givingness, are needed for its protection of the planet and its protection of men from their own destructive drive. What one hopes and prays for is that the resentments, sometimes the fury, of the devalued feminine will become transformed into the fuel for the kind of deep commitment necessary to work out a new balance between mother consciousness and the masculine drive for power. This cannot happen too soon to save us from ourselves.



Photo by Hilde Maingay



Morningsong

*a wooden room:
to be beside you in a simple bed
to wake in simple light
and to drink from simple cups
subtle water*

*simple wood and light
simple cup and bed
simple warmth and calm
difficult*

the simple word difficult

*simply open the door:
the pines and cabbages drink the light
the animals follow us with their eyes,
patiently wait to be fed.*

*after the dark milk of our dreams
we have the bright breast of this day*

*plain table subtle fire
our two plates round as moons*

bless the pan. bless the spoon. bless the morning.

— Dawnine Martinez

Political Prospects, Cultural Choices, Anthropological Horizons

— Richard Falk

If you see the sword coming.... blow the trumpet and warn
the people, then if those hearing the trumpet do not take
warning, their blood will be on their own hands.

— Ezekiel, 33:3-4

.... The future which we know throws its shadow long
before it enters.

— Anna Akhmatova,
"Amadeo Modigliano",

N. Y. Review of Books, July 17, 1975

It doesn't require biblical prophecy to discern the seriousness of the present human predicament. Disregarding apocalyptic possibilities, present realities associated with collective violence, mass poverty, ecological decay and widespread repression establish a firm foundation for discontent with the present political order at every level of organization. Symptoms of malfunction inter-link on a planetary scale, making our era the first of universal history. Such symptoms are emerging at the same time as the expectancy for social justice on the part of many people throughout the world is calling into question the prevailing order of privilege and tradition in national societies as well as connections between national poverty and weakness and the structure of international society.

Perhaps the link between "national security" and "nuclear catastrophe" remains the most powerful metaphor of a wider condition of pathological politics. The wisdom of our leaders and the resources and safety of our people depend on the proposition that our security can be safeguarded by mutual threats of genocide, threats upon the lives and well-being of hundreds of millions of people with no voice to protest against such awesome danger and uncertainty. A nuclear arms race goes on with expensive, technetronic innovations that improve accuracy, reliability, and destructive force of nuclear warheads, and bring into being new weapons systems (so-called vertical proliferation) that perpetuate the arms race with no longer even the pretense of adding to security. Simultaneously, the means to enter the nuclear club is spreading to many additional governments and may soon be available to splinter political groups as well (so-called horizontal proliferation). In a world system beset by inequality and premised upon a conviction that "might makes right", there is little hope of restraint by those who hold deep grievances. The rational prospect of self-destruction has never deterred those who are desperate or are deeply convinced of the justice of their cause. So we have a situation of mounting danger with no political will evident in any official institution

to transform the situation. A virtual sense of resignation and inevitability prevails. During the 1976 Presidential election campaign neither Gerald Ford nor Jimmy Carter queried either the decency or vulnerability of a security system permanently based on nuclear deterrence and arms competition. It should be noticed, however, that Jimmy Carter did assert in his Inaugural Address an intention to "move this year a step toward our ultimate goal — the elimination of all nuclear weapons from this earth." We must await with watchful skepticism, to see if these encouraging words are translated into appropriate policies; we must as well watch what our Soviet superpower rival does to encourage or inhibit impulses toward denuclearization. At present, however, there is no basis for hope that nuclear weapons can be eliminated so long as "security" is entrusted to national military establishments upholding the competitive position of the main sovereign states that together make up the world system.

Despite objective circumstances that make it reasonable to regard our basic political arrangements as obsolete, it seems necessary to recognize that they are also durable. The array of forces favoring the status quo makes it implausible to anticipate global reform that could overcome the inadequacies associated with a world of roughly 170 sovereign states of greatly unequal size, wealth and capability, each pursuing its state interests with scant regard for either each other's or the general well-being of the planet.

This double awareness that change in the political realm is, at once, necessary and impossible underlies the pessimism about the future that prevails in the West. Knowing that pessimism as a posture is often self-fulfilling and tends to immobilize, how do we resist immobilization and begin to consider the nature of the change required of our political structures and the choices available to our culture? I wish to address these issues in the context of planetary politics, seeking, above all, to encourage political activity that rejects a posture of hopelessness and is committed to the es-

establishment of a just world polity as the framework within which national societies and small communities are governed.

The change that is needed is so fundamental that its achievement must be measured over decades, possibly centuries, not years. Therefore, we launch, as it were, upon a voyage; we must depart with a firm sense of present actualities and move toward a destination that is provisional and remote. But, though the destination may be remote, the goals for undertaking the journey must be defined in a realistic spirit. Belief that the journey is possible must undergird the risks. Both the departure and a course wisely set can bring hope to those who join. An early launch is critical as each passing year makes the rites of passage more hazardous. The aspiration that accompanies such a voyage calls to mind a response of Abdul Qadir, a holy person of Sufi tradition alive in the XIIth century. On being asked by an inquirer for guidance — “Can you give us power to improve the earth?” — he is reported to have replied:

I will do better: I will give this power to your descendants, because as yet there is no hope of such improvement being made on a large enough scale. The devices do not yet exist. You shall be rewarded; and they shall have the reward of their efforts and of your aspiration.

(Idries Shah, *Tales of the Dervishes*)

We need to begin. In beginning we find the ground of our action and the hope needed to sustain risk.

Politics partakes of continuous evolution, offering the challenge of continuous self-transcendence. A “solution” of political issues in some kind of utopian polity is contrary to the evolutionary context of human existence, standing outside the flow of time. No ideal end of history can be happily envisioned; the stoppage of the flow of time would itself have a sterilizing impact upon human consciousness and so would be inconsistent with the judgment that some ideal polity had been attained. By contrast, the contingent politics we endorse is built on an ethos of revolutionary patience: contingent because subject to further evolution and dependent on fallible visions and actions of people; revolutionary because fundamental; patience because the revolution may not possess the capacity to transform existing power structures for many decades.

I. Manifesting Political Conscience

A commitment to possibility is required of those who undertake the voyage. Contingent politics is rooted in such commitment and encourages individuals and groups to manifest political conscience in the face of overwhelming resistance. Some problems may be too difficult for humans to solve. The problem of separating the security of large groups from the technological capacity — cool and abstract — to inflict massive death and destruction may be one such problem, but we do not yet know this. We have not yet



tried. We must start by asking the same sorts of questions as Liz McAlister, one of those brave, unsung persons among us who, as a peace activist, bears witness with body and soul to the reality and gratuitousness of the nuclear menace:

What has our use of, possession of, proliferation of the bomb done to our spirit as a people? What would it mean if we use these bombs again? What would it mean if others used them against us? What does it mean to destroy the world?... Why the pervasive moral numbness, the crippled public intelligence and imagination? Why the despairing suspicion that nuclear lunacy has gone too far, is too big to fight, too well financed, scenarioed, socially entrenched?... Why will the American left look upon the nuclear arms race as merely one of a myriad of pressing public issues? Who gives any of us the irrational luxury of that conclusion?

What makes these questions vivid for Liz McAlister is that she, in communion with others at Jonah House in Baltimore, is building her life around their seriousness. As I write she is in jail as a consequence of acts of civil disobedience. On December 28, 1976, she joined others in chaining shut the doors of the Pentagon and pouring blood on its columns. With these acts she dramatized for others the seriousness of nuclear policies and challenged the dominant sense

of their abstract, irrelevant bearing on our lives as well as the facile view that such issues can be left to the government and are, in any event, beyond the competence or reach of the citizenry.

More is required than manifesting a seriousness of concern; we have heard enough of mere opinions. Liz McAlister and her comrades offer us a view of action that defies a calculus of probabilities without claiming success in the face of formidable odds. Here is Liz McAlister's formulation:

Can a handful of folk — you and me — awaken conscience and concern? Can we bring life out of this present picture of death? Life is precarious and unpredictable, and the only way to live it is to make every effort to save it as long as there is a possibility of doing so.

(quotations from Liz McAlister taken from *Year One, Vol. II, No. 6*, December 1976)

The Vietnamese people and their revolutionary leaders could not have persisted in their war of almost 30 years against the French and the Americans if they had based their struggle on a calculation of probabilities. Only by concentrating upon the possibility of victory could they ignore the overwhelming probability of failure. Lacking the motivation and inspiration of the Vietnamese, the American Peace Movement, faced with tiny risks by comparison, was repeatedly disillusioned and intimidated because its activities did not produce quick and dramatic results. Such disillusionment arises from an insufficient feeling for struggle as a process that persists despite frustrations and failures. To move toward a just world polity presupposes an assurance that the means and ends are necessary and requires an acceptance of risk, struggle, uncertainty, at every stage, including the capacity to persevere in the face of apparent failure.

Manifesting conscience in concrete deeds by exemplary individuals is critically significant for raising political consciousness about planetary politics. At this stage, the abstractions about planetary danger are so generally accepted that they verge on being platitudes that numb more than arouse. Indeed, political leaders in control of the present outmoded, dangerous, and unjust system themselves bemoan human destiny and acknowledge the seriousness of such realities as nuclear threats, famine, poverty, terror and pollution. However, these same leaders accompany their words with policies that aggravate the very conditions they deplore. By acknowledging the dangers, the managers of power seek to enhance their capacity to govern by building public confidence; by ignoring such dangers in their policies they avoid challenging entrenched vested interests with a heavy stake in high technology, militarism, big business and overseas investment. Considering these realities, it is

hardly surprising that official rhetoric points toward the need for transformation and official policies toward the opposite need to sustain the status quo.

The art of ruling an obsolete political order depends on obscuring the gravity of a situation from the citizenry. Otherwise legitimacy would erode and radical movements gain a foothold. If unrest or adverse developments (war, famine, economic or ecological catastrophe) were to make this tension between words and deeds more apparent, as began to happen for many younger Americans in the late 1960's, then we would expect the political leadership to opt for repression rather than benign adaptation. And, indeed, the repressive policies initiated in the Johnson and Nixon presidencies confirm this assessment. On a more intellectual level, the viability of democratic accountability and participation is challenged. Interestingly, the Trilateral Commission, that organization of the super-elite dreamed up by David Rockefeller to coordinate the interests of dominant classes in North America, Western Europe and Japan, sponsored, as well as Jimmy Carter's bid for the presidency, a study arguing that the West was being endangered by an excess of democracy and that the future of these countries might depend on the willingness of their governments to establish greater control over their citizenry even if this meant curbing democratic rights (see published book *The Crisis of Democracy*). Perceptions of this sort reveal a deteriorating situation better than the formal reassurances given by our leaders, but the corrective responses proposed are so menacing that it is as critical to expose their design as to grasp the reality of positive possibilities.

It is juxtaposed against this background that the heroic exploits of individuals challenging these negative trends attain their significance. To the actions of Liz McAlister can be added those of Karen Silkwood, Jim and Shelley Douglass, Dan and Phil Berrigan and countless others whose concerns in a variety of policy contexts inspire their deeds of conscience. We mention these particular individuals to give substance to our argument. Karen Silkwood died a violent death under highly suspicious circumstances while seeking to expose the dangers of nuclear contamination to herself, to her co-workers, and indirectly to all of us, from the Kerr-McGee nuclear fuel plant in Oklahoma. Jim Douglass fasted for weeks against nuclear weaponry and, with the support of the Pacific Life Center, led a campaign of civil disobedience against a proposed base for Trident submarines at Bangor, Washington. With 70 others, Jim Douglass entered the base on August 8, 1976, by cutting a section out of the wire fence protecting the Naval facility. Proclaiming the Trident as an incipient "crime against humanity", the group chose to demonstrate on a Sunday that was between the anniversary of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombing. Jim Douglass has been convicted of "mali-

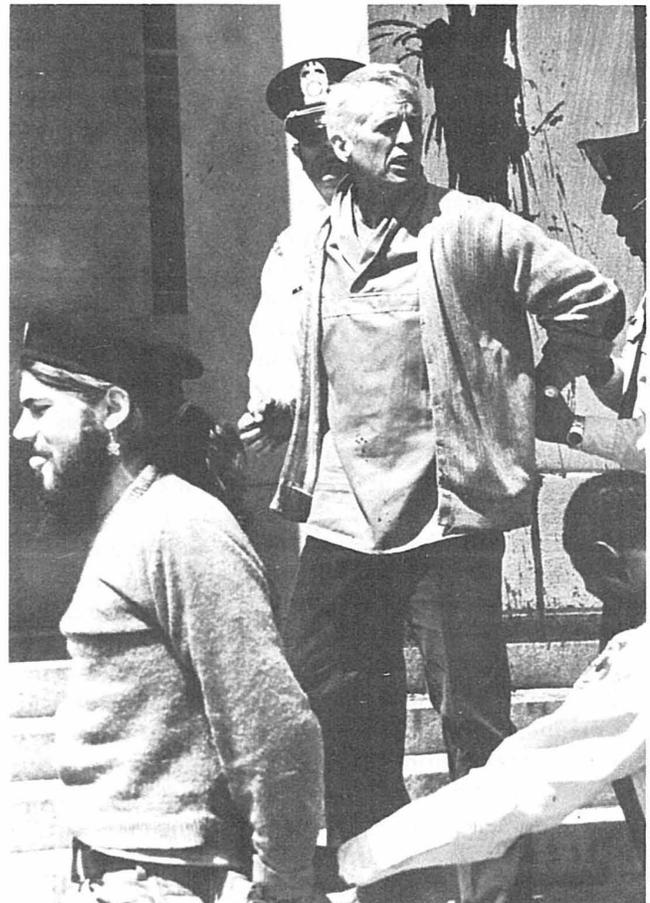


U. S. Agency for International Development has recently admitted to shipping abroad pesticides declared too dangerous for use in the United States; South Vietnam and Indonesia evidently were sent sixty-four metric tons of leptophos for use on cotton crops, despite evidence linking this pesticide to serious nerve disorders and paralysis. Nor can such official insensitivity be linked exclusively to a single ideology. The bureaucratic socialist states within the Soviet orbit have to varying degrees subjected their own people to repressive and cruel policies and have shown, in general, less concern for public well-being than have the capitalist democracies. For instance, Soviet failure to protect its population from the hazards of nuclear energy is notorious and appears far more serious than the lamentable record of protection achieved by American regulatory institutions (Atomic Energy Commission; Nuclear Regulatory Commission). Manifesting conscience through defiant confrontation with the arrayed power of the state is a lonely, frustrating experience that demands profound moral and political dedication. The media characteristically fail to interpret such activity in a clarifying way, confining attention to the punishment imposed by the state and ignoring matters of motivation and concern. Consequently individuals engaged in such activity often feel

cious trespassing” and sent to jail for 90 days; his wife Shelley, also a leader in the struggle, was sentenced to a term of 60 days. Similarly, Dan and Phil Berrigan’s frequent recent acts of non-violent but militant witness against the war system are treated as “crimes” by the system. To manifest conscience in ways that expose the violence of the dominant war system, especially if disrespect for property or official symbols of power is displayed, is regarded as “criminal.”

The message of such actions is clear: do not trust official institutions or public reassurances on matters of vital significance to the health and safety of the society. It is naive to assume that governments are committed to the well-being of even their own people despite the nationalist mythology associated with the sovereign state. Notably, the most flagrant abuses of human rights are at home, directed toward those who supposedly are beneficiaries of the protective custody of the wrongdoing government. Governmental behavior toward foreign societies, global interests and the future is even less conscientious. Protests against the irresponsibility of foreign governments is common enough, as when Liberia registers as seaworthy unsafe oil tankers (e. g. Argo Merchant) or China explodes a nuclear device that showers radio-activity over the northern hemisphere.

No state is immune from the tendency to endorse the pursuit of power, wealth and prestige, regardless of the harm done to others. A humiliating example can be drawn from recent American behavior. The



isolated and misunderstood. There is not as yet a supportive movement of the sort that existed during the Vietnam period that stands behind those who actively seek a radical restructuring of the world political system.

The message of the deed is not the only effective way to address these issues at this time in American society. Another way to manifest conscience is to embody positive values in concrete life circumstances of personal existence, including joining in the effort to build communities that are as independent as possible of high technology, of the state bureaucracy, and of the money economy. In this regard experimental communities prefiguring a future that is minimally dependent on the state and the market for self-realization are inspiring examples; they demonstrate that alternative futures of a positive sort can exist, at least on a small scale, and be made to work; that we are not yet irreversibly entrapped in an experience of cultural disintegration. Cultural explorations of this kind often are laden with hopeful political content; the New Alchemy Institute, the Philadelphia and Pacific Life Centers, the Lindesfarne Association and the Zen Center (San Francisco) are some positive examples with which I am familiar. In each context, the emergent reality radically repudiates the mainstream polity and culture, particularly its pursuit of a styrofoam prosperity that is rooted in a "national security mentality" and disjoined from the pursuit of life, liberty and happiness for each individual.

A third way of manifesting conscience with regard to planetary prospects is to depict as credibly as possible the contours of a just world polity. To avoid sterile utopography such positive visions need to be accompanied by transition strategies that weigh issues of attainability as seriously as those of desirability. These images of the future, drawn upon a large canvas of ideas and ideology, can foreshadow a positive destiny for human society that complements deeds of conscience by activists and cultural innovations by communities of conscience. As a civilization and as a species, we need images of "the big picture" because, in a period accurately called the age of interdependence, there is no space that is insulated from danger; "the little picture" of private actions and communal life will not flourish if the pressure on governance structures intensifies. If pressure increases, the state is certain to close off experimental space because of its threatening potential. Even now, most people in most societies have no present opportunity to manifest conscience in their lives without inviting death or brutalization. Therefore, a response to the current condition that has any prospect of success must include some program for mobilizing mass support around the possibilities of a new political order of planetary scope based on peace and justice. The World Order Models Project of the Institute for

World Order has been seeking to work out such images of "the big picture." In a series of books, intellectuals from the main regions of the world have projected distinct images of how to achieve a world political system based on peace, economic equity, human rights and ecological balance (e. g. Mendlovitz, ed., *On the Creation of a Just World Order*; Kothari, *Footsteps into the Future*; Mazrui, *A World Federation of Cultures*; Falk, *A Study of Future Worlds*). These images, though crude, initiate a global process of envisioning alternative orders of power and wealth that could exist at the *center* of societal arrangements rather than within experimental space along the peripheries of power. These images (not blueprints) emphasize public education as an immediate priority. Learning about the dangers and failings of the present order, associating these dangers and failings with prevailing values and institutional forms, and building a transnational consensus around new values and institutional forms are essential to shaping a different political order.

A just world polity embodying these values can take a variety of forms. The underlying institutional hypothesis is that the state system cannot provide sufficient "central guidance" to deal with problems of planetary scope such as fallout, ozone depletion, endangered species, nuclear peace, disaster relief, tanker spills. Separate state interests are too diverse and antagonistic either to achieve necessary levels of cooperation or to elicit appropriate concern for the well-being of the whole planet and of future generations. Both a global ethics of space and a futurist ethics of time must emerge as real components of political consciousness if we are to deal with major symptoms of societal distress.

A subsidiary conviction is that to conceive of central guidance on top of the state system, in the manner of "world federalism", would merely create a super-bureaucracy, exacerbating disastrous tendencies toward "bureaucratic centralism" that are already crippling spiritual possibilities on the national level. Therefore, our political imagination needs to be stimulated beyond the facile view that the existing failures of governance at the state level to provide adequate security and well-being can be remedied by expanding the scope of governance to a planetary scale. Technology is not the only realm where small is, or can be, beautiful; politics is paramountly such a realm as well. We need to envision how a perspective of smallness translates into social, economic and political forms of organization. How can we achieve world order values, in other words, within a political framework of minimum governance?

Such speculations spring from an understanding of the modern state, its role, strengths and limits. To dismiss the state as "obsolete" overlooks the degree to which peoples of the Third World regard the building of strong states at this stage of their development as a

progressive step enabling higher degrees of political, economic and cultural independence; i. e., the state as instrument of anti-imperialism may be regarded in a positive light. Such a positive function of the state does not eliminate criticism of statism as it operates within and among the northern tier of advanced industrial countries, but it does complicate the issue of the state.

Given the outline of priorities for a just global order, certain policies follow. Political and economic decentralization accompanied by a strengthening of cultural vitality must precede and predominate in the process of transformation. Political and economic decentralization at the state level, especially for the rich and powerful, is quite consistent with centralization of the interdependent aspects of international life (e. g., oceans, environment, reserves, human rights). This view of institutional change is dialectical — small is beautiful to achieve human-scale communities, large is necessary to cope with the destructive effects of unregulated and highly interactive human activity. The premises of a social movement to evolve a just world polity derive strongly from the ideological traditions associated with libertarian socialism, philosophical anarchism, humanism, and militant non-violence. Bakunin, Kropotkin, Whitehead, Gandhi and Martin Luther King are among the intellectual forbears of such a movement for change.

The political situation during a time of fundamental change is characterized both by exceptional vulnerability and by a release of creative energies among those that know the old game is almost up. On the one side, we hear intimations of impending doom (Richard Nixon confided to visitors during the last days of his presidency, “I could pick up that phone right now and in twenty-five minutes seventy million people would be dead”, as reported by Sen. Alan Cranston, *Rolling Stone*, February 26, 1976, page 35). On the other, we see growing evidence of a spiritual reawakening that includes the rediscovery that national destiny as well as human survival depend on our capacity as a species to participate reciprocally in nature and on our willingness to grasp both distant and near in their totality, as parts of the whole. Of course, such rediscoveries to take hold presuppose a cultural mutation, a veritable leap beyond where we find ourselves that cannot be anticipated by any projection of past trends or any incremental process of continuous adjustment. The options are polar: breakdown or breakthrough. In this sense, hope depends on a radical turn of mind. As Doris Lessing has written “.... there are lungs attached to men that lie as dormant as those of a babe in the womb, and they are waiting for the solar wind to fill them like sails.” (*Briefing for a Descent into Hell*). In contrast, despair (or its double — fatuous optimism à la Herman Kahn) reflects a prosaic turn of mind — deploy rational faculties to

continue doing what we have, making those small adjustments that seem possible given constraints on change, given the inertia of large organizations, and given the entrenchment of powerful elites and interest groups. Intellectually, as well as politically, no tools for adjustment available to those now running things can provide us with any prospect of a positive human destiny.

Future possibilities are also embodied in past social arrangements. Grasping the life style and world vision of American Indian tribes, for instance, vividly expresses a spiritual conception of human reality, including such values as simplicity, communal solidarity, and connectedness to nature, as expressed in *Black Elk Speaks*. Without romanticizing such past social orders, it is important to realize that satisfying modes of social existence preceded and were displaced by our highly rational civilization with its linear insistence on measurable progress and its insensitivity to cycles and spirals of evolution as assessed by normative achievements like peacefulness, happiness, beauty, spirituality, playfulness. Realizing values appropriate to our situation implies drawing upon the heritage of the past as well as upon innovation. Appreciation of a heritage is not a matter of nostalgia for that which is beyond recall, but of building upon the usable past while working toward a desirable future.

II. Some Comments on the Political Realm

The argument of this essay is that the political prospect of our time must be interpreted primarily in light of the possibilities of cultural renewal along specified lines of value change. What I wish to consider here are both the limits of our present political structures and the possibilities for cultural transformation of consciousness that will influence the configurations of a global policy. By “political” I mean the governing process, that is, the institutional arrangements of power and authority relating to security and welfare within specified boundaries. The territory can be as small as the family, as R. D. Liang points out in *The Politics of the Family*, or as large as the planet or larger. The central political focus in our time is the sovereign state, partly because of its accumulation of incredible firepower to sustain order at home and abroad. Science fiction writers like Ursula LeGuin in *The Dispossessed* extend our political imagination beyond the planet, disclosing the possibility of interplanetary, even intergalactic, politics. As expected, scientists are beginning to make these fictional boundaries of the imagination part of our potential social reality, as Gerald O’Neill’s projected “space colonies” indicate.

Politics is closely associated with “economics”, the defense or extension of arrangements for the production and distribution of income and wealth. Of particular importance in the present world situation is the extent to which the state upholds rights to own,

accumulate and transmit “private property.” The ownership of the means of production, which is the issue that most sharply distinguishes socialism and capitalism, the motivation underlying work, and the location of decisional power with respect to production priorities, such as planning versus profits or worker control, are critical economic issues. Other economic issues with political content include the transmission of inequalities from generation to generation, as in “inheritance” or class structure, and the economic inequalities between social classes that leave the “lower” classes below the poverty line. Equality of economic opportunity, independent of sex, race and age, also raises important issues these days for the political process. Class consciousness, the sense of injustice by the deprived, often determines whether the governing process rests on consent, education and persuasion or on force and intimidation. One sign of the deteriorating world situation is the declining presence of consensual government at the state level or, put differently, the disappearing legitimacy of government. The image of the “illegitimate” state arises from a composite of its inability to rule by consent and its related inability to satisfy fundamental human needs for security and welfare.

Politics also is inevitably bound to the pattern of beliefs, values, myths and goals embodied in a culture that identifies and unifies a particular societal grouping. The legitimacy of the state depends also on whether the pacifying myths of the state that arouse loyalty and obedience are commonly accepted by most of the people. “The king can do no wrong” was one such myth that was supportive of the prerogatives claimed by kings and queens. In the contemporary bureaucratic socialist state the reigning monarch has been replaced by “the party” that claims absolute wisdom to rule because it relies upon an infallible body of ideological dogma. Many sovereign states are multicultural; they encompass several religions, languages, heritages, group identities within given territorial boundaries. The political task then at the state level is to propagate unifying myths of shared experience that engender loyalty from each cultural element. If the apparatus of the state is dominated by one cultural entity, a wide-based loyalty is difficult to promote. Indeed, much political conflict in the present period arises from struggles of transnational and subnational groups to achieve greater measures of political autonomy within fixed state boundaries. Most of the separatist movements active in Quebec, Scotland, Iraq, Ethiopia, the Soviet Union, Spain and Belgium are operating in states where the apparatus of governing has been captured by an antagonistic ethnic, regional, religious or language group.

Cultural identity exists on a civilizational level as well as on the state level; the beliefs, values and goals of a civilizational identity transcend the boundaries

drawn on world maps or even the boundaries created by separate languages, races and religions. Sensate materialism, for instance, is buttressed by the conviction that “progress” in human affairs is possible only so long as science-based technology is continuously applied to increase the productivity of agriculture and industry. Both socialist and capitalist political ideologies share this underlying commitment to economic growth, measured by increases in GNP. An image of indefinite expansion of world product ignores “the limits to growth” arising from the constraints of finite acres of agricultural land, deposits of mineral resources and environmental capacity to absorb pollution. Despite a flurry of interest in 1972 in *The Limits to Growth* published under the auspices of The Club of Rome, the governing elites of the world have unanimously reaffirmed that, at least in the short run, only growth can deal with the economic issues that matter — jobs, inflation, not to mention profits. Although useful in posing questions, the Club of Rome perspective — elitist, technocratic — took for granted the desirability of maximum material growth, confining its analysis to matters of sustainability.

Only very recently has questioning of the cultural underpinnings of industrial civilization been taken seriously; hence, we have the gradual emergence of “a counter-culture” in Western, open societies. These gropings toward cultural renewal converge around the view that spiritual realities are the essence of every benevolent pattern of human development, that a technology geared to abstract and aggregate societal goals such as GNP increases and returns on capital is not socially beneficial, even if it were ecologically sustainable, and that economic over-development tends to occasion cultural regression. In a time of cultural regression, life seems meaningless and many pathological patterns of behavior emerge; there is a loss of personal and communal centeredness, a deepening alienation from neighbors, from nature, from spiritual possibilities. The inability of American citizens to walk safely in their cities, despite the extraordinary levels of societal affluence attained, is indicative of a failing culture. Neighbors who watch a woman being assaulted and raped from the safety of their apartment windows without bothering to telephone the police exemplify this loss of human connection. Such loss disposes the dissatisfied toward violence and the satisfied toward repression. Terrorism of many descriptions results on both sides. It is no wonder a police chief in the Bronx, when interviewed about his role, described it as heading “an army of occupation.”

Attitudes toward “nature” are reflected in a cultural identity. The mainstream culture of the modern West upholds the human capacity to transcend, to dominate and to pacify nature. This attitude has precipitated a global ecological crisis that is destroying our habitat and diminishing the life prospects of future

generations, simultaneously producing mass alienation. Individuals entrapped in this dying culture start from their own reality of "alienation" to explore a wide variety of strategies for "reunion" with nature. Not all of the explorations are desirable. At one extreme hard drugs impose intolerable costs on body and spirit as the price of a bogus, if exhilarating, reunion. At another, "quick fix" business propositions like EST help their customers tune out of the alienating circumstance of the culture, at least for a while, by various psychological devices of reinforcement, assuring individuals of the normalcy of their feelings and actions, as well as affirming egocentric views of social experience (get what you can, don't feel guilt, don't judge others).

Alienation from nature produces a mind set that compartmentalizes rather than interconnects and unifies. Thus, those who live in a faltering culture tend to examine its politics and economics but not necessarily its underlying values and beliefs. We accept that the governing process seeks to sustain economics that serve the dominant culture. Those who are deeply dissatisfied with economic performance because it is wasteful or unfair or destructive are characteristically at odds with prevailing politics, but do not necessarily draw the dominant culture into question. For instance, most of the ideological/political struggles associated with socialism, fascism and liberalism that have produced much of the high-technology in our country are carried on within an accepted cultural framework of secular materialism. Only recently is the political question beginning to be posed in cultural as well as economic terms. The Chinese emphasis on "cultural revolution" and the emergence of "counter-cultural" forms in the West are two directions of radical politics that express an appreciation of the fundamental role of culture in structuring societal forms, as well as human consciousness. Such a cultural emphasis tends to convert political outlooks from a concern with "events" (the revolution) to a focus on "process" ("permanent evolution"). Cultural preoccupations also lengthen time horizons as the processes of change connected with underlying beliefs, values, myths and goals are slow and continuous.

Whether attempts at cultural renewal can endure in a hostile global climate is questionable. Even China's experiment, while a profound example of cultural renewal, is not without deep difficulties. Mao Tse-tung's imposition of a rigid common conception that was intolerant of any dissent makes Chinese culture vulnerable, especially with Mao's absence, to the appeals of the technetronic age and the bureaucratic centralizing tendencies of the modern state. Cultural innovations in Western democracies are equally vulnerable. In some sense they are dependent on the beneficence of liberalism in the culture whose values they abhor. Such dependence can be corrupting, but,

even when it is not, the state will be disposed to crack down on innovation when pressures, resulting from the failures of liberalism, mount against its own claims of legitimacy.

To seek or to create possibilities for cultural renewal is a radical expression, in the sense of going to the root of things. Due to its nature, such expression is rejected by almost all those who dominate present political and economic arrangements. In my view, to expect political renewal to emanate from the official institutions of the state located in Washington is as foolish, though not quite as obviously foolish, as to expect cultural renewal to come from the TV networks or Hollywood movies. Indeed, the nihilistic quality of recent big budget Hollywood movies reflects a cultural condition of severe anomie — all viewpoints are corrupt; self-seeking is drenched with violence; technological gadgetry infatuates the characters; the backdrop is often an antiseptic surrounding of urban modernity, and a figure that critic Richard Eder identifies as the "anti-hero" dominates the script. "King Kong", "Marathon Man", "The Next Man", "The Killer Elite", "Network" and "Three Days of the Condor" are productions in this vein. A growing awareness of this cultural situation is more likely than is an awareness of the political situation. An underlying illusion of competence in the political arena persists, despite a temporary loss of public confidence in the integrity of the governing process created by Vietnam/Watergate. However, political and cultural consciousness are becoming reconnected here in the United States, and this holds promise.

Many of those who were disillusioned politically in the 1960's have been working seriously to rebuild the culture. Properly interpreted, their disillusionment does not entail renouncing goals like peace and justice, but it may represent a realization that these goals cannot now be directly, narrowly or exclusively pursued. What has been difficult for political radicals in America to learn is that the climate for change does not yet exist and that there is no quick fix for the polity once it is understood that the priorities for change are integrally linked with shifting values, as well as shifting power elites. But such an understanding is essential, for without a culture-based politics of renewal every prescription for either reform or revolution is certain to fail when put to the test. In addition, in the United States there is no basis as yet for mobilizing support for radical change. Revolutionary initiatives, being premature, prompt counter-revolutionary tactics by the state. Indeed, modern experience with political revolutions increasingly is being interpreted by those Western radicals seeking fundamental structural changes in social, political and economic realms, as discrediting politics per se. More accurately, this experience should be understood as discrediting autonomous politics. Such an understanding could move us

beyond despair for the future, because the therapy, although slow, is attuned to the pathology as well as to the relation of forces and can be immediately vindicated in concrete situations of individual and group behavior.

When a country is materially impoverished, as is the case throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America, the process of alienation can be deferred if the societal energies are mobilized around the elimination of poverty, the attainment of equity and a vision of societal purpose. Cuba, after decades of corruption and slumber, has illustrated this dynamism during the Castro years. But if it is correct that spiritual identity is integral to human fulfillment, then alienation is bound to emerge if Cuban society is constrained for an indefinite period by a materialist ethos of work and service. Even though "work and service" under revolutionary conditions can partake of some spirituality, especially when they are inspired by a charismatic leader with a vision of the future, cultural creativity eventually presupposes a level of individual freedom to transcend earlier societal norms or a traditional core of shared beliefs that provides a spiritual center available to all. Without either freedom or tradition, cultural decline is bound to result and a condition of cultural underdevelopment emerge. We know from Western experience that materialist satisfactions, even in circumstances of individual freedom, will not prevent cultural underdevelopment if spiritual values are totally divorced from the daily realities of work and living.

Poor countries have stressed the priority of economic development in recent years. Only lately has it become clear that, if the strategy of economic development is dominated by the goals of a privileged elite or is carried out without concern for human effects, the results are likely to be adverse. Political or economic changes that are separated from a preservation of human rights are necessarily reduced to a conventional political attempt to seize power on behalf of a repressed elite. Even if a one-dimensional change should succeed and live up to the promises of those seeking power, it is unlikely to provide the kind of restructuring of behavior and institutions capable of integrating political, economic and cultural perspectives. For this reason, a new stress on human rights is being made around the world by those who hold progressive ideals associated with peace, empathy and love of nature. The elementary realization of human rights is a precondition for cultural renewal.

This emphasis on human rights is also a response to the repressive exercise of state power in a situation of deepening crisis, especially throughout the Third World. These tendencies can be summarized as a drift toward several varieties of authoritarian rule in the Third World. The authoritarian solution, combining extreme centralization of power and brutal practices

of repression that include torture on a systematic basis, is a direct consequence of reliance upon capitalist or market-oriented development strategies in contexts of massive poverty and extensive inequality, where an acute sense of injustice on the part of victims exists. That is, development strategies, exemplified by such societies as Brazil or South Korea, generally put the governing elite in the service of a somewhat larger societal grouping, about ten to twenty-five per cent of the total, composed of traditional land-owning and industrial elites, skilled laborers, merchants and the civil servants, including the military. A recent affirmation of faith in this development model was inadvertently made by Pablo Baraona, Director of the Central Bank in Chile and a close economic advisor of the Pinochet regime, when he asserted that the fact "that more than 90 per cent of the people are against our policies is proof that the model is working" (quoted in *N. Y. Times*, December 8, 1976, page A18).

The organic interplay of politics, economics and culture provides the basis for reconstructing the future in beneficial ways. Such a view starts with a critique of those forms of "development" that rest on mere "growth", without emphasis on "justice" or "the quality of life." It moves from critique to activity, either by way of political struggle or cultural innovation. Because societal circumstances vary dramatically, what makes sense in the United States may be impossible to undertake in the Soviet Union and inappropriate in Zaire or Bolivia. There is, however, a common motif: humane development. That kind of development will encourage political, economic and cultural forms that move toward goals that can be professed under all circumstances: non-violence, economic well-being, human rights and ecological balance.

Concrete expression of these shared goals will be determined by the particularity of individuals and groups as they decide how best to act given their own talents, desires, circumstances of time and place. In general, however, we require a solution of planetary scope as well as one of human scale. We require myths of solidarity and destiny that generate the political will to evolve planetary procedures of central guidance. As soon as possible, we need minimum institutions of planning, regulation and assessment that are both responsive to the realities of interdependence and reflective of a new positive consensus to create planetary community. Our need is urgent, but the nature of the task is such that it cannot be rushed without being ruined. Decades, at least, will be required.

Finally, cultural politics on the levels of human interaction and planetary politics on the level of global interdependence will depend mainly on grassroots political possibilities. The official elites in most

governance structures are incapable of a radical restructuring of their attitudes and behavior. Instead, the citizenry must be mobilized to challenge the assumption of official institutions; leadership responsive to a new populist ideology must emerge. Whether this can happen, and where, is problematic. Do we look to Governor Jerry Brown as a political forerunner, a bearer of some of the values of cultural renewal but also as one compelled to operate, for political effectiveness, within a web of vested interests and stereotyped beliefs?

We do not know whether we can or will succeed. But we do know, I think, that we will be lost — spiritually, and quite possibly, biologically — if we fail to try. The case for trying seems overwhelming.

III. An Anthropological Postscript

Science fiction writers have always been acutely aware that the universe may include several planets capable of sustaining human-type societies and that the fundamental history and organization of each may be dramatically different. It is often unclear whether a particular author believes that the foundation of this difference is a matter of cultural evolution or reflects the presence in the universe of an array of species with differing social traits. In the latter instance, the interpretation of the difference is largely an anthropological matter, and its careful study could help illuminate both limits and potentialities bearing on human development.

Ursula LeGuin touches on these issues toward the end of *The Dispossessed* when the physicist-hero Shevek is voyaging back to the anarchist planet of Anarres after an extended visit to Urras, a planet that seems close to what our earth civilization might become in a couple of centuries if we prove lucky enough to escape an apocalyptic transfiguration. Shevek engages in conversation with Keng, the ambassador from Terra, about different human societies, those "...billions of people in the nine Known Worlds?" Shevek explains to Keng that his creative breakthrough ("Transilience, space travel, you see, without traversal of space or lapse of time") would make possible a mutually beneficial, new planetary order among these nine worlds, but that A-Io, a country in Urras, sought possession of the new understanding of ultimate reality for imperialist purposes, "to get power over others, to get richer or to win more wars." Shevek, in the end, chooses to repress knowledge under these circumstances: "I will not serve *any* master."

Keng concludes that the anarchistic community of Anarres sounds too good to be true: "I wept listening to you, but I really didn't believe you. Men always speak so of their homes, of the absent land.... But you are *not* like other men. There is a difference in you." Since Anarres was originally created by countercultural struggle on Urras, the difference discerned seems

mainly unconnected with species traits, but is an expression of cultural potentiality.

But Keng herself sounds like one who comes from neither world. To her "Urras is the kindest, most various, most beautiful of all the inhabited worlds. It is the world that comes as close as any could to Paradise." And she notes that for Shevek, in contrast, Urras is Hell. What, then must Terra be like? Keng describes Terra:

My world, my Earth, is a ruin. A planet spoiled by the human species.. We controlled neither appetite nor violence; we did not adapt.... there are not forests left on my Earth. The earth is grey, the sky is grey, it is always hot... there are nearly a half billion of us now. Once there were nine billion.... We failed as a species, as a social species.

The destiny that befell Terra is now threatening us. In a sense, Urras is our positive destiny, Terra our negative destiny. Both are dysutopias. Anarres is depicted by Ursula LeGuin as "an ambiguous utopia", problematic, but better than anything the rational mind can calculate, an anarchistic polity that embodies a radically different set of societal arrangements. Is it out beyond the reach of the human species and, hence, utopian, in the sense of being imaginable but unattainable? Or is it one of the possible lines of potential human development encoded into our genotype as a species? After listening to Shevek tell about his own belief in human potentiality, Keng exclaims "I thought I knew what 'realism' was," and Shevek replies, "How can you, if you don't know what hope is."

Hope, to be credible, has to be founded on radical expectations. Muddling through cannot expect to achieve more than the world of Urras and is more likely to invite the fate of Terra, a degraded human existence, but not total extinction. Jean Paul Sartre, interviewed on his seventieth birthday, described his greatest failing as not being radical enough, not going far enough in following through on his beliefs. How to find the insight and wisdom and strength to be radical enough is probably the most important issue facing individuals who are both realistic and hopeful about the future. I was recently impressed by Anais Nin's self-appraisal at the end of her sixth volume of diaries: "I feel I have accomplished what I hope to accomplish: to reveal how personal errors influence the whole of history and that our real objective is to create a human being who will not go to war." This outlook is what I mean by an anthropological perspective.

Such a perspective concerns *limits* as well as *horizons*. Earlier in this essay I ventured the view that we may be dealing with some problems that are too difficult for human beings to solve. If that is correct, the expenditure of effort for their solution merely

deepens frustration. I feel that such reasoning applies in recent decades to many dimensions of technology. We have already allowed our curiosity and greed to open too many Pandora's Boxes to survive very well as a species. Our sense of historical absolutism is such that *any* step needed to achieve immediate security or prosperity seems justifiable at the time. The nuclear bomb is a prime instance of anthropological arrogance. We are the wrong species to handle this kind of technology in any acceptable way. Our political forms are too unstable to assure restraint over time. Our personality structures are too variable to ennoble much confidence that psychopathic behavior will not intervene at some stage to unleash a gratuitous nuclear holocaust. Furthermore, the biosphere is subject to such a variety of natural disasters that it is impossible to assure physical stability for long time periods. This questioning of human capacity seems well-founded given recent experience as diverse as Auschwitz, Hiroshima, Gulag Archipelago.

The experience with nuclear technology is worth examining. The bomb was originally developed at a furious pace ("The Manhattan Project") because of a fear during World War II that Germany might acquire it first. But once we had acquired it, we used and developed it along quite different lines. The use of the bomb against the Japanese lacks a credible national survival justification, despite the rationalization that it saved lives of the society that used the bomb. Even this limited claim of "military necessity" is controversial; some historians feel that Japan was prepared in any event to surrender, or would have, had a demonstration explosion been made. After the bomb was used, the United States made only a short-lived, half-hearted and controversial attempt to achieve nuclear disarmament. When the attempt failed in 1946, a process of continuous evolution of nuclear weaponry and its gradual dissemination began. Furthermore, the governments of nuclear states have insisted on independent discretion to use

these weapons as they see fit in international conflict situations.

And now thirty years later energy concerns are leading governments around the world to make heavy investments in nuclear power industries not only as sources of electricity but also for assured access to nuclear weaponry at little additional cost or effort. Like the bombs, nuclear reactors create hazards that require the kinds of perfect control that human society is ill-equipped to provide. Too much stability and technological ingenuity is required over too long periods. To aspire after such stability is itself undesirable and dangerous, creating pretexts for further interventions by the state in our lives. The presence of numerous nuclear reactors in societies that include many disturbed and tormented individuals, as well as social and political discontent, points up the need for extensive police surveillance and a permanently militarized polity. Any enlightened citizenry would demand to live in a police state as the lesser of two evils in the event nuclear power takes hold in a major way.

Like Icarus we are trying to fly close to the sun with waxen wings. Perhaps this impulse to do more than we can has been part of our temperament as a species from the beginning; perhaps, it played a positive role in earlier periods, helping our ancestors to find their way out of the cave and enabling human beings to accomplish marvelous and mysterious things. But with the advent of nuclear technology, biogenetics and weather control, we have exceeded our limits as a species. The wax that holds our wings is melting. Is there time to descend? Do we have the wisdom and will to do so?

Anthropologists of the future will be fascinated by whether we pose and respond to such questions. For now, those who care about the future will do well, I think, to mobilize their energies to oppose the powerful forces that insist upon the inevitability of technetronic momentum.



Photo by Hilde Maingay