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Catherine DeWitt majors in English and has an interest in environmental issues.
John Hare is a professor of philosophy at Calvin. This essay was first given as a lecture to CPOL in January 1990.
Anthony Meyer plans to enter seminary after he completes his major in English. He’s just a normal guy.
Arie Ringnalda’s sculpture on the cover of this month’s issue is currently on display at Perception, a local gallery.
Dave VanderLaan infrequently writes poetry.
Mary Vander Meer, a senior, majors in English and psychology and is a newlywed.
Cover: Arie Ringnalda  Illustrations: Conrad Bakker
Ever since childhood I have loved liquor stores. It was not that I had many opportunities to peruse the shelves and racks of bottles before I reached an age at which I became aware of the effects of alcohol. But on the rare occasions when I would tag along with my father as he bought a bottle of wine or something a bit more hearty, I stood in awe of the high shelves overflowing with bottles, each differently shaped, and each showing its colored contents through sculpted glass. I did not know what these bottles contained, but I loved looking at their shapes and colors.

Though I did not know that it was for the same reason, I also took up any offer I received to go along to the hardware store. Being surrounded by those hundreds of gadgets, fixtures, tools, and boards gave me a sense of contentment, if I can reconstruct a feeling over a decade removed from the present. That all these different objects could fill a space past what should have been its limit and that in this mass of dissimilar objects there could remain a sense of order overwhelmed my young mind. I would usually lose track of my thought and stand in the middle of a row, my field of vision filled with objects which shared no similarity save their proximity on the shelf, struck by the disorder brought under control so well.

As I grew and started to recognize my fascination with diversity held within the boundaries of an enclosed space, I started to take interest in other places and events which also exhibited this phenomenon. One place I recently found which does this is the Canadian Parliament Building. Designed in the neo-Gothic style, each corner, each recessed place, each wall, and each ceiling holds some sort of ornament. One particular ceiling sticks in my memory. The building was designed and built in the first years of the twentieth century, and the gargoyles were sculpted to reflect the age. This particular ceiling is filled with sculpted heads that represent Canada’s different provinces and armed forces. A World-War-I-helmeted infantryman looks down on the building’s visitors from his vantage point near a cowboy from one of the Western provinces. In another corner, a flying ace shares a section of the ceiling with the head of a seaman from one of the Maritime provinces. All these different heads, each meticulously chiseled from its original block of stone, share a small, enclosed space twenty feet above the ground. Each differs greatly from the one next to it, yet they all abide harmoniously within a confined space.

Each of these gargoyles, as well as each bottle in the liquor store and each bolt in the hardware store, fills its own space without regard to the
other objects sharing the larger, confining space. Yet as each object fills its own space, it respects that of the others. One object does not leave its assigned place and infringe on that of any other object. In this way the possible chaos of the situation is held in check and actually creates a sense of awe in those who delicately observe it.

Though this arrangement of differing objects pleases my aesthetic sense, when I see similar arrangements in society I am not pleased. This type of approach to societal structure is taken not only by those in favor of retaining apartheid in South Africa but also by members of our own community who fear the social and cultural changes which accompany ethnic and racial diversification.

On the other hand, those striving for diversification tend to be going too far in their drive for multi-cultural recognition. What made me appreciate the diversity I found in those places mentioned above is that I was able to discover them on my own. No one forced me to go to the hardware store and told me that I should like the arrangement of wares. No one told me that I should like the neo-Gothic architecture of the Canadian Parliament Building. I discovered pleasure in each on my own. Even though the opportunities were made available to me, I was not forced to enjoy the diversity I found. Part of the pleasure I found in this diversity, I believe, came from discovering it.

But when someone tells me that I should accept another culture as readily as I accept my own, I cringe. While under other conditions I could have found pleasure in the differences between the two cultures and joy in the discovery of these differences, when I am told that I ought to do so I lose some of this delight in difference.

Those who are striving for multi-cultural awareness are working toward a goal of which I approve. However, I do not agree with the way they are going about it. Forcing multi-cultural awareness and the acceptance of ethnic diversity by leveling charges of political incorrectness against those whom they wish to make more sensitive, these parties are taking away the joy of discovery and putting on guard those whom they are trying to sensitize to the issues.

However, if these groups were to make available information about various ethnic and cultural groups and let people make judgments and form opinions for themselves rather than forcing opinions through accusations, this joy in the discovery of diversity would not be taken away. As with bottles, nuts and boards, and gargoyles, the pleasure one can find in the diversity among people is best discovered on one’s own.
Goodnight

I am no dentist
but I know the jigsaw
patterns of flat sharp hard
white and ivory
inside your
mouth

All those times
with coffee cream
and sugar donuts
between us
I’d see your teeth
telling me
the deeper meaning
in the movie we’d just seen

I’ve known no mouth like yours

Your toothbrush bristles
so soon gone aside
looking tired
bending like
spines of little old ladies
who cannot
stand up straight

Put the cap back on the toothpaste please

Hug me
Kiss me too
I know you hate this
taste of
toothpaste on my teeth
but
kisses meet
first with a layer or two of
lips in between

Sleep then
When you wake
the morning will have washed away
this bitter taste of mint
in me

Then reach for me
touch lips
cheek
hips
even my teeth to
greet you and your
one in the whole world
mouth

We fit
we two
in bed
goodnight my sweet

love you.
Love you.

Mary Vander Meer
My husband and I always looked forward to retirement. Neither of us were comfortable in the work environment and longed to be in an environment we could choose for ourselves. After a huge retirement bash, we began to live out our dreams. We went camping for weeks on end and traveled all over the country visiting friends and relatives. We even took a trip to Europe simply on a whim. There was one activity we enjoyed in every city we visited. We enjoyed going to the zoo.

Now I want to get one thing perfectly clear from the start—I believe that zoos are inhumane and useless. Animals can only be their true selves when they are free. What is so amazing about a cheetah when it is trapped in a cage and can’t run? Where is the power of the lion when his dinner is thrown at him, already dead? And where does the beauty of the soaring eagle go when it can only sit on the ground? All creatures are defined as they live. In cages, lions and cheetahs are simply cats, and eagles are only birds. I would rather watch an African safari on TV than go to see animals at the zoo.

I suppose you are wondering why we visited the zoo so often if we hated it so much. Well, there is one animal the zoo can show us like no other place can—the human being. It is amazing what humans are like once they throw off the expectations of society and behave according to their natural tendencies. And when human beings are true human beings they sure can be entertaining.

As I was saying, we loved to travel and go to zoos; that is until about four years ago. Four years ago this all stopped. Now we spend our days and evenings in the house, usually watching whatever is on television. All this changed in one day, right here at our hometown zoo. It had been one of our most entertaining trips, but it was also our last. My husband, Clem, refuses to go back, and to tell the truth, I don’t want to either.
I remember it was hot for being early May. The sun had been baking the ground all week and the temperatures were well into the eighties. Clem and I were just itching to do something on this beautiful Saturday and with very little discussion we agreed to go to the zoo. Clem surprised (or should I say, frightened) me when he danced into the kitchen for breakfast. His thin white rim of hair was hidden beneath a neon pink baseball cap with orange stripes. The truly shocking thing about him, though, was his pants. For the first time in probably ten years he was wearing shorts. His legs were radiantly bright above his black socks and sandals as they let their decades of hibernation. The buttons down the front of his short seemed to quiver under the strain forced upon them by the years of expansion they were trying to hide. Humming a waltz, he grabbed my arm and we danced around the kitchen until we smelled smoke from our forgotten toaster.

We arrived at the zoo early; anybody arriving before 9:30 got in free. We immediately made our way to the long, wooden bench in front of the duck pond where we usually spent our mornings.

That morning proceeded quite rapidly with the usual assortment of duck imitations we see at every zoo. The best imitation was done by a young father who did a walking squat the entire length of the pond with his knees akimbo and his elbows flapping at his side; all the while he was loudly talking like Donald Duck. He did this, as you can imagine, much to the dismay of his wife who steadily turned more red. However, his daughter in the stroller thoroughly enjoyed the spectacle. His rating went up in part because of his willingness to continue despite the pleadings of his desperate wife.

The highlight of our day arrived shortly before noon. She was a simply immense woman whom we watched slowly approach the pond. She seemed to be almost rolling down the path which, luckily for her, had a slight downhill slant. As she passed in front of our bench, I noticed the true wonders of her body. On top of her vast expanse of flesh rested a head which seemed to be about three sizes too small for her body, while her face held the smallest mouth I had ever seen! The virtual absence of a neck made it look as if this golf-ball-sized head was simply balanced on top of her body with no permanent connection. To offset this extremity beneath her floral-print sundress were a pair of tiny feet. They had to have been size five at the most, probably smaller. At every step these feet seemed to quiver and shake under her weight as if they would snap off at the ankles.

She stopped just past our bench to lean over the railing (as best she could) and watch the ducks. Quickly losing interest, she turned to continue her roll downhill when she noticed the duck food gumball machine. We watched her insert a quarter, catch a handful of duck food, and begin to lob it piece by piece to the ducks. With her handful half gone, she suddenly stopped her arm mid-air. She took a long look at the brown crust of protein in her hand and popped it in her mouth. Our eyes grew wide with wonder. We fought back tears of laughter as she bought another handful and continued on her way.

By the time we recovered from our fit of hysterics it was 12:30 and time for lunch. We were especially blessed that day to have the entertainment continue throughout our lunch. At the table across from ours sat two teenagers—a boy who looked like a girl and a girl who looked like a boy. His beautiful blond hair flowed down over his shoulders while her hair seemed to be a thin layer of black fuzz or moss growing on top of her head. Both bodies were almost completely covered with black leather which contrasted with their thin pale faces and blue lips. All four ear lobes seemed to be made of solid metal as their earrings glowed in the sunlight.
They sat close together as they faced us, stuffing french fries into each other's mouths and listening to their headphones. They were calmly feeding when all of a sudden, as if on cue, they began to rhythmically pound the table and stomp their feet with expressions of great pain on their faces. Then the threw up their arms, looked to the sky, screeched out a prolonged OOOOHYYEEAAHHHHH which reverberated throughout the outdoor café, and slammed their faces to the table.

They resumed their feeding as we made our way out of the café and toward the bench we had seen across from the monkey cages. Time passed slowly as we sat in the afternoon sun. We were sure that nothing could top our morning experiences and we were right. Traffic was slow in front of the monkey cages. Even the monkeys were lethargic in the warmth.

We were preparing to leave when we saw our two leather-coated friends walking our way with contorted faces, beating the air with their arms. Right behind them came the duck family, the young father already practicing his monkey imitations and his wife already begging him to stop. From the other direction came our third friend once again rolling downhill toward us. Clem and I had to suppress our laughter at imagining what was going to happen with them all together in one place. As they converged on the monkey cages, Clem, not wanting to miss any of the action, stood up to get a better view. As he stood, the four buttons shot from his shorts with a sharp snap and flew in all different directions.

At the snap, all the eyes that had been trained on the monkeys turned to see the old man with a neon striped baseball hat standing in his underwear with a pair of shorts crumpled down around his ankles. Clem froze a moment of shock. His legs were now two-tone; a blinding white where his shorts had been and a fiery red where the sun had burnt them. Clem shot down to grab his pants. The downward momentum thrust his body forward and knocked him off-balance. Unable to move his feet, Clem swung his arms in huge circles as he attempted to fly away from the on-rushing cement. He hung in the air for what seemed like an eternity before his body crashed to the ground. I rushed to help him up but he refused my hand. I, along with everybody else, watched as he removed the pants from around his ankles. With as much dignity as he could muster, he rose to his feet and deposited his shorts in the nearest trash barrel. Standing there in his underwear, he looked at us all, lowered his eyes, and marched off toward the exit. I bolted after him as the silence behind us was slowly transformed into muffled laughter and finally exploded into outright hysterics.

It has been four years and neither of us has ever mentioned the zoo. I think we are afraid we might again see our species as we really are. Now, instead, we watch humans on TV. Here there are never any fat people who roll instead of walk, no fathers who act like idiots, no couples with black leather and blue lips who scream things at random while they stuff food in each other's mouths, and no old men with neon hats who walk around in their underwear. It may not be what humans are really like, but it sure is safer than seeing them at the zoo. Now, all day long, we watch the people trapped in his box as we sit at home in our underwear.
Hello, darkness my old friend.

I walked alone.

Nothing.
The halo of a street lamp
step ahead.

And no one dare . . .

Stop!

No! warning a hand fell
like a flash tall
cold and damp Help! split the night
Please! cobblestones a hand split
tall

no! thing tall
a head Help! without listening
split the stabbed by the
touch naked No! vision

Hear my words! stabbed split
I saw No! thing naked Stop!

But my words the thing
stabbed by the thing fell
and no one dare
naked alone

left its seeds silence

and whispered No!

Dave VanderLaan
Here in the United States the world seems to be at our fingertips. We poke it here and there and shape it into what will bring in the most profit. Then we jab a little harder, dig a little deeper. We continue to squeeze out as much as we can, dredging resources and heaping up waste. And slowly, but surely, we finger the world until it becomes grossly distorted, dried out, and nothing more than a lifeless, rotten, soft shell. Lacking shape and in shreds, its remnants rest in our hands.

Wendell Berry is concerned with these remnants. He received his master’s degree from the University of Kentucky in 1957 and is now a professor there. In addition, Berry raises sheep on his farm called Lanes Landing which slopes down to the shores of the Kentucky River. He has published many books, including *Nathan Coulter* (1960), *The Broken Ground* (1964), and, perhaps his most well-known, *The Unsettling of America* (1977). He has also published essays such as “God and Country” (1988) and an anthology of poetry, entitled *Collected Poems* (1982). Berry’s grass-roots approach to life reflects itself in his books, essays, and poetry. Through his writing, Berry encourages people to work towards re-building an exploited world through land stewardship.

Above all, Berry strongly opposes expansion through exploitation. To term this systematic development as growth is a contradiction in terms, he believes. Berry explains in *Home Economics*, “The pattern of industrial ‘development’ on the farm and in the forest, as in the coal fields, is that of combustion and exhaustion—not ‘growth,’ a biological metaphor that is invariably contradicted by industrial practice.”

America’s conception of success is inaccurate, according to Berry. He thinks Americans translate success into buying power, or consumerism. He argues that this consumerism dominates our lives and contributes to a faulty economic notion that the world is at our disposal without expending much effort. For
example, when we want a new outfit of clothing, we purchase it ready-made at Woodland Mall. Usually we do not even consider driving to a fabric store, selecting material, thread, and buttons and sewing it ourselves. Other American staples like fast-food restaurants, bank machines, and microwave ovens reflect a similar attitude.

At first glance, Berry admits we seem to have created a worry-free, hassle-free lifestyle in which all one needs to be is a consumer; we seem to be supplied with everything which could make us happy. Looking more closely, however, he claims this apparent Utopia is actually self-destructive because we are forgetting how to care for ourselves. Instead, we depend on malls and Meijer’s to supply us with what we need.

Berry explains that our culture “is being rapidly reduced to a mere economy, in which nothing is valued that is not profitable.” The environment is a case in point. In itself, the land does not wear a price tag, so it is exploited, abused, and neglected. However, it is the main producer, indirectly or directly, of all we have. Somehow this connection gets lost in the hurry to make money. Berry warns if we destroy the earth, we destroy ourselves.

Because of our economy, we are estranged not only from ourselves and the environment but also from God. In Berry’s opinion, if we neglect the earth we neglect the Lord’s mandate for us to be stewards of the land. We choose not to remember that “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof.” Instead we think of it as ours. We want to be in charge, instead of just being stewards, or caretakers. But Berry stresses we must remember to treat the earth as a borrowed item. We need to keep it clean, respect its owner, and realize that we will be held responsible if anything happens to it.

Berry thinks that scripture addresses a triangular relationship among God, man, and the earth. Revelation 4:11, in Berry’s opinion, is “an indispensable standard for stewardship”: “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasures they are and were created” (emphasis added). This passage clarifies why the earth was created—not for our pleasure, but for God’s.
In his essay, "God and Country," which he presented at the North American Conference on Christianity and Ecology, Berry explains, "Our responsibility, then, as stewards, the obligation that inescapably goes with our dominion over the other creatures, is to safeguard God’s pleasure in his work." To help us better understand the meaning of stewardship, Berry uses the term "usufruct." Citing the *Oxford English Dictionary*, Berry writes that usufruct is "The right of temporary possession, use, or enjoyment of the advantages of property belonging to another, so far as may be had without causing damage or prejudice to this." Berry summarizes the idea behind usufruct when he explains that "If God created all things for his pleasure, then we have no right to abuse anything."

Berry argues that churches are especially trapped within the American economic system. In "God and Country," he admits, "We all, obviously, are to some extent guilty of this damning adaptation;" nevertheless, he urges us to "set our hearts against" it and to "try with all our might to undo" this adaptation. In order to free ourselves from these trappings of our economy, Berry calls us to work "outside the system," against mere consumerism, in order to bring about change. This would involve sustainable living with an interdependent community at its core.

Living outside the system, in Berry’s opinion, means placing economic, money-making values beneath more important moral values which we believe, but do not act on, like neighborliness, stewardship, and peaceableness.

Initially, Wendell Berry refused to be interviewed. However, after much persuasion, he agreed only under the condition that he would be interviewed by letter rather than over the telephone. I mailed him twenty-seven questions based on what I have read and heard about him. Although he did not elaborate much about his beliefs and gave only minimal responses, Berry did confirm some of my understanding of his philosophy.

He expounded on the idea that we need to act on our beliefs and that the only way to do this is to work outside the American economic system, or at least to bring "the values of power and wealth... under the rule of the values we have always lipserved but have really held in contempt: neighborliness, stewardship, personal responsibility, freedom, independence, peaceableness." He thinks this list of values is largely encompassed by the idea of economic stewardship. Although these two words seem to be a contradiction, Berry explains, "There is no necessary inconsistency. All we have to do is see that
The Peace Of Wild Things
(Complete poem from Collected Poems)

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.
ians. I was reminded of one of Berry’s poems, “The Peace of Wild Things.” After becoming dis­couraged by the too-busy bustle of high-tech life, Berry writes of a sort of Wordsworthian retreat and lets nature be his teacher, his healer.

Today, seventy percent of the “smoky” haze over the Appalachians is caused by pollution. Thirty percent of the fir trees are dying as a combined result of acid rain and a tree fungus epidemic. Even so, God’s grandeur still can be seen and felt. There is still enough worth saving.

Although Berry’s ideas may seem a bit idealistic to some and, to others, impossible to achieve in today’s society, we cannot pass them off. His suggestions for repairing the earth are difficult, time-consuming, and life-changing. We must learn to work hard again and challenge ourselves with this enormous task of learning to be better stewards of God’s land. Even if this means merely being more aware of the detrimental effects our economic structure can have on ourselves and the environment, this is a step of progress.

It may seem that the type of society and economic structure Berry hopes for is impossible in this world. Yet he maintains it is possible, keeping in mind that change begins within the individual. Berry has undergone the change himself, and he now has reached our “community” through his writing. He has dispersed his ideas, planted seeds in all of us, and has encouraged us to grow and change from within as well.

In a sense Berry is very realistic because he acknowledges the limitations of his philosophy. He realizes that it will not bring about revolutionary change. He simply is trying to live according to what he believes and encourages us to do the same. Although Berry may seem to be idealistic, so are the teachings of scripture. Many of us use the Bible as a guide for daily living, and even though we know we can never match its expectations, we still keep it as our guide. Trying to improve ourselves, we struggle against the tide of human exploitation. I believe this is what Berry is calling us to do regarding our care for the earth.

Perhaps stewardship is often ignored because it requires so much work, so much re-shaping of a world we have abused. As we stand, with the remnants of God’s beautiful earth in our hands, we have the choice of letting them sift through our fingers or holding them fast, working from memory to help restore the earth towards its original shape as God intended.

APRIL/MAY 1991
Clockwise from top left: Michael Graves, Disney headquarters building; David Strick—ONYX; Nicolas Poussin, *Et in Arcadia Ego*; Philip, courtesy of The Art Institute of Chicago; Peter Eisenman, aerial view of the Wexner Center; Underlay, interior of the Wexner Center.
The term “postmodernism” has become pervasive without ever having been given a clear sense. In the following pages I will try to give an account of what the term means and say how I respond to postmodernism as a Christian. My account is influenced by a long series of discussions with Gordon Beam at Lehigh University, but his conclusions are different than mine. The term is notoriously vague and has been used to describe a bewildering variety of cultural artifacts from MTV videos (Madonna’s “Papa Don’t Preach”) to books of philosophy (Richard Rorty’s *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*). I will come back to Rorty and Madonna at the end. Let me start with two examples of what I take to be postmodernist artifacts, to give a sense of what I am talking about. The first one is self-consciously postmodernist and the second one not. The first is a sculpture of Jackie Kennedy “in her bloodstained Dallas deathday ensemble,” with a video monitor showing cartoons where her face should be. The second is the “Last Supper Talking Clock.” The advertisement for it which appeared last year in *The Grand Rapids Press* reads, “Every hour a disciple (in Leonardo’s picture) announces his name and tells the time, followed by words of our Lord Jesus. For example, ‘I am Peter, the time is 12 o’clock. I have been with Jesus who said: a new commandment I give to you, that you love one another.’ Soft music follows. Automatic flashing of candle light for each disciple as he announces the time.”

Though now used liberally, the term “postmodernism” has its original home in architecture. As the term is used to describe phenomena further and further away from architecture it has a less and less definite sense. In architecture “postmodernism” refers, literally, to what comes after modernism. We need, then, to have some sense of what “modernism” means. This will be the topic of my first section, and I will use Le Corbusier as my primary reference. I want
to claim, though, that modernism is a cultural phenomenon which extends past architecture, just as postmodernism does. I will start, therefore, with Paul Cezanne and then talk about Le Corbusier. I will end this section by referring to TS Eliot. In the second section, I will go on to talk about postmodernism and will concentrate on architecture and philosophy. I will try to make a distinction between two kinds of postmodernist architecture, “traditional” and “schismatic” (using Robert Stern’s terminology). The section will end with a reference to Richard Rorty. Finally, I will return to Madonna’s video and try to defend the claim that this is correctly understood as a postmodernist cultural artifact.

Modernism

Paul Cezanne. Cezanne did not like talking about his work; and even with artists who do like talking about their work, one has to be careful not to let their words get in the way of their work. But Cezanne said one thing about what he was trying to achieve which I want to use as an introduction to him. He said that he was trying to do “Poussin from Nature.” If you look at Nicolas Poussin’s painting *Et in Arcadia Ego*, painted in 1655, you will see some of what Cezanne wanted. There is a sense of order and balance, a structure of harmony in which one shape seems to answer the other. We feel that everything is in place, and nothing is casual or vague. Each form stands out clearly and one can visualize it as a firm, solid body. The whole has a natural simplicity which looks restful and calm. But Cezanne says, “Poussin from Nature.” In fact the painting, though it may look natural, is bound by an elaborate set of rules—rules governing perspective, rules governing the proper geometrical relations between the major figures, rules governing the gradation of color tones from dark to light. Look at the elaborate posing of the arms, hands and fingers to form a circle. Then this circle is balanced by the strong vertical axis of the standing figure on the right. Moreover, the painting was first drawn with lines on the canvas taken from lines on an original drawing on paper. But there are no lines in nature. The whole process of posing and drawing is artificial; it is a grid imposed by the artist. In effect Poussin has represented nature as it should rationally be rather than nature as it is in fact experienced through the senses. Now the painters who immediately preceded Cezanne in France, the Impressionists, rebelled against these rules. They wanted to paint from nature directly. When you look at a painting by Claude Monet, for example, you can sense the directness of his presentation, his capturing of an actual visual moment on the canvas. It is partly because he gave up mixing pigments on the palette and, instead, applied them separately onto the canvas in small dabs and dashes. Partly it is because of the absence of lines and careful geometry. But Cezanne was not satisfied. “Impressionist pictures,” he said, “tend to be brilliant but messy.” They had lost, he thought, the striving for harmonious design, the achievement of solid simplicity and perfect balance, the sense of order and necessity. He decided “to make of Impressionism something solid and durable, like the art of the museums.” He wanted *Poussin* from Nature.

The painting on which I am going to concentrate is *Basket of Apples*, painted in 1894 and hanging in The Art Institute of Chicago. Notice, first, that this is not a picture of everyday life. It is not from nature in that sense. It is a pure invention. The basket rests on a block, the cookies on a platter set on a book, the apples on a richly folded cloth, and all these together lie on a table. Constantly, one thing put on top of another. The painting is a construction. Yet, at the same time, there are elements of disorder. Compare the apples in the basket with the apples apparently randomly spread on the tablecloth. Compare the folds in the cloth with the order of the cookies. The balance he achieves is not simply a balance of large and small units; it is a balance (as Meyer Schapiro puts it) between the stable and the less stable, a balance of units that are themselves some of them balanced and some of them not. This is how to understand the odd tilting of the bottle. Again, no
Jottle is actually like that. The painting is not from nature in that sense. But what Cezanne has done is to create balance when the major vertical element is itself unbalanced. You can compare the bottle here with the vertical axis of Poussin's painting, the standing figure on the right that I mentioned. How does Cezanne achieve balance? Well, the tilting of the right side of the bottle corresponds to other diagonals—the inclined basket, the foreshortened lines of the cookies, and then the folds of the tablecloth converging to the lower edge. There are also balances of color and of texture. Constantly, he leaves things out in order to achieve this effect. Notice the astonishingly abstract treatment of the table, and again the right side of the bottle.

In what sense, then, is the picture from nature? I think a key here is another of Cezanne’s sayings, “For progress in realization there is only nature and the eye develops in contact with her.” His search was always for what he called “realization,” which is to make something real. In The Story of Art, EH Gombrich says, “The modern artist wants to create things. The stress is on ‘create’ and on ‘things’.” He wants to feel that he has made something which had no existence before. Not just a copy of a real object, however skillful, not just a piece of decoration, however clever, but something more relevant and lasting than either.” Cezanne was constantly frustrated in his search for realization, and he felt that he could not either redo Poussin or find an adequate new way of his own. To make something real, the only guide is nature itself, he said. Realization requires the temperament to uncover the spirit of nature, to capture the essential in nature, and then to put it on the canvas. You can get a sense for what Cezanne means if you let your own eye by guided by his. As I was thinking about this, I stood at the edge of Hiemenga Hall facing the chapel and looked at three pine trees. And I realized I was seeing them as Cezanne might have seen them, seeing the color patches of the bark, the columns of the trunks. To see nature in this way is tremendously exciting, almost mystical. Your eyes need to be trained, for most of the time we are impervious or blind to what is actually there for us to see.

The order and balance which Cezanne recreates and reconstructs on the canvas is an order which is essential to nature itself. He sees into this order and balance, but in order to realize it on the canvas he has to dispense with the academic rules of past painting just as the Impressionists discarded them. So there are here both positive and negative elements. The positive element is the search for the essence; the negative element is the rejection of the procedures and expectations of the past. These two elements, and the anxiety produced by their combination, are what seem to me characteristic of modernism, and I will use this as a unifying theme in the rest of the essay.

Le Corbusier. I will move on now to architecture and to the work of the most famous publicizer and practitioner of modernist architecture, namely Charles Edouard Jeanneret, who called himself Le Corbusier. The building on which I want to concentrate is Unite d’Habitation, built in 1952. This building is a collective housing project on the outskirts of Marseilles in the south of France. It is twelve stories high and has an ingenious interlocking system of transposable units of construction. Each apartment possesses a double-height living room with a terrace and a lower portion passing through to the smaller balconies on the other side. There are twenty-three different apartment types catering to the entire range of possible tenants, from the single individual to the family with four children. The elements of each are standardized, their combination varied. An interior street containing shops, a restaurant, and a hotel is expressed half way up the block as a glazed gap of increased transparency. The roof terrace on top has a gymnasium, a creche, and a ventilator stack in a sculptured shape. The building is an expression of Le Corbusier’s ideal of communal living; it anticipates the Utopian city and uses the techniques of mass production.

This is a late work by Le Corbusier, but it is still an expression of five features of his ideal for architecture which he had published in 1923 in a book called Vers Une Architec-
From “The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock”
TS Eliot

Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherised upon a table;
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,
The muttering retreats
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:
Streets that follow like a tedious argument
Of insidious intent
To lead you to an overwhelming question...
Oh, do not ask, “What is it?”
Let us go and make our visit.

In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.

And indeed there will be time
To wonder, “Do I dare?” and, “Do I dare?”
Time to turn back and descend the stair,
With a bald spot in the middle of my hair—
(They will say: “How his hair is growing thin!”)
My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,
My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin—
(They will say: “But how his arms and legs are thin!”)
Do I dare
Disturb the universe?
In a minute there will be time
For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.

And would it have been worth it, after all,
After the cups, the marmalade, the tea,
Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me,
Would it have been worth it, after all,
To have suffered the/ov/erwhelming question...
In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.

So there are here both positive and negative elements. The positive is the vision of a unified, socially utopian community. This is the vision of society itself as a machine, with each member a productive and useful part. It is no accident that Le Corbusier chose 1,800 as the ideal number for his mini-society in this building. For the same number had been proposed a century before as the ideal population for a small town. The interior street linking the whole building from one end to the other expresses the notion of a unified community, as does the building’s name, Unité d’Habitation. Le Corbusier says in the book, “Everything is possible by calculation and invention, provided that there is at our disposal a sufficiently perfected body of tools, and this does exist.”
In many of these features, Le Corbusier resembles Cezanne. As in Cezanne's painting, there is here the negative element (the rejection of the past) and the positive element the search for the essence of a building, here the essence of communal housing. Like Cezanne, there is the element of construction from simple elements. Cezanne had recommended to artists the technique of looking for the cone, the sphere, and the cylinder. This advice was followed literally by the Cubists, more literally than Cezanne had envisaged. Le Corbusier can be seen as expressing the same aesthetic in architectural or sculptural form.

**TS Eliot.** What I want to do now is to talk about TS Eliot, the poet. I am going to talk briefly about his poem, “The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock,” which was written in 1917. Modernism has both the triumphalist, optimistic side represented by Le Corbusier, where the break with the past is a cause for rejoicing, and also a side that laments this break with the past, though it cannot repair the breach. Both these attitudes are responses to the conjunction of the positive and negative elements I mentioned in connection with Cezanne, but they are opposite attitudes.

I am going to distinguish three types of nostalgia, and I will take Prufrock as expressing the second. I will call the first two “strong” and “weak” nostalgia. Nostalgia is literally the grief (algos, in Greek) caused by the desire to return home (nostos, in Greek). The paradigm case of strong nostalgia is Odysseus, also called Ulysses, whose story is told in Homer’s *Odyssey.* Odysseus had been fighting in Troy, and the *Odyssey* is the story of his long return home to Ithaca, to his wife Penelope. Now this grief caused by the desire to return home is something I think Christians should feel. Paul says that for him to die is gain. “I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.” We should not seek to escape from the responsibility of transforming the world. But I think the best of all would be to be with Him, and hear His “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.” We should be looking forward, like Abraham, “to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.”

But to have strong nostalgia, there has to be the sense of a home to return to. It is the sense of having citizenship in the kingdom of God that gives us a firm basis for action in the world. This is what J Alfred Prufrock is missing in Eliot’s poem.

What strikes me about Prufrock here is a sense of paralysis. Note that the evening is spread out against the sky like a patient *etherised* upon a table, not fully conscious. They are going to go through half-deserted streets (not full, not empty), the muttering retreats (not speech, not silence) of restless nights (not waking, not sleep) in one-night cheap hotels. In the room the women come and go talking of Michelangelo. If this were a postmodernist poem, you would not know whether this was Michelangelo the painter, sculptor, and architect, or Michelangelo the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle. This would be partly because postmodernism revels in ambiguity and partly because it blurs the distinction between high culture and popular culture. The paralysis is made acute for Prufrock by his sense of how, in a past age, men were not disabled in the way that he is. He cannot ask the overwhelming question. But once men could. Eliot quotes several times from a poem written in the seventeenth century, an age of faith. The poem is by Andrew Marvell, “To His Coy Mistress.” The poet chides his lady for her coyness; it

negative elements. The positive element is the search for the essence; of the procedures and expectations of the past. These two elements, combination, are what seem to me characteristic of modernism.

would be different “had we but world enough, and time,” but now he hears “time’s winged chariot hurrying near,” and the lovers must stop thinking and act. This decisiveness, this virility is what Prufrock is without and harks back to in the language of the poem. Weak nostalgia is nostalgia for strong nostalgia. Eliot is speaking, through Prufrock, for his time. He no longer has the sense of where he belongs, where his true citizenship lies, and this has deprived him of the ability to act decisively in the world.
His activity is mere pretension. If he is honest about his condition, he does not have the convictions from which to act. So there is still the grief and the desire to return, but now it is the desire to return to a place where he would know where his home was, as the seventeenth century knew this. It is the wish to return to strong nostalgia again, but he knows he cannot.

Another fine expression of weak nostalgia is James Joyce's novel, *Ulysses*. It is about modern Dublin, in Ireland; but its central character is compared continually to Ulysses or Odysseus of the Greek myth. Joyce's character is not, however, heroic; and, like Prufrock, he cannot act decisively. One critic (Richard Ellmann) says of him that his characteristic behavior is "almost acting," almost acting, but never quite making it all the way to action. This character is, like Prufrock, suffering from a kind of paralysis—a paralysis which keeps him from asserting his presence in the universe.

**Modernism**, then, is complex. It is characterized by two different reactions to the loss of the past. For Le Corbusier this is liberation. For Eliot it leads to a waste land. Le Corbusier is invigorated by the ideal of finding the essential house or factory or apartment building. For Eliot, before his conversion to Christianity, the sense was more like what he expresses in "East Coker," when there is a scene change in the theater, "with a hollow rumble of wings, with a movement of darkness on darkness/ And we know that the hills and the trees, the distant panorama/ And the bold imposing facade are all being rolled away."

There is not time here to discuss the parallels between modernism in architecture and in philosophy. As with "postmodernism," the term "modernism" is used for philosophers only by extrapolation. There are, nonetheless, significant similarities between the artists I have been discussing and the philosophers of the same period. Ludwig Wittgenstein, for example, was influenced by Adolph Loos, just as Le Corbusier was, and designed a house for his sister which embodies the aesthetic of a "machine for living in." His *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* gives an account of language according to which when we put a sentence together we construct a model of reality from logical atoms of sense. On the other hand, there are intriguing connections between weak nostalgia and Heidegger's account in *Being and Time* of the existential structure of human beings. I will leave these suggestions as mere hints.

I want to end this section with two pipes. The first comes from the very end of Le Corbusier's book. Why did he put this at the end of the book with no explanation? It is because it sums up everything he has said. This is the essential pipe. No frills, no decoration; its form is controlled entirely by its function. Notice too how the writing is the same way. Pure, straight letters. No nonsense.

Five years later Magritte painted another pipe; in commentary on the first one, I think. Notice that the pipe is curved, and the writing is curved too. What the writing says is "This is not a pipe." But does this mean that the pipe is not a pipe or the writing is not writing? Magritte is doing a number of different things here. (There is a little book on Magritte's pipe called *This Is Not a Pipe* by the philosopher Michel Foucault which does not refer to Le Corbusier at all.) One thing he is doing, I think, is to object to the pretensions of Le Corbusier. There is not, I think he is saying, one style alone—for pipes or for lettering or for building.
There are different moods, then, in response to the negative and positive elements I identified in Cézanne. There is the confidence of Unite d'Habitation and the weak nostalgia and self-mockery of Prufrock. The ironic reference of Magritte's pipe belongs with him second.

Postmodernism

The next section of this essay concerns a third kind of nostalgia—playful nostalgia. It is typical of postmodernist culture. It is the sense of loss without the sense of grief. Looking back to the beginning of the modern age, this is almost what Nietzsche had wanted when he proclaimed the death of God. He predicted that people in the modern world, aced with the death of God, would first fall into a kind of nihilism. They would have he sense that without God nothing mattered. And indeed some of the existentialists that followed him said things like that. I remember a young Frenchman who came to stay with us at home when I was growing up. He wanted something to read in French, and what we had was a novel by Camus. I think it was La Peste—The Plague. He had seen an outgoing sort of person, but after reading the book he started staying in bed and then going out for long walks by himself and saying things like "Rien n'a d'importance," nothing has importance. But this was not what Nietzsche wanted. He thought it was a mistaken generalization to think that if God were dead, nothing mattered. He wanted people to work through the grief caused by the loss of God and work towards a new joy in the small things of life. He loved, for example, his cup of cocoa in the morning. His metaphors for the final stage were of dance and liberation. This sounds like loss without grief, like postmodernism. But there is a key difference. For Nietzsche, it was always supposed to be hard to work through to the joy. The joy had to come through the grief. But the postmodernist can do without God and the traditional system of belief and can do this with a shrug, with a smirk.

It is like when someone you love dies. First you grieve. But after some time healing can come, and you can even start using some of her things again without pain, perhaps even wearing her clothes. The postmodernist is able to use bits and pieces of the traditional systems of the past, without apparently having to work through the grief of losing the sense of belonging wholeheartedly to those systems. This is what I call playful nostalgia. In architecture, it means using bits and pieces of architectural styles of the past, placing them in contexts that are quite alien to their original. Doing this for fun. The most famous early example is Philip Johnson’s AT&T Building in New York which is a skyscraper with a broken pediment on the top, a baroque feature introduced by Michelangelo in the Laurentian Library in Florence in 1526. It looks like the top of a Chippendale cupboard. Michelangelo is himself playing with and disrupting traditional classical forms here, and the quotation of him has a kind of wit which is characteristic of postmodernism (pretty and witty, says one critic). In philosophy, playful nostalgia means using bits and pieces from old philosophical systems without caring about overall coherence. Just trying various bits on, even in quite incongruous combinations, to see if we like them. And what is utterly characteristic is the smirk.

Traditional Postmodernism. What I have said about postmodernist architecture fits best with one of the two types of postmodernist architecture I want to distinguish. I am going to make this distinction now, drawing the labels from Robert Stern, but the dis-
tinction itself from many different sources. Stern distinguishes between traditional postmodernism and schismatic postmodernism. The difference is that traditional postmodernism emphasizes the rejection of the negative element in modernism, and schismatic postmodernism emphasizes the rejection of the positive element in modernism. Both of them, then, reject modernism. This is why they are forms of postmodernism. But because modernism has these two elements, negative and positive, postmodernism comes in these two forms; one rejecting the first element, the other rejecting the second.

The positive element of modernist architecture, in Le Corbusier, was his sense that he was discovering a universal language of architecture for the new age, the essence of the house or apartment block; his sense was that there was therefore only one style appropriate for the modern world. The negative element was the rejection of the dead hand of the past, the rejection of “styles” in the plural. This derived from the rejection of ornament and decoration, since the distinctive details of the neoclassical or neo-Gothic or neo-Romanesque style were all seen as ornament (as Joyce Kozloff says, “Pornament”).

So traditional modernism is the rejection of the negative element. An important theorist behind this rejection is Robert Venturi. He compares, for example, the American vernacular architecture of Las Vegas with the Piazza of San Marco in Venice. The comparison is brilliant, and you see both differently after you have thought about what he says. He talks about the buildings he designs as “decorated sheds,” using explicit ornamentation. For example, the Gordon Wu hall of Butler College in Princeton is ennobled by large stone roundels and colored marble in geometrical patterns. Venturi tells us to stop asking about a building, “Is it good?” His own criterion is “Does it sing?”

As with modernist architecture, the high style gets popularized and generates second-rate buildings all over the country. Driving around America during the last decade, one was struck by the number of pediments and porticoes and lunettes and finials on the newest structures. Robert Stern himself designs in a style called, by his enemies, “preppy postmodernism.” Carol Vogel, a friendly design critic for the New York Times, describes a residence he recently designed. “In the large master bedroom, Stern made a particularly strong architectural statement by designing oval transom windows and large French doors, and then tenting the ceiling.... To enhance the airy feeling, [the decorator] chose a wallpaper with a subtle stripe.” Le Corbusier is turning in his grave.

Perhaps the best symbol of traditional postmodernism is the new Disney headquarters building designed by Michael Graves. This has a massive Greek pediment held up by figures like the caryatids on the Erychtheum in Athens. But in this building the caryatids are the Seven Dwarfs.

Schismatic Postmodernism is the rejection of the positive element of modernism, the rejection of the search for essence or universal meaning. There is a terminological dispute between those who want to include this group of architects as postmodernists and those who want to call them “Deconstructivists.” As far as I can tell, this dispute is merely terminological, and it need not delay us. The most famous practitioner of the style is Peter Eisenman. He wants an architecture for people who are aware of the meaninglessness of a civilization that can blow itself up at any moment with nuclear weapons. Modernism, he says, was the last gasp of humanism. He wants to express the negative, the absence of any ideal state, any Utopia. He wants to build buildings that do not make sense. For example, he makes a staircase that is not actually a staircase to anywhere, a door that only covers half of the opening, a column obstructing on the dining room table where someone would normally want to sit. He wants his architecture to be uncentered, chaotic, fractured. His most famous work is the new arts complex for Ohio State University, the Wexner Center. What he does is to dis-
upt deliberately the main axis of the campus by constructing a long glass tunnel on a different axis (actually at right angles to the main street of Columbus) with no logical connection to the original one. The building also “refers” to an armory that used to exist on the site. Eisenman is quite explicit that what he wants from his buildings is absence, absence of a single coherent meaning. He achieves this by a deliberate dislocation of architectural conventions, setting a number of different grids, or plans, or “texts” together. “Even as any architecture shelters, functions, and conveys aesthetic meaning, a ‘islocating architecture must struggle against celebrating or symbolizing these activities; it must dislocate its own meaning.”

Postmodernism and Philosophy. I am now going to talk about the analogies between postmodernist architecture and postmodernist philosophy. I will end by saying something about “Papa Don’t Preach.”

I referred briefly to Wittgenstein and Heidegger when talking about modernism. In asking about postmodernism I will refer to the work of Richard Rorty, though I do not think he is a philosopher of the same stature or importance as the other two. I will be quoting from an address he gave to the eleventh Inter-American Congress of Philosophy in Guadalajara, Mexico in 1985. There is another postmodernist philosopher with more obvious claim, namely Jacques Derrida, for it is his work especially that lies behind deconstructivism in architecture. But Derrida’s work is too obscure for my necessarily brief presentation.

Rorty agrees in seeing that the modernist period is characterized by two different kinds of philosophy: one that searches, like the early Wittgenstein, for the essence of things as though philosophy were a science; and one, like Heidegger, that despairs of a result from this search. Rorty thinks that these two kinds of philosophy are successive. I would argue, though, that both continue concurrently through the modern period. I will not try to make that case here. Rorty’s perspective is that the move away from scientism has made possible what he calls “a more playful, more cosmopolitan, less professional tone in which to philosophize.” More playful, because less serious. More cosmopolitan, because we can now avail ourselves of bits of philosophy from all over the world (like a cosmopolitan dresser who can avail herself of clothing from all over the world). Less professional, because we do not have to pretend any longer that the philosopher has the kind of expertise that a scientist has.

He goes on, “My hope is that now, at the end of the century, we philosophers may be in a position to regain [Hegel’s] sense of cultures and languages as matching themselves against past and future cultures and languages rather than against such extra-human forces as God, the moral law, or the real world.” So we are not to think of ourselves as trying to be true to anything humans have not created for themselves—not true to God, not true to the moral law (if that means something like the order of creation), and not true to “the real world.” Rather, we are to match ourselves against past and future cultures and languages. Rorty does not tell us how we are to match ourselves against future cultures and languages. I would have thought that was rather difficult. But past cultures and languages can indeed be tried out to see if any parts of them suit our present condition. Rorty continues, “This sense of ourselves as engaged in a process of reweaving our beliefs and desires rather than trying to bring these into conformity with something else lets us reappropriate [Schiller’s] sense of play as the highest possibility for human life.” This light-hearted dealing with the past is what I characterized earlier as playful nostalgia.

I remember, when I was a student, Rorty told me that I would never know the mind of the Stagirite (that is, Aristotle). This was disheartening, since I was writing a dissertation on the background in Aristotle’s metaphysics for his ethical theory. Rorty’s point
was that each generation merely reads back into the texts its own doctrines; it is the same with all texts, that there is no such thing as an objectively valid interpretation that we could hope to reach. Edgar McKnight makes the same point in *Postmodern Use of the Bible: The Emergence of Reader-Oriented Criticism*. He says that modernist hermeneutics rejected the supernatural and interpreted the Bible in terms of a natural, temporal order, but postmodernism rejects the modernist search for order as well. “A radical reader-oriented criticism is postmodern in that it challenges the critical assumption that a disinterested reader can approach a text objectively and obtain verifiable knowledge by applying certain scientific strategies.” What is left is a dynamic nexus of competing systems.

So perhaps these movements are self-defeating. This might see positive element of modernism and also the half-hearted embrace of significations, what Derrida calls “a weaving and reweaving,” recalling Penelope’s web.

Rorty ends on a different note. We should not think of philosophy as providing a foundation or a justification for political positions, he says. We should not even be asking for the “political implications” of our philosophical views. Politics will, indeed, determine the future of the world. But political practices, just like other human practices, are not themselves grounded, or legitimated, by anything which shows them to be in touch with the way things really are.

I think postmodernism in philosophy and in culture at large can be seen as a hopeful sign in one respect. Both forms of it, both traditional postmodernism and schismatic postmodernism, have rejected the claim of a coherent naturalist view of the world. Neither form of it, however, is likely to be able to maintain itself. Traditional postmodernism plays with symbols and styles and doctrines of the past. But the power of these bits and pieces is parasitic on the power of the systems to which they originally belonged. A new style can, and indeed always does, emerge from elements it incorporates from the past. But it incorporates them into a new whole, into a pattern of expectations that has its own coherence. It is hard to see that traditional postmodernism has achieved this. Schismatic postmodernism relies on the hope of expressing meaninglessness directly. But it is doubtful if meaninglessness can be communicated directly. Communication requires the presence of meaningful structures that remain stable through the communication. The stairway that is not a stairway communicates only because we do know what a stairway is. The expression of meaninglessness is always parasitic on the continuity of meaning.

So perhaps these movements are self-defeating. This might seem hopeful, since after rejecting the positive element of modernism and also the half-hearted embrace of traditional forms, perhaps the next cultural stage will be the search for a whole-hearted return. Perhaps, but perhaps not. For there is no incentive within playful nostalgia to change. The incentive to change was provided by the grief that was present in both strong and weak nostalgia; but if I am right, that grief has gone. Aristotle asks whether weakness is worse than vice, or if it is the other way around. He starts by answering that vice is better, since at least it is consistent in acting on its vicious principles; and if the principles can be changed, so can the action. He ends, though, by preferring weakness and inconsistency because at least the desire for virtue is present, and this desire can be the lever that lifts the whole person to virtue.
weak nostalgia preserves the longing for the sense that there is a city with foundations whose architect and builder is God. Postmodernism, admittedly, is more hospitable to the use of Christian symbols. The job of the Christian is to be alert to the use of symbols we care about and to invite those who use them back into the context in which alone they make sense. But the symbols cannot serve as a lever unless the person who uses them still desires to make sense of their use.

**Madonna.** I want to end by talking about Madonna. You may think that all this heavy philosophy I have been talking about does not belong in the discussion of such an evanescent artifact of culture as an MTV video. But I think that is wrong.

The point I want to make is that the video at its deepest level does not make sense. It is not supposed to make sense. Indeed the pleasure we get from it derives in part exactly from its not making sense. This is, after all, Madonna. Watch her dancing. Her arms, her shoulders, her lips. What are the words that belong to her here? There are erotic words, words of sexual love. What we actually get is a little soap opera. She wants to keep her baby. Now is this serious? There is a split here—a basic contradiction between the way she is as she dances and what she is saying.

There is another set of values she is playing with, besides the maternal ones. She is playing with feminist values—indeed the video is like this, with rapid change of images. With this video, change and motion are also its subject. Throughout the piece, she is travelling to her father’s house. This is clear at the end. But the images of travel are continual. Boats at the beginning, cars, and then the elevated railway.

Notice the ambiguity. She is travelling to her father’s house. She goes through the door. There are scenes with him in the house, strangely disjointed. She goes into her bedroom and sits on the bed. Why is this final scene in her bedroom? A male figure walks in, holds out his arms to her, but we cannot see anything except his arm. Why is that? Why is he kept hidden? She puts out her hand into his. They are clearly going to embrace. Now think back to the words while she is dancing. “Don’t stop loving me, Daddy.” You may think I have a dirty mind. But I am convinced that the image Madonna is playing with is the image of incest. This is after all Madonna. This time not masturbating with a crucifix, but Madonna with child. And who, in the case of Mary, was the father of the child? Theologically, it is God, her father.

So she is playing with these symbols: symbols of the family and symbols of feminist liberation and symbols of Christianity. What is titillating about the video is that these symbols are quite at odds on the surface level with the Madonna her audiences know and love. It is not that the video is now presenting these values for their own sake. It is using them, playing with them, in order to entertain us. That is why it is a postmodernist piece.

Is she doing this deliberately? I do not know, and I am not sure that it matters to the evaluation of the video (though it matters in what we think of her). The talking clock which I started with may have been designed, for all I know, by someone with great piety. Here we have to evaluate the artifact itself, not the intentions of its makers. We ought to worry when the symbols of our faith are used in a way that makes nonsense of them, even if there is no intent to abuse, and even if the nonsense (in this case, perhaps unintentionally) entertains us.
So you’ve put in your time. You’ve discussed Plato’s Republic, you’ve analyzed Freud, you’ve despaired over Nietzsche. You know the old-time religion; you know the liberal arts. So now, how does all this help you get what you really want? Who’s going to tell you:

**How To Be Rich AND Famous.**
The answer is, nobody. You can go ahead and ask. Ask some wise old professors whom you respect where the road to wealth and fame lies. You know what they'll tell you? They'll tell you about somebody like John Calvin who lived like a monk and pored over theological manuscripts and was just painfully sincere every day of his life. Or they'll tell you about Thomas Edison who struggled against all odds to become an inventor and later said that the recipe for success is “one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration.” Or, worst of all, they'll tell you about Vincent Van Gogh who lived in squalor and couldn’t even trade his masterpiece paintings for bus fare to go see his ear doctor (and ended up having to mail the ear in by itself).

Basically, the rule is that the wiser the person you consult, the less likely he or she is to be able to tell you what you want to hear. What we all want to know is how we can become rich and/or famous while we’re still young enough to enjoy it.

This month’s “Other Shoe” is dedicated to telling you what you want to hear. Listed here are case studies that you can apply to your own life: people who became famous without working very hard, professions that may make you rich and that you should consider, and how species with no talent have become wildly popular. Read and be enlightened.

**CASE STUDY #1 THE WOOLY MAMMOTH**

The wooly mammoth is the classic example of a species that became famous solely through clever advertising. Think about it: what is a wooly mammoth anyway? An elephant with bad haircut, that’s all. Mammoths weren’t as ugly as saber-tooth tigers and wouldn’t have lasted a round sumo wrestling with a dinosaur; yet they are in demand by museums the world over. Why? Because they knew how to use the geothermal opportunities available to them. Specifically, they kept wandering into tar pits. Archaeologists go gaga over anything they can dig out of a tar pit. This is because tar pit specimens often are well-preserved and have little flakes of skin and hair and stuff still attached to their bodies. Archeologists are somewhat morbid people to hang around with, but they can make your remains famous in a hurry (between twenty and fifty thousand years).

So how can you use a tar pit to your advantage? You should know that competition has been tight for humans over the last few millennium. It’s not enough to simply have your remains interned in a tar pit. Ever since the Cro-Magnon men, archaeologists have wanted to find some sort of revolutionary tool or something in your hand before you can break onto the museum scene. The first human skeleton found with a wheel, the first with a bronze weapon, and so forth, they’re the ones that became famous. So what should you bring to a tar pit? The idea is to find an item that will be seen as innovative and important by scientists of the future. Bad ideas: Milli Vanilli albums, Chia Pets, calculator watches. A calculator watch would be a good idea, except that it’s not going to last through thousands of years of geothermal activity. After a few centuries any digital watch will melt and begin to look like junk jewelry, which is exactly what future archaeologists will think it is. And the last thing you need 20,000 years after your death is for some snotty graduate student of the future to set you up in a museum display labelled, “Tasteless Man, 2000 AD.” Good things to bring: a Swiss army knife, a Timex watch. If you wear a Timex you may someday be featured in a Timex magazine ad with a caption that reads “Jane Doe’s remains were geologically transported across three
continents over the last 20,000 years; yet her Timex watch, which can store eight different time zones, kept her on schedule all the way.”

CASE STUDY #2 SET A WORLD RECORD

The best way to become famous in your own time, as any fourth-grader can tell you, is to get into the Guinness Book of World Records. It may not be pleasant to tread water for days on end or shove hundreds of cigarettes into your mouth at once, and the genetic engineering you would need to perform to grow the world’s largest kumquat may incidentally mutate all the house pets in your neighborhood and create a race of giant insects that will destroy the Earth, but at least there would be no hot tar involved.

You should realize, however, that even within Guinness there are levels of fame. The world’s fastest typist probably has to carry the book around with her to show people. The world’s tallest man, however, needs no introduction. And the superstars of Guinness, of course, are the huge twins who ride motorcycles. You remember them, don’t you? They’re listed as the world’s heaviest twins and every year Guinness finds a place to run that picture of them riding their motorcycles. I don’t know quite what the lesson to be learned from all this is, except that you should keep the Guinness Book in mind if one of your neighbors happens to grow an extremely large vegetable and as a result you find your body gradually mutating into watermelon-shaped proportions.

CASE STUDY #3 PAUL REVERE

Paul Revere is an excellent case study in fame for two reasons. One reason is that he is, indeed, quite famous; the second is that he didn’t have to do all that much work for his status. Paul Revere’s main contribution to the Revolutionary War was comic relief. Imagine all the Colonists nervously hidden behind stone walls trying to load their muskets with shaking hands, when suddenly this nut comes riding by shouting, “The British are coming! The British are coming!” This tension-breaker must have caused the colonists to slap their knees and comment to each other, “Good old Paul Revere, always was a little slow on the uptake!” Feeling better, the colonists probably resolved to buy much more of Paul Revere’s silver after the War, which was, of course, Revere’s plan all along.

Paul Revere recognized, however, that after the War the country was going to need more than one-night heroes. He worked hard at his prosperous silversmith business, and late in life, he told his sons that to become famous in the new nation was going to take more than one timely horseback ride through the countryside. “Become obscenely fat and ride motorcycles,” he told them.

CASE STUDY #4 ROBIN HOOD

Another historical figure who was able to have fun while becoming famous was Robin Hood. The legendary Robin Hood spent his time swinging from ropes, frolicking in the forest, and, of course, stealing from the rich and giving to the poor. Robin Hood’s noble acts made him a hero with the poor people of the area and made him a continual frustration for the Sheriff of Nottingham. Some critics of Robin Hood say that his legend is overrated and argue that the amount of gold which Robin actually redistributed to the poor was insignificant, but these critics miss the point. It is not the amount of money he gave that is important, but the fact that Robin Hood was a symbol, a champion, and an inspiration to all men who like to wear green tights.

We should take even less seriously those critics who would tarnish the Robin Hood legend by pointing out that Robin Hood was, after all, only a mythical figure. What these critics don’t realize is that being mythical was a key part of the Robin Hood mystique. I mean, put yourself in the Sheriff of Nottingham’s shoes. Week after week, you have to come back from patrolling the forest all beat up, with arrows comically sticking out of your backside, and the worst part is that everyone in town knows you were attacked by a man.
who is only a myth. You slump into the nearest pub and the locals all laugh and say “So, you ran into Robin Hood again, eh Sheriff?” Then some joker points behind you and shouts “Look out, Sheriff, it’s the Easter Bunny!” and then laughs hysterically, as if this was the first time you had heard that joke instead of, like, the millionth. I daresay you’d go crazy under this kind of pressure and likely have to be hauled off in one of those medieval hay carts. Living under this pressure, it would be no surprise to anyone if pretty soon you were wearing green tights.

**CASE STUDY #5 LAWYERS**

Everyone knows that being a lawyer is a good way to become rich and possibly famous. But some people opt not to join the legal profession because they have a negative view of lawyers. They think that typical lawyers would sell their own grandmothers for the right price. This is, of course, a spiteful myth; a lawyer might say he or she was selling you his or her grandmother but as soon as your check cleared, the lawyer would cackle triumphantly because in the fine print it clearly states that you are merely leasing Grandma and paying a hefty service fee to boot.

So you can see that prejudice against lawyers is based on mere ignorance. Lawyers, as everyone knows, play an important part in our economic system. Think of our economy as a pie. Businesses, workers, unions, and government all clamor for a piece of this pie, and sometimes the competition gets unruly or confusing. So you can see that, sooner or later, somebody would figure out that the easiest thing would be to hold the entire pie as evidence and eat 33% of it while nobody is looking.

**CASE STUDY #6 BUSINESSPEOPLE**

Being a business executive also offers many opportunities for wealth and fame. But is the corporate life for you? The only way to decide this is to get some real experience in a corporation. We suggest this simple experiment: sneak into the top floor of any large corporate headquarters, dial an extension from an unattended phone, and yell “Whitfield! I want that report on my desk ASAP!” The person-on-the-other-end’s name may not even be Whitfield; it may be something like, say, Betty. This does not matter. Mistaking Betty for Whitfield will make her wonder who Whitfield is and whether she will soon be replaced. This will make Betty deliver some kind of report to your desk very quickly. If Betty is a new employee she may not have written company reports yet, and you may find yourself reading a report Betty wrote while she was in college. This is good because you know what to do with those: mark all the typos with big, red circles (implying that you think Betty meant to spell “that” t-a-h-t) and write a comment in the margin like, “This symbolism had better make a profit for us in the next quarter, or both you and Van Gogh will be out on your ears.” Send the report back to Betty and quickly depart the premises. If this experience was satisfying to you, you are obviously unsuited for the businessworld because you put in a half hour of work without being paid. Think about becoming an English professor.

**CONCLUSION: TAKE WHAT YOU CAN GET**

Many graduates become discouraged because they cannot “make it” overnight. Particularly if you are going into business, you may have to accept an “entry level” job which typically involves cleaning and vacuuming the corporate entry way and maybe mopping out the executive washroom. But take heart, even Paul Revere had to go through a lengthy apprenticeship where he had to go around on his bicycle and warn people about passing hay carts, global warming, and the like. So the lesson is to take what you can get. And watch for opportunities like wars, unsuspecting sheriffs, potential lawsuits, large vegetables, or tar pits. Lacking any of these situations, start eating and buy a motorcycle.
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