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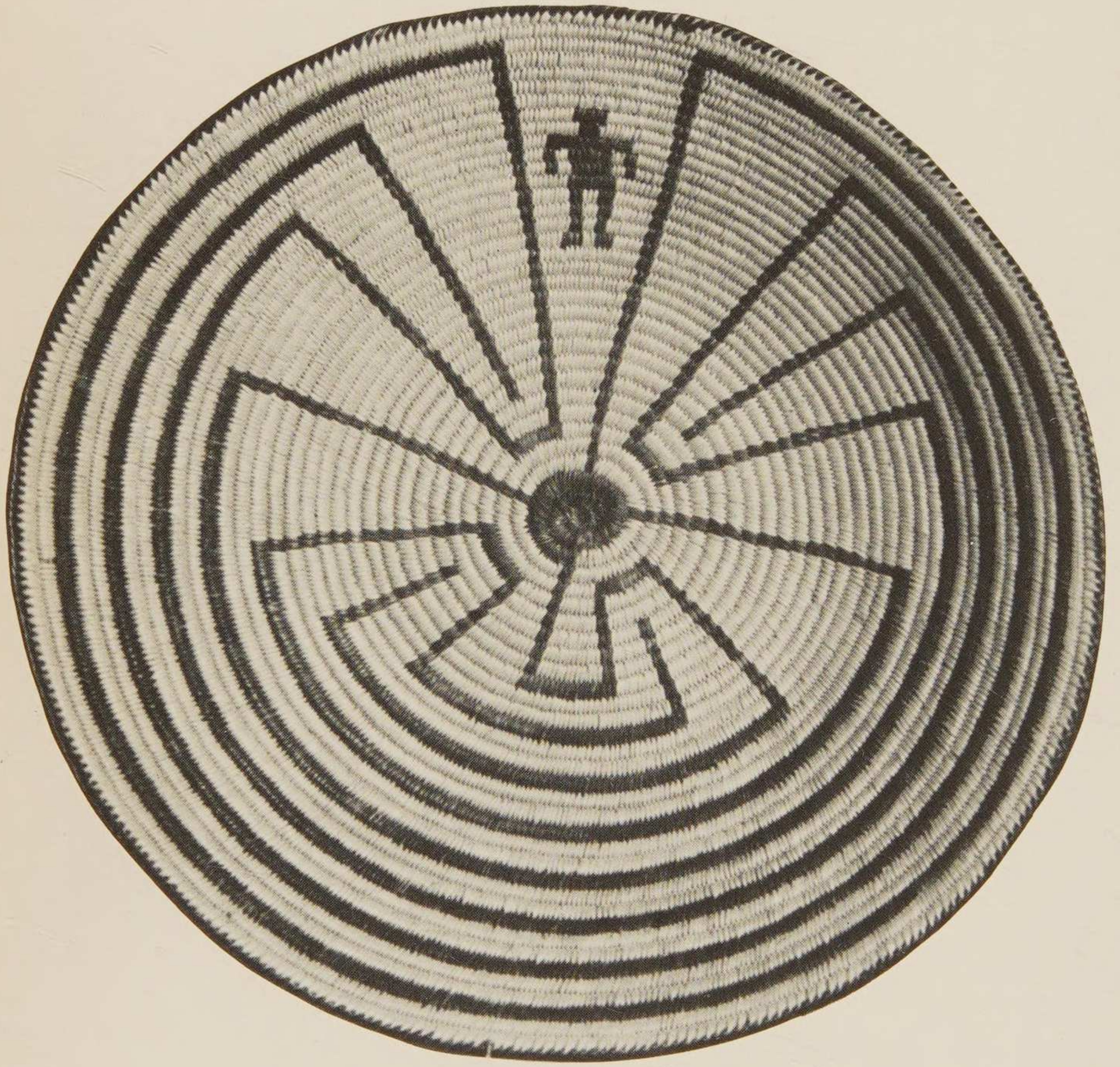
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OBSTACLES

Italo Calvino The Dalai Lama Jacques Lusseyran
David Malouf Abraham Menashe Mohawk Chiefs at Akwesasne
Jonathan Omer-Man Brother David Steindl-Rast Al Young



SEP 24 1980

VOLUME V, NO. 3

PARABOLA

OBSTACLES MYTH AND THE QUEST FOR MEANING

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Cover: Moencopi Strata, Capitol Reef, Utah, 1962 by Minor White. Courtesy The Minor White Archive, Princeton University.
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Inside Cover: Basketry tray, Pima, Arizona, late 19th c. Courtesy of the Denver Art Museum.

FOCUS

Obstacles. We spend our lives fighting them, overcoming them, getting around them, or making excuses for being stopped by them. How much of all this energy is spent tilting at windmills? Something, certainly, stops us from attaining what we wish and being what we could be; but is it what—or where—we think it is?

Opposition and challenge from the outside evidently stimulate us to do battle, exercise and train us, develop our muscles and our patience. They play Marpa to our Milarepa, if there is any Milarepa in us at all. They help rather than hinder. But there is something inside everyone that resists help—a coward shadow that dogs the heels of our potential hero. This is the real obstacle, and it is very close to home; we have met the enemy, as Pogo says, and he is us.

I think this is why the theme of our present issue has touched us and those who have written for us in such a heartfelt way. It is *our* situation. Ever since early 1979 when we first saw Abraham Menashe's photographs we have been drawn to the question and the extraordinary potential of obstacles. Hindrance and possibility, force and resistance, I cannot and I would, are



what we are made of, from little boys and little girls to big ones. And the capacity to reconcile that inner conflict—over and over again, perhaps, in a gradual process of creating a more mature and balanced whole—is the exclusively human characteristic; it is what differentiates us from the animals. We know in our bones that the final glory, the ultimate achievement, of the human being is to master himself. This does not have to mean that he is successful in “overcoming” all those outer barriers, nor that he becomes a saint who eliminates every trace of the natural man. One who masters himself is in charge of what he is. He has brought about a relation between the animal and the divine in him, through which the animal is cared for and the divine is served. And this means, sometimes, the apparent *absence* of struggle: the huge, often invisible effort of acceptance of what one cannot change. No aspect of the battle for self-mastery is harder than this one of renouncing one’s natural “rights” and desires, to find what lies beyond them, an inner peace. For when the higher will conquers the lower, the result appears to be a joyful freedom from both victory and defeat. “To be victorious and to be defeated are equal,” says Don Juan. “Everything is filled to the brim and everything is equal and my struggle was worth my while.”

Such freedom must be costly and painful to acquire, and we put off the attempt to gain it as long as possible—usually until it is too late. But we know it is our real destiny, and that we are capable of achieving it. (“You could free me if you would,” says the enchanted princess to the man in the fairy tale.) And when we are aware of someone else engaged in this struggle, we recognize it with a kind of leap of the heart. The joy of Menashe’s photographs of children with crippled bodies—*not* crippled children—resonates in us; we feel it doubly. Another person fights our battle with us and for us; we are allies.

It was some of our contributors to this issue who showed us what our theme was really about, and that no matter how bravely one may face the outer foe, the true nobility of the warrior is in how he faces himself. Any animal will fight for its physical life and needs, but only a man can fight for his soul.

We would like to dedicate this issue to the spirit of Jacques Lusseyran, to His Holiness the Dalai Lama of Tibet, and to our friends, the chiefs of the Mohawk Longhouse at Akwesasne.

—D.M. Dooling

FULL CIRCLE/A Readers' Forum

PARABOLA is interested in an exchange of ideas and points of view through the active participation of its readers. We welcome your letters and comments on the issues raised in our pages. Please address all correspondence to:

The Editor, PARABOLA, 150 Fifth Avenue,
New York, NY 10011

Noting, in your Vol. V, No. 1, that you plan to offer an interpretation of the numbers song, "Green Grow the Rushes," I wonder if you can make anything of this passage from Goethe's "Faust" — Part I, "Witch's Kitchen" scene:

This you must ken,
From one make ten,
And let two be,
Make even three,
Then rich you'll be.
Skip o'er the four!
From five and six,
The Witch's tricks,
Make seven and eight,
'Tis finished straight,
And nine is one,
And ten is none,
That is the witch's one-time-one!

(George Madison Priest translation)
—Robert Clancy
Jackson Heights, NY

While recently trying to determine which books from my collection to sell, I came across one entitled *One Is God*, illustrated by Christine Price and published by Frederick Warne and Co., Inc. Immediately I remembered Ms. Raphael Carse's letter regarding the song "Green Grow the Rushes" in Vol. V, No. 1.

Both Christianity and Judaism have a claim on this song, according to the research done by Ms. Price, who says the song has been with us for nearly five hundred years. The following are the Christian meanings she has come up with.

One is one and all alone/And evermore shall be so. "The first verse is one of the few whose meaning has never changed. In the second verse the 'lily-white boys' can mean Gemini, the sign of the zodiac for the springtime month of May, but they can also stand for Jesus Christ and Saint John the Baptist. The third verse often has 'Rivals' instead of 'Wisers,' and this is said to mean the three persons of the Holy Trinity—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The 'Gospel Makers' of Verse Four—the writers of the first four books of the New Testament—are sometimes changed to 'Gospel Preachers.' But it is the fifth verse that seems to be the most confused. Originally it referred to the five-pointed star, an ancient symbol that was marked on the doorways of houses to ward off the Devil. When this meaning was forgotten, the 'symbols at your door' became 'thimble over the ball,' 'plum boys at the bowl,' or even 'farmers in a boat'! In the same way the 'six proud waters,' meaning the waterpots at the Marriage at Cana, were made into 'six broad waiters' or sometimes 'cheerful waiters.' The 'seven stars' are always the stars in the constellation of Ursa Major, the Great Bear, and Verse Eight usually stands for angels, although they may be called the 'Eight Commanders.'

"It is hard to guess who is meant by the 'nine that brightly shine' in the ninth verse,



but occasionally this is sung as 'Nine for the Maiden Muses,' who come from the myths of ancient Greece. 'Ten for the Ten Commandments' and 'Twelve for the twelve Apostles' are always the same; one version of the song is even called *The Ten Commandments*. 'Eleven for the eleven that went to heaven' is not sung as a separate verse because it recalls the sin of Judas Iscariot, the betrayer of Jesus. The eleven are the Apostles—not counting Judas.

"'Green Grow the Rushes, Oh!' is a true folk song, living on for hundreds of years because people love to sing it. But in the beginning this was first and foremost a song of faith, a song about holy things. It belonged to a whole family of old, old counting songs in many languages, and one of the oldest of these was a Hebrew folk-song for Passover called 'Who Knows One?'" [For a commentary on this song and its interesting parallels with "Green Grow the Rushes, Oh!", interested readers may write Full Circle c/o PARABOLA, 150 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10011.]

Both Ms. Carse (I am sure) and I are grateful to Frederick Warne and Co. for publishing this, to Christine Price for her research, and to PARABOLA for tying us all together on this one planet.

—Barbara Cahill
Montvale, NJ

Thanks for the kind review of *African Rhythm and African Sensibility* (Vol. V, No. 2). In reference to reviewer Dale Fitzgerald's query, I dealt with my African teachers in English, pidgin, Akan or—in serious cases—with a translator. You might be interested to know that I am now writing a two-volume ethnography of Dagbon based on the lectures of Alhaji Ibrahim, in his own words. I would also like to recommend to your readers Paul Berliner's book, *The Soul of Mbirá* (University of California Press); it's great.

—John Chernoff
Pittsburgh, PA

David Reck reviewed *The Soul of Mbirá* in PARABOLA, Vol. IV, No. 2.

—The Editors

PARABOLA especially regrets the following omissions in previous issues:

—The credit line for the photograph on page 98 (Vol. V, No. 2). It is: Copyright ©1980 Abraham Menashe.

—The translations, "Old Oaks and Ancient Sages," (Vol. V, No. 1), by Jonathan Chaves were made possible through the assistance of a research grant from the Translations Program of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

—The publisher's name on page 114 (Vol. V, No. 2). *Time Stands Still* by Keith Critchlow with photographs by Rod Bull is published by and available from:

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Our sincere apologies to our contributors.

—The Editors



Miz Chapman Tells Us the Score

A MEMOIR, 1947 by Al Young

“Now, son, I know you can do better than that. You’ve got to do better. You know how come? Because you’re black, that’s why. Nothing’s going to come easy in this world that’s laying for you out there, so you might as well get used to have to be twice as good as white folks at whatever you do if you intend to ever make anything out of yourself.”

The woman speaking wasn’t my mother. It was Miz Chapman, my second-grade teacher at Kingston Primary School for

Colored in Laurel, Mississippi, 1947. My mother, who later bombarded me with similar warnings, was still quite young then. Unable to look after and provide for all of her children, she had sent me and a much younger brother back from Detroit to our native state to spend a couple of years with her sister, my Aunt Doris, and her family. This practice wasn’t unusual in that distant era, long before such notions as the Nuclear Family, the Civil Rights Struggle, and Black Pride were widespread.

Zora Neale Hurston, the late and eminent novelist and folklorist, spoke of being “passed around the family like a bad penny.” Perhaps because I was only seven at the time, I didn’t feel as though I were

being farmed out. Still, it felt peculiar to be separated from my true parents, that is, until I landed in Miz Chapman's room in that big, dilapidated, gray, wooden structure surrounded by mud.

She was, indeed, a remarkable woman, this scolder and molder of minds, this Miz Chapman. Darkskinned, white-haired, scalding of eye and seemingly telepathic, she was often given to warm laughter. Moreover, she possessed an uncanny ability to train her laser-like sight on your very soul. With a look that variously melted or chilled, Miz Chapman was capable of reading everything there was to know about you—past, present, or future—at a glance. And she was memorably tough on her secret favorites; pupils from whom she expected nothing short of excellence. Unfortunately, I happened to be one of those.

One chilly Friday morning in late autumn, Miz Chapman casually announced that anyone who wanted to stick around after school to “learn a little something about the history of the Negro race” was welcome to do so. “It’s important that you all know about that,” she added.

Given all the activities, sanctioned and unsanctioned, that went on after school in our sad little corner of that textile mill and cannery town, I was surprised to find myself remaining after classes had let out just to learn what Miz Chapman had to teach us. Since it was all entirely voluntary—and that went for our teacher’s time as well—only a handful of us had been curious enough to take up the invitation.

Drawing a long face, a twinkle in her eye, Miz Chapman gave us each a special look, then seated us in a semicircle around the bell-shaped wood heater, now grown cold, that squatted in one corner of the rickety room. We had to keep on our coats and jackets and sweaters.

“You poor things,” she began, removing her glasses and pinching the bridge of her nose. “Poor babies. I wish there were

more of you here because this here is something you really need to know about. We’ll just have to begin where we have to. Nothing makes a failure but a trial.”

Those cryptic, opening remarks of Miz Chapman’s were making me giddy with anticipation. I was innocently fascinated and yet, at the same time, slightly frightened. What on earth was she about to tell us that was so important that she found it necessary to lower her voice so mysteriously, so ominously?

“I reckon we’ll have to start with slavery,” she said. “Now, you all know about slavery, don’t you?”

Some of us knew vaguely about slavery and some of us didn’t. It must be remembered that public school classrooms back then were often filled with pupils of varying ages. You simply had to master the material Miz Chapman was teaching before she would advance you to the next grade. There was no getting around it. In that second-grade class of hers, there were kids old enough to be third-graders, and several lanky, strapping ones of fourth-, fifth- or possibly sixth-grade age.

“Miz Chapman, ma’am,” I raised my hand and asked, “would you please explain what slavery was?”

She folded her hands in her lap and leaned forward on her chair. “There was a time—and it wasn’t all that long ago, either—when colored people were in slavery. That was how it started out, in this country anyway, in these United States, this place we call America.

“Slavery,” she continued, rising from her seat and pointing, “is when you—and by you, I do mean *you*, *you* and *you*—are owned by somebody else, the same way somebody might own a dog or cat or a mule or cow. Now, the way the Creator meant for things to go, there wasn’t supposed to be any such thing as slavery. People all over the world, all they are is brothers and sisters. But, you see, we don’t always go by God’s laws. We’re like a world full of wayward children. We forget about the Lord and do things our way, and what that means is any old kinda way.”

She paced around the heater momentarily, as though pulling her urgent thoughts

together. “People out of Spain, England, France, Holland, and different places, they hopped in their little boats and sailed over here to start them up a new country, so they say. Now, you all remember when we were studying about Christopher Columbus and the Pilgrims and all those folks? Remember how the Indians were already here when they stepped off the boat? Well, keep that in mind because that’s important. We’ll get back to this and talk about it some more because it all fits in with what I’m fixing to tell you.”

Somewhere down inside my stomach, a little knot was beginning to tighten. I looked around at the other faces to see how my classmates were taking this old woman’s words. Like the rest of this motley assemblage, I had seen my share of western movies, but had never stopped to consider why the Indians were always going on the war path, or why Tom Mix, Tim Steele, Hopalong Cassidy, and other cowboy heroes were forever shooting at them. Everybody sat engrossed, entranced and wide-eyed.

“You see,” said Miz Chapman, peeping around furtively before sitting again, “you can go buy yourself a mule and hitch that mule up to pull your wagon or plow your land. You don’t have to pay that mule a salary. All you have to do is feed him and give him water, and maybe have a barn or a shed to put him in at night or when the weather gets rough. I mean, who ever heard of a mule or a cow or a chicken drawing a paycheck?”

When she broke out into a smile, we all knew that it was OK to follow her lead. We smiled back, and a couple of us laughed nervously.

“Wellsir,” she went on, “back in those days, going way, way back—three-four hundred years at least—you could buy yourself a person. That’s right, a person, a human being, a man, a woman, a child—depending on what you needed ’em for—and you could train that person and put ’em

to work just like you might any other poor beast of burden. And that’s what was done with us. Slave traders—men who made their living catching and selling slaves—traveled all up and down the coast of Africa, packing their slaveships with the strongest men and women and little biddy children they could round up, and bringing ’em back over here to sell.”

“But why’d they have to go all the way over there?” some girl wanted to know. “Couldn’t they capture ’em some white folks and Indians right here?”

Miz Chapman shook her head and smiled again. “Whoa, now, that’s a good question! Bless your heart! Shows me you got your thinking cap on. What you say! Fact of the matter is they did have a right sizeable few of their own kind in slavery all along. There used to be something called debtors’ prison. You owe so much money and can’t pay off your debts and bills. Well, over yonder in England, say, they might work out a deal where you’d get shipped over here to the Colonies and be put in slavery—indentured servitude, they called it—until you worked off what you owed. But, you see, white folks, it looked like, could always buy their way out of slavery somehow, but the Negro couldn’t, not in most places anyway. You have to remember something, though—and if you don’t remember this, then nothing else I’m trying to tell you today’ll make much sense—so pay attention. White folks won’t treat us the same way they treat other white folks. Listen at what I’m saying. White folks treat colored people different. They always have, and they still do!”

“And the Indians?” I asked.

“This Indian,” she said, shaking her head. “Seems like they never could get him to work for them the way they could us. See, child, it’s one thing when you pile in and take over somebody else’s country, and another thing when you go yanking people out their home and drag ’em off someplace that’s thousands of miles across the ocean, put ’em in chains, then dare ’em to run away or do anything about their condition. That’s how they did us. They snatched us up the way you might go out in the woods and

catch a rabbit or a possum or a squirrel, then they pent and cooped us up. They put us to planting cotton, chopping cotton, picking cotton, cooking, sewing, scrubbing, building, mending, riding shotgun on one another, and every other kinda chore you can think of, even raising their little privileged children, and..."

"But why?" It was the same girl's voice interrupting her. "I need to know why!"

"Girl, I already told you! It was cheaper to do it that way than it was to pay somebody, that's why. It's always cheaper to make somebody work for you for nothing than it is to pay 'em."

Miz Chapman's gaze turned suddenly toward the row of tall windows in back of us—windows kept sparkling clean by pupils forced to work off violations—where the late afternoon light had begun to fade.

"You know," she told us, getting to her feet, "for all that, we're still here. We are still here. We're still struggling, but we're still here. Y'all know that old spiritual we sing about 'I Been 'Buked and I Been Scorned'? Well, for all that, for all they have done to us and're trying to do to us, we are still here, right here, carrying on ...still trying to make that journey home."

Her face softened. A tear slipped down one of her high cheekbones. "Everything they could see to take away from us, they took. They took away our homeland, our families, and the people we loved, our language, our customs, our music, our history ... But you know what? All we are is children of God, and the Almighty will take care of His own. No need for you all to worry about *that*. Just like He parted the waters of the Red Sea and led the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt, the Lord is looking after all of His children.

"And for everything they took away, we came up with something new. We commenced to making new religion. We sang us some new songs and danced us some new

dances. We created new families, built us some new homes, and commenced to making some new history, too. See, you can put a hurting on the body, but you can't touch the soul. You know how come that is? It's because the soul of man, the same as God's love, is everlasting. The Good Book says, 'And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever'!

"Now, it also says in the Good Book that God helps those who help themselves, and that's just what we've been doing, and what we're bound to do more of. The way we go about doing that is first by learning *how* we can help ourselves. You young'uns have opportunities we didn't have when I was coming along. You can go to school and study. You all are in a position to do a whole lot more than we could. But you're dealing with the same situation. You don't have to be all that smart to look around at the way we're being treated and cheated to see that we aren't a free people yet. No, not yet.

"I feel like it's part of my job to tell y'all everything I know about what our people have been through before you got here, before you were born. I want you to know about the Negro race and some of the people, *great* people, who didn't sit around and lay around waiting for somebody else to get busy. There were some who saw what had to be done, who went on ahead and did it, and what they did *stayed* done! I'm talking about folks like Phillis Wheatley, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Paul Laurence Dunbar, W.E.B. DuBois, George Washington Carver, Mary McCleod Bethune, A. Philip Randolph, Langston Hughes, and plenty other Negro geniuses you aren't liable to find out too much about in books these white folks put out."

One older boy seated next to me screwed up his face and raised his hand. "Miz Chapman," he asked, "how come white people so doggone mean?"

"Now, that's something you've got to be careful about," she told him. "Not everybody's the same. Even with white folks, some're different. Y'all are old enough to know by now that there's a big difference between good and bad anything. If it wasn't for

good-thinking, right-thinking white folks, then the Underground Railroad wouldn't have worked as well as it did."

"The Underground Railroad," I asked. "What was that?"

"I see we have a lot of catching up to do," said Miz Chapman. "All of us are children of God, don't care what anybody else tells you—and before you turn grown, you'll be hearing a whole gang of explanations about how the world was created and how mankind got here. You just take your strength from the Almighty, trust in Him, use your own good sense and go on about your business. Anybody with any kinda sense knows good and well that man did *not* make this world and the planets and the stars and the seasons that come with it. This earth is our home for *now*, that's all. We just pass through here on our way someplace else. But, see, that doesn't mean we won't have to fight for what we have a right to. There are going to be trials and there are going to be tribulations. Nobody's going to *give* you a darn thing!

"When they wrote the Constitution, white folks weren't thinking about us, because Negroes were considered the same as property or livestock. 'Kill a mule and I'll hire another'n; kill a nigger and I'll buy another'n!' That's how the old saying went. But after the Civil War and President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, that was a step in the right direction. Yet and still, nobody's going to just walk up and hand you nothing for free. You've got to work and struggle for it, and most times you've got to fight for it. 'Here, old So-and-so, we want you to have this here freedom on accounta you all right with us.' Hunh, what you say! That isn't how it works. You have got to earn it; but before

you can earn, you first have to learn. Get something in your head and then—no matter what they do to you; no matter how lowdown the world becomes—they can't knock it out of you! But you can't operate on muscle and nerve and brains alone. You need heart; you need God. You need the Master to lean on and guide you."

Then, rising and resting her hands in the pockets of her well-worn coat, Miz Chapman looked at the wall clock and said, "Now, who wants to lead us in reciting the Twenty-Third Psalm?"

I remember that it was growing dark as I made my way home from the schoolyard. Clutching my books with their neat, grocerybag paper covers, I hurried along the dirt roadways and partially asphalted paths, cutting across trash-strewn vacant lots and fields of weeds, leaping over sluggish puddles and mud holes, some of them rumored to be mined with quicksand.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me..."

Finally I was sprinting past the broken-down fences and ramshackle houses of my own little block in that part of Laurel known as Kingston Bottom.

"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies..."

The smell of suppers cooking filled the air. I could see lights burning in the windows of our place, the last house on the road before you came to the creek. My Aunt Doris would be inside where it was warm, preparing a meal of neckbones and rice, turnip greens, cornbread, molasses, buttermilk. To top it all off, there'd be no school tomorrow!

I was yet to learn who "mine enemies" were but, like those croaking frogs hidden in darkness by the distant creek, I knew that they were out there somewhere, crouched, setting their traps, laying for me like hunters. And I knew that I would either have to learn to be strong, clever, and swift, or forever play dead.

A bubble of pure joy was about to burst inside me as I raced down the final stretch home. ◇

A Lesson in Swordsmanship

Matajura wanted to become a great swordsman, but his father said he wasn't quick enough and could never learn. So Matajura went to the famous dueler Banzo, and asked to become his pupil. "How long will it take me to become a master?" he asked. "Suppose I became your servant, to be with you every minute; how long?"

"Ten years," said Banzo.

"My father is getting old. Before ten years have passed I will have to return home to take care of him. Suppose I work twice as hard; how long will it take me?"

"Thirty years," said Banzo.

"How is that?" asked Matajura. "First you say ten years. Then when I offer to work twice as hard, you say it will take three times as long. Let me make myself clear: I will work unceasingly: no hardship will be too much. How long will it take?"

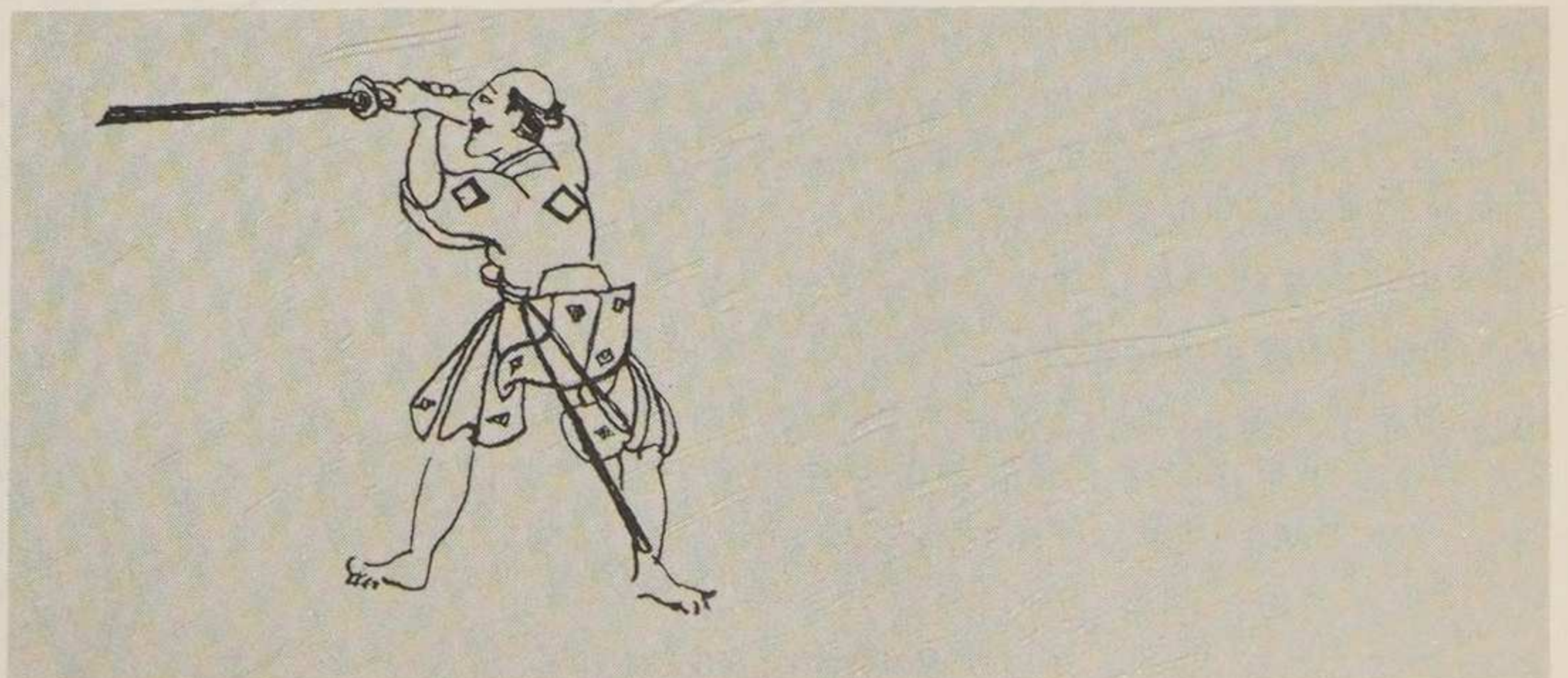
"Seventy years," said Banzo. "A pupil in such a hurry learns slowly."

Matajura understood. Without asking for any promises in terms of time, he became Banzo's servant. He cleaned, he cooked, he washed, he gardened. He was ordered never to speak of fencing or to touch a sword. He was very sad at this; but he had given his promise to the master and resolved to keep his word. Three years passed for Matajura as a servant.

One day while he was gardening, Banzo came up quietly behind him and gave him a terrible whack with a wooden sword. The next day in the kitchen the same blow fell again. Thereafter, day in, day out, from every corner and at any moment, he was attacked by Banzo's wooden sword. He learned to live on the balls of his feet, ready to dodge at any movement. He became a body with no desires, no thoughts—only eternal readiness and quickness.

Banzo smiled, and started lessons. Soon Matajura was the greatest swordsman in Japan.

—From the annals of Zen



The Garden

In some lights it is simple:
versions of green,
leaf and underleaf, tree
orchids, a fabric of vine

and flower and vine dense woven.
It might be original
as They first saw it—high,
sunless, breathing, a wall

called God, earth-rope and cloud-rope
tangled. And was
there sky? Had they caught its color
already in butterflies?

They tore the voices
away, silence was blue.
The wall sighed like an arras
and fell. When they stepped through

they were not themselves; far off
seemed closer, they stood
on flat boards in a world
of perspectives, while a cloud,

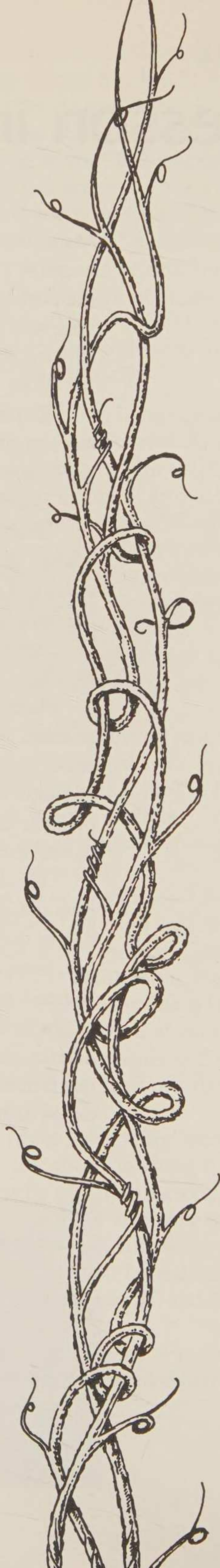
one only, a message pinned
to the ceiling, climbed
out of earshot and was lost.
It must have seemed

the far end of things.
It was in fact a start
in a fresh direction, a green
shoot, a co-ordinate.

As when a songbird sketches
three notes on the air: one
then another at a tangent,
then the first found new again.

—DAVID MALOUF

Illustration by Scott Rawlins



Blindness

A New Seeing of the World

by Jacques Lusseyran photographs by Lee B. Ewing

Jacques Lusseyran was born in Paris on September 19, 1924. In his autobiography, he describes his childhood as a happy one and his parents as ideal. When he was eight, he lost his eyesight in a school accident. His parents decided to keep him in the regular lycée, however, rather than send him to a special school for the blind. After learning to read and write Braille in six weeks, he was accepted on probation by the school authorities and did so well that at the end of the school year, he was awarded first prize in his class. The young Lusseyran was a gifted student. He was especially drawn to literature and philosophy, but he found that the “subject for all subjects, the fact that the world is not just outside us but also within,” was entirely lacking in the classroom. “To accumulate knowledge was good and beautiful, but the reason for men to acquire it would have been more meaningful, and no one spoke of that.”

In the spring of 1941 during the Nazi occupation of Paris, Lusseyran organized the *Volontaires de la Liberté*, a students’ resistance group which published an underground newspaper called *le Tigre*. Initially the oldest member was not yet twenty-one and Lusseyran himself, who was elected its chief, just seventeen. His principal task was to administer the group’s activities and to interview prospective members, because he had what his comrades called a “sense of human beings.” He could “see,” partly by means of their voices, whether some were to be trusted, whether others were treacherous or weak. In 1943, this group, which had grown to 600 members, joined the *Défense de la France*, one of the five large

resistance movements in France. Lusseyran became a member of its Executive Committee and was put in charge of the massive distribution of its clandestine paper. Following the liberation of France, this paper became *France-Soir*, one of the most important daily newspapers in Paris.

On July 20, 1943, Lusseyran was arrested by Gestapo agents. He and others in his group were betrayed by the one man he had recruited with misgivings—misgivings he had rationalized and suppressed. He was interned and interrogated in Fresnes and deported to Buchenwald in January, 1944, where he remained until he was freed by the United States Third Army on April 18, 1945. Of the 2,000 Frenchmen who went into Buchenwald with him, he was one of 30 who survived.

Following the war, Lusseyran struggled to obtain a professorship in France. In spite of the fact that he had completed his studies at the Sorbonne cum laude with a licence de lettres and de philosophie, he was refused entrance to the *Ecole Normale Supérieure* where public employees such as professors and diplomats were trained, because of a law instituted by the Vichy Government which prohibited “invalids” from entering public employment.

Although he eventually won his struggle in France—he became a professor and taught there during the 1950s—he decided to move to the United States. He taught as a guest lecturer at Hollins College for several years and in 1961 became an associate and then full professor at Western Reserve University in Cleveland. At the time of his death in 1971, he was teaching at the University of Hawaii.

On July 21, 1971, Lusseyran was killed in an automobile accident with his third wife, Marie, who was a painter and also a writer. The accident took place not far from his mother’s home in

Juvardeil, France, where he had spent many of his childhood summers. He is survived by four children.

In addition to his regular activities as a teacher, Lusseyran lectured throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe on various literary and philosophical themes, many of which dealt with blindness. He was also the author of a number of books and articles. His last work, named "*Conversations amoureuses*," is as yet unpublished.

This is my story. I saw, saw with my eyes, until I was eight years old. For more than 35 years now I have been blind, completely blind. I know that this story, this experience, is my greatest happiness.

What thirty-seven years of blindness have taught me—I must admit—is to make great efforts. But they are much more than efforts; they are also discoveries.

Barely ten days after the accident that blinded me, I made the basic discovery. I am still entranced by it. The only way I can describe that experience is in clear and direct words. I had completely lost the sight of my eyes; I could not see the light of the world anymore. Yet the light was still there.

It was there. Try to imagine what a surprise that must have been for a boy not yet eight years old. True, I could not see the light outside myself anymore, the light that illuminates objects, is associated with them, and plays on them. All the world around me was convinced that I had lost it forever. But I found it again in another place. I found it *in myself* and what a miracle!—it was intact.

This "in myself," however, where was that? In my head, in my heart, in my imagination? Don't you feel that such questions are purely intellectual, and worthy only of those adults who have already forgotten the utter simplicity and unquestionable power of true experiences? For me—I was in my eighth year and lived, instead of thinking—the light was there. Its source was not obli-

terated. I felt it gushing forth every moment and brimming over; I felt how it wanted to spread out over the world. I had only to receive it. It was unavoidably there. It was all there, and I found again its movements and shades, that is its colors, which I had loved so passionately a few weeks before.

This was something entirely new, you understand, all the more so since it contradicted everything that those who have eyes believe. The source of light is not in the outer world. We believe that it is only because of a common delusion. The light dwells where life also dwells: within ourselves.

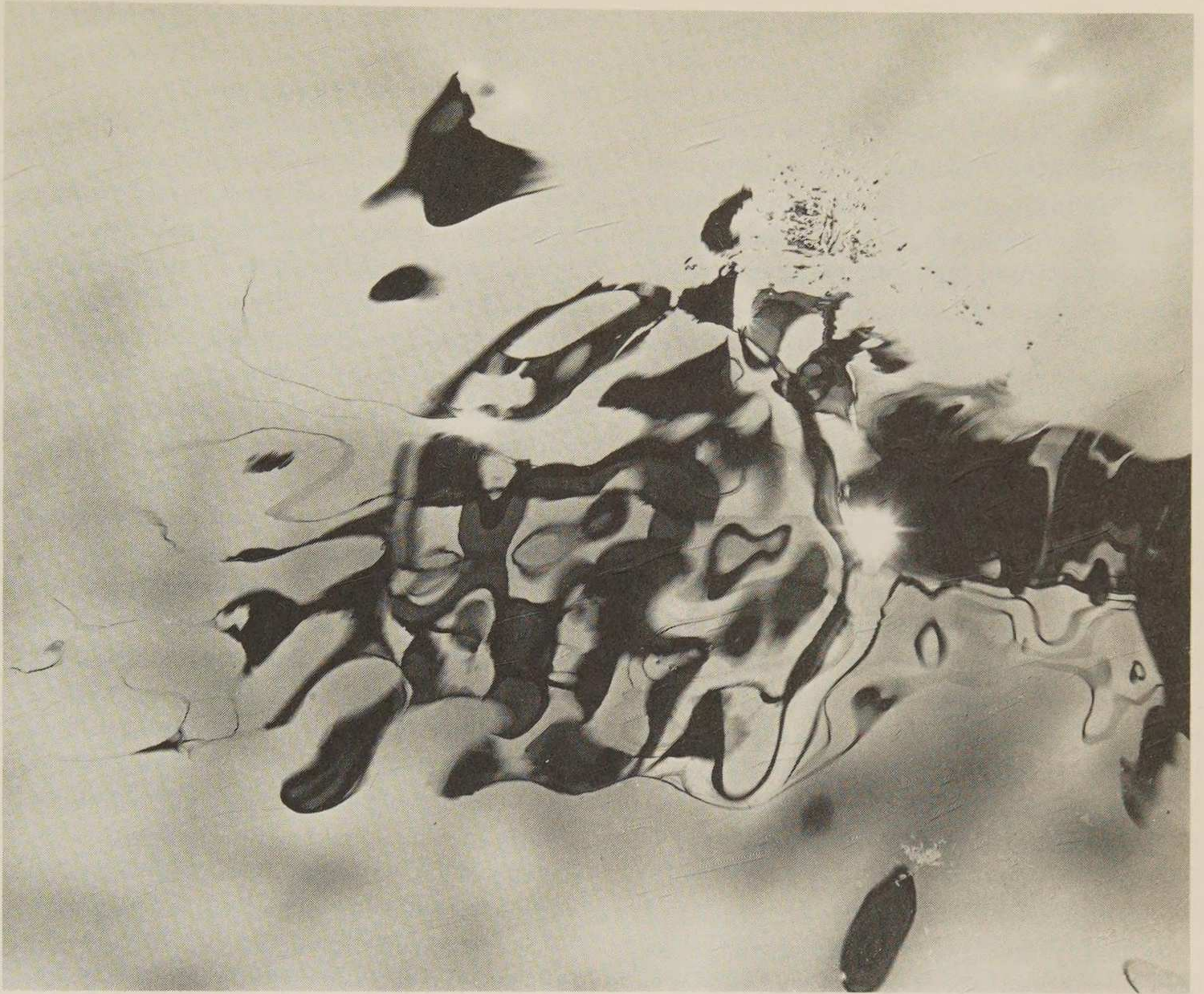
Yet I had to make the effort to find my way between doors, walls, human beings, and trees. As happens to all blind persons, I hurt myself often. But I quickly learned that I knocked against things only when I forgot the light. When I paid constant attention to the light, I ran a much smaller risk.

The second great discovery came almost immediately afterwards. There was only one way to see the inner light, and that was to love.

When I was overcome with sorrow, when I let anger take hold of me, when I envied those who saw, the light immediately decreased. Sometimes it even went out completely. Then I became blind. But this blindness was a state of not loving anymore, of sadness; it was not the loss of one's eyes.

I spoke to you of discoveries. This was one of them, and it was so great that a whole lifetime full of religion and morality is often not enough to enable others to make it.

In another respect, too—I wish to say this here—I was exceedingly fortunate. I had parents who understood. Neither my father nor my mother ever pitied me because of my fate. They never said the word "unfortunate" in my presence. My father, who deeply understood the spiritual life, immediately said to me: "Always tell us when you discover something." I was to discover more and more! And he was right. One should not try to console either those who have lost their eyes, or those who have suffered other losses—of money, health, or a loved one. It is necessary instead to show



them what their loss brings them, to show them the gifts they receive in place of what they have lost. Because there are always gifts. God wills it so. Order is restored; nothing ever disappears completely.

I knew this when I was eight years old, because I had found the light again. From that moment on, blindness became for me a fascinating experience and the attempt to live a new way.

It is often said that seeing brings us closer to things. Seeing certainly permits orientation, the possibility of finding our way in space. But with what part of an object does it acquaint us? It establishes a relationship with the *surface* of things. With the eyes we pass over furniture, trees, peo-

ple. This moving along, this gliding, is sufficient for us. We call it cognition. And here, I believe, lies a great danger. The true nature of things is not revealed by their first appearance. I know that thinking can correct the information we receive through our eyes. But it is necessary to apply our thinking, and the whirl of daily necessities does not always leave us time to do so.

Seeing prefers outer appearance; this is part of its nature. It tends to regard consequences as causes. In our strange attitude toward the light we believe that our eyes see the sun, although they merely perceive lighted objects.

The danger, therefore, lies in the nature of seeing itself, in its quickness, in its usefulness. This is especially true when we use it for knowing other people. Think of the disastrous errors in our judgments when we base them on the clothes, the hairdo, and the smile of the person we meet. And yet the greatest part of our loving and our hating, as well as the greatest part of our

opinions, depend on these clothes, on this smile.

A person approaches us. What does he mean for our eyes? First of all, he makes a physical impression: *i.e.*, there exists no relationship—not even a fleeting one—between him and us. There is only one between society and him, since it is obvious that clothes, smile, facial expression, even gestures, in a word, behavior, are the common property of society.

I think of the endless game, a game that has become involuntary. We play it to call attention to ourselves. It is the art of deceiving the eyes of the other person, an art that fills many minutes of our lives. What we deceive is the eyes. For them we work. We know very well that they will pass over us quickly and not examine us very long.

Naturally, there are eyes that examine and do not merely see. They are the eyes of a mother or an anxious wife, the eyes of a good physician, of a wise man, an artist and—why not?—of a humorist. But why is it that the moment these eyes see, they seem half closed and turned inward?

This process has many names: thinking, concentrating, reflecting. When we really think about it, however, we understand that it is always a protection against seeing. After we have received pictures through the eyes, it is necessary to hold on to these pictures, to explain them to ourselves without any visual support, in short, to give them an entirely new form of existence; the inner existence. Without this willingness to give up, at least temporarily, the impressions we receive through the eyes, no true cognition is in my opinion possible.

This simple fact should warn us of a momentous illusion: the illusion that forms are all-powerful.

I believe that seeing is responsible for the prevalent conviction that we shall understand and completely recognize the world when we progress from one form to the next, from one phenomenon to the other. We forget that the motion itself,

which leads the eyes from object to object, cannot take place in our eyes. It necessarily precedes and directs their movement.

What simply has to be understood is that seeing is not the work of the eyes alone. The ability to see must exist before its physical instrument, the eyes, can act. As long as men forget this fact, they will ever and again face illusion and failure. They will be impatient. They will want to see ever more and more. And they will no longer know who it is that is confronted with such a flood of impressions and sees them.

All this is known to a blind person. He knows it naturally, not because of an extraordinary gift of intelligence or by his own merit. Deprived of the privilege of the eyes, he measures at the same time his loss and his gain. Most of all, he continues to live and to experience with an irresistible force the wonderful mutual exchange that takes place between the inner and the outer worlds.

I repeat: The experience vouchsafed to me was not memory. The light I continued to see without my eyes was the same as before. But my standpoint in relation to the light had changed. I had moved closer to its origin.

It happened as if the light were no longer that object of the outer world, that strange illumination, that phenomenon of nature which can occur or not, and over which we have so little power. It was instead as if the light would henceforth envelop the outer world and myself in one single movement, with one single grasp.

I can foresee the objection that could be raised: Isn't your experience a deception? Once you could see, knew colors and forms. You could name them. But how is it with one who was born blind?

I admit, this is a weighty objection. It would be even more so if we lacked the testimony of the blind from birth who were healed. All claim, certainly, that the light, as it revealed itself to their eyes, was a surprise to them, a new discovery. But they confess at the same time that before they could see with their eyes they carried within themselves a counterpart of this light.

And so all is light in this blindness; and what is more, this manifest luminosity con-

tains a magnificent lesson. Since my childhood I have been impressed with a phenomenon of surprising clarity: The light I saw changed with my inner condition. Partly it depended on my physical condition, for instance fatigue, restfulness, tension, or relaxation. Such changes, however, were relatively rare. The true changes depended on the state of my soul.

I had the same experience with space. When I became blind, I found out that an inner space existed. This space also changed its dimensions in accordance with the condition of my soul. Sadness, hate, or fear not only darkened my universe, but also made it smaller. The number of objects I could encompass within myself with one glance decreased. In the truest sense of the word, I knocked against everything. Objects and beings became obstacles within myself. Outwardly I could not avoid running against doors and furniture. I was punished very thoroughly and very quickly.

Conversely, however, courage, attention, joy, had the immediate effect of opening up and illuminating space. Soon everything existed in me abundantly: a great many objects, pictures, beings. I saw a magnificent landscape before me. I knew that this landscape could be expanded indefinitely; in order to achieve this, my joy had merely to become even greater. At the same time, my physical adroitness increased; I found my way and moved with assurance.

In short, there were two possibilities; to reject the world—and that meant darkness, reverses—or to accept it, and that meant light and strength.

I do not believe that my explanations contain anything particularly new, unless one takes into account the experimental, concrete, and sense-transmitted character of the facts described. The discovery made possible by blindness is undoubtedly the experience of the existence of an inner life. From numerous meetings with blind persons, and numerous questions put to them, I

have learned that others have had similar experiences. Yet most do not talk about them.

In order to describe these experiences, certain technical faculties are required. It is necessary to master a certain language, that of psychology, and to practice a certain kind of analysis. But that is not of great moment, and many blind persons have this knowledge at their disposal.

We all know to how great an extent our experiences, especially inner ones, depend on language. Language, however, is first of all a collective tool. It may be said that it is the tool of the majority.

The words the blind use are the words of the seeing. They have borrowed them all, and the seeing do not take it too kindly that the blind make such positive use of their words. The seeing are given to intolerance.

A blind man is disabled; he is infirm; he is excluded from society and not counted a full person. He is accorded compassion, even help, but nearly everyone prefers to hear him complain about, rebel against, and accuse his being different, rather than to hear him describe with assurance the world he carries within himself. The blind often feel very painfully the doubt and lack of faith with which their personal experience is received.

The blind, therefore, either withdraw from the world and lead a life filled with strange habits, thereby widening the gap between themselves and world of the seeing even more, or they direct their efforts toward making others forget their blindness. Rarely, very rarely, do they present themselves as blind, and as wishing to carry out their function as blind persons.

I believe that blindness *has* its own function. It has the tasks of reminding us that the despotism of one sense, sight, is unjust, and of cautioning us against the form of perception prevalent today. And, further, it is the task of blindness not only to recall to memory the origin of all knowledge, but also to remind us of the wonderful gift that permits a mutual exchange between other forms of perception and perceived pictures.

The blind know from direct experience that the *act* of seeing has priority over seeing in the usual sense, outer seeing. I consid-

er it important that they do not hide this knowledge.

I consider it especially important that the blind and the seeing compare what they see. They should get together before they pass judgment, before they establish an order or rank for inner and outer seeing; they should compare their experiences, become aware of their mutual wealth of experience. And they should, one as well as the other, accept their limitations. I am convinced that this comparison would accomplish valuable work. I am convinced that after such an exchange of thoughts, the limits of both kinds of perception, limits that should be known, will stand out in new clarity. Let us hope that this dialogue will be candidly carried out some day!

I believe, however, that even today a preliminary listing of the gifts of the blind is possible. It is generally said that the loss of seeing immediately causes the other senses to develop further, that a compensation takes place. This is true. It is true that the blind hear better than the seeing. Sounds make it possible for them to perceive distances and even figures.

The shadow of a tree on the road is not only a visual phenomenon. It is also audible. The oak, the poplar, the nut tree have their own specific levels of sound. The tone of a plane tree is entered like a room. It indicates a certain order in space, zones of tension, and zones of free passage. The same is true of a wall or a whole landscape.

All differences in light have corresponding differences in sound. What I hear, while leaning out of my window under a gray, overcast sky, is sluggish. Sounds have become weak. They move in disconnected small groups. They circle in a single plane of space. What I hear when the sun shines has a much more intense vibration. Real objects emitting sounds begin to appear. The sounds go where they may, meet in accordance with their affinity, and combine into forms.

A blind person hears better, and that is

as it should be, because he hears what he does not see. A blind person has a better sense of feeling, of taste, of touch. He should be told how much his senses keep in reserve for him. But first of all, it seems to me, it is necessary to point out to him the condition that leads to such a widening of the senses.

This condition isn't simply not seeing anymore. Neither does it mean that a new structure is given to the remaining senses. The necessary condition is much simpler; one has to be attentive. A really attentive person could understand everything. For this understanding he would need nothing that is tied to the senses. Neither light, nor sound, nor the shape peculiar to every object would exist for him, but every object would reveal itself to him in all its possible facets. In other words, he would enter completely into its inner world.

The senses would continue to exist, because their role as natural intermediaries has been established by the order of creation itself. But they would no longer work independently, separated from each other, as we have wrongly assumed they must.

From just this "total attention" the seeing are constantly diverted. So are the blind, but not to the same degree. For them remaining attentive is a practical necessity, and this simple fact constitutes the first of their gifts.

Hearing, sense of smell, sense of touch! Truly, I hesitate to make these differences because I am afraid they are arbitrary.

Does a blind person really know what he perceives when, walking along on the sidewalk, he suddenly indicates that he has recognized a gap in the wall or building? Or when he stops a few inches before reaching an obstacle, without even having brushed against it? Can he put into words what he has experienced? I think not. He will say, when asked, that he heard something: less resonance, a movement of the air, like the very slow approach of an object. But this explanation is only a concession to the generally used language.

He did not hear. He touched. Perhaps hearing and touch are the same sense perception. His ability to indicate the gap in the wall means that the area free of cement or stones had already taken possession of his



whole body; with the whole surface of his body he had experienced its shape and power of resistance. It even means that he had already passed through the gap.

All our senses, I believe, join into one. They are the successive stages of a single perception, and that perception is always one of touch. Therefore hearing can replace seeing, and seeing can replace touch. Therefore no loss is irreparable.

At this point I ask myself whether what we call *attention* could be the psychological form of this fundamental contact, a form based on feeling as well as intellect. In other words, could attention be a kind of touch?

A blind person is in a room; a man enters, sits down, and does not talk. Can the blind person come to know him? Common sense will say no. But I am not sure that common sense is right. The blind person can strain his attention. He can open himself to

such an extent that this unmoving person comes closer. By and by, quietly and without moving, he can remove all the inner obstacles that separate him from the other until he begins to absorb the man's appearance.

I know that such an experience verges on the limits of cognition. I know that it almost never takes place consciously. Yet I believe that every blind person has had it, whether he was conscious of it or not.

How can this be explained? Has the blind man developed a higher faculty? With the help of the spirit has he transcended the normal conditions of perception? I believe one should simply say: He touched.

I used a blind person as an example. I could equally well have spoken of a seeing person, because—to repeat—the special merit of blindness is not that it creates a different experience, but that it leads us by necessity toward a heightened experience.

Some have called this fundamental touch “a sense for obstacles.” They have even tried to assign to it a certain part of the body. Some, in accordance with the tradition of esoteric physiology, have

placed it in the region of the forehead, in the "eye of Shiva." Others, following a purely rational hypothesis, have spoken of cooperation of a mixture of elemental sense impressions of a visual character, located primarily in certain parts of the skin. This is the famous thesis of Jules Romain, laid down in his memorandum on "para-optical seeing," or "the sight that takes place outside the retina."

I, for one, would rather confine myself to a more direct observation.

What the blind person experiences in the presence of an object is pressure. When he stands before a wall he has never touched and does not now touch, he feels a physical presence. The wall bears down on him, so to speak. An effluvium emanates from that wall. Conscious perception takes place the moment it meets another effluvium, which originates in him.

Perception, then, would mean entering into an equilibrium of pressure, into a force field. As soon as we pay attention to this phenomenon, the world comes to life in a surprisingly different manner. No single object, no single being remains neutral. The oneness of the world is experienced as a physical event.

The pressure I have spoken of assumes all forms: absorption, transference, cooperation. Everything enters into an intimate and active relationship with ourselves: the window, the street, the walls of the room, the furniture, the slight movement of the air, living creatures. Finally, even thoughts take on weight and direction.

This is the experience of the blind, but—of this I am convinced—it is also a common experience. Seeing persons also experience these pressure effects, but they do not permit them to enter their consciousness. Yet it seems to me they could throw light on a great many rather vague but important states of mind: sympathy, antipathy, the feeling of being ill at ease,

good will, the wish to stay or to flee, opposition, devotion.

These conditions are always explained psychologically: I consider them to be much simpler.

I said "pressure." I said "effluence." I could also have expressed myself differently and talked about "a field of vibration." It is this basic vibration, which shapes objects and reveals beings, to which we are led by blindness.

And now I hope that you will find it easier to accept my paradox, the confession of faith I made in the beginning: Blindness is my greatest happiness! Blindness gives us great happiness. It gives us a great opportunity, both through its disorder and through the order it creates.

The disorder is the prank it plays on us, the slight shift it causes. It forces us to see the world from another standpoint. This is a necessary disorder, because the principal reason for our unhappiness and our errors is that our standpoints are fixed.

As for the order blindness creates, it is the discovery of the constantly present creation. We constantly accuse the conditions of our lives. We call them incidents, accidents, illnesses, duties, infirmities. We wish to force our own conditions on life; this is our real weakness. We forget that God never creates new conditions for us without giving us the strength to meet them. I am grateful that blindness has not allowed me to forget this.

I should like to have this attitude called "optimistic," though optimism is not regarded highly today. This is my wish because I cannot admit that an experience is worthless because it is a happy one.

The blind see in their own way, but they do see. This is a fact that entails just as many risks and obligations for the blind as seeing does for those who are able to use the light of their eyes. ◇

Acknowledgement

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Broken Strings

A Jataka Tale



Long ago, the Buddha was reincarnated in a child born to a family of wealthy and famous musicians in the city of Benares, and in the course of his youth became so proficient in music that by the age of sixteen, he had mastered the vina. King Brahmadata, hearing the boy's sweet music, declared that even Pansika, the god of music, could not rival such a performance. From that day forth, Guttala, for so the boy was named, was honored by being granted lifelong service to the King, and his vina music became known throughout India for its unsurpassed beauty.

It came to pass when Guttala was an old man, that three merchants from Benares traveled to the city of Ujjain, where they beheld a great celebration in progress. In the evening, after a day of trading and feasting, they sought entertainment, and because they had heard the magnificent music of Guttala, they asked if a master of the vina could be found in Ujjain.

A young man named Musila was brought before the merchants. When the musician saw their great wealth, he thought, "Not only can I win their hearts with my music, but I can win their gold as well!" Tuning his instrument to a middle pitch, he began to play. But he played like a man trying to seize a bird with two hands, and the merchants did not even glance at him. Determined to win at least the attention of the merchants, he tuned his vina to a lower pitch, and played a most accomplished song. Still the merchants talked only among themselves, and paid no attention to him.

"Does not the resonant music of my vina agree with you?" Musila asked at last. The merchants looked up, startled. "We are not uneducated about music," they answered. "We did not know you were performing. We thought you were merely tuning your instrument."

"Have you ever heard anyone of greater talent play the vina?" asked the young man.

"Yes," replied the merchants. "In Benares there lives a master musician named Guttala, who plays so beautifully that Panchasikha would ask to study with him."

"If that is the case," replied Musila, "I must become his pupil," and he made arrangements to travel with the merchants to Benares, where he sought the house of Guttala.

Musila begged to become Guttala's student, but the master, sensing that Musila had bad qualities in him, refused. Musila, not to be deterred, ingratiated himself with Guttala's family and had them intercede on his behalf, and at last Guttala could not refuse. He took

the young man into his heart and his home and taught him everything he knew.

After much study, Musila came to equal his teacher in skill, and one day he asked to serve the King, as Guttula had done before him. At the master's request, the King accepted the student and offered him lifelong service at half the master's wage. But Musila pleaded that he was equal to his teacher and so deserved an equal payment. The King answered, "It is not right to show lack of respect for one's teacher, who is like one's own parent." But Musila persisted, and asked to perform with his teacher so that he might display his skills before the King.

Guttula was heartbroken. It was beneath his dignity to compete with a man whose art was tarnished with pride. He was ashamed that he had taught Musila all he knew, and he trembled with fear that the arrogant student would dishonor the god of music and triumph over his teacher. "I am an old man," he thought. "My playing suffers because of my age." Lord Indra heard Guttula's plaint, and appearing before the old man, promised to help him.

On the appointed day, the old master and the young student sat before the King. They began to play together, and indeed they performed with equal skill. So delightful was the music that all who heard them were charmed.

Unseen by all, Lord Indra appeared, and whispered into the ear of the old master. Then Guttula, still playing, broke a string on his vina. Everyone was startled; Musila alone rejoiced. Still Guttula continued to play on the broken string, and the music swelled from it more richly than before. So sweet was the sound that tears fell from the King's eyes. The sound of Guttula's vina penetrated the air in all directions. In the stables, the elephants paused, enraptured, and the horses stood motionless as trees, lest they disturb the music with the sound of their bells.

Guttula broke a second string, and the music now streamed forth a hundredfold more beautifully. Miles away, warriors in battle let their weapons fall to the earth, and fish in the sea swam to the water's edge to listen. Guttula broke a third string, and a fourth, and the music grew more and more beautiful. On earth, the peacocks wept because Brahma had made eyes instead of ears on their tails, and in the heavens, the celestial dancers kept time with their thousand-belled anklets to the sound of Guttula's music.

Musila, seeing his teacher play on the broken strings, in jealousy tore the strings of his own instrument, but no sound came forth. Angrily he struck string after string, but his vina was silent, and King Brahmadata banished him from the land forever.

—Retold by Laura Simms

From the Guttulaya Jataka by Vaettaeve Thera (XVth Century)



INNER GRACE by Abraham Menashe

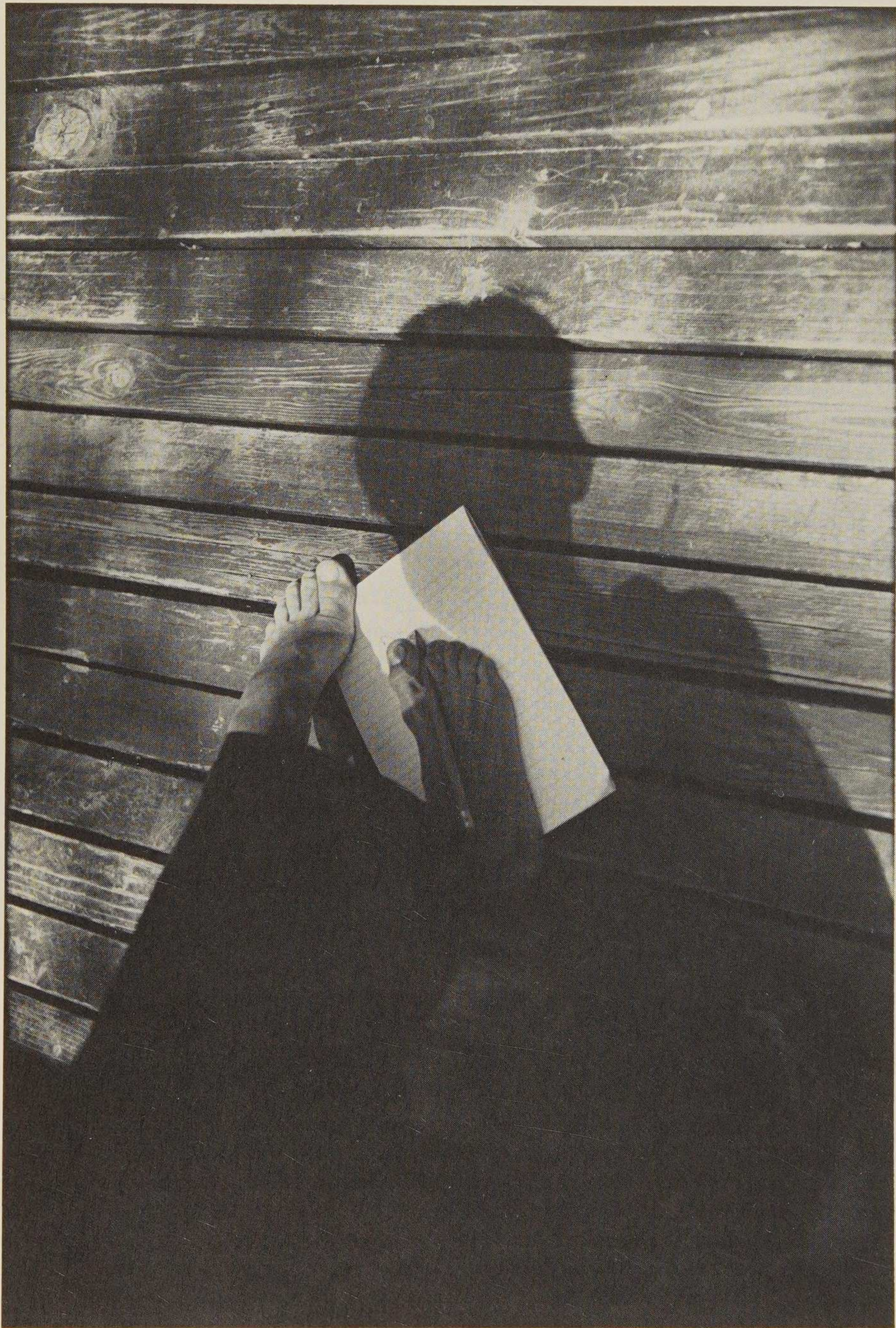
The subject of these photographs is the multihandicapped institutionalized individual. This includes the retarded, the blind, and the cerebral-palsied.

Grace is defined as "elegance or beauty of form, manner, motion or act...the influence or spirit of God operating in man to regenerate or strengthen him." It is a state that exists in the joy of being as well as the effort of trying. The photographs embrace moments of innocence, accomplishment, serenity, pride, and struggle.

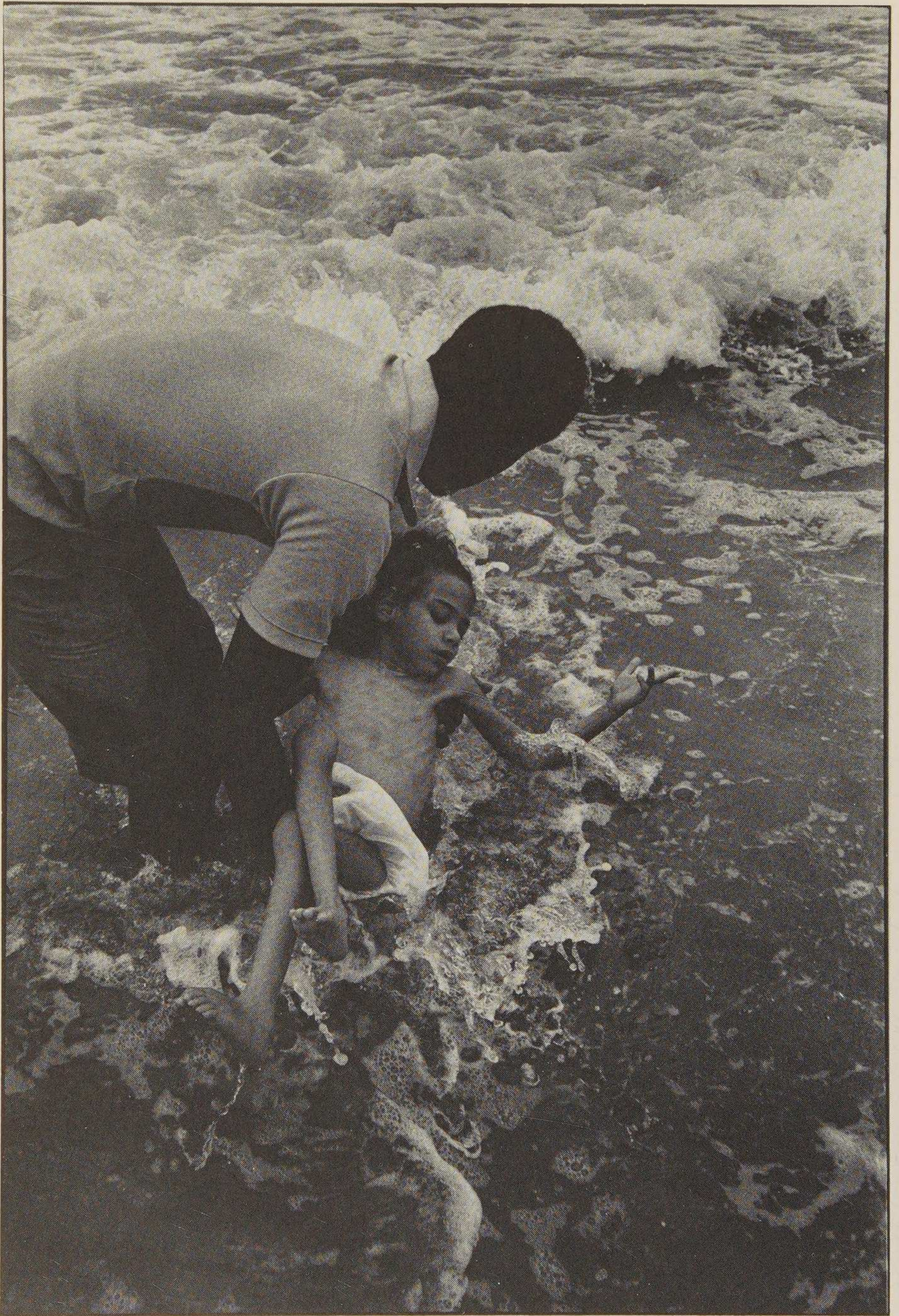
In accepting the limitations that life imposes on us, we can often overcome them.

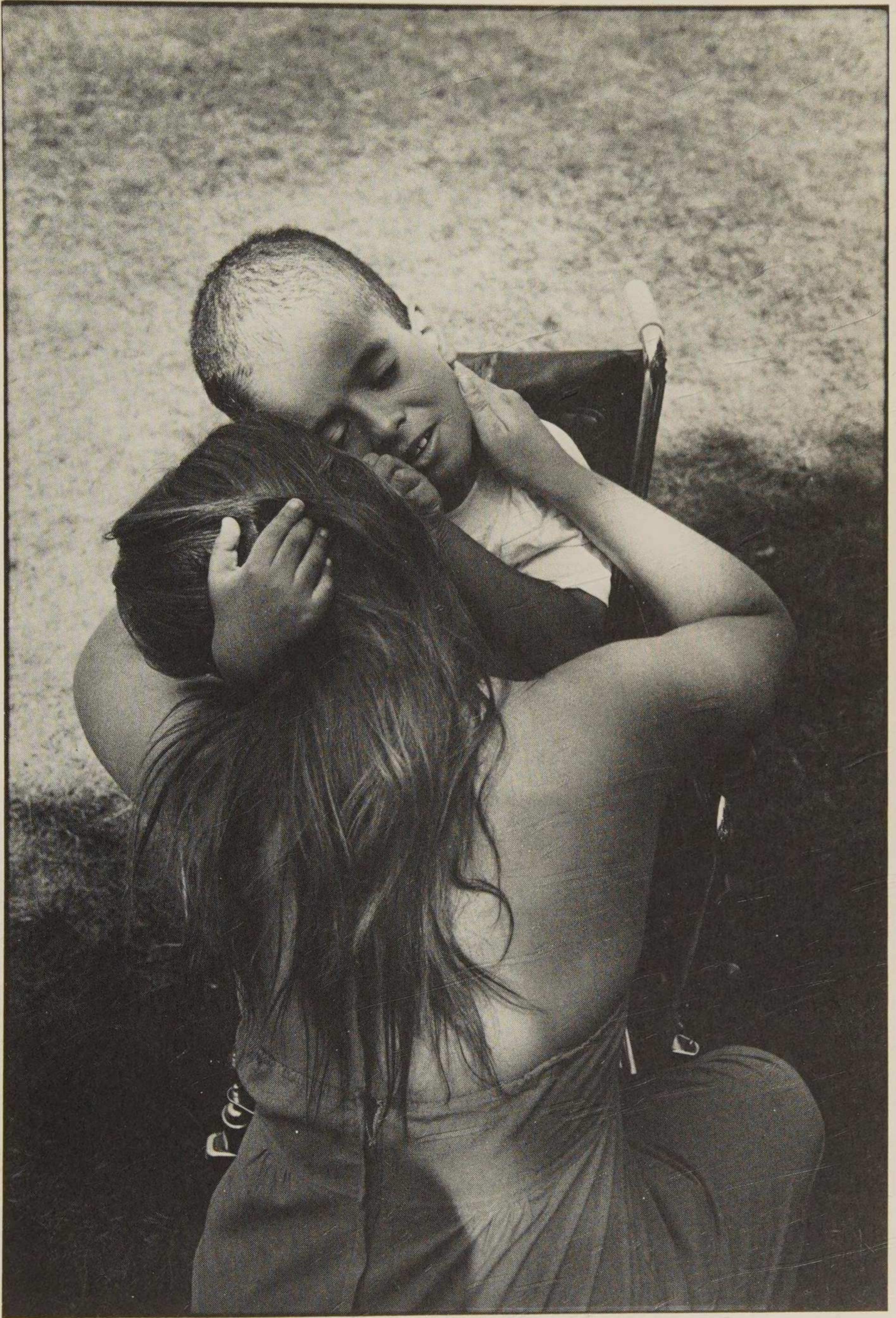
The images reveal beauty in the distorted body and bring us closer to the conquering spirit in man. As we learn to carry our burdens well, in the yielding and in the striving, we become imbued with the favor and love of God. This assistance, the influence of the freely given, is grace.

To me the photographs form a prayer—not only in the making of them, but now in the sharing of them.













The Raven

Once upon a time there was a queen who had a little daughter, who had not yet learned how to walk. One day the child was troublesome and her mother cried out impatiently: "I wish you would fly away with the ravens and leave me in peace!" Immediately the child turned into a raven, flew out of the window and disappeared into the woods, where her sorrowful parents searched for her in vain.

Time passed; and one morning, a man walking in the forest heard a raven calling and followed the voice until he came where she was.

"I am really a king's daughter," the raven said to him, "and I am under a spell, but you could free me if you would." "What must I do?" he asked her. "You must go deeper into the forest till you come to the hut of a little old woman; and there you must neither eat nor drink, but wait for me in the garden. I will come to you every afternoon for three days, but if you have eaten or drunk the least thing, you will fall asleep and will not be able to set me free."

The man swore he would neither eat nor drink, and went off boldly to find the old woman's house, but the raven princess was sad.

When the man reached the house where the old woman lived, she made him welcome and set food and drink before him, but he would not take anything. The old woman begged and pleaded and teased, and finally he was persuaded to take a tiny sip of wine. Then he went out to the garden to await the raven, but he was suddenly very tired and overwhelmed by the desire to rest. "I will lie down for just a moment," he thought, "but I will not sleep." But the moment he stretched out on the ground, he fell into such a deep sleep that nothing could wake him. The raven princess came in a coach drawn by white horses and wept when she saw him sleeping; she tried to rouse him, to no avail, and sadly had to go away again.

On the second day he vowed he would neither eat nor drink nor sleep, but it all happened as before. The raven princess came in a coach drawn by roan horses, tried to awaken him, and had to go away again. On the third day, the man had been so thirsty that he had taken a big swallow of wine, and was sleeping so soundly that he did not stir when the raven came in a coach drawn by black horses. She got out of the coach and knelt beside him, weeping, and put three things down beside him: a loaf, a jug of wine, and a piece of meat. She took from her finger a golden ring with her name written upon it and put it on his hand: then she wrote a message which said that the food she had left him could never be used up, no



matter how much was eaten or drunk; and added: "If you still wish to set me free, you must come to find me in the Golden Castle."

When the man awoke, he was full of sorrow that he had slept and lost her. But he read the message, took the things she had left him, and set off for the Golden Castle, although he had not the least idea where it was.

He wandered for a long time, until he came to a castle where two hungry giants lived. They would have eaten him but for the magical food that the princess had given him; with this they were satisfied and even willing to help him find the Golden Castle, which was very far away. They carried him within a hundred leagues of it and there set him down to walk the rest of the way.

When he arrived, he found the castle was on the top of a mountain made of glass. At the top of it he could see the King's daughter. He longed to reach her, and tried over and over to climb the glass mountain; but for every foot he pulled himself up, he slipped back two. At last he was worn out with trying, and he built a hut at the foot of the mountain, where he could see the castle and watch for the princess. He lived there for a whole year, looking at the princess whenever she appeared until she went back inside the castle again, and weeping because he could not reach her.

One day he heard a commotion outside his hut and looking out, he saw three robbers fighting.

"What are you quarreling about?" he called out to them.

"I have found a stick that will open any door it touches," said one, "and one of my brothers has found a cloak which makes him invisible, while the other has found a horse that can carry a man anywhere. Now we cannot decide whether to share these things or go our separate ways with them, each man for himself."

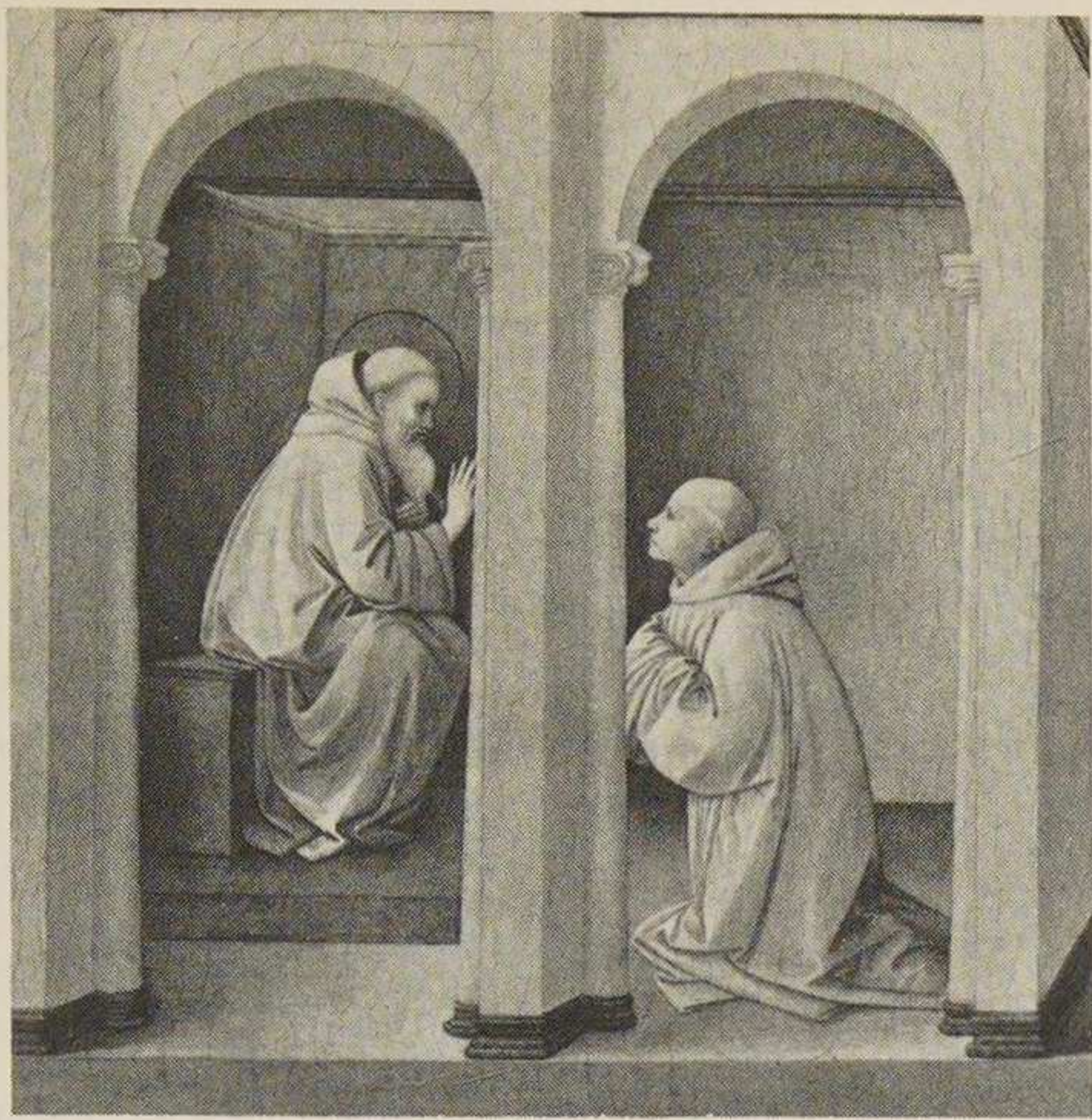
"I will buy them from you," said the man, "but let me try them first."

He mounted the horse, took the stick in his hand, and put on the cloak; and when he became invisible, he laid about him with the stick and gave the three robbers a sound thrashing. Then he rode up the glass mountain, and the horse carried him without faltering to the very door. He opened the door with the stick, and entering the castle he found the princess, sitting on a golden chair and sipping a glass of wine. She could not see him, for he was still wearing the cloak; but he took her ring from his finger and tossed it into her winecup so that it rang out. When she heard it strike the goblet she rose joyfully, crying, "The man who will set me free is here!" Then he dropped the cloak and took the King's daughter in his arms, and they kissed each other.

So the princess was saved, and their wedding was celebrated with great joy.

—Retold by D.M. Dooling

Illustration by Jody Wheeler



Paths of Obedience

Fairy Tales and the Monk's Way

by Brother David Steindl-Rast

Some topics are too heavy to be treated other than lightly.

Great fairy tales have that light touch. They treat a weighty message with so light a heart that we are forever delighted by the tension between playful form and ponderous content. A fairy tale at its best might well be a myth that has learned its own lesson so well that it is able to take itself lightly.

This is the reason why fairy tales speak a language understood by all. Smiles need no translation. This is the reason also why the language of fairy tales seems to me appropriate for speaking about obstacles, tests, and trials on the monastic path. Behind this choice of language stands my conviction that the Path that makes any path worth pursuing is one and the same for all of us. The monk has no monopoly on it. The monastic path is merely a methodical approach, designed to keep one on that great "Path with a heart." Not all who try the monastic approach are thereby monks; what makes you a monk is that for you it

works. The monastic path is not designed for all. But the great Path, which even the monastic approach merely approximates, is all-embracing. Its design shines through every path.

The two fairy tales I suggest we explore let the pattern of the great Path shine through. They tell of tests and trials, of the *dura et aspera*, as St. Benedict calls those "hardships and rough spots" on the way. And they tell of them in a manner that allows us to see the universal Path in the particular, and the monastic trials in the light of the great tests we all must undergo, regardless of the way we choose. The first of my two stories is Grimms' "Snow White." The other one is the tale of Amor and Psyche found in the *Golden Ass*, more correctly called *Metamorphoses* (Book 4:28 to 6:24) by Lucius Apuleius.

But before we try to see what these two stories can show us about obstacles on the path of the monk or any other, a word of caution: let us never press their images, nor, for that matter, my own interpretations; in the spirit of the fairy tale, they want to be held lightly. Playfully, almost, those images raise questions, raise rather than answer them. Who are we to press them into answers? Before they are raised, questions tend to oppress us. But once truly raised, a

question can arouse life. The images of myth and, in their own way, great fairy tale images too, raise questions that are not meant to be answered but lived.

Try, playfully, to look at the setup of the Seven Dwarfs through Snow White's eyes. Does it look domestic or *monastic*? Seen through the eyes of a monk, at any rate, it certainly resembles a monastery rather than a household.

To begin with, the place "beyond seven mountains" and far from any other habitation suggests monastic seclusion. And the little ones who live together there do not form a family, but rather a brotherhood of some sort. They share a common table (St. Benedict's much emphasized *mensa communis*) and a common dormitory ("if possible," says St. Benedict, "all are to sleep in one room"). All receive the same: there are seven little settings on the table, each with its own little plate, spoon, knife, fork, and cup; and when they come home each lights his own little lamp. One is reminded of St. Benedict's list of things necessary for the personal use of each monk: "cowl, tunic, stockings, boots, belt, knife, pen, needle, handkerchief, writing tablet." Yet, again in good Benedictine style, the needed things are not issued with military uniformity, but

"to each according to need": the shorter the dwarf, the shorter his bed. And with a rather monastic sense of fairness, the one whose bed fits Snow White's size takes turns sharing the beds of the other six, crowding each bedmate for only one hour until the night is out.

This brotherhood of seven—*septenarius sacratus numerus* of the Benedictine Rule—follows a strict schedule of work from morning to nightfall. "Idleness is the enemy of the soul. Therefore, the brethren ought to be occupied at definite times in manual labor." (Walt Disney even adds a monastic detail which the Brothers Grimm have not made explicit: he has them chant as they process in order of seniority.) The order and cleanliness maintained by the Seven Dwarfs strengthens our sense of a monastic atmosphere, for "anyone who treats the monastery property in an untidy or careless way is to be taken to task."

No single one of the traits we have pointed out might be convincing by itself. But together they add up to a syndrome that could hardly be so monastic by mere chance. In fact, the perspective in which the Seven Dwarfs are viewed can easily be recognized as that of peasants living near a monastery. It is an outsider's view, in spite of its familiarity with details, not unsympathetic, but baffled as much as intrigued. We hear a suppressed chuckle in the voice that mentions precisely those traits which peasants would have found most unfamiliar in a monastery. Each one is sleeping in a sepa-



rate bed! St. Benedict, too, makes quite a point of that, for it was by no means a general custom. Order and cleanliness are stressed again and again; but there is more than that, there is refinement. There is a table cloth; and the bed linen is as white as snow. And small as the Seven Dwarfs are, the storyteller is looking up to them and refers to them even as *die Herren*, using the title by which, in my own childhood still, peasants would refer to the monks of a neighboring abbey.

That the dwarfs seen in this perspective “dig for gold” makes sense. Given time enough, monasteries tend to acquire wealth. But quite apart from that, peasants would see gold mainly in church; and not so much in their own village church as on a pilgrimage to some monastic shrine. The glass coffin, too, with its golden lettering recalls reliquaries and the monks’ calligraphy. Yet, the most lively details are remembered not from church, but from the monastic kitchen, where lay people from the neighborhood would be as likely as Snow White to find employment. Both cooking and laundering were done in the kitchen; so also mending and knitting while the stew was simmering. All those are listed as Snow White’s duties. But to me the most amusing and convincing little detail is the subtle hint at the monks’ insistence (shall we call it a hang-up?) that the meals be on time. St. Benedict seems almost a bit fussy regarding the evening meal. Twice he repeats that “all must be finished while daylight lasts,” and every Snow White that ever worked in a monastic kitchen soon learned that when the dwarfs came home at night “the meal had better be ready,” as the story puts it—or else.

Surely, the stories of Snow White and of Psyche have a great deal of charm in common. But are there deeper connections between the two? On the very surface level of narrative already we detect remarkable parallels as soon as we look closely. This

may surprise us, when we remember that one and a half millennia separate Apuleius from the Brothers Grimm. And yet, the similarities make sense as soon as we discover that in both stories the protagonist is the same: Anima. (The Jungian connotation is not misleading here, but we shall have to fill in nuances as we go along.)

Anima’s obstacle course starts with an obstacle. Neither Snow White nor Psyche is allowed a running start. A first and crucial testing stands at the very beginning of both stories. It is, in fact, the impact of collision with this initial obstacle which propels Anima into action. Not a bad beginning for a monastic vocation.

How can one tell that there is promise in a monastic candidate? Two answers given seem diametrically opposed, though each is cogent in its own reasoning. The one will have it that only a candidate who was a success in worldly matters is likely to make a go of it in the monastery, too. The other one argues from the opposition between worldly and monastic values that a candidate fit for the monastery must in worldly circles have been considered a misfit. Paradoxically, a genuine candidate proves both opinions right. Our stories bear out this paradox. As Snow White, and as Psyche as well, Anima is both success and misfit. And she is a misfit precisely because she is a success; because of her surpassing beauty.

By their beauty both Snow White and Psyche are singled out. That same beauty becomes for both of them the first great obstacle, the initial touchstone of their testing. A surpassing beauty, we have called it. There is something brand new in that beauty, something the old woman can’t match, be she stepmother queen or the jealous mother-goddess Aphrodite. Anima’s beauty is surpassing because it is something altogether new. But her being beautiful in an unheard-of way surpasses Anima’s own comprehension. And so, her own inner bewilderment becomes the ordeal which her external trials merely make explicit.

As we follow the succession of events our two stories run perfectly parallel in their first, “pre-monastic” phase. The differences in narrative detail make the parallelism of the plots all the more striking. Out

of jealousy, the old mother figure seeks to destroy Anima. Snow White is as much in the dark about this as Psyche is. By the time they catch on, their fate is sealed. Both are led into the wilderness; both are destined for death in the prime of life, but both are spared by the one whom the old woman had commissioned with their undoing, and in both cases he spares them because he looks at their beauty and is moved. (One could hardly imagine two more different actors for this part than the old queen's huntsman and Eros himself, but the plot is the same.) Out in the wilderness Anima is totally alone. *Mutterseelig allein* it is said of Snow White, and Psyche, left alone on the summit of a crag, brings to mind Rilke's lines "Exposed on the heart's mountains..." Then among the trees of a forest (Dante's "dark woods"?) both find a house as if prepared for them; both find a meal ready, but they remain alone in these welcoming surroundings; and in the end both go to bed alone and fall asleep. (What monk does not remember that first night on a monastic cot or mat, that last sigh before a deep sleep?)

This, then, is Anima's flight from worldly ways, her *fuga mundi*. And it is Anima, to be sure, here at the threshold of monastic life. Be it in Bangkok or on Mt. Athos, at Chidambaram or Monte Cassino, the one who seeks admission at the monastery gate is always Anima. St. Benedict uses the feminine "anima" more than half a dozen times in speaking of monks, especially in the context of monastic apprenticeship and training. The Novice Master is to be *aptus ad lucrandas animas*, — skilled in winning souls. Souls only? Our word "soul" seems quite inadequate to translate "anima" in this and similar passages. What is meant is certainly not the soul as distinct from the body. "Anima," as St. Benedict uses this term, has far more in common with the biblical *נֶפֶשׁ* (*nefesh*) than with Plato's *ψυχή* (*psyché*): it stands for the whole human person. We might even say that it

stands for the root of our wholeness, for our human potential to fall in love with Love, as Psyche did. To be bride, that is the vocation of Anima.

The tribulations Anima must undergo in the wilderness begin for Snow White almost as soon as she has fled over those seven mountains and valleys and has been received by the brotherhood of the seven little ones. It was a common saying among the Desert Fathers, those forebears of Western monks: "Have you fled into the wilderness? Prepare yourself for battle!" Monastic struggles are not just inevitable obstacles on the chosen path, they are reasons why one chooses this path. A novice deliberately wants to be tested and tried on this narrow road without bypasses. Tribulations are painful, but welcome. The *tribulum*, from which the word "tribulation" is derived, is the Roman threshing sledge that separates wheat from chaff. And in the Rule of St. Benedict the image of a fire by which silver is tested stands side by side with the threshing sledge that runs over the monk's back. "But in all this," monks rejoice, "we more than overcome through the One who loves us." It is for the sake of the great Lover that Anima finds herself in the wilderness, even though, at first, she may be no more clearly aware of this deepest reason than Snow White or Psyche or any other novice.

At first, all is sheer delight: Snow White's humble abode, where every pot and pan has its proper place and sparkles on the shelf, no less than Psyche's magnificent residence with its colonnades and fountains. In every monk's memory novitiate days have a way of taking on colors of paradise. But a crisis must soon come. "Crisis" is another term that has its roots in a Roman farmer's word for sifting grain. Extremity, panic, perplexity are not essential to crisis; its essence is rather a process of stripping that liberates. "Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose." This applies also to the kernel stripped of its husk and set free; it applies to the process by which Anima in her novitiate is stripped of worldly ties.

Ties and tying, that is the key image of Snow White's first trial. The queen stepmother, disguised as an old peddler woman,



calls out her wares: “Staylaces in all colors!” Yes, they do come in all colors. The family ties that will ensnare Psyche in her troubles are only one kind of ties; it matters little by what kind a novice is entangled. “Come,” says the old peddler woman, “let me lace your bodice properly for once.” Before she knows it, Anima is all tied up with this or that. And that is the end of her new life. Like one dead, she lies on the ground. Snow White had been warned, but to no avail. Finding her now, the Seven who had been unable to save her by warning her, save her by cutting her ties. That’s far more painful; violent, almost, but this is the violence of love. Nowhere does this brotherhood show their love more clearly than by cutting the ties at any cost (remember, those were brand new silken laces) and set-

ting Anima free. “Little by little she returned to life,” the story says.

But temptation will come again. Three times. In the language of myth that means again and again. If the first temptation was entanglement, the second one is vanity. This means something more serious, of course, than the innocent enjoyment of being good-looking. What makes vanity serious is a morbid preoccupation with self, one’s little ephemeral self, for that is lethal.

In our fairy tale, the image for this vanity is an ornament, a comb. The wicked queen barely needed to change her disguise. The forgetfulness of novices is proverbial. And yet, mindfulness is what the training of the monk is all about. Well, that mindfulness does not come easily to Anima. “Go away,” says Snow White, “I must not let anyone in.” But when she eyes the comb, she is infatuated. And when the peddler woman offers to make her pretty, she thinks no harm. What the story literally says is that “Snow White thought of nothing” —

not a flattering, but an accurate description of Anima in her novitiate daze. As soon as the poisoned comb touches her hair, the daze becomes a deathlike stupor.

Again it is the *acies fraterna* as St. Benedict calls the brotherhood that closes ranks when the spiritual struggle gets tough, that comes to Anima's rescue. Again the Seven Dwarfs find Snow White lying on the ground as if dead. But they have not forgotten. They immediately recognize that it was the stepmother's doing, find the comb, and pull it out. This second failure struck deeper than the first. This time, cutting won't do; the comb has to be extracted. Vanity threatens monastic life closer to the core than external ties.

But, in good fairy tale fashion, Snow White is given a third chance. This time she does remember; but again she fails. This time she does not blunder into her failure, she is outright disobedient. Like Eve, who "saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired," Snow White "lusts after the apple," the story tells us, and she takes and eats. "This time the dwarfs will not be able to bring you back to life again," the queen laughs, and she is right.

The laces had remained on the outside; the comb was merely inserted in her hair, but she swallowed a bit of the apple. Eating is a full engagement. It is communion. We become similar to the food we assimilate. Psyche, in the end, will drink the goblet of ambrosia and become immortal. Snow White, here, shares the apple of hatred and dies. Her three trials came closer and closer to the core of her being, closer and closer to the essence of Anima's monastic commitment. The laces first: one is ensnared by ties, but they remain external. Next, the comb: vanity is a morbid turning back on itself of a self that may, however, be in itself still healthy. But disobedience is disintegration, death.

This would make no sense if obedience consisted merely in doing what one is told to do. But the obedient response to a specific call is merely an exercise. It trains Anima in the skill of being attuned to the call of each moment. Mastery of that skill is accomplished obedience. By being in tune with the whole the heart becomes whole. This wholeness, the goal of every path, is at stake in the testing of obedience.

Through obedience, each thread on the cosmic loom finds its way into the great pattern as it emerges. Through disobedience the threads get entangled. Snow White's silken cords of many colors hint at her entanglement. Psyche, in turn, gets tangled up in family ties. When her invisible lover warns her against her sisters, she begins to miss them all the more keenly, and at length her tears prevail. The wicked sisters are admitted and their envy is aroused by Psyche's bliss. Again her lover warns; Psyche must at least guard his secret from her sisters. But when they come again they get her entangled in the web of her own lies, and on their third visit they pull the snare tight. At last she must admit that she has never seen her lover's face and those two, her kin and yet her foes, persuade her that he is a monstrous serpent. They implore her by the bonds of blood and by the ties of birth that unite them to rid herself of that monster bridegroom.

By now the real issue is clearly in focus: this is a test of faith. Will Psyche trust her divine lover or her all too human kin? "If the joys of your secret love still delight you, and you are content to lie in the embrace of a foul and venomous snake, at least we, your loving sisters, have done our duty."

"Those false she-wolves are weaving some deep plot of sin against you," her lover had warned Psyche; "They will try to persuade you to want to know my face; but I have told you, if you see it once, you will see it no more." Psyche, in reply, had assured him of her faithfulness: "I seek no more to see your face; not even the dark of night can be a hindrance of my joy, for I hold you in my arms, light of my life." And yet, "she tossed to and fro" in a crisis of faith; "in the same body she hated the beast and loved the husband."



Like Snow White, Psyche forgot. "She forgot all her husband's warnings and all her own promises." At her sisters' faithless counsel, Psyche lights the lantern and lifts the sharpened razor. But there lies Love himself, fairest of gods! "Even the flame of the lamp, when it beheld him, burned brighter for joy," and "a drop of burning oil fell upon the god's right shoulder." In seven syllables, the collapse of paradise is told: *tacitus avolavit*—he flew away without word.

Anima failed. There is no denying it; not if we take our stand on the storyteller's own ground. One need not deny, of course, that in a sense this failure led to growth for Psyche. Yet, it is not the element of disobedience that leads to a happy ending after all, but rather a turning away from it, a change of heart.

Contemplating God's plan in which even sin has its function, Augustine marvels: "Even sin!"—*Etiam peccata!* Paul Claudel paraphrases Augustine with a Basque proverb: "God writes straight, even on crooked lines." We should not rob this insight of its power by making it appear as if failure had been the inevitable, even the originally intended course of events. The paradise towards which we go casts no shadow on the one we lost. What our bliss would have been, we shall never know. Enough for Anima that, even after her fall, "the god her lover left her," not lying on the earth, "but gave her hope."

It is hope that is tested in Psyche's second trial. Our myth, as it stands, leaves as little doubt that Psyche has failed, as the biblical myth leaves doubt that Adam and Eve have fallen into sin. Yet in both stories there remains a ray of hope. Here, Eros promises to destroy the wicked sisters, "but you," he says to Psyche, "I will only punish



thus—by flying from you.” This flight of Eros from Psyche is an intriguing variation on Francis Thompson’s theme of the Hound of Heaven. In the very flight from her, “this tremendous Lover” pursues Anima, here too, “down the nights and down the days,” as day and night she seeks him. The paradox of hope is this: Anima’s divine lover pursues her by fleeing from her.

According to the logic of the heart, his pursuit of her must necessarily take the form of flight, or else the hopes she has might be mistaken for the Hope he is.

All which I took from thee I did but take,
Not for thy harms,
But just that thou might’st seek it in My arms.¹

In its own imagery our story develops the purification of Psyche’s hope. As Eros flies away, Psyche follows him with her eyes until, blinded by tears, she can see him no more. In despair she casts herself, then and there, headlong from the brink of a river. Again she has failed. The test of her hope starts out with failure. “But the kindly stream... to do honor to the god who sets even waters ablaze with his fire, quickly caught her up in its current and laid her unharmed upon a bank deep in flowering herbage.” It is here that Psyche’s long wanderings begin.

Wide open to the road ahead of her, Psyche sets out on her journey of hope. The divine Lover whom she seeks secretly

guides her steps and keeps stripping her, one by one, of all her hopes, to make her completely empty, ready to receive him. This stripping takes the form of Psyche’s encounter with the Great Mother. Hope is a motherly virtue. Under three different aspects Psyche must meet the mother goddess: as Demeter, Hera, and Aphrodite. I see in this threefold repetition more than the fairy tale’s fancy for the number three. Only by putting earth, sea, and sky together can the myth bring out the cosmic fullness of the mother image. Demeter gives fruitfulness to the earth; Hera is queen of the Heavens; Aphrodite was born from the foam of the sea.

But there is also a stepping up in the sequence of the three encounters. Wandering after her lost lover, Psyche sees a temple high on a mountain and says, “How do I know that my lord may not dwell there?” It is a temple of the great Earth Mother, and Demeter appears to Psyche, but will not let her stay even for a short rest. She must go on.

In a deep valley, Psyche comes upon another temple, where she begs Hera, goddess of matrimony and of childbirth, for asylum. But again her hope is shattered; she must be on her way. Deep in her heart she knows that she will have to face the divinity under the very aspect that causes all her trouble: Aphrodite, goddess of beauty and love. Wishing “to leave no path of fairer hope untried, however doubtful it might be,” she had approached the sacred portals of Demeter and Hera. But she knew that no darkness could hide her safely from “great Aphrodite’s inevitable eyes.” Now she says

to herself: "Your little hopes are shattered. Renounce them boldly!" With this boldness of hope, purged of all hopes, and preparing herself for certain death, Psyche stands at last at Aphrodite's portal.

Here the third phase of her trials begins; now her love is to be tested. And, like her faith and hope, her love is not merely tested by these trials but transformed.

The tests of Psyche's love turn out to be tasks of obedience. This must be so. For obedience is the process by which we find our place in a wholeness to which we belong. Wholehearted assent to that belonging is love. In her obedience to the tasks imposed on her by Aphrodite, Psyche comes to understand and accept her belonging in an ever wider context. By expanding in this way, her love is transformed from preferential attachment to universal belonging. Love always grows in that way.

... Thus, love of a country
Begins as attachment to our own field of action
And comes to find that action of little
importance
Though never indifferent...²

Psyche's tasks have cosmic implications, stretching her love throughout earth, water, fire, and air. She cannot fulfill her tasks without the help she receives from fellow creatures that inhabit those four realms. Confronted with corn, barley, millet, poppy seed, chickpeas, lentils, and beans all in one heap, Psyche is dumbfounded by the task of putting like with like, but the ants, "humble nurslings of earth, the mother of all," take pity on their human sister; in no time they separate the whole heap, grain by grain. Next she is commanded to bring some golden wool from rams fierce with fire, but out of the water the voice of a reed tells her when and where she may simply gather the pickings of wool from the thorn bushes. And when Psyche is given the impossible task to fetch water from the top of an inaccessible waterfall, an eagle swoops down, fills the vessel, and carries it back to her through the

air. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God" (Rom. 8:28); and here is "the spouse of Love himself," as the little ants call her in the story.

As Anima's love expands it deepens; it matures. The stages of love's growing are also depicted in the succession of Psyche's labors of love. Not only does the order of images—seed, summer fields, and barren rock—suggest springtime, harvest, and bleak winter, the heart knows more subtle seasons. It starts with making order. "Friend, for what purpose hast thou come?" St. Benedict solemnly confronts each novice with this question. Sort out your motives! There is only one valid one: "that he truly seek God,"—Anima's invisible Lover. Once Psyche has done this sorting out, she has to show how brave she can be. In order to prove that her love is "a most vehement flame" (Cant. 8:6), she has to brave the rams that burn with the sun's fire. But from fortitude in action there is still a long climb to that slippery rock where Psyche stands as if she herself had turned to stone. Sooner or later all paths of love, monastic or otherwise, lead to that point where going on is as impossible as turning back. Anima stands still; but she still stands. At this point "love is most nearly itself."

Now certainly Psyche is no longer a novice. Yet, there is one more trial that sums up all the others and somehow was contained in all of them. The ultimate obstacle is death.

Aphrodite adds a fourth task to the conventional triad which we often find in myth and fairy tale. Psyche has to go and confront the one aspect of the Great Mother she had not yet encountered, Persephone, queen of the nether world, Mother Death. This part of the story is so rich that we cannot even begin to do it justice here, but we ought to focus on one element that is essential in our context: Psyche's final failure. Obedient to Aphrodite's command and to the advice of a "far-seeing tower," she carries out the task of bringing back in a casket beauty, a gift of the eternally young queen of the realm of death. Already she has regained the realm of daylight with her treasure. And what happens now? Disobedient, she opens the box.

Once more we must remember the close bond that unites love and obedience if we want to feel the full impact of our story. Throughout Psyche's last and crucial labor of love her obedience is stressed, but one step from the finish line she falters. Alive, she has descended into the realm of death and obtained that gift of beauty sealed in secret. But as soon as she breaks both seal and command, she falls into a deathlike sleep. By failing in obedience she has failed the test of love. This at least is the verdict of the story. It is our task to understand why this is so.

Love is our heart's creative "yes!" to that all-embracing design of being to which we belong—not a static design, of course, but a universal choreography, a dance. Obedience is the process of finding, step by step, our way into the harmony of that great design, and so into love. But disobedience reverses that progress. Disobedience is dissonance. Suddenly we are out of tune, out of step, out of breath; we have fallen out of love, have cut ourselves off from the flow of the lifegiving design. This means death. Disobedient Anima dies. All Psyche's helpers from ant to eagle are powerless now, for she has cut herself off from them. Only the lover can bring Snow White to new life; only Eros can wipe the sleep of death from Psyche's eyes; for Love is that "Designer infinite" who can mend every rift, and only Love can work into the grand design even sin—*Etiam peccata!*

We have already seen how closely the stories of Snow White and of Psyche parallel one another throughout their beginning phases, from the initial stumbling block of Anima's surpassing beauty to her welcome in monastic surroundings; we now see how perfectly the two stories mirror one another also in their final phases. Three times, Snow White succumbs to temptation—by the colorful laces, the pretty comb, the tasty-looking apple; each time she falls into a deathlike sleep that more and more resembles death. Her entanglement and her vani-

ty lead step by step to her final deadly disobedience. Psyche, too, fails three times, as her faith, her hope, and her love are tested. But in all three of those testings it is her obedience that is tried.

Of course, our text knows no such abstractions as we have used to trace the parallels. Happily, the fairy tale lets truth blossom forth in images. And those images, too, show distinct resemblances. We have noticed before how the motif of Snow White tied up in her silken laces echoes Psyche's entanglement in family ties and deceit. But Snow White's ornamental comb and the forbidden fruit are also reflected in Psyche's final disobedience. Are we not reminded of Snow White's vanity when Psyche plots to steal from the treasure entrusted to her just enough to make herself more attractive? And when she decides to "sip a tiny drop therefrom," she falls into the death-sleep that overcomes Snow White as soon as she tastes a tiny piece of the apple.

Our focus on obedience gives us not only a clue to the pattern underlying both stories, it allows us also to recognize it as the basic pattern of the monastic path. St. Benedict calls it "the road of obedience ...so that through the labor of obedience you may find your way back to the One from whom you have strayed loitering in disobedience." When the monk comes up against "impossible tasks," St. Benedict has one simple guideline: "out of love...in faith ...let him obey." "Secure in hope" the monk journeys towards the goal. But this hope is truly open for surprise, not blocked by petty hopes; for "eye has not seen nor ear heard what God has prepared for those who love Him." What awaits them is the unheard-of, the unseen lover, Love himself.

Union with the Lover who is also the savior from death is the point towards which the stories of Snow White and of Psyche converge. Even at the darkest moment a ray of promise remains: the sleep merely resembles death. Even the animals that come to mourn Snow White are sitting there more like emblems of hope embroidered on a hanging above the glass coffin. Owl, raven, and dove, the birds of death, burial, and mourning—but the owl came first, we are explicitly told, "and last, a

dove." A dove also came last, after Noah had sent out a raven; "and there it was with a fresh olive twig in its beak" (Gen. 8:11). The image is strong.

And then comes that moment when Anima opens her eyes and looks into the eyes of Love bent over her. To be awakened by Love, that is the biblical version among the world's great renditions of the theme of spiritual awakening. Love blinds, we say, but in a deeper sense love is the great eye-opener. "Awake, O sleeper, arise from the dead, and the Anointed One will shine on thee!" (Eph. 5:14). When Snow White opens her eyes, her first words are: "O God, where am I?" And her lover gives the beautiful answer: "You are with me!" *Ecce!* is the first word of Eros to Psyche, "Look!" and he calls her *misella*—poor little one, *povrecita*, or as the Hound of Heaven says to Anima at the end of the chase:

Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest,
I am He Whom thou seekest!³

"So let us then rise up at last," St. Benedict calls out to his monks, "for Scripture is arousing us and saying: 'It is high time for us to rise from sleep.' With eyes wide open to the light that makes divine..." Yes, this is an expression of rare daring in Christian literature. Not merely divine light, but light that *makes* divine—*deificum lumen*—that is what we are to look at. *Ecce!* St. Benedict, too, calls out to Anima: "look, in his love the Lord shows us the way of life." No sooner has Eros wiped the death-sleep from Psyche's eyes and put it back into its casket, than he shows her that way of life, the road of obedience: "Make haste to fulfill the task with which my mother has charged you; I will take care of the rest."

The rest is the great wedding feast. But, before it can be celebrated Anima must carry the sealed secret of beauty to the goddess of beauty and love. By this act of obedience the story of Psyche comes full circle. It all started with that beauty. From the very start, faith, hope, and love have been at stake in Anima's dealing with that

gift—"surpassing," and that means "not easy to handle." It took courage to bear a beauty which in its newness surpassed her own comprehension—the courage of faith. The newness of that beauty demanded from her a limitless openness for surprise—the openness of hope. And being the beauty she was demanded a "yes" of love in which, accepting herself, she would surpass herself. The fear, the despair, and the "no" of disobedience paralyzed her beauty into that of a death mask. But she is given a chance to complete the "ultimate task," and "with all speed" she runs. In obedience she surpasses herself in faith, hope, and love. This is Anima's ultimate transformation. The original stumbling block has become the final stepping stone. The goblet of immortality is filled for her and the wedding feast with Love can begin.

It is all pure gift. Her original beauty was gift. Her final glory is gift. And all the suffering along the way turns out to have been a gift of Love. Maybe even her failing was gift, so as to make it clear that her overcoming, while truly her own, is also truly gift.

But was it necessary, all that suffering, we ask?

Ah! must—

Designer infinite!—

Ah! must Thou char the wood ere Thou canst
limn with it?⁴

Fairy tales do not give us the answer. But maybe they can help us live with the question. And how else would you learn to live with Psyche's invisible Lover? ◇

Notes

1. Francis Thompson, "The Hound of Heaven" in: *The Oxford Book of English Mystical Verse*, ed. Nicholson E. Lee (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 409-415.

2. T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968), 4:3, pp. 159-162.

3. Thompson, op. cit.

4. Ibid.

Milarepa and the Trial of the Towers

The following narrative forms a small part of the story of the twelfth-century Buddhist saint, Milarepa, whose quest for Truth has delighted and guided Tibetan Buddhists for centuries.

In the preliminary episodes of the story, it is related how Milarepa and his mother were robbed of their inheritance by the connivance of Milarepa's aunt and uncle. At his mother's behest, Milarepa becomes a student of magic and acquires the knowledge necessary to bring destruction upon his enemies. He causes the destruction of his uncle's house, killing thirty-five people, and sends violent hailstorms which destroy the wheat-crop in the village, to the vengeful glee of his mother. But Milarepa himself is troubled by his black deeds, and when he can bear his remorse no longer, he goes in search of a lama to learn how he can purge himself of his sins. The first lama he finds tells him that he can become Buddha in one day of meditation: Milarepa is delighted—but fails to meditate. The lama then sends him to find Marpa the Translator, the disciple of the Great Master Naropa. At the name of Marpa, Milarepa is filled with joy, recognizing at once the name of the one master who can help him. Immediately, he sets forth on his journey.

Marpa, meanwhile, has had a dream that indicates the coming of a great disciple. He goes into his field to plow, and there Milarepa finds him, but does not at first recognize him. The farmer tells Milarepa that he will arrange for a meeting with Marpa. "Meanwhile," he says, "plow the field." Milarepa obeys, and in the evening he is taken to the lama and finds the farmer he met in the field.

"I am Marpa," said the dusty figure in front of Milarepa. "Prostrate yourself!"

"Lama Rimpoche," said Milarepa, bowing down to the ground. "I am a great sinner in need of Enlightenment. I offer you my body, speech, and mind, and I ask for food, clothing, and the teaching."

"Don't rave at me about being a great sinner," replied Marpa. "I have not made you commit any sins. What are these sins?"

Milarepa confessed his crimes and described the vengeance he brought upon his village. Marpa said, "So that's what you've done. Well, it is good that you have offered me your body, speech, and mind, but I will not give you food and clothing as well as the teaching. You must choose one or the other: if I give you food and

clothing, you must find someone else to give you the teaching. If I give you the teaching, you must provide food and clothing for yourself. If you choose the teaching, know that whether you achieve Enlightenment in this life or not depends entirely upon your own efforts.”

“Since I have come to you for the teaching,” Milarepa replied, “I will find food and clothing elsewhere.” So he went into the valley and began to beg. By saving a part of the alms earned by begging, he was soon able to buy a large cooking pot which he offered to Marpa as a gift. Marpa accepted it, but when Milarepa begged for the teaching, Marpa replied by sending him out to destroy a region of robbers by invoking magical hailstorms. After accomplishing this, he was sent to cast spells on certain mountaineers who were attacking Marpa’s disciples. Again Milarepa invoked his magic, and the mountaineers fell to fighting among themselves, many perishing by the sword. Marpa then gave Milarepa the nickname, Great Magician, but when asked for the teaching, replied, “Am I to reward your crimes by a teaching I came by at the risk of my life? You must be joking! Anyone else would kill you for asking such a thing. Now, if you can restore the harvest you have destroyed by hail and bring back to life the mountaineers you have killed, I will teach you. But do not come back if you cannot do this.”

In despair, Milarepa wept, and Marpa’s wife consoled him. The next day, the lama came to his disciple and said, “Last night I was hard on you, but be patient. This is very slow work. You have much energy: build me a tower for my son, Darma Doday. When you have finished it, I will instruct you and will give you food and clothing as well.” Then he took Milarepa to the eastern crest of the mountain and told him, “Build a circular tower on this crest, and when you have finished, I will give you the teaching.”

Milarepa began to build, carrying the stones by hand, and mixing the mortar himself. When the tower was half finished, Marpa came to him.

“When I told you to build this tower, I had not given the matter enough consideration. I do not want the tower here. You must tear it down and return the earth and stones to their places.” Then, taking his disciple to the western crest, he added, “Build a semicircular tower here. When you have finished, I will give you the teaching.” Once again, Milarepa set to work, after having torn down his earlier labors, and when the tower was nearly half finished, Marpa again came to him.

“It is not right. Tear it down and replace all the earth and stones. Then come with me.” Milarepa did so without complaint, and went with Marpa to the top of the mountain to the north. “Great Magician, I was drunk the other day and gave you poor directions. Build a tower here instead.” Milarepa replied, “To build and then tear down makes me miserable and wastes your wealth. Please consider the matter carefully!” “Today I am not



drunk," said Marpa. "I have thought the matter over. Build a triangular tower, to be called the Tower of the Tantric Yogin. Build it. It will not be torn down."

When the triangular tower was a third finished, Marpa again came to Milarepa.

"Great Magician! For whom do you build this tower? Who told you to build it here?" "The lama himself ordered this tower for his son," answered Milarepa. "Did I indeed? I do not remember doing so. If you are right, I must be going mad. Am I insane?" Milarepa said, "I suspected it would be like this, and I remember asking you to give the matter good consideration. You replied that the tower would not be demolished." Marpa replied, "If I said that, who is your witness? Are you going to shut us all up in a magic triangle, and cast spells on us, who have done nothing to harm you? If you sincerely desire religion, go and put all the earth and stones back where they were. Then I will give you the teaching. If you won't do this, you might as well leave."

Overcome with grief, but still thirsting for the teaching, Milarepa replaced all the earth and stones, and it was at this time that sores began to break out on his back from all his labors. Still, he thought, I mustn't say anything to the lama, or it will seem to be complaining. Then, without displaying his sores, he implored Marpa's wife to help him obtain the teaching. She in turn went to Marpa and said, "All this useless building of towers is only bringing your disciple to grief and despair. Have compassion on him and give him the teaching."

At this, Marpa asked her to prepare a meal and bring Milarepa before him. When the meal was served, Marpa said, "Great Magician, don't tell tales about me behind my back. Since your desire is strong, I will give you the teaching." Then he taught Milarepa the exposition on the Triple Refuge, and said, "This much is general law and applies to everyone. But if you want the secret teaching..." Then he told Milarepa about Naropa's liberation, and the terrible ordeals he had suffered. "For you," concluded Marpa, "the way will be extremely difficult." At these words, Milarepa's faith was renewed, and he swore to carry out everything the lama asked.

A few days passed, and Marpa took him to another piece of ground. In detail, he described to Milarepa the ten-storied square tower to be built, the nine principal stories, and the pinnacle. "When you have finished, I will give you the secret teaching, and you may then retire to meditate on it. While you meditate, I will give you food." Milarepa replied, "Would it not be a good idea to have the lama's wife here as a witness to all these promises?" "Very well," said Marpa, and the lama's wife was brought to witness while the walls were traced out on the ground.

"I am glad to be witness," said the lama's wife, "but it will probably be of no use. The lama builds and destroys without reason, and does whatever he pleases." Marpa replied, "Just bear witness, and allow me to keep my promises. Great Magician, if you will not have the trust to pledge, you must go away." Milarepa pledged his trust and began building the square tower. While the first wall was being put up, three of Marpa's disciples came by, rolling a large rock, which they set into the wall as a cornerstone. When the second story of the tower had been built, Marpa came and carefully inspected the work. When he came to the huge boulder that formed the cornerstone, he pointed to it and said, "Where did this stone come from?" Milarepa told him, and Marpa said, "You must not include others' work with yours. That was not in the bargain. Take the stone out and put it back where it was."

Milarepa replied, "But you promised that this tower would not be destroyed." "True," said Marpa, "but it is not right that my advanced pupils should be helping you. Don't demolish everything: just remove the stone and replace it." But to do this, Milarepa had to tear down everything that he had built, and when the stone was back in place, Marpa said to him, "Now bring the stone back again and use it for the cornerstone." Because of the effort required of him (it had taken three men to move it before), this stone came to be called Milarepa's Giant Stone.

This tower was eventually finished, but this was still not the end of Milarepa's ordeals. They went on and on and on... The day came, however, when Marpa placed his hands on Milarepa's head, and said, "My son, from the beginning I knew you were a disciple capable of receiving the teaching."

—Retold by Paul Jordan-Smith

THE GREAT TRANSITION

Somewhere in the life-voyage of certain religious people there is a great transition, which can also become a major crisis of significance. The traveler enters this great transition as a man or a woman of God, as a man or woman of truth, and emerges as a Lover of God, as a Seeker of Truth. Each tradition employs its own imagery to describe this transition, and it is known variously as the initiation, the end of apprenticeship, death and rebirth, the sojourn in the wilderness, the passage through the gate, etc. When a traveler passes through the great transition, the significance of the voyage is totally transformed. From the perspective of one who has passed through it, the first leg, the first part of one's life, is perceived as a period of preparation in which the traveler learns the skills of his trade—the basic geography of the cosmos, the rudiments of navigation and map-reading, and the recognition and avoidance of dangers. The great transition is both a summons and a revelation. The traveler opens his sealed sailing instructions, and, for the first time, his true destination becomes clear. He also discovers that although the knowledge he had gleaned and the competences he had acquired previously are of great value—he could not have reached his present station without them—the total picture they give is, ultimately, an illusion, from which he must move into a deeper reality. This great transition is also the point at which many travelers are broken. The new route is so strange when compared with the old that the two appear to be incompatible, or even mutually exclusive. It is a sad but commonplace fact that the life of a religious person, especially in our

times, is often no preparation for the tasks facing a Seeker of Truth.

I perceive precisely such a crisis, a breaking point in the religious lives of many of my Jewish friends today. They have come so far as Jews, have learned the traditional wisdom of the Jewish religion, and have accepted, with some degree or other of commitment, its praxis, its skills. And then, suddenly, comes the summons, comes the revelation. The response is frequently one of shock, of despair. No matter how clear the recognition that the call is of truth, and to truth, they feel that they have not been prepared to make the crossing, that nothing that they have learned as Jews has equipped them for the life of a Seeker of Truth. The great transition is seen as impassible. At this point, many shrug off the summons, and justify themselves by saying that the new route is not part of the Jewish way; some attempt to continue as if nothing had taken place, and tend to live rather impoverished, automatic, religious lives. Others, and their number seems to be growing, accept the summons, but feel that they cannot pursue it within Judaism, that they cannot reach completion as Jews; these are the Jewish dropouts, the recruits to other, especially Eastern, religions.

Personally, I believe that this crisis can be navigated, and that it is possible to make the passage and to emerge as a religious Jew. The difficulties are formidable, especially for those outside the orthodox, fundamentalist camp. Those who wish to undertake it must be willing to seek out and to find the Jewish wisdom that deals with the path to enlightenment, forewarned that the access to it is obstructed; the texts are obscure, and teachers are few. Such travelers must be prepared to question and to challenge much of what they have previously learned of Judaism, even, on occasion, to the point of smashing apparently sacrosanct structures in order to extract a few holy stones. Nevertheless, I believe that it can be

done, and that the effort will be richly rewarded. What follows is an offering of insights, derived from my own work and that of my friends, into the nature of some of the obstacles we have encountered. There are, of course, no answers, but the very understanding of a difficulty is often a step towards confronting it.

The first obstacle is one that derives from a confusion of means and ends. Is one a Jew primarily in order to serve God, or is one a Jew for a variety of valid, though ultimately extrinsic reasons, among which religion, at least ontologically, is secondary? Now, it is clear that membership of any religious community is determined to a large extent by psychological and sociological factors, but in the case of the Jews, with the burden of three thousand years of troubled history and a community structure that was fashioned at least partially by external pressures, these are particularly heavy. Thus, for example, even a person who finds little satisfaction in Judaism is likely to feel bound to it by a sense of guilt. How can one abandon a path that one's forefathers fought so ferociously to defend, on many occasions at risk to their lives? How can one opt out of a nation that was threatened so barbarically with extinction in the most recent past? How can one desert a community under siege?

Parallel to, or flowing from, this continued association out of a sense of guilt, another, more positive and certainly more acceptable mechanism develops: the growth and reinforcement of personal identity by means of membership in a group. The Jew learns to love and to be proud of the values of his group, its path and its praxis; and he

receives warm rewards for this loyalty. On the most basic level he acquires a strong identity and a support group upon which he can call in time of crisis. On a higher level, he discovers the rich spiritual resources that are his heritage, a well-tried way to worship God, a world view that attributes deep significance to the cycles of life, and a theology that promises—despite the vagaries of history—divine protection and ultimate vindication. Now, there is nothing reprehensible in such mechanisms. They are both commendable and essential for a group that has every right to desire to continue to exist. Nevertheless, for the Jewish traveler who approaches the great transition, they can constitute a serious obstacle. He learns that in order to proceed with his work—which is to understand God's will and to align his whole being with it—he must strip ego from self, must rid himself of all habits of thought that inhibit the freedom of his soul. He has to learn to purify his praxis, so that it will serve the one goal. The Jewish identity we have described makes this task very difficult, for it has welded together the functions of the soul and the process of survival.

So far we have dealt with problems whose provenance is sociological, the effects of a recruitment to a religious community for reasons that are not primarily associated with the worship of God. Let us now turn to another group of obstacles, those that derive from an apparent incompatibility between what the traveler has learned in the first part of his voyage—that is, the Judaism he has received—and what he perceives as the path beyond the great transition—to become a Seeker of Truth. These difficulties are of a mixed etiology, but can broadly be attributed to the sad state of contemporary Judaism. I have no intention here of embarking upon a critique of Jewish theology, and shall limit my diagnosis to a single sentence: Judaism appears

to be suffering from a lack of knowledge of the old and from an inability to confront the new.

The first obstacle in this group is one that all but the most extraordinarily fortunate seekers are certain to encounter: the almost universally accepted, but quite false, hypothesis that Judaism does not acknowledge the "inner path of quest" as a legitimate route to God. Had I not been so sternly warned by my academic teachers to reject out of hand all "conspiracy" theories, I would be greatly tempted to adopt such an explanation. Ask a hundred rabbis, and you find that ninety-nine will say that it is not the Jewish way. "Enlightenment is not a goal in Judaism." Survey the numerous scholarly works on Jewish mysticism, and with one or two remarkable but little known exceptions, you will find no reference to it. Even accounts of small closed groups that were clearly established as holy communities are generally written in a way that emphasizes other, secondary characteristics, such as the messianic aspirations of the members. Scan the textbooks, the manuals, the encyclopedias for material on meditation, and you are likely to conclude that it was never part of Jewish praxis. Nevertheless, there is a vast body of Jewish wisdom on the inner path, dispersed in books on the Kabbalah, and especially in the later Hasidic works. True, it is not presented in monographic discourses (Hasidic books are notoriously nonsystematic), and there are few explicit manuals of instruction, but it is possible to glean a mass of important teachings from these sources. Some Hasidic writers, for example, deal extensively with the processes of cognition, the migration of attention through the various levels of consciousness, and specifically with the problem of the painful descent from the holistic mode, the ecstatic perception of an all-pervading oneness, to the individuated mode, the perception of particularized reality. Many other topics of a related nature, comprising together what

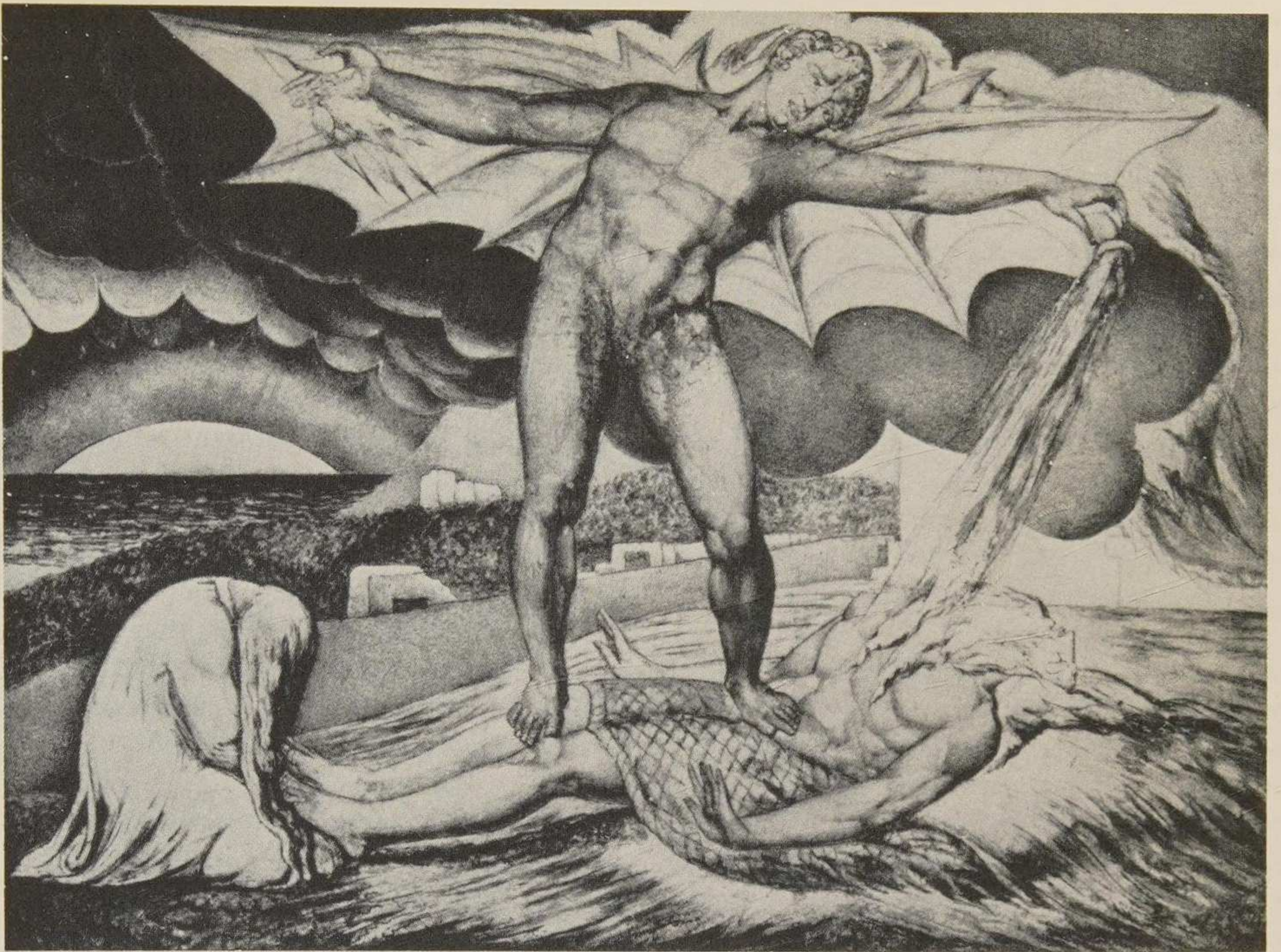
could be called the basics of the mystic's craft, can be located in a good Jewish library.

This obstacle, this systematic denial of access to information, is in fact a new manifestation of an ancient and perennial struggle, that between priest and prophet, dogmatist and mystic, the community and the ecstatic. When perceived as such, it is relatively easy to confront: it is not that no path exists, but that there are powerful social forces that wish to prevent one from following it.

The problems that derive from the inadequacies of modern Jewish theology, however, are far more difficult to resolve. The traveler needs theology; it is an essential navigational aid, and he cannot proceed without it. The task of theology is to provide a reliable map, a concept of the universe in which every detail is significant and the life of the individual is meaningful. Furthermore, theology must describe the features of the universe in such a way that the mystery that enshrouds them is untouched. Divinity resides in mystery. The major failing of theology today is that it has restricted its own applicability to a few relatively safe areas of existence. Most of the universe is no longer mysterious, or at least not so in religious terms.

Traditionally, Jewish theology relates to and portrays four interrelated areas of existence, which may be envisaged as four concentric circles. The innermost is the human soul; the second circle is the individual's immediate environment, which starts with his body and reaches out to the entire Jewish people; the third is the cosmos, everything that God created; and the outermost circle is the Creation, the mythical key to an understanding of the personality of God and the nature of his relationship with the world.

Most of the work of Jewish theologians and thinkers in recent years has been directed towards the second circle, most specifically towards the contemporary problems of the Jewish people. Thus serious attempts have been made to grapple with the agonizing problem of the Holocaust, and, on the brighter side, the significance of the establishment of the State of Israel. Now, although an understanding of what it means



to be the Chosen People is extremely important in such traumatic and dramatic times, its value is limited when the universe as a whole is unfathomable from the perspective of religion.

For centuries theology (both Jewish and non-Jewish) fought against the encroachments of science into what it considered to be its private territory. Frequently, however, it seems to have done so for the wrong reasons. By focusing the issue on the conflict between religious dogma and scientific fact, the theologians failed to perceive the deeper significance of the scientific world view. When, in recent years, they were willing to accommodate, to concede that, for example, there was no inherent contradiction between dogma and the discoveries of Galileo and Darwin, and that the book of Genesis was in many ways an allegory and

not a textbook of history, it was too late. The scientific cosmology had won the day, and its significance is not that the earth is not the center of the universe, or that man evolved from amoebas by way of worms and apes. The cosmological teaching of modern science is that man is utterly insignificant: in terms of the infinite reaches of time and space, human history is but an ephemeral, local event of minute proportions; not only is man not the final stage of Creation, he is not even necessarily the highest form of life, just the most recent development on this particular planet. The effect of this onslaught of science upon religion has been devastating. Instead of confronting an exciting new world, theology has restricted its concerns to safe familiarities, and even these seem at times to be demystified.

For the traveler who becomes a Seeker of Truth, such a theology is of no more value than a broken toy. He must relate to the mysteries of astrophysics, and must face with awe his own minute proportions in relation to the cosmos. He must ponder

once again the question posed so powerfully in the Bible, by Ezekiel, by Job and the Psalmist: In such a terrifying world, is there any significance to my life? The Jewish seeker cannot determine his coordinates exclusively within the narrow bounds of Jewish history and peoplehood; he must plot his course also by the most distant galaxies.

Paradoxically, this is not a particularly difficult task, though it does seem formidable. Whereas much modern theology appears to be paralyzed in the face of the new cosmology, that embodied in the old Jewish mystical tradition, the Kabbalah, appears to be alive and pertinent. These strange theological works depict a universe of infinite size and complexity in which, on the one hand, man is insignificantly small, and yet, on the other, he is the observer and the actor who stands at the center. It is obviously an inane pursuit to attempt to find equivalences between the details of the Kabbalistic picture of the universe and, for example, the Big Bang (though, needless to say, it has been attempted), but the modes of cognition, and even the theory of knowledge, seem to coexist in peace. What I wish to say here is that the Kabbalah offers a map of the cosmos that is not incompatible with our new knowledge, and can match it in excitement. A friend of mine once remarked that were the great mystics of the Middle Ages alive today, they would surely employ science fiction as a vehicle for their works. In my opinion, the writings of Isaac Luria, a major Kabbalist who lived in the sixteenth century, were just such science fiction.

So far I have reviewed a few common obstacles of a more general nature. Before concluding with a short discussion of what is most frequently considered to be the most serious difficulty of the Jewish seeker, the lack of teachers, I shall list three or four more problems, each a cluster of closely related questions, and shall devote no more than a few words to each.

Is the Jewish praxis really the way? Is compliance with a complex set of commandments an aid or an obstacle to the path? Do not the details obscure the essential work? Is it possible to be confident that, in performing a particular minor ritual, one is making manifest the will of God? My response to these questions is to repeat what has been given to me: It is the way if one chooses it as the way.

Does not the great emphasis placed on study in the Jewish tradition introduce an element of achievement orientation, of personal involvement with success, precisely in the area in which one must be free of the constrictions of ego? The answer to this is that there is such a danger, but that the great teachers, especially of the Hasidic movement, were aware of it, and fought against it on both the personal and social levels.

Does not Jewish self-consciousness, drawing on centuries of apologetics, engender a rather over-serious, humorless way of looking at the world? Can the Jew giggle in his prayers? Can he perceive the laughter in the universe? Can he hear the Almighty chuckling? This one is difficult. The perception of the humorous is certainly a requirement of many seekers, but many others have done without.

The final item I shall mention in this survey is the lack of teachers. Whereas the western world appears to be inundated with great (and less great) gurus and spiritual guides, there are very few who can lead the seeker on the Jewish path. Once there were many. A Jew living in Eastern Europe in the eighteenth century, in the heyday of the Hasidic revival, could probably choose between a dozen or more great *rebbe*s, and he would be able to select the one whose path and regimen seemed to suit him best. What then must the modern Jewish traveler do, as he approaches the great transition and desperately needs the direction of a spiritual mentor? There appears to be but a single answer: He must realize that he is not alone, and that there are many others in the same predicament. Seekers of Truth who have no spiritual teachers must come together and teach each other. ◇



The Roots of Peace

From the Iroquois tradition

There was a dark time before the great Confederacy, when all the nations of the Iroquois were at war with each other, and the people were weak, and the Mahicans and the Adirondacks attacked and slew them at will. Then Deganawidah came out of the west.

He came in a canoe made of glittering white stone which was very heavy, yet it did not sink, but flew swiftly over the water of the lake. He was a messenger from the Master of Life, who had revealed to his grandmother in a dream that a child would be born to her virgin daughter, and he would bring the good news of peace and power to the people, and that his name would be Deganawidah. And so he was born, and grew, and came out of the west in his white stone canoe.

The first people he met were hunters, and he gave them the message to take back to their chiefs that the fighting must cease. And he went to the house of a woman, who fed him, and he gave her the message of peace and power in its three parts: justice, health, and law. And he told her there would be a longhouse, and a council of nations, and unity between them. The woman was glad and embraced the message, and Deganawidah made her the mother of nations.

Then he continued eastward and came to the house of the Man Who Eats Humans, who had just put a kettle on the fire with the meat of a human body in it. Deganawidah climbed to the roof and looked down the smoke hole, and his face was reflected in the water of the kettle. The Man Who Eats Humans saw the reflected face and was amazed, for it was his own face, and yet it was wise and noble.

“I didn’t know that I was like that,” he said. “This is not the face of a man who eats human flesh. I see it is not like me to do that, and I shall not do it anymore,” and he took the kettle outside and emptied it. Then Deganawidah came to him and entered the house with him and gave him the message of peace and power, and the man embraced it. Deganawidah went out and killed a deer and brought it back for their food. “It is the meat of deer that men must

eat," he said, "and their antlers placed on men's heads shall be the sign of authority," and ever since that day the chiefs of the Five Nations have worn the horns of the deer.

Deganawidah told the man that he was to be his messenger, and that he was to spread the news of the Great Peace and to convert the chiefs of the people. The hardest part of his task would be to convert a magician-chief of the Onondagas whose name was Atotarho, and who was so strong and cruel and evil that all men and animals feared him. His body was twisted seven times, and his hair was a mass of writhing snakes. For this reason, Deganawidah gave the man who was to be his messenger the name of Hiawatha, He Who Combs, because he would prevail over Atotarho and comb the snakes from his hair.

Deganawidah went among the people, and the first he converted to the Great Law were the Mohawks. Hiawatha went to begin his struggle with Atotarho, but Atotarho mocked him and put evil spells on all three of his daughters and on his wife, so that they died. Hiawatha was so overcome with grief that he could no longer bear the land of the Onondagas, and he went south and sat on the shore of a lake to mourn. He made strings of shells and sang songs of grief, begging for someone to come and make the shell strings into words of consolation. At last Deganawidah came and listened, and he also made strings of shell and put them with Hiawatha's, and spoke words of consolation that are still used with the wampum strings by the people; and Hiawatha was freed from his grief.

After this, Deganawidah and Hiawatha went to the Oneidas and the Cayugas and the Senecas and converted them all to the Great Law of Peace, and also all the chiefs of the Onondagas except Atotarho. Deganawidah told him that he would be the chief of all the Council and the Keeper of the Council fire. Atotarho wished for this and for peace but asked where was the power. Then Deganawidah called all the chiefs of all the nations, and they came together and were as one; and Deganawidah said, "Here is power." Then Atotarho's mind was changed, and Hiawatha combed the snakes from his hair, and the seven twists came out of his body. Deganawidah placed the antlers on his head and on the heads of the other chiefs and taught them the words of the law.

And he planted a pine tree, and called it the Tree of Peace; and four roots spread out, to the four directions. Then he uprooted the tree, and took all the weapons of war and threw them in the hole under the tree, and then he planted the tree again. In the topmost branches he placed an eagle, to watch and cry out if any evil approached the people.

Roots have spread out from the Tree of the Great Peace, one to the north, one to the east, one to the south, and one to the west. These are the Great White Roots, and their nature is Peace and Strength.

If any man or any nation shall obey the laws of the Great Peace...they may trace the roots to their source...and they shall be welcomed to take shelter beneath the Tree...*

*From *The Great Law of Peace*.

An Earthquake Coming

Interview at Akwesasne

The Mohawks, Onondagas, Oneidas, Senecas, Cayugas, and Tuscaroras are the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy. Iroquois society is based on a set of principles which they call The Great Law of Peace, which they have followed for hundreds of years, and which was influential in the framing of our own Constitution. They are unique among Indian peoples in that their traditional Councils do not accept Federal funding; they continue to live on their own (much reduced) lands, and they claim the right to be considered a confederacy of sovereign nations. Recently, however, local courts have ruled that the Mohawk nation no longer exists and that its people are now simply "the St. Regis Indians." If this decision were to be upheld, the old treaties would be invalidated and the Mohawks left entirely at the mercy of land-grabbing and commercial exploitation.

The Mohawks, like all Indian peoples after generations of "adaptation," are somewhat scattered as well as ideologically divided. Famous for their skill as steel and bridge workers, their men take jobs all over the country, but for most of them their own land is Akwesasne—called by the United States and Canada the St. Regis and Six Nations reservations—which lies on both sides of the now dangerously polluted St. Lawrence River. Many nontraditionalists have accepted different forms of Christianity and are willing to cooperate with the governments of the "dominant culture," which in turn encourage their election of a Tribal Council which accepts Federal authority, and implement it with a Native police force, the Akwesasne Police. These are called the "elected people"



The camp, Akwesasne

by the traditional faction, or Longhouse people, who steadfastly maintain the old religion, the old ways and language of the people, and the principle of Mohawk sovereignty. The elective process, by voting, is completely foreign to the traditional Iroquois way, where everything is decided by consensus. The Longhouse Council of Chiefs is chosen in this way.

Five of us from PARABOLA's staff spent a weekend at an encampment of the Longhouse people at Raquette Point. This camp has come into being since the arrest last year of Longhouse Chief Loran Thompson on charges of larceny, based on the fact that earlier in the day Chief Thompson had found a crew of men cutting down trees on his property and had confiscated their chainsaws. The tree-cutting was an attempt to clear ground to build a fence around Akwesasne which was proposed by New York State and not approved by the Mohawk people. A physician, Dr. David Gorman, from the neighboring town of Malone, described this and ensuing events as follows:

"A swath of land 80 feet wide and 200 feet long was cleared on the Thompson land before he discovered the intrusion. No easements were obtained, making the project illegal by either Longhouse or State-Federal law.

"He chased the workers off his land and confiscated their equipment as evidence of who cut his trees and brush.

"Eight State troopers and three Akwesasne Police went to the home of this leader... Thompson was mauled and roughed up by the police in front of his children... A 72-year-old Indian lady was struck with a club and hospitalized... The Longhouse people, incensed at the physical abuse of one of their leaders by the police, gathered in Akwesasne and demanded the resignation of the Akwesasne Police on the grounds that they had become tools of their oppressors. They promised to obtain other jobs for them and to provide for their families. They favor a volunteer police force made up from both groups.

"When the Akwesasne Police refused to resign, they were given three warnings. Then the police headquarters were attacked by an unarmed group of people and the police forced to resign. A few hours later the headquarters building or Council House was returned to the elective leaders..."

The State retaliated by issuing indictments against most of the Mohawk chiefs as well as some of those of other nations of the Confederacy and most of the staff of the Akwesasne Notes, the remarkable newspaper published on the reservation and circulated to one hundred thousand readers. These men can now leave the encampment only with the risk of arrest. Those who can leave to get to their jobs provide for those who cannot. Food is sometimes in short supply. Fish has always been their staple diet but this is no longer safe as the river is contaminated by waste from the huge Reynolds (Alcoa) aluminum plant and two other chemical factories. They shared what they had with each other and with us.

The strongest of many strong impressions that we had was of a quality of relationship and of mutual respect that was, as Tom Porter says, so simple it was hard really to comprehend. Here is the conversation we had with three truly remarkable men: Chiefs Tom Porter, Loran Thompson, and Jake Swamp. We would be fortunate, and proud, to have such leaders. That, as the Akwesasne Notes heads its editorials, is *How It Is With Us*.

LORAN THOMPSON Where did you want us to start?

PARABOLA *At the beginning! What can you tell us about obstacles? Your people have had a lot of them.*

L.T. Things that get in our way?

P. *Things that get in your way, that stop you; and things that although they get in your way, they don't stop you!*

In the old days there were intentional obstacles: a hard life that made strong people. Then there are obstacles that come apparently from accident or human error: sometimes they are fatally destructive, and sometimes they also are strengthening to people. For instance, we are all facing the difficulties of our historical period—like this atomic waste problem, or pollution. What can we make of that? What hopes have we got?

TOM PORTER The obstacles that were put in the way of the Native American people a hundred years ago are not so different from what they are today, only now they are much more subtle. But the end result that was sought for is the same: the complete removal of the Indian nations from this land. Back in George Washington's time, and the presidents' after him, it used to be the policy of the United States government to exterminate all Indians, and that was by no means a secret. It was taken by the Native people as being an official policy; whether it was or not, it was the motto of most political people at that time. They used to say: "Kill every Indian, because nits breed lice." It may not have been an official policy that was passed by Congress, but it was a state of mind at that period. So the United States government set about trying to carry that out, and there were many wars and so on, but for some reason they were not able to exterminate us. Perhaps it was because enough of the people that make up the government became outraged and had enough influence and power to stop at least the physical killing; however that happened, it did happen.

But the intention of removing all traces of the Indian people didn't stop. In place of physical violence, missionaries set out working first of all to remove all the values that make a person know what is right and

what is wrong, that let a person know where he stands in the world, that let a people know where they stand in relation with other peoples of the world. The missionaries set out to remove those values and put European, Christian values in their place. It seemed to us that under the guise of education, in those days and up to today, there was the same policy to attack the brains of the Native people in order to completely erase every trace of anything that gives a Native person a value system to compare what is right with what is wrong, and to instill a whole new network of thinking, completely. In sociology—is that what they call what they teach you in college?—they make graphs that show what happens when you do this to a people—take their brain out and put another in. There is a graph that shows the people going down, down, down, but when you get to a certain point, there is a name for that that I have forgotten: at that point you either shoot right straight back up to where you started, or else almost the entire race commits suicide. What is that term in sociology? Do you know what I am talking about? Well, that's the point we are at now—the Indian people. So that's why in Indian country there is such a high rate of suicide—higher in proportion to the population than any other ethnic group in this country. Many of our people are at that point now. And some of the nations, like here, instead of committing suicide, are doing something that might be almost the equivalent—and that's this camp. Many people have said we have to be nuts to take on the United States! [Laughs] But instead of hanging ourselves, we'd rather take them on, because back of us is the truth, and truth is what motivates us.

So those are obstacles that have been created intentionally and then after a while the intent was removed, but it was like an inherited way of doing. The intent wasn't there to do that, but people sort of inherited the policy to do away with us. So now you have a race of people that have been almost

completely demoralized: a race of people that have been almost completely deprived of hope, of any sense of pride, or any hope of a continued life—or it is so messed up in the brain that it can't be comprehended. Almost. We are at that very thin line right now.

JAKE SWAMP It's important that first of all we should go back to the creation: what our purpose in life is, the obstacles that get in the way of expressing what we were given, and how it's connected to what's going on today. The Creator put us here for a purpose when He made the *Onkwehonweh* (original people). He meant that we must continue into the future, taking part in our own lives and making sure that there is a special place for our grandchildren so that they can continue life as we have. The Creator meant for us to give thanks daily. For the thousands of years we've existed, each morning when we get up we offer a thanksgiving, a prayer to the Creator for all the things He's given us—our Mother Earth, from the grasses right on up to the heavens...

P. *Is that what the chanting was this morning?*

J.S. Yes. We offer this every morning. We acknowledge all these things that the Creator gives us. We offer this thanksgiving to Him, so that He doesn't take away these powers, so that our life—everybody's life—will continue. And we always ask for peace and guidance so that we don't trip over...obstacles!

[Laughter]

Today it's pretty hard to express ourselves as what we were meant to be, because years back we were disturbed by another type of life. This became dominant over our own, and there was conflict. It's pretty hard to distinguish what you're supposed to be doing and what you're not supposed to be doing; it's heartbreaking sometimes.

I feel that if we had an area of land some place where we could be left alone for at least ten years—to express ourselves—we would become so peaceful again, and we would feel that power again that our grandfathers lived with a long time ago. Our

minds would become one again with nature, and we would absorb the power that nature has, because we're part of it.

L.T. Right in the beginning when He gave us all our ceremonies, and He gave us our instructions, He put it in our hands. He instructed us: "It's your responsibility to teach your children what I have given you. And it's your responsibility to make sure that it's not lost." He said, "When you come home, you make sure that you have these things with you." Because He's going to talk to us in our own language and ask our names.

So we're responsible, and that's what keeps us going. It's a big responsibility when you've got somebody's uncle Sam over you trying to take it away from you. But we were given a prophecy; we were told what was going to happen.

P. *What is the end of that prophecy?*

J.S. Purification. We don't know what it means. We just have to watch out for it. They say that only a few people will be left to begin again—at a certain point. And it has happened before.

P. *But it is prophesied that there will be a new birth after this destruction?*

J.S. Yes. Then it starts over again.

L.T. The Hopis have a good explanation of that—the different worlds we're in. The way we're told is that towards that end you'll see a really big group that believe in nothing and don't care about anything. Then you have a smaller group that's in-between—that don't know which way to go. And then there's a real small group who are still holding on to what the Creator has given us and who are still trying to live by that. They're the ones that will be told where to go at a certain time in order to live through the purification.

P. *For some the purification means the end; for others it means the beginning.*

L.T. The end of the beginning and the beginning of the end.

P. *But nothing is said about the form this purification will take?*

L.T. No. Just that He's going to wash the world. That's the only way it's described.

J.S. In our opening thanksgiving we give thanks to the Thunderers for bringing water to us. But there is something else. A long time ago there were great serpents walking all over the earth; then the Creator saw that man could not live with these serpents and beasts, so He put them under the ground, and He put the Thunderers in charge to hold them there beneath the ground. If they would surface one day in the future, just to see them would destroy the people. What I understand it to mean is the uranium—it's surfacing now, they're taking it from the ground.

L.T. You don't even have to see it, and it destroys you. And it's getting so close that they want to start shipping it across this bridge right here.

P. *Oh no! Really? Where do they find it around here?*

Sweatlodge framework



L.T. I don't know where they find it, but they have nuclear plants further up in Oswego—in Canada. I don't know where they're shipping it from. The people up around Alexandria Bay don't want it going across their bridges anymore, because of the tourists there. So they're shipping it all this way. It's okay to ship it across the Indians' land! Now that the uranium is going to start coming through, we have to do something about that too. We might have more indictments! [Laughs]

P. *But Tom was speaking of a point where either something completely disappears, or it comes up. It seems to me there is an upsurge, the signs of a possibility at least, not only in your race but in mine, when there are people who are eager to listen to you, eager to find out what your secrets are that we have forgotten or never knew; a re-evaluation of a relationship that has gone, as you say, almost to the point of no return. Do you think there is a possibility to seize this point and come up again? How have you kept alive that very thin hope, in spite of the incredible difficulties you have had? How are you able to go through what you are going through now, here, for instance?*

T.P. Well—I guess you might say that power comes from those Native people who have received the knowledge or the instructions from their elders—the people who went before and who always protected this knowledge, almost in an underground way. Over the years they have had the power or the capability of forewarning, of having a knowledge of the future. That is something that can't be explained like arithmetic. It is something that is or is not; you possess it or you don't; it isn't really something you can study. You can't be like that if you weren't meant to be like that. For some reason the Native people have been very susceptible to that kind of power. In a sense, it is something like the instinct of animals. I've read that when there is an earthquake coming, even the frogs all know it; they don't have

an instrument to measure how much vibration occurs under the earth, yet a simple frog—he never went to college!—yet he has a power that even Einstein doesn't have. And that is similar to what I am talking about with the Native people, or any people who are more in tune or more open to receive such powers, or gifts—gifts, I should say. Because the Native people's philosophy of life before the arrival of European people has been one of Nature, based on Nature completely. I imagine that is why probably more Native people are extra sensitive—those who still have been somewhat protected, or managed to protect themselves against the effects of the outside world, which has a tendency to make people numb and not sensitive to anything. Amongst us there are still many of our people born with that ability, this power we are speaking of, either to be great orators, or great seers, or great medicine people to heal people both physically and psychologically.

So I can't talk about it like I would say one and one make two. The only thing I can say is that the philosophy of the Indian life, this harmony of spiritual knowledge that we were taught by our elders, is so *simple*—perhaps that is the difficulty; it is so simple that perhaps it is too simple and causes a big problem to understand. It seems the people of the United States and Canada aren't satisfied unless there is a very complicated network of things to understand—then it's worthwhile! [Laughs] But the Indian people were too simple to let life just go unnoticed. So people ask us things now, because we do know; our grandfathers and grandmothers explained to us, when we were kids just growing up, what is going to happen and what we were going to see in our lifetimes. You might call it prophecy, because when we were younger, these things were not visible. Here in Akwesasne when I was eight or nine years old there was not a single telephone pole. In order to see electricity you had to cross the river to Cornwall. So the things they talked about, like airplanes and such, were like ten million miles away from being reality to us that lived here. But they prophesied those things before they were even invented, and that's why we think they knew what they were

talking about. They told us to stick together; they told us not to let our ways die; they told us to continue our ceremonies, and they explained the things that were going to happen. We could say that it was just a story they told us to keep us doing things the way they wanted; but they said we would see the fish turn their bellies to the sun and they would die, the fish; and now we see that, and that is why we have to listen to them, because with our own eyes we see it is true.

So that is what we have to do now with our children: tell them what is going to happen to them within ten or fifteen years. It is easier now to see—you don't have to be a psychic! It is just too evident, all over. It's evident now that people are going to destroy themselves. And it will be, because there isn't any hope that the population of the world is going to be saved, because it has gone beyond that now. But we do know that there will be certain ones of this race and certain ones of other races that will survive through these trying times when the world is going to change, who will enter into another world; but there will only be small groups of them. Most of the people are going to be done away with, because they don't want to listen or do what is right. So in that sense there is no hope, for the world population as a whole.

We know there is going to be a purification coming—pretty soon, very, very soon. A lot of times when we spoke with Canadian or American people, they said: “You are so pessimistic; why be so pessimistic?” We don't see that as pessimistic, or hopeless, but as a renewal of hope. Because the sooner the price of oil goes to ten dollars a gallon, the better for us all; the sooner the people of this world start to wake up and to get rid of the mafias that are running the country, the better for all people it will be—not for just the people, but better for everything that lives. The birds are going to be happier, the deer and the other animals

will be happier, the fish will be happier, the rivers will be happier.

J.S. The most important thing for us is the freedom to express our own culture, to practice our own language. Back in 1880, the U.S. government had plans to assimilate us. The New York State government came to the conclusion, in their words, that they should “divide their lands and sovereignty and make them citizens.” But still there's something—a natural bond that our people have that nobody sees. It's a feeling of togetherness. Even though people may not agree on certain matters in our daily lives, on top of this there's an unseen force, a bond, that holds us together. And it's hard to break this because it's *natural*; it's been given from a long time ago.

A long time ago our forefathers were forced to take another belief; they didn't want to give their own up, but they had to conform—there was too much power over them; they were burned at the stake in order to make them accept another way. At that time, an old man burning at the stake informed the people that for the time being they must accept, or they would all perish. He said: “At some time in the future, our grandchildren will rise up again.” And I think it's today.

Even though most young people don't understand the language anymore, we're trying hard to bring that back—so they don't lose it. The radio and TV and schooling has been destroying our culture. It's not destroyed yet—it's still here in spite of everything, but not on a large scale.

P. *It's destroying our culture too, you know. We really are all in this together!*

J.S. This is what we are looking at—into the future. Today, we sit here; we watch the world around us; at the same time our forefathers gave us certain prophecies that have been ingrained in us. Our own grandfathers that we knew in our lifetime have told us in storytelling that they were told long ago that you have to watch the world as it progresses: there will be certain changes taking place that will be like markers that we're close to purification. There are a lot of processes that we're going through already—like the trees

dying, and the air; they say it will be like a dark cloud coming over and it will be hard to see the sun—that's how dark it will be getting. And then the rivers will get dirty, and the fish will rise up to the top on their bellies—they will die. These things have already happened.

Women are taking it upon themselves to do away with life by using birth control. That's not natural. It's against the natural order. If we look back into the past, whenever man has gone against nature it always has come back on him later.

I think the whole world needs to come to an understanding—maybe a conference could be held some place where all these things would be put on the table for everyone to look at and re-evaluate; then work from there for the future. It's the survival of mankind that we're concerned with. It's not just for ourselves. We're going through these struggles, sure, but it's our *duty* to do this. We have to do this. We have no choice. That's what our laws and our constitution tell us. *And* we have no choice but to defend ourselves. But if we perish, then I think that everyone else will too.

I think the world would listen now, at this point, because there's evidence now everywhere—you can't miss it. It's the destruction of the earth, our mother. We look at the earth like it's our own mother. It's hard to rip her up. It's a great sin for the people in the world to be doing this.

P. What is the responsibility of people who see it this way and are concerned with a rebirth, with a preservation of what has to be preserved for that?

T.P. What can be done? It is even hard to find what is practical. Everything is so unrealistic; how do you apply practicalness to it? You might say that to get some dynamite and blow up these chemical plants right away—that's the most realistic and practical thing, on the one hand; on the other hand, it isn't practical. It's confusing, because it's those very things that are destroy-

ing our kids' chance to live. It's those very things that are destroying the values to share in a peaceful life of a society of brothers to brothers, or cousins to cousins.

P. But those things are just the symptoms of something much deeper, that you can't blow up: an attitude, a way of thinking—or a way of not thinking, maybe.

T.P. But as long as those things have us in their grip, it's hard to consider anything else. It's the foremost thing. If you don't blow up the places that represent greed and destruction of life, then the only other thing to do is to try to make as many people as possible find the alternative to that. That's why we always support the self-sufficiency programs that young people especially are doing, in the United States and Canada and other parts of the world—with some kind of natural technology that works with the environment rather than against it.

I want to tell you something one of our women said one time. She's got fifteen kids, and she said, "I have a lot of children, and I love them very much. That's why I am saying this. I can't direct it to the President or the Prime Minister, because they won't see me, because I am not important enough to them. However I can indirectly direct it to them; so tell it whenever you go anywhere. Mr. President of the United States, Mr. Prime Minister, and World Leaders: when you have polluted the last river, when you have caught the last fish, and when you have cut down the last tree, it is too bad that only then you will realize that you can't eat all the money you have in the bank. And for the sake of my children, and all the children that aren't born yet to your people and mine, we ask you to think and to act upon that."

And that's what it really boils down to. How valuable are the kids, the ones near to you and me who are parents and grandparents? How valuable? That is the real question. Or do we just philosophize and theorize about the whole thing?

P. Do you have a "program" with the children to give what you have to try to keep alive?

J.S. No, we teach it at home. I don't think it's a "program." Our way wasn't meant to be in a classroom. It's pretty hard to teach

children in a classroom, because you have to be expressing yourself; you have to communicate with whoever you're looking at. It's hard to describe a tree in a room, for instance.

L.T. It's all brought out in the meetings...in the different political meetings, because our political life and our spiritual life are interwoven. Whenever there's a decision made, then you use different parts of your way of life, your beliefs. Different people speak, and the children are sitting around, and the younger people are sitting around, and they're all listening. So they're taking it in naturally. It's not a classroom. At different ceremonies, between the dances there are people who give words of encouragement to the people. A lot is picked up from there.

And then when they get older, whenever their interests put them in the frame of mind that they want to learn more, they'll go willingly to the people that know for information. You don't have to force them.

P. *Do you have priests?*

L.T. No, spiritual leaders—the faithkeepers and the chiefs. They're just ordinary people. They're not looked on as priests or anything like that—just men and women.

P. *Men and women? Women do ceremonies?*

L.T. They bring it to the surface whenever a ceremony has to be done. They say: "The berries are ready. We ask that the ceremony take place." They name the date and the time and how it's going to be done. They ask the chiefs, and the chiefs come back and say: "Yes," and it's carried out.

P. *Do you have anything that corresponds to the sacrificial dance of the Plains Indians, the Sun Dance?*

J.S. Yes. In fact, some of our women left on Friday, and they went to another reservation, Six Nations, to take part in a Sun and a Moon Dance. But, it's a *thanksgiving* to the

sun which represents the men and the moon which is connected to women.

L.T. At that time, the women are told their duties and their responsibilities. And when the young men go through *their* ceremony, they're told their duties and responsibilities. It prepares them...

J.S. Sort of a graduation...

L.T. ...for manhood.

P. *You have a stronger respect for the family than is usual these days, but the children have to go to ordinary American schools, don't they?*

J.S. Yes, for the time being. They have to have this education so they won't be cheated later on. They have to have some knowledge of what's going on out there. But at the same time we have our own classes too. We bring the kids together and we have games, and we talk to them about different things. They pick it up pretty fast. But it's better for us to have these classes in our own homes—for our own children—to keep the family together.

L.T. We're trying to come up with alternatives to the school system, where we have more control over what's being taught. In the public school system we have no voice. If a teacher wants to tell the Indian students that they're pagans, that they believe in nothing, that they have nothing, that they're nothing at all—she can do that! And there'll be no one there to tell her that she's wrong. Even if the student decides to get up and tell the teacher: "You're wrong, because we do believe in something—we do have a Great Spirit," in most situations the teacher will tell that student: "Sit down, you're out of turn," or "Go on up to the office." The teachers feel they can't make mistakes. Maybe it's not their fault. Maybe that's what they really believe.

A few years ago when my brother was in school, the history teacher said: "You people are very fortunate—to be living in America. You all ought to be very proud to be American citizens." My brother got up and said: "No way! I'm no American citizen. I'm a North American Indian." And she got all kinds of mad! She sent him up to the office. And after the class she went up to the office and told the principal what it

was all about. And she said: "You're not coming back into class until you either apologize or you come up with proof of what you're saying." He's only fifteen, sixteen years old!

Luckily, my father had all the papers. The next day my brother went into class with a big armful of books, and he said: "There you go! I'm not American; I'm not Canadian. I'm North American Indian. And here are the papers to prove it." And she starts reading. The next day she pulled him aside and apologized to him, but she didn't apologize to him in front of the class. So it's in the rest of the kids' minds, and it stays there. But that's what they're all up against.

P. I was thinking about Smallboy and what he's done. He's taken a small group of Cree Indians and taken a piece of land in a huge country, in the Edson National Forest in Canada, and he seems to have gotten away with it. The government tried to give him the Order of Canada award, for "outstanding achievement and services to the country," but they couldn't find him!

You're talking about wanting your own country, to practice your own ways in. It doesn't seem as if it's ever possible on any big scale for anyone to go back in time. Whether we like it or not, we're influenced, we have to go with the times. At the same time, we have to fight what's wrong with the times.

In education, for instance: you know you need certain kinds of technical education...

J.S. We realize we can't do away with all these things. We have to take part in certain things. We know life continues and things change. If it doesn't interfere with the way we respect the earth, then it's all right. What we're concerned with is the values of our people, the values and respect we hold for the land. This is what our survival means to us—that we have the freedom to express ourselves as we are as people. We no longer have our territory to live in as our forefathers did. It would be impossible. But we have to have a certain

area where we can satisfy our own selves, our own people, about our own teachings.

P. How do you reconcile the fact that cars, airplanes are all part of the weapons of destruction, but we all use them? We don't think we can get along without them. You do too. How do you understand that?

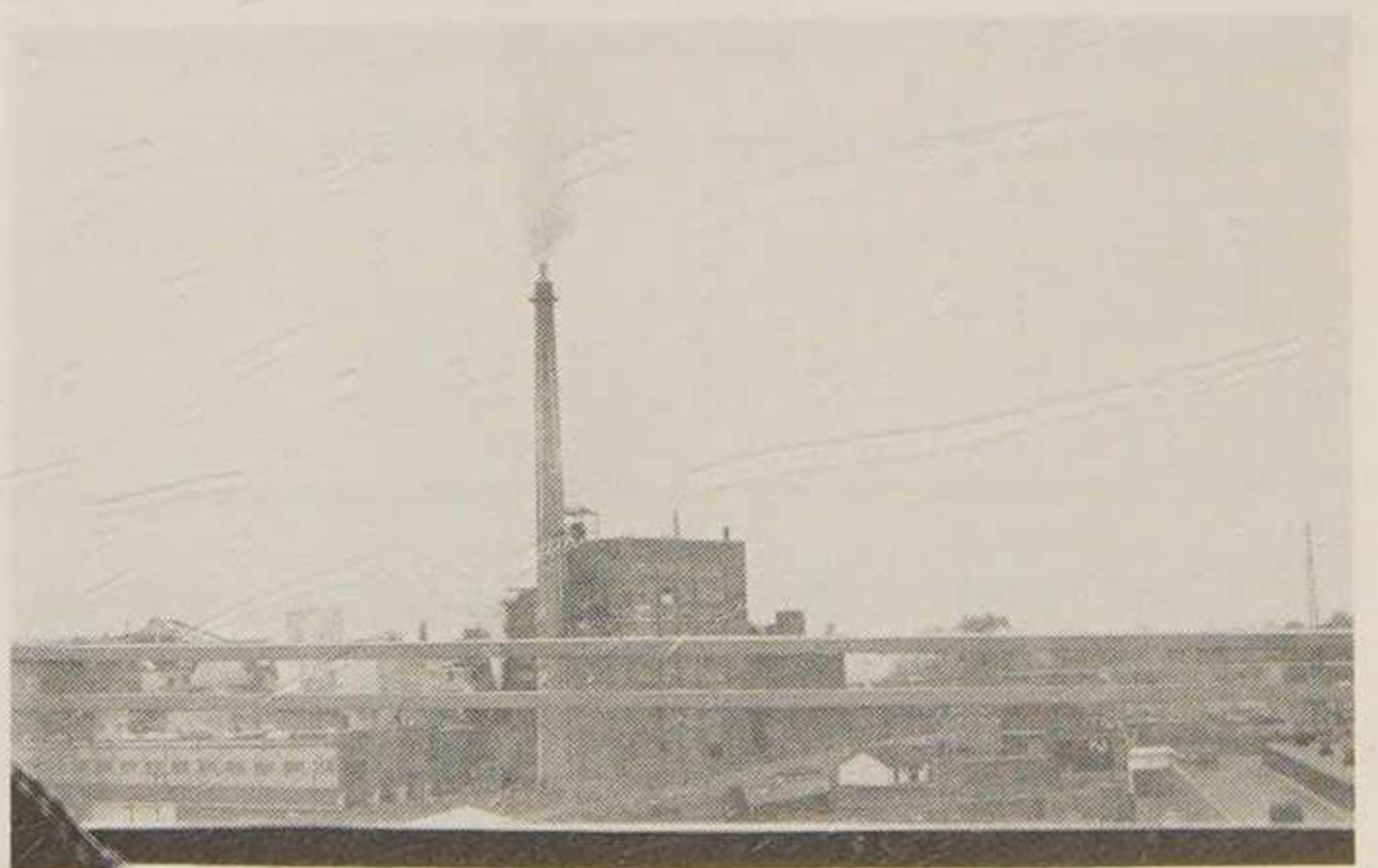
J.S. It's probably like everything else that's going on against nature—it will have to disappear.

L.T. The fuel will be all gone. If corporations and governments and individuals who are in control of natural resources weren't so greedy, they could make a car go fifty to sixty miles to a gallon; they could make a car last twenty to thirty years instead of two or three. That way you don't use so many natural resources, and there wouldn't be the mess and the waste.

P. It's really hard to see the right way, isn't it? But maybe it's easier to see than to do.

T.P. That's my problem, and that's the first thing that comes to my mind when I see that plant over there. Because in the St. Lawrence River here—how many different kinds of poison are in there, at least that they know about? PCB's, fluoride, mercury, and all that. The Mohawk people love to eat fish; we have eaten fish for thousands of years—and for the last five hundred years, out of this river. If we go without fish for a little while we get starving for it. And those fish have those poisons in them, and we know what the scientists found out in Japan: they call that mercury poisoning from fish "Minamata disease." You can eat it now, and sometimes it won't take effect for fifteen years, but then it could hit your

Plant at Cornwall on the St. Lawrence



If at any time one of the chiefs of the League choose to submit to the law of a foreign people, he is no longer in but out of the League, and persons of this class shall be called "They have alienated themselves" (Tehonatonkoton) ...You,

the League of Five Nations chiefs, be firm so that if a tree should fall upon your joined hands, it shall not separate you or weaken your hold. So shall the strength of union be preserved.

system. So we don't know how many of our people are going to get that sickness in fifteen or five years or this year. Yet we want to eat fish so bad, and we still do; but we try to cut down—like trying to cut down on cigarettes, it's hard to quit eating fish, too. Our bodies want it.

That is just one thing. Now we can talk about those other two plants over there. What else comes out of them? There's a big dump right here, and when those guys from Cornwall go over there to get aluminum out, they have got holes in their shoes and in their clothes, because whatever is in the dump eats right through them. So we don't know how much of that comes through the ground into our water here. It's only a little way—you can throw a stone four times and you will be right in the middle of the dump. It would be less destructive to the environment to blow the place up than to let it keep going. Each day that goes by, our children become less and less of a human being, and our people become less and less of a people with any kind of sensitivity. Because the longer time goes by, the more our senses and our feeling of how to relate to one another as a family, whether a nuclear family or a whole-world family, become more and more numbed; and we become more and more each day living zombies.

[Silence]

P. *There have been territories that the courts have admitted did belong to you, so there has been a reimbursement of so many million dollars. But that*

isn't what you really want, is it? What would you do with the money? And if you did get it, it would probably be the very worst thing you could have.

J.S. It's a destructive force, that money. Our territories are still intact. They were encroached upon. They were never sold out. But the government is going to the individual nations, trying to make them sell. That's against our constitution. In order to have any kind of dealings, you have to come as a whole united body and make that decision.

The Tribal Council that has been placed in our territories, they will accept money; they go for the money. But our teaching is that you can't sell your mother, and this is what the government doesn't understand. They want the title, but we can't give it. It doesn't even belong to us; it belongs to the children. We're just here to take care of it.

P. *If you could, at this moment, sit down with somebody, say the President, and tell what you wanted in the way of relations with the government, what would you say?*

J.S. I don't think that would be too hard, because all the groundwork has been worked out—by your forefathers and our forefathers. Certain procedures would be followed through the treaties. The agreements are already there. All that has to be done is that they be respected. Our leaders could talk to the President, and they could work these problems out easy enough.

P. *You say your territories are still intact—you haven't actually lost any land then—but, of course, you used to have the whole thing!*

[Laughter]

But I mean, the Mohawk people aren't claiming more land, or are they?

J.S. We would like to have some more land, because in order for our children to survive they have to have land to work with. We

know that we have to make a place somewhere they can go before it gets too bad. But it's pretty hard to find land now that's not polluted. Somehow or some way it could be negotiated that the people here could move, because our children are affected by this fluoride poisoning here already.

L.T. Like he says, the Mohawk nations's lands are still intact. Nobody has ever sold our territory, legally, and if we were to decide at this time that we need to move out of here, and we have to go somewhere where we can become stronger, then we're going to do that. Because that land out there is still ours, and it's still rightfully ours—anywhere out there in New York State. We can move into Seneca territory, Onondaga, because we're a confederacy. There's unity. But we'd like to move into our own territory. But the non-Indian people in that area wouldn't understand what we're trying to do. And right away they'd say: "That's my land because I paid for it." But they don't look back and see how they got that land. And our people wind up fighting a war. Then the way of life, the beliefs, become secondary, because you have to first protect yourselves. At this hour, we're trying to come up with different ideas that can go around armed confrontation with the state.

P. *Are you getting any help here, in terms of the pollution of your land, from the various environmental groups that are fighting the government—are they incorporating your problem in their fight?*

J.S. There are people studying the situation on our behalf in order to find out different things, and most of the groups that exist have come to us. They want us to take things up with the courts, but we don't have the funds to do that. We have sent complaints to the United States government—

from one nation to another nation—formal complaints.

L.T. What's happened here with the Reynolds factory problem is the Mohawk Canadian Band Council put in a suit for pollution damages, and the court ruled that the Canadian Band Council doesn't have the authority to put in the suit. They say that land that's been polluted belongs to the Queen. They also ruled that Reynolds was not sitting on New York State property. Alcoa hasn't been paying taxes because they say they're sitting on Indian lands.

P. *How extraordinary! They claim that they're trespassing; they claim that they're illegal!*

L.T. And that gives us a little loophole, you see. Once the people here become stronger and united, we can stand on the decision that that judge made. It will be hard, but we have the support of the different environmental organizations.

P. *Are any of the people coming back to the Longhouse?*

L.T. A lot of them.

J.S. Three weeks ago the people around the area put up a march on our behalf, and we had about a thousand of them come out.

Bunker, Akwesasne



The soil of the earth from one end to the other is the property of the people who inhabit it. By birthright, the Onkwéhonwe, the original beings,

are the owners of the soil which they own and occupy and none other may hold it. The same law has been held from the oldest times.

That made us feel pretty good. They had been staying away because they didn't want to get involved. They had fear in them.

There's only a handful of people who make any kind of social change—that will come right out and do things. But later on the rest of the people come out and support them. It took this long, because the police have been harassing the people all through this year. They've been getting more and more frustrated, and they've been learning; they've been educated by it. They've realized what they have to do: they have to defend their own nation. This latest decision by the county court against us rules that we're not Mohawks anymore; we're the St. Regis Indians. They used some anthropologist's report as evidence.

T.P. There's quite a story to that: we used to let American people come to the Longhouse, to the ceremonies there, but we had a lot of trouble with the white people. There was this anthropologist came in there and just shoved people aside to sit down. Then he kept asking: "What did they say? What are they doing?" We told him: "Wait till after this is over, and we'll tell you." But he just kept on asking and interrupting. Another time he went to a social dance, and they told him he could come but not to tape-record anything, because these are our songs and dances. But he did; he sneaked a tape recorder in there. As a result of that the Council said that no more American people could come to our ceremonies, and they didn't permit him to come to the Longhouse anymore. And you know what he did? He threatened to bring suit against the Mohawk people for discrimination on religious grounds!

[Laughter]

And then, you know? The research that he did, this last month when the judge in Malone made a ruling against us, he used this man's work against us to make a decision.

P. *No!*

T.P. Yes! I'm not kidding you a bit. Instead of coming and asking us what our tradition is and what we believe, he goes by what this man says a Mohawk is. So that's how the judge said there was no more Mohawk nation.

P. *What do you do next?*

J.S. Well, it doesn't really concern us what they do in the courts. The people who have already been arrested will go through with the political trial. They'll maintain that they're political prisoners. But the ones that haven't been picked up will continue to resist. We won't recognize the courts.

P. *You won't try to win in the courts? You know, it is possible!*

[Laughter]

L.T. But if you win, you lose. Because if you're forced into the court, then you have to come under its jurisdiction, and that's the whole issue.

P. *Yes, you're starting to deal with a government that you say has no jurisdiction over you. You're allowing them to make a judgment on you when your whole position is that they don't have any right to do that, right?*

J.S. That's why we have people going to Geneva, to the U.N. That's why other countries are putting in complaints against the United States on our behalf. We're being heard.

I think there's been more accomplished in the last year than in the past ten years in uniting the Mohawk people—not only the Mohawk people, but different parts of the confederacy will look over here and say: "There's something going on over there." They come into the camp, and there's a different feeling in the camp. There's some kind of unity here.

We just have to hold on as long as we can until the people out there will come together and realize that. We're waiting for them to come to realize they are Mohawk people: they are the people of the *Haudenosaunee*, and they can't go around it. And if they try to go around it, then what are they doing here? If they want to be Americans, then go be an American, or a Canadian. But don't get in our hair, because

we've got a big job to do. We have our lives on the line here.

P. But you say that more of them are becoming convinced that they are Mohawks and are coming to the Longhouse.

L.T. During the winter, we have some strong people, friends, in the elected Tribal Council. They had a problem over there with the three Trustees of the state that were in there. The people called a recall vote, and they booted them all out. But the state backed the Trustees and said it was an illegal recall vote. Then these strong people turned around and said: "What are we going to do now? What the traditional people have been telling us for years and years, now we finally see it. Now we understand what they're saying." That's when different people on the Council started coming into the camp, getting advice from us here about what to do next. Now these people have talked to other people and have convinced them that the Longhouse way is the only way you're going to get anywhere as an Indian people.

P. Everything is completely joined in your way of life: your religion, your government, your education. But some of your people have been converted to Christianity; was that a problem? Or was it very easy for them to come back to the traditional religion?

J.S. A lot of them have come back, but it's hard for them. The Christianity that was taught to them was true fear. It's pretty hard to break away from that—when you go to school and the priest tells you if you go to the Longhouse, you're going to go to Hell.

P. Is that mostly Catholic?

J.S. Yes. And this was a priest who stressed that to the little children growing up. So when they mature to adults they are afraid to express themselves as Mohawks, because they're afraid they'll go to Hell, I guess!

P. They're never taught to make friends with the devil?

J.S. No!
[Laughter]

L.T. Or try to change the devil's mind!
Just the other night one of the older men told us that there was a meeting a long time ago, and the decision was made that regardless of what religion you belonged to, whenever there's a meeting of the people concerning their problems, then everybody has a voice. When you came through the door, regardless of what religion you belonged to, you took that coat off and you hung it at the door, and you came in as an Indian person, a concerned Indian person. You took care of your problems, and when you went back out, you put that coat back on. But because of Sunday schools and religious instruction and through the different school systems, the different priests put a hate and a fear into the children toward the Longhouse people.

P. But you know, that's just "churches," that's not religion.
[Laughter]

L.T. That's right.

P. True religions aren't against each other. They couldn't be. Churches are, though, and that's where the trouble comes in, and now most religions have become churches.

Don't you have some Buddhist monks living with you here?

L.T. Yes—in those tents by the river.

Another thing that woke up the people here in Akwesasne during the summer is when the different people were arrested, their bails were real high—\$20,000, \$15,000, \$10,000. Where the heck are we going to get that kind of money? We don't have any money; we can hardly buy food.

But the Methodist Church has a fund for helping different Indian people. And it just happens that most of these people, the strong people of the Tribal Council, are from the Methodist Church. And when the Church representative came down and made public that it was the Methodist Church that put up the bail, it stunned some of the people: "How come my church is

bailing these people out, and I'm the one that's pushing them in?"

[Laughter]

It really made them start thinking: "If the church is getting them out, maybe they're doing something right." Again the Tribal Council lost some more support.

P. *What do you call your own government?*

J.S. The Council of Chiefs or the Longhouse Council mostly.

P. *Can you tell us how the chiefs are chosen?*

J.S. By the Clan Mothers.

L.T. Very carefully!

[Laughter]

P. *When they grow up or when they're little? Are they trained to be chiefs? This is a part of the woman's role that interests us.**

J.S. As for the women's role: they're the ones that have the children. The women know the children best—they know their faults and their dislikes. They watch the children grow up so they know who's suited for any kind of position.

P. *But then do they all together come to an agreement? Is there one woman in particular who...*

* PARABOLA will publish an interview with Judy Swamp on the woman's role in our November issue.

J.S. The woman that takes care of that—from that one long extended family—the title's thousands of years old—the one who happens to be "standing," she's the one that picks the chief.

L.T. The Clan Mother is chosen by all the people to take care of the position of the chiefs, to make sure that the chiefs are "standing," or carrying out their function. And if a chief is to die, within a few days the Clan Mother has to have picked another candidate for that position. She has to go through her own clan to do that. The Clan Mother would call her clan together to notify them of the person she chooses for this position.

There are three Clan Mothers and three chiefs in each of the three clans—Wolf, Turtle, and Bear—nine chiefs, nine Clan Mothers. So the Clan Mother of the chief who died would call the whole clan together and choose someone from her own clan.

P. *Can she choose from another clan?*

J.S. No, not unless they run out of people who can fulfill that position in her own clan. Then they have to borrow from another clan. It doesn't happen too often.

L.T. And if she doesn't do her job properly, then the clan can replace her too.

J.S. And she has the power to replace the chief if he doesn't do his duty. She'll take him outside the Council and scold him. He has three chances. At the third warning—she takes his horns, his title, away, and she'll pick another one.

P. *It's an extraordinary system—and it works too, doesn't it?*

The chiefs of the League of Five Nations shall be mentors of the people for all time. The thickness of their skin shall be seven spans, which is to say that they shall be proof against anger, offensive action, and criticism. Their hearts shall be full of peace and good will, and their minds filled with a yearning for the welfare of the people of the

League. With endless patience, they shall carry out their duty. Their firmness shall be tempered with a tenderness for their people. Neither anger nor fury shall find lodging in their minds and all their words and actions shall be marked by calm deliberation.

L.T. It works.

It has to go through the clan first. When the candidate is brought into the open, then she says: "Is there anyone here that has anything against this person—who doesn't want him to hold this position for the clan?" Then, if there's no one at that time, he goes on to the meeting of the whole Longhouse. That same question is put up in front of the people. If anyone has a valid question or has any doubts in their mind about that person, it's brought out at that time. If not, it's mentioned in the ceremony that if objections haven't been brought out before, then it's never to be brought out in the future.

P. *It's like the banns in the Christian marriage ceremony: if there's no objection now, "forever after hold thy peace"!*

[Laughter]

And you have special war chiefs?

L.T. They're chosen at different times. It's like a temporary position. Whenever there's a problem, there always seems to be one or two people that stand out and lead naturally. Many times, they're the ones that are chosen to hold that position. But then when the problem is over, their job is finished and they just guide and watch over the men so that they're organized.

P. *How do you know when a problem is over? Because sometimes it changes into another one... speaking of obstacles...*

L.T. Well, then it's just the start of another problem. We're used to that!

[Silence]

A lot of what you said a little while ago—that it's not realistic to think that we can go back and live the way they lived so many years ago... a lot of the Indian people, especially the Band Council and the Tribal Council, that's what they're always throwing at us. They're always saying: "They want to go back and live like we lived a hundred and fifty years ago; run around in

the woods..." That's not what we want. We just want to be able to live in peace amongst ourselves, amongst the non-Indians, and be able to carry out our own functions, carry out our own ceremonies, our own governmental administration, and be left alone. But we want to be respected by people coming into our territory—just like we respect other ways when *we* go to Ottawa, Toronto, Washington, whatever. We don't go against the grain. But when they come into our areas, they want to bring in their laws and force them on us.

P. *Yes, but there's a certain problem there. In the piece you wrote for the Akwesasne Notes, Jake, you had a wonderful analogy: you were in your canoe and the Dutch were in their boat, and you couldn't put a foot in both, or you'd fall in the river and drown. Right? The two boats could go along the river side by side, but people could not cross from one to the other.*

So: is this possible? You want to be left alone; you also want some of the things that would be an exchange with white people.

L.T. That comes in another prophecy, when we are told that certain things were going to happen. First we were given the ceremonies. We went on for quite a few hundred years just living by the ceremonies. Then we were told when we were given the Great Law of Peace: "You're going to see a light-complected, blue-eyed person coming to your shores, and along with him, he's going to have certain articles that you have to leave alone, because it's going to make you go astray and take you away from what I've given you." Then for quite a few years we lived according to the Great Law of Peace, and then came these articles—religion, and money, gambling—things like that—which take you right away from the beliefs, which take your mind away from the Creator. It came about that a lot of our people were using all these things, and then we were given another message: "Now you people have accepted a lot of these things, so now we have to give you another message. There are certain things that you can use: you can use the house, but it's a home; it's just a shelter. Don't make a house that's going to make another person who can't build a house like that jealous. Keep it in mind that way—don't flaunt it."

You take other things like that—TV is a bad thing, the way it's used today, but you can use it like we're using it now: we're bringing the people back together, to try to get the truth out to the people. As long as you use it properly and don't use it just to destroy, it's there to use.

P. But we have to accept the bad with the good. Television and radio are good for some things, and cars and modern medicine and modern education—and they're bad for other things. If you accept those things, it seems to me that you accept that there are drawbacks. There are obstacles.

J.S. The only thing I can say to that is that we have to continue—do the best we can according to our teachings. If we see that something's going to be destructive—like trucks carrying nuclear waste across our bridges—then we have to speak out against it. We can't just hide and take it. Our people have a natural instinct for survival.

P. You can toss things back and forth between the boats. But don't fall in!

J.S. Don't lose the balance there. People have to have respect for one another, and if they have something to offer you that they think might be good for you, then they can offer—but not force you. That's the kind of respect we want. We want to determine our own future—not to have somebody else determine it for us.

L.T. In order to give what Indian people have to the world, we have to preserve it. And we find it difficult to preserve it here because politics and government are interfering. To our minds, we have to go somewhere else where we can teach our children everything that we know—so that it gets stronger and stronger; so that more people know it. It's like at a standstill: one person dies and only one other is picking it up, so it stays in one place. And we want it to grow.

P. You're absolutely right—there are different times and stages... Was it Ramakrishna who said that when a tree is small you build a fence around it

so that the cows will not knock it over, but when it is grown the cows can come and sleep under its shade. That's a wonderful image, don't you think? Maybe we're at the point where you have to build a fence.

But you don't want us to build a fence!

L.T. A fence is what started this whole thing!

[Laughter]

It's hard for us to understand how the United States government can operate morally—without having a spiritual mind when you make a law, what do you have? Just control—control over smaller people that are trying to mind their own business.

P. I think that that's the basic thing that's wrong with the modern world: two things that absolutely have to be together have split. The spiritual life has removed itself from daily, practical life. And this is just the road to death! I don't think that will come back, except in the way that your prophecy says; I think that the world has to be purified. Maybe there will be human seeds that will come back in a new way.

When people stop believing in something bigger than they are is when this split occurs and everything begins to go a little bit crazy. And that is why I suppose some of us turn to all the different ways in which human beings have made contact with a force higher than themselves. That is why the traditions that are still alive have something to do for us. Something has to stay alive in order to be born again.

L.T. But prophecies are given just as a warning, and it's our responsibility to try to follow whatever warnings that were given—try to stop destruction from happening. That's the position of my people.

T.P. It is a hard thing. People have to do something, for sure; but what are they going to do? That's the big question. Most people in this country say they are Christians, I think; it's supposed to be a Christian country. And the Christian philosophy, just like the Indian one, has an answer to it—I think; of course, I don't know the Christian way too much, but I am impressed sometimes when I hear the preachers talking on the radio on Sundays. The man they call Jesus Christ was a man who believed in sharing everything—I think that is what they said. And when they were collecting

money in the church, Jesus went in there and he was mad! He didn't say: "Please, may I talk?" He just waved his fist and started jumping around, saying: "What the hell is wrong with you people?"—or something like that. He said: "Stop the gold and silver collection!" I like that; that's true. That ought to be done. Then I heard about another time when they were having some kind of feast, and they cut the bread up so everyone would have a piece. I think even there wasn't enough bread, but a miracle was performed and there was enough so everyone could eat. They shared the bread and something else—fish. So to me, that raised the question right there: What does the United States want? What does Mr. Carter want? What does each senator want?—and Mr. Kennedy? And I will put the same question to Brezhnev too, and to anyone else who follows a destructive life form. I am not a pro-American; I am not a pro-Communist—I am neither; I am just a pro-human being. So if they are looking to the Christian religion, I think maybe there might be an answer there for the American people, because there too it tells about the same understanding that the Indian people have, and that is to share, and be interdependent on each other. If we can't do that then it's no use. When you talk about sharing, you get labeled a Communist. But I really think everyone has got to share; there can't be rich and poor people; there has got to be just brothers. But that is too simple—too simple.

All our ceremonies are founded on Nature. There's the Midwinter ceremony; the Maple Leaf ceremony; the Planting ceremony; the Mother Earth ceremony; the Thunder and the Sun and the Moon ceremonies; the Wind ceremony; the Corn and the Bean and the Strawberry ceremonies. That is what our life is about, our whole religious understanding is about everything in the world that helps us to live. We are dependent on those things. So we are a very practical people in our beliefs; we base

them on the practical things in the world we live in. Maybe that is where we are a little bit different, because I notice the preachers when they talk on the radio on Sunday, they talk about hoping for the Good Land and entering the pearly gates of heaven where the gold and silver is. I think they made a little mistake, because you must try here first before you worry about over there; now is the time to worry, to do something now. Our religion doesn't worry about the after-life, but about what we do today.

P. You worry about your children's life—not your after-life, but how they can survive.

T.P. Yes—at least that the bed will be made. Because my mother and my grandmother made the bed for me so that I could have a comfortable sleep. This world is a bed. And so our duty is to do the same thing our grandmothers did. There are seven generations ahead that we have the responsibility for; so we have to watch out not to do anything to hurt them.

I don't know how to convince the American or Canadian people or any others that need to be convinced of that. You hear them say: "I worked hard for what I have, and when my children grow up they have to do the same thing. I've done my share." So many Americans say that, it's pitiful. So then when the parents get old, that's why the younger people don't care if they throw them into an old age home, because they didn't care about them when they were growing up—not really.

P. That's a serious problem, because the family seems to have disintegrated in Western society.

T.P. It looks like it. Here, our grandmothers and grandmothers and grandfathers and grandfathers—you see, we don't have just two of each, every old person we call grandmother or grandfather—

P. But the young people call each other grandmother and grandfather. Loran said Jake was his grandfather, and then they both said you were their grandfather!

T.P. That's a joke!

[Laughter]

P. It doesn't seem like it!



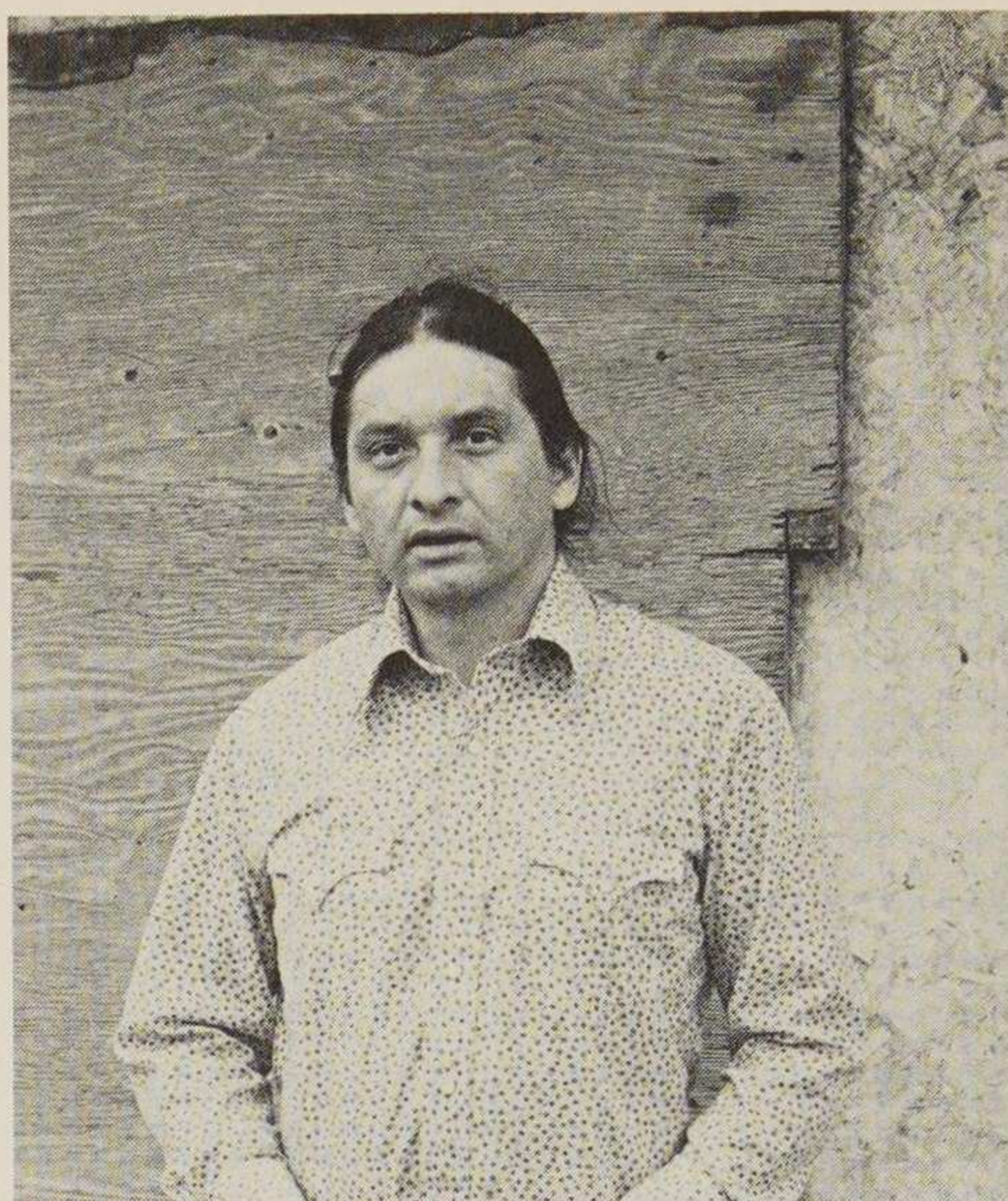
Loran Thompson

T.P. Well, it started to be a joke! But it's all right!

[Laughter]

So that's one big difference I see in the two mentalities. It's a very good thing to have many grandparents because you honor someone when you call them that. Here, we know even our tenth cousins; because we all live within fourteen miles, and we see each other every day. In America, grandparents are in one place and the grandchildren are all over the world. There's no real family; the day to day relationship of grandparents isn't there. The family is very important. We were talking about education: that's the biggest thing in the breakdown of the family, Western education, because it takes the children away from their mother and father. A complete stranger teaches them. That's why there's no heart anymore in family life.

There are so many ways that have to be tried, and a lot of them fail; and the thing is, there isn't so much time to try things any-



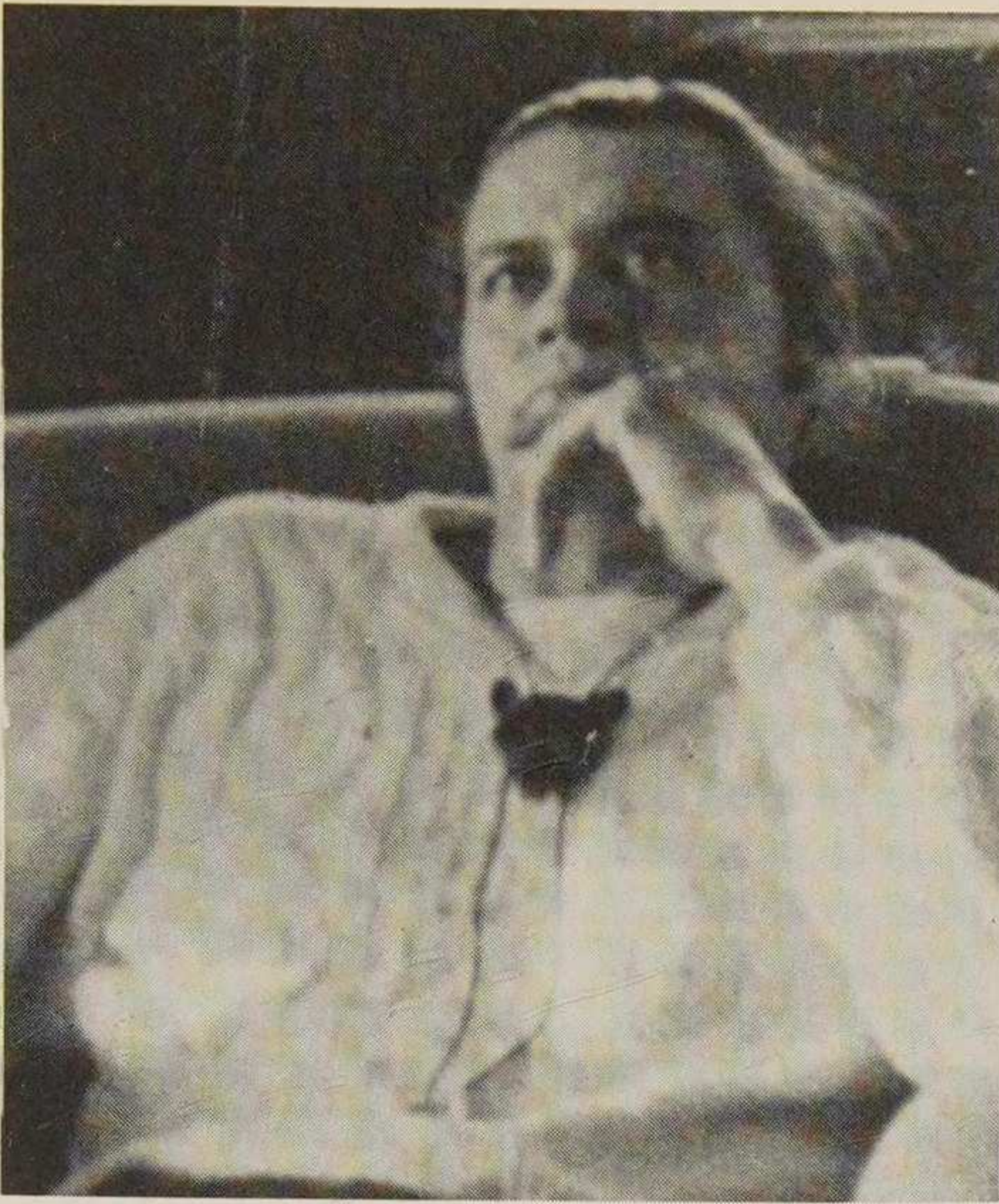
Tom Porter

more. People have got to become more serious about that.

P. *I wanted to ask about the very, very small amount of information that gets into the papers, other than in Akwesasne Notes, about what's going on up here, and what you're doing about it. I feel that if more people knew, there would be a great deal of support for your way of looking at things, among our people. They just don't know; they're ignorant about it.*

L.T. It's hard here, because the newspapers only carry exciting things. If there were four or five people that were shot, killed—that would make the news. Because there's nothing but a move for unity going on here, it's not interesting.

Maybe we could stop the ships from going through the seaway. The locks are on our land, and the land claim states that. They recognize the locks as being on Indian land, and they recognize half of the Robert Moses power plant, the dam, over there. What goes through my mind is how come the Council wants to sell that? How come they want to trade land for it? Why don't they try to get it back? It's admitted that it belongs to the Indians on paper: "OK, you admit it. We'll just take it back. We don't



Jake Swamp

want any money. We just want this back. We'll control it."

P. And the Tribal Council wants to sell it?

L.T. They want to trade it off for some swampland—in Canada, someplace.

P. What is the chief interest in your land?

J.S. This Raquette Point, they've wanted it for a long time.

L.T. It's the first point that the seaway comes into the United States. If they take over the port here, they won't have to go through the seaway, and they would save a lot of money. And they want this whole area for an industrial park.

Then the Tribal Council turns around when the government proposes a dross plant. They're excited: "It will create jobs!" When it's completed, there'll be twenty-five jobs! And that's counting administration! And we have nobody who's qualified to run a dross plant!

P. What's a dross plant?

L.T. It recycles scrap aluminum—the waste. It creates more pollution than Reynolds when it's in operation. And the Council wants to put that on the reservation. If we let them put that on the reservation, where's your argument about what Reynolds is already doing to us? That's why we are saying: "What are we going to do?" If the people don't want to get up and just oust them out of there, then let's go someplace where we can live a life the way we want it, instead of arguing about politics and all that stuff all the time.

P. Wouldn't you have more difficulties in trying to claim another piece of land that you haven't been on for such a long time?

J.S. It's just as difficult being here. You might as well defend yourself for a good cause.

L.T. Yeah!

J.S. Or they could say: "OK, let's make it a reality. We'll give you this land."

P. How much land would it mean?

J.S. Well—nine million acres!

[Laughter]

That would probably cover our territo-

ry; there's about nine to ten million acres in New York State! But I don't think we need that much to survive on, in order to practice what we want to practice.

P. And how many Mohawks live in this area?

L.T. Six to seven thousand.

P. Loran was saying before we sat down together that even though the whole concept of a reservation was to put you down, in the end it turns out to be something that gives you strength, because you are all together, at least. Though it was an attempt to cast you aside, it's been something that has kept you together.

T.P. Yes—that's for sure. That's true. In fact, you know, here among the Akwesasne Mohawk people, the European people divided us so much by the rules of "divide and conquer" that came from England; they planted many of the seeds of division here. And we haven't been together for so long, because some of our people have become Catholic and some Methodists and Mormons, and there are those who remain traditional. But there is still something here among the people in this particular community, so that no matter how many generations went through the process of assimilation, there were some powerful means of the Creator, of the God, that have not permitted the most sophisticated methods of divide and conquer to penetrate completely. There is something here that is undefinable in this community called Akwesasne: I don't know if it's Mohawk, Indian, or what it is, but perhaps when I said that we live within fourteen miles and know our tenth and fifteenth cousins, so we are all one big, big, big family numbering about seven thousand, maybe that is it. So when the New York State court did this to us—we don't know if we may get shot tonight, it could easily happen—all they have put us through has caused the Mohawk people to recognize a common enemy. And that has united us. We have been separated for years. But we had that unity march here

about three weeks ago. Over a thousand people came marching three miles down the road—old ones, young ones, and babies. So the United States in its attempt to do away with my people have caused them to unite. They have done us a service; sure.

[Silence]

I don't see that we are pessimistic in our outlook; because if the world started to shake in this next hour, and the dam broke over there, so what if the water took us as it came through and drowned us as we sit here? We would say: "It wiped it out and cleaned it up good! We must have been part of the problem!"

[Laughter]

And then laugh about it too—yes! Because we deserved it, if that happened to us. But if we are right—only the Mystery of this world would know that, and decide if we are going to the next world or not, or if we are going to be weeded out like the weeds in the garden. So that is not being pessimistic: because I am only as good as you and you and the others here; I am only as good as the fish in that river; I am only as good as the grass in this field. Because if that is destroyed, I will be destroyed with it. I can't do anything if the river breaks the dam; I can't stop it, no matter how much I yell. It is out of my hands. That isn't pessimistic; that is just the facts. ◇

For further information, donations, and letters of support, contact:

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Note:

Quotations in boxes throughout this article are from the Great Law of Peace of the Iroquois Confederacy—dating no later than the fifteenth century.

“With Crooked Glances You Teach Me”



The Lama of the Crystal Monastery appears to be a very happy man, and yet I wonder how he feels about his isolation in the silences of Tsakang, which he has not left in eight years now and, because of his legs, may never leave again. Since Jang-bu seems uncomfortable with the Lama or with himself or perhaps with us, I tell him not to inquire on this point if it seems to him impertinent, but after a moment Jang-bu does so. And this holy man of great directness and simplicity, big white teeth shining, laughs out loud in an infectious way at Jang-bu's question. Indicating his twisted legs without a trace of self-pity or bitterness, as if they belonged to all of us, he casts his arms wide to the sky and the snow mountains, the high sun and dancing sheep, and cries, “Of course I am happy here! It's wonderful! Especially when I have no choice!”

—Peter Matthiessen
The Snow Leopard¹

Whence come the highest mountains? I once asked. Then I learned that they come out of the sea. The evidence is written in their rocks and in the walls of their peaks. It is out of the deepest depth that the highest must come to its height.

All good things approach their goal crookedly. Like cats, they arch their backs, they purr inwardly over their approaching happiness: all good things laugh.

A man's stride betrays whether he has found his own way: behold me walking! But whoever approaches his goal dances. And verily, I have not become a statue: I do not yet stand there, stiff, stupid, stony, a column; I love to run swiftly. And though there are swamps and thick melancholy on earth, whoever has light feet runs even over mud and dances as on swept ice.

Lift up your hearts, my brothers, high, higher! And do not forget your legs either. Lift up your legs too, you good dancers; and better yet, stand on your heads!

—Friedrich Nietzsche
Thus Spoke Zarathustra²

It is circumstances which show what men are. Therefore when a difficulty falls upon you, remember that God, like a trainer of wrestlers, has matched you with a rough young man. For what purpose? you may say. Why that you may become an Olympic conqueror; but it is not accomplished without sweat.

—Epictetus
The Discourses³

The exercise of the adaptive functions appears to be indispensable to the optimum development of man. Our body is placed in a physical medium whose conditions are variable. The constancy of our inner states is maintained through ceaseless organic activity. Such activity is not localized in a single system. It extends to the entire body. All our anatomical apparatuses react against the outside world in the sense most favorable to our survival. Is it possible that such a fundamental property may remain virtual without inconvenience to our body? Are we not organized to live under changing and irregular conditions? Man attains his highest development when he is exposed to the rigors of the seasons, when he sometimes goes without sleep and sometimes sleeps for long hours, when his meals are sometimes abundant and sometimes scanty, when he conquers food and shelter at the price of strenuous efforts. He has also to train his muscles, to tire himself and rest, to fight, suffer, and be happy, to love and to hate. His will needs alternately to strain and to relax. He must strive against his fellow men or against himself. He is made for such an existence, just as the stomach is made for digesting food. When his adaptive processes work most intensely, he develops his virility to the fullest extent. It is a primary datum of observation that hardships make for nervous resistance and health. We know how strong physically and morally are those who, since childhood, have been submitted to intelligent discipline, who have endured some privations and adapted themselves to adverse conditions.

—Alexis Carrel
Man, The Unknown⁴

The ceremonials are never sung without purpose and that purpose is commonly to administer to a suffering person. As with the hero in ceremonial origin mythology, suffering a predicament is the occasion for having a ceremonial performed. Illness is an occasion to learn the Navajo way of life, to learn the significance of relationships, to appreciate the meaning of time and space as defined in the acts of creation. As the created world is not appreciated without the constant presence of the threat of it collapsing into disorder, so is the Navajo way of life not fully understood, or for that matter even known, without the presence of the sickness which threatens to destroy it. Navajo life is maintained in the tension between health and sickness, between observing and trespassing boundaries, between pleasantness and adversity, between *hózhǫ́* and *hóchǫ́*, for it is only when the tension is drawn to the point that the balance is threatened that the ceremonials are performed.

—Sam Gill
Songs of Life⁵

Originally our cart was built for an ordinary town; all the mechanical parts were designed to suit the road. The cart has many small wheels. The idea was that the unevennesses of the road would distribute the lubrication oil evenly and thus oil them. But all this was calculated for a certain town where the roads are not too smooth. Now the town has changed, but the make of the cart has remained the same. It was made to cart luggage, but now it carries passengers. And it always drives along one and the same street, the "Broadway." Some

parts got rusty from long disuse. If, at times, it needs to drive along a different street, it seldom escapes a breakdown and a more or less serious overhaul afterwards. Badly or well, it can still work on the "Broadway," but for another street it must first be altered.

—G.I. Gurdjieff
Views from the Real World⁶



What was really needed was a fundamental change in our attitude toward life. We had to learn that it did not really matter what we expected from life, but rather what life expected from us... Life ultimately means taking the responsibility to find the right answer to its problems and to fulfill the tasks which it constantly sets for each individual.

These tasks, and therefore the meaning of life, differ from man to man, and from moment to moment... No man and no destiny can be compared with any other man or any other destiny. No situation repeats itself, and each situation calls for a different response. Sometimes the situation in which a man finds himself may require him to shape his own fate by action... Sometimes man may be required simply to accept fate, to bear his cross. Every situation is distinguished by its uniqueness, and there is always only one right answer to the problem posed by the situation at hand.

When a man finds that it is his destiny to suffer, he will have to accept his suffering as his task; his single and unique task. He will have to acknowledge the fact that even in suffering he is unique and alone in the universe. No one can relieve him of his suffering or suffer in his place. His unique opportunity lies in the way he bears his burden... The way in which a man accepts his fate and all the suffering it entails, the way in which he takes up his cross, gives him ample opportunity—even under the most difficult circumstances—to add a deeper meaning to his life. It may remain brave, dignified, and unselfish. Or in the bitter fight for self-preservation he may forget his human dignity and become no more than an animal. Here lies the chance for a man either to make use of or to forego the opportunities of attaining the values that a difficult situation may afford him. And this decides whether he is worthy of his sufferings or not.

The most ghastly moment of the twenty-four hours of camp life was the awakening, when, at a still nocturnal hour, the three shrill blows of a whistle tore us pitilessly from our exhausted sleep and from the longings in our dreams. We then began the tussle with our wet shoes, into which we could scarcely force our feet, which were sore and swollen with edema. And there were the usual moans and groans about petty troubles, such as the snapping of wires which replaced shoelaces. One morning I heard someone, whom I knew to be brave and dignified, cry like a child because he finally had to go to the snowy marching grounds in his bare feet, as his shoes were too shrunken for him to wear. In those ghastly minutes, I found a little bit of comfort; a small piece of bread which I drew out of my pocket and munched with absorbed delight.

—Viktor Frankl
Man's Search for Meaning⁷

For years they traveled over mountains and valleys, and a great part of their life flowed past on this journey. But how is it possible to relate all that happened to them? It would be necessary to go with them and see their difficulties for oneself, and to follow the wanderings of this long road. Only then could one realize what the birds suffered.

In the end, only a small number of all this great company arrived at that sublime place to which the Hoopoe had led them. Of the thousands of birds almost all had disappeared. Many had been lost in the ocean, others had perished on the summits of the high mountains, tortured by thirst; others had had their wings burnt and their hearts dried up by the fire of the sun; others were devoured by tigers and panthers; others died of fatigue in the deserts and in the wilderness, their lips parched and their bodies overcome by the heat; some went mad and killed each other for a grain of barley; others, enfeebled by suffering and weariness, dropped on the road unable to go further; others, bewildered by the things they saw, stopped where they were, stupefied; and many, who had started out from curiosity or pleasure, perished without an idea of what they had set out to find.

So then, out of all those thousands of birds, only thirty reached the end of the journey. And even these were bewildered, weary, and dejected, with neither feathers nor wings. But now they were at the door of this Majesty that cannot be described, whose essence is incomprehensible—that Being who is beyond human reason and knowledge. Then flashed the lightning of fulfillment, and a hundred worlds were consumed in a moment.

—Farid ud-Din Attar
The Conference of the Birds⁸



Notes

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Note: The title of ARCS comes from Nietzsche.

Salvaging the Mystery

by Italo Calvino

For me [the attempt to assemble a readable master collection of Italian folktales] was a leap in the dark, a plunge into an unknown sea into which others before me, over the course of 150 years, had flung themselves, not out of any desire for the unusual, but because of a deep-rooted conviction that some essential, mysterious element lying in the ocean depths must be salvaged to ensure the survival of the race; there was, of course, the risk of disappearing into the deep, as did Cola Fish in the Sicilian and Neapolitan legend.

I plunged into that submarine world totally unequipped, without even a tankful of intellectual enthusiasm for anything spontaneous and primitive. I was subjected to all the discomforts of immersion in an almost formless element which, like the sluggish and passive oral tradition, could never be brought under conscious control. I could not forget, for even an instant, with what mystifying material I was dealing. One might well ask why I undertook the project, were it not for the one bond I had with folktales—which I shall clarify in due course.

Meanwhile, as I started to work, to take stock of the material available, to classify the stories into a catalog which kept expanding, I was gradually possessed by a kind of mania, an insatiable hunger for more and more versions and variants. Collating, categorizing, comparing became a fever. I could feel myself succumbing to a passion akin to that of entomologists, a passion which rapidly degenerated into a mania, as a result of which I would have given all of Proust in exchange for a new variant of the “gold-dung donkey.”

I was unexpectedly caught in the spiderlike web of my study, not so much by its formal, outward aspect as by its innermost particularities: infinite variety and infinite repetition. At the same time, the side of me that remained lucid, uncorrupted, and merely excited about the progression of the mania, was discovering that this fund of Italian folklore, in its richness, limpidity, variety, and blend of the real and the unreal, is unsurpassed by even the most famous folktales of Germanic, Nordic, and Slavic countries. Thus, the longer I remained steeped in the material, the fewer became my reservations; I was truly exalted by the expedition, and meanwhile the cataloging passion—ma-

niacal and solitary—was replaced by a desire to describe for others the unsuspected sights I had come upon.

Now my journey through folklore is over, the book [Italian Folktales] is done. As I write this preface I feel aloof, detached. Will it be possible to come down to earth again? For two years I have lived in woodlands and enchanted castles, torn between contemplation and action: on the one hand hoping to catch a glimpse of the face of the beautiful creature of mystery who, each night, lies down beside her knight; on the other, having to choose between the cloak of invisibility or the magical foot, feather, or claw that could metamorphose me into an animal. And during these two years the world about me gradually took on the attributes of fairyland, where everything that happened was a spell or a metamorphosis: kings who had been thought kindly turned out to be brutal parents; silent, bewitched kingdoms suddenly came back to life. I had the impression that the lost rules which govern the world of folklore were tumbling out of the magic box I had opened.

Now that the book is finished, I know that this was not a hallucination, a sort of professional malady, but the confirmation of something I already suspected—folktales are real.

Taken all together, they offer, in their oft-repeated and constantly varying examinations of human vicissitudes, a general explanation of life preserved in the slow ripening of rustic consciences; these folk stories are the catalog of the potential destinies of men and women, especially for that stage in life when destiny is formed, i.e., youth, beginning with birth, which itself often foreshadows the future; then the departure from home, and, finally, through the trials of growing up, the attainment of maturity and the proof of one's humanity. This sketch, although summary, encompasses

everything: the arbitrary division of humans, albeit in essence equal, into kings and poor people; the persecution of the innocent and their subsequent vindication, which are the terms inherent in every life; love unrecognized when first encountered and then no sooner experienced than lost; the common fate of subjection to spells, or having one's existence predetermined by complex and unknown forces. This complexity pervades one's entire existence and forces one to struggle to free oneself, to determine one's own fate; at the same time we can liberate ourselves only if we liberate other people, for this is a sine qua non of one's own liberation. There must be fidelity to a goal and purity of heart, values fundamental to salvation and triumph. There must also be beauty, a sign of grace that can be masked by the humble, ugly guise of a frog; and above all, there must be present the infinite possibilities of mutation, the unifying element in everything: men, beasts, plants, things.

THE PARROT

Once upon a time there was a merchant who was supposed to go away on business, but he was afraid to leave his daughter at home by herself, as a certain king had designs on her.

"Dear daughter," he said, "I'm leaving, but you must promise not to stick your head out the door or let anyone in until I get back."

Now that very morning the daughter had seen a handsome parrot in the tree outside her window. He was a well-bred parrot, and the maiden had delighted in talking with him.

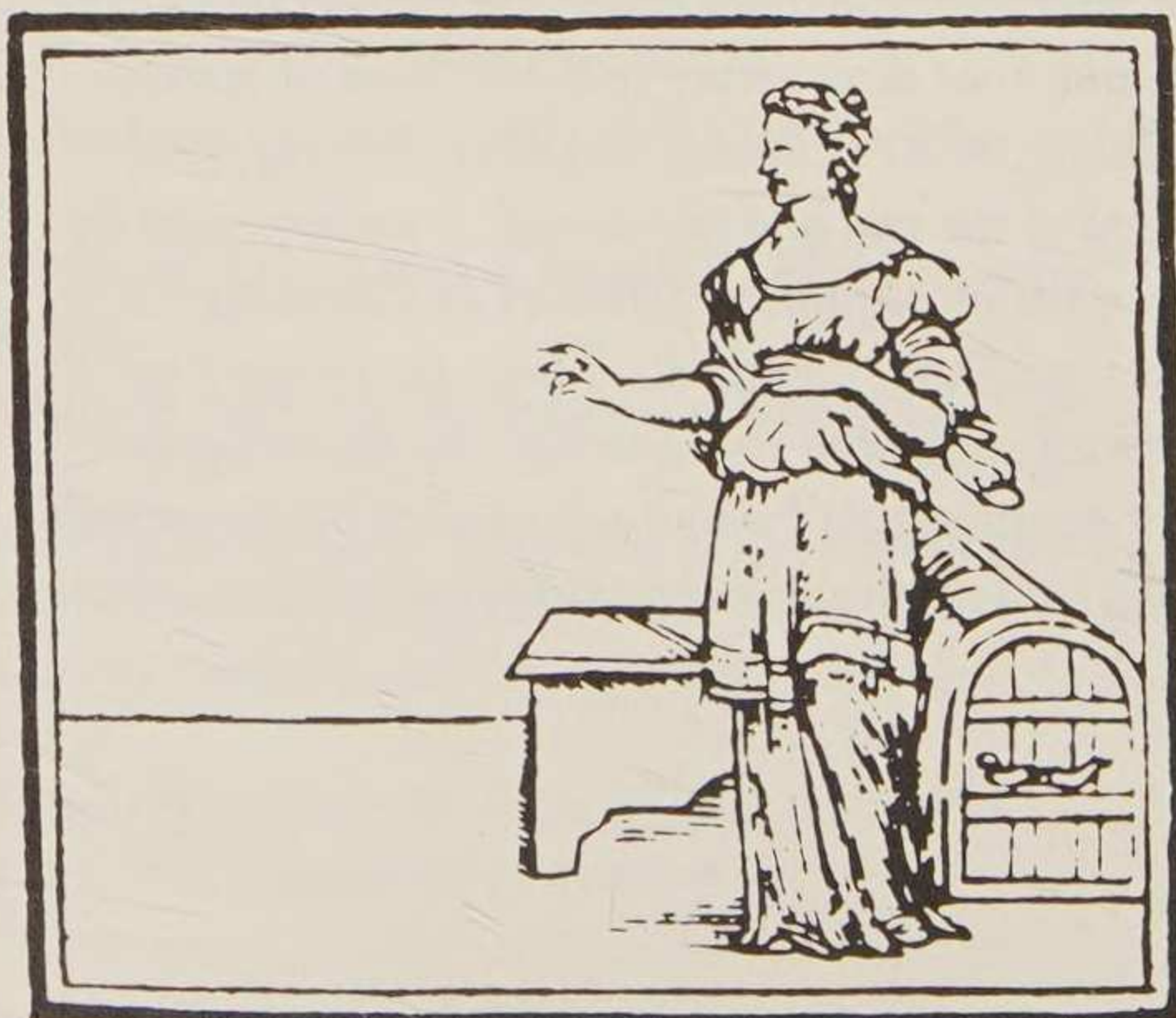
"Father," she replied, "it just breaks my heart to have to stay home all by myself. Couldn't I at least have a parrot to keep me company?"

The merchant, who lived only for his daughter, went out at once to get her a parrot. He found an old man who sold him one for a song. He took the bird to his daughter, and after much last-minute advice to her, he set out on his trip.

No sooner was the merchant out of sight than the king began devising a way to join the maiden. He enlisted an old woman in his scheme and sent her to the girl with a letter.

In the meantime the maiden got into conversation with the parrot. "Talk to me, parrot."

"I will tell you a good story. Once upon a time there was a king who had a daughter. She was an only child, with no brothers or sisters, nor did she have any playmates. So they made her a doll the same size as herself, with a face and clothes exactly like her own. Everywhere she went the doll went too, and no one could tell them apart. One day as king, daughter, and doll drove through the woods in their carriage, they were attacked by enemies who killed the king and carried off his daughter, leaving the doll behind in the abandoned carriage. The maiden screamed and cried so, the enemies let her go, and she wandered off into the woods by herself. She eventually reached the court of a certain queen and became a servant. She was such a clever girl that the queen liked her better all the time. The other servants grew jealous and plotted her downfall. 'You are aware, of course,' they said, 'that the queen likes you very much and tells you everything. But there's one thing which we know and you don't. She had a son who died.' At that, the maiden went to the queen and asked, 'Majesty, is it true you had a son who died?' Upon



hearing those words, the queen almost fainted. Heaven help anyone who recalled that fact! The penalty for mentioning that dead son was no less than death. The maiden too was condemned to die, but the queen took pity on her and had her shut up in a dungeon instead. There the girl gave way to despair, refusing all food and passing her nights weeping. At midnight, as she sat there weeping, she heard the door bolts slide back, and in walked five men: four of them were sorcerers and the fifth was the queen's son, their prisoner, whom they were taking out for exercise."

At that moment, the parrot was interrupted by a servant bearing a letter for the merchant's daughter. It was from the king, who had finally managed to get it to her. But the girl was eager to hear what happened next in the tale, which had reached the most exciting part, so she said, "I will receive no letters until my father returns. Parrot, go on with your story."

The servant took the letter away, and the parrot continued. "In the morning the jailers noticed the prisoner had not eaten a thing and they told the queen. The queen sent for her, and the maiden told her that her son was alive and in the dungeon a prisoner of four sorcerers, who took him out every night at midnight for exercise. The queen dispatched twelve soldiers armed with crowbars, who killed the sorcerers and freed her son. Then she gave him as a husband to the maiden who had saved him."

The servant knocked again, insisting that the young lady read the king's letter. "Very well. Now that the story is over, I can read the letter," said the merchant's daughter.

"But it's not finished yet, there's still some more to come," the parrot hastened to say. "Just listen to this: the maiden was not interested in marrying the queen's son. She settled for a purse of money and a man's outfit and moved on to another city. The son of this city's king was ill, and no doctor

knew how to cure him. From midnight to dawn he raved like one possessed. The maiden showed up in man's attire, claiming to be a foreign doctor and asking to be left with the youth for one night. The first thing she did was look under the bed and find a trapdoor. She opened it and went down into a long corridor, at the end of which a lamp was burning."

At that moment the servant knocked and announced there was an old woman to see the young lady, whose aunt she claimed to be. (It was not an aunt, but the old woman sent by the king.) But the merchant's daughter was dying to know the outcome of the tale, so she said she was receiving no one. "Go on, parrot, go on with your story."

Thus the parrot continued. "The maiden walked down to that light and found an old woman boiling the heart of the king's son in a kettle, in revenge for the king's execution of her son. The maiden removed the heart from the kettle, carried it back to the king's son to eat, and he got well. The king said, 'I promised half of my kingdom to the doctor who cured my son. Since you are a woman, you will marry my son and become queen.'"

"It's a fine story," said the merchant's daughter. "Now that it's over, I can receive that woman who claims to be my aunt."

"But it's not quite over," said the parrot. "There's still some more to come. Just listen to this. The maiden in doctor's dis-



guise also refused to marry that king's son and was off to another city whose king's son was under a spell and speechless. She hid under his bed; at midnight, she saw two witches coming through the window and remove a pebble from the young man's mouth, whereupon he could speak. Before leaving, they replaced the pebble, and he was again mute."

Someone knocked on the door, but the merchant's daughter was so absorbed in the story that she didn't even hear the knock. The parrot continued.

"The next night when the witches put the pebble on the bed, she gave the bedclothes a jerk and it dropped on the floor. Then she reached out for it and put it in her pocket. At dawn the witches couldn't find it and had to flee. The king's son was well, and they named the maiden physician to the court."

The knocking continued, and the merchant's daughter was all ready to say "Come in," but first she asked the parrot, "Does the story go on, or is it over?"

"It goes on," replied the parrot. "Just listen to this. The maiden wasn't interested in remaining as physician to the court, and moved on to another city. The talk there was that the king of this city had gone mad. He'd found a doll in the woods and fallen in love with it. He stayed shut up in his room admiring it and weeping because it was not a real live maiden. The girl went before the king. 'That is my doll!' she exclaimed. 'And this is my bride!' replied the king on seeing that she was the doll's living image."

There was another knock, and the parrot was at a total loss to continue the story. "Just a minute, just a minute, there's still a tiny bit more," he said, but he had no idea what to say next.

"Come on, open up, it's your father," said the merchant's voice.

"Ah, here we are at the end of the story," announced the parrot. "The king married the maiden, and they lived happily ever after."

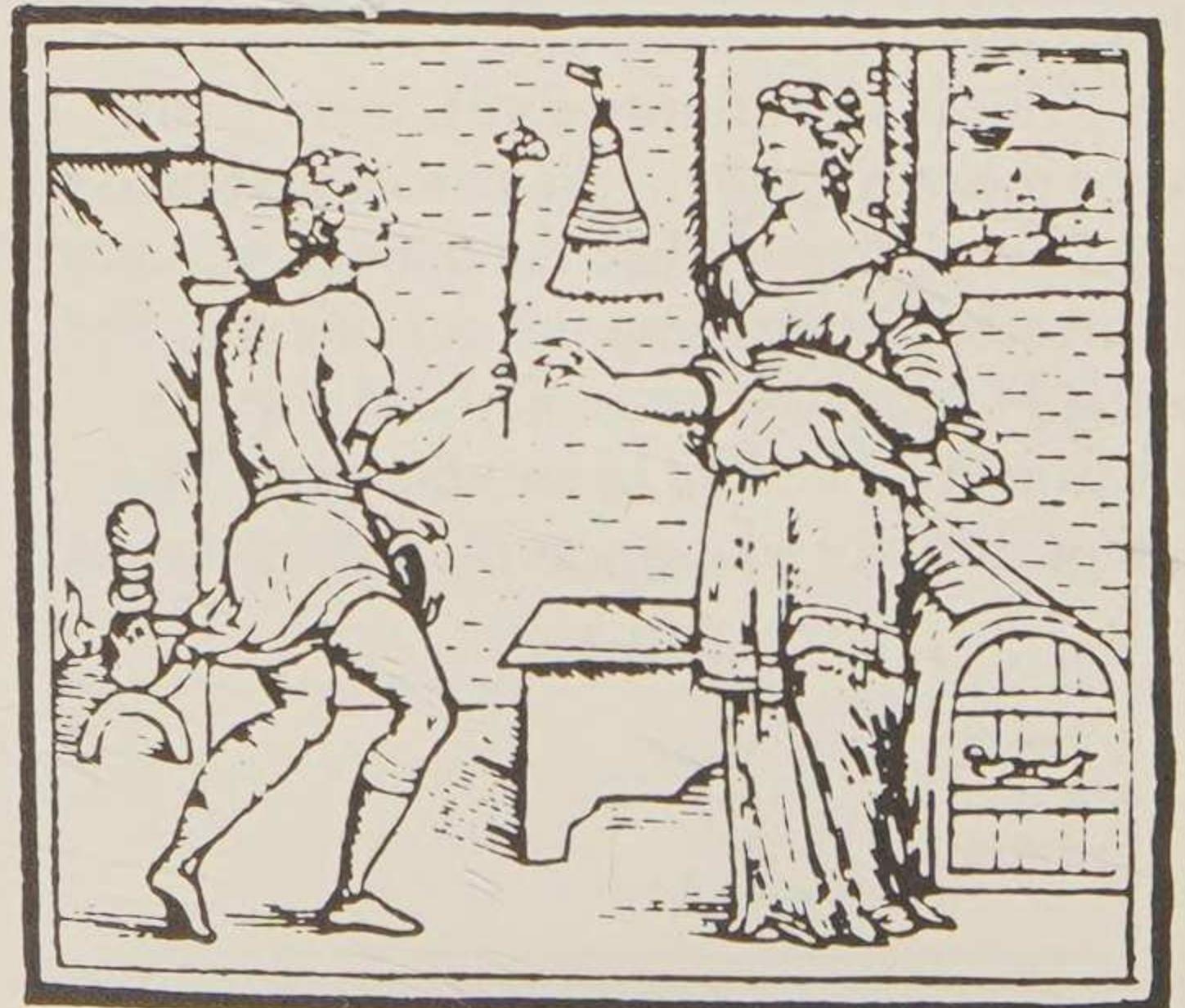
The girl finally ran to open the door and embrace her father just back from his trip.

"Well done, my daughter!" said the merchant. "I see you've remained faithfully at home. And how is the parrot doing?"

They went to take a look at the bird, but in his place they found a handsome youth. "Forgive me, sir," said the youth. "I am a king who put on a parrot's disguise, because I am in love with your daughter. Aware of the intentions of a rival king to abduct her, I came here beneath a parrot's plumage to entertain her in an honorable manner and at the same time to prevent my rival from carrying out his schemes. I believe I have succeeded in both purposes, and that I can now ask for your daughter's hand in marriage."

The merchant gave his consent. His daughter married the king who had told her the tale, and the other king died of rage. ◇

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Changing the Impossible

Through my own little experience I can feel benefit of love and compassion and realization of human value, human dignity. I feel that as a result of this practice I am quite happy person. Despite many difficult circumstances, I always feel: Oh! I am happy! So that is my luck! If because of these difficulties I always feel I am sad, it is not much use!

—H.H. the Dalai Lama

In 1935, a two-year-old Tibetan peasant boy named Tenzin Gyatso was discovered as the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, the reincarnation of his predecessor on the Lion Throne, and supreme temporal and spiritual ruler of Tibet. He began his training at the age of four; he was fifteen when the Chinese invaded Tibet, and he was forced to assume the full responsibility for his beleaguered people. For the next eight years, continuing his studies and training, he demonstrated the amazing depth of his political and spiritual understanding, in a patient struggle to negotiate with the Chinese and to bring Tibet's case before the world.

Everyone knows of his dramatic and sacrificial flight from Lhasa in an unsuccessful attempt to avert the bloodbath with which the invaders were threatening his unarmed defenders. And as everyone knows, he has since lived in India as an exile with the remnant of his people, including a large number of children, many of them orphans, who must be cared for. The struggle against odds continues; yet during his recent visit to the United States, what we saw was an overwhelming kind of triumph. He did not speak of obstacles or of strug-

gle, except indirectly: "Enemy your greatest friend; without him, how learn patience?"

Who is the Dalai Lama? A god-king? An anachronism?

A tall thin man with dancing eyes, who seems to take a kind of eager delight in all that is human and all that is divine (with no division between the two), he bears the weight of his people and his own extraordinary destiny lightly and with joy. The eagerness and the joy were contagious and people responded to him, in such numbers that we were too late to obtain an interview with him. So when our friend the artist Ruth Wilson went to India, we pulled all the strings we could for her to see and talk with him for us. She writes of her experience as follows:

It is a misconception that the Dalai Lama is easily accessible! I devoted the entire time from March 12 to the end of my stay in India to getting this interview. This is no complaint—I knew from the start that it would be well worth every effort, and it was. The Tibetan office said that he was "out of station" at the moment and though he would return within the week, it was very, very difficult to see him in Dharamsala as he was fully booked before going out again. However he was to come to Delhi and there was a very good chance for an interview there. It was finally arranged for the 29th at 6 P.M. at his hotel, at an hour's drive from where I was staying.

My hostess and her fourteen-year-old son drove me over at the appointed time. There was a Tai conference going on and the hotel was flooded with Burmese wearing red roses. Luckily I had been given a room number on the fifth floor; we went there and found it locked. We were a little early, as the exact time I had been given

This is a true story...

A certain professor had the rare opportunity of getting an interview with the Dalai Lama at Dharamsala. A friend counseled him to write down his questions, so he would not forget them when the time came. The professor said nothing but thought he was quite clear about his questions and for someone so used to public speaking surely there was no need to write them down. As he approached the Dalai Lama's residence he noticed a monk working in the garden. "Excuse me," he said, "where should I go for an interview with the Dalai Lama?" "Just proceed

and wait in the first room," the monk said, "he will be with you shortly." The professor did as he had been told and after a few minutes the Dalai Lama entered; to the professor's great surprise, he saw that it was the monk he had been talking to in the garden. He was so confounded by this unexpected revelation that he could not think of anything he had wanted to say. The Dalai Lama smiled and said, "If you were to ask me so and so, I would answer thus, and if your question were such and such, I would say this," and he answered all the questions that had been in the professor's mind.

was 6:10 P.M., so we sat down and waited in full view of the elevator, for about half an hour. Finally a group of Tibetans came; one of them stepped towards me and said he was extremely sorry to have kept me waiting, but His Holiness had been addressing a youth conference and had been delayed. Another half hour—and then—finally—a flurry of identical dark red robes, but not a fraction of a doubt as to which one of the crowd of monks he was! He walked quickly to his room followed by his escorts. Another few minutes while a monk who had also been waiting in the foyer took precedence, and then I was informed that "my party" was invited to come in with me. I first declined for them, but then the Dalai Lama himself appeared at the door and personally invited them in. Soon we were seated around the coffee table and His Holiness was plugging the microphone into my tape recorder. I brought out the microphone stand and while I was reaching into my handbag for my glasses which I needed for fitting it to the mike, he had taken both things and put them in working order, and set them up at an appropriate distance on the table. An audiovisual engineer couldn't have done a quicker or better job. This beginning of our interview took me by surprise; I had expected an august presence, a "holy person," and here was this easy, smiling, warmly kind man, completely free of

any trace of strangeness or constraint. Yes, so *free!* That was the great impression. In a second, we were both involved in setting up equipment, both interested in getting to the question that you had asked a few weeks ago and several thousand miles away.

"The magazine PARABOLA," I told him, "comes out four times a year and every issue deals with a special theme, a specific question. Once the topic was 'Children' and another time it was 'Death.' The issue this talk is going into is on 'Obstacles.'"

His Holiness Obstacles? Obstacles?

Hm...obstacles of what?

R.W. *All kinds of obstacles. Your Holiness has had more experience in dealing with obstacles than almost anyone I can think of! There are, of course, the obstacles in life as the Tibetan nation has experienced them, and also the inner obstacles—obstacles to the evolution of the human spirit. A person strives, and circumstances get in the way. The question is, how can one utilize this situation, make use of these difficulties rather than saying that obstacles are only negative: What is their role in the life of the spirit?*

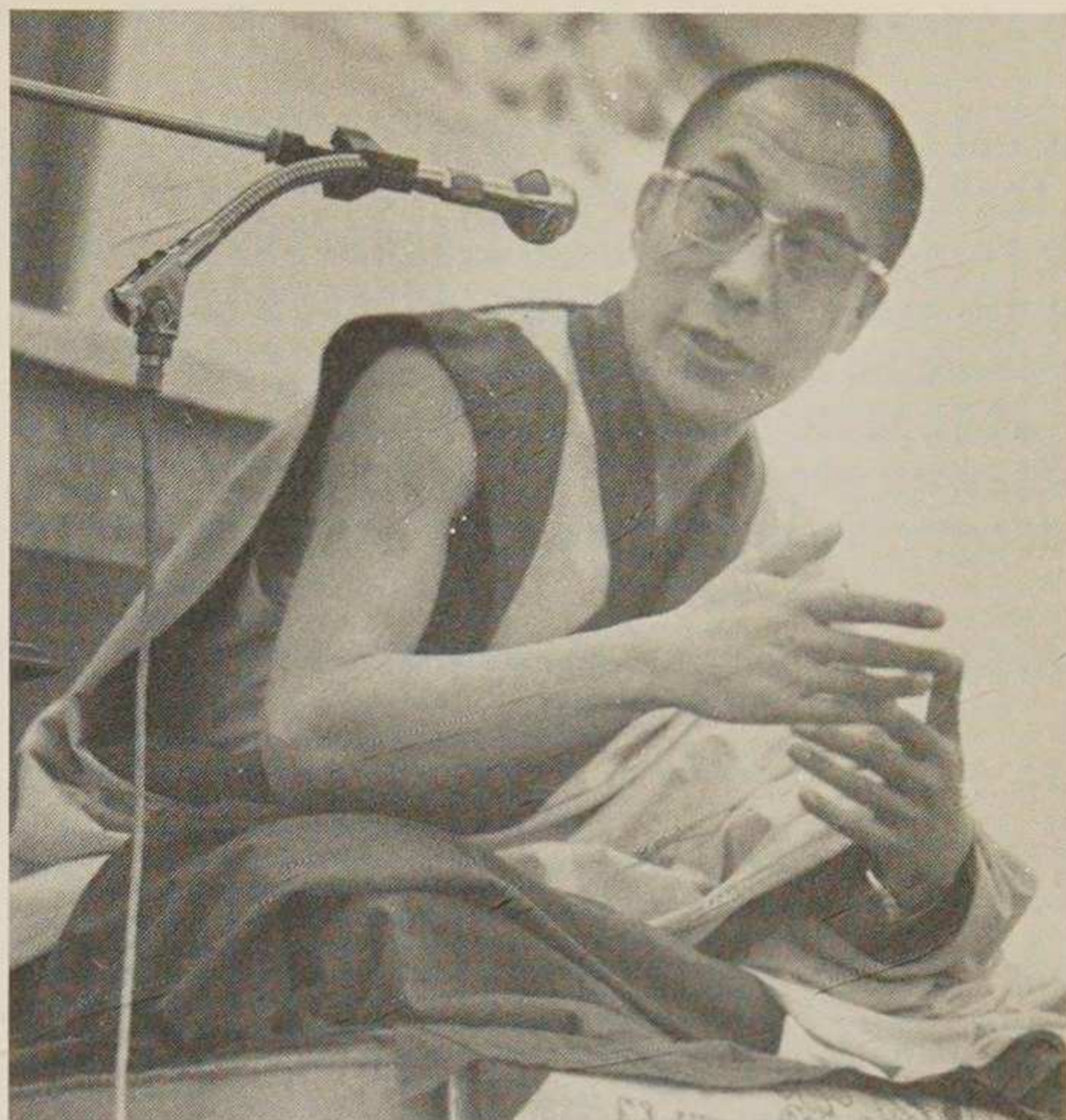
H.H. That is difficult to explain. We may say this way: if you utilize obstacles properly, then it strengthens your courage, and it also gives you more intelligence, more wisdom. Because there is obstacle, you make attempt; so have to think, have to try something. Have to try certain way; so this gives strength and also wisdom and intelligence. If you use them in wrong way, then discourage, failure, depression. [Laughs]

R.W. Yes, very often this is the case; one feels low, incapable of taking the next step. What should be the spiritual attitude? How to overcome this feeling of depression? How can we look at the obstacle as something positive rather than negative?

H.H. That depends on the angle. One way, regard the obstacle as something negative; therefore, we try to overcome. Another way, it gives you, as I mentioned earlier, a good result, in certain ways; therefore we may call them positive. I don't know; but generally, obstacle is obstacle! We do not want them; so that means we want to overcome. So that means negative. It depends on interpretation. And then, what is the interpretation of negative and positive itself? These things are relative. Negative depends on positive, positive depends on negative.

R.W. Is it just a question of the mind dealing with it?

H.H. Not only mind. Things are not controlled by mind fully. Things are things—but heavily depend on mind. But mind itself is not superior to everything. I mean, mind cannot change things—for example, this solid table cannot change into something liquid by mind force. (In some exceptional case may be possible, but generally not.) So that means mind depends on matter. So you see, matter depends on mind, mind depends on matter. In a sense, mind is superior: due to consciousness, due to mind, we utilize this matter in this direction or in that direction. Unless you get inner peace through mental improvement, mental upliftment, you cannot achieve real, lasting peace externally. So in that sense, the mind is superior.



BRIAN BERESFORD

R.W. In your book, you say that as a boy, when you entered school you had this resistance to learning certain things. When you started on dialectics, there was this resistance, and when you finally started to study metaphysics you even felt distressed. But you say that every time, after the first few days, you managed to get into your studies and not only to feel quite good about them but actually enjoy them. So you overcame something. What made you do that: was it obedience that helped you to overcome the obstruction?

H.H. Obedience to whom?

R.W. Obedience to the teacher?

H.H. I think it was to my own brain. And making more attempt, more effort. I can understand, I can absorb that thing with my mind, so it becomes easier. So once you learn some difficult subject you feel very happy. That happiness is like a prize for the hard work.

The practical test comes when occasions of sorrow or suffering arise. The person whose mind is conditioned by the study and practice of religion faces these circumstances with patience and forbearance. The person who does not follow the path of religion may break under the impact of what he regards as calamities, and may end in either self-frustration, or else in pursuits which inflict unhappiness on others. Humanitarianism and true love for all beings can only stem from an

awareness of the content of religion. In whatever name religion may be known, its understanding and practice are the essence of a peaceful mind and therefore of a peaceful world. If there is no peace in one's mind, there can be no peace in one's approach to others, and thus no peaceful relations between individuals or between nations.

— H.H. the Dalai Lama

From **My Land and My People** by H.H. the Dalai Lama of Tibet (New York: Potala Corporation, 1977).

Eastern or Western, even believer or non-believer, there is no difference, we are all the same. I am a human being, you are a human being, we all are the same. If we look this way on this planet, there are no boundaries, there is just one globe. So all these demarcations, these differences, actually we make them, I think. We make this color, that color, these separations. If we look from

wider viewpoint, we can remain calm; with that we feel much inner peace. Even when in daily life all may not be successful, we can remain without losing inner peace and stability. That way you can minimize many inner problems; despite these problems and obstacles you remain peaceful and calm, and your neighbors also share that...

—H.H. the Dalai Lama

R.W. *In a word, it's a challenge that you accept.*

H.H. Right!

R.W. *I have just now been to Dharamsala to see how the Tibetans live, and I was very much impressed by the whole atmosphere there. It was remarkable to see how the people take their lot; they seem to be very happy, as far as I could see as an outsider.*

H.H. Yes, they are jovial—jovial types. Generally they are quite happy. That's a gift. It is an advantage—despite many difficulties, they feel quite happy! [Laughs]

R.W. *Do they feel they want to go back to Tibet?*

H.H. Definitely; no doubt, no question. You see, every time they receive any fresh news from Tibet the reaction is very strong. That means the love for their country.

R.W. *Do you think there is a possibility of going back?*

H.H. I am hopeful. One day we can return. Things are changing.

R.W. *I wish the whole world would understand what you and your people have understood. You have faced this great crisis—all people have their own problems, their own crises, but how many of them look at their problems in this way: that they are challenges they have to accept?*

H.H. [Laughs] Is this the first time you mix with Tibetans?

R.W. *Well, I have heard about Tibet as a child from my father who loved Tibet. He used to show me pictures of Lhasa and told me fascinating things about your country. So there was a picture in my mind, and also of course curiosity. Now, of course, Tibetans are all over the world; I have met some in Austria, and England, and America; and I have*

met Trungpa Rinpoche and been to his place in Vermont. Still, that does not make me know very much.

H.H. But this time you gained more knowledge?

R.W. *Yes. I have met several people studying at the Buddhist Center in lower Dharamsala—that's an excellent place. I also watched some of the celebrations at the temple: the chanting, the gongs and the Tibetan horns, and then the masks and the dancing—I was very impressed. Just to stand there and be part of that gathering was a tremendous experience.*

His Holiness chuckled, obviously pleased. Some more conversation followed that included everyone, and I then asked permission to leave, as we had heard that His Holiness had to leave at 7:30. We were each presented with a white scarf and conducted to the door, His Holiness supporting my arm with both hands while pointing out a hardly visible step. His smiling face and his blessings accompanied us all the way home.

Human being can do anything. Determination, some sort of courage, self-confidence, that is the real force for victory, for success. If you have willpower and courage—reasonable courage, not blind courage; courage without pride—at a certain stage, because of that courage, because of effort, continued effort, sometimes the impossible can change into possible...

—H.H. the Dalai Lama

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Physical Pariahs

by Rob Baker

Children of a Lesser God, a play by Mark Medoff, with John Rubinstein and Phyllis Frelich; produced by Emanuel Azenberg, the Shubert Organization, Dasha Epstein, and Ron Dante; directed by Gordon Davidson; Longacre Theatre, New York City.

The Elephant Man, a play by Bernard Pomerance with Donal Donnelly, Patricia Elliott, and Bruce Davison; produced by Richmond Crinkley, Elizabeth I. McCann, and Nelle Nugent; directed by Jack Hofsiss; Booth Theatre, New York City.

Our inability to deal with persons whose physical nature or abilities don't happen to measure up to our own standards of beauty or perfection is nowhere more apparent than in the very language we use to describe such persons: even forgetting such obvious embarrassments as "cripple" or "spastic," who are we to judge another person "deformed" (according to what concept of form?), "handicapped" (in whose horse race?), "retarded," "feeble-minded," or (worst of all, perhaps) "invalid" (how can any human being be in-valid?). Even the word most preferred by such persons themselves—"disabled"—has a hollow, negative ring to it. Not able to what? Certainly the rules and requirements—to say nothing of the needs—are always ours, not theirs.

No wonder our affluent society has complicated the lives of such "poor unfortunates" by giving them "special" educa-

tion, sequestering them (if not in the attic, at least in a nearby state-supported "home"), even sterilizing them (for "their own good"), teaching them absurd pastimes like basket-weaving so they can "feel useful," giving them cold steel hooks for hands, or artificial limbs and eyes (mostly so *we*, not they, don't have to look at what's "missing").

American literature has dealt at times with disability honestly, openly, with neither undue sensationalism or cloying pity—especially the writers of the South, such as Carson McCullers and Flannery O'Connor (both of whom were themselves disabled most of their adult lives); to a somewhat lesser extent, American film has done the same, most significantly with Tod Browning's landmark study of the sideshow performers he had known as a child, *Freaks*, a film that virtually destroyed his Hollywood career. But American theater has tended to regard the subject as more or less taboo.

Certainly some of the off-off-Broadway troupes of the sixties used various kinds of grotesques in their menagerie of oddballs, but their use of such physical pariahs as paraplegics (played of course by fully limbed actors) was more often than not for mere shock effect. It may have given theater some of the waking up it needed, and at least the characterizations were not condescendingly "sympathetic," but it was nonetheless shallow, lending little in terms of helping to understand the real or symbolic difficulties faced by such persons in the everyday world. Like much iconoclasm of its type, it was as hollow as the idols of the temples it razed, and nothing new, nothing better, was offered in place of what was destroyed.

Surprisingly enough, in the wake of a remarkable play called *The Elephant Man*, Broadway may be picking up where off-off-Broadway left off. Unfortunately there's an overtone of liberal do-gooderism running through many of the plays—not surprising considering how uncomfortable our society is with all types of nonconformity (physical, mental, sexual, spiritual), but nonetheless disturbing. In spite of the significant step in the right direction by *Elephant Man*, we're still getting plays like *Whose Life Is It Anyway?*, about a paraplegic's right to die, not live, or works like *Nuts* and *Children of a Lesser God* whose very titles are irritating stumbling blocks to whatever insights they might contain.

The latter, a play about a speech therapist who falls in love with a deaf woman, is a hearing person's rather self-pitying lament for his being unable to "communicate," caused mostly, the playwright seems to be saying, by the woman's stubborn self-reliance. She refuses to learn to "talk" aloud (i.e., perform for the "real" world, so that "normal" people can understand her); having always communicated by signing, she finds this sufficient, especially since speech seems and feels awkward to her.

The therapist fails, and the woman continues in her perfectly natural way, but this is the most upsetting thing of all about the play: we seem to be being asked to view this as a tragic, Romeo and Juliet situation, where the noble explorer (the playwright himself, reeling from a bad affair?) is somehow defeated by the barbarian outsider, in spite of all his good intentions. The conceit is rather mindboggling: that the disabled (or anyone else who is "different," either by choice or circumstance) have been put here on earth so that the rest of the world can study their problems, learn from them, and then tell them how to run their lives. That's rather frightening.

Actress Phyllis Frelich, herself a non-hearing and non-speaking (the latter by

choice) person, gives a magnificent, eloquent performance as the woman. She certainly deserves better than Mark Medoff's cheap pop-psychology script, and she certainly doesn't need John Rubinstein there onstage "translating" every word she signs for the audience. That ploy is the most loathsome embarrassment about the production, almost as frustrating in its way as the man at a recent matinee who kept turning around in his seat to tell an older hearing-impaired woman, who was asking a companion to help her adjust her hearing aid, to shut up.

Much has been written already about Bernard Pomerance's *Elephant Man*, praising its articulateness, its consciousness, its powerful restraint; all the praise is well-deserved.

Pomerance has based the play on the real life history of John Merrick, whose gross physical deformities turned him first into a sideshow freak, then a medical curiosity and a sort of *cause célèbre* in Victorian England. The work is a far more remarkable play, of considerably higher consciousness, than Broadway has seen in some time. Though it distances itself a bit too easily from Merrick's actual physical grotesqueness, having him played by an almost matinee-idol-handsome actor who uses no make-up whatsoever (which thus compromises the work slightly in terms of actual confrontation with the idea of serious disability), it nonetheless deals meaningfully with Merrick's own problems, personal and social, and with the broader symbolic import of his life. Even Merrick's sexual desires are broached, though a new study of Merrick's life* questions whether his friendly benefactress, the actress Mrs. Kendall, ever actually even met Merrick, let alone had an affair with him, as the play indicates.

Most moving, however, is Merrick's relationship to his physician, Frederick Treves, through whose writings we know most of our facts about Merrick today. Treves was a brilliant and successful sur-

**The True History of the Elephant Man* by Michael Howell and Peter Ford, Allison and Busby, Ltd., 1980, distributed by Schocken Books.

geon, and his special gift was to see Merrick not as a guinea pig but simply as another human being who was being deprived of his humanity by society and circumstance. Without ever trying to force Merrick to be or look like the rest of the world, Treves helped him to come to terms with that world, to experience it on his *own* terms, and to achieve a few years of happiness before he died.

Only by allowing the disabled to function in their own way, their own realm, can society ever hope to learn from them the extent of their true abilities—gifts which we have been unable to see because the smallness of our vision has limited us, crippled us, retarded us, incapacitated us, invalidated us in a way that, with wonderful irony, only a “disabled” person could easily comprehend. ◇

Playing with One Foot in Each Camp

by Rob Baker

L’Os/Ubu; The Ik;

The Conference of the Birds

Presented by Le Centre International de Créations Théâtrales in association with Alexander H. Cohen and Micheline Rozan, under the direction of Peter Brook, at La Mama E.T.C., New York City.

Ten years ago, after having proven himself several times over as one of the most impressive directors of our time, both in films and on stage, Peter Brook chose to take a beautiful risk. Gambling his considerable prestige and reputation in the world of mainstream theater, he moved to Paris and gathered together a small select group of basically unknown actors from around the world. They began to work, slowly, conscientiously, not towards “production” or “performance” at first, but towards self-understanding, an understanding of each other, and at least a partial understanding of all that has been forgotten of what was once an ancient and sacred art.

Though Brook has continued to direct independently at times (most notably, his

Royal Shakespeare Company production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and his recent filming of Gurdjieff’s *Meetings with Remarkable Men*), his first passion has remained the work with the Centre, at the Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord in Paris. There Brook and the group have worked insistently to strip theater of all its pretensions, including even the rich embellishments and perhaps at times self-conscious inventiveness Brook had previously lavished on his own productions. Their goal was to take theater back to its bare essentials—gesture, sound, color, emotion, ritual movement, simple storytelling. Their journey took them to hospitals, asylums, public squares, African and Near Eastern villages as well, in an attempt to explore the similarly lost relationship of audience to players—a link Brook felt was as important to theater as re-learning the relationship of players to material.

In September of 1973, Brook brought the company to New York, giving several day-long workshops at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. The company was still rough, still basically into exploration rather than performance, and many New York theater regulars were less than impressed, especially those of us who had so marveled at the articulateness of Brook’s *Lear*, the daring tour de force intelligence of his *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, the shattering con-

frontation of his *Marat/Sade*. Indeed, seeing a bunch of actors flop around on the floor, pretending to be birds and squawking in an unknown “invented language” was considerably less than we thought we deserved from a talent of Brook’s stature. It is only now, almost seven years later, that we have begun to realize how much we had—and have—to learn.

Brook, no doubt, will forgive us our impatience, our critical self-importance. He’s given us another chance at last, bringing three of the Centre’s works to La Mama, the downtown theater complex run by his long-time friend Ellen Stewart, herself a woman of extraordinary theatrical vision and intuition.

Judging by the three productions (one actually is two shorter pieces performed on the same night), Brook’s theater is a theater of obstacles, of the struggles of everyday life; the work demands of us the same degree of hard work, concentration, and self-examination that Brook insists from himself and his actors—a willingness to explore without ever expecting a total answer, complete illumination, happy ending. The works probe silence as well as sound; they force us to confront (and begin to comprehend, almost in spite of ourselves) language we don’t “know,” to actively participate in ritual to which we think we have not been initiated. They often take as their source material not “plays” or “drama” at all, at least not in any textbook sense, but anthropology, social concerns, poetry, tall tales, the gibberish of pure sound.

Brook has indicated that he’s trying to bridge the gap between the ordinary and the extra-ordinary, “to keep one foot in each camp,” as he described it last year in these pages; to capture, however briefly, the link between everyday reality and something higher, “the visible and the invisible.”

In doing so, he attempts to create what he refers to in his book *The Empty Space* as an Immediate Theatre, a theater of essentials, of the here and now, which defies the Deadly Theatre (the trite, lackluster drama not only of Broadway commercialism, but of academia as well) by linking the visionary commitment of what he calls the Holy Theatre (such as that of the followers of theatrical gurus like Artaud and Grotowski, usually steeped unfortunately in esoteric elitism) with the vitality and spontaneity of the Rough Theatre of the marketplace (though giving it something more of form, of substance, of permanency).

Brook’s theatrical credo may seem curiously familiar to students of various occult traditions who have worked with the concept of the low, middle, and high self—or those who have recognized the same imagery as the central theme of Doris Lessing’s new novel, *The Marriage Between Zones Three, Four, and Five*. In each instance the goal is the same: for one’s conscious mind (the middle self) to take control and make the proper connection between one’s soul or spiritual nature (the high self) and one’s physical or animal nature (the low self)—the trick being, of course, not to fly off the handle in either direction, to remain grounded in reality while trying to learn to fly.

Brook’s repertory in New York divided quite naturally into just such levels of consciousness, and each work commented on and enriched the others.

His adaptation of Alfred Jarry’s *Ubu* (a scatological travesty of *Macbeth* and *Julius Caesar* which caused a furor in Paris in its 1896 premiere) exemplifies a world of spiritual squalor: if ever there was a play depicting the world of the low self gone hog-wild, this is it—a world with no hint whatsoever of the high self, and only the most perverted sense of the middle self (the intelligence being totally at the service of power, greed, and sexual/political self-indulgence). Brook and the company staged *Ubu* with proper gusto and bawdiness, plus acres of ham. They play it well, but the work remains, in itself, trivial, dated, more depressing than disturbing. Low self theater is obviously not the company’s forte.

The Ik, adapted for the stage from Colin Turnbull's *The Mountain People*, is an anthropological study of a nomadic hunting tribe of Northern Uganda who, when forced by that nation's government to farm instead, find their way of life reduced to starvation, violence, and complete perversion of even basic human kindness and concern for their fellow beings. So much for "adaptation" and "acculturation" of "primitive" societies by "civilization," when what is really going on is total disruption of a completely natural, centuries-old order and way of being.

The adaptation has Brook's company building branch houses onstage, filling the space with dirt and stones, squabbling for bits of food, as well as the very elements of water and fire, in a landscape that becomes increasingly bleak and oppressive as the action progresses. Unlike the overdone cartoons in *Ubu*, *The Ik*'s characters, for all their selfishness and crudeness, have at least the nobility of a heritage lost, traditions that could perhaps still be tapped and perhaps even salvaged if something could reverse the brutalized and brutalizing circumstances of their lives. And it is a test of the exceptional abilities of the actors in the company that they bring this desperate, marginal existence so vividly, honestly, and unpretentiously to life.

L'Os (The Bone), adapted from a story by African writer Birago Diop and shown on a double-bill with *Ubu*, covers somewhat the same territory as *The Ik*, but with more distance and a considerably lighter, more humorous touch. In it the main character (wonderfully acted by Malick Bowens, who co-adapted the script) becomes so obsessed with eventually eating the bone of a cow that he has tricked out of his old friend Moussa (Yoshi Oida) that he plays sick, then dead, to avoid having to share it with his hungry fellow villagers, his wife (Mireille Maalouf) or even Moussa himself. It is of

course the perfect irony that he is buried alive while trying to pull off his selfish trick: since he (like the *Ik*) has sacrificed all sense of humanity and higher consciousness by reverting totally to his animal nature, it thus makes perfect sense that the earth itself (always the home base of the low self) will get him in the end.

Virtually all sense of ritual and tradition, including those related to the sacred, having been abandoned by the *Ik*, it is only in *Conference of the Birds*, developed by the company from the twelfth-century Sufi fable/poem by Farid ud-Din Attar, that a real examination of high self attitudes are permitted among the works shown by the Centre here.

The tale is that of a journey by a group of birds to find their king, their god, the Simorgh. The journey takes them through self-examination, self-denial, self-doubts; over deserts, into deep mysterious valleys, beyond hunger and endurance. Deprivation follows deprivation, but at last they arrive, and those who have survived are greeted gently with the whispered revelation that they themselves are the Simorgh, that they are the very goal they have sought all along the way.

The empty space at La Mama is awash with light when the birds make this discovery; the audience is still, the Oriental carpets keep their enigmatic, patterned secrets inside as they rest on the floor and against the wall. A band of birds has crossed the desert, overcoming all obstacles in its path, to find a message that is its alone. No one can speak for them; no one should even try. But Peter Brook and company have done that thing they've been striving for: to push theater back to where it once was, where the thrill of ecstasy is still possible. Having lost none of the threads along the way, the connection has been made, dynamically and essentially, to something much higher, and the everyday world, for that short moment at least, vibrates with the linking. ◇

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Footnote to the Gurdjieff Literature

by M. de Salzmänn

The increasing spate of books about Gurdjieff should not blind us to their almost unflinching and therefore tragic irrelevance to what is essential. "Well and good," we might say, if we are willing to accept the offerings of ill-informed commentators who provide us with every possible shade of misinformation. But how not to be baffled when those who claim some relation to Gurdjieff's teaching contribute, by the subjectivity of their approach, to the distortion of its real perspective?

Of course, one cannot blame premature attempts for their failure to meet an almost impossible challenge, for their failure to convey, outside its proper ground, the metaphysical essence of the teaching, which is self-realization and the correlative capability for true action. But did those responsible for these attempts ever consider that naive and pretentious intentions in this realm could very well engender in others thoughts and reactions that are deeply misleading? We must admit that the problem is not an easy one, and is fraught with ambiguity.

Ambiguity already arises in the uncontrollable phenomenon of Gurdjieff's increasing fame. He was almost unknown in his lifetime. But now the spreading literature about him and the recent filming of *Meetings with Remarkable Men* have made his name widely known to the general public; and it will probably not be long before he will sit in the ranks of popular figures. On the one hand, we are justifiably irritated insofar as this mounting wave of interest is based largely on a caricature of the reality. On the other hand, we cannot

object to it if we recognize, underneath it all, its profound legitimacy.

Ambiguity appears again when we observe that, in spite of all the dilutions, distortions, and mystifications that Gurdjieff's message has undergone, it nonetheless preserves an awakening power.

Ambiguity, or rather the lack of understanding from which it arises, will of necessity always be found near Gurdjieff. It pertains, in fact, to the kind of knowledge he tried to transmit and to the inherent requirements of this transmission, which are beyond ordinary understanding. Failure to recognize this essential point ends any chance of avoiding the misunderstandings.

It is not possible to present here a conventional review of all that has been written about Gurdjieff. Neither censure nor arguments, nor judgments in general, can be helpful when trying to approach a reality that is beyond them. The words of Heraclitus wonderfully point to an alternative ideal: "Among those who sleep, each one lives in his own world; only those who are awake have a world in common."

So, until the definitive book appears, it seems preferable to suggest, and perhaps make acceptable by means of a candid commentary, the idea that different levels are expressed—levels which are necessarily to be found in the Gurdjieff literature as well as in any other human endeavor. It may also become apparent that what has been written on this subject has for the most part only touched the deceptively visible portion of the iceberg or, to use a better image, merely commented on the facade behind which the "path" begins.

Books "of" the Teaching

A definitive characteristic of a living teaching or way is that it cannot be found in any book. Many books may make us sensi-

tive to the existence of the path and help us find the threshold, but rare are those which can go further to serve as a precise map for orientation along the way. As for the journey itself, it cannot go far without a guide, or without a "school" in the original meaning of the term.

It would serve little purpose to set forth here the principles that necessarily apply to Gurdjieff's teaching as they do to any other traditional teaching, since they are, in essence, universal. But it may be useful to point out two widespread misunderstandings.

The first is the complete inappropriateness, from a traditional perspective, of designating as a teaching a mere dealing with ideas. The word "teaching" should refer strictly to a direct relational experience that takes place in the presence of a teacher, in particular through oral transmission.

The other misunderstanding, which in fact arises from the first, is reflected in the indiscriminate usage of the word "esoteric." Wholly apart from etymological and more abstract considerations, we should realize that esotericism is not at all to be found in ideas themselves, whatever they may be, but in the capacity to understand them correspondingly. It involves an experiential and practical aspect in which the meaning of an idea may even acquire a new taste. It implies, so to say, a conscious control over higher states of being, where what is reflected by the ideas corresponds effectively to what is actualized in the dynamics of the state, and vice versa. This refers to the fundamental identity between "Knowledge" and "Being." Esotericism therefore is not something voluntarily hidden; it is by nature self-protected, since it cannot be grasped without the corresponding inner preparation.

These considerations may help us not to misuse the word "esoteric" when speaking of mere books, and also clarify why, besides Gurdjieff's own writings, there has thus far issued from his pupils only one book that can be considered, without any prejudice,

definitely useful in the teaching. This is P.D. Ouspensky's *In Search of the Miraculous — Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1949). Gurdjieff's pupils have always felt deeply indebted to Ouspensky for this exceptional and as yet unrivaled contribution to his work. It is a brilliant, honest, and faithful exposition of the author's memory of what had been transmitted to him. If one realizes that note-taking was never permitted, the book is all the more extraordinary. Although it corresponds to an initial stage of Gurdjieff's work both in time (1915 to 1923) and as regards the pupils' preparation, it retains a remarkable strength and freshness in orienting an active questioning for those on the path.

Ouspensky's qualifications and motivations were doubtless unusual, but the secret quality emanating from his book comes from the fact that it carries us as near as possible to the conditions of oral teaching, in which the influence of the teacher gives life to the ideas.

Books "on" the Teaching

What is stated above should not imply that other serious books on the teaching are without interest. They can and do, in some cases, include a special insight, reveal original aspects or bring new information. They may also be more accessible for people outside the teaching. And evidently they can serve as excellent mirrors for its followers, impelling them toward a personal confrontation in regard to their own understanding. At least in the latter case they have the much-to-be-desired advantage of not engendering excessive misinterpretations. But even though serious, these books are usually pale reflections of Ouspensky's as concerns the doctrine; and because of their more subjective motivation, they cannot escape from altering its spirit.

It was Ouspensky's destiny at a certain moment to separate from Gurdjieff, and thus dissociate the teacher from his teaching. This certainly brings up the vital question of fragmentation or of the effective continuation and transmission of a teaching. If it is deprived of the influence from which it originates—which all traditions recognize as being beyond the human level—and

which is the only force that can animate it, a teaching essentially and substantially becomes a different "apparatus," unfitted for fulfilling the same purposes. A spiritual teaching, without a noticeable change in its formal aspect, may well become a merely moral or psychological doctrine. In any case this depends upon the level reached by the pupil.

Ouspensky himself gave the word "psychology" a traditional and higher significance, but it is hardly deniable that his more or less distant followers who wrote about the teaching gave it increasingly the taste of tidy and endless "psychological knitting." This process is evidently culminating in much more exterior forms of what is, unfortunately, still called the "work," which seem to flourish now in many places and sometimes appear to have firmer links with a search for publicity and social acceptance than with Ouspensky, much less with Gurdjieff.

It seems unnecessary to speak extensively about what we might call the classical books, dealing with the "system" of Gurdjieff. As was said before, they are mostly an expression of Ouspensky's line of thought and refer to conceptions adapted for early stages of the work. We could mainly include here the books of Maurice Nicoll, Kenneth Walker, and J.G. Bennett; C.S. Nott might also be mentioned in this context. All these authors were British, associated with Ouspensky or else deeply marked by his influence. All, at one time or another in their lives, were in direct contact with Gurdjieff and his teaching, although briefly, and clearly felt something near him that they did not receive from Ouspensky. Bennett nevertheless had a particular itinerary, being a follower of many teachers in succession and making a mixture of teachings that is difficult to sort out. At the end of his life, he established a center of his own, returning more frankly to what he considered to be the "Gurdjieff way." His last book, *Gurdjieff, Making a New World* (Harper & Row, 1973), is interesting be-

cause of its profusion of informative material, but unfortunately indulges in highly speculative interpretations of Gurdjieff's works and life—which, needless to say, have been thoroughly exploited by commentators of all breeds.

A more recent contribution, that may well represent a significant reflection of the development of Gurdjieff's teaching after his death, is Jean Vaysse's *Toward Awakening* (Harper & Row, 1979), which gives a special importance to the experience of attention and bodily sensation—oddly missing in Ouspensky—and hence the taste of a more advanced stage of involvement.

At least, all these authors had a personal evaluation of Gurdjieff's work. And they have paid, largely through their own strivings and inevitable sacrifices, a tribute to it. They were and are respected as worthy men by all those whom they have helped to become more genuine human beings. The background of the teaching's concrete demands enabled them to convey the ideas with a realistic goal and a sense of relativity.

Books "about" the Teaching

When this background in experience is lacking, one is unable to give the "work" ideas their real weight; they become abstract, lose their depth, and are manipulated more or less happily under the sole control of subjective appreciation. Kathleen Speeth's *The Gurdjieff Work* (And/Or Press, 1976) may appear to be a clear and unquestionable digest of facts, but no substance is left. Moreover, naiveté here, as elsewhere, has the inevitable result of a completely indiscriminating mixture, all on one level, of information of diverse sources, qualities, and credibility. Although more practical and more limited in its objective, Colin Wilson's recent essay on Gurdjieff's philosophy, *The War Against Sleep* (The Aquarian Press, 1980), shows the same lack of background which his intelligence cannot make up for and which he may be unconsciously justifying when he writes: "Ouspensky's peculiarly narrow and puritanical view of the 'work' convinced him that writing was somehow forbidden. In fact, the final publication of his book, as well as that of many brilliant books by others involved in the

'work', proved beyond all doubt that the essence of Gurdjieff's ideas can be conveyed perfectly well on the printed page."

We must agree that in all fields ideas can be well conveyed by properly prepared people. It is, however, evident that in the case of "experiential" disciplines, which are normally included in spiritual teachings at a very high degree of sophistication, ideas taken too literally can only lead to sterile theorizing and distortion when their symbolic or practical significance is not understood. And we should not forget that the most important part of Gurdjieff's teaching is necessarily conveyed under the cloak of analogy and symbolism.

Nevertheless, among people not actively following the teaching, it may happen that an authentic personal interest (perhaps associated with scholarly skills and patience) can very well convey fresh impressions and insights, notwithstanding big errors; as is the case, for instance, of Michel Waldberg's work based on Gurdjieff's books. Such really spontaneous undertakings should certainly not be discouraged.

The recent book by James Webb, *The Harmonious Circle* (G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1980), should also be mentioned here as an apparently serious attempt to decipher, through books and interviews, the phenomena of and around Gurdjieff and Ouspensky. Unfortunately, however, it also is overloaded with misinterpretations, quotations taken out of context, and mere rumors.

Further Misunderstandings About the Teaching

It is important to recall that Gurdjieff practically disappeared for more than twenty years, at the turn of the century, before reappearing in the "world"—bearing a knowledge of an overwhelming dimension. The teaching he brought represented, in Colin Wilson's view, "probably the greatest single-handed attempt in the history of human thought to make us aware of the potential of human consciousness."

It is also clear that Gurdjieff did not invent a "philosophy" of his own in order to be original and create a sensation. Nevertheless, his teaching can indeed astonish us. While connected with the most profound sources of traditional thought, it brings an illumination, a form, and a language which can be found nowhere else, notwithstanding the simplistic and misleading efforts to track down their sources by writers such as Boris Mouraviev, Idries Shah, and J.G. Bennett. Being unable to place the teaching within an established "way" with a regular lineage, others, like Whitall Perry, have not hesitated to brand it as purely and simply antitraditional, an argument that can only be ventured by assuming a "hearsay attitude" toward the facts and with a total disregard for intuition.

Gurdjieff's teaching (of which one can find a fragmentary exposition in Ouspensky's book) contains a properly metaphysical aspect, a cosmology, and a detailed explanation of that complex transformer of energy represented by the whole of each human individual. But its specific character appears not only in the doctrine. It is also evident in the multiple means or supports—representing the praxis, or "works" as one would say in Christian terminology—which are basic to it. It is these supports that make it possible to harmonize the different elements of the ordinary functional level in order to become able to correspond and participate in higher levels of being, themselves in relation with more subtle influences.

This inner process obeys laws and develops in stages that are precise. One of the particularities of Gurdjieff's teaching is the noteworthy emphasis on the importance of the first phase of harmonizing the functions and acquiring a center of gravity of the individual presence (which reminds us of the Hara). The definite and complete realization of this phase Gurdjieff named "self-consciousness." He pointed out that it was the normal and primordial state, which modern man finds himself very far from, but which he ought *naturally* to wish for and be able to attain. He was merciless in not allowing those who followed him to dream of other, distant possibilities before having

worked thoroughly toward actualizing this one. The assiduous and all too often visible work linked with this phase, in spite of the progressive transformation of "effort" into "non-effort," has undoubtedly contributed to the superficial conclusion that Gurdjieff's teaching is "voluntaristic," without love, humanistic, etc.

Gurdjieff's ideas appear to correspond especially to the psyche of modern man. The edgy resistances of today's "a-religious" man are not provoked, since the teaching apparently does not call upon any belief, any cult or worship, or any ritual; at first it simply proposes that one should know oneself as one is, in order to allow the chaos of the inner functioning to be remedied. But let us make no mistake; awakening to oneself necessarily involves the discovery of a unifying inner dimension of being which was not perceived at the beginning: an "I" deeply hidden, a "Knower" that illumines and experiences what is lived as an immediate, non-discursive knowledge. Thus the etymology of the word "religion" (that which re-connects) or of "yoga" (union) becomes again meaningful.

The teaching brought by Gurdjieff cannot, in its essence, be in contradiction with any of the traditional teachings. On the contrary, when one is sufficiently prepared, this teaching makes possible a true correspondence in depth with other traditions. And it is not at all astonishing that at a certain level a very direct and mutual appreciation becomes possible, since the actualization of inner development and its corresponding states of being is everywhere subject to the same laws.

Books "on" Gurdjieff

Another aspect, and not the least as regards the specific character of Gurdjieff's teaching, was the special awakening influence conveyed by his own presence. All who approached him on a right basis were unforgettably marked by it. Though he certainly made a strong impact on people in general, it is particularly interesting to con-

sider the different and special relationship that he established with his pupils.

One might be tempted to explain this influence by Gurdjieff's unusual charisma, or his mastery in dealing with what psychoanalysts call "transference." But such interpretations lead only to giving importance to his person, to inducing a personality cult which he himself would have mercilessly destroyed; there are no golden legends to be built around him. The only purpose of an authentic teacher is to awaken others. And this awakening always takes place through laws—simple but difficult to apply—according to which real consciousness awakens consciousness, just as true love awakens love. There would be no transmittable teaching if it were attached, so to say, to the individual person and not inherent in the higher potentialities of being. This does not conflict with the view that a man is great insofar as he truly succeeds in lifting others above their ordinary limitations. And it was indeed this that one felt so strongly near Gurdjieff.

What was furthermore remarkable was his way of teaching and addressing each one according to his particular capacities, inadequacies, and needs. He evidently gave Ouspensky more material about ideas than most of the others; with Thomas de Hartmann, the Russian composer, he specially developed a certain work on music; with some others he went more deeply into the study of the flow of energies through intensive work on various exercises and "sacred movements." Along with the conditions provided in common, everyone received an appropriate food. More generally speaking, near him there seemed to be no limits for transforming daily life into meaningful conditions for inner work. Seeing around him a representation of humanity *in toto* was a powerful help in raising one above a too personal vision. But notwithstanding this example, some of his pupils later formed their own groups of a definitely elitist character.

It is therefore not surprising that the personal accounts about Gurdjieff can have such a diversity of expression. But all of them—although they often fall into awkward misinterpretations, or gossip, or even vanity and name-dropping—give flashes or



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flavors of the same fundamental experience. One cannot remain indifferent to the intimate happenings of these accounts. And depending on the reader's own capacity to separate the wheat from the chaff, he can find some wonderful glimpses of Gurdjieff: in the early years of his teaching, with Thomas and Olga de Hartmann; somewhat later, with Kathryn Hulme and Fritz Peters; and later still, in books by William Welch and René Zuber. Margaret Anderson also conveyed personal impressions, perhaps in a more dilettante fashion; and more recently A.L. Stavely and Anna Butkovsky-Hewitt have offered their contributions, among still many more, in the delicate area of personal testimony.

Voluntary and Involuntary Mystifications

Writing has certainly lost its ethical standards and books their aura of credibility. One nevertheless cannot avoid wondering what kind of special perversion is involved in a certain category of books about Gurdjieff, in which we have searched but could not find even a vehicle for humor. Here, for their glory, must be cited the intentionally abusive inventions of *The Teachers of Gurdjieff* presented under the pseudonym of Rafael Lefort, the tasteless hoax of *Secret Talks with Mr. G.* by E.J. Gold, and the imaginative *Dialogues of Gurdjieff* by Jan Cox.

The current year's crop includes *Gurdjieff, Seeker of the Truth* (Harper & Row, 1980) by Kathleen Speeth and Ira Friedlander, which is not intentionally fallacious but nevertheless exploits—as if it were unquestionably factual—the now fashionable subject of Gurdjieff's book *Meetings with Remarkable Men* (E. P. Dutton, 1963). An extensive bibliography at the end cannot suffice to give weight to such an incredibly feeble production.

Of course, we must cite here the long-time source of the most unworthy legends, *Monsieur Gurdjieff* by Louis Pauwels (Samuel Weiser, 1972), who never met Gurdjieff, as he publicly acknowledged. Though the

book was an unfortunately stimulating example that almost anything can be written with impunity, Pauwels himself later regretted his dubious achievement, which he called “a sin of youth.”

The Silent Ones

It may be interesting to note that, at least until now, none of Gurdjieff's closest pupils, except Ouspensky, has written a book concerning him. What matters most to disciples is the life and continuation of the teaching; and that is far from a literary or historical preoccupation. What is really promising is that today the tree has borne fruit. The written accounts returning to the past, linked with anecdotal or even historical comments about Gurdjieff, seem rather idolatrous to those of us for whom Gurdjieff is more alive than he ever was.

For us, the only true creativity is influential and gives testimony to the life of a teaching. We find much more alive, for instance, the works of those who, because they were especially linked to writing, tried to pass on what they understood in a form that was original and appropriate to them. Let us name here A.R. Orage, Jean Toomer, P.L. Travers, and René Daumal, among others. Maurice Nicoll likewise furnishes an interesting example through his attempt, in particular in his books *The New Man* and *The Mark* (Stuart & Watkins, 1950, 1954), to go more deeply into the Gospels by means of keys offered by the teaching.

Certainly, one always hopes for a more holistic view that will show Gurdjieff's place in relation to the great traditions. But will it save us from ambiguity? When he saw us lost in our painfully dualistic gropings, at just the right moment Gurdjieff would address us, smiling, with his Taoist-like expression: “A stick always has two ends...however you take it.” ◇

M. de Salzmänn is a psychiatrist practicing in Paris. He has been in contact with Gurdjieff from childhood and is now one of those guiding the transmission of his teaching.

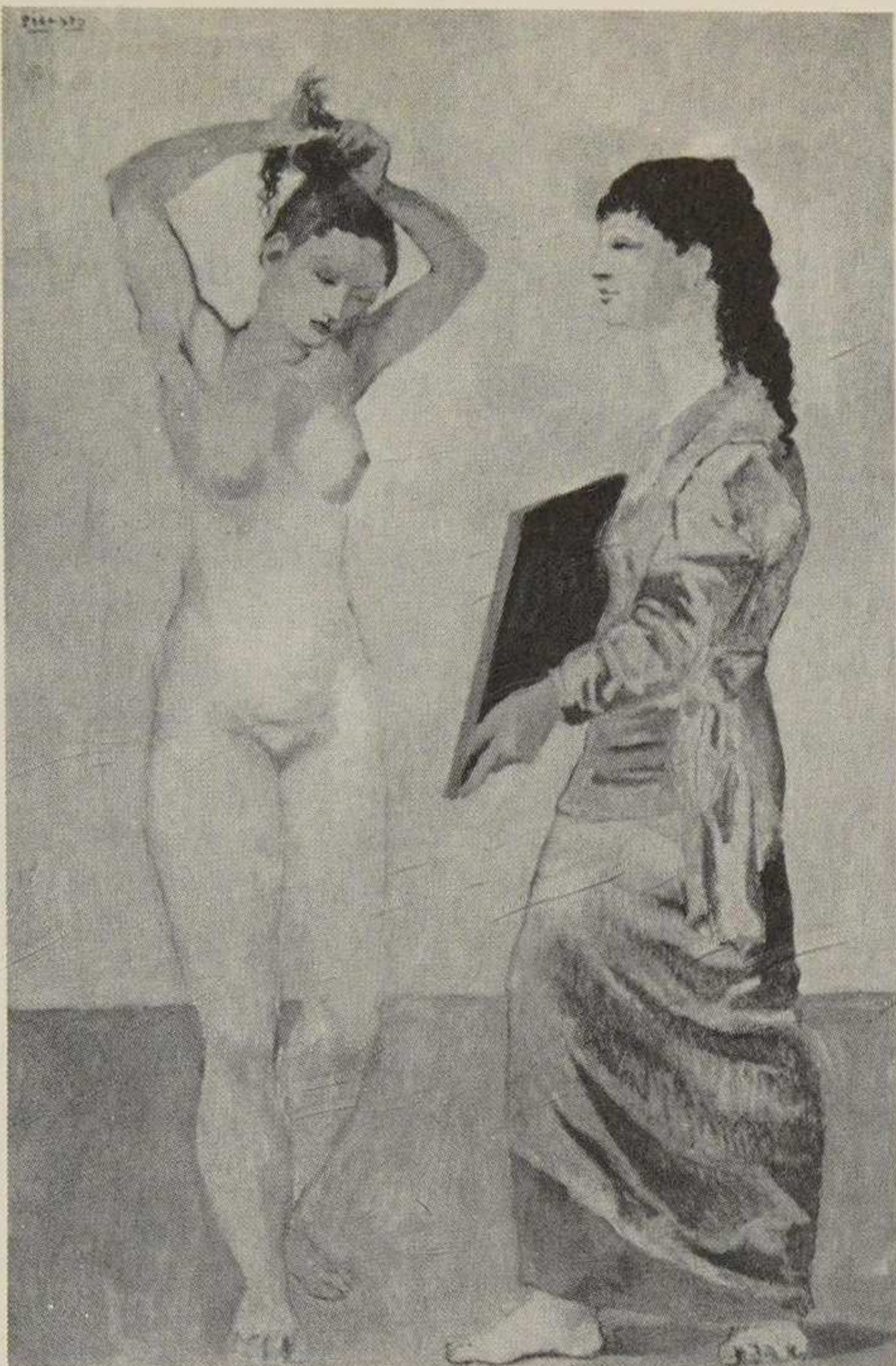


Figure 1 *La Toilette*

Something Reliable

by Roger Lipsey

Pablo Picasso: A Retrospective

An exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, New York City, May 22–September 16, 1980.

Spanning more than seventy years of work, requiring three miles of exhibition wall to make its statement, the Picasso Retrospective is a truly engrossing narrative. Like any good narrative, it has climactic moments and boring spells, plots and sub-plots, triumphs and ignominies, and above all char-

acters—it could have one of those lists of *dramatis personae* that are so terrifying at the beginning of Russian novels. The actual works are almost invariably more powerful than the printed reproductions through which most of us know most of them, and this not by way of some spurious charisma attaching to objects that have “known the master’s hand,” but through actual traits of scale, color, and texture that make themselves felt. The reviewer-as-moralist cannot help but take this as proof of the need for arts of high quality throughout the land—rather than as proof that this particular exhibition must be sent on tour. The event is a group celebration of human achievement and sensitivity: an utterly friendly atmosphere prevails in the museum, and the line of people circling the block, waiting to go in, was on my day a composition in tilted umbrellas and brave huddling that early Picasso might have wanted to paint.

One fine issue gradually makes itself known as you enjoy the famous Blue and Rose Period images of humanity (*fig. 1*): a melancholy but immensely dignified couple, a woman with a famished gaze and sunken cheeks, a harlequin’s family, a youth leading a horse in a curiously barren landscape, a naked adolescent girl holding a basket of bright flowers, portraits without end of men and women whom Picasso knew, among them himself. The figures, the details of their environments, the color-saturated atmosphere in all of these paintings build the viewer’s acuity of vision until he or she may realize that these re-presentations of reality summon more attentiveness than does reality itself most of the time.

It is tempting to surround this phenomenon at once with sophisticated observations. In the first place, this is hardly the first opportunity that any of us will have had to take note of it. We in fact require of art that it be different from life and throw things into sharper relief. Secondly, the idea of enhanced awareness has long been part of the literature on art; Berenson gave it classic expression in his Renaissance studies at the beginning of the century, but it undoubtedly predates him and can be found fully orchestrated in Ruskin and beyond. Further, we can expect from *visual art* a

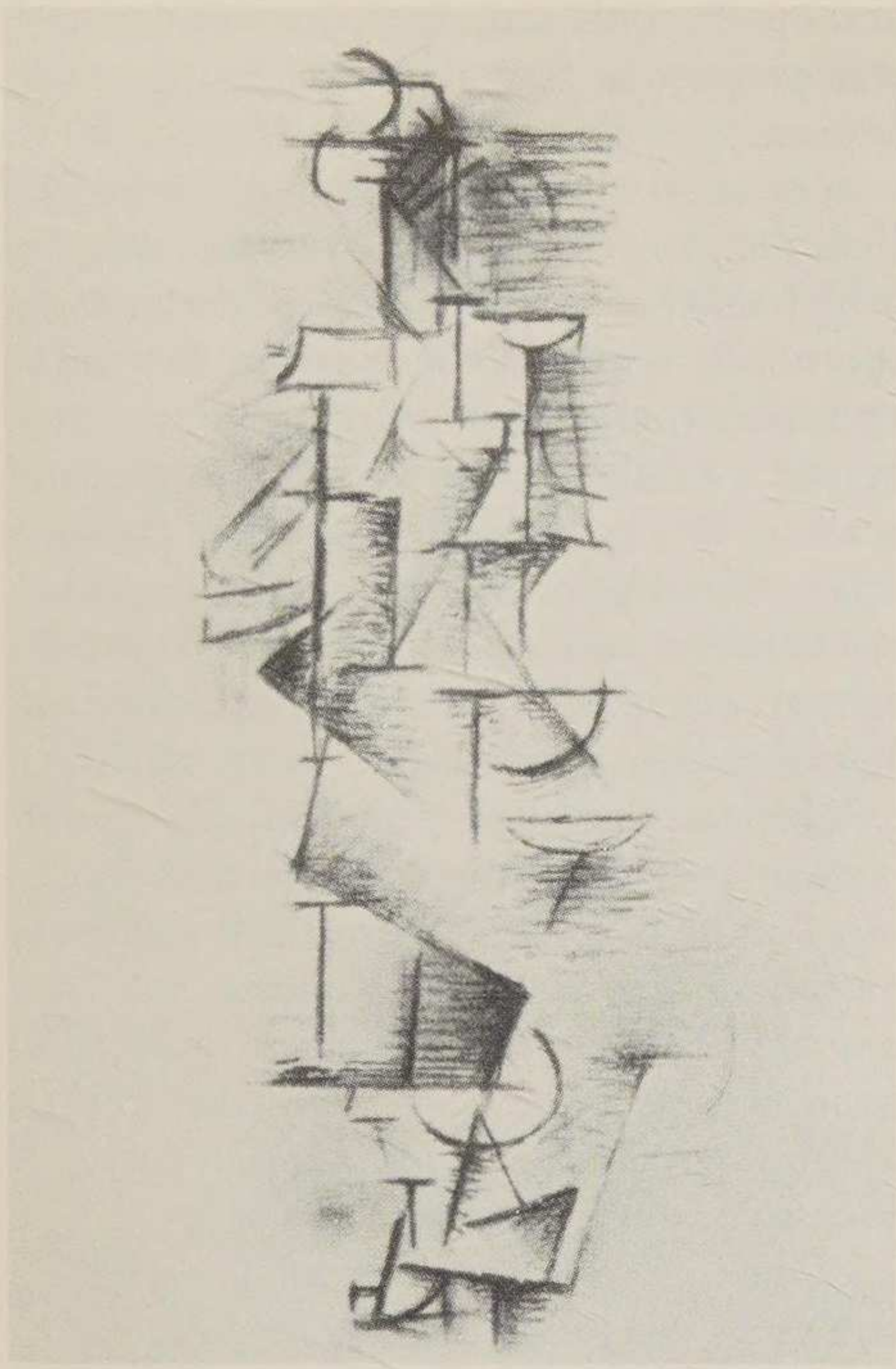


Figure 2 *Nude Woman*

heightening of *visual* experience and of the consciousness behind it, just as we expect from poetry a heightening of aural experience. It would be absurd to ask ordinary living, conducted in all of these modes mixed together, to have the vividness that comes when a single mode of perception is isolated and deepened.

All of this duly recorded, one is still left with an invulnerable kernel of amazement that good art and our vision work this way—amazement and a naive conviction that something should be done about the situation. To enter an art museum and become acutely sensitive to the visual field, with all that it communicates of feeling and structure; to leave and deflate like one of

those inedible fish that live in Long Island Sound—this pattern seems more an indictment of a way of life than one of its cultural ornaments. The greater the artist, the greater the difference between the man in the museum and the man in the street, and Picasso is in many respects the greatest artist of the century.

Much of Picasso's art can be and, for some purposes, even must be perceived in sequence over time. The humane Blue and Rose Periods, whose center of gravity is in feeling, give way to the firmly intellectual analysis of developed Cubism (*fig. 2*), which in turn yields room enough for the revival of an exquisite classical figure style, having more to do with the sensation of human existence than with its pathos—and so on. There is both logic and unexpectedness in the artist's progress. On occasion, however, Picasso seems to break sequence and makes a work that doesn't really benefit from being thought about in relation to anything less than the human condition itself and the essentials of our history.

One such is a wartime bronze, the "Man with Sheep" of 1944 (*fig. 3*). It is an uncanny work, and I am glad that I have seen it. It reassures that beneath the nutty flim-flam of the "art scene" at any modern time and place, there is something reliable always ready to make itself known. The bronze draws strength from its ancient theme, first known in pre-Classical Greek sculpture but adopted by Christians as the Good Shepherd. It draws strength from its "unfinished" surface, which amounts to plain-speaking and a poetry about damage and resistance. It has strengths as portraiture—the impassive, well-formed head of a Man who is truly vertical; the pathetic, ill-formed sheep bleating in his arms. But all of these separable features serve a single expression. Speaking a more universal language than Picasso's famous "Guernica," this bronze is an anti-war monument that breaks the bonds of museum convention and addresses us directly. ◇

Roger Lipsey is a Contributing Editor to PARABOLA.



Figure 3 *Man with Sheep*

CURRENTS

The exhibition of Robert Flaherty's photographs and films on the Inuit (1910-1922) organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery and presented in New York by the International Centre of Photography (April 4-May 18) offered an all too familiar reminder of the fragility of native people and cultures in the face of the dehumanizing encroachments of modern society. Flaherty's film classic, *Nanook of the North*, and his photographs of the Inuit form a rich portrait of an open, good-natured people uniquely skilled in the arts of survival through constant interaction with a harsh and sometimes brutal environment. The still photographs, many appearing here for the first time, are of special cultural and historical interest, and though they lack the polish of Edward Curtis's photogravures of the North American Indians, they are no less poignant studies.

Flaherty was a pioneer of the modern documentary and was exemplary in his adherence to certain ethnographic methods of scientific investigation. But his work among the Inuit was also marked by the ever-present dilemma of the ethnographic observer who through his presence modifies the traditional way of life he is trying to capture. The somewhat scholarly catalog (notable for its bilingual design with English text and accompanying Inuktitut translation) makes a distinguished and even-handed examination of this dilemma as well as of the man and his work. But perhaps the most impressive aspect of the exhibit is the presentation of contemporary documentary films and videotapes made by the Inuit today which explore the social and cultural effects of modernity on traditional ways. Notwithstanding the questions that still re-



main concerning Flaherty's role as documentarian and agent of change, it's ironic that he has given the modern Inuit both a film that excites "great pride in the strength and dignity of their ancestors" and the "tradition of participatory filmmaking" with which they are now working to better "understand and maintain their cultural identity."

On July 2, in the Main Auditorium of the American Museum of Natural History, the Society for the Study of Myth and Tradition presented "Sounds from the Sacred Mountains," a program on the music and myth of Tibet. Huston Smith presented a lecture on "Mantras and Metaphysics: The Tantric View of Sound," (which included a short segment from his well-known film "Requiem for a Faith") and Ernest McClain spoke on "Music and Myth: A Tibetan Variation." The remaining portion of the evening's program consisted of traditional music performed by Lama Norlha and Dhondup Namgyal with drums, cymbal, trumpets, and chants composed by the 2nd Karmapa and Milarepa. Before the performance, introductory remarks were made by Lobsang Lhalungpa who also organized and directed the music.

The Society's fall program will be devoted to an exploration of "Earth and Spirit."

(Continued on page 126)

COMMENTS

In considering education Kathleen Raine poses an urgent question: "...ought we not rather to consider man's invisible kingdom, the boundless interior regions we inhabit, the almost unguessed, undiscerned spiritual regions within us, so close to childhood, but later only to be attained through aspirations and disciplines which have little to do with the amassing of facts or the learning of technical skills which passes for education in our secular society?" This leads to the larger question "*What is Man?*", the title of Ms. Raine's new work, published by Golgoonooza Press in England, an arresting and powerful essay in which the poet explores various sacred traditions in order to understand what it is to be human and to "live our myths." She takes us to task for not *being* our spiritual selves and specifically for not properly nourishing that self, for not educating the human soul. Strong stuff, and beautifully written.

Ed Young, Shanghai-born artist, has been responsible for many of the more intelligently illustrated books by America's storytellers. Lately he has turned to his own "tellings"—last year the delightful *The Terrible Nung Gwama*, and happily this year a charming and mysterious book of Chinese riddles, *High on a Hill*, from William Collins. It succeeds as a wonderful package of surprises and an evocative and masterful series of images dissolving into images: firefly to bee, mouse to earthworm, swallow to human face, complete with tongue and beard. Imaginative black and white pencil sketches with discreet touches of red, and English and Chinese renditions of the funny and informative riddles makes this an exquisite and humorous book—for everyone.

My Guru and His Disciple (Farrar Straus Giroux) is a frank account of Christopher Isherwood's relation with the late great Vedantist Swami Prabhavananda, with interesting side glimpses of his friends Auden, Huxley, and Heard. Oddly, what is most clearly revealed is what Isherwood evidently suspects but never really accepts: the incommensurable difference in level between him and his teacher. Told with warmth and charm and without pretension, the story captivates and touches the reader who cannot help seeing himself mirrored in Isherwood's attempt to convince himself that all is well. But both author and reader know that no raising of the price of pottage can justify selling the birthright. Paradoxically, but perhaps not wholly unintentionally, the book makes a strong argument for a search its author was never fully able to follow.

In Robert Bly's hands, anthologizing becomes an art. *News of the Universe: Poems of Twofold Consciousness*, chosen and introduced by Bly (Sierra Club Books) is not only a solid history of the development of "nature poetry," but a fine example of the art of collecting. Bly loves words not only for what they mean but for the sheer beauty of their sound. We not only see, we also hear. The volume is infused with Bly's knowledge of his art and his admiration for its practitioners.

Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz impressed us deeply when we interviewed him in 1978. While this latest book, *The Thirteen Petalled Rose* (Basic Books), like all of his work, is exclusively concerned with Jewish thought and beliefs, it penetrates so profoundly into universal questions that every reader feels intimately and personally addressed. The eleven essays that comprise the book are both independent and inextricably related, ranging from the mystical "Worlds" and "Divine Manifestation" to the practical "Repentance" and "The Search for Oneself." All are imbued with the simplicity that can emerge when a human being with a highly trained and developed intellect speaks for an equally attuned emotional sensitivity. This is a rare book—a teaching that ineluctably catches us up in a challenging dialog.

The Eiffel Tower and other Mythologies

By Roland Barthes, translated by Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang, 1979. Pp. 152. \$9.95.

Reviewed by Huston Smith

(Assisted by Jean Yves Leloup and Anne Bevan)

Grant the author his Marxism and pejorative definition of "myth," and this is a fine book. The two concessions are important, so I must return to them. But first credit where credit is due: the book's merits.

Translated into English twenty-five years after it was first published in France, *The Eiffel Tower* is social criticism, and as such—given always the foundations on which it builds—is brilliant. Right up to his death within this past year Roland Barthes was idolized by the French intelligentsia, and the barest sampling of this slim book will show why. His reputation derived only secondarily from the social commentary this book represents; most of it stemmed from his scholarly work on language where he was linked with Lévi-Strauss, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida. But his popular essays manifest the power of his mind as transparently as do his complex technical treatises. Barthes' capacity to unmask the masquerades of everyday life is uncanny. Deftly and relentlessly he lays bare the pretense and folly that hold our social life intact. I say "our" because the Atlantic doesn't make that much difference in European and American attitudes.

The opening, title essay, "The Eiffel Tower," shows at once the kind of thing that is in store; in it Barthes dissects the Tower as symbol of France itself. Maupassant didn't much care for the food there, but he used to lunch in the Tower often because, as he said, it was the only place where he didn't have to *see* it. Yet the

Tower is empty. One doesn't go there to see anything in it, but France, from and through it—an idealized and romanticized France that doesn't really exist. Earth touches heaven in the Tower; a national *axis mundi*.

Twenty-eight vignettes follow, most of them under four pages in length. And always it is the vanities, foibles, and self-deceptions of bourgeois pieties that are Barthes' targets—in the author's covering word, its "mythologies." When the French press uses the word "bande" (band) to describe Algerians, Barthes notes—remember, he was writing in the 1950s—that the word is placed in a context that makes it connote outlaws, rebels, or civil criminals; whereas "when the 'band' is French, it is sublimated under the name *community*." Billy Graham's foray into France gets surgical analysis; Barthes checks off the Expectation, Suggestion, and Initiation in his performance as isomorphic with the rituals of a Papuan witch doctor. So it goes. Always those x-ray eyes, whether the object they are trained on is status photographs (the French equivalent of ours by Bachrach), public infatuation with the nuptial plans of celebrities, the Tour de France (equivalent to our Indianapolis Five Hundred), France's "Dear Abby" columns, or press treatment of the Soviet Union. In each case we are caught out: shown up for what we were and are; though of course it is not *us* he is talking about, it is the petit-bourgeoisie who read neither *The Eiffel Tower* nor PARABOLA!

There is so much truth in all this that it seems almost disloyal to subject this elegant little book to the same treatment it directs toward modern Western society. But at the foundational level the Marxism and myth I noted at the start control both the author's choice of subjects and their handling, so they must be addressed.

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runs the risk of abetting those who would turn the East/West power struggle into an ideological crusade. Yet the fact remains: as world view, Marxism has yet to show—not just assume, as this book does—that matter runs the cosmic show and economics the pageant of history, with individuals dangling like puppets on these all-controlling strings. Here Barthes' social criticism connects with his work on language. For if we try to identify the conclusion of Barthes' subtle and complicated theory of speech, we must say something like this: In company with the structuralists, he devalorizes both the individual as conscious subject and spirit generally, for these do nothing but reflect structures that are latent in things. *This* is why people reason everywhere by the same logic, liberty being always paired against determinism, etc. In the last analysis it is matter that thinks and speaks by means of man. That no one says what this underlying matter is or from whence its logic,

structures, and myths derive is not my point here. I want only to note that Barthes' politics is of a piece with this theory of language. For if it is not man who speaks but rather speech, and beneath it matter, that speaks through him, neither, in the last analysis, does man act: he merely acts out what the forces of history decree. In his chapter on "The Man in the Street on Strike," for example, Barthes argues that the bourgeois myth about strikes consists in seeing them as isolated events engineered by willful individuals rather than for what they really are: "a remote operation of determinisms, of a solidarity of events which the materialist tradition has systematized under the name of totality... The man in the street and taxpayer (that other alias) are literally [read essentially] *characters*, i.e., actors promoted according to the needs of the cause to surface roles; their mission is to preserve the essentialist separation of social cells, which we know was the first ideological principle of the bourgeois revolution." Appropriate as well as necessary at that stage of history, this bourgeois impulse "to disperse the collectivity into individuals" is

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now "a constitutive feature of the reaction-ary mentality" which must be resisted.

Another myth to be unmasked.

So what is a myth? For Barthes it is (a) a lie, (b) of which we are unconscious, and (c) which supports the status quo. Of this definition two things must be said.

First, it reduces the word to a mere pejorative, a verbal way of sticking out one's tongue at a position one wants to disparage. We all have assumptions; if I disagree with yours, I shall (by this logism) call them myths. Similarly with the status quo; things I don't like about it are supported by myths, and the things I do like by reason. When the word is debased thus to no more than a finger-wagging no-no, William Buckley, say, could count as many myths in *The Eiffel Tower* as it spots in bourgeois society. Such usage replaces reason with emotion; one foregoes argument to piggy-back on invective.

Second, this denatured definition of myth ignores a noble history of the word which extends from Plato to Coomaraswamy and continues today through such writers as Mircea Eliade and Joseph Campbell. Of course Barthes can also claim a lineage; everyone knows that Xenophanes criticized the Homeric myths for anthropomorphizing divinity and that Christians dismissed as myth whatever in Hellenism did not conform to the Bible. But with the exception of the nineteenth century, when the world was taken to be an open book, with sense-data its semantics and reason its syntactics, there have always been major thinkers who argued that being has depths that can only be approached indirectly: "Tell the truth but tell it slant/Success in circuit lies." Along with art and rite, myth is a part of this circuitry. Its partisans—in this century among literary critics, ethnographers, and historians of religion their number has been growing—admit that myths, like metaphors, contain elements which if taken literally, are not true. But insight takes off from these "inaccuracies" rather than being grounded by them.

To find Barthes asserting that "myth acts economically: it abolishes...complexity...it does away with...any going back beyond what is immediately visible, it organizes a world which is without depth, a

world wide open and wallowing in the evident," is to see how one-sidedly a rich word can be read. For Roland Barthes myth is fiction, illusion, and lie; for myths' partisans it is apprehension that dawns when peoples stand on tiptoe, seeing more than they otherwise can.

Who owns this word?

Huston Smith is Thomas J. Watson Professor of Religion and Adjunct Professor of Philosophy at Syracuse University.

**Kalila and Dimna:
Selected Fables of Bidpai**

By Ramsay Wood. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980. Pp. 209. \$10.95.

Reviewed by Gwyneth Cravens

This medicine has its own requirements of operation...and one of these is time—time to gain effect. We must observe, therefore, whether the stories of the past two days act beneficially on your humanity... The very worst habit would be that of moralizing away the effective substance. Thus the urge to tag tidy little rationalizations, persuasive formulas, intellectual summaries, symbolical labels, or any other convenient pigeonholing, must be steadfastly resisted. Mental encapsulation perverts the medicine, rendering it impotent. It amounts to a by-pass around the story's true destination; to explain away is to forget. Thus, let the stories which you can remember do their own work by their very diversity.

The Bidpai fables about the two jackals—the observant and wise Kalil and the meddling and treacherous Dimna— have been doing their own work for a very long time. Some appear in the Buddhist Jataka cycle, and the theme of instructions on kingship first occurs in the *Arthasastra* (ca. 300 B.C.). In the latest rendition, from which the description above has been taken, Ramsay Wood has selected a series of tales within tales in which the central episode concerns a kingly lion and a stray bull who become close friends until Dimna, in a fit of jealousy, cunningly sets them against one

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another and the lion, to his later regret, devours the bull. This may be a remote echo from the second millennium, B.C., when the lunar-oriented religions represented by the bull were mostly overcome by solar-oriented religions represented by the lion. However, Sir Richard Burton surmised that these beast-fables are far more ancient and comprise a heritage from mankind's departure from the animal kingdom. In the introduction to *Kalila and Dimna* Doris Lessing gives a nice summary of the story-cycle's more recent history: Aesop, La Fontaine, Muslims, Jews, Christians, and an array of Western folk cultures have all taken from the rich storehouse of Bidpai. The first English translation became popular in Elizabethan times, and in the nineteenth century British orientalist offered various versions, but since then the tales have been practically unavailable. Mr. Wood, drawing on early additions and translations from Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, and Syriac sources, has very deftly crafted selected fables into a work with a novelistic momentum, a cleanly modern tone, and warm,



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beautifully-wrought descriptions. It's difficult to write about talking animals without getting cute, but Mr. Wood succeeds in making the protagonists into lively, complex individuals who manage, for all their human traits, to retain their distinctive animality. For example, the story of Zirac, the super-rat who was the daredevil leader of his pack until he lost his secret hoard of useless coins and who found the hard way that a "seeker accepts neither the coin of this world nor that of the next" and that true wealth is in equality and friendship, is presented in a moving and yet unsentimental way. Similarly, the illustrations by Margaret Kilrenny have a clear vigor that mirrors the writing. Quotations from Gogol, Twain, Houdini, Job, Darwin, Clifford Simak ("'hi pal,' it said, 'I trade with you my mind'"), Desmond Morris ("There are some who will prefer not to contemplate their animal selves"), and others which head each chapter serve as elliptical comments on the content.

The best and deepest learning about how to manage the kingdom of the self often occurs in the back of the mind while the front of the mind is being skillfully entertained. I hope Mr. Wood will bring Bidpai back to tell more tales when the Merciful Physician decides that the correct amount of time has passed.

Gwyneth Cravens is the author of the novel Speed of Light.

Buddha's Lions: **The Eighty-Four Siddhas**

By Abhayadatta, translated by James B. Robinson. Berkeley: Dharma Publishing, 1979. Pp. 422. \$16.95.

Reviewed by John Blofeld

Since the tragic events that led to the flight from Tibet some twenty years ago of many scholars, translations of Tibetan works have been appearing in increasing numbers. A tradition so foreign to our own must often seem strange to us, and "strange" is an epithet that many readers are likely to apply to the work that forms the subject of this review. It consists of a foreword by the Venerable Tarthang Tulku, an explanatory introduction by the translator, separate accounts of each of the eighty-four Siddhas, some important appendices which include a bibliography of related Sanskrit, Tibetan, and modern works, and a reprint of the Tibetan text. Each account is accompanied by a beautiful drawing of the Siddha who forms its subject, made by Rosalyn White from various sets of Tibetan thankas and wood-block prints.

The term Siddha is a title given to certain people who attained direct realization of the true nature of reality in a single lifetime and, in so doing, acquired paranormal powers (*siddhi*). Those who form the subject of this book are Indians of both sexes who probably lived between the eighth and twelfth centuries of our era. Among them are world-famous figures such as Nāgārjuna and Śāntideva, who made outstanding contributions to the development of the Mahayana School of Buddhism. What is emphasized is the attainment of full

realization during the course of a single life span, in which direct intuition plays a greater part than scholarship, and also eagerness to share the fruits of attainment by teaching others.

That the Siddha tradition has been of great importance in Tibet is not surprising, for the apex of Buddhism as taught and practiced in that country was the Vajrayana or Adamantine Way which stresses that, as the conditions of our future rebirths are uncertain, it is best to take the Short Path and seek Enlightenment within this very life. It may be that the Siddha tradition contributed to enthusiasm for the Short Path, or that the popularity of the Siddha stories resulted from that enthusiasm—or both.

My reason for supposing that the present work will seem strange to readers unacquainted with this genre of Tibeto-Sanskrit literature will appear from the story of two sisters who became known to posterity as the Siddha Mekhalā and the Siddha Kanakhalā. They were the daughters of a householder, who quite undeservedly became the subjects of malicious gossip (which, in traditional Indian society, could lead to devastating consequences), so they went to the guru Kāṅḥapi for advice. The guru instructed them in “seeing, meditation, practice, results, and Total Integration”—meaning total integration of the dissimilar perceptions of reality which occur at the levels of relative and absolute truth, integration of the pluralistic realm of forms with the undifferentiated realm of void, which results in full Enlightenment. Having energetically practiced this teaching for twelve years, the two ladies went to thank their guru and to make him whatever offering he deemed suitable. Said the guru, “Give me your heads!” From the mouth of each girl issued a “sharp sword of knowledge” with which they unhesitatingly cut off their own heads as a present for the guru. Then, singing a joyful song about the “Total Integration of knowledge and space,” they danced with their severed

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heads in their hands. Delighted with this response, the guru told them that henceforth they must use their attainments for the benefit of all living beings. Then he restored their heads, leaving no trace of a wound. The sisters rose to even higher attainments after that and worked devotedly for the benefit of sentient beings before going off to the realm of *Ḍākas*.

Such stories differ greatly from our concept of straightforward biographical accounts; but, as suggested in the translator's preface, though these stories clearly relate to historical figures and traditions, it is best to consider them as hagiography taken from a living tradition honoring holy and exalted individuals. Moreover, the Venerable Tarthang Tulku explains in his foreword that the Siddhas and their lives provide us with a central vision of the Vajrayana teachings designed to contribute to our inner development. When we re-examine the stories with this in mind and ponder their meaning, we shall find in them depths which had previously escaped us. It will be noted that most of the Siddhas entered upon the path to realization as the result of some

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crisis or affliction that aroused in them awareness of the world's transitory nature and led to their longing for a new way of life. This led each in turn to seek out a guru, obtain profound teaching and then apply that teaching wholeheartedly without any resistance or reservations whatsoever. Having *no* reservations, holding *nothing* back, being *totally* free from hesitation—this is an attitude essential to successful Vajrayana

cultivation. One must be like those ladies who, supposing that their guru required them to surrender their lives upon the spot, cut off their heads without a qualm.

My own experience has been that these stories may work upon the reader at three levels. Taken just as stories, they may seem to us pleasantly "whimsical," "curious" or whatever, and be dismissed from mind as easily as we dismiss most things after extracting whatever pleasure they afford. Taken as guides to a typical pattern of spiritual development, the stories may reinforce our own aspirations to transcend the ordinary level at which we take part in life's daily round. Read in a meditative mood, with disbelief suspended and the mind wide open to receive whatever images (or non-images) may be in store, one or more of the stories may suddenly communicate to us an experience, a wealth of meaning, altogether different from what can be perceived by means of ordinary ratiocination, thereby instantly lighting up the mind, like a breathtakingly striking picture or cadence of music, in a way that can be experienced but not described. When this happens, then speculation as to whether the stories are intended to be taken literally or allegorically becomes entirely irrelevant.

If some of the stories do work on us at this third level, that is a matter for congratulation, for the kind of education we have been given and the sort of background from which we come tend to make modern Western man more or less impervious to that kind of magic. We have so lost our

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sense of wonderment and awe that what can very easily work its benign effect upon people of other cultures does not easily get to us through the apparent solidity of material surroundings. So strong is the belief of most of us in that seeming solidity that magical means of communication from mind to mind, or from symbol to mind, have no power to reach us. The loss that this entails for us is immense—indeed, catastrophic. Books such as this one, if read in a receptive frame of mind, may help us to overcome this evil.

John Blofeld's most recent book is Gateway to Wisdom, Shambhala Publications.

Voices of Wisdom: Jewish Ideals and Ethics for Everyday Living

By Francine Klagsbrun. New York: Pantheon, 1980. Pp. xxxiii + 555. \$16.95.

Reviewed by Rochelle Ratner

In Biblical times, Jewish leaders were not rabbis, nor cantors, nor sextons, nor directors of education. Each role evolved as the need arose.

—Sarah Roth Lieberman

Appropriately, this quotation is found under the heading "Challenging the Traditions." While not the first modern book of Jewish ethics, *Voices of Wisdom* is one of the first compiled by a woman, intended for both men and women. Anyone versed in Bible, Mishnah, Talmud, and other traditional Jewish texts can quote the proper passages and expound upon them. Why, then, do we go to one teacher with a problem, when we would not dream of going to another teacher? The usefulness of this collection, therefore, depends upon how well Klagsbrun has absorbed the material she quotes and how well she can anticipate the needs of her readers.

Though most selections are from Rabbinic sources, Klagsbrun is aware that many

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readers today need a more mystical understanding of rigid doctrine, and she includes entries from the Zohar and various Hasidic writers. As she points out: "Many of its [the Zohar's] most powerful and beautiful symbols and images have been incorporated—often unconsciously—into the mainstream of Jewish thought."

Taking into consideration the twentieth-century emphasis on Self, the book begins with man relating to himself, then to his neighbors, then to a marital partner. From the fourth chapter on, it follows the path from birth to death; just as the young must be strictly ruled, so the laws—Deuteronomy, Leviticus, *midrash halakha*, and Maimonides' *Code*—are more evident in the first chapters; just as in old age we tend to give ourselves over to philosophical concepts, so the book gradually approaches a confrontation with the Divine. "Ideals and Ethics," the subtitle says; Judaism has taught that all law is divine law and to the Jewish conscience there is no difference between religious and ethical duties.

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Not every quotation will be the most enlightening one for each reader at each reading. At best, all the writer/compiler can do is reach beyond the moment for material she remembers being useful at various times in her life. Klagsbrun, who grew up in a traditional home and attended a small Hebrew day school, carries over the child's excitement at realizing for itself how to apply the teachings. Her introductions to each chapter, and again to brief categories within the chapters, make this book almost a basic guide for understanding Judaism, useful for Jews and non-Jews alike. She frequently quotes other sources or provides an interpretation of the texts to follow, adding to the narrative flow and encouraging the reader's own commentaries. She adequately summarizes how the ethics of the contemporary world have affected traditional views (one of Judaism's greatest assets has been its ability, apparent even in Biblical times, to adapt to a changing world).

Even for readers with only a moderate background in Jewish literature, some of the selections will be familiar. It is the juxtaposition of the familiar with the new that permits one to feel comfortable with the text, as well as to be open to concepts not immediately relevant. Reading from cover to cover, the same stories are told from slightly varying perspectives as they illustrate different points; such personages as Honi the Circle-Drawer or Rabbi Akiva and his wife Rachel become familiar (the latter, actually, is more relevant to women today than some of the more blatant contemporary attempts, also included).

Teaching by fable has always been an important element in Judaism. But by this is usually meant the stories in Genesis, the Midrashic literature, or the Hasidic tales. With a boldness that characterizes most of *Voices of Wisdom*, Klagsbrun claims that some of the Talmudic debates are "legendary" as well. (Such a statement, while common knowledge among scholars, has usually been reserved for books of detailed technical analysis, carefully kept hidden from the common reader).

Klagsbrun takes this one step further: if some of the greatest thinkers were storytellers, then modern storytellers who take

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tradition as a base can approach some of the most profound recent commentary. Thus we find fictional works by Sholom Aleichim and Elie Wiesel and, in an even more daring effort, there are the philosophical viewpoints of novelists such as Isaac Bashevis Singer and Cynthia Ozick. Again, this has been done before. The difference is that the other books have been divided into historical periods, with these "moderns" usually forming a brief section in the end. Arranging the book according to topic, and thus placing these writers side by side with the greatest sages, Klagsbrun demands that we place an almost equal value upon their statements.

There are no easy answers, and some selections contradict each other; in her introduction Klagsbrun quotes the sages: "Every controversy that is for the sake of heaven will endure." Again, this re-emphasizes the need for a good teacher. Klagsbrun's prefaces, commentaries, and the context within which she places her selections serve merely as guides. An excellent bibliography of both ancient and modern sources shows where to look for more comprehensive material.

Rochelle Ratner is a poet and critic and an editor of The American Book Review.

The Adventures of Nanabush: Ojibway Indian Stories

Told by Sam Snake, Chief Elijah Yellowhead, Alder York, David Simcoe, and Annie King. Compiled by Emerson Coatsworth and David Coatsworth. Full-color paintings by Francis Kagige. New York: A Margaret K. McElderry Book/Atheneum, 1980. Pp. 85. \$10.95.

Reviewed by Robin Ridington

The blurb, describing this collection of stories told by Ojibway elders to historical field researcher Emerson Coatsworth in the 1930s, tells us they "will delight a wide new audience of young readers and storytellers." The stories recount in an entertaining

way the escapades of Nanabush, a "great magician and world creator" of Ojibway tradition, but they also reflect the mature philosophy of an ancient and complex native way of knowledge. Many of the stories explain features of the present world as the result of the magician's encounters with birds and animals in a world that "existed long before our world." They tell why the buffalo has a hump, how the Milky Way flew up into the sky as spray from the flight of the first turtle, how porcupine got its quills, and why people do not live forever.

These stories stem from the comprehensive ecological and psychological knowledge that was and is basic to Ojibway life. They were part of a system of knowledge about how to be human, individually and communally, in a world of nature. The literal event they describe provides a basis for the metaphors of Ojibway cultural philosophy. Like all mythic oral traditions, the stories gave rise to questions as well as providing answers.

Traditional Indian teaching took place in a natural and cultural setting that was equipped to deal with the questions generated by these stories. Children went on vision quests to gain the power of Nanabush. Their childhood experiences took on deeper meaning as they grew to adulthood. They knew about magic and creation by experiencing it in their own lives. The Nanabush stories served both to reflect and instruct their own accomplishments. Each tale is infused with the shamanic power of transformation, the understanding of life and death that hunting people in particular have developed as the central point of their philosophy. Each episode of the Nanabush cycle recounts a significant encounter in the shaman's quest for knowledge. Although these stories were told to children as part of their education, they were also studied by adults.

The stories are worthy of further study by adults in our culture. The wonderful original paintings of Ojibway artist Francis Kagige, done in the eastern woodland style made famous by Norval Morisseau, reveal the shamanic significance of the Nanabush stories even more effectively than the texts themselves. Many of them depict inner meanings by showing us the inside as well as

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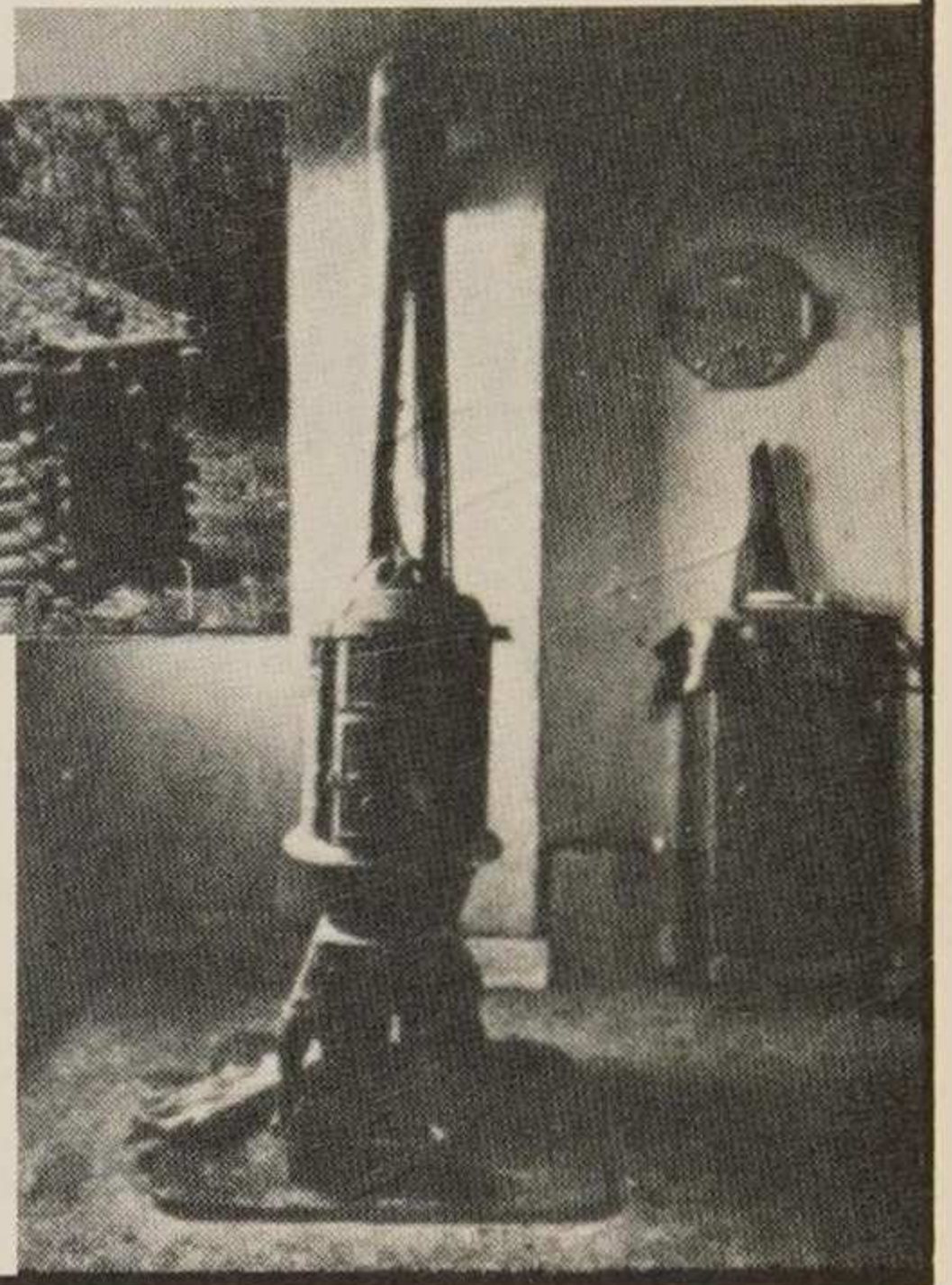
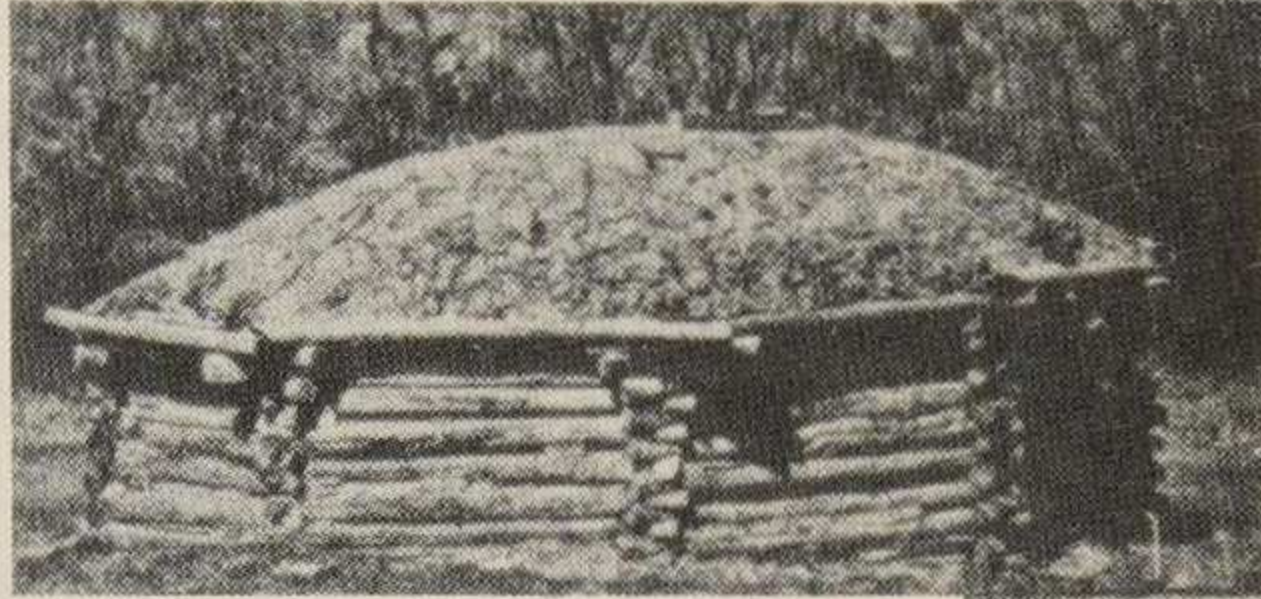
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the outside of Nanabush and his animal companions. Some show human faces emerging from animal bodies or parts of animal bodies within the face of Nanabush. These images communicate shamanic transformation without words. They are images of power that enter directly into the imagination. The book is worth buying for the paintings alone; as for the stories, if we read them to children we should be careful to use them to pose complex questions and not accept them as fanciful answers. Our children can be our teachers if we attend carefully to their response to these images of visionary power and transformation.

Robin Ridington is Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia. He is the author of Swan People: A Study of the Dunne-za Prophet Dance and papers on shamanism, mythology, and the world view of hunting and gathering people.

The Aquarian Conspiracy

By Marilyn Ferguson. Los Angeles: J. P. Tarcher, 1980, distributed by St. Martin's Press, New York. Pp. 448. \$15.00.

Reviewed by James George

I do not know Marilyn Ferguson but after reading her new book I see her as Eve in today's Garden of Eden, polishing up a beautiful New Age apple that any old Adam should find irresistible. Lest you feel threatened by the title, *The Aquarian Conspiracy*, be reassured at once. Instead of a hard, linear, male type of confrontation argument about how we are entering a new astrological sign, coming under new influences, and all that, we find ourselves disarmed by a lady who admits she doesn't know about astrology, though there is plenty of solid evidence around for believing that inner and outer change is dramatically accelerating now. And as for conspiracy, it turns out to be an updated “conspiracy of love”—Teilhard de Chardin's phrase.

Whenever we pass from one culture to another, in time or in place, there is some

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degree of culture shock. Today's shocks are coming thick and fast. What has been needed to hasten the passage is a good midwife who would give us an understandable context in which, by seeing the whole process, we would go with it more consciously. The only alternative seems to be—to be dragged into the New Age kicking and screaming.

It is precisely a sense of context that Ms. Ferguson provides, and though she writes from California (the bio-shelter of most new cultural species) her horizons are worldwide—the Whole Earth.

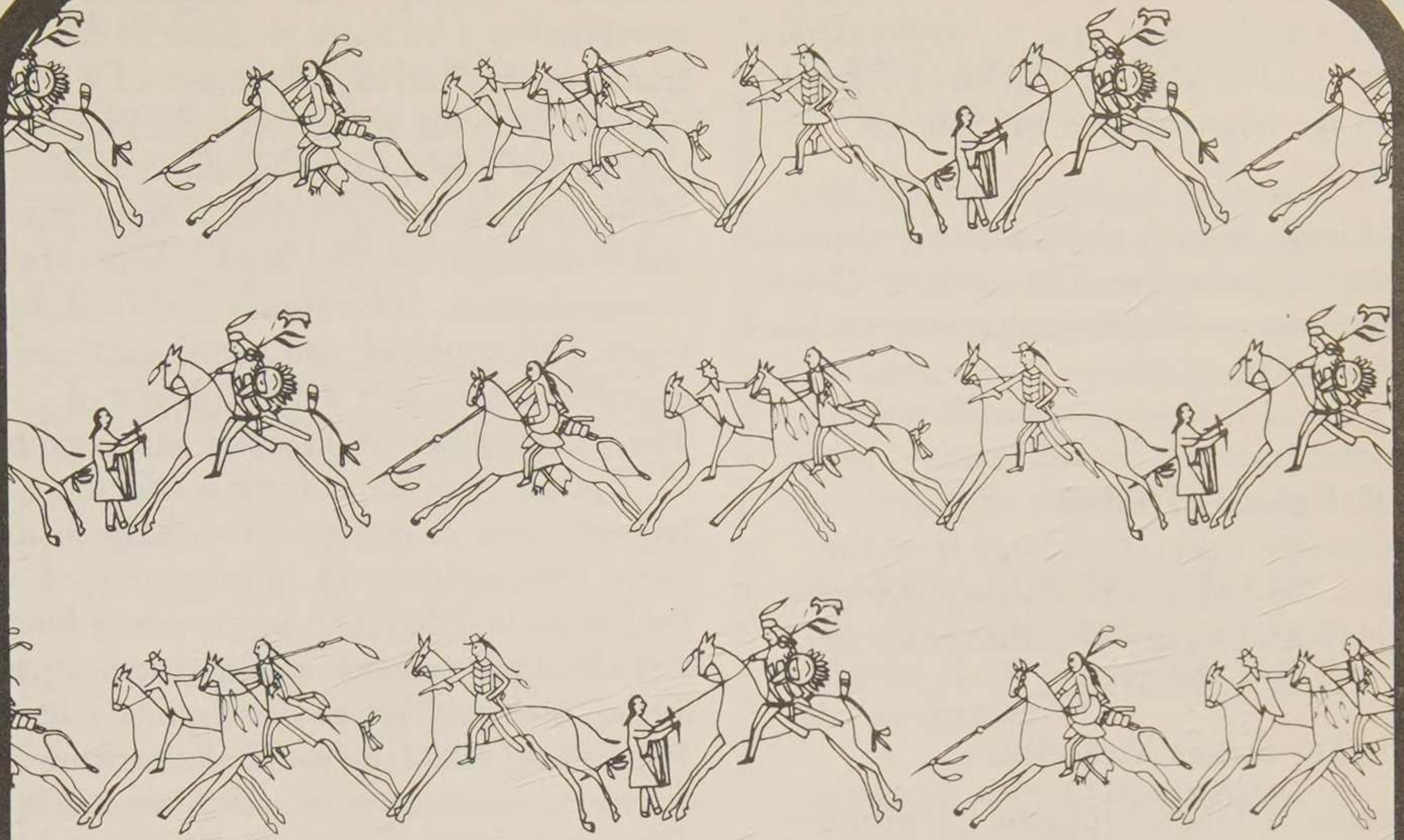
The cultural revolution has been analyzed and explained before, but what is new here is the emphasis on *transformation* to a different kind of being—beginning with personal transformation, with self, and only through the personal to the social transformation that would then inevitably follow,

“from the inside out.” In the past twenty years there have been plenty of radical political reactions and counter-culture “movements” of all kinds. But what begins now to carry conviction, as the standard-bearer of a genuine *emergent culture* for all of humankind is the notion that it all has to begin with a change of mind and heart, one's own.

Of course, esoteric groups have been whispering this secret for years. But probably Ms. Ferguson is right that it is now time for this seminal idea to “go public” and be given enough context to make it much more widely acceptable.

Transformation—the idea that I can change and must change radically, that the present limits of my world are self-imposed—is not an easy notion to accept; for to understand it in depth one must already be transformed. But at least there is help in knowing more about (for example) how the brain/mind works. As Karl Pribram and David Bohm suspect, it may work on the analogy of a hologram, any part of which carries the imprint of the whole, as DNA does for the cell. This chapter, aptly called “Liberating Knowledge,” I found the most exciting and encouraging. For if there is an inherent relation between part and whole built into the order of reality, my long alienation can be ended. *I too can be whole.* And *that* is the transformation. Ms. Ferguson has brought us new knowledge with which to remove our old prejudices that stand in the way saying “It can't happen.” Altered states *are* possible. *I can.* But will I?

Even in California (which has more of a tendency in this direction) no one should be seduced into believing in an easy automatic process or “progress.” If this book has a defect it is (for me) in the sometimes facile quality of its persuasiveness. I am all for sunlight and love, rather than gloom and fear, but I would not want to promise anyone a safe and sure passage to this promised land. It is (I expect) going to be a rough crossing and the threshold of the really new is always a place of peril and trial. Without the fire of the oven, no bread. From today's physics, Ilya Prigogine distills the same wisdom, which Ms. Ferguson quotes with approval. But her talent is Eve's. We also



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need to hear Adam's heroic voice: "Prepare to face the ordeal!" Only if we can hear in ourselves both voices have we a real chance of getting back into the Garden of the new golden age from whence we came so long ago.

James George, formerly the Canadian Ambassador in a variety of posts, is the Director of the Threshold Foundation, an international organization based in Switzerland.

The Religions of Tibet

By Giuseppe Tucci, translated from the German and Italian by Geoffrey Samuel. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980. Pp. xv + 340. \$19.95.

Reviewed by Barbara Nimri Aziz

The study of Tibetan religion has proliferated, particularly during the past decade. Doubtless this has been aided by the arrival of gifted Tibetan teachers in India and the West and by the distribution and translation of important Tibetan texts that were formerly unavailable. Committed, intelligent Western scholars joined imaginative, learned lamas to expand Tibetan studies on a number of fronts. Devotion has combined with practice and scholarship in a highly productive and sensitive manner.

Without sacrificing the complexity, the discipline, and the strength of Tibetan religion, Western scholars have made it more accessible and more comprehensible. Today their writings possess a fluidity, a warmth, and a conviction that was almost impossible to convey only two decades earlier.

Perhaps it is out of this situation that this new comprehensive volume on Tibetan religion emerges. It is the first such attempt since Waddell's nineteenth-century book on Lamaism, and it far surpasses the latter in depth and in philosophical integrity. It is also significant that *The Religions of Tibet* is authored by the eminent Tibetologist, Professor Tucci, and translated by another Tibetan specialist, anthropologist Geoffrey

Samuel. Appearing a full ten years after its German original, this new English edition is nevertheless a far more readable book. The translator has had the advantage of working directly with the author on what may be this master's final contribution to an already overwhelming corpus of translations and commentaries. The book is general yet comprehensive. It combines historical, literary, philosophical, and sociological perspectives which only a Tibetologist of Tucci's eminence could know and assemble.

The scope of the volume is enormous. Its initial two chapters deal with the history of the First and Second Propagations of Buddhism in Tibet. It is not a review but includes rather extensive discussion of traditions such as rJogs-pa Chen-po (Great Perfection) which helps clarify current questions concerning the roots of some later Tibetan Buddhist schools.

Here, as throughout, Tucci avoids sectarianism and minimizes the roles of and the differences among various Tibetan sects. Overattention to sectarian particularities has regrettably characterized much Tibetan study in the past with the result that our knowledge has been fragmentary and strongly comparative rather than syncretic. Tucci stresses the developmental and shared qualities of different traditions.

This balance is maintained in the third chapter although it concerns different lamaistic traditions and the nature of the Dalai Lama. Next, the chapter on doctrines of important schools is perhaps the most interesting part of the book. Completely avoiding sectarian typologies, the erudite author utilizes his profound familiarity with Tantric literature to present the reader with an authoritative and discerning introduction to the foundations of Tibetan Buddhism. At the same time he sheds light on popular traditions like the *gcod* which was incorporated differently into all schools but has been overlooked by other Western scholars.

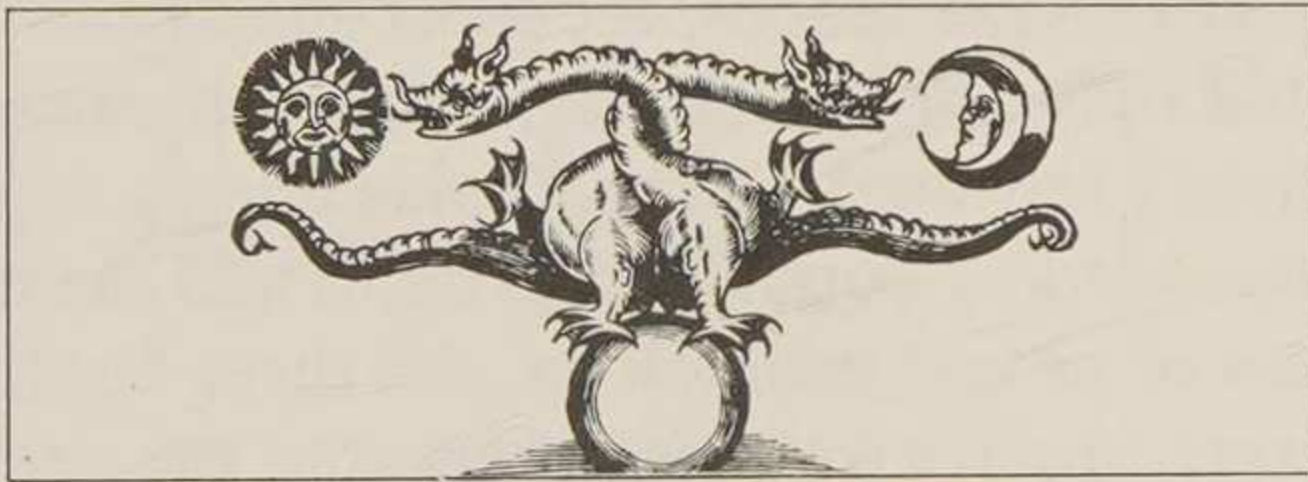
In the fifth and sixth chapters many technical terms are elucidated, adding considerable value to what might otherwise be a sketchy account of monasticism, ritual festivals, and folk beliefs. Although some attempt is made to define the social dimensions of monastic life and village festivals,

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these are two areas where the interested reader would do best consulting other sources, such as various periodicals. One may nevertheless say of the section on folk religion that Tucci's contributions on exorcism, protection, death, and augury are valuable, especially with his elucidation of complex terminologies.

The chapter on folk religion contains a section "final considerations," in which the author brings together his vast knowledge of Tibetan literature with his experience and sensitivity for an unusually fine assessment of the relation of folk religion to the wider philosophical developments of Buddhism in Tibet.

The final chapter is an extremely useful survey of Bon religion treated as a non-Buddhist tradition; but it should be remembered that for centuries Bon and Buddhism have been inextricably mixed and much has been written about the lamaist-monastic traditions of Bon.

The Religions of Tibet is one of those rare books which serves both the interests of a general reader and the needs of Tibetologists. It is not suitable as an introduction; nor can it substitute for monographs such as *The Cult of Tara*, *The Nine Ways of Bon*, or for translated commentaries and biographies. As a comprehensive survey and a glossary of unparalleled scholarship though, it is the finest work of its kind so far. It is also a most lucid and erudite discussion of a complex subject.

Barbara Nimri Aziz is an anthropologist specializing in Himalayan studies. She is the author of Tibetan Frontier Families (Carolina Academic Press, 1978) and is currently working on a book on pilgrimage. She lives and teaches in New York City.

The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution

By Carolyn Merchant. New York: Harper & Row, 1980. Pp. xx + 348. \$16.95.

The Comedy of Survival: In Search of an Environmental Ethic

By Joseph W. Meeker. Los Angeles: Guild of Tutors Press, 1980. Pp. 176. \$7.95.

The Wooing of Earth

By René Dubos. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980. Pp. xv + 183. \$8.95.

Reviewed by Peter Heinegg

Strip-mined landscapes, oil-fouled oceans, clear-cut forests, carcinogenic water, air, and food—we know all about our ecological woes, but what was the Original Sin that brought them on? Carolyn Merchant locates the Fall in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when a mechanistic model of the cosmos replaced the old organic one. Joseph Meeker sees disaster in the Western myths exalting tragic consciousness and human self-aggrandizement at nature's expense. René Dubos, the most conservative and optimistic of the lot, blames the mess on man's repeated failure to plan ahead, compounded by population growth and the misuse of potent technology. All three books oversimplify to some extent, but they're all, despite sharp differences in approach, solid contributions to America's agonizing (and long belated) reappraisal of its wants and needs.

Merchant's is the only scholarly work, strictly speaking, in the trio, and at times it verges on the ponderous. Her dutiful summaries of dead-and-buried tomes of cosmological speculation by Paracelsus, della Porta, Robert Fludd, F.M. Van Helmont, etc. certainly flesh out her argument, but they also threaten to smother it. The problem here may be that we're too familiar with her general drift: over 160 years ago William Blake pointed to his evil trinity of Bacon, Locke, and Newton as the enemies of "Imagination" (and then transcended this hostility by incorporating them into the triumphant dialectical conclusion of *Jerusalem*). So we're impatient to get through Merchant's meticulous demonstration that Blake was right after all.

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But, on the other hand, there's no denying the strength of her case. Once Europeans understood nature as a "system of... inert particles moved by external rather than inherent forces," the way was open, as never before, to brutal exploitation of the environment by the rising class of capitalist entrepreneurs. There is likewise no doubt that this momentous shift was due in part to a rejection (on principle) of the Feminine as a constitutive element of reality, and that it led to new forms of oppression and disenfranchisement for women. Merchant does a good job of pointing up the links between a devitalized world view and the brutal commercialization and stratification of society.

Merchant scarcely touches on the last 250 years, and hence she leaves some large questions unanswered. What about the Romantic return to nature? If Wordsworth and Darwin, Goethe and Heidegger, Rousseau and Bergson, and all their heirs and comrades-in-arms failed to destroy mechanistic thought, didn't they greatly weaken it? And if so, why do we persist in treating nature as soulless stuff? If technology helped to imprison women, didn't it also, perhaps accidentally, help to liberate them (spread of literacy, jobs outside the home, etc.)? One would like to see Merchant expand and refine her thesis in another book.

In contrast to Merchant's dryly written dissertation, Meeker (the publisher's blurb calls him "Joe") presents us with a lively and deliberately provocative tract. It appeared originally in 1972—this is the first paperback edition. In a characteristic broadside Meeker declares that "the humanities have given consistent intellectual support to the environmental exploitation which is the most distinctive product of Western civilization, and they began their work centuries before the engineers became clever enough to think up ways to implement their ideas." Meeker finds the peculiar vices of humanism enshrined in the tragic hero (vices which still flourish despite the collapse of tragedy as a genre).

The tragic mode, he maintains, assumes that nature is there for our benefit, that morality transcends nature and natural limits, and that the individual personality is supremely important. Against this lofty delusion Meeker champions comedy—tough, resourceful, realistic, its feet firmly planted in the earth; the art of survival as opposed to the quest for superhuman greatness.

Meeker is quite diversified, a professional broadcaster, think-tanker, naturalist, and park ranger (with a Ph.D. in Comp. Lit. no less), and no mere backpacking bull in a literary-philosophical china shop. His arguments have wit and imaginative power, even though they're consistently biased. Thus, he attacks the famous choral ode from *Antigone* on the genius of Man, but he ignores Sophocles' (and Aeschylus') denunciations of *hybris*. As the fate of Oedipus (and Clytemnestra) shows, the Greek tragedians stress the dangers of overweening mind and will. Even that cantankerous radical, Euripides, has the Nurse in *Medea* say: "I would like to be safe and grow old in a/Humble way. What is moderate sounds best,/ Also in practice is best for everyone./ Greatness brings no profit to people." (Rex Warner trans.)

In the same vein, Meeker pits picaresque fiction (humble, healthy, unsentimental) against pastoral poetry (self-pitying, starry-eyed evasion). He quotes approvingly the motto of Felix Krull, "He who really loves the world shapes himself to please it." Once again Meeker has a lot of suggestive points to make, but they just won't work without major qualification. For the *pícaro* is by definition amoral, and hence would dump PCBs or raw sewage into any nearby stream if he could get away with it. Logically—and ominously—enough Meeker praises Machiavelli for his picaresque politics ("not designed to glorify personalities, to conquer nature, or to serve honor and abstract morality"), but what could be more ultimately devastating to nature than the Florentine's policy of subordinating everything to that pernicious abstraction, the State?

Meeker has a knack for clever "misreadings"—e.g., he says Hamlet puts off revenge because, like other predators, man instinctively prefers evasive action to in-



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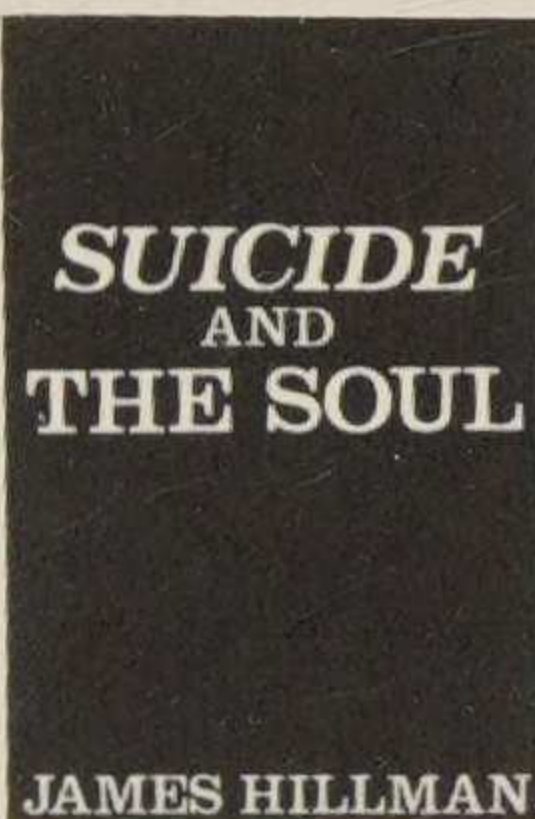
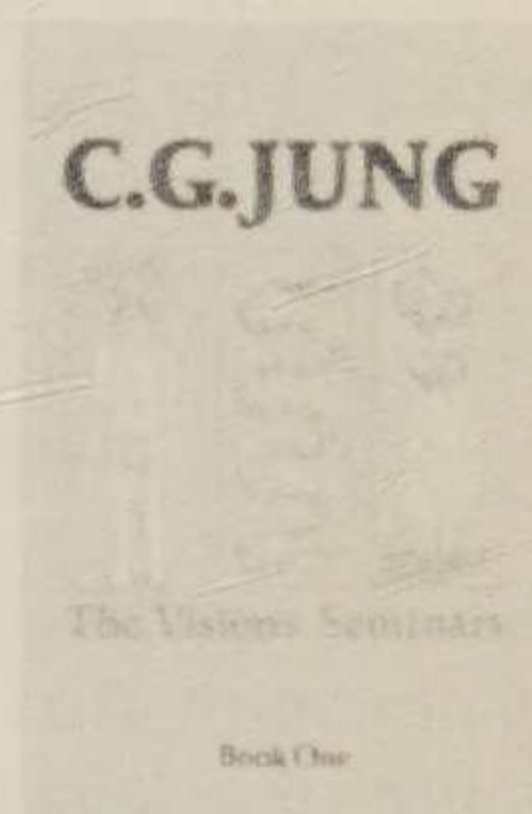
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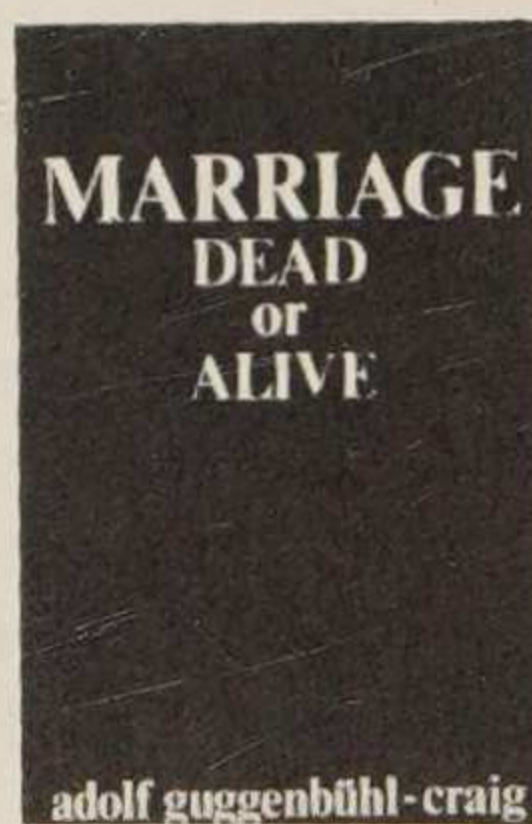


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traspecific murder—but too often these distract the reader from the book's real strengths. Still more distracting are the dreadfully whimsical pencil sketches scattered throughout the text, of a slim naked girl cavorting with a huge bull moose—a symbol, apparently, of joyous humanity at ease with nature. Nonetheless, Meeker is worth reading because his challenge to our cultural pieties is, apart from its rhetorical excess, right on target.

The dust jacket of *The Wooing of Earth* has a shot of the vigorous Dubos (*un vieillard encore vert*, as his countrymen say) with a genial smile on his face and two large pairs of pruning shears in his hands, apparently in the act of descending on the shrubs in his yard and, in the best tradition of French gardeners, restoring order to the careless chaos of nature. And Dubos in fact doesn't hesitate to proclaim his preference for humanized nature, for the positive possibilities of transforming the environment. "We can improve on nature," he stoutly asserts, "by manipulating it with respect, imagination, and intelligence." Dubos, as he often does, evokes fond memories of his childhood in the lovely, civilized setting of the Ile de France. That's the sort of world, he believes, we belong in, not the wilderness, which for all its splendor is frightening and inhospitable—as the Bible keeps reminding us.

Dubos agrees with Rabindranath Tagore, who took the train from Brindisi to Calais in 1878 and marveled at the "perfect union of man and nature" he saw, or thought he saw, speeding past his compartment window. "I watched with keen delight and wonder that continent flowing with richness under the age-long attention of her chivalrous lover, western humanity ... the heroic love-adventure of the West, the active wooing of earth." Tagore liked the wooing, but he never noticed the rape. And Dubos too focuses on the bright side of the picture, not because he's blind to the

dark side, but because he chooses to downplay it.

Dubos devotes a chapter, "Can the World be Saved?" to the ecological crisis, as if to prove that he's serious, that he grasps the problem in all its staggering immensity. But then he spends most of his time emphasizing nature's ability to heal itself (he cites the Jamaica Bay wildlife refuge, Rocky Creek near San Angelo, Texas, and other back-from-the-brink success stories) and responsible environmental management. This is humanistic ecology (of the kind Meeker would snort at). It makes sense, or it used to, but Dubos himself knows that the eons of slow evolution, of trial and error and mutual adjustment, resulting in the artificial, but stable and productive, "soil community" (E. Hyams) of Europe and the human culture it supported, are an unobtainable luxury in most of the world today. Even Dubos' beloved France—not to mention the Sun Belt or the Amazon Basin—has put up shamefully little resistance to the runaway degradation. Perhaps the noble old humanistic ideal isn't tough enough for these hard and rapacious times.

But Dubos still keeps the faith. Greece may have been denuded by massive erosion, but would logic ever have bloomed so luxuriantly, if Hellas "had remained covered with an opaque tangle of trees"? It never occurs to Dubos that "logic" might be a mixed blessing (Merchant could enlighten him here). He claims that the deforestation of the mountains of Attica was all for the good, in that it brought into striking relief shapes that would otherwise have gone unseen. (It's not clear whether Dubos has had a look recently at those mountains and observed the jerrybuilt housing, tacky resorts, and industrial developments now encroaching on them.)

Still, Dubos is a sane thinker and a fluent, graceful writer. When he counters David Ehrenfeld's (*The Arrogance of Humanism*) strictures with an appeal of "noblesse oblige"—i.e., our superior position in the natural order demands that we behave with decency and restraint towards our fellow creatures—we don't doubt for a minute where to look for such nobility. It radiates from this warm and marvelously rational

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man. But the *noblesse* as a class have been notoriously incapable of living up to their obligations. It took a revolution, and it may well take another one, to end the worst abuses.

Merchant, Meeker, and Dubos span a fairly broad ideological spectrum, but they share a common realization that the world is lost unless it undergoes a profound change of heart towards nature. Their books are an encouraging sign that a viable and fair environmental ethic may yet be within our reach.

Peter Heinegg is professor of Comparative Literature at Union College in Schenectady, New York.



CURRENTS (Continued from page 102)

“Life Not Death in Venice: From Victims to Victors,” sponsored by the Center for Visual Anthropology and the College of Continuing Education at the University of Southern California, from May 1 through June 30, was an exhibition of the artwork of elderly Eastern European Jews in the Los Angeles area. The artists, unknown and untutored, dealt with traditional or folk themes, based on memories—mostly from childhood. They acted as docent to their own works, and they offered interpretations of them to the public. Students at the University recorded life histories in text, photograph, and videotape which were on exhibition along with the art work, thereby achieving a social as well as artistic goal. The culture was further examined through the appearance of “outsiders,” including Isaac Bashevis Singer, the Traveling Jewish Theater, Leeny Sack, Lee Strasberg, and others—people who derive their art from this source beside the people who are the original expression of it.

CREDITS

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Page 39 Eros and Psyche from Myrina, early first century.

Page 40 Eros on a bronze mirror from Etruria.

Page 46 Milarepa, bronze with silver, glass, lapis lazuli, and turquoise stones, 4⅜", Western Tibet, ca. 15th century. Collection of the Newark Museum. Reprinted by permission.

Page 51 Satan Smiting Job with Sore Boils, by William Blake, tempura on wood, c. 1826-27. Tate Gallery, London.

Page 53 Illustration from *The Great Law of Peace of the Longhouse People*, drawings by John Fadden/Kahonhes. Published by *Akwesasne Notes*, Mohawk Nation via Roosevelttown, NY 13683. Fifth printing, 1977.

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Page 99 Figure 1: La Toilette. Gosol, early summer 1906. Oil on canvas, 59½ × 39". Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York. Fellows for Life Fund.

Page 100 Figure 2: Nude Woman. Cadaqués, summer 1910. Charcoal, 19 × 12⅜". The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. The Alfred Steiglitz Collection.

Page 101 Figure 3: Man with Sheep. Paris, 1944. Bronze, 86⅝ × 30¾ × 28⅜". Philadelphia Museum of Art. Gift of R. Sturgis and Marion B.F. Ingersoll.

Page 102 Portrait of man, probably 1913-1914, Baffin Island. ©Robert Flaherty.

Italo Calvino, one of Italy's most inventive writers, is the author of *The Baron in the Trees*, *The Nonexistent Knight & The Cloven Viscount*, *Cosmicomics*, *t zero*, *The Watcher and Other Stories*, *Invisible Cities*, and *The Castle of Crossed Destinies*. Calvino lives in Paris.

David Malouf was born in Brisbane. He has taught in Australia and England and now divides residence between Italy and his homeland. His poetic works include *Bicycle and Other Poems*, *Neighbors in a Thicket*, and *The Year of the Foxes* (George Braziller); his first novel, *Johnno*, and the extraordinary odyssey that brought him to our attention, *An Imaginary Life*, were also published by Braziller in the United States. He has just completed a book of stories and a book of poetry from which "The Garden" is taken.

Abraham Menashe, born in Egypt in 1951, is a freelance photographer living in New York City. He is self-taught and is committed to images that heal. His work is in the archives of the Museum of Modern Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Jewish Museum. A work-in-progress, *The Faces of Prayer*, will be on permanent exhibition at the United Nations Church Center when completed.

Jonathan Omer-Man lives in Jerusalem and is the editor of *Shefa Quarterly*. He teaches privately, and writes about Jewish mysticism from a non-Orthodox perspective. He visits the United States regularly on lecture tours.

Brother David Steindl-Rast was born in Austria and has a Ph. D. in experimental psychology from the University of Vienna. In 1953 he joined the newly founded Benedictine Monastery of Mt. Saviour in New York State. After twelve years of formal training, he received permission to undergo Zen training for several years. He now heads the Benedictine Grange on Mt. Desert Island, Maine and is a member of the Advisory Council of Planetary Citizens. He has contributed to many symposia and anthologies, *Earth's Answer*, *Exploring Inner Space*, *Main Currents*, *Coevolution Quarterly*, and *Cross Currents* among them.

Al Young is the author of three books of poems and four novels, the latest of which is *Ask Me Now* (McGraw-Hill, 1980). With Ishmael Reed, he edited the anthologies: *Yardbird Lives!* and *Calafia: The California Poetry*. The former Edward H. Jones Lecturer in Creative Writing at Stanford, he presently works as a freelance writer and screenwriter. He is also the recipient of fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Guggenheim Foundation.

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