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Non-representation of the Wild: Marginalization of the Nomad

The West's attitude towards the wild has for several centuries now been characterized by ambiguity. On the one hand there has been the admiration for tigers burning bright, for the sublimity of high mountain peaks, and for the freshness and innocence of what was not yet spoiled by civilization; but on the other hand there has been the fear of and contempt for the uncivilized and primitive. In this paper I shall discuss several aspects of the latter, I shall try to analyse the West's perception of the nomad – the other who refused to enter what the West considered to be civilization.

“... the nomads have no history; they only have a geography”.¹ This diagnosis, of itself explaining to some extent the marginalization of the nomad, is a result of recent insight, though its first part has doubtless been known for ages. My effort here will be to find out what it means that the nomad has no history, which in fact entails interpreting the opposite as well, i.e. what it means to “have” (a) history. Such a task must involve certain simplifications but that is only because I shall try to give an account of a marginalization, that is a simplification. One cannot marginalize a race, nation, ethnic group or an individual without making simplifications about their life, culture, intelligence, etc. The moment one starts noticing refinement and subtleties, marginalization ends.

In my attempt to explain the nomad's exclusion from history I shall concentrate on the West's perception of nomadism in relation to the following: the State,

¹ G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, “Treatise on Nomadology – The War Machine”, in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. B. Massumi (London: The Athlone Press, 1992), p. 393.

society, culture, religion, and civilization. None of these can of course be discussed separately because there is considerable overlap between them, and I am not going to introduce any arbitrary divisions. The concepts will just be highlighted to show that they, in the meanings given to them by the West, are in fact “responsible” for the nomad’s exclusion from history.

I shall discuss the views of four eminent scholars: I. Kant, R. W. Emerson, C. G. Jung, and J. Bronowski. Each of them wrote about or simply referred to nomadism when analysing a different aspect of social life. By putting their analyses together it becomes possible to obtain an overall picture of what can be called the marginalization of the nomad in the Western world.

Nomads vs. the State

On the first page of “Conjectures on the Beginning of Human History”² I. Kant makes a distinction between two orders: that of nature, to which the laws of mechanics are applicable, and that of free will, which is specifically human and which cannot be studied in terms of cause and effect. The important thing for a philosopher of history or a historian to realize about these two orders is that in the first case events are predictable, while in the second they are not (the only predictability to speak of with reference to free will is based on the hope that one day humanity will get fully convinced that the laws of conduct already formulated by practical reason are the best to abide by, i.e. they assure the speediest advancement towards enlightenment).³ Man’s life is a combination of both orders, but it has not always been like that. At the beginning man was just an animal species fully controlled by instinct. He was very well-off in that state, but unfortunately it was a hindrance to his development. And then, at some “point” in time, came the awakening of reason, the act of transcending nature.

² I refer to three essays by Kant: “Muthmasslicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte”, “Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht”, and “Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung”, published in Poland under the title *Przypuszczalny początek ludzkiej historii i inne pisma historyozoficzne*, trans. M. Żelazny, I. Krońska, A. Landman (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Comer, 1995). In Britain the essays were published in a volume entitled: Kant, *Political Writings*, ed. H. Reiss, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

³ The distinction between the events determined by external measurable forces and the activities that have their origin in free will is discussed at length by M. Żelazny in the introduction to *Przypuszczalny początek...* The distinction is of great significance to Kant’s thought because it forms the basis for the division between the realms of speculative and practical philosophy. As far as mechanics, or science in general, is concerned we have to bear in mind the fact that in the eighteenth century it was shaped according to the laws formulated by Newton and Kepler; hence the exaggerated, by modern standards, hopes of predictability.

Since Kant's analysis is a philosophical – today we would say anthropological – interpretation of the first few pages of the book of Genesis, he illustrates his ideas with suitable quotations. Thus, according to him, the progress from the care of nature to freedom is presented in the Bible as eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. In other words man ate what instinct (Nature, Providence) had told him not to eat – a step that no animal has yet taken.

Kant does not mention the nomad at this point, but if we look deeper into his argument, we can discern the first sign of marginalizing the nomad: If the birth of reason was connected with the differentiation and enrichment of man's diet, and if we assume that the human mind has always functioned in the same way, i.e. it has kept on transcending nature, we would have to admit that nomadic tribes have lagged a long way behind town-dwellers in this respect, because their diet has changed very little throughout ages. On the steppes of Mongolia, for example, they still prepare and preserve food the way it was done in the times of Genghis Khan, while in Europe we not only have national cuisines but even regional ones, and they still keep changing – think of the variety of cookery books on the publishing market, and the effectiveness of commerce that has made our diet almost completely independent of seasons (i.e. nature). The above comparison makes us see the nomad as someone still within the grip of nature, certainly not on the same level as animals but definitely below the intensity of freedom⁴ achieved by the sedentary.

Man's relation to animals is also mentioned by Kant. He points to verse III,21 of the book of Genesis: "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins and clothed them." (*AV*) Kant interpretes it as man's realization of his superiority over animals. From that moment on he has treated them as tools and means to his ends, they ceased to be his equals.

Again, though Kant does not write about it, town-dwellers have considered themselves more advanced, because from their point of view the nomad had to keep on moving in search of new pastures, or to follow the animals he hunted, which prevented him from settling down and thus from engaging in activities that were thought necessary for civilizational development: he did not build anything permanent, he was not able to accumulate any surplus that could have later been traded for something else, and that would have allowed him to divert his attention from sustenance to, for example, inventing and modernizing his technologies, etc. In short, the nomad was seen as no less a slave to his animals than they were to him.

These however, as was stated above, are not the conclusions drawn by Kant. He interpretes the Biblical events (eating unknown fruit, making use of animal skins, etc.) as the original moments of the awakening of reason, which, according to him, had on the one hand beneficial, but on the other hand regrettable conse-

⁴ The word *freedom* is used here in the meaning given to it by Kant at the beginning of his essay, i.e. independence from nature.

quences, because man using the power of his imagination started developing needs and cravings in an artificial way – not only beyond natural urge, but even against it. In this way there appeared in man a host of superfluous and excessive inclinations, following which was a waste of time and a hindrance to development. Kant, then, would be able to refute our arguments about man's relation to animals and the changing diet, because he does not make simple equations in which the complexity of intellectual operations together with their results equal progress, and simplicity is synonymous with retardation.⁵ I decided to mention the arguments, as they are still present in Western thought.

Kant's marginalization of the nomad becomes more obvious in his discussion of the mechanisms of social relations and his views on the future organization of mankind. In *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose* we read that the means employed by nature to develop in man all his original capacities is the antagonism of these abilities within society. Kant calls this phenomenon the unsociable sociability of men and argues that it is the cause of proper social order. Man is a social animal and at least in childhood and youth the company of other people is indispensable to him – neither physical nor mental development is possible without it.⁶ At the same time almost every person would like to arrange everything to their liking. Yet having one's own way in society means attempting to make other people change *their* ways, which of course they refuse to do. What is more someone who imposes his own will on others is well aware that if the situation was reversed, i.e. if another person's will was imposed on him, he would put up similar resistance. There exists, then, a permanent conflict between the sociable and unsociable both within every person and within society. Even though the unsociable tendencies are a source of a number of vices, Kant praises them because of the resistance they arouse. It is precisely this resistance, he argues, that stimulates all the strength and energy in man, that makes him overcome his laziness, and thus helps him to realize his ambitions and to achieve a prominent

⁵ It is difficult not to agree with Kant, but in that case we will have to face a practically unsolvable problem of defining the criteria that would allow us to distinguish between intellectual activities that are unnecessary and those that help us in our progress towards enlightenment, perfection. For example, was it a waste of time and effort to invent the internal combustion engine? Do we need it to become better people? What does *better* mean in this context? The difficulties of our dialogue with Kant arise from the fact that he believed in progress towards life organized according to the rules proposed by practical reason, whereas now at the end of the twentieth century the idea has seriously been questioned.

⁶ Modern social sciences have made us more aware of the fact that socialness is necessary in human life not only in its external form, i.e. as social environment, but also as a force operating from within. Let us take language acquisition as an example: It is obvious that to master his/her mother tongue a baby must be talked to. But, as Roman Jakobson observed, the first verbal function acquired by babies is the phatic one, which means they feel the need to communicate before they are actually able to formulate and receive any informative messages. In other words, one can assume that language develops from the need to maintain contact.

position in his group. Man's talents would for ever remain dormant without the unsociable tendencies and the resistance they arouse.

To make his meaning clearer Kant compares people to trees. In forests, where they grow close to one another, trees have to fight for air and sunshine, so they spring up for the sky and are straight and tall as a result. Whereas in places where each of them has plenty of room and is free to shoot out branches in every possible direction, they are stunted and twisted. We encounter here an interesting paradox that can be expressed in the following way: The less freedom you have, the freer you become.⁷ The paradox is a result of confronting two different meanings of the word *free*. In the first part the meaning is general, *free* can be defined as "not limited, restricted, or controlled"; in the second it is more specific, "independent of nature, instinct", i.e. "not restricted, controlled, etc. by nature, instinct". We can rephrase the paradox now and say: You have to give up being *free* in order to be *free from*.⁸ In this line of reasoning the state of being *free* is of course less desirable, because it is merely natural. Being *free from* on the other hand demands effort and can thus be seen as an achievement, especially that the original, primitive, natural freedom is understood here as remaining within the grip of nature. The difference, then, is not just semantic, it is also, or first of all, ethical. Progress would be a march from one instance of *free-from* to another.

Kant does not mention the nomad at this particular point, but he does a number of times in "Conjectures on the Beginning of Human History" (the essay we discussed first, but which in fact was published two years after *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose*, in 1786). At the bottom of one of the final pages there is a note about the Bedouin, which is put there as a supplementary comment on the distinction Kant makes between two types of sovereignty that characterize nomadic and sedentary peoples. Town-dwellers and villagers chose man as their sovereign, while pastoral tribes would only recognize God in this position. Arab Bedouin, we read in the note, still call themselves children of some sheikh, the founder of their tribe. In no way, however, could that man be their master, i.e. he was not in the position to use violence or force against them, because

⁷ A very similar paradox is mentioned by Deleuze and Guattari in their discussion of the relation between the State and its philosophers, for whom "the State is the becoming of reason. . . . Always obey. The more you obey, the more you will be master, for you will only be obeying pure reason, in other words yourself. . . ." G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 375–6.

A commandment of this sort can be found at the end of Kant's "An Answer to the Question: 'What is Enlightenment?'" Of course it does not mean that Kant speaks in favour of despotism, just the opposite – he is strongly against it. Despotism is taking away people's freedom by force, while he tries to persuade the reader/citizen to take an attitude that could be called conscious discipline.

⁸ G. Orwell writes about this distinction in "The Principles of Newspeak":

The word *free* still existed in Newspeak, but it could only be used in such statements as 'This dog is free from lice' or 'This field is free from weeds'. It could not be used in its old sense of 'politically free' or 'intellectually free', since political and intellectual freedom no longer existed even as concepts, . . .

in pastoral tribes, where there is no such thing as immovable property that would have to be left behind, any family that do not like something about their tribe can easily leave it and join another one. What in effect Kant says is that nomad organization is looser. It certainly is in the sense that it is not projected unto immovable property and in this way allows more freedom of movement. But Kant would reject such freedom. If a nomad family is free to break away from their tribe at any moment, should we not think of them, and indeed of the whole tribe, as a bunch of scattered trees? The desert, steppe, and prairie give every 'human tree' ample room, yet the price to be paid for it is too high, since you pay with what is human in you. The nomad's latent abilities cannot develop, because he is not forced to develop them. Whenever he meets resistance that he should overcome, that could stimulate him, he ducks out. Seen in this light, nomad organization appears to be doomed to disappear.

It is small wonder, then, that there is no place for the nomad in Kant's vision of the future. History to him is an advance towards better and better systems of government. There is no history outside the State.⁹ *History is the history of the State.* (We find here the same attempt to delimit meaning as in the case of freedom. Just as there is no *freedom* only *freedom from*, there is similarly no *history* only the *history of*.) With the assumptions made by Kant it can hardly be any other way. He is of the opinion that nature, or Providence, 'has' a plan concerning the development of humanity – reason finds it difficult to accept the opposite view according to which the development is planless, i.e. haphazard and chaotic. The wisdom of nature, which is taken to be an axiom in other fields of knowledge, must also comprehend man. In other words man together with his freedom – reason's ability to transcend instinctual behaviour – is part of nature's wisdom and in consequence of her plan, he is not an exception to it. The plan, however, cannot be brought to fruition in the individual because our life span is too short; only the human race as a whole will see its potentialities realized. Therefore a great number of generations, each passing on its enlightenment to the next, will be needed to attain a level of development in which nature's intention will reach its fulfilment. Kant claims that the *only* environment in which this can happen is the State,¹⁰ where we find the forest-like atmosphere necessary for the development of the 'human trees'. He argues that by studying the history of the State we can actually discern a pattern that opens out an encouraging perspective: we shall see how in very distant future humanity develops all the abilities with which it was equipped by nature. From this point of view what is outside the State is of little relevance, perhaps no relevance at all. By rejecting the State the nomad excludes himself from nature's plan, i.e. from history.

⁹ Cf. Propositions seven, eight, and nine, in "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose".

¹⁰ When Kant writes about the State, he means the type of organization found in "our part of the world", i.e. Europe. An organization such as the Mongol Empire would not be considered a state.

Nomads vs. Society (Agri-culture)

There is at least one point on which Emerson would fully agree with Kant: the growing complexity of man's needs has nothing to do with progress. Just the opposite. "Man the Reformer" begins with bitter criticism of contemporary society. Its functioning and its institutions are described with such words and phrases as "abuses, impediments, theft, fraud, selfishness, vitiated by derelictions, routine and obsequiousness", etc. A young man (the essay was originally "A Lecture Read before the Mechanics' Apprentices' Library Association") looking for employment must at the outset of his career forget about his dreams, prayers, and ideals. Society is so full of vices that it is completely unfit for a man of virtue to live in. And it is not just a matter of a certain number of corrupted individuals that you can refuse to deal with. There is no way one can avoid being implicated in the system because society, due to the more and more complicated division of labour, is organized in such a way that goods and commodities before reaching you pass through many hands. You cannot know whether what you get has not been vitiated somewhere on the way, and even if you do know, you still take it because there is no other way to obtain it – you will not start producing your own sugar, making your own bricks, furniture, clothes, etc.

The reform Emerson writes about is a new type of education. Briefly, it is a return to simplicity and self-reliance, which can be achieved through manual labour, especially farming. Young men could begin their careers, and those of us who are no longer young could change theirs, by renouncing the wealth accumulated by the past generation and "putting ourselves into primary relations with the soil and nature, and abstaining from whatever is dishonest and unclean, . . ." ¹¹ This purifying move will bring a number of beneficial changes into your life: manual labour, apart from being good for your health, will make you freer, less dependent on others, and will help to develop your faculties. Emerson gives negative examples first, showing how we disable ourselves when we refrain from working with our hands. A son who inherits from his father a rich estate, and is not given the skills and experience which made the estate, will soon be turned into a watchman; to him his possessions will not become means, but will be his masters. When you get your goods just by signing cheques, you not only make yourself dependent on other people but also impair your faculties. Confesses Emerson: "... I feel some shame before my wood-chopper, my ploughman, and my cook, for they have some sort of self-sufficiency, they can contrive without my aid to

¹¹ "Man the Reformer", in R. W. Emerson, *Selected Essays*, ed. L. Ziff (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985), p. 134.

The two essays by Emerson that will be discussed are: "Man the Reformer" and "History", in R. W. Emerson, *Selected Essays*, ed. L. Ziff (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985).

bring the day and year round, but I depend on them, and have not earned by use a right to my arms and feet.”¹² But manual dexterity is not enough. In order to be self-sufficient you have to lead a simple life. “Society is full of infirm people who incessantly summon others to serve them”, because most of us are convinced that we cannot live without “sofas, ottomans, stoves, wine, game-fowl, spices, perfumes, rides, the theatre, entertainments,”¹³ etc.

What Emerson writes in praise of his wood-chopper, ploughman, and cook can without any reservations be written about the nomad, e.g. the North American Indian. In fact, in the mid-nineteen century, when Emerson delivered his speech, the Indian of the Great Plains was a much better example, almost the epitome, of self-sufficiency and self-reliance. He knew very well how to get his food and prepare it, how to make his shoes, clothes, tools, weapons, houses, etc., and he did not need anyone to serve him. Some of the passages in “Man the Reformer” could indeed be chosen as mottos to treatises on the life of nomads:

Can anything be so elegant as to have few wants and to serve them one’s self, so as to have somewhat left to give, instead of being always prompt to grab? It is more elegant to answer one’s own needs than to be richly served. . . . it is an elegance forever and to all.¹⁴

Yet these lines were not written with the nomad in mind. Why should they, one can argue. It is only natural that Emerson concentrates on what he thought of and felt towards people he met everyday, and not on what he could possibly feel towards the Indians who lived far away from him somewhere on the prairie. But Emerson also writes about Spartans and ancient Romans, they are the examples to be followed, which may provoke us to ask the following question: Why should a founder of American philosophy, when explaining to his young countrymen how to live a good life, i.e. a life of few wants, speak of ancient Greeks and Romans rather than contemporary American nomads? Why does he not even mention them? The answer is so simple that the question appears to be hardly worth asking, even stupid. Says Emerson: “A man should have a farm or a mechanical craft for his culture. . . . We must have an antagonism in the tough world for all the variety of our spiritual faculties, or they will not be born.”¹⁵ The tough world, then, is to have an important function, it is not simplicity for simplicity’s sake, we need it for our culture – “our higher accomplishments, our delicate entertainments of poetry and philosophy”. In the nineteenth century very, very few people would think of Indians as having a culture. They were called savages. Their life, though characterized by simplicity and self-reliance, was perceived as in a sense fruitless, i.e. not fostering culture.

¹² Ibid., p. 136.

¹³ Ibid., p. 141.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 135.

An etymological detour will help us understand Emerson's attitude better. The word *culture* is derived from Latin *colere* – to till, and originally, in the Middle Ages, *culture* meant first of all *cultivation*, the tilling of land. At that time the word was not used in the senses it is used today, and in which Emerson uses it.¹⁶ We have no reason to assume that the change, the enrichment of the original meaning was accidental. More probably it reflects the way in which Europe constructed its meanings. In this particular case we learn that culture (“the variety of our spiritual faculties”) has its source in husbandry. Culture and agri-culture are two sides of the same coin. We should not be surprised, then, that Emerson, an admirer of ancient Greeks and Romans, considers the agricultural life to be so important.¹⁷ It does not mean of course that he expects everyone to become a farmer. For him “the doctrine of the Farm is merely this, that every man ought to stand in primary relations with the work of the world”.¹⁸ There is, however, no indication in the essay that this doctrine includes what the nomad does. How could it? Who would include the *nomad* in the doctrine of the *Farm*?! Unless one would like to write about what the farm is not. Those who do not culture their land, who even refuse to possess land, are of no interest to Emerson. The world of the nomad remains outside discourse.

In “History” there is about a page devoted to nomadism. Worth pointing out is the fact that Emerson realizes there is a close link between geography and nomadism. He puts it the following way: “The geography of Asia and of Africa *necessitated* a nomadic life. . . . The nomads of Africa were *constrained* to wander, by the attacks of the gad-fly, which drives the cattle mad, and so *compels* the tribe to emigrate in the rainy season and to drive off the cattle to the higher sandy regions.”¹⁹ The idea of the nomad being *forced* to wander is expressed three times in just a few sentences. To Emerson then, contrary to Deleuze and Guattari, the nomad does not have a geography; geography “has” the nomad. In other words, he is merely part of geography. We must remember that to be forced means to be deprived of choice, i.e. to some extent dehumanized because it is freedom of choice that, among other things, distinguishes people from animals.

Interesting is the way in which Emerson presents the contrast between nomadism and sedentarism: “. . . the nomads were the terror of all those whom the soil

¹⁶ Cf. *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, ed. C. T. Onions (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

¹⁷ “In general one may say that the husbandman's is *the oldest and most universal* profession, and that when a man does not yet discover in himself any fitness for one work more than another, this may be preferred.”

“Man the Reformer”, p. 137. [Italics mine.]

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

¹⁹ “History”, in R. W. Emerson, *Selected Essays*, ed. L. Ziff (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985), p. 161. [Italics mine.]

or the advantages of a market had *induced* to build towns.”²⁰ Inducing points to a relationship markedly different from that of forcing. To induce, when used with reference to humans, indicates persuasion on the part of the agent and taking a decision, making a choice, on the part of the patient. The word, of course, may also mean an influence different from persuasion, but not one that would eliminate choice altogether. The nomad, then, is forced to live the way he does, while the sedentary has himself chosen his. Comparing these two we see they not only differ but also form a hierarchy, with the sedentary on a higher level because choice makes him more human.

The main argument put forward in “History” is that we must, while reading it, internalize history, or else it will be meaningless to us. Emerson even goes so far as to say that “there is properly no history, only biography”.²¹ There immediately arises the question whether all we find in history is worth internalizing. Since the answer is predictably negative, we may ask more precisely: What is worth internalizing, and what is not? Emerson does not pose these questions, but he provides answers to them. The reason why we ask them is that we expect there is some kind of correspondence between what one internalizes while reading and who/what one is, of which previous internalizations form an important part. In other words, ground must be prepared in one’s mind for new things coming in. (The unconscious no doubt plays an important role in this process, but as it is, by definition, inaccessible to consciousness, we shall not speculate about it and concentrate on Emerson’s conscious efforts.) Interestingly enough, the ground is ready for the reception of nomadism, in fact nomadism is already there: “And in these late and civil countries of England and America these propensities [Nomadism and Agriculture] still fight out the old battle, in the nation and *in the individual*.”²² The statement is very important, it says that nomadism is a propensity, i.e. a *natural* tendency or inclination within every person.²³ If so, then we have a contradiction here. Why should nomadism be a propensity in the case of Englishmen and white Americans, and a constraint in the case of Mongols, Bedouins, and Masais? Because of geography? It would mean that when you lead a nomadic life, you do so because it is forced on you by geography, and when you finally have a choice and become a farmer, then your nomadism takes the form of a propensity. It does not sound very likely, does it? More probably geography makes it possible, or easier, for the propensity to activate itself. Anyway, Emerson does not see any contradiction here.

²⁰ Ibid. [Italics mine.]

²¹ Ibid., p. 153.

²² Ibid., p. 161. [Italics mine.] The idea is repeated a few lines below on the same page: “The antagonism of the two tendencies is not less active in individuals,”...

²³ Almost all dictionaries define propensity as a *natural tendency*, some even use the adjectives *innate* and *inherent*.

To Emerson, nomadism, whether natural or enforced, is to be rejected. First of all, in its original form it does not really deserve attention, it is too primitive, so Emerson concentrates on its modern manifestations, which according to him are trade and curiosity (tourism), and which he calls a progress from the gad-fly. From his point of view it must be so; trade and curiosity are not forced on anybody, not on the individual, and therefore cannot be seen as merely a change of form; they are definitely signs of progress. Secondly, new forms of nomadism become dangerous and harmful when internalized. Let us have a look at the final comparison of nomadism and sedentarism:

The pastoral nations were needy and hungry to desperation; and this intellectual nomadism, in its excess, bankrupts the mind through the dissipation of power on a miscellany of objects. The home-keeping wit, on the other hand, is that continence or content which finds all the elements of life in its own soil; and which has its own perils of monotony and deterioration, if not stimulated by foreign infusions.²⁴

What are the advantages of nomadism? Emerson does not mention any. Sedentarism, on the contrary, offers something very precious and important: self-sufficiency, both material and intellectual. The home-keeping wit, we are told, finds *all* the elements of life in its *own* soil. True, it has its perils, but there is an effective way to deal with them – they can be averted by foreign infusions. And how do you fend off the perils of nomadism? That again, as with the advantages, Emerson does not say, and he does not really have to. It seems to be obvious: The best way to avoid the perils of nomadism is to settle down. Emerson leaves us in no doubt that nomadism, irrespective of the forms it may take, is to be steered clear of.

One of the reasons why we decided to include Emerson in our analysis was that we expected to find in his essays comments on the frontier, which in the nineteenth century was to a large extent a line separating the State from nomadic tribes. To put it in a more straightforward way, we hoped to find something about North American Indians.

The word *Indian*, however, poses a problem that we have to address before we go on. Our interest here is focused on nomadism, but obviously not all Indians were nomads, in fact many were not, especially those living east of the Mississippi River or the Pueblo in the Southwest. To associate Indians with nomadism only is a gross mistake. And yet, this is precisely what America and Europe have been doing for more than a century now. The model, perhaps we can even say the archetypal, Indian that emerged from novels, paintings, and later also from films is a fearless warrior and a hunter galloping on his mustang through the prairie; his “house” is a painted conical tent – the tepee, his “village” is a camp; only the palefaces try to limit his freedom of movement. This is the image that little boys cherish so much, and the only one that most adults will conjure up when asked

²⁴ “History”, pp. 161–2.

about the North American Indians. What is peculiar about the image is that it is being reinforced all the time, and not only in such feature films as *Dances with Wolves*. In 1992, for example, a kind of documentary was made, entitled *The Real Story of Custer's Last Stand*, in which a white man (Jack Palance) and an Indian (Floyd "Red Crow" Westerman) reconstruct for us the events that led to the battle of Little Bighorn and the battle itself. The only Indians that are shown to us are the nomads from the Great Plains, and the film ends with Jack Palance saying: "As for the death of Crazy Horse,²⁵ it meant the end of an era. The Indian nations, as the world used to call them, came to an end, and with them a way of life. Too bad! It was a good life."

What Jack Palance says is inaccurate. Indians lived in different ways in various parts of North America. Why, then, did the life of the nomadic tribes become in the eyes of the white man the Indian way of life in general? Was it because the colonists, in the process of building a new nation and a new state, needed something against which they could define themselves?²⁶ Or was it because nomadism was considered a primitive way of life, inferior to sedentarism, which view, as we know, was used by the colonists to justify their advance? They called it the advance of civilisation, but it actually was little more than an advance of greed, and perhaps somewhere at the back of their minds they felt that what they represented was, to quote Marlow from *Heart of Darkness*, "only brute force – nothing to boast of, when you have it, since your strength is just an accident arising from the weakness of others". Or was it simply a matter of supply and demand? At some point in time boys, both big and small, would have no longer bought another set of stories about farmers²⁷; they wanted something more exotic.

These are the problems that we expected Emerson to help us with. But he baffles us even more, not only because he marginalizes the nomad, but also because he refuses to write about Indians. Let us return to the beginning of the passage Emerson devoted to nomadism: "In the early history of Asia and Africa, Nomadism and Agriculture are the two antagonist facts. The geography of Asia and of Africa necessitated a nomadic life."²⁸ Emerson could have written something very similar about nineteenth-century America. He does not explain what he means by the geography of Asia and Africa, but we can easily guess that he must have thought of the steppe, desert, and savannah, because these are the regions the nomads

²⁵ Crazy Horse was killed in 1877, a year after the battle.

²⁶ Deleuze and Guattari write that "the State itself has always been in a relation with an outside and is inconceivable independent of that relationship. . . . the outside of States cannot be reduced to 'foreign policy', that is, to a set of relations among States". "Treatise on Nomadology", p. 360. The *outside* can adopt various forms, it is not necessarily situated outside the geographical borders of the State.

²⁷ According to Emerson "every man passes personally through a Grecian period". ("History", p. 162.) Most of my friends and I would rather admit to have passed through an Indian period.

²⁸ "History", p. 161.

wandered, in fact they still do. Now, "History" was published in a collection of essays in 1841. Almost forty years earlier, in 1803, the United States bought from France a huge territory, about a quarter of the present US area, called the Louisiana Purchase. It extends from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains and from the Gulf of Mexico to Canada. What the colonists could see on entering the newly acquired territory were just limitless expanses of the prairie and semidesert, i.e. exactly the kind of geography that, according to Emerson, necessitates a nomadic life.²⁹ And indeed, that is where the North American nomads were to be found. If, then, in his own country and in his own time could Emerson find such a good illustration of his views, why does he not write about it? Is it possible he did not notice it? Did he think the examples from the early history of Asia and Africa would be more interesting and more convincing to the American reader than those from contemporary America?

After the passage devoted to nomadism, which comes more or less in the middle of the essay, one reads "History" waiting, almost impatiently, for the Indian to appear, but he does not until the very last sentence: "The idiot, the Indian, the child and unschooled farmer's boy stand nearer to the light by which nature is to be read, than the dissector or the antiquary."³⁰ When you tell somebody that they know less about something than an idiot, you just tell them they know very little or nothing at all, you do not mean to praise the idiot, do you? Idiots, children and unschooled farmers' boys are to be taken care of and schooled; they cannot be held responsible for their actions, at least not fully; they must not be left to themselves. The fact that the Indian is put on one plane with them partly explains why Emerson chose not to write about him – idiots and children do not make history,³¹ strictly speaking not the kind of history Emerson would consider worth internalizing.

We have already said that not all North American Indians were nomads, but on the other hand the reverse is also true, i.e. at that time all the nomads in North

²⁹ Again, we are not told why the geography of Asia and Africa necessitated a nomadic life, but that is probably because Emerson considered it to be obvious: the land was unfit for cultivation. In the nineteenth century the same was still true of the prairie, let alone the semidesert (that is why parts of the Great Plains were called "badlands"). "Only modern agricultural machines can slice deep enough through the thick sod covering the prairie." Z. Teplicki, *Wielcy Indianie Ameryki Północnej* [*The Great Indians of North America*] (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1994), p. 295. [Translation mine.]

³⁰ "History", pp. 172–3. Earlier on page 157, before nomadism is mentioned, Emerson writes about "the head of an old sachem", but only to show us the resemblance between human features and a mountainside, which has nothing to do with nomadism or sedentarism.

³¹ Emerson admires childlike simplicity but only in adults: "The Greeks are not reflective, but perfect in their senses and in their health, . . . Adults acted with the simplicity and grace of children. . . . They combine the energy of manhood with the engaging unconsciousness of childhood". ("History", p. 163.) Can we not say the same thing about the Sioux, the Cheyenne, and other peoples from the Plains? We can now, but in the nineteenth century their simplicity was called savagery.

America were Indians, with very few exceptions of certain trappers and cowboys perhaps, whose ways of life might have borne some resemblance to that of the nomads. By marginalizing Indians altogether Emerson marginalizes the contemporary nomad, though he does not appear to be aware of it. The conflicts between the colonists and native Americans that kept erupting from the seventeenth century were just called Indian Wars, and for a long time no one seemed to notice that, as the new American state expanded west of the Mississippi River, the battles and skirmishes with Indians became more and more signs of a confrontation between the State and the nomad organization.

Nomads vs. Religion

For centuries nomads have been thought to be irreligious. A brief analysis of a few lines in C. G. Jung's "Transformation Symbolism in the Mass" will help us to understand why.³² The title is informative enough, and there is no need for any further introduction here. The only thing we would like to add is that the study is not a theological one; Jung, as can be predicted, approaches the subject as a psychologist. Of particular interest to us is the section called "The Psychological Meaning of Sacrifice", and especially its first part about the sacrificial gifts. The substances used in the transformation rite are, as we all know, bread and wine. Today after two thousand years it is impossible to explain clearly why these two were chosen. Jung presents the following interpretation of their significance: The task, the whole process of producing bread demands a lot of effort, care, patience, and devotion. Bread therefore can be seen as a projection of what is best in man. Jung also points to the words from *Paternoster* – "our daily bread", which reveal man's anxiety for his existence, and which also, though indirectly, instruct him to produce bread, which will make his life secure. Man, however, "doth not live by bread only", so bread is accompanied by wine. For at least two reasons. First, wine possesses a certain substance which from time immemorial has been called "spirit"; second, its cultivation, as in the case of bread, demands hard work and permanent care. Both bread and wine are "expressions of cultural achievement". They are "cultural products" which can "easily stand for the psychological conditions of their production, that is, for those human virtues which alone make man capable of civilization".³³

³² In the edition we use here it is published as the second chapter of C. G. Jung, *Psychology and Western Religion*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (London and New York: Ark Paperbacks, 1988), pp. 97–192. The editors inform us that it was first published as a lecture in *Eranos Jahrbuch 1940/41*. It is also to be found in the 11th volume of Jung's *Collected Works*.

³³ *Psychology and Western Religion*, p. 149.

What Emerson only implies in his essays, here is stated openly and straightforwardly: culture and civilization are the fruits of the cultivation of land. The brief remark about nomads comes then as no surprise:

Where wheat and the vine are cultivated, civilized life prevails. But where agriculture and vinegrowing do not exist, there is only the uncivilized life of nomads and hunters.³⁴

As we can see, the nomad, just because he refuses to settle down and cultivate land, is placed outside culture, outside civilization, and as a result outside the religion of the civilized. Christianity with its idea of the *new* covenant has always been perceived in the Occident as progress, not only in comparison with Judaism but obviously with any forms of worship that preceded it.³⁵ And since Christianity's central rite is so inextricably linked with agriculture, it became easy for farmers to think that cultivated land was the only environment in which Christianity could possibly appear and develop. The nomad would not have simply been able to create such complex and subtle symbolism, his way of life has prevented him from doing so.³⁶ A confirmation of this view can be found, for example, in *The Biblical Dictionary*. Under the headword "Sacrifice" we come across the following sentence: "The offering of a sacrifice was originally characterized by simplicity, typical of nomadic peoples."³⁷ If so, then the refinement, subtlety, and complexity of the symbolism of the Eucharist is the achievement of the sedentary. In this way farming gains the significance of a religious act. (The close link between religion and agriculture is also, though in a different context, established by Emerson: "But the nomads were the terror of all those whom the soil or the advantages of a market had induced to build towns. *Agriculture* therefore was a *religious* injunction, because of the perils of the state from nomadism."³⁸)

What we have written about religion and agriculture could, as in the case of culture and agriculture, be inferred from etymology. *Colere* means not only to *till*, to *cultivate* but also to *worship*, to *honour with worship*. And indeed, the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* lists *worship* as the first, i.e. the earliest meaning of *culture*. Again, we have no reason to assume that it is by chance that one word means both *cultivation* and *worship*. More tenable is the assumption that in the

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Cf. especially *Hebrews*, verses VIII–XIII, where it is also called "a *better* covenant". [Italics mine.]

³⁶ Christian symbolism is of course by no means reducible to sedentarism. One can easily find images that can be regarded as having originated among pastoral nomads, e.g. Christ is often pictured as a shepherd, and he is also called "the Lamb" and "the Lamb of God". What we attempt here is not a close analysis of Christian symbols but an account of a marginalization, which, as was already mentioned, is basically an account of a simplification.

³⁷ "Ofiara", in H. Langkammer OFM, *Słownik biblijny [Biblical Dictionary]* (Katowice: Drukarnia Diecezjalna, 1989). [Translation mine.]

³⁸ Emerson, "History", p. 161. [Italics mine.]

European mind these two meanings have a common root. As this way of thinking about religion has prevailed for a long time in history, it is understandable why the nomad was seen as either irreligious or his forms of worship were dismissed as “pagan rites”. And to be irreligious or pagan did not simply mean to be different. It meant that the Word (*Logos*) was not revealed to you, you were not among the chosen people.

Nomads vs. Civilization (Settlement)

In *The Ascent of Man* J. Bronowski argues that civilization started about 10 000 BC, when an “event” called the ‘agricultural revolution’ took place. Before that, “man in all parts of the world that he had reached was a forager and a hunter, whose most advanced technique was to attach himself to a moving herd as the Lapps still do.”³⁹ 10 000 BC was the end of the Ice Age, and there appeared in the Middle East a kind of wild wheat, which people began harvesting. They were no longer forced to wander in search of food, they could cease to be nomads. Those who did so became villagers, and they are the fathers of civilization. They accumulated the first surplus; they started building houses, later on cities; they created “a technology from which all physics, all science takes off”.⁴⁰ Bronowski follows the evolutionary model, so according to him there is a linear passage from nomadism to agriculture, and he sees the change as a huge step in the ascent of man. Nomadism is left behind.⁴¹ It was made primitive and obsolete by the appearance of wheat and the decision of those who chose to settle.

³⁹ J. Bronowski, *The Ascent of Man* (London: Futura Publications, 1984), p. 36.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 45. And on p. 52 we read “that civilization is made by settled people”.

⁴¹ To illustrate his thesis Bronowski gives the example of the history of the Israeli people as it is related in the Bible, “the history of a people who had to stop being nomad and pastoral and had to become an agricultural tribe”. (*The Ascent of Man*, p. 45.) For some reason Bronowski forgot about what the book of Genesis says about the relation between the nomad and the sedentary. Expelling Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden God says unto Adam:

cursed is the ground for thy sake;
in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the
days of thy life;
thorns also and thistles shall it bring
forth to thee;
and thou shalt eat the herb of the
field:
in the sweat of thy face shalt thou
eat bread,

(AV)

This is followed by the story of Adam and Eve’s children, in which the division into (pastoral) nomadism and agriculture already exists: “And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller

Reading Bronowski's account of nomadic life one gets the impression that it is one of the worst things that has ever befallen man: "It is a life without features. . . an adventure that leads nowhere. . . a journey at the end of which "there will still be nothing except an immense, traditional resignation", etc.⁴² Even the nomads' fantastic, stupendous achievement – the idea of riding the horse – is presented to us as first of all a threat to the surplus of grain, i.e. a threat to agriculture, i.e. civilization, because the horse gave nomads speed and manoeuvrability, which helped them to defeat peasants and rob them of the surplus they accumulated. Bronowski claims that warfare was, in a sense, created by the horse. But luckily for civilization, even Mongols, who for a time established the supremacy of the nomad over a huge part of the world, finally became settlers in the countries they had conquered, because "civilization can never grow up on the move".⁴³

In this way we have come to the third meaning of *colere* – to dwell, to inhabit. In most dictionaries the definition of the verb *to dwell* is "to live as a permanent resident". (*Inhabit* is usually explained as "to dwell in".) But *to dwell* is also defined as simply "to live", e.g. to dwell in a forest, so it may perhaps be possible to regard the following sentence as semantically coherent: The Bedouin dwell in the desert. In this case, however, dwell means something different. When we say that, for example, a forest ranger dwells in a forest, we actually use an ellipsis, because what we mean is that somewhere in the forest the ranger has a house or a cottage, to which he returns every afternoon or evening, in other words he dwells in a particular point in space. But when we say that the Bedouin dwell in the desert, we do not imagine or think of any particular points. The Bedouin do not return to their tents, they take the tents with themselves.⁴⁴ The Bedouin dwell in the desert – there is no ellipsis here. In ancient times and still in the Middle Ages, when the world was not yet mapped and it was rather senseless to say that someone dwells in the steppe because it meant nowhere, nomads were not seen as dwelling somewhere; they were seen as *coming*, usually from nowhere, at best from a direction. It was particularly true of the Huns and Mongols. The *dwell* in *colere*, then, since it is linked with agriculture, must mean settlement, permanent residence.

We can propose now the following equation:

colere (settle, till, worship) = culture

of the ground." (AV) According to the Bible, then, the two orders, nomadic and sedentary, emerged simultaneously. Biblical scholars argue that the Cain-and-Abel episode was added to the original text later, which does not change our interpretation, because if we decide to analyse the episode separately, it will only corroborate the view that in Biblical times nomadism was not perceived to be a way of life in any way inferior to sedentarism.

⁴² *The Ascent of Man*, p. 39.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁴⁴ *Tepee* is a word taken from the Siouan languages. It gets its meaning from the combination of *ti* to dwell + *pi* used for. Obviously the *ti* in *tepee* has nothing to do with permanent residence.

This is “civilization, as we [the West] understand it”,⁴⁵ and within it, as we have tried to show, there is no room for the nomad.

At the beginning of this chapter, when analysing the three essays by Kant, we noticed that for Kant history is the history of the State. Obviously Colere and the State form some sort of unity, though it is difficult to find out what exactly the relation between them is. First of all because we do not know whether the State is a “product” of agriculture or whether the contrary is true.⁴⁶ Whichever is correct, the close interrelation between the two cannot be questioned. The answer to our initial question – Why do the nomads have no history? – can be phrased as follows: The nomads have no history, because history has always been the history of the State/Colere. It becomes particularly obvious when one tries to find something about nomads in ancient times. The Hyksos are a good example. A typical dictionary entry provides the following information about them: “*Hyksos* – a member of a nomadic Asian people, probably Semites, who controlled Egypt from 1720 BC until 1500 BC.”⁴⁷ No one knows who the Hyksos had been and what they had done before they invaded Egypt, and what happened to them after they had been expelled from the country. Their history is the history of their reign over a state. Even *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, by far more informative in matters of history than any dictionary, gives only the accounts of the Hyksos reign over Egypt. (Also interesting is the fact, mentioned by *Britannica*, that according to Manetho, the Egyptian high priest and historian of the 3rd century BC, the Hyksos rule was godless, which confirms what we have written earlier that nomads were thought to be irreligious.) The last piece of information about the Hyksos given by *Britannica* is this: “The Hyksos thereafter [after their expulsion from Egypt] disappear from history.” Entering the State the Hyksos entered history; leaving the State they left history. One may find it difficult to believe, but it is as simple as that. And the same was true of other nomads.

⁴⁵ *The Ascent of Man*, p. 36.

⁴⁶ For a long time the former was believed to be true, but this view is now disputed. Deleuze and Guattari argue that the State is older than agriculture. “. . . it is the State that creates agriculture, . . . It is not the country that progressively creates the town but the town that creates the country.” (“Apparatus of Capture”, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 429.)

⁴⁷ *Collins English Dictionary*, ed. M. Makins et al. (Glasgow: Harper Collins Publishers, 1991).