

NATURE AND CULTURE

Practically all human societies have differentiated the human world from the non-human world as something independent and antithetically other (though for some – classical China, for example – the distinction is rather weak, or nearly nonexistent).

“Fine Tuning” the Human Body and Psyche

A number of human societies see man, even from a physical perspective, as something incomplete and imperfect which, to acquire fully humanity, requires various interventions into his bodily integrity, sometimes seriously damaging, from a functional point of view. Many societies, for example, practiced various dental manipulations – colouring teeth black or other “unnatural” colours “so that they wouldn’t be like dog teeth,” incrusting them with gemstones, grinding them down, or removing the front incisors (in some Australian tribes, this takes place during male initiations). Also widespread were various deformations of the as-yet soft skulls of children by bandaging – flattening the forehead or forming narrow, tower-shaped heads or “horns” by allowing the free growth of the *tubera parietalia*; in Europe, this custom vanished in the beginning of the Iron Age. A very mysterious practice, no longer practiced in the current age, is skull trepanation, which would often heal and be repeated several times, known from the Bronze Age in Europe and from many other regions – Peru, for example. It remains a question whether the aim of trepanation was “magical,” neurosurgical, or therapeutic, following some injury to the skull, or something different. A completely peculiar phenomenon was the binding and deforming of women’s feet in China, which, beginning with the Ming Dynasty, spread from the aristocratic classes to the whole population (the Far East has a relish for monstrosities and crippling deformations such as bonsai, gold-

fish, long-tailed cocks, etc.). This intervention, allowing no other walking than painful mincing around the house and its close environs, is sometimes interpreted as a measure to guarantee a woman's fidelity and prevent cuckoldry. It should be realised that in doing this, the enormous and densely populated region *de facto* lost half of its workforce and that poor Chinese peasants would certainly be more welcoming of help in the fields than an absolute guarantee in the fatherhood of their descendants. The motive for this tradition, on the conscious level, was aesthetic - miniature, artificially formed feet, called "golden lilies," were considered "beautiful," while naturally formed feet were seen as "ugly." A very common practice in various ethnic groups is that of circumcision. Female circumcision, practiced northeast Africa, is an explicit mutilation resulting in anorgasmia, and the more common male version is definitely not primarily motivated by "hygienic" concerns, as is often claimed (even in the desert, where many litres of water are drunk every day, one can always find that extra decilitre; the incessant washing and scrubbing done in Islamic cultures puts extraordinary pressure on the water supply, yet it is always supplied). A more "moderate" form of bodily intervention is tattooing, sometimes considered a basis of "culture" in general; in abundantly pigmented races, it often consists in scarring, and even various perforation are common for the purpose of inserting decorations (in the earlobes, nose, lips, etc.). Sometimes facial hair is removed, especially in places where there is naturally little, and certain Paraguayan tribes pull out their eyelashes, so that their eyes "won't be like rhea eyes" (hair and beard fashions will be discussed later). The process of becoming a human, then, often brings with it a necessary "denaturalisation," even physically. In the majority of cultures, there was a completely "obvious" conviction that people are not born full-fledged humans, but must become so through initiation or education (the Greek concept of *paideia*). Even some biologists (e.g., Portmann, 1960, 1966, 1970) share this opinion - human nature is not a given but is realised in the process of enculturation. The human world, according to the general consensus, is in need of constant care to prevent it

from dissipating and to make it distinguishable from the natural world. Stories which describe the opposite process (feralisation, animalisation) have always been popular. In this way arose the true stories about “wolf children” or the legends about St. Onuphrius, in which he remains in the desert to meditate so long that he becomes covered in hair and is scarcely recognisable as human.

The Origin of the Dichotomy of “Nature” and “Culture”

The above-mentioned feeling of an essential difference between the human and non-human worlds was gradually strengthened after the Neolithic agricultural revolution, when the forest was changed from something magical, though basically ambivalent, into a dark, frightening, and threatening space, expanding into hard-won fields, and inhabited by predators who threaten the lives of Little Red Riding Hood and domestic animals. The world of the Grimms’ fairy tales records this outlook – the association of “free” nature with uncontrollable wildness and evil was interestingly embedded in old Germanic law: anyone walking through the forest without singing could be killed without warning, as his intentions were undoubtedly wicked. This perception of the world is reflected in the Latin term *cultura* (something to be cultivated – originally a term for agricultural land and its crops, and later for the phenomena of civilisation in general, apparently as Cicero’s neologism for the Greek *epimeleia*, care). The word comes from the verb *colo*, *colere*, *cultum*, meaning to inhabit, cultivate, educate, till, care, as well as to worship (hence *cult*); the word *cultura* – cultivation, education – signifies something which does not occur naturally or as a matter of course, but which requires care and must be considered as extraordinary. The word *natura* was understood as its polar opposite (that which is native, which arises naturally, is born – from *nascor*, *nasci*, *natus sum* – to be born). This was basically the Latin translation of the Greek word *physis* – nature, naturalness (including human: “what is his nature?”) – which comes from the root *phyo* – to grow, to increase; to the order of *phy-*

predominantly covered by deciduous forests, have, thanks to the activities of man, areas of taiga (coniferous forests), steppe (fields), forest steppe (fruit orchards, gardens), boundary zones, and lacustral zones (ponds), as well as the remains of wetlands and bogs and a few rocky steppes. Still today we can see a great difference between the lands of the former Austrian monarchy, where a combination of aristocratic monopoly on hunting and the Theresian Forest Ordinance created the appearance of the landscape as we know it, and other regions – in the former Ottoman Empire, where logging and hunting were relatively unrestricted and available to the peasants (except for the Sultan's hunting grounds), forests and larger animals remain only in remote places. Landscapes which are completely cultivated – The Netherlands, for example – give a somewhat strange impression, looking like a sweeping extension of residential gardens; the vast, overbearingly monotonous fields of corn and wheat in the American Midwest are another example. It seems that humans, by their ancestral psychological disposition, are attached to savannah-like landscapes with free-standing trees, probably the inheritance of their distant East African origin. A significant role is also played by human “phytophilia” – a love of green and flowering plants, which is to be expected in primates (Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1984). Deserts or extremely dry steppes epitomise landscapes with an air of “freedom,” but one more suitable to occasional meditation, mystical exercises, and withdrawal from the world than to enduring affection – Arabs call the desert the “Garden of Allah,” but at the same time the favourite colour of the Prophet was bright green.

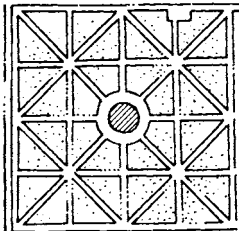
From ancient times until quite recently, it was cultivated land and other cultural products which were considered fundamental, valuable, and worthy of every care. A good example is the European Middle Ages – an era which definitely did not have a problem with devastating extensive areas of the environment and had little sense for the non-human world (though the question did occur as to whether it was not immoral to extract mineral deposits, even though it was believed that they slowly regenerated). That which is prevalent is rightly considered as less

valuable – that of which there is enough. Whereas the tendrils of the natural world grew spontaneously and luxuriously, right up to the monastery walls, Aristotle's *Organon*, for example, had to be laboriously copied and cherished as a cultural treasure; there was, moreover, a great reverence for authorities and for the past and a certainty that anything lost from the cultural heritage was lost forever. Medieval children would certainly not wish for some animal (perhaps with the exception of a "prestigious" domestic animal) or a trip to the forest for their birthday, but for some artificial product such as a knife, ribbon, or a religious icon (the original meaning of art/skill is still reflected in the word "artificial"; the pejorative sense of "not real, synthetic" was acquired much later; from the perspective of "materialism," the phrase "artificial material" is the deepest blasphemy). There was a similar "dearth" of other civilised phenomena: to get a better, cultivated apple or to be able to listen to a sermon or to musicians was really a festive occasion. Only the poor tradesmen in his workshop who could not afford a piper or harpist allowed himself to be entertained by the song of a caged bird. Deserted places such as the peaks of the Alps were practically never visited (most peaks were not climbed until the 18th century) – there was no trace of appreciation for the beauty of landscapes not influenced by man. Apart from the modern era, only Late Antiquity and cultures of the Far East have had an aesthetic appreciation for such landscapes. The Middle Ages, of course, also had a sense for the charm of animals and the enjoyment to be had with them, but this practically involved only domesticated animals (horses, dogs) or tamed individuals (falcons, ravens, monkeys, etc.). They also certainly had an appreciation for decorative flowers like roses or various aromatic herbs, but medieval and Renaissance gardens (as well as Baroque, Enlightenment, and Islamic gardens) are characterised rather by their unnaturalness, cultivatedness, and essential otherness, more like a geometry textbook than wilderness; for the same reason, Islamic gardens abound in "wasteful" amounts of running water. It is not completely surprising that "French" parks, with precisely trimmed trees and ornamental flower beds (conserved

still today in Versailles or Schönbrunn, for example) suddenly gave way in the 18th century to the English park – basically a “cultivated forest steppe.”

The Dream of Natural Innocence and the Beginnings of Environmental Sentiment

The idea that culture is deforming, arresting, false, distorting of human nature, and needing to be kept within certain bounds and resisted first arose in 18th century France – the most cultivated European country at that time – especially in the works of J. J. Rousseau (1712-1778). This is basically a modernised echo of the archaic idea of an original “golden” age of harmony between man and nature, when there was no hard labour, discord, falsehood, or power of one person over another – when people lived in a state of “original” innocence. This motif is mirrored in the first chapter of Genesis, just as it is in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Columbus’s letters from the Caribbean, or Bougainville’s account of his journey to Tahiti; more prudent individuals – the Gnostic Basilides, for example, or the Ophites – saw value in the “plucking of the fruit from the tree of knowledge” and the separation of man from the common course of natural phenomena – value lined with hardship, but worth it, in the end. While early industrialisation was beginning not only to seriously damage the non-human world but, to a certain degree, to distort human nature, voices were crying out for the protection of the “original,” “natural,” “untouched” world, to which a great deal of attention became fixed. This attention soon brought about



The geometrically precise plan of a French park from the 17th century. (After Herout)

the demise of its object, as the care and attention focused on the threatened natural world meant that it was no longer “original” and “untouched.” It seems that the signal to this movement, generally known as Romanticism (1780-1850), was more of a change in human nature than the damaging of the external world. The latter could be achieved even by pre-industrial means – a combination of burning forests, the charcoal trade, and clearing pastures can turn entire regions into semi-deserts, and the deforestation of the Mediterranean already was very advanced in Antiquity, as noted by Plato and Pliny the Elder. Early industrialisation damaged the natural world much less than it did man. Endeavours to treat the natural world “sparingly” here went hand in hand with a general effort to protect monuments and folk traditions. The Josephinian Enlightenment in Austria had no scruples about selling off monastery libraries for wrapping paper, and revolutionary Paris tore down several dilapidated Gothic churches as useless barns and symbols of superstition. Before Herder, it did not occur to anybody that what the peasants were singing or telling of in their piedmont cottages could be of value and worth listening to or recording (more on this in the section on folklore). At the same time, as previously mentioned, there was an increasing taste for past ages (medievalism) or earlier cultural or geological eras (the origin and development of archaeology and palaeontology) – basically a sense for the independence of historical phenomena and their value. It is not the aim of the book to describe further the history of this branch of European thought, which saw civilisation as a “boil on the face of the planet” and eventually culminated in environmentalism as a political movement. It is characteristic that this concept occurred in a culture with a markedly “polarised” thought. In the thought of China, for example, the dichotomy of nature/culture never arose – as in all “cosmic” empires, the Chinese Emperor was not only the leader of the Han, but also of the forests of Mount Emei and the fish of the Yellow Sea – he was simply the “master of the universe,” his job description being “to ensure harmony between heaven and earth.” In such a system of thought, the idea of a dialectic of

nature and culture cannot arise. If we were to discuss the problem in terms of our usual concepts, it would be most apposite to say that culture is a "continuation of nature by other means," and both processes are deeply analogous, though not completely identical. The classic European dichotomy of nature against culture (or vice versa) is a crude misunderstanding of the unity of the world and man's place in it, as man is an essential element and legitimate member of the living world (if termites held concerts in their mounds, an examination of them would fall under the field of entomology, not musicology - it would be much more sensible to divide science into the study of living things, including man and his epiphenomena, and the study of non-living phenomena, such as geology, astronomy, chemistry, etc.). Precisely because the above-mentioned conceptual dichotomy is possible, it is necessary to reject a simple adequation of the cultural and natural worlds, such as is maintained, in accented form, by sociobiology. Snails do not ask about the relation between nature and culture, simply because they cannot. It is not that various schemes particularly dear to sociobiology are missing in human society (their latent presence can be felt in certain undercurrents - many countryside old women behave as faithful pupils of E. O. Wilson), it is rather that they are uncultured and non culture-creating. Human culture and the human world are, from a certain perspective, *opus contra naturam*, but only to a certain degree. The "cardinal" question of the essential difference between nature and culture, or the total identification thereof, is a classic "non-question," where answers are not so much expressions of cognition but of future ideological/political orientation and implication. The discussion of this issue, then, is more a matter of "professions of belief" than anything else. It is not at all surprising that the environmental movement displays para-religious characteristics and that a number of its adherents secretly yearn for martyrdom, if not totally. The protection and conservation of natural resources and huntable animals always had the nature of religious prohibitions and taboos in hunter-gathering groups. It is clear that the thriving expansion of the human world is in some way oppressive of the natu-

ral world – it could be said that the issue of every postage stamp is accompanied by the disappearance of a butterfly and every compact disc by the silencing of a cicada. To look down on the non-human nature as a “valueless substrate,” as modern economic theory does (a flower has no value in a meadow, but does in a flower shop – i.e., the cost of picking and delivery by humans), is barbaric; just as barbaric, of course, is to reject the value of the human world and see value only in a world restored with forests full of bison and wolves. Humans are basically the only creature which is capable of doubting itself, which is one of the foundations of their great success and their cultural and intellectual innovation; radical self-hatred is something unusual in the living world. It is worth noting how different epochs accented opposite aspects in the relation to “nature” – Antiquity, for example, saw in nature primarily a loving mother and provider for man; the late 19th century saw in nature only struggle – teeth and claws and the necessity of remorseless battle with “the elements” and for “living space.”

The Nature of Civilisation

It is interesting briefly to remember what culture and the process of civilisation consists in. From a certain perspective, it consists in bringing forth, in space or time, something which under natural circumstances would not be. The whole matter begins with the nature of human language, which makes it possible to refer (note the etymology: *re-fero*, “bring again”) to something which is not actually present, whether spatially or temporally. Among animal communication, as previously mentioned, only the “dances” of bees have this property – much of what will be said here of humans could also relate, in a lesser degree, to bees. Individual cultures differ only in their degree of technical refinement, not in actual principles; from this perspective, it is all the same whether we dry rose hips for winter or import mangos (today, fetching strawberries in winter is no longer the whim of wicked stepmothers, but a reasonable task for adolescents, who need only go to the supermarket). If we were to try to

define the difference between humans and animals, the best we could say is that humans, of all living beings, least like to settle for the actual, though bees, ants, and hamsters also do it, on a lesser scale. The agricultural revolution represents a momentous turning point here – the significance of the transition to agriculture is generally underestimated, as is the fact that ethnic groups which did not make this transition are not capable of the combination of planning, scheduling, and conservation found in more technologically advanced phases of civilisation. Conservation, on all levels, is an integral part of this aspect of civilisation: a piece of dried meat will last long after the rest of the mammoth decays; the son, now grey-haired, still looks like a baby from the old photograph; an amphora in a museum or grain in a sill look good long after their brothers went to ruin. Cults of the dead and memories of the dead also belong to this category of phenomena. Representation (i.e., to make something present) in time and space is the common denominator of industrial and post-industrial civilisation – e.g., the telephone, television, as well as modern transportation and the long-distance conveyance of products. It would take several years and many difficulties to walk to Singapore, but we can be there in twelve hours by plane. We also do not need to despair that Plato is long dead and that we will forget him – we have the Dialogues preserved like conserves in the pantry. This relates to other fundamental characteristics of civilisation: the artificial “mortification” of something which is part of the process of civilisation, whether material or psychological – Plato’s Dialogues are similarly “frozen” like vegetables in a supermarket. In this way, the substances of civilisation are separated from the usual cycle of material – frozen cauliflower for a few months, an oak table for a few decades, silicon and aluminium in glass and bricks for centuries, if not longer – likewise for the above-mentioned museum collections. In texts also, the recorded words are as if “saved for harder times,” taken out of their usual independent and unwritten “circulation.” We need only dip into a library, we find, “conserved” for us, the diaries of Captain Cook. *Physis*, of course, gnaws on the “dead” goods of civilisation with the teeth of time

whenever they are left unguarded. It is also worth mentioning that, in its late phases, civilisation is producing a number of artefacts of relatively short durability, as opposed to archaic ages, when a stone axe or a flaxen shirt often outlived its owner. This tendency, imitating, in a way, the natural "flimsiness" of leaves or flower petals, as opposed to old European "heftiness," was to be found long ago in Far Eastern culture, though even there it is gradually deepening. With the use of biodegradable material this process is coming even closer to nature - even books, songs, and scientific publications are not written today "for the ages," but for a single season, and whatever does not directly catch on drops below the horizon like dead birds. The rediscovery of a forgotten genius like Roger Bacon is something typical only for the early stages of civilisation.

Disposability and repeatability are also integral parts of civilisation - a light bulb should illuminate after every flick of the switch, perhaps one hundred times (this aspect in some ways resembles the disciplinary exercises of the military; and modern science places the requirement of repeatability on experiments - Koestler humourously points out that sexual intercourse and storms are not less real because they are not indefinitely repeatable, if at all). Nature, as opposed to culture, is somewhat "softer" and weaker, but, on the other hand, has a greater degree of freedom - a Jeep can easily overtake an antelope on the plains, but it cannot follow it in the forest. Likewise, technology is "hard," and of all manipulative disciplines, it is the most liberated from context - penicillin works for good as well as ill, regardless of the personality of the doctor or pharmacist, the spirit of the age, the position of the planets, etc.

Another fundamental characteristic of the process of civilisation relates to the separation of things earlier connected. Apart from joining things that were earlier unconnected (breeding mules from donkeys and horses, placing "Indian" chicken steak and "Peruvian" potatoes on the same plate, etc.), the process of civilisation consists mostly in separating things originally conjoined, for which a significant amount of energy is needed - both for the act itself and for maintaining the separation. From

swamps, civilisation makes a combination of ponds and dry land; from limonite, it separates out metallic iron; from cows it produces steak and Emmental cheese; it colours brown hair blond or black. The formation of ideologies or of the modern European nations is of a similar nature, releasing an unprecedented energy – warfare between New Guinean villages was indeed permanent, but it was not enough to create a sub-equatorial Verdun. Every human action representing a functional utilisation of human potential blocks energy within it and prevents the world from coming to a unity which, paradoxically, at its full extent, would mean the heat death of the universe. In continuing the trend of simpler technologies (and life, in general) and creating many polarised dividing lines, science and technology are contributing to their diversity and variety, but also to instability. Whereas it is necessary to distil and transport fuel for an automobile, a horse can graze even in a ditch; while there is always the danger that our fields will be overgrown by weeds, and eventually forest, the forest is fundamentally more stable for hunter-gatherers; while the forest could burn down or dry out, this is no danger to rock, etc. Technology creates dividing lines through the separation of polarities and, eventually, through sophisticated new connections on an unprecedented scale. From all the available possibilities, our civilisation, with unswerving certainty, always chooses the one most technologically, energetically, and financially demanding, and which most closely concurs with the above-described trend. Energy demanding processes actually began long before civilisation – life is more energy demanding than non-life, warm bloodedness more than cold bloodedness (a crocodile's food requirements are several times less than those of a tiger of the same weight, but there are no Siberian crocodiles), etc. – we have merely furthered these trends *ad infinitum*. True to the Gospel appeal to be hot or cold but not lukewarm, the computer world knows only plus and minus – no gradients, just binary crossroads (the opposite appeal – an anti-technology one, so to speak, is also found in the gospels: Jesus in the desert resists the temptations of the devil to miraculously turn rocks into bread,

even though it would be a harmless and useful act). A distinctive and very energy-demanding attempt at a perfect separation of something which was at least somewhat inclined to be mixed was South African apartheid. Polarisation and the segregation of polarities in various areas has clearly progressed in the life of our generation as well. While in traditional societies all domestic animals were sometimes suffered and were somewhat protected and even loved by people, the situation has become polarised in the last fifty years into the nightmare of factory farms and the “paradise” of house pets to an unprecedented degree (more on this in the box “Mute Creatures”) Literature has also split into the “realistic” branch, portraying naturalistically described sex and bouts of drinking, and the “fantastic” branch, depicting pseudo-medieval chivalry and dreamlike landscapes with archetypal images. The diction of “entertainment” genres has achieved an unprecedented fatuous nonsense, while that of specialised literature is more and more affected and estranged from everyday language. The pole of “danger” has moved toward adrenaline sports and motoring, and that of “safety” toward the insurance business and the social state (Auschwitz, the “*anus mundi*,” was a frightening display of how, with the aid of technological finesse, the pole of horror can be separated from the continuum and concentrated in one place: all of those murdered there would have died anyway, but probably much later in life, individually, without the accompanying terror, and of natural causes). Interest in the natural world has separated, on the one hand, into colourfully-illustrated publications for biophiles among the general population or pitifully sentimental stories about animals and, on the other, the world of cladistic molecular taxonomy and computer models. The classical ethology of Lorenz’s era was still a successful attempt at joining scientific scholarship with a general interest in life. It is worth noting how in the present era we have the polarity of extremely mechanical neo-Darwinism on one side, and on the other, a primitive and unrelenting creationism – more considerate and sophisticated forms of both evolutionism and creationism would be unmercifully swept under the table. In-

terest in history and in the past have been separated into mystical/pseudo-historical films and books and to theories of history, showing interest in nothing other than texts and demonstrating a pretentious lack of interest in the world around them and a contempt for the naivety of wanting to get to know the past. The mass media still operate mostly on the principle of the confrontation of extreme opinions (they interview, say, an eco-terrorist together with a fanatical economist), and more sober and measured voices lose the hope of being heard at all. To an unprecedented degree, the “guts” are being torn out of a once-unified world.

Environmentalism and its Intellectual Roots

The main motivating power of the environmentalist movement is essentially the feeling of estrangement, put into motion by Romanticism, and not the actual decline of human living standards. This mood arises only in times which “allow” for it, whether from an economic or political perspective – therefore it arose in the 20th century during the prosperity of the 1960s in the U.S.A. Material living conditions are not a sufficient balm for the feeling of uprootedness; today’s conditions are “objectively” better than ever before (even the economic conditions of workers in the factories of early capitalism were better than those of the countryside poor – the reasons for their discontent was the “inhuman” environments of the world of manufacturing, and the loss of a sense of purpose – one of the most important things for man). Concern about the pollution of the outer world, felt more personally than a mere technical problem, is basically a projection of the fear of pollution of the inner, psychical world. Such a devotion, therefore, has a number of characteristics reminiscent of the obsession connected to ritual cleanliness in many religions such as Judaism or Islam; we essentially react the same whether it is a curse or chlorinated hydrocarbons applied to an apple. These feelings primarily evoke the contamination, denaturation, and deformation of the contents of our psyche, which are transferred, in accentuated form,

onto the world around us. The phenomenon itself is related to the activity of the mass media, through which strange and obscure content flows into our psyche. Not coincidentally are individual television stations called "channels." Mass media, and especially television, have their undeniably positive sides, of course - with their continual saturation of the viewer's psyche with "archetypal" contents, they are an appropriate substitute for otherwise absent fear, love, struggle, various passions and aggressions, and this, it seems, has prevented a new world war more successfully than all disarmament commissions, though at a very high price, which, of course, always comes with "peace," or the absence of war, like, in former times, paying tributes to the Tatars - life is essentially paid for with life itself.

Environmental fears are rooted in another inborn human idea - the nearby end of the world, which will be obliterated because of its sinfulness (gradually coming to be identified with industrial civilisation). This idea is found in nearly all cultures, either in the form of periodic cycles of destructive cataclysms or various forms of a Last Judgement, already knocking at the door (Late Antiquity liked to imagine *ekpyrosis* - the destruction of the world by fire). This evidently involves the projection of the unconsciously felt human finitude of individuals onto the universe as a whole (to a certain degree, we always have an impression that the universe, at least the "best" of it, begins and ends with us), and there essentially has never been an age which was not convinced that the degree of iniquity is already flowing over and that the world will soon be obliterated, and that this is basically for the good. Thus preachers of eschatological tidings have always found doors open for them and always have a guaranteed audience, and the Apocalypse of John has always been among the most commonly read Biblical texts. That the world is now believed to be headed for destruction by human activity is basically an expression of modern hubris and is the polar opposite to the idea that the world will be "saved" by human activity; even in the case of the world, as in daily life, the rule holds that whatever we cannot love, we hope to at least destroy. This is not a totally insignificant danger, but it arises

mainly from intensive expectation of a catastrophe by masses of people and the fact that they secretly look forward to a Great Ecological Catastrophe, which would immediately solve many of their personal problems, or that they expect it to obliterate industrial civilisation, “cleansing” the world and bringing about a return to some age of paradise, which most fantasise as having many medieval, or, rather, Tolkienesque, characteristics. The danger is that what we imploringly “wish for,” even though we “fear” it, usually comes – in this case, primarily as a societal catastrophe, not generally an environmental one (it is noted that the apocalyptic tradition is completely foreign to the Far East, though in practice there is no lack of catastrophe there).

The anti-civilisation movement was especially intensive from the end of the 19th century in Germany, which, probably traumatised from the violent Christianisation of the early Middle Ages, periodically tries to separate itself from southern and western centres of civilisation and cope with the “contamination” of something of vital importance – in the Reformation, the original Christian faith was seen as having been defiled, in the era of Romanticism, it was the German language, in the Nazi era, it was the German genome, and in the era of the “Greens,” it was the German soil, atmosphere, and forests. In-between periods, on the other hand, the custom is to take on the achievements of western civilisation and perfect them. Around the turn of the 20th century, German thought distinguished culture (*Kultur*) and civilisation (*Zivilisation*), wherein the former encompasses primarily psychological achievements, and the latter, those of technology and urbanisation (e.g., Wagner’s opera as compared to the Krupp factories). Culture was seen as “proper,” and civilisation as foreign, destructive, and undesirable; there was a pronounced aversion to cities as centres of degeneration, iniquity, and all manner of unnaturalness – this idea stretches back to the Middle Ages, if not to Antiquity. A similar style of thought, which can be easily observed in the works of Konrad Lorenz (1973, 1983), for example, or in the German-Jewish political writer Max Nordau (1892), and recognisable also in the Nietzschean “hunger for myth,” led in the 1930s to the eruption of archaism

during the Nazi era. Jung rightly discerned in German culture a heritage combining “barbarian” vitality and creativity with an oppressive, and quite recent shell, or, more accurately, *persona*, of civilisation (see the essays, “Wotan” and “Nach der Katastrophe” in the Collected Works).

Catastrophic vision generally underestimates how “deeply rooted” the natural world and human nature are. Despite various alarm signals, total catastrophe is still far off – though it is somewhat gloomy that we are slowly sending the Siberian tiger and literature, for example, to the grave to rest with the mammoth and the pyramids. The world need not be organised by some “central committee”; like raking leaves in a park: left alone, they will nearly disappear on their own by spring. Self-regulation and indomitable vitality are among the fundamental, hopeful, and formidable aspects of *physis*. Existence is true in a deeper way than is truth, in the sense of “adequation” – we understand the full extent of the truth of snails or dandelions only when we try to eradicate them from the garden.