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The Dance of Neoteny and Ontogeny

IN THE IDEOLOGY of recent times—of progress and the self-making of the person and the society, of the ego's selection of choices of what-to-be, appended to a body—the child is a *sac physiologique* that is fostered and that grasps or obtains thought and intelligence. Epigenesis is a contrary concept of life cycle (or ontogeny). The person emerges in a genetic calendar by stages, with time-critical constraints and needs, so that instinct and experience act in concert. The mature adult is a late stage in this lifelong series of overlapping and interlocking events: not linear but spiral, resonating between disjunction and unity, but moving, so that each new cycle enlarges the previous one.

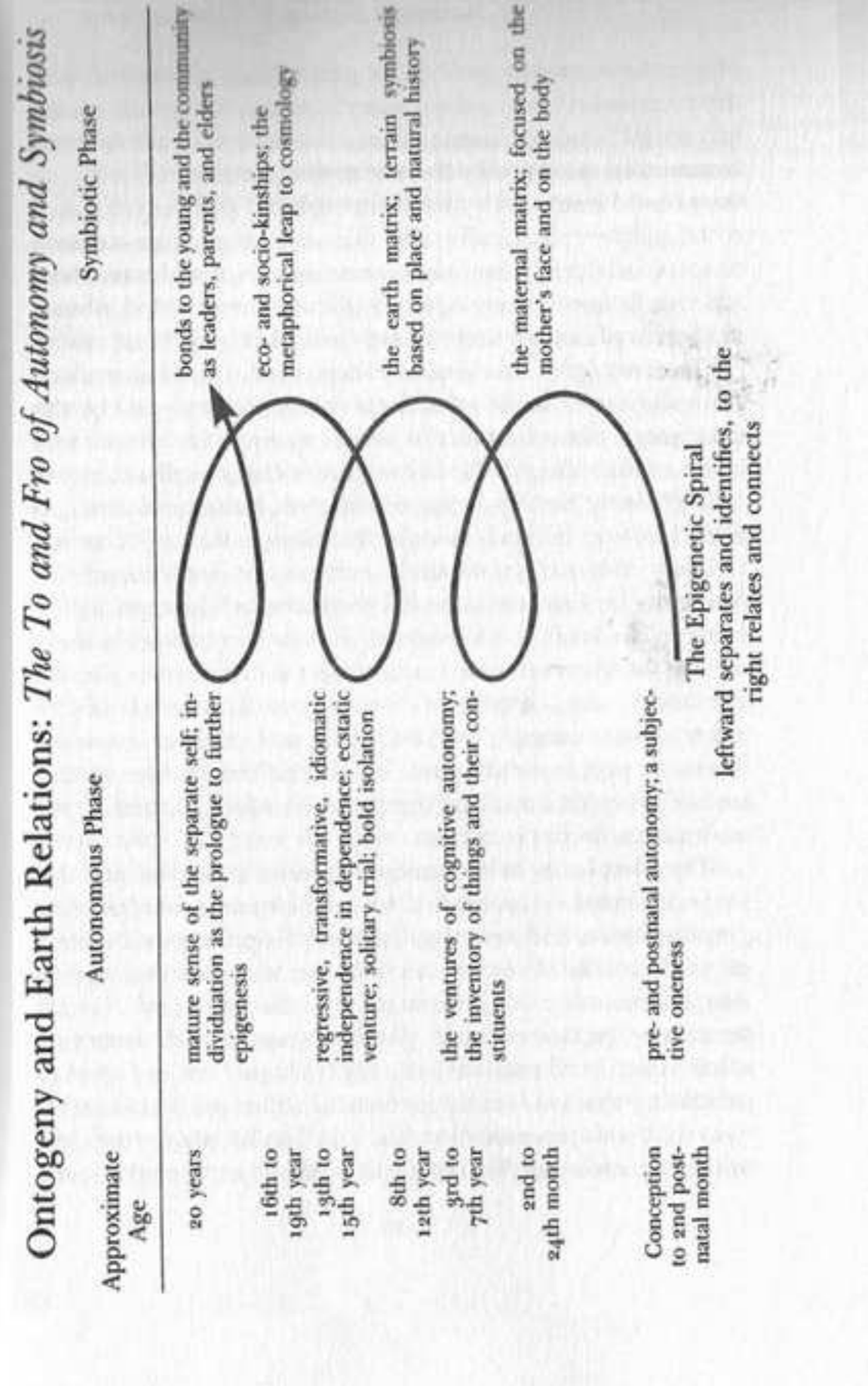
This complicated passage through separations and symbioses is human and primate. It evolved. It is based on an extended life—extended not only by time added at the end, but by an expanded youth. This retarded growth rate and its associated events are neoteny. It is most conspicuous in the slow growth of the body itself; the retention of babyish or even fetal bone-growth patterns; toe, finger, or head orientation, reduced body-hair covering; late tooth eruption and loss; and so on in dozens of modified organ- and tissue-

development rates. Neoteny includes a prolonged psychogenesis. It extends, specializes, and orders experiences essential to the emergence of consciousness and the psyche.

Joseph Pearce, in his lovely book *Magical Child,* describes this emerging sense of self and separateness, the growth of a confident, centered being who reaches out to new experience, perceiving a universe in a plural reality. By symbiosis he means a connecting dependency, a kind of school for relatedness, a matrix or setting in which the structure of the world is forecast by previous experience, beginning with the body, and is discovered according to "expectations." The infant is programmed by his own nervous system to anticipate certain responses from the mother, which must be encountered in order to become the basis or matrix of the earth, a new counterplayer.

Learning in this sense does not mean preparation by logical operations with dialectical and ideological ends, by art appreciation or creativity, nor by overviews of history and cultures. It means a highly timed openness in which the attention of the child is predirected by an intrinsic schedule, a hunger to fill archetypal forms with specific meaning. Neoteny is the biological commitment to that learning program, building identity and meaning in the oscillation between autonomy and unity, separateness and relatedness. It takes about 30 percent of the whole human life span. It is a pulse, presenting the mind with wider wholes, from womb to mother and body, to earth, to cosmos. Each of these resolves tasks given in the growth of consciousness and intuition in infancy, childhood, and youth. Their goal is not to perpetuate the prenatal subjective merger state but, in a staircase of mergers and departures, to identify a self (or selves: a resolution of the inchoate "we," "they," and "it" as well as "I"), leading to a more mature sense of relatedness. In this way a good sense of being in the cosmos is the result of two decades

Ontogeny and Earth Relations: *The To and Fro of Autonomy and Symbiosis*



of timed events that involve the person with others and with the nonhuman in an extraordinary interplay. Generally speaking, social bonds (infant-mother, juvenile-family, adolescent-community) accompany the successive matrices of being, as the ground from which novelty is explored and the self delineated, while ecological reality (flowers-bees, bears-salmon) become satisfying otherness in their own right and metaphorical sign images or messages about the inner world, the binding forces of human society, and the invisible spiritual realm.

The success of this sequence depends on good nurturing. Thus the evolution of infantile stages is accompanied by the emergence of a parental and social capacity. To be the caretakers of such a highly specialized ontogeny is itself a complex task requiring successive appropriate responses and anticipation. Neoteny as such is only the plunge into immaturity. Delivery into maturity depends on certain unique characteristics in the human adult that have been called the capacity for culture. Much of the transmitted content and behaviors making up the characteristic features of a particular people are directed to the ontogeny of its members. The details of this material—the language, myths, tools, and ceremonies—vary from one people to the next, but the differences are on the surface; they fill forms that the species has long since evolved as firmly as its physical traits.

The complexity of human development is so great and the scope for error so broad that we might wonder how anyone gets through to full maturity. Some repair processes are built into its calendar. The most conspicuous is adolescent regression, an infantile aspect that may serve the individual in recuperative ways. Beyond that, psychotherapy (which occurs in some forms in all societies) is usually shaped around a reexperiencing that enables the patient to adjust to, if not mend, a psychodevelopmental flaw. The catalysts of mind, provided by the nurturers, are like the nutritional and hormonal factors

of the neotenic body, except that they are required experiences. Like the timed events in a play (either dramatic dialogue or the execution of movements in a game), they may be poorly presented, muffed, or missed.[1] The play goes on, more or less imperfectly. The person, so deprived, bears the consequences as unregenerate elements of immaturity, glossed by repression and compensation, distorted by unconscious yearnings for overdue fulfillment and resentments against the nurturers. If, for example, there was no adequate earth matrix in the child's life between its fourth and tenth year, it can never achieve a fully satisfying philosophical rapprochement to the stellar universe or to any of the fundamental questions to which religion is always directed. The cosmic counterplayers are likely to be perceived in some disguised form of infantile symbiosis, imperfectly integrated with the vast middle ground of the earth terrain and its living forms.

In the foregoing chapters I have attempted to show how each of four epochs of the past of civilized man were served by deforming the ontogeny of its members. These effects have been cumulative, but the first epoch—agriculture—was the most decisive. Unlike the society of prototypical human beings, who lived by hunting and gathering, agriculture favored larger groups of people, who, in terms of individual personality, accepted decision-making by other means than councils of the whole, the rewarded of success by power rather than prestige, and authoritarian leadership, seized rather than granted. Politically, agriculture required a society composed of members with the acumen of children. Empirically, it set about amputating and replacing certain signals and experiences central to early epigenesis. Agriculture not only infantilized animals by domestication, but exploited the infantile human traits of the normal individual neoteny.[2] The obedience demanded by the organization necessary for anything larger than the earliest village life, associated with the

rise of a military caste, is essentially juvenile and submissive, reflecting proud but unreflecting loyalty, blood-brother same-sex bonding, group adventurist attitudes, tight conformism, and willingness to suffer and endure based on pride.[3] The abandonment of the totemic use of wild plants and animals and the congeniality of the ecosystem as a model for social speculating threw the mythopoetic leap to philosophy in adolescence back upon familial models, including domesticated-animal subordinates. Agriculture removed the means by which men could contemplate themselves in any other than terms of themselves (or machines). It projected back upon nature an image of human conflict and competition and then read analogies from that to people (or, as Levi-Strauss puts it, "naturalized a true culture falsely").

The result of this is that human groups foreign to one's own are read as other species, and, on the historical misconstruction of nature as violent, the displacement, enslavement, and killing of the others is logical. One enacts rather than thinks the role of predator or prey. The poetic energies of puberty are deflected from their confrontation with the cosmic and nonhuman toward which that ontogeny had been directed for a million years, turning it back in myths that disguised the maternal symbiosis in celestial dress. In short, the unfulfilled maternal symbiosis of infant and mother leaves a vacuum that can be exploited to draw the new birth of adolescence backward, framing the world in terms of the myths of the Great Mother. While there is no doubt that the maternal symbiosis of infancy is fundamental to all further at-homeness, it is its coherence that is paradigmatic, not its enfolding, shielding, comforting surrender of responsibility. As William Thompson has pointed out, the social consequences of the prevailing myth of the Great Mother are the takeover by an even greater father.[4]

The correction of our modern abuse of the feminine and

the recovery of rootedness in the earth is not an adult adoption of the subjectivity of early development. Simply magnified, the latter carries with it all that passive, mindless lack of understanding and questing for which the ancient Mesopotamian agrotheocracies were scorned by the Hebrews and the Greeks. It is not the recovery of mother fixation, with its ambivalence of hating and adoring, fearing separation and yet resenting maternal power, that we now need, for the ideologizing of that ambiguity leads to splitting everything, a kind of final divisiveness.

A broader sensitivity to the feminine rather than fixation on mother is the normal characteristic of the child's maternal symbiosis. The intense bonding of mother and infant involves not only body contact and feeding on demand, but time together in quiet repose and leisure, during which the tentative explorations of the child away from the mother are successful to the extent that she is available and attentive, though not fussy and directing. With the beginning of village life, the number of children born to a woman in her lifetime increased from four or five to as many as sixteen (with about 50 percent survival in both). The mother could give less attention and less milk to each individual baby. Not going so far afield as her foraging counterpart, she did not carry the infant as much and was more likely to seek surrogate caretakers. The resulting failure of symbiotic bonding is unity pathology: the fearful, tentative, slow-thinking, psychologically crippled child whose personality will always be marked by a stressful mother attachment, unrelieved by a new centering in the plural earth matrix. Moreover, it does not end with the schizoid deformities of the adult, but in adults who are sick mothers, whose infants, says Harold F. Searles, "strive to remain fragmented as therapy for her and, failing, achieve inadequate separation from her and eventually from the nonhuman."[5] Failure of separation makes self and parts of the world subjectively inter-

changeable or, at the other extreme, dichotomized and opposing. In both there is a failure of relational factors in a literal, fragmented world without metaphorical dimension.

The fantasies, anxieties, and hostilities of unresolved immaturity are acted on or repressed and redirected in many ways. In this dark shadow of adult youthfulness is an enduring grief, a tentative feeling about the universe as though it were an incompetent parent, and a thin love of nature over deep fears. What agriculture discovered was not only that plants and animals could be subordinated, but that large numbers of men could be centrally controlled by manipulating these stresses, perpetuating their timorous search for protection, their dependence, their impulses of omnipotence and helplessness, irrational surges of adulation and hate, submission to authority, and fear of the strange.[6]

This useful warping and impedance of epigenesis in the service of village life has continued to provide mankind with a solipsistic psychology appropriate to a man-made world and its defense against neighbors. Still, its deformities are hurtful. Civilized men have pursued redress and maturity while at the same time bending ontogeny in new ways to suit new ideologies. The desert fathers, reacting against the momism of the Bronze-Age Near East, formulated patriarchy. Wrathfully demythologizing, deritualizing, and desacralizing the earth, fostering mobility and the iconography of the Word, the Hebrew prophets, Christian purists, and Hellenic Greeks sought to wrench the human personality into a more grown-up style. Taking a cue from the ontogenetic principle of the masculine guide or spirit as mediator in the transition from one symbiotic plateau to another, they misconstrued it as maleness and amputated the passage. The sense of individual responsibility fostered by these Western progenitors, resembling the juvenile's superego, and their precepts of alienation from the earth caught up the idealizing adolescent, shorn of his karma

of ceremonial initiation, his dreams and emotions directed into visions of power and escape.

Repudiating myth in content and ritual act, western man broke bonds with the earth, soil, and nature, to return power to the father, and dissociated the human spirit from seasons and celestial rounds. To do so was to awaken fear of the body and world in their rhythms and inherent liveliness, to make man alien, to glorify separation anxiety. Perception and philosophy at the desert edge confirmed a split universe, sentencing the person to a lifetime of ambiguity and forcing personal identity at the terrible cost of unrelatedness. "As a prize for certified adulthood, the fathers all limit and forestall some frightening potentialities of development dangerous to 'the system'," says Erikson.[7]

In spite of their mockery of the heathen myths and ceremonies of initiation, these alienists created for their children an atmosphere of intense crises of belief and faith—matters traditionally supervised by men, even among the agricultural theocracies with their maternal symbolism. These desert patriarchs, scorning natural symbols, minimizing the plant, animal, seasonal, earthy, and feminine, exploited the adolescent capacity for abstraction—and made it terminal—by despising all such sources except the Bible and its exegesis.[8]

Both Mircea Eliade and J. L. Henderson have argued that adolescent initiation is the cultural response to an intrinsic need.[9] The desire to prove oneself, infantilisms, idealism, poeticising, and enlarged search for a new identity are age-grade traits. The tutorials, ceremonies, religious instruction, and vision inducing are administered by a cadre of adults who are themselves the product of the successful marriage of ontogeny and liturgical art. That marriage is at the heart of human cultural behavior. It is the response to the neotenic psychology of the young by mature adults. As part of the biology of human life, the ceremonies of initiation have an

ecological function: they are the branch whose flowering completes a crucial phase of the life cycle by using the realm of nature as the language of religious thought. The natural world can become, in retrospect, an object of veneration if it is first an object of thought, as the prototype of coherence—and it is that because of the quality of early maternal care.

The West of the Protestant-mechanist era coupled that desert thought, with its attachment to an adolescent, ascetic, idealist escapism, to scientific mechanism and literary secular humanism in a further assault on the spirit of the autochthonous and feminine that form the basis of place attachment in every individual.

The Protestant puritanical reformulation of the self-chosen and child-inflicted alienated consciousness of the Christian fathers and Hebrew prophets had its own twists and quirks—which can also be seen as an unconscious struggle to recover maturity. One was their ambivalence about the sordidness of the organic realm. Their contempt for the body and their revulsions against the pullulations of life and the horror of slime, decay, excretion, birth, and death are not rational disinclinations, but the effects of a harshly built psychological distortion of childhood delivered up to adult consensus and rationalization. But, like the child, the Protestants were fascinated by the body in their obsessive "play" with it and its products, which ontogeny offers as proof and elements of the livingness of the self, made whole by progressive inclusionist perception.[10] Lacking that perception and affirmation of plurality and diversity it simply decays into duality.

In the pubertal youth this fixation on the body stirs with renewed force. In tribal peoples its "dirty" side is elevated to serve as a basis for pollution taboos, linking contamination to the inadequate observation of cultural practices and the adolescent drive for the purity of a shining idealism to social

customs. Aversion serves a limited but positive function in group consciousness.

But if contamination is everywhere—as it is in the ideology of the puritanical version of the Fall—the metaphor becomes destructive.[11] Conditioned to despise and distrust his own intuitions regarding the body, the individual cannot incorporate a "wisdom of the body" in a philosophy of holism. The alternatives open to a society intervening in ontogeny in this way simply play out the opposition that remains unresolved by extrapolating from either the perverse, infantile, erotic pleasure of self-attention or the prudish, horrified distaste for any natural gratifications: thus Protestant culture in North America produces the world's most devoted protectors of wildlife, its greatest leaders in conservation, its most romantic wilderness literature, the first national parks, and the angriest opponents of the soiling of air and water . . . and it produces an ecological holocaust, the raping of a whole continent of forests and rich soils by uncomprehending destroyers, wrapped in patriotism, humanism, progress, and other slogans in which they profoundly believe.

The adherents to both ends of this psychoideological spectrum act out their feelings, fulfilling the modern commonplace that "man makes his environment." The psychotic, says Edith Jacobson, tries to "change the world" to meet his needs, a fantasy of performing (as opposed to symbolizing) his impulses. International corporations exult in advertising that they are changing the world. Beneath that proud boast is a kind of protean mania, advising us that we must progress or fall backward. Such fear of regression, says Jacobson, is most acute in early adolescence, when the youth, on the verge of recapitulating infantile modes of renewal, is poised psychologically between "dedifferentiation" and the movement toward maturity. The reformist environmentalist can be equally

unconsciously, desperately acting out that changing of the world as the mode of changing the self, particularly in animal protectionism, wild-area (as opposed to the rest of the planet) preservation, escapist naturism, and beautification—all of which maintain two worlds, hating compromise and confusing the issues with good or evil in people.

The trouble with the eagerness to make a world is that, being already made, what is there must first be destroyed. Idealism, whether of the pastoral peaceable kingdom or the electronic paradise of technomania and outer space, is in the above sense a normal part of adolescent dreaming, like the juvenile fantasies of heroic glory. Norman Kiell observes that the "pubescent" is called on to reform while his precognitive self is at the world center, hence acts to "save mankind from his own nonhuman status"—that is, from the temporary identity vacuum in the transition from the juvenile stage into adult life.[12] The difficulty for our time is that no cultus exists, with its benign cadre of elders, to guide and administer that transition.

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

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

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

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

In this connection it is no surprise that the "adaptability

society" celebrates childhood, admires youth and despises age, and equates childhood with innocence, wisdom, and spiritual power. Its members cling to childhood, for their own did not serve its purpose. To those for whom adult life is admixed with decrepit childhood, the unfulfilled promise cannot be abandoned. To wish to remain childlike, to foster the nostalgia for childhood, is to grieve for our own lost maturity, not because maturity is synonymous with childhood, but because then it was still possible to move, epigenetically, toward maturity.

Wide-eyed wonder, nonjudgmental response, and the immediate joy of being are beautiful to see; I hope some kernel of them remains in the heart of every adult. They are sometimes presented as appropriate models for adult attitudes toward nature. But the open ecstasy of the child has its special purposes: a kind of cataloging, preconscious order-finding, and cryptic anthropomorphizing that have to do with personality development—at least for the child with a good mother bond. The poorly bonded child goes through this nature-wonder period even though troubled, for it is a new "maternal" reality and perhaps is therapeutic. In any case, there is no figurative nature for the child; all is literal. Even in pretending, there is only one reality. The children playing delightedly on the green grass or in awe at an owl in the woods will grow up oblivious to the good in nature if they never go beyond that momentary fascination. When, as adults, they will weigh the literal value of the owl (already realized, for it taught them the name and owlness) against other literal values, such as replacing the forest with a hospital, a sewage system, or an oil well, their judgment is likely to be for progress. With poor initial mother symbiosis, with an inadequate or lackluster place and creature naturizing, or without the crucial adolescent religious initiation that uses the symbiotic, literal world as a prefigured cosmos, the adult cannot choose

the forest and the owl. His self is still at the center of a juvenile reality. It may be true that the purpose of the childlike pleasure in the outdoors is an end in itself; it is also necessary to the further work of the self going beyond the self.

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

In effect, the four historical episodes in such socially assimilated deprivation have become elements in the European-American personality. The American is not the profligate anti-European; he is, in respect to certain characteristics, the full embodiment of Western, classical, Christian man, enabled by the colossal richness of an unexploited continent to play out the savaging of neoteny according to the agendas of domestication, desert-edge transcendence, Galilean-Calvinist dualities, and industrialization. Careless of waste, wallowing in refuse, exterminating the enemies, having everything now and new, despising age, denying human natural history, fabricating pseudotraditions, swamped in the repeated personal

crises of the aging preadolescent: all are familiar images of American society. They are the signs of private nightmares of incoherence and disorder in broken climaxes where technologies in pursuit of mastery create ever-worsening problems—private nightmares expanded to a social level.

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

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

The high percentage of neuroses in Western society seems often to be interpreted as a sign of a highly stressful "lifestyle." If you add to it—or see it acted out as—the insanities of nationalism, war, and biome busting, a better case than simply that of lifestyle can be made in terms of an epidemic of the psychopathic mutilation of ontogeny. Characteristic of the schizoid features of this immature subjectivity is difficulty differentiating among fantasy, dream, and reality. The inabil-

ity to know whether one's experiences originate in night dreaming, daydreaming, or viridical reality is one of the most familiar disabilities of seriously ill mental patients. Drug use and New Age psychedelic athletics in search of a different reality, even the semantics of using "fantasy" as synonymous with creative imagination and "to dream" as inspiration, suggest an underlying confusion. They are like travesties of the valid adolescent karma, the religious necessity of transcendence. The fears associated with this confusion in adults are genuinely frightening. The anguished yearning for something lost is inescapable for those not in psychiatric care or on weekend psychic sprees, but who live daily in time-serving labor, overdense groups, and polluted surroundings. Blurry aspirations are formulated in concealed infantilisms, mediated in spectator entertainment, addiction to worldwide news, and religious revivalism.

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

plurality of the self. The environment of play, the juvenile home range, is the gestalt and creative focus of the face or matrix of nature. Ordeals in wilderness solitude and the ecological patterns underlying the protophilosophical narration of myth are instruments in the maturing of the whole person.

Only in the success of this extraordinary calendar does the adult come to love the world as the ground of his being. As a child, immersed in the series of maternal/ecological matrices, there are inevitable normal anxieties, distorted perceptions, gaps in experience filled with fantasy, emotional storms full of topical matter, frightening dreams and illusions, groundless fears, and the scars of accident, occasional nurturing error, adult negligence, and cruelty. The risk of epigenesis is that the nurturers and caretakers do not move forward in their role in keeping with the child's emerging stages. If such deprivations are severe enough, the normal fears and fantasies can become enduring elements of the personality. The individual continues to act on some crucial moment in the immense concerns of immaturity: separation, otherness, and limitation. Wrestling with them in juvenile and primary modes, even the adult cannot possibly see them holistically. Some of these omissions and impairments enhance the individual's conformity to certain cultures, and the culture acts to reward them, to produce them by interceding in the nurturing process, and so put a hold on development. In this way, juvenile fantasies and primary thought are articulated not only in the monosyllables of the land scalper, but in philosophical argument and pontifical doctrine. Irrational feelings may be escalated into high-sounding reason when thrown up against a seemingly hostile and unfulfilling natural world. The West is a vast testimony to childhood botched to serve its own purposes, where history, masquerading as myth, authorizes men of action and men of thought to alter the world to match their regressive moods of omnipotence and insecurity.

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

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

Alternatively, the initial domestication may be seen as a calamity for human ontogeny against which subsequent history is marked by cultural efforts to recover a mature perspective without giving up the centralization of power made possible by unleashing fecundity and urban huddling. In this sense, history is characterized as the will to recover the grace and poise of the mature individual, initially reduced to a shambles by the neolithic, without giving up the booty. For example, the psychology of self-actualization, group dynamics, and personal therapy, aimed at healing individuals de-

prived of appropriate adolescent religious experience, though helpful to the individual, is basically antagonistic to the modern state, which needs fearful followers and slogan-shouting idealists. Thus the culture counters these identity therapies and the philosophical realism of a cosmopolitan and sophisticated kind that could result from them with prior wounds—damage to the fetus and neonate in hospital birth, through the anxieties of the distraught mother, asphyxiation, anesthetics, premedication, the overwhelming sensory shock of bright lights, noisy surroundings, and rough handling, impairment of delivery by the mother's physical condition and delivery posture, and separation of the infant from the mother—all corroding the psychogenic roots of a satisfactory life in a meaningful world.[13]

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

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

Perhaps we do not need new religious, economic, technological, ideological, esthetic, or philosophical revolutions. We

may not need to start at the top and uproot political systems, turn life-ways on their heads, emulate hunters and gatherers or naturalists, or try to live lives of austere privation or tribal organization. The civilized ways inconsistent with human maturity will themselves wither in a world where children move normally through their ontogeny.

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

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

cralized world extolled by the Hebrew-Christian-Muslim puritans, "control" over all the plants and animals—which was perfected in domestication, the final repudiation of everything organic in the very structure of our built environments—we reacted with the utmost material violence, not because of some failure to contain anarchic impulse, but because the humanism of literature and history is so discordant with the kind of being we are.

24. Harold F. Searles has observed that schizoid disorientation—the confusion of the sick individual as to where he is at any moment—would be tolerable to Hebrews in the desert, as it would to the rank and file in an army or a modern person in an underground train or in a jet aircraft. Perhaps this is the "homogenized" landscape against whose lack of orientation Eliade speaks of the necessity of sacred places or, again, the earthly home that to puritan thought is alien ("Non-differentiation of Ego Functioning in the Borderline Individual and Its Effect Upon His Sense of Personal Identity," paper presented at Sixth International Symposium on the Psychotherapy of Schizophrenia, Lausanne, Switzerland, Sept. 28, 1978; "A Case of Borderline Thought Disorder," *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 50 [1969]: 655.)
25. The tendency of the modern city—and agribusiness countryside—to become more uniform, as centralized mass production standardizes construction and land use, seems at first glance to be a side effect of progress, lamented by many. But is it only a by-product? If the general effect of urban life is to aggravate our sense of estrangement and our schizoid fears of the Other, such homogenization may soothe the harried psyche. Ask yourself whether, having traveled for weeks in a foreign land, you are not delighted to run across a motel or restaurant belonging to a familiar chain. If the world appears increasingly ominous and gloomy, as J. H. Van Den Berg says it does in "a defective state of mind" (*A Different Existence* [Pittsburg, Pa.: Duquesne University Press, 1972], pp. 8–9), then perhaps we react by trying to make it more familiar.

    Can we experience both the denial of the nature of the outer world and an exaggerated sense of responsibility for it? The connection is a weak identity structure that cannot cope with one's own malevolence and a poor differentiation between inner and outer in which one projects feelings of helplessness onto the outer world. The first results in the illusion of the peaceable kingdom, denying the reality of predation (or self aggression), the second in a sense of guilt for all the "badness" in the world. Some of us conservationists and environmentalists are uncomfortably close in our more excessive expressions of the world's decay and our more pastoral notions of how things should be.

6. The Dance of Neoteny and Ontogeny

1. Kenneth Keniston says, "The *extent* of human development is dependent upon the bio-social-historical matrix within which the child grows up; some developmental matrices may demonstrably retard, slow, or stop development; others may speed, accelerate, or stimulate it. . . . Human development is a very rough road, pitted with obstructions, interspersed with blind alleys, and dotted with seductive stopping places. It can be traversed only with the greatest of support and under the most optimal conditions" ("Psychological Development and Historical Change," in Robert Jay Lifton, ed., *Explorations in Psychohistory* [New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974], p. 149–64).
2. The infantilizing effect of domestication on animals has other effects far beyond the animals. Being incorporated into the human social system as its lowest-ranking members, their subservience becomes a kind of object lesson teaching a hierarchic scale of authority and right. Toward the animals themselves, the human feeling for their otherness evaporates in material values and sentimental affiliation. See Calvin Martin, "Subarctic Indians and Wildlife," in Carol M. Judd and Arthur J. Rays, eds., *Old Trails and New Directions: Papers of the Third North American Fur Trade Conference* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1980).
3. Daphne Prior, "State of Surrender," *The Sciences.*
4. *The Time Falling Bodies Take to Light* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981). See his concept of enantiodromia, p. 131.
5. *Countertransference* (New York: International Universities Press, 1979), p. 175.
6. The fear of strangers in the child peaks at about three months,

then subsides. But defective nurturing heightens this reaction and perpetuates it as an obsession for the familiar (Gordon W. Bronson, "The Development of Fear in Man and Other Animals," *Child Development* 39, no. 2 [June 1968]). Erik Erikson sees this fear of strangers (and strange animals and flora) as "the first fear of alienation," the "dread of being left alone in a universe without a supreme counterplayer," a mixing of anxiety and rage that "persists into all later phases of life and can pervade a widening range of relationships" (*Toys and Reasons* [New York: W. W. Norton, 1977] p. 50).

7. Erik H. Erikson, "Play and Actuality," in Robert Jay Lifton and Eric Olson, eds., *Explorations in Psychohistory* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974).
8. In describing childhood thought as "iconic representation" (as opposed to infantile "sensory motor" perception or "acting out"), Jerome Bruner notes that children vary in their capacity for imagery, commenting that those with "low imagery" tend to replace it with language. These latter, "intellectually more supple," are held to have superior powers of conceptualization, but a "conventionalized memory," and lose the ability to preserve the distinctive quality of perceptual experience (*Studies in Cognitive Growth* [New York: John Wiley] pp. 21–28). It seems likely that such individuals (or such behavior) and their literary emphasis would be favored in societies rejecting icons and leaping forward to the symbolism of the printed word.
9. Much of the loneliness, sense of isolation, fragmentation, and crises of alienation of modern people—and, to some degree, the loss of "meaning" in their lives—is due to the collapse or subversion of Eliade's "maturational psychodynamics of adolescence." Erik Erikson describes it as "a loss of things to be true to," malfunctions of identity psychology, avoidance of commitment, the denial of ancestors and repudiation of the significance of the past, hypermobility, and excessive abstract idealism ("Youth, Fidelity and Diversity," in Alvin E. Winder and David L. Angus, eds., *Adolescence: Contemporary Studies* [New York: American Book Company, 1968] pp. 1–28, and Joseph L. Henderson, *Thresholds of Initiation* [Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1967]).

10. The term "inclusionist" is used here following Frederick Elder, who has described environmental attitudes as styles of inclusionist (seeing the world as a single reality) and exclusionist (believing that spiritual and human interests are independent of the natural realm) thought. See *Crisis in Eden* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1970), pp. 14–18.
11. The fanatic anality of Protestantism and capitalism has been fully discussed in Norman O. Brown's *Life Against Death* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1959), p. 230. The Reformation, he says, was not due to toilet training but was "an eruption of fresh material from deeper strata of the unconscious, made possible by a large-scale transformation in the structure of the projective system (the culture). The dynamic of history is the slow return of the repressed" (p. 230).
12. *The Universal Experience of Adolescence* (New York: International Universities Press, 1964).
13. Joseph Chilton Pearce, *Magical Child* (New York: Dutton, 1977), pp. 45–50, 56–60.