Can Life Prevail?



Pentti Linkola

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Publisher's Foreword

We live in a world increasingly under threat of collapse due to its gradual destruction of the environment. Everyone knows about the dangers of climate change, endless production of garbage, the unspeakably horrific mistreatment and exploitation of animals, and so forth. Everyone knows that if things do not change drastically soon it will mean the end of modern civilisation, and possibly even life. Yet, no one wants radical change. People are too comfortable to give up their high-octane cars, wide-screen television sets and exotic holidays. Pentti Linkola has no time for polite tips on slightly reducing one's personal carbon emissions or eating more eco-friendly food. He goes directly to the core of the matter and presents radical solutions to the world's environmental problems. Although these have at times shocked some people due to their controversy, Linkola's writings are not based on a desire for controversy, but on a lifetime of meticulous observation of his surroundings, study and deep thought. Linkola's solutions – such as dismantling modern cities and moving back to the countryside – may not be popular, but they are nevertheless worthy of careful consideration by thinking people. For this reason it is our great honour to present one of his books – the most recent – to the English-speaking world for the first time.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Eetu Rautio of Corrupt, Inc for providing us with this translation, and Terhi Isomäki and Sirkka Kurki-Suonio of Tammi Publishers for helping us resolve ambiguities in the text.

The Publisher,
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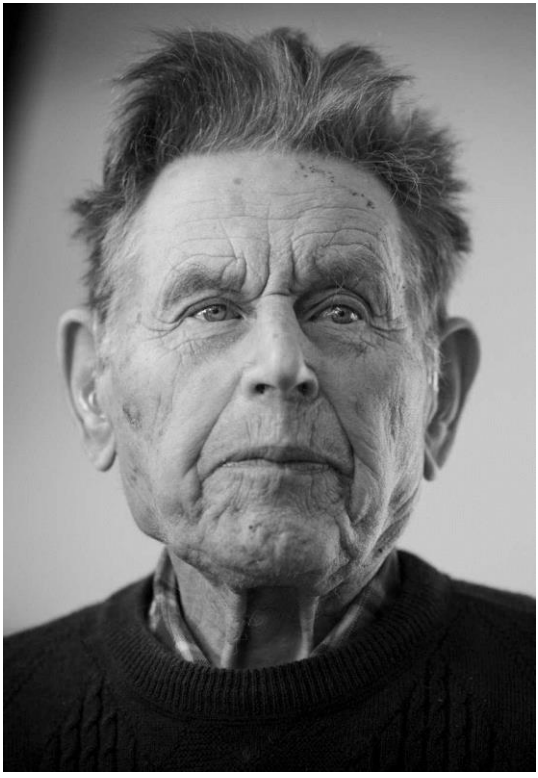
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Pentti Linkola

Foreword

A short personal recollection might help to introduce this collection of essays by Finnish ecologist Pentti Linkola.

I am currently working as a part-time librarian. The head librarian is a square middle-aged lady. A week ago, the two of us were in the office when our conversation switched to the present state of the world. The greatest of all threats, the lady explained, comes from overpopulation: the Earth is simply far too crowded at present. What is needed, she argued, is a stringent policy of population control, and a world government to effectively implement it.

The point of the story is that the lady concerned had never read Pentti Linkola: in point of fact, she had never even heard his name. Had she, I wonder what she would have made of the opinions voiced in this book?

For sure, Linkola is not your average Green. Unlike most Greens, he is not afraid to speak unpleasant truths. Many of the thoughts Linkola dares to publish will often have crossed the minds of ordinary citizens (like my head librarian); yet, similar opinions would hardly be featured in the media of Western countries.

Linkola, in a way, is an ordinary citizen himself: not a puffed-up intellectual, but someone who has spent most of his life working as a fisherman, earning a living by the Finnish shores, while fighting for the preservation of the Finnish wilderness:

"Fighting for forests means fighting for Finland. Three-quarters of Finland consists of woodland. What the forest looks like is what Finland looks like. Finland equals forest. If the forest is flayed, Finland is flayed."

Linkola is clearly a patriot of sorts; not the flag-waving sort, though: like Edward Abbey, he is someone who cherishes a breathing motherland teeming with life.

Linkola and Abbey share much in common: a love for the wild, a hatred of mechanical chaos and a disdain for the conceited ways of modern leaders. Both are men of the land; both are revolutionaries. Linkola, like Abbey, talks of the wilderness from first-hand experience; but while the present book includes a number of personal remembrances, it is not the autobiography of a retired Finnish fisherman.

As the train of industrial civilisation rattles on at ever increasing speed headed towards the abyss, crushing entire ecosystems in its wake, the heterogeneous essays contained in this book issue a dire warning.

Radical problems call for radical solutions. While the solutions advocated by Linkola might not seem palatable to many people, they are nevertheless founded on a disillusioned assessment of environmental factors, on a profound ecological sensibility and a holistic approach to human existence. The disparate articles collected in this volume, and the many areas of enquiry they cover, should thus be envisaged as part of a coherent attempt to define under what conditions the preservation of life and biodiversity on Earth might be secured.

Can Life Prevail? is the latest book of Linkola's to have been published in Finland. It is also the first to have been translated into English. In presenting this work to an English-speaking public, efforts have been made to remove those passages that would prove too obscure for readers unfamiliar with Finnish geography, ecology, and culture. In no way do these editorial choices detract from the overall feel of Linkola's writing, which is both global in its appeal and profoundly rooted in the living reality of Finnish nature. Finland will be seen to emerge in these pages as a useful case study for assessing the damage wrought by "Suicidal Society" and for outlining what societal alternatives might still be available in an overcrowded world on the brink of collapse.

Introduction

As the many symptoms of environmental decline appear, 'green' thinking rises in our collective consciousness as the latest trend. Like all fads, its insincerity separates it from being able to achieve a goal. Our pop culture ecology will not avert ecocide but it will provide a fashion in the meantime.

While we sell each other neutered 'green' products and magazine articles about recycling condoms and turning off appliances, the crisis continues unabated. Fish stocks plummet, industrial chemicals stain water supplies, the air turns acrid with smoke, and land development excludes more species from their native habitats. Even as we see effects on our climate, half of our population is fanatically engaged in neurotic but ineffective 'green' activity, and the rest are defensively oblivious.

On the cusp of this imminent ecological holocaust, human beings seem unsatisfied with the still relatively new modern lifestyles they have adopted. Suicide rates rise; people bemoan the hollowness of life; doubt creeps into our minds even when we believe we are safe. Representatives of all sides of political, religious and cultural divides agree we, as a species, are heading down a bad path with no brakes. But no one can tell us what this path is, or how to stop it.

History shows us that others have faced similar mental blocks to other problems. When a society ages enough to forget its founding goals, it can only repeat the methods that worked to achieve those goals in the past. As a result, such societies become trapped in a "methodological ghetto," limiting themselves to methods used in the past and considered safe. They forget that goals, with the passage of time, often require new methods in order to attain them. Today, this could certainly be seen to be the case.

In less than 200 years, the entire architecture of our communities in the West has transformed from local villages to large-scale industrial empires. In that process, our goals have become methods. Against this overwhelming trend, which can be seen to manifest itself as a pathological state which empowers certain agencies who squash dissenters, history throws a few great minds who adhere to clear thinking even when it contravenes convention, and look past method to the underlying goals.

Pentti Linkola is such a mind. Where other environmentalists argue over method, Linkola targets our goals through a critique of the design of our modern industrial empire. He sees how our methods — which sound good on paper — produce what Garrett Hardin called "the tragedy of the commons," where people doing what seems sensible individually become as a crowd a destructive force.

* * *

Kaarlo Pentti Linkola was born on December 7, 1932 in Helsinki, Finland to an affluent family well-established in academia. We know little of his early life because he avoids talking about himself. At college he studied zoology and botany at first, but then changed his studies to become a naturalist in the older school of Audubon, Muir and others. He published his first book in 1955, *The Great Bird Book*, with co-author Olavi Hilden.

Of interest to those who want to plot the curve of both his learnings and beliefs, he started writing peaceful, nature-oriented material like the pamphlet "For the Fatherland and Human" (1960), which encouraged pacifism and conscientious objection, presaging much of the thought to come about during the tumultuous counter-culture years ahead. The transition into this time and a perceived absence of effect in the natural world shaped Linkola's future thought.

As the years passed, Linkola steadily progressed toward his current ideology. In a collection of essays entitled *Dreams of a Better World* (1971), he spoke against the modern Western way of life and its overconsumption. The next decades brought *Introduction to the Thinking of the 1990s* (1989) and *Can Life Prevail?* (2004, English edition 2009) which expanded upon his previous ecological ideas with a stance that many consider eco-fascist or eco-traditionalist. In Finland, he is a popular author and recipient of the coveted Eino Leino prize for excellence in nonfiction writing.

Linkola is famous for living as he advocates others live. Supporting himself for many years until his retirement by fishing from a rowboat and selling the fish from a horse cart, he lived simply in a cabin in the woods near Lake Vanajavesi. He lacks a car, running water, computer or other electronics. He travels mostly by bicycle, longer distances by bus. His biggest departure has been to get himself a cell phone "for emergencies."

His most tangible activism has been to create the Finnish Natural Heritage Foundation (Finnish bank code 549409-522493), into which he thrust almost all of his monetary property. This foundation buys up Finn-

ish forest land, one acre at a time, to conserve it from utilization by others. "It's the only system in Finland through which you can save a piece of old forest with even a small contribution," he says.

While his self-consistency gained him guru status despite the political unpopularity of his ideas, Linkola remains controversial but active as an agent provocateur, giving interviews and writing the occasional short article. Although his work remains relatively unknown outside Finland, as environmental decline accelerates, his work is increasingly finding a wider audience as people worldwide actively seek for plausible ways in which humanity can prevail.

* * *

The French writer Michel Houllebecq, in his book *Atomized*, used a metaphor from quantum physics in which he described people as either belonging to waves, or movements outside of themselves, or particles, in which in the same isolation that makes them 'free' makes them lonely, apathetic, unable to form connections.

In our time, it is not only unfashionable but inconceivable to think outside the method of preserving individual autonomy. We worship 'freedom', itself a negative definition focused not on what we can do but what we cannot be obligated to do. Our civilisation understands itself not as a product of history and maker of future history, but as a facilitation — like a big shopping mall with a legal system — of individuals doing what pleases them, so long as they do not interrupt others doing the same and disrupt the peace.

This condition has not made us happy. While we agree that liberty, equality, fraternity and open economies are noble methods, the goal of these — having a better civilisation and individual lives — has not manifested itself through those methods. By basing our ideal on freedom, we have closed ourselves off to obligations outside of ourselves, which coincidentally are the things that make us feel most alive. We are prisoners of the self, and it is no surprise we act selfishly as a result.

Linkola most clearly distinguishes himself from other environmental spokesmen by thinking practically about the effect of individuals "as a group": "The consciousness of ecology has grown, but still the Average Joe only increases the load. The bustle is controlled by three words: as long as. As long as we can still travel to the other side of the globe four times a year, we will do it. As long as we can still buy a SUV, we will buy it. This is the reality."

In doing so, he has escaped the methodological ghetto. The safe methods we have been using do not achieve our goals, so we must change. Linkola saw that while every well-meaning "education" program has

vanished without making change, the occasional governmental fascism like the Endangered Species Act in the USA has produced results. Either we enforce an unpopular truth on ourselves, or we wait paralyzed by our inability to transcend our methods, and let nature enforce it on us through environmental cataclysm.

To avoid the selfishness of individuals, Linkola advocates an end to Third World aid and immigration, mandatory population control, and the creation of a ruthless "green police" to clean up the planet. His theories tie together deep ecology with a recognition that democratic, liberal societies cannot control themselves. He believes that the individual who connects himself to reality through struggle — and not the individual withdrawing into him- or herself — brings the greatest meaning to life.

As a result, Linkola's ultimate contribution may be more spiritual than political. Humanity makes mistakes, but is not irredeemable in itself. All we must do is change our behavior, and that starts with changing our expectations. We can do better, even if it means facing our fears. "Every example throughout the history of humanity shows that only deprivation and struggle create a human life worthy of the name and that material welfare leads only to despair," Linkola explains.

* * *

A few of his more controversial points:

- Progress — consisting of technological, economic and moral/social growth — is an illusion. "Its priests fervently cling to the idea that material prosperity brings enjoyment and happiness — even though history has shown that only material want and a life of struggle lead to a meaningful existence. In other words material prosperity doesn't bring about anything apart from misery."
- Democracy empowers selfishness. "Any political system based on desire is fundamentally flawed. Society and life have been organized upon the basis of individual desires, not on what is good for nature."
- An elite is needed to rule. "Just as only one out of 100,000 has the talent to be an engineer or an acrobat, only a few are truly capable of managing the matters of a nation or mankind."
- We need strong leadership to keep individuals from being selfish. "Our only hope lies in strong central government and uncompromising control of the individual citizen."

- Population control can be done with passive means. Births must be licensed, immigration and international trade must end, and growth must be reduced.
- We can find a more balanced life. People can travel with bicycles, rowboats and horse carts. Private cars are confiscated. Long-distance travel is done with sparse mass transport. Trees will be planted on most roads.
- Business, which empowers selfishness, must be reduced. Manufacture is allowed only for proven needs. All major manufacturing capacity is state owned. Products will be durable and last for generations.
- We can re-invent a culture where science, spirituality and politics are united around realism. "Education will concentrate on practical skills. All competition is rooted out. Technological research is reduced to the extreme minimum. But every child will learn how to clean a fish in a way that only the big shiny bones are left over."
- Among naturalists, or those who study nature as a whole as a system of patterns, Linkola's views are neither anathema nor unusual, although they are rarely articulated because it is political and commercial suicide. Jacques Cousteau, another well-known naturalist, once said: "This is a terrible thing to say. In order to stabilize world population, we must eliminate 350,000 people per day. It is a horrible thing to say, but it is just as bad not to say it."

* * *

Unlike those who are stranded in the morals and methods of environmentalism, Linkola recognizes, in his own words, that "the biggest threat to life is too much life."

Our expansion is the cancer consuming our planet; we can be pro-human but realize that, like humans individually feel a need to diet, we must suppress our urge to fill our inner voids with the reckless consumption of external things. Underneath this fearsome proclamation is a compassionate voice speaking to each individual: all is not lost; we can change.

At the end of our investigation into his beliefs, it seems the heart of Linkola is love. A love for humanity, encompassing not only what it is and what it has been, but what it could be. A love so great that it can destroy in order to protect, or create, much as our universe does not shy away from destruction in order to make new and better things.

Pentti Linkola may be a trickster who is using radical ideas as metaphors, or he may be speaking literally — it's hard to tell. What is certain is that he restarted the debate on how to fix the environment by getting us out of the confinement of ourselves, and looking at the big picture, which gives hope for realistic solutions for the first time in human history.

Brett Stevens
Austin, Texas, 2008

Preface by the Author

When I write or speak about the important questions in life, when I persistently attempt to erect dams in the way of a devastating flood, most of my friends and many strangers regard me as a naïve optimist. They think that the game is already over: that the life of our planet is declining; that it is heading at a rapidly accelerating pace toward final suffocation, and there is no longer much we can do about it.

Yet, I will still argue against these people. I know the same things they do: I know that the end of history is nigh. Still, I am talking about very high probabilities, not about absolute certainties. It is *almost* the same thing.

Besides, I am also interested in less than what those thinkers and observers who stand for a "total solution" are interested in: what matters for me is the preservation of life on Earth until a distant future. In an emergency, I am satisfied with a delay, a postponement (even a slight one): some "extra time for nature", as the late zoologist and friend of nature Olli Järvinen entitled his collection of articles. It is not irrelevant for a human individual whether he will live to eighty or eighty-one years of age: a person, like any animal, will usually hang onto his extra year or extra days.

I find some worth even in mere speculation, in hypothetically considering under what conditions and after what changes the continuation or lengthening of life could be assured.

Ultimately, I am resigned to simply searching for an explanation for the world, with no reformist aim in mind – at least for the time being. I am working on a report and strive, in a way, to be a contemporary historian, one more insightful and accurate than most. I was forced to struggle in an attempt to split chaos into fractions, to divide the wide front of human insanity into cross-sections to examine, in the attempt to formulate a difficult analysis after an easy synthesis.

Although my view is a worldwide view and my area of observation the whole of Europe, the nation closest to my heart is, understandably, my homeland. And it is a fortunate coincidence – fortunate for my explanation of the world – that this country provides the clearest example of destructive development in the whole world. Even the ethnologist and explorer Kai Donner, a long time ago, stated that of all peoples the Finno-

Ugric have been the most willing to absorb the influence of Western culture and abandon their own. Faster and more radically than any other nation, Finland is switching to the most horrid forms of market economy, to an uncritical worship of technology, to automation and media vapidity; with information technology pervading all human exchanges, (American) English has now been adopted as a second language in Finland – and as the first in an increasing number of professional sectors.

Amidst all of this chaos, I am quick in noting – and cataloguing – the good, joyful things in life. Good and joyful are many things found in this collection of writings: things that share the one common feature of being still in existence. I have found nothing good that was ever brought about by progress.

These articles contain many repetitions, as they were written in heterogeneous circumstances. Much overlap will be found with texts written by other thinkers, with my earlier works and even between different pieces of this collection. This is the least of my worries, as repetition is, to some extent, the mother of all learning. A thousand more echoes are to be found in the liturgy that is constantly hummed around us: the liturgy of the prophets of economic growth, of competition, efficiency and 'competence'.

Pentti Linkola
Sääksmäki, April 25, 2004

Chapter 1

Finland

Humbug
(1993)

In the thirty-five years I have worked as a fisherman, I have had to deal first hand with the phenomenon of food hygiene. Personal experience is always a clear indicator of the development of certain phenomena: in this case, the degeneration of our cultural history.

As a small boy, I spent my summers on my grandfather's estate by Lake Vanajanselkä, which was surrounded by dozens of fishermen's red cabins. Many family members used to spend the summer there as well, and naturally had to be fed. From time to time, Hilma Silvo would come to sell his fish, and would sit on the long bench of the main room with a basket at her feet. I thought this was a magnificent basket: it was covered by black alder branches, and when you opened it slightly, you were immediately struck by the glimmer of large pikeperch, their eyes glaring. Most of these fish were taken to the nearby town of Hämeenlinna, where long rows of fish salesmen awaited in the market hall. The fish were carried to town in the basket, beneath the black alder branches. The fishermen would row up to a liner at the centre of the lake, which slowed down to take the basket on board. The ship stopped at quays along every cape, coming and going at irregular hours. Hygiene was never discussed: the fish was bought in hot weather as well as cold, and the buyer was the one to top and tail it. In the evening the fishermen rowed up to the ship again: a basket was then lowered over the bulwark with an envelope containing the day's wage.

Those memories, which my senior fishing brethren helped me recall, stretch back to the prosperous days of the 1930s. War followed and years of distress: at least back then, the concept of hygiene was not at all connected to the business of eating. We ate what we had, and particularly the most expensive delicacies — wares from the black market — may have gone through a long process of hauling and ripening. No one had heard of vegetarianism, although it had been an old folly in Europe; certainly,

I cannot see how it might have survived those rough days: I suppose it disappeared and was later resurrected. In any case, Finns were statistically healthier during the war than at any other time in their history — unless, of course, we also include bullet holes in the statistic.

When I followed the role models of my childhood and became a fisherman, I was ten years late: I missed the golden age of those troubled years. At that time it was common practice for most women from Valkeakoski and Hämeenlinna to wait in a queue by the shore for the Vanaja fishermen. And no fish was wasted either: roach, blue bream, white bream, anything was good enough. But of course, fish was valued even in the late 1950s when I started fishing: it is shocking today to discover what high prices a catch could fetch back then. The fish were transported by bus in cardboard boxes and crates to the market salesmen of Äänekoski and Jyväskylä. At this stage, I had yet to hear of the expression "food hygiene".

I caught whitefish, the easiest Finnish fish to spoil, in Lake Päijänne, and an ice cellar was an absolute requirement in the hot weather of July and August. If you threw the whitefish from the net straight onto the ice and then poured some new ice into the crate in the evening, the fish would last well through the journey from the city, and sometimes through long business cycles to your customers' kitchens. Back then, even city-dwellers were rooted in nature: they wanted fine, undamaged fish to scale and gut themselves (only in the case of the roe you might have removed the liver and possibly heart and kidneys). Had you tried to offer a gutted fish in the market, people would have thought you were up to something fishy.

As welfare Finland progressed, however, many regulations began to be issued from wiseacres' desks. As the road network had expanded, roads had been made straighter, deliveries faster, and fish was being transported even more quickly from the mesh to store counters, government officials came to believe that the fish too, perhaps, was going to spoil sooner. According to the new regulations, all fish was to be iced during transportation up to mid-October, when experience had already shown that using any ice was unnecessary even in September. This, of course, meant additional expenses and more working hours for the arrangement of packs and crates.

Soon it was found that cod and flatfish had to be slaughtered and gutted immediately after the catch and sent already scaled to wholesale. At that time, unfortunately, I had just been dispatched as a sea fisher to the Finnish Gulf, where I struggled to make a living with flatfish in July and August, when there was no other fish to catch at all. Swift like the Light Brigade, in the half-darkness of the night, with my phenomenally deft fishing buddy Jokke Turunen I would gut and rinse the meshes, machine-

like, at the rear of the boat. We would then head back, rushing on our bicycles to carry the flatfish crates to where the morning bus would be leaving, at 7 am sharp. That summer we were making four Marks per kilo; in autumn, the price had already dropped to three Marks, and we too dropped out.

That new regulation made even less sense in the case of trawl fishers ordered to gut Baltic herring on board: a kilo of Baltic herring has as much guts as a kilo of flatfish and cod, but the herring spoils much faster. I cannot make sense of this letting of blood: blood — whether that of warm- or cold-blooded animals — provides valuable nourishment for humans. I used much flatfish and cod in my own household. At home, the fish would lie in all stillness in a corner of my hallway even for a couple of days before being gutted. He who knows fish like the back of his hand has a lot to cry and a lot to laugh about. How many times have I heard my guests thank me for my burbot soup: "Why, this fisherman's soup is wonderful! And fresh too, for once!" Yes, burbot soup is a heavenly dish. My soup is really delicious, although to make it I only use the burbots which have lost their colour (a sure sign that the fish has been kept a while too long and is no longer good enough to sell). The burbots found in markets and shops will be fresher than mine.

I can remember a young fish researcher who took food hygiene one step further. This person discovered that fish did not cool enough when covered in natural ice chips: he had found so many bacteria in them, that he figured we needed to produce ice chips mechanically. Full of enthusiasm, he cheerfully brought this news to fishermen: the number of fish stored in manufactured ice chips would soar, he claimed, and so would the fishermen's profit. Too bad that the price of an ice chip maker is equivalent to the income a part-time fisherman might make in two years (and the majority of our fishermen work part-time). Even a full-time fisherman would have to spend a full year's income in order to afford this machine.

Freshness hysteria means nonsensically increasing the frequency of transportation, by transporting increasingly smaller quantities with increasingly expensive equipment — and this applies to all food products. When I see one of those refrigerating vans that cost a million or two, I shiver. A friend of mine, a potato farmer, takes his newly unearthed potatoes to the shops three times a day. It is all quite charming: the potatoes shine like emeralds and are almost alive: but just how much does this cost? The most moronic buyers won't even take bread that isn't hot from the oven. Those shops all have refrigerated shelves and freezers and toilets and tiles and sinks. Most of the shops in my youth had nothing; but of course none of them are left now: they were all closed down in the

first assault of the hygiene inspectors. Any shopkeeper or farmer in Finland could confirm what I am writing. Whenever I hear someone moaning about food prices, I think to myself, "No wonder food is expensive, after all the fuss made about hygiene!"

Sometimes I make the mistake of riding my bicycle in the warm south, in Hungary or France. There I always notice the simple joy of men and flies in market squares and shops where there is no hygiene fuss. Fuss over hygiene only seems to flourish in my own country, which is frozen half of the year and almost frozen the other half; but Arctic bacteria in Finland is given a hard time anyway. A long life has taught me that the vast majority of all man's actions are rubbish: nothing but humbug!

My problem is that I continuously strive to make sense, so to speak — in vain. Through laboratory analysis we can find countless bacteria, poisons, heavy metals and botulin in almost anything. But this is only of academic interest. In everyday life, it is a matter of resistance. Hygiene won't stop a salmonella epidemic: rather, it might cause it. A child is given a good start in life if he is allowed freely to sweep and taste the floor, the street and the compost hill. In the course of my own lifetime, all foods have been declared poisonous at some stage. I myself tend to dismiss all nutritional controversies — surrounding meat, vegetables, salt, butter, sugar — with one simple statement: if you don't eat, you die, and if you eat, you survive. It is enough to clarify that objects that harm teeth and internal organs, such as iron nails and glass fragments, should best be avoided.

Juice and jam always get covered in a layer of mould in my humid old cellar and porch: I simply mix it into the jam and eat it with gusto. Sometimes, after a long trip, I will find half a loaf of bread that has turned green at the back of the shelf: well, I won't waste God's grain. There is no lake or stream in Finland from which I would not drink: thirst is a terrible torment and the vast range of tastes a real delight. I will press the fen down with my boot until enough water trickles out for me to catch in a cup or my cap. Downstream, I will keep a precautionary distance of a few kilometres from pulp mills: the lye-induced chapping of the lips is a greater deterrent than thirst. To this day, I haven't peeled a single apple — and yet my stomach has never been bothering me. Now, of course, they would say that I was born with an iron stomach. Actually, I'm sure there isn't much variation in human anatomy and physiology: even bodily proportions don't vary that much. The only great difference between people is their brain capacity: they either have the room for a vast number of thoughts, beliefs and delusions, or they don't.

Will the hygiene scare continue? Talk is being made of an incipient economic depression in the country, which will supposedly encourage us to cut costs. A week ago I got a call from a fisherman friend of mine,

one of the few who still struggle in this profession stifled by fish farms, cheap imports and rising costs. He and our remaining colleagues were forced to give up their customary deliveries to the wholesale store, as it couldn't afford to pay a decent price due to increasing expenditures. My friend had been forced to mobilize the last resources of his family to meet the cost of processing, smoke-curing, filleting, as well as that of running his own market store, which travelled across different regions. All this is pretty tough, when you are supposed to be fishing as well. Somehow, my friend had managed to keep things going. Now, however, it seems that the final barrier has been erected: according to the new regulations, the temperature of market fish must not exceed three degrees (it used to be eight). This is practically impossible, so practically every man already has a fine waiting for him.

If only I had power to match my will, I would deport all the hygiene inspectors to the landfills where they have disposed of so much good food that was produced with the nation's hard work.

The Finnish Body
(1993)

Last spring I took part in the *Sporttipäivät*, our national sports celebration. Physical fitness is a matter very dear to me, and an early jog across Vaasa with a young manager from the city leading the way was a real treat. And yet... Some five hundred people from all around the country had enrolled on the programme to exercise and practise some sport, but only thirty of them showed up at the start, and half of these opted for the shortest walking marathon. Perhaps the example I have chosen is not a particularly good one: the marathon was on the second evening of the festival, and the programme of the previous day must have been taxing. Nevertheless, narrow-minded as I am, I noticed too many typical Finnish men with reddish faces, plump cheeks, suspiciously bulging jackets and windcheaters. Sure, there were some vigorous bodies as well: I was delighted at the sight of my fellow lecturer Harri Holkeri, with his jogging and Baltic herring diet.

Professor Vuolle from Jyväskylä University showed us some excellent statistics regarding the sporting habits of Finns. As a student of nature, however, I am always suspicious of sociologists' surveys. In this instance, I felt that the results simply revealed positive attitudes to exercise. Sure, this is a good thing in itself, although I believe there is somewhat of a temptation to cheat in these surveys: some may confuse their love for watching sport with the practising of it. What if Vuolle's study had been made by concretely examining the daily schedule of a group of people?

My fragmentary and inaccurate data, gathered according to this principle, suggests that the Finnish body is degrading at a fast rate due to lack of usage; that females are — again — in better shape than men; that the upper social strata have better postures and that people living in the town centre walk more than those who live in the country.

The real problem is posed by those countrymen who are complete slaves to machines from a shockingly young age. All exceptions aside, it is impossible to make the average Finnish country dweller of over fifteen years of age ride a bicycle, ski or row — or even exercise in the fields. The spell of the car and its antecedent — the scooter — is unbelievable. A young man will travel a hundred metres to the sauna by car; as this involves backing the car, reversing and manoeuvring, opening and shutting garage doors, it is not a matter of saving time. In the case of farmers, moreover, the more technology advances — every sack of fertiliser now being lifted by a tractor, the spread and removal of manure being a mechanical feat — the more will their physical activities be limited to taking a few steps in the garden and climbing onto the benches of saunas. Lumberjacks have already been replaced by multi-tasking machines, while fishermen lever their trawl sacks with a winch, haul their nets with a lever, and gather their Baltic herrings with an aspirator from open fish traps.

The biologist, who sees man as a balanced whole, and for whom muscles, bones, sinews and veins are as important as brains, can only look on, upset, as the destruction of all physical work and fitness continues. When Martti Ahtisaari entered the arena of Finnish politics, my biologist friend Olavi Hildén — a university professor over sixty yet still in great shape — became furious: "How could people even consider to choose him as our president? He can't even walk properly: he just ambles along!"

If one has the patience to cool down, he will admit that charming personalities exist even among chubby people: many great things have been achieved from behind thick layers of fat. But still, it is frightening to see the presidential chair filled by someone who has completely allowed his willpower and discipline to slacken in one sphere of life. This is all the more unpleasant if we follow sociologists in believing that presidential victories are no longer determined by candidates' ideals, but rather by the images of themselves that they project. Is the popularity of Ahtisaari due to the fact that he is perceived as a buddy by the typical Finnish male, feasting on beer and sausages in his sauna, and that he reminds the typical Finnish female of her own pot-bellied companion?

When was the Finnish body forced to retire? Well, it happened quickly, in the same decades when all other structural changes in our society took place, paving the way to (eco)catastrophe: it all began in the 1960s — and the process is not over yet. In my days as a schoolboy, in the

1940s, in Helsinki, I remember all spare time was spent on the move — despite the fact that we all hated gymnastics and sports at school. A day-long skiing trip on winter Sundays was an absolute must. During the week at least half of my class, girls and boys together, would spend evenings skating or sledging in Kaivopuisto. While we waited for the evening to come, we would have huge snowball fights on the cliffs of Töölö (two hits and you were out of the game!). I can still remember as a statistical miracle the time when alone I succeeded in vanquishing the whole rival team with eight hits.

Sure, we spent evenings indoors. Each in turn we would host a social occasion that was officially known as a "fight night", when we would wrestle or fight like knights at a tournament. Luckily, the old houses in the city had large rooms that were also fairly soundproof. The only quiet time I recall spending among my peers are the few nights when we sat and played Monopoly. But the number of those evenings is insignificantly small compared to the hours pale schoolboys nowadays spend staring at screens.

Recollections like these, with their talk about how things were better in the olden days, are hardly original: admittedly, they are pretty much common to every elderly person. And yet, to dismiss these recollections as the trivial "blathering of old men" would be a stupid mistake, for they can be seen to furnish historical portrayals of objective, sizable differences in human conditions and ways of living. To what extent and according to what perspective these changes might be positive, negative or irrelevant is a separate — and serious — issue. The same goes for the question of which of these changes might be irreversible and which only a passing development.

I sense a dark foreboding in man's separation from his body, as if it heralded the severing of man's direct link to nature's laws. This is not a minor issue: it's about whether man is a human being or a machine. This question is related to even more profound matters — in fact, the most serious matters of all. The most crucial question regarding every human action in this era is how much strain it exercises on nature: the choice is between growth and preservation. This increasing lack of physical exercise does not bode well. The replacement of muscle power with industrial energy means, of course, a great increase of burden, the fiasco of all fiascos. But let us consider the issue of ecological balance separately and get back to my days as a schoolboy.

When it comes to the cost of objects, the "old ways" were not always that great. I remember once buying a new pair of wooden skis: after twenty minutes one of them had already snapped on smooth ice. This, however, was an exception: sports and outdoor equipment (skates, sleighs, footballs, trampolines) were cheap in those days and mostly

handed down from generation to generation and from one sibling to another. Modern sports equipment, by contrast, whether that used in downhill skiing, ice hockey or fishing, is a terrible squander. The whole concept of a sports hobby has changed. In my youth, hobbies should not and could not cost much: often they cost nothing more than a few patches to mend your trousers with. Schools and clubs have long had gyms and sport halls, but in the new era of madness the size of these places has become absurd. Winter sports are now played in ice stadiums in summer, and football is played in winter: Finns have beaten their own country's climate. All this leads to the waste of natural resources: production, transportation, energy, emissions, shrinking green areas, climate change, ozone depletion — the usual "environmentalist" talk, the persistent harping one must never tire of, if only for the sake of life. One must have the strength to remind people again and again that motor sports are environmental crimes of the worst sort — until they will finally be banned altogether or stifled through heavy taxation.

Every individual who walks, runs, rides bikes, swims, rows, paddles, skis, shovels or hoes is setting up a line of defence against the mad onslaught of machines; if he is a parent, grandparent, teacher, youth mentor or exercise instructor who also manages to win a few other people over to his side, he is doing an even better job.

Sales Season
(1994)

In August 1962, after a busy season for bird-ringers, I had earned myself a decent vacation. So I cycled with my wife through Sweden and Denmark, although the furious wind blowing from the North Sea never allowed us to reach our intended destination: the beaches of Jylland. Still, we adored the huge beech forests — spending our nights there, too — and the vast green fields dotted with cows, lapwings and flocks of gulls. We ate countless cherries and apples, which were sold in carton boxes. We also visited towns and city centres. I remember the masses of old black bicycles and how different the traffic situation was from the one back home. I also remember how I once made the mistake of ordering some non-alcoholic wine at a restaurant: when the bill came we realised we had just lost half of our travel funds. To this day, that wine is the most expensive food item I have ever purchased.

The most amazing thing for us in Denmark, though, were the shop windows of cities, which had these large signs advertising ordinary food at reduced prices. We found this shocking, appalling, pitiful: were the Danes — non-alcoholic wine aside — so poor that they couldn't afford to

pay normal prices for bread, butter and sugar? We had never seen any food items being advertised in Finland, except for new products. A pack of butter, Finnish sausage, a litre of milk and a kilo of oatmeal would cost the same — whatever the price — anywhere in Finland. We were also horrified by the ugliness of the shop windows: we knew that all decent shops in Finland hired people to make their windows look artsy and stylish.

Yeah, right. We now know better: Finland has followed the lead of bigger countries and European civilisation. It has been a while since sun or moon have shone their rays in any grocery store: shop windows have now been plastered full of moronic price announcements all ending in 95. (We should consider ourselves lucky, I guess: last summer I noticed that prices in Germany all ended in 99...).

Why should this be so bad? Well, first of all, the cityscape is becoming gross and shabby. Beauty is always a central and inalienable value, a value far more important than economy.

The other sad consequence of having all these signs up is that people's thoughts are burdened: their thinking is constantly being drawn towards trivial nonsense. Every day people are forced to wade through hundreds or thousands of price tags just to figure out where to buy the cheapest tomatoes or mackerel. And where does all our pious talk about the saving of paper and energy go when new posters are affixed every day, myriads of supermarket catalogues are shoved into every mailbox, magazines devote dozens of pages to food advertising and hundreds of thousands of cars travel from one discount store to another seeking discounts? Oh Finland, oh Europe! Oh Man, thou crown of Creation! At times it is not easy to love humanity...

These ever-present giant-letter signs displaying sums of money are no small concern, no simple subject for a merry causerie: they are a matter of dire cultural history, the prelude to and expression of the extremely material Zeitgeist we are living in. For as long as human culture has existed, we have bemoaned and disapproved of materialism, always attempting to get rid of it for the sake of "higher goals" (let us simply say in the name of ideology, philosophy, science and art). Now, we have entered the time of the most manifest and absolute materialism ever known to the world: the reign of money.

In my youth, even this country had a so-called educated class. I knew people who had completely embraced the values of culture, beauty, style, social responsibility and charity (charity not as the bleak social security of state power but as a personal gift). Consideration and good manners were of utmost importance to these people, who followed one basic rule: never to discuss money, even if occasionally one might have pondered upon his own financial situation.

Nowadays, the educated class and its values are almost dead: they have been completely stamped out. Some old geezer or grandma may still be living in their own minority culture, greeting all neighbours, stopping to talk to the janitor, radiating a puzzling smile of friendship to a nation of windbreakers.

When was the last time these people published any poems in newspapers? When did financial news, account statements from corporations and factory orders become the main items of news? When did *Helsingin Sanomat* with such flaring honesty start heading its main section "MONEY"? If I were to answer that it was a year ago, or five or ten years ago, I would not be too far off the mark.

How was this new Zeitgeist born? What or who creates society's values? There is no simple answer: I would need a book, not an article, to explain it. For the sake of clarity, however, we might point here to one main culprit: journalists, those mediators of information — an unbelievably irresponsible, vile, and harmful category of men. Journalists are not only monkeys running after the latest trends, emulating each other like sheep; journalists also dictate fashion and values. It is journalists who turn the 0.1% increase in the interest rate of Luxembourg's central bank into the main headline of the day.

Journalists effectively have the same function as the sales signs in shop windows or the advertising leaflets in our letterboxes. These mediators of information have an incomprehensible desire and capacity to fill people's consciousness with rubbish that is both trivial and false, while erecting huge walls around serious questions. Journalists make sure that vital issues like population explosion, depletion, pollution and extinction are only followed by the readers of specialist publications — as was previously the case with financial news.

Journalists peddle gambling; people buy it and invest their lousy pennies. The students I knew, even those not enrolled in the School of Economics, have all joined investment companies or the stock market. A double moral has prevailed: we are crucifying a few bank managers who are as guilty as half of the nation, while letting off the hook the greatest inciters of financial gambling: journalists.

But now that financial trafficking has been exposed, it is not that easy to get rich by moving money around. Will the old heroes be replaced by better ones? I think things will only get worse. The new national hero in Finland is a genuine lout who with his company (Masa Yards) is making money by furiously pounding steel: can there be a more worthless and criminal act than to waste the remaining natural resources to build luxury cruisers so that the rotting carcasses of humanity might sail around the Caribbean in their whiskey haze?

But I apologise for the rant: I guess my writing too is a sign of how all sense of civility has long been lost...

Civility is dead, long live civility! Where is the national movement we need in this country, with a new Jesus to drive the merchants out of the temple? I would immediately join as a disciple, and then possibly give up writing.

Is all this filth here to stay? After all the fantastic inventions and scientific accomplishments of man, after all the purgatory we have been through, has it really come to this? Is this the true condition of man and our real contribution to life on this planet? Is this, to quote Fukuyama, truly the end of history? Or might something decent still be salvaged?

What is the Majority and What is the Minority?
(1996)

Reality, the facts of everyday life and the news do their best to depress the caretaker, "guardian of life" and "environmentalist". The concern about Creation and mankind's drift towards destruction and extinction is a heavy burden to take upon one's shoulders. It is also tiring to fight back again certain trends, and the temptation to give up is strong.

Yet, occasionally there is some glimmer of hope: a small improvement in a natural area, some successful attempt at preservation, a moderate decrease in emissions, a legislative step towards conservation, a new area being protected, some conference at Rio... We immediately try not to remind ourselves that in the meanwhile annihilation is marching on elsewhere; we do our best not to notice that in the end some of these "environmentalist" actions are only a sanctimonious masquerade and scam.

Some real solace is provided by knowledge of the fact that there aren't so few of us "environmentalists" out there after all. Environmentalist voices come from unexpected quarters: letters in newspapers, articles, chatter in the street, even random encounters with strangers. Besides, life is often mysterious: it might be the case that neither we "environmentalists" nor anyone else actually know what worldview, what outlook, is held by the majority of people and what by the minority.

Is society being led in a direction that the majority does not actually approve of? How many actually wish for and support things like strenuous competition, efficiency, rationalisation and renovation? Like trying for the sake of trying, always rushing to invent new things and abandon the old? Like bartering for the sake of bartering, travelling back and forth to the far reaches of the Earth, the shipping of goods to and fro for its own sake? Or schooling, courses, adult schooling, re-education, always hurrying about as if one's heels were on fire?

How many believe that human well-being, pleasure and happiness diminish the more we follow this path? And that even if this path were not to lead to ecocatastrophe and extinction, it would still be a gloomy and dreadful one?

It is often the case that after a municipal assembly or a similar event, when a bad decision has been taken, a member of the assembly will privately admit that he was personally against the decision, but voted in favour all the same because he knew it was the position held by the majority and did not wish to shatter the consensus, disturb the easy flow of things, and give rise to unnecessary confusion. Then the same matter is often brought up with another assembly member in private, and again the same words are heard. In the end, it may be that thirty councillors are individually making a decision that is the exact opposite of the one they all just voted for.

It is entirely possible that the "opinion of the majority", "the general view" according to which decisions are taken — the opinion of town councils, the parliament and media — in fact only reflects the position of a small but powerful minority. This minority fosters rivalry between individuals, companies and societies in the name of performance, automatisation, production, consumption, exports, imports, the stock market, motorways and fast trains. This minority possesses the power and cogency of a shaman, the drive of a fanatic, the mysterious, irrational and persuasive strength of an idiot. Perhaps only a few people set the rules.

Formally, even Finland is a democracy: we all have the same right to vote and one's word weighs as much as anyone else's in decision-making. Election after election, the major parties, which are all the same — all going on about development, progress and money — receive a vast majority of votes, and are legitimised to form governments.

In the end, force of habit prevails. People would like to vote for small, alternative parties, "but it just isn't worth it: they'll get so few votes, they will never make an impact." It is both shocking and absurd, for instance, that while most Finns would ultimately like to vote for the Green Party, they don't. Is Finnish society a tragicomedy, where one doesn't know whether to laugh or cry?

Life Protection, Utopias, and Agriculture
(1998)

When the environmentalist enquires about possibilities for survival, his attention is inevitably drawn to the issue of farming. Mikko Hovila's broad survey "Agriculture and the Environmentalist Movement", featured in issue four of *Elonkehä* [*The Biosphere*], was a highly significant

piece, not least because it offered an opportunity to clarify some rather miserable delusions.

I do not know how the dictionary defines the word utopia. Anyhow, Hovila uses it to indicate "a model differing from the dominating one" or — in more elaborate terms — "a model that differs from the one that happens to prevail at the time of observation". This concept, I would argue, is both fruitless and misleading.

The words utopia and utopian are useful when used to describe reveries that are only dreamt of: things impossible, deceptive, unrealistic or which lead to ruin. For a long time it has been clear that of all known societies and economies, the most genuinely utopian are those that have been adopted at present, as they are founded on the logical impossibility of continuous economic growth.

When, in an article entitled "Utopian Politics are Dangerous", Hovila describes the model societies suggested by Pentti Linkola and Eero Paloheimo as "unrealistic", "dangerous utopias", his line of reasoning makes no sense whatsoever. What could be more "dangerous" than the present unwavering and relentless descent into a mass grave: this society of economic growth and technology that every second is destroying the life around us? If nothing else, the programmes of Linkola, Paloheimo and Schumacher (who was also mentioned by Hovila) are examples of extreme realism, anti-idealism and anti-utopianism. Each in their own way, these programmes have specifically been devised to secure the survival of society, mankind and life: they are as far away from being "dangerous" as could possibly be.

What Hovila writes is often unbelievable: "The use of violent methods poses a concrete risk. The recent raids carried out by animal-rights extremists are an example of how 'utopians' may collaborate with dissenters." In his expression of this matter Hovila even manages to lump together two completely opposite things: the subtle and altogether limited violence of animal rights activists on the one hand; the massive violence openly practiced by fur farmers and the vast, hidden violence perpetrated by economic growth on the other.

Hovila deftly writes: "These models present the same problem as all utopias: unless fully implemented, they will not be implemented at all. Without a connection to the present, these programmes are simply meaningless."

It is rather grotesque that Hovila's words should be completely disproved by his own suggestions (in this case, in favour of greener farming). For neither have his own compromising suggestions been "realized to any degree": the complete end of agriculture and absolute triumph of industrial farming are shaping market economy. Small adjustments toward a softer direction have not been accepted any more than radical

environmentalist alternatives: integrated farming or IP [Integrated Production] plays no part whatsoever in the contemporary economy.

Hovila's point about being "connected to the present" is significant. The worst mistake that anyone thinking about society can make is to envisage the prevailing system as the starting point: to begin from a *tabula rasa*, a clean slate, is an absolute must in order to develop any sort of programme. Human history across the world offers a wide range of societal models: the model that happens to be the prevailing one in our own society does not represent any intrinsically superior point of reference. Any binding to a given societal model paralyses the whole thinking process, as is shown by the conventionalities that Hovila — like many others — writes.

In voicing his disapproval of the Green movement because of its opposition to farming, Hovila actually echoes the feelings of many people, including myself, with regard to a past when family farming still meant "living off the land" and agriculture was a way of life. Yet, at the same time, Hovila fails to mention the disgusting aspects of Finnish farming which were also prevalent back then: the senseless love of machines, which soon led to over-mechanisation, and the brutish treatment of forests. It is because of these reasons that environmentalists, whether from the countryside or city, are suspicious of farmers.

But what is the state of agriculture nowadays? How did the farmer mange to get snuffed out like that? I have lived in a farming community for the last fifty years and am increasingly terrified at how farmers surrender, apathetically yielding to what is dealt from above.

There are tens of thousands of farmers (dozens in my own circle of friends) who, as humbly as they slaughter cattle, are handing over their estates and houses, closing their business and retiring even if only middle-aged, to become forty or fifty year-old idlers. The saddest thing is that the reason why these farmers are leaving is that they are scared by all the talk about the decline of the farming business, even if the money they are making from milk, meat and grain is still enough to support them.

Then there are the tough guys of the agricultural world, mostly young men berserk about performance. They'll invest, mechanise, increase, buy half of the village's lands with no concern for the debts and charges they are incurring in trying to satisfy the EU wishes by acquiring tremendous numbers of cattle, pigs or chickens and hectares upon hectares of crops. These walking environmental catastrophes, with their agribusiness farming, do not deserve the slightest sympathy.

What of course will never change is the fact that we will always derive our sustenance from agriculture. The truth, however, is hard to swallow.

Against Highway Crime
(1999)

There is news in the papers about attempts to disrupt and sabotage highway construction sites. The Finnish Road Administration is asking for help from the police.

It should be emphasised that, given the current state of the world, building a motorway is undoubtedly a criminal activity, classifiable among major crimes. All actions that encourage, increase, ease or speed up traffic are criminal activities. The smothering with asphalt of every green, productive *are* [a Finnish unit of measurement, equivalent to 10 square metres or 120 square yards] is a criminal act in a situation where humanity is on the verge of destruction and ecocatastrophes are looming large.

Among ecocatastrophes is climate change, which — as we witness with our own eyes — is advancing at an even faster rate than expected. In the coming decades it will blight a large share of the globe's harvests through drought and make northern regions (like Finland) unsuitable for farming, as the inevitable increase in rainfall will make harvesting, both mechanical and manual, impossible. The upsetting of the gaseous balance of the atmosphere, to which traffic crucially contributes, is one of the major causes of climate change.

An increase in road traffic does not contribute to human well-being. Ninety percent of cargo traffic transports unnecessary and harmful material. Ninety percent of passenger car traffic is either wasteful driving or the kind of travelling that could easily be replaced by public transport (with 50 to 500 people per vehicle).

Trillions or quintillions of animals and plants are being wiped out on motorways. The road across Lake Vanajavesi in Konho, for instance, has wiped out a large colony of birds, spoiling the river's habitat forever. Hardly a greater sin could have been committed on the face of the Earth: no war has ever led to such wastelands.

All those responsible, at various levels, for the construction of motorways, should be sent to the Court of Impeachment. In the case of MPs, their inviolability should be revoked.

As long as these steps will not be taken, responsible young activists deserve all of our support in their efforts to halt the motorway monsters.

The role of the police should also be re-evaluated: is it to protect criminals, or could it be to protect life instead?

Chapter 2

Forests

The Old Forest of Talaskangas
(1989)

The second editorial of the *Helsingin Sanomat* published on the 27th of February argues that a primeval forest with its plants, mushrooms and animals is no more valuable to nature than a forest that has been coppiced or clearcut and subsequently re-planted: a field of trees, so to speak, with its own plants, mushrooms and animals. The editorial also states, "lumberjacks do not destroy nature, even though they chop down trees." Yeah, right. Let me tell three short stories about three primeval forests in Finland.

The first forest was felled and later cleared of all stumps; wheat was sown in its place. No significant change took place: wheat is as green and natural as both three-hundred year-old pines and roughly shaped, two metre thick aspens.

A second forest was also chopped down and an industrial plant was built in its place; around it, thirty hectares of paved terrain occupied by warehouses and parking lots. No doubt, this new natural forest was not green, but living humans inhabited it; and humans are as valuable as the rest of living nature.

A third primeval forest was cut down when a piece of rock, moved by a tractor, drew someone's attention. Soon a hundred metre deep quarry could be found in its place. Nature did not substantially change: the new level, a hundred meters below the previous one was, of course, equally natural. Aeons ago, a mountain of five thousand meters had stood there.

For the sake of comparison, I will tell one last story, one set entirely in the human world. There was once a city in which there stood a large, ancient cathedral. Masses and other services were held inside the cathedral. The building, however, was found to be old, excessively tall and expensive to maintain. So it was demolished, and a hall made of reinforced plastic, with a metal roof, was built in its place. This was cheap to

heat and maintain. Services continued to take place inside the new building, but expenses still seemed too high. The hall was then torn down and the site was flattened into a field. Here masses were held each Sunday morning, markets at other times, as well as football matches, ice hockey games, etc. On cold winter Sundays the service had to be shortened; it was noted, however, that the benefit derived from the liturgy did not depend on its length: what matters is to have a devout and receptive mind.

The Green Lie
(1993)

If I had the power to read people's minds, I would disguise myself as an interviewer from the Centre of Statistics; I would take a sample of five hundred forestry professionals and ask them: "Do you really believe that Finland's forests are being used to create surplus timber through logging and that lumber reserves have increased in the last few decades?" I will never be able to solve this mystery. People only answer regular questionnaires, which they enjoy. While I know that forestry professionals are stupid, I will never know just *how* stupid they are, or how cunning and opportunistic.

Countless naturalists cruising the country, countless eagle-eyed laymen, harass me with their visits, phone calls and approaches, on the road, in city streets or even on trains, asking me the same questions: "Where are the areas protected from logging, where are the dying forests, where are the dense woods?" These people cruise the roads from Hanko to Utsjoki, from Vaasa to Ilomantsi, roaming across dirt tracks in the woods, observing every coast and island from their boats. They also rove forests while picking berries and mushrooms or hunting — or for no particular reason. Yet, in their travels, they encounter nothing but fields of stumps, nurseries with trees as thick as an arm at most, or middle-aged forests thinned out to the point that they almost consist only of seedling trees. These people say that genuine, fully-grown trees — of the kind that can only be embraced with arms outstretched — are only found in construction sites and villas. Statistically, what is it that increases the number of cubic meters of lumber?

My own position on this matter, as in many other matters, is rather unfortunate. In conversations or in the papers, either to argue or to console, many people have claimed that I am imagining things or that, for whatever reason, I wish to paint an exaggerated picture of reality. At times, I am described as a member of "Helsinki's high society"; at other times, I am portrayed as someone "weird and beardy" or as a "fuss-

maker" who has no clue about the life of "the people", "ordinary working folk", the "countryside" and the "economy." Appalled, I then have to point out that I have lived that life and witnessed it with my own eyes. After the War, I have witnessed the spoliation of the countryside, the mother of all Finnish landscapes and forests, and have seen the gentle contours of our motherland being trodden upon and deformed. No doubt, I have made many mistakes, but none of the kind my opponents would suppose. I have kept my eyes wide open and listened too keenly; I have sniffed around for too long and have seen and travelled too much — besides, I also remember too much. My soul has been wounded, yet I persist. I will find a cure for my "clinical depression" and, banging my head again against the wall, I will try to save what remains to be saved.

I already noticed that in some ways my memory is getting rusty. I cannot recall all of the regions whose forests I have travelled through with rubber boots or skis, a compass and tattered map hanging from my belt. So I browsed through my notes the other day and discovered that while I did not make my way through all of the Finnish counties, I journeyed across 250 of them, roughly half of the total. This sample is enough for me to realise that not many other people possess such first-hand knowledge of Finnish forests. I have also drawn a survey of around ten central Tavastian villages I travelled through, exploring almost every portion of privately owned forestland.

I have never personally sat atop a satellite, so I must trust the satellite pictures of wintry Finland, Sweden and Russian Karelia provided by Mikko Puntari. Actually, I had little need for those pictures myself, as I had seen the same places from the ground: the same bushy steppe, the same snowy desert, and, beyond the border, the dark forests of Sweden and Russia.

What has life in the forest taught me? Could I recall the main points and express them in writing? "Condense", asks the editor. "Let memories flow", "tell the young", "remind your peers", my own veteran-self demands, yearning for a golden past. I think I will follow the middle road.

I had time to spot many virgin forests untouched by the axe, starting from the islands of Åland, at the heart of the great trackless forests of southern Tavastia, in Ostrobothnia, Karelia, Kainuu and southern Lapland. Some of these areas were so wild that one could even encounter an ancient giant stump — maybe one every hectare. In the villages a couple of giant trees would occasionally be employed for the construction of ships along the coast: their trunks were then dragged by five horses. One could walk for miles and miles across the Vienan wilderness of Mujejärvi and Jonkeri, Nurmes and Kuhmo without finding a single human trace: no woodchips there or campfires. It is in these places that I have first learned the meaning of the word "rapture": what it is like to be seized by

an otherworldly force, to purposely lose oneself in the woods, choosing to follow only the rough guidelines stored in the mind; and then walk straight into an ancient pine inhabited by a golden eagle and its fledglings — and all this without realizing what province you are in, whether Oulu or North Karelia.

Oh, the mighty wild lands of Ranua and Pudasjärvi! I wandered there too, in search of golden eagles. And Palovaara with its herd of exuberant, wild summer horses, roaming free, following the jingle of the bell around their leader's neck! Oh, Vilmivaara and Soidinkangas, greater than the grace of all gods! It was there that I achieved my personal walking record: 36 hours at a steady pace, searching for a friend that had got lost in the wilderness without a compass. And what to say of the enormous worksites of Pudasjärvi, where wide marshlands were turned into populated areas? Or of the rancour of those governmental landlords, technicians and foremen, when they saw their finest pine ridge, surrounding the necks of open bogs, being shared among veteran farmers...

I also remember the innumerable forest cabins in the backwoods, where lumberjacks or forest workers — the word "logger" was not used back then — would carry food gathered miles away, across paths and causeways. I remember their bustling and snoring in winter, and the silence in summer, when they were gone; I also remember the two old cottage guards who used to live in the cabins year-round. I recall log being transported, silently appearing like a ghost: the lower branches of great spruces would suddenly open like a curtain, although the creak of the sleigh was only heard when nine steaming horses glided past carrying their huge burdens to the stockpiles on the coasts. In spring no trace was left of the road other than bundles of straw laid out on the steep hills by the loggers to slow down their loads. Ospreys would carry off the straw to use as padding for the nests they made at the top of the highest pines. Back then, forests would be utterly quiet for half of the year: from March men would be by the shore or the roadside with their shaving-knives, or laying shirtless on sunny banks; by the first of May they were working in the fields.

I vividly recall the first paths crossed by bicycles or mopeds in the state parks of Perho, Halsua and Lesti. These were followed by rugged roads made of frozen snow, which lasted no longer than the previous paths. Now a network of gravel roads extends for hundreds of thousands of kilometres, dividing the woods into small sections and slaughtering the Finnish forest. This road network has had a further devastating impact on woodland ponds, which are now filled with an array of fibreglass boats, and surrounded by booths and buses — all the glistening colours of the rainbow.

The rolling and rumbling of clearcutting all began in the 1950s. I recall the first cutting of a hundred hectares in the forests of Yhtyneet Paperitehtaat, in Luopioiset: the forest lay bare, black and vast. My travel companion, the late Pekka Putkonen, who later became a doctor, named it "Kullervo's Curse": it is under this name that it is still found in my observation notes. That clearing in the forest was made with two-man saws. Much labour was available back then, as it still is today, even if it were to cut down trees with knives. Machines, however, were already looming upon us and were soon destined to strike at the heart of the wilderness — and elsewhere as well — depriving man of all he deserved: mighty labour, effort and struggle. The first chainsaw I heard was on a snowshoe journey across the hinterland of Ruokola. It signalled an horrendous break in my life. In August of the same year, the first large-scale logging with chainsaws took place in the virgin pine forests of Ilomantsi, in Naarva.

What I remember most distinctly is what happened to the trees: they vanished before my eyes, melting away like snow. Ancient pinewoods disappeared along with dense spruce forests; bushes of nurseries replaced them — when, that is, they were replaced at all. Every birch thicker than a leg disappeared. Aspen groves were methodically driven to extinction: those old hole-ridden aspens I had climbed during the summers of the 1950s to tag almost three hundred jackdaw fledglings, owls and stock doves. Clearcutting began in the interior and not until the 1980s did it reach the woods near inhabited shores. The number of trees decreased at an inconceivable pace. I estimated that around the villages of Tavastian at the beginning of the 1980s perhaps one-third of trees were still standing that had been there in the late 1940s: a loss of about two-thirds in just thirty years. Elsewhere — particularly in the far north — the loss was even greater.

Given these facts, the propaganda devised by the forest industry has proven amazingly effective. What I have just described was witnessed by eyes and satellites all across the country. And yet, the words spoken by the forest industry about the logging, preservation and growth of state timber reserves was swallowed whole by the majority — the majority, that is, of those people who do not explore the woods or even gaze at them from their car windows: the majority of those people who believe any green area that is not a field to be a forest. All the media have swallowed the official lies. To my bewilderment, I recently even found the same statistics about forest growth cited in an otherwise detailed and insightful book: *The State of the Environment in Finland*. Like Goebbels used to say, any claim will be taken to be true if repeated often enough.

It is Dark in the Woods
(1993)

How have the statistics that suggest an increase in timber reserves and conservation through logging been gathered? Well, they were compiled by the Department of Forest Research, whose main duty is to collect data on behalf of the forest industry. The Department has nothing to do with unbiased academia, although the masses — and the chief editors of some newspapers — often believe it does. The scientific-sounding name of the Department and the appointment of its officials to professorships are nothing but an ingenious bluff. The same holds true for the official title given to forest fellers: "foresters".

The Department of Forest Research is a tool in the hands of the forest industry: in other words, one of its offshoots. The industry, like any major corporation, is only interested in business. Things could not be any different from the way they are now, particularly with regard to morals, as the industry's only gods are the bank and the market: the industry would readily sell its own grandmother. The industry, as it were, will increase its reserves, selling more and more merchandise until it has none left. Most things in the world the industry does not understand, and the future is one of them. A merchant's plans for profit do not extend beyond the horizon.

To produce an advantageous forest statistic is the most profitable of businesses. It is worth investing in, budgeting great sums of money for, preparing with care and cleverly disguising. It is hard for me to believe that forest survey groups — which, to the best of my knowledge, travel across the routes marked on the maps — would be dishonest in their work and allow their results to be rigged. But how many persons work out the total figures? Through an intermediary, I have heard that the publisher of the satellite pictures, wishing to examine the original material of the surveys, discovered that these are not public files. The archives of Metla [the Department of Forest Research] were closed. I do not know whether this is true; however, such things usually are.

Can anyone picture the forest industry publishing a statistic that points to a decrease in timber reserves or, worse still, a catastrophic decline? Besides selling forest products, the industry also purchases raw wood. What would its stance be, then, in a price negotiation with a forest owner? The industry knows how to trade, and its aim is to have the seller believe that there is a surplus of the product in question so that the he might accept the buyer's offer. Furthermore, the industry must convince the seller that the surplus is still increasing: that the amount of timber is

not only vast but growing larger. Only then will the forest owner be willing both to sell cheaply and to sell more of his trees, as opposed to withholding them in the hope of a better offer. My own guess is that the Department of Forest Research will state that timber reserves are increasing even when the last currant bushes are being torn from peoples' yards and sent to the pulp mills.

A less significant but nevertheless bothersome point is worth stressing: when the people are assured that timber reserves are increasing, the sharpest edge of conservationist rhetoric is dulled. When the forest industry churns out slogans verging on insanity such as: "The forests are just rotting there", "the forests are turning into inaccessible thickets" or "the axe is the best remedy for the forest"; when it speaks of "sparse usage", "dilapidation" and "bogging down" or of "suicidal spruce forests", it treads the dangerous ground of reckless management. Nevertheless, the industry is "playing it safe", as all its claims are true, provided they are repeated often enough. The industry also knows that it can repeat statements and slogans frequently enough, for it possesses a fair amount of money and — like its colleagues in Naples and Sicily — a vast army: foresters, who do just what they are ordered.

Biologists of course occasionally dare to correct the absurdities delivered by the industry. They remind us that the forests of Finland have been growing since the last ice age without the help of man and that the trees of old forests naturally renew themselves, like all vegetation, when the previous generation of trees has died. Man, on the other hand, always roams in the forest like a bull in a china shop. Researchers and friends of nature, however, soon grow weary: they simply do not possess the resources to wage a constant battle of information. They are but a small minority in Finland and their chirping is easily quelled. My writing, too, will be drowned in the beating of drums.

Critics who have infiltrated the ranks of the forest industry — Trojan horses — are a trickier problem: experts like Lähde, Vaara or Norokorpi are grilled with such intensity that the snarls directed at outside protectors of the environment feel like a pat on the head by comparison. There is no envying the opposition within the forest industry!

I once asked a forester how the obedient consensus within the male-dominated forestry trade, which only a few stubborn critics dare to defy, might be explained: how does this mafia really work? How can it be that while so many institutes and universities provide courses in forestry, no one has even begun to rectify the most disgusting and twisted policies implemented in the field? Why is almost all criticism coming from outside the profession, from the basic research of scientists and nature conservationists? Why don't we form a pressure group to support Lauri

Vaara, for instance? This man does not question the rationale behind forest economy, does not speak like a conservator, does not even criticise the methods of forestry, but at least convincingly and mathematically emphasises how terribly unprofitable heavily mechanised forest harvesting is in terms of national economy, country trade and employment.

The answer forestry professionals give to these questions are clear enough: all posts in the trade are either directly created by logging companies or connected to them. Were any educational institute to start teaching forestry in a different manner from that approved by the forest industry, the first class of students to graduate would be left unemployed. Furthermore, word would soon spread: in the following academic year, the institute or faculty in question would be left without students. It is really that simple.

For decades I have occasionally observed how prey struggles in the web spun by forestry officials and companies. He who journeys a lot also sees many things; he who sits at many desks hears a lot of talk. I have heard many stories about the unscrupulous business of forestry professionals. Here's one example. The Silvicultural Association, which is in a position of authority, prohibits further logging in a forest of small holdings after a few trees have already been felled. After a while, a forest ranger shows up, concerned, like the owner of the property, or his widow, by the fact that no more profit is being made, while taxes keep rising. So the owner and the forester think things over. Perhaps the ranger could renovate the forest so that in twenty years it could produce timber once more; in the meanwhile, the owner would have to struggle to pay the taxes. Some kinsman may warn the owners that this is wrong, but what use would that be? Money is a priority. The transaction then takes place: the ban on logging immediately ceases and the forest ranger sells timber in the first winter for two or three times its purchasing price.

Larger transactions are arranged with the forest authority and private companies. I followed one episode closely in the 1970s. A young man had inherited two hundred hectares of sturdy pine forest from his cheapskate of a father. Trees were marked for felling and the owner consecutively bought six "Mercedes Benz" cars — white ones, too — which were all crashed by him, one after the other. The man was lucky: only after the sixth accident did he lose his licence. Anyhow, a seventh Mercedes was ordered. I remember that the man had to wait for quite a while because the dealer had no white models at the time. The house of the young man (who was now without a licence) was located five hundred metres away from the local bar. To reach the bar, the man would drive five hundred metres in the opposite direction until he reached the shore; here he would jump in a motorboat and drive seven hundred metres to the bay: all this to spare himself a five hundred metre walk down to the bar.

There is another story related to this one. The young man's pine forests were located in two areas: one was on the mainland, the other on an island. The forest on the mainland was worse off and quite used up, while the one on the island had many trees left, although it had been fenced off by the Silvicultural Association. The man began spending all his money and eventually ran out of funds. Of course, he panicked and chose to sell his land and woods on the island. The wealthy farmers of the village coveted the area, but would not engage in such a risky transaction: with a logging ban in effect, the land's capital was all tied up, while taxes were steadily increasing. The Kymi Corporation (now known as Kymmene) bargained on and off for three years, until it managed to purchase the land at an insignificant price. As might be expected, no sooner than the transaction had taken place, the logging ban was revoked. Kymi's own men gave me all the exact figures: the profit made in the first year from the sale of the forest's timber was five times what Kymi had paid for the purchase of the whole land. And I am not even talking about clearcutting here.

But let us return to the data about forests in our country. I was in the heart of Savo this spring, on a business trip for once, looking to buy a patch of forest for the upcoming nature preservation trust. I made sure to familiarise myself with Finnish forest economy in advance and discovered that in the last few years something quite unique had occurred: all privately owned forests had been examined and a logging plan had been drawn up for every hectare. The patch I was interested in was divided into sections of one or two hectares; detailed information had been provided for each section regarding the main types of trees to be found there, their average age and cubic volume. Judging from these data, the forest seemed rather interesting.

When we began exploring the forest, however, we grew increasingly disappointed. Not a single tree had been felled after the drawing of the plan, and yet the information provided was not at all accurate. Certainly, the data regarding the age of the trees and particularly their volume were all wrong: one-third of the forest, we discovered, was empty. I am always confident in providing estimates regarding the density of forests, and this time I was even accompanied by a ranger (an acquaintance of mine who was going to conclude the transaction on behalf of the trust). The ranger shook his head the same moment I did. Quietly, we made our way back: it was rather depressing to discover that even this humble forest was surrounded by hundreds of hectares of clearcutting.

The above experience is so recent that I have only got to tell one of my neighbours about it. My neighbour had a similar story to share: he had felled one of his spruce patches according to the forest economy guidelines, and had obtained only two-thirds of the amount of timber the

plan promised. I then decided to talk to a representative of the provincial environmental office, and was told that they were accustomed to deduct ten to twenty percent from the tree estimates provided by forest economy plans. Judging from the aforementioned 'private' experiences, the actual percentage is likely to be much higher, as for the sake of appearances the government seeks to pay a high price for the purchase of conservation areas.

What should we conclude from all this? That man is a gullible creature. Despite all I had previously witnessed, I now gained the impression that the tentacles of the forestry mob do not extend to every nook and cranny. I had already surmised that the inventory of the country's forests is drawn up quite honestly and that the data is not rigged until it reaches the department offices. Now, old fox that I am, I finally discovered something new. What kind of instructions have the people behind the forest economy plans been given? Has the national balance sheet on forests been thoroughly manipulated?

The Forest Covering in Finland Must Be Restored
(1995)

Many speeches have been delivered about forests this year. The subject, however, should always be a popular one, because Finland equals forest.

When people are confused about what they have heard and ask for a final verdict about the condition and use of Finnish forests, they are quite mistaken. People resemble each other in terms of physical qualities or emotional life, yet, they are light years apart in their opinions. When it comes to woodlands, some people believe the highest value to be the economic growth of Finland; others the preservation of life on Earth. No serious exchange of opinions can take place between those holding these two opposite stances: they simply have to settle in delivering separate speeches. Some of these speeches may even serve some purpose.

One's outlook on forests is thus linked to the most basic of questions: one's perception of life, humanity and its place in the biocoenosis (i.e. biosphere). For a protector of life, who is moved by the diversity of life (biodiversity), it is unthinkable that the whole Earth should belong only to one animal species, humanity. Look at man, this person will say: look at him in Bosnia, Palestine, Rwanda, Kurdistan; or look at him in Finland, engaging in inheritance disputes or phone sex or the trade union movement: is man above all other forms of life? Does man have the right to rule the destiny of millions of basically similar species? Is man the living image of God?

For a preserver of life, the forest is the last piece of land that is left for nature. This person may accept the use of lumber in the construction of modest buildings, a sparing use of firewood, or the harvesting of mushrooms and berries. The forest industry, on the other hand, has nothing to do with the livelihood of man. Livelihood is derived from agriculture, fishing and harvesting throughout the land. The forest industry serves the sole purpose of achieving luxury, of "economic growth".

The protector of life bases his arguments on sound reasoning. Scientists across the world are unanimous in their verdict: if economic growth continues at the current pace, human civilisation will collapse within a few decades. Those who consider things in the long run envisage the extinction of humanity as a consequence of ecological catastrophes. Other species are already growing extinct at an astounding rate: half a million animal, plant and fungus species are meeting this fate every year according to the Finnish science centre Heureka.

To consider a less significant issue, the quality of human life, it is easy to see in what ways the forest industry is guilty. The industry has brought Finland surplus luxury, a misfortune culminating in the gamble of present economics. The timber torn from woodlands has led to high levels of technology, automation and education, and to a huge decline in our standard of living through massive unemployment (including meaningless welfare jobs and study courses), frustration, emptiness and an increasing divide between generations and genders. The lack of physical work, in turn, has led to widespread physical deficiencies.

Finnish woods have virtually been stripped bare and sold. It is difficult even to describe how far these woods are now from embodying genuine, diverse and natural forests. Finnish forest policy has been compared to the ravaging of the rain forests. One important point should be emphasised, however: while half or two-thirds of rain forests are still standing, Finland — with the exception of arctic Lapland — has only preserved 0.6% of its original woodland.

If we think in terms of timber reserves rather than forests, we know from the forest industry that there are 94 solid cubic metres of timber per hectare in Finnish 'forests'. Many factors suggest that the total figure has been widely inflated. But even if the figure were true, it would spell disaster: on average, a full forest covering should measure around 300-400 cubic metres per hectare. If nothing else, the rectification of the global carbon balance — the most serious of all serious problems — would require the forest industry to be shut down for decades.

My 1,450-kilometre trip across the woodlands of eastern Häme and Savo has only deepened my despair. Logging here was more ferocious than ever: woodpiles extended for several kilometres, and the logs looked younger than ever before, consisting of twenty to thirty year-old

wretched little trees. The clearcutting continued, leaving one distinct impression: that soft programmes are just bogus, designed to trick European paper buyers.

In the magazine *Suomen Luonto* [*The Nature of Finland*], forest researcher Risto Seppälä, pleading in favour of the new forest platform, demands that "environmentalists" abandon any further aims "for the sake of honesty". What I have been saying so far should make even Seppälä realise the insanity of his claim. A meagre compromise would be to fully protect half of the woodlands, as the Brundtland Commission itself suggests. But it is absurd to believe that a compromise is possible with the champions of economic growth, whose arguments spell utter doom.

A Logging Story
(1999)

Last winter the only remaining forest along the road to my home village was felled. It was an old fir forest with a few large birches here and there. At the same time, tall seeding pines were taken from a wide clearing on the opposite side of the road: a clearing made fifteen years ago, where seedlings one thumb in width were planted. Currently, I am living on a hectare of spacious land that is almost an island surrounded by logging sites.

This forest by the road was cleared in winter, not at the beginning of summer, when animals mate and flowers bloom, as was the case with half of the clearings in the area. This is one positive thing I noticed (positive aspects should be found in all matters). A creek flows through the clearing and a sparse row of single trees was left along its banks — to "protect the key biotope", I assume. These trees, however, fail to preserve the microclimate of the creek or its ferns. It would have been better for the landscape if this wretched line of trees, mutilated by the logs felled next to them, hadn't been left there to haunt the place. All in all, a few other trees were left in the clearing, at a distance of twenty or fifty metres from one another.

The logging itself was impressive, as it always is nowadays. There is no greater lie than that about the countryside becoming desolate: only now is it truly alive, with all the booming and crashing, screeching, crunching, squeaking, howling and clanking of steel shovels.

The bulk of the work was carried out by two multi-tasking machines painted in eco-friendly green. After opening this gap, the machines moved on to the 'large forests' beyond the state road. The virgin forests of my youth or even middle age had now turned into wind-swept little

woods. Still, there was enough work for the machines to do: each week, they moved further and further; gradually, the crashing changed into banging, and banging into a distant booming, until it faded completely with the arrival of spring.

Equally heavy trucks carried the logs away. I still have no idea where they were taken: previously, dead trees were transported to Kaskinen, 300 km away, where there are several processing plants.

One day a new, gigantic red tractor arrived. It hoarded branches and treetops, forming great stacks by the roadside. This was done to ensure that humans would not have to venture into the clearing, cleaning up the debris left by the machines. After that, it was the turn of a yellow excavator that dug ditches into the ground. In the last few years all logging sites in the area have been ploughed, sometimes just two years after the logging, so that the green sprouting raspberry bushes might be ripped out to render the scenery monotonously black once again. This time, the ploughing was carried out immediately (hooray! a second positive aspect!).

All these machines made their way around a little patch of preserved trees (a third good aspect!). Amidst the mighty fir woods there was a small damp concentration of trees where no trees of any value grew. A pretty little tuft of alders was left there. In summer, a local inhabitant felled the alders at the request of the owner of either the forest or the clearing (so much for the third positive aspect...).

In March I was making my way to a village on horseback, and happened to be in a hurry. Suddenly, I found two trucks blocking the road: one was carrying a wood-chipping machine, the other a chip container. The trucks awkwardly reversed to let me pass, rumbling back onto the state road. I was still in a hurry. An enormous covering of snow left from the previous winter had formed a mattress half a meter in thickness atop the woodchip piles. Half of the contents of the chip load consisted in snow. With a little common sense, I concluded that the energy released from burning the chips was used to dry the chips themselves. A few days later I happened to read some calculations in a newspaper, stating that the efficiency ratio of soaking wet wood chips is almost nil.

Near the beginning of the summer, the Taimi-Tapio company planted spruce seedlings in the clearing (seedlings so small that all I could see from the road with my old eyes were tiny green dots). Cardboard boxes were not left scattered around the clearing (a fourth positive aspect), but were rather piled in three tall stacks by the side of the road. Here they were left, growing increasingly faded and cracked, in the sunshine and rain. Luckily, it hardly ever rained last summer (a fifth...). It looked as if three truckloads of household waste had been dumped by the roadside.

The issue of whose responsibility it was to remove the piles — whether that of the owner of the clearing or of the planting company — was discussed with the president of road management. The company was ultimately deemed responsible. The president then caught up with the forester in question, yet nothing was made of it. After all, we are talking about forestry professionals (not a single positive aspect here). In August, after some twenty trips to the village during which I had the chance to admire the junkyard scenery, I complained to the inspector for environmental preservation of Valkeakoski, who got in touch with Taimi-Tapio. The stacks, however, were not removed.

In September, I visited Valkeakoski to open a negotiation with the inspector. I appealed to the fact that the road is officially the city's street, and even has some street signs to prove it (although the nearest shop or bus stop is seven kilometres away). I also mentioned that twenty houses are found along the road, including some summer cottages. Couldn't the town's park or development officers get rid of the waste with their equipment and subsequently bill the company? The inspector, a heavy burden of experience on his shoulders, thought that this was likely to lead to complaints for years to come and that the town would probably not risk it. Nevertheless, we devised a plan that took account of the notoriously limited mental capacities of foresters. Presumably, we thought, foresters would not be able to imagine the whole plan. While a stern threat was unlikely to turn the town into an intermediary, a slim chance remained that the plan could indeed work. By mid-September, the piles had disappeared: this seasonal decoration was removed after three and a half months.

But I have got ahead of myself. At the beginning of June, during a weekend, the first storm arrived, felling many lone trees in the clearing (as well as the row of trees by the creek). One of these trees snapped a telephone wire. My three-month long search for aquatic birds was interrupted by the storm. I then planned on visiting home. I needed a phone, but had to walk two kilometres to a neighbouring village, as the line was down for three days, until electricians showed up on Monday.

The storm that arrived in midsummer was harsher. It hit the whole province and felled some of the few trees that were still standing in the clearing. At many intervals, the telephone wire was severed. A world without phones would undoubtedly be a much better place — but then human lives would have to be arranged very differently. Now that we take the phone for granted, its absence causes great difficulties. When I had to call the hospital concerning my ninety-two year-old mother's endoscopic surgery, I resorted to fellow hikers and a taxi to return to my boat in the far-away village. I visited home two additional times, leaving several days between each visit; still the village was without its phone

line, and I was forced to cycle to acquaintances in nearby villages whose phones worked.

After many attempts, the phone failure was finally reported. On the second week, from acquaintances' homes I phoned the call centre to enquire about maintenance schedules. The phone-lines had also been down in the past, but then electricians had showed up immediately. Now only the national call centre was working: "Welcome to Sonera's free service. We are busy at the moment. Our operators..." Five minutes of music followed. "Welcome to Sonera's free..." Five minutes of music. "Welcome to Sonera's..." The same indescribably sweet voice, awakening a lust for murder.

A connection was never established, but after exactly ten days the electricians arrived. Sonera had fired half of their electricians and the situation had gotten out of control after the stronger storm. A close neighbour of mine only just survived this incident: an eighty-five year-old woman who lived by herself but was contacted daily by her daughter in Tampere, who phoned to make sure she was fine. Thanks to an incredible stroke of luck, this lady's grandchild happened to be spending a short holiday at her cottage by the beach when the lines were cut off: the grandchild managed take care of her grandmother while simultaneously keeping in touch with Tampere through expensive calls from her mobile phone.

The piles of waste are now gone and the phone is working again (like the old lady). The merciful snow, however, is late. Now that forest economy knows no restraints in its brutal methods, now that the ploughed clearings of former woodland merge with one another and with fields for kilometres and kilometres, things could not be worse. Only fifteen years ago all villages had some cattle and half of the fields were green with grass. Now, not a single calf or green patch of grass is to be seen. A great portion of the village area has been ploughed and fields and forests have turned into black soil.

This is my motherland, and every motherland deserves love. So I love all this. I assure myself over and over again that I love it: what else could I love if not this? Alas, it *must* be loved.

Is the WWF Favouring Crime?
(2000)

In early February the media gave an exceptional shock to all Finnish friends of nature. As the blow was delivered from an unexpected direction, it proved particularly unsettling. The International WWF (World

Wildlife Fund) had announced that Finland was the second best EU country in terms of forestry. Switzerland came first, Estonia and Latvia last.

We know that the forest policy of Finland is the greatest environmental catastrophe of the new Europe — the result of massive clearing made centuries ago. Our woodlands, which extend for 200,000 square kilometres, have been utterly razed following the World Wars; our timber reserves now amount to 50-70 solid cubic metres per hectare: in other words, to just over ten percent of the full, natural amount (400-500 metres per hectare).

The bulk of so-called forests in Finland consist of either new, bare clearings that in winter cannot be told apart from a field, or in nurseries consisting of trees as thick as a wrist at most. Forested patches stand out in our landscape like tiny islands and tufts. They too are disappearing at an inconceivable speed, as harvesters open hundreds of new sites every day.

Nothing comparable is taking place in any other European country (praise all gods for that!). Between 1986 and 1998, I have personally made forest inventories covering thousands of kilometres across most European countries, so I am more than familiar with the situation in Europe. (In Finland, between 1948 and 1999, I have made inventories covering tens of thousands of kilometres of woodlands in nearly 250 counties). In most European countries — particularly Germany — the forest covering is almost untouched, although it partly originates from ancient plantings that have been manipulated for some time. Estonia and Latvia (as well as Lithuania) have the most overwhelmingly inviolate, fabulous virgin forests.

I have asked Timo Tanninen, the head secretary of the WWF in Finland, about this public statement — as the WWF information about Finland comes from Finnish sources — but I received no clear answer. To explain things, Tanninen sent me 135 pages in English, which ended up straight in the bin (how could it occur to anyone that a friend of nature and a protector of forests born in Häme would know even a word of English?!); he also included a one-page Finnish leaflet that makes no sense whatsoever. The leaflet blabbers on about excellent forestry, and the small area of preserved forests in Finland.

The WWF and its Finnish chapter must be aware that 'forestry' is a human action that is exactly the opposite of protection. Regardless of any euphemistic terminology, it means cutting down forests: hence, forestry is clearly an (arch)enemy of conservationism. Issuing statements about different methods of logging — that is, of ravaging the forest — should be none of the WWF's business.

The WWF cannot possibly ignore the fact that the forest industry is using its statement in the media war by means of which they are trying

to conceal the utter devastation of Finnish forests from European wood purchasers. Or has the WWF, in thoroughly corrupt Finland and Europe, turned into a branch of the forest industry, a criminal organization?

No retraction has been made regarding this disgusting statement. The situation is a bitter one for a friend of nature like myself, who supported the Finnish chapter of the WWF when it was first founded, who has encouraged it to embark on many an arduous campaign, who has been part of its administrative board for a long time and who has always funded its campaigns with a large share of his personal income — always, that is, until now.

Chapter 3

Animals

From Gunslingers to Environmental Disaster
(1993)

Now that new hunting regulations have been approved, I wish to examine the changes that have taken place with regard to hunting in the field of conservation. The changes over the past fifty years or so have been dramatic: the country's fauna, flora and natural environment have also changed tremendously. In less than fifty years, Finland has been turned upside-down.

When I was a young and fanatical conservationist, I was committed not so much to plants, like my father, but rather to animals, and particularly birds. Hunters, therefore, represented the greatest threat in my eyes. My first public appearance in the world of conservationism was when, in the late 1940s, I delivered a speech at a student celebration in my school attacking duck hunters. Just before the opening of the hunting season, I had read an interview with two hunters in a newspaper where these gunslingers were anxiously wondering about how many ducks might be arriving. In reading this interview, I was filled with contempt. I had first begun my career as an ornithologist by observing the water birds of Tavastia; I had been watching ducks ever since their migration in spring, counting the number of nesting couples, eggs and broods, and had even received an award during the winter celebrations at Luontoliitto for a paper entitled "The Waters and Coastal Birds of Some Tavastia Lakes". I was shocked, therefore, when I read that those two jerks, who knew nothing about ducks, were going to start shooting them on August the 20th. Now that I think of it, official data on the duck population was probably nonexistent back then. The Finnish foundation for the preservation of wildlife, later named *Riistanhoitosäätiö*, was just getting started in those days.

Like the whole brotherhood of naturalists, however, I was worried the most by predators. All beasts of prey down to the marten had been slaughtered to the verge of extinction. Predatory birds had suffered since

the end of the last century, but had managed to recover during the years of the War, when guns were reserved for other tasks. Soon after the War, guns began blazing more furiously than ever throughout the country, as hawks and owls were being stuffed and turned into ornaments to be displayed in homes or offices.

In the 1950s, birds of prey suffered greatly in Finland. In those years, even in enlightened Tavastia, an ornithologist had to keep even an osprey's nest strictly secret; else, a punitive expedition would have set off from some corner of the village to destroy it. It is a great blessing that no one back then had even dreamt of forest roads — roads that do not lead to a house. The fact that in order to embark on a journey in the woods one had to cross miles of rugged terrain afforded the birds at least some degree of protection. When the network of forest roads was set up and every tree with a nest could be reached with a car, environmental education had already accomplished its aims. Had there been such roads in the 1940s and 1950s, many species would be extinct by now.

When I was young, I was an energetic and temperamental person. So I began pestering the state conservation official in order to end the persecution of birds of prey at the hands of the ten most famous taxidermists in the country. In fact, even before the War a law had been in place to protect most of these birds: simply, it had always been infringed upon. As they needed a licence for arsenic, taxidermists were all registered. Conservation official Reino Kalliola, however, was a jovial, kindly and old-fashioned gentleman, who rewarded rather than punished, and believed all that was stated in his splendid, literarily fabulous books on nature (which remain unsurpassed to this day). Perhaps, the man was less than keen to heed my request because he was the only person responsible at the time for all those matters that are now handled by the Ministry of the Environment, the environmental administration and provincial conservation officials.

A little insistence on my part is all it took for Kalliola to order a police investigation and appoint me — who else? — as the expert to be consulted on the matter. This all happened almost exactly forty years ago. I remember the great bird-watching summer of 1953, when I rode a bicycle up to my observation spots in Tyrväntö and Sääksmäki, ringing the last stock dove fledglings of the summer in the aspen woods of Haukila. Over the course of the decades, twenty-eight nest holes of large birds and countless little crevices of starlings and tits had accumulated in those giant aspens.

What we found in the hands of the taxidermists was beyond all expectations: honey buzzards, common buzzards, long-eared owls, marsh harriers — hundreds upon hundreds of birds. The policemen were not particularly zealous in their work. When we were stumbling through

what I assume must have been the only freezing-room in the capital, located in a large warehouse at Sörnäinen, the old officer Jalonen, who had been yawning his head off until then, suddenly noticed a squirrel in summer fur: the animal had been killed when the game season was already closed. I also remember Jalonen's reply: "Well, what's wrong with that?" After all, the squirrel was a useful fur animal back then (although, in his reply, Jalonen was also referring to the honey buzzards and owls).

The police of Vääksy proved more compassionate. As our trip back from the taxidermist of Urajärvi extended well into the evening hours and I did not have a tent with me at the time — it was years before I bought one, as I usually just slept in barns — I asked for, and was granted, a night in the lock-up. Oddly enough, it was the only night I ever spent in jail, yet I failed to make the most out of it. During the morning hours, a mate from the cell adjacent to mine began conversing with me through the wall; he seemed genuinely kind and even mentioned he knew a place were I could work. Only now that the tricks and low-cost imports of the European Commission have ruined my business as a fisherman, have I regretted that I never further inquired about that job. Perhaps — who knows? — I could have made a fortune.

Things eventually took the course suggested by Kalliola and Yrjö Kokko. Their successors, a number of skilful and diligent scholars of nature, began their educational work with literature, newspaper articles, photographs and films. In a quarter century, the people of Finland were brainwashed into tolerating, or even loving, not just the country's lynxes and bears, but also hawks and eagles. Only a few sullen geezers somewhere in the backwoods are still shaking their fists at animals and placing eagle traps.

My relationship with hunters improved once the persecution of birds of prey came to an end. What certainly contributed to bring about this change was the appointment of biologists with a strongly conservationist background to official positions within organisations dealing with hunting and wildlife. The pivotal magazine of these organisations, *Metsästäjä*, has long supported conservationist efforts. Of course, most hunters are not nearly as exemplary in their attitudes as their leaders. Duck hunting is still the vilest of spectacles, leading to many outrages. The fate of water birds is still a sorry one: as in the case of fowls, no talk is ever made regarding the protection of ducks. Nevertheless, it is nice to think that one day water fowl too will be protected: we shall then see at what level their population will settle.

Making peace with hunters was, first and foremost, a necessity for me. Finland began to prosper, but industrialisation and an efficient economy were only achieved at the expense of nature: in the 1960s the focus

of environmentalism suddenly shifted from preventing the killing of animals and plants to the protection of their environment. The primeval aspen woods of Haukila that I mentioned earlier have long gone, like many other aspen woods that were there in the 1950s. The stock dove faced extinction long ago in Tavastia, my home area, not because of hunters, but because of foresters. When the fauna of Finland was forced to adapt to an altered environment, and only a few animal species survived while many others disappeared, environmentalists and hunters often found themselves on the same side against a common enemy. It made little sense to protect the birds of a lake from being hunted when the nutrients used in farming and industrial nitrogen were causing the whole lake to be covered in vegetation.

An Animal History of the New Age
(1993)

In the last essay of mine, I explained how Finnish naturalists and hunters were ultimately forced to sign a peace treaty, and how the worst fate was that of Finnish animals. Long past are the days when — so a mournful anecdote goes — a first attempt was made to protect the lynx. At that time, President Paasikivi, who had been shown the amendment, had sceptically asked: "Isn't the lynx a beast?" The politician who had presented the motion, unfamiliar with the finer points of conservationist rhetoric, rather perplexedly gave an affirmative answer, only to hear the president say that the motion was being dismissed. The lynx had to wait a few more years before being granted some form of protection.

But what about the present condition of the Finnish fauna? It is highly unfortunate that life has not taught me much about the so-called lower species of animals: invertebrates. Invertebrates are sure indicators of many forms of environmental damage, ruin and destruction. Luckily, a growing number of researchers have become acquainted with these small brothers and sisters of ours, and are busy setting up new conservation programmes. My point of view is that of a layman: I give priority to warm-blooded animals.

I would say that the most remarkable change that has occurred in recent years is that animal populations are less stable than they were in the past. Unbelievably sudden rises and falls in animal populations can be observed: it is hard to tell what spring will be a silent one for which species. Environmental changes caused by man do not always provide an explanation, although they frequently do: fauna today is entirely at the mercy of man. During my youth, or childhood at least, zoologists generally attributed similar variations to climate change.

Strange as it may sound, signs of instability can sometimes be observed even on an individual level. In my youth, when I began banding not just the fledglings of tawny owls, but also their mothers, I would find seven out of eight mothers alive and nesting in the same hole the following spring. Nowadays, it seems like almost half of the owl mothers change each year. Presumably, there are so many young and newborn owls living in the numerous high quality birdhouses this welfare state provides that old owls are being prematurely displaced by the young. Not a pleasant discovery for an elderly ornithologist like myself.

Another feature of contemporary Finnish fauna is the renaissance of large animals, a stunning surprise nobody would have predicted thirty years ago. Again, it is mostly birds I have in mind here, but of course bears, lynxes, and most importantly moose should also be counted. When Rolf Palmgren, the pioneer of conservationism, announced the threat of extinction in the 1920s on the basis of what had occurred until then, the moose, along with the swan, topped his list of endangered species. We are now witnessing the glorious comeback of swans, both whooper swans on the mainland and mute swans on the coasts. The crane population is growing too. In fact, the crane is a unique example of an animal that has been able to replace its lost environment with a new one: it has left dried marshlands for coastal flood meadows and even land under cultivation, or scarcely forested depressions and low-lying cultivated fields. However, it can be assumed that the crane would have nested in damp fields and beach meadows in the past, had the keen land owners of the past not unceremoniously fended off all harmful birds.

The end of unrestricted culling apparently leads to a surprising increase in the number of larger and stronger animals — provided, that is, that the environment can afford it. These animals lie at the top of the food chain: many are hunted by no animals except humans, wolves and bears. Who knows: will a bear snatch a moulting goose or a crane fledgling? The eagle, at any rate, will not outmatch a crane. In a swamp in Ilomantsi I once saw a crane driving a golden eagle away, chasing it far, trying to poke it with its beak from both sides — one of the most amazing bird sightings of my life.

The bean goose population has risen, as has — in even greater numbers — that of the greylag goose. The eagle owl too has made a huge comeback. Every summer, conservationists triumphantly announce the recovery of white-tailed eagles in the last few years. That giant gull, the great black-backed gull, is faring better than any other species of its genus. In my youth, the mightiest of all Cervidae, the raven, was extremely rare in southern Finland: it has now spread all over the country. The grey heron and bittern, those ghostly cousins, are the freshest newcomers among our avifauna (we are still waiting for the white stork!).

The golden eagle, which has problems both with the atavistic use of guns in the north and with dwindling populations of prey, is somewhat of an exception among large birds; yet the last few years were not the worst witnessed by this species. Given that snowmobiles are considered one of the chief problems for golden eagles, we should be cautious in talking about the future of these large animals in positive terms: if things look fine at present, the future might be gloomy. People studying the white-tailed eagle will remind us that when the number of holiday visitors exceeded a certain limit in an archipelago, it meant the beginning of a decline.

The third major recent change in the Finnish fauna is the growth of the number of predators. Since the 1950s, things have taken a radical turn: predators are now heavily represented in our fauna, so much so that even a conservationist is led to question his own assumptions. Large predators are of course still scarce, but all — with the one possible exception of the wolverine — have recovered from a terrible depression. The bear constitutes a significant ecological factor near the eastern border, and so does the lynx around Savo and Tavastia. But how can this rise in the number of large mammals be explained, considering that forested terrain has been stripped bare and paved with roads? I presume that one major reason must be the same factor that, conversely, has caused a great loss in avifauna: the spread of dense nurseries in areas that were clearcut. Man has nothing to gain from these wretched sites: whether he is a berry- or mushroom-picker, a hunter or a hiker. Bears, lynxes and wolves, on the other hand, can lie there unbothered, although they have to seek prey in more productive hunting grounds.

The weasel, which in the 1950s I only spotted in the primeval forests of Kuhmo's Jonkerinjärvi around Viena, has become a noticeable presence in Finnish forests: an exciting example of a new predator. Whether native to foreign continents or — like the weasel — a son of the land who has returned from emigration, new predators breed in great numbers and take an unnaturally heavy toll on the population of its prey until a sort of balance is achieved. At the moment, the weasel roams about in biotopes that are entirely different from the vast woodlands where it used to live; now it even steps on the toes of polecats and mink (the European mink, to be more exact). The situation with mink and racoon is also far from being under control. These animals are altogether new predators: when present in great numbers, they constitute an additional strain for the environment, which also has to accommodate its old guest, the fox.

Among birds of prey, the disappearance of the peregrine falcon has caused the greatest grief; nothing could have saved this animal in the 1950s and 60s: its extinction was one of the fastest ever to take place.

However, for some unfathomable reason, a small population of this species survived in Lapland. The merlin and kestrel are also trapped in a downward spiral. The kestrel gives a very poor image of Finnish agriculture because it has survived reasonably well elsewhere in Europe. On the other hand, the hobby has been erroneously said to be endangered: it is more likely that in the course of my life its population has grown. In my last long rowing trips along the great lakes of eastern and north-eastern Finland, I found eighteen nests of predatory birds on shores and islands, and all belonged to the hobby.

Harriers have greatly improved their lot in Ostrobothnia, and to a lesser extent in other regions as well. Marsh harriers are the first species that came to my mind when I wrote that man is not always accountable for variations in animal populations. It is an utter mystery why harriers abandoned the splendid grasses along the Gulf of Finland and moved to measly patches of reeds along inland lakes and ponds. The bird that is better off of all is the sparrowhawk — his case is similar to that of the weasel. Its numbers fell dramatically, probably because of environmental toxins, as it happened not when game wardens were hostile towards predators, but later, during the 1960s and 1970s. This drop in the sparrowhawk population, however, was followed by a recovery unlike anything I have seen before. When in the 1980s, after a twenty-year break, I spent three weeks, from August to September, at the place where I used to work in my youth, the sparrowhawk was the bird species found in greatest numbers — even more so than the willow warbler, flycatchers, redstart and tree pipit, species that were in their main migrating season at the time. I would never have expected to witness such a display. Banding little birds with a net was nearly impossible: sparrowhawks would kill them before we could even reach them.

Owls are still faring pretty well... Tengmalm's owls, tawny and Ural owls all rejoice because of the nationwide network of birdhouses. In some areas there are even too many birdhouses, and the lumber used to build them would be better used elsewhere. However, I shudder when I wonder what the situation might be like in a few years' time if the number of ornithologists continues to drop. What will happen if there won't be anyone capable of building decent birdhouses? The population of black woodpeckers is also surprisingly strong at the moment, but it may be only a temporary phenomenon caused by the exceptionally mild winters we have recently had. And besides, the whittlings of this master carpenter only benefit Tengmalm's owls. Owls are in the same position as the osprey, which will face hard times if the coming generation of naturalists does not maintain and renew birdhouses.

When I was young — now, that's a new way for me to start a paragraph! — the eagle owl was on the verge of extinction. In the fifteen villages in Tavastia that I had explored there were only three or four birds left; throughout the 1950s, despite my strenuous attempts, I failed to come across a single nest of this species. When welfare-Finland was suddenly born and its municipal junkyards fattened by squander started providing food for thousands of rats, the eagle owls first conquered these joyous fields, and then, with the fat broods spawned there, the whole of Tavastia. The way they behaved with their fledglings was shocking, and my relation to the giant owl chilled to below zero.

At the other end of the owl spectrum we find that sharp-eyed devil, the pygmy owl, a very similar case. In my active days in the 1950s and 60s, I would only rarely encounter this bird; in the following decade, however, its population grew at least five times in size. Nowadays, I encounter pygmy owl nests and broods far more often than in my youth, although I spend maybe one percent of the time in woods that I spent back then. There probably aren't many locations in Tavastia where on daybreak in autumn one would not hear the shrieking falsetto of the pygmy owl.

I see the eagle owl as a mistake of Creation. I simply cannot stand the food it stores in my birdhouses, which regularly goes uneaten and rots in spring: a layer of bullfinches, covered by one of pretty siskins and topped by five glinting blue tits. I cannot understand the sanctimonious nature-worshipper who thinks that everything in nature is fabulous and indisputable. If we criticise man and his crimes, we can criticise other parts of nature as well. Evolution is neither perfect nor infallible, especially now that its usual course has been interrupted. If an ecocatastrophe weren't looming ahead of us, surely the eagle owl would eventually be somehow stripped of its unneeded surplus.

The Ethics of Environmentalism
(1993)

A hundred years ago, books divided birds of prey into two classes: the "clawing" and "extremely clawing". Old statistics about bounties and their victims are impressive. I stated earlier that predatory animals and birds were still having a hard time in the 1950s. For a long time hunters saw predators as the main cause of both the fluctuation and constant diminishment of game. Similarly, fishermen with empty nets first blamed gulls, ospreys and black-throated divers. By exaggerating a little, it could be argued that an ancient idea prevailed back then: that the Creator had brought forth a given amount of game and fish at the beginning of time,

and that this reserve was being slowly eaten away by predators — and of course, according to fishermen, by other fishermen.

The notion of the renewal of game and fish populations, of their division into age groups, and of the extent to which each notch in the food chain can be taxed is a historically recent development in the consciousness of the average man. Only after my youth have zoologists discovered the natural law according to which predators cannot permanently extinguish the whole population of their preys (for in doing so, they would then perish themselves). This is as close as researchers get to the truth when speaking to the public.

Now that Finland is swarming with predators, it is time to address the issue of predatory animals once more. Maybe old game wardens were right after all: the thing about the balance between predator and prey surely holds true when the former attacks only a single species of animals; but, like we all do, predators enjoy several foods. The eagle owl can start by eating all smaller owls, common buzzards, goshawks and ospreys in its territory — something it often does. After that, it will move on, leisurely taking its toll on the numerous moles and rats that can easily hide and thus won't be completely decimated. The mink swims from one island of razorbills and black guillemots to another, killing their offspring down to the last cub; it then simply starts eating sticklebacks and young perches.

We here get to the issue of natural balance. No matter how vigorously someone like Yrjö Haila might deny it, balance in nature does exist, although it is constantly shifting. Man-induced disruptions are a reality. I have already mentioned the abnormally large number of eagle owl broods in junkyards; clear-cutting is another unnatural occurrence that is responsible for the sudden increase in eagle owls in the Finnish forests. Clearcutting has provided new spacious hunting ground for eagle owls, which have thus increased their chances to spot and catch common buzzards at the edge of clearings or ospreys, visible in their nests from miles away. Another efficient predator, the goshawk, is facing the opposite problem: as it nests in old, large woods and hunts in densely forested terrain by stalking medium-sized animals that are now diminishing in numbers, it is not faring well.

It is with a feeling of resignation that I am forced to admit that the full protection of eagle owls was an obvious mistake. Our natural environment has been so disrupted by increasing human intervention, that any policy of conservation soon requires some kind of rectification: research and, even more so, legislation simply cannot keep up.

The greatest disaster will occur, however, if no attempt is made to change human actions: we will fail to reach the largest sum of life possible, which is the highest goal of environmental protection. The new law

on hunting and, even more so, discussion of this law among naturalists are not a sign of progress in themselves. Those who were aiming to protect all or nearly all animals (except game) were seriously mistaken. In ornithology magazines it was suggested that the crow should also be protected: why, it isn't harmful to humans, is it?

The above point of view is something quite new; it rejects the notion that nature must be *taken care of* and instead leaves animals to face each other. At present, by contrast, man is constantly interfering by favouring one animal over another. I do not see this as the triumph of conservationism or as being indicative of any profound understanding of nature; rather, it strikes me as a form of estrangement from nature. How did that aphorism by Sylvi Kekkonen go? It is a short road from tolerance to ignorance. I think the two are often synonymous.

Human concern for nature emerges very clearly in expressions like "harmful animal" and "harmful bird". I am sure that in many cases this has led to some excesses. There was a time when the red-backed shrike was considered an outlaw throughout the country because it ate little birds, lizards and bumblebees. There was no flaw in this reasoning except for the fact that the bird does not benefit from the economy, rubbish-heaps, etc. of man. While it benefits from the man-made landscape in which it lives, so do its preys.

The ecological principle that inspired previous legislation was clear enough: an animal that lives off man through most of the year by making use of human waste and eats its own fledglings or eggs for the rest of the year is a harmful animal that must be driven away. The deaths caused by man, in this case, must also be prevented by man. The fox, crow, magpie, jay and herring gull are typical harmful animals of this sort. If that winter parasite living on rubbish piles, the jay, is moving from its ordinary diet (of crossbills) to a diet consisting solely of the eggs of blackbirds and small birds or fledglings at springtime, it is man who is responsible.

Choosing to protect the jay was a mistake, as is likely to be the protection of ravens, who prospered thanks to the remains of elks and the carrions on which eagles feed. The major reason for protecting colonies of herring gulls was that of shielding other birds of the archipelago from naive game wardens: the herring gull itself deserves anything but protection. It is questionable whether this policy of protection is in any way a positive thing. Anyhow, it is highly regrettable that game wardens no longer organise shooting contests targeting crows in spring and other harmful birds.

In the previous essay, I discussed whether by restoring — i.e. rejuvenating — natural environments we could have millions of more birds in the country, provided a similar increase were sustainable. Perhaps a dif-

ferent assumption is needed: I feel that predators, both native and imported, are actually so plentiful at the moment that they permanently stifle our bird population. Anyone who follows bird nests in summertime will point out that very few of them survive, except in holes. I have estimated that only plentiful secondary broods in late summer will save many little birds from complete ruin, even if only a small portion of the population were to nest. It is as if the merciful hand of destiny controlled the yearly activities of professional predators like the jay and magpie, who appear to limit their sweeping of the nests in July.

When I consider my personal and rather typical southern Finnish backyard and its surroundings, I can see that the chances for wagtails, chaffinches, spotted flycatchers, blackbirds, yellowhammers and swallows to get their fledglings flying are almost non-existent. There are almost no spots safe from crows, magpies, and jays; cats cruise through the lot every day, squirrels scour every log and every building corner, while hawks make an appearance every now and then. The tawny owl can be found stalking the area; raccoons, dogs and badgers sniff around at night.

I was excited last summer to find a bird nest that had been spared from predators in my own house. A robin had managed to bring forth a brood in a nest that was located on the porch of my stable, in a fold of a canvas that loosely hangs from a beam supporting the ceiling. No predator could plunge upon the nest from above or jump at it from below, although its canvas could not withstand the attack of a magpie or great spotted woodpecker.

It should be noted that while predators, even in the long run, do not undermine the populations of the animals they prey upon, the way they time their attacks is crucial for the preservation of life. It makes a great difference whether a young bird is killed in its nest in June or dies because of hunger, cold, snow and ice in February — when all birds are competing for food.

I have made a careful estimate of the number of nest-thieving birds during my bicycle trips in many European countries. Finland has the greatest number of crows, magpies and jays. Only Estonia, which has an unbelievable amount of crows, comes before Finland in this respect. I feel that there aren't as many little birds on the fields of Estonia as its magnificent landscape would suggest. Germany, that wonderful and orderly country, is quite remarkable: nowhere in my life have I seen so few crows and magpies as I did during my cycling trip in eastern Germany last summer. Even jackdaws were scarce: only in two cathedrals in some city centre did I find a few specimens. All three species of birds, and even jays, were easily outnumbered by common buzzards. Correspondingly, more birds could be found in yards and gardens; more linnets, finches, warblers and woodpigeons nested in backyard lime trees than anywhere else.

Unscrupulously stern rules must be applied to foreign predators, both those which were imported and those which crossed the border themselves. We can probably tolerate the importation of alien species as long as they do not harm the native ones. But if the existence of any native species is threatened in order to secure the well-being of imported animals — if goshawks are threatened because of pheasants, for instance, or lynxes because of white-tailed deer — then the environmentalist's verdict must be irrevocable.

A final sentence must be delivered in the case of those predators that are not part of Finnish nature: the mink and raccoon represent an unbearable burden. Recently, even these creatures have found people to protect them, which is something quite paradoxical. People who defend these imported predators in the name of environmentalism are obviously enemies of conservation, while the game warden is its ally. Years ago, some crazy old lady wrote letters to newspapers issuing a nation-wide call to arms to wipe out every viper on Earth. Personally, I would suggest an efficient war against the mink and raccoon.

The Suppressed Nightmare of Conservation
(1993)

So far, I have shared some thoughts and opinions from a 'classic' conservationist perspective by talking about the relation between man, animals, and the environment. So far, I have overlooked worldwide environmental issues: I have pointed out how man has caused nature several problems, even tragic problems, more on a local level than by contributing to the ozone layer, climate change and erosion. I have talked at length about the relation between predators and their prey, and about how man has disastrously imported predators from the other side of the world. The worst is yet to come. The worst animal in Finland is a domestic animal, an angel of death imported from Egypt: the cat.

I have already criticised the animal protection movement for defending the mink and the raccoon. But when the movement takes a stand in favour of cats against the flora and fauna native to Finland, animal protection becomes a serious enemy of conservation –even if the same movement earns the warm support of every friend of nature when it fights against the fur trade or intensive cattle farming.

But by God, not only are fanatical animal protectors friends of the cat, but so is half of the population! Man's relationship with nature has never been more deranged, reckless and hypocritical than it is with the cat: when it comes to defending the cat, many environmentalists turn cunning and deceitful. I am here talking about the northern, Finnish man,

who pretends to love nature, animals, and particularly birds — and indeed does love them, with half of his heart. But then again, Mediterranean people unabashedly walk all over wild animals.

Man's relationship with the cat is such a sensitive issue in Finland — despite the increasing appeal of environmentalism — that the whole matter is never mentioned. And yet, the cat has a profound impact on nature. Cats are easily the most numerous animals in Finland, and their victims can be estimated to range in the millions every year among birds alone. An animal protector that stands fervently against hunting should know that a cat may kill as many birds in Finland as all the hunters of the country put together. The mammals it slays are even more numerous. One would think that the problem of cats would be a regular topic of discussion in magazines like *Suomen Kuvalehti*; that reports and statistics concerning the number of animals killed by cats would be widespread. Actually, the matter has hardly been addressed at all.

And what about the thousands of mawkish pictures of cats in magazines? How come you never see pictures that show a cat engaging in what, according to my experience, would be more typical behaviour: like dragging the mother of a green sandpiper brood into the crevice of a cowshed, or dragging a redstart by its wing into the rose bushes of some family home? Or again, sitting on the stairs of a cottage, guarding the red-breasted robin or squirrel it has just killed?

One of the worst features of the new hunting regulations was the effort to increase the protection of the cat. Sadly, some change in the wrong direction took place. The attempt to distinguish between wild and domestic cats is crazy. No doubt, there are a handful of cats living in apartment houses and which are taken outside on a leash: conservationists have nothing to say about them. All other cats, however, with some very rare exceptions, are top-notch predators. At least during the early hours, every cat from the countryside or suburbs is out hunting; and that includes 95% of all cats in Finland. That is precisely the use of the cat as a domestic animal, and why it was imported in the first place. Consciously or subconsciously, the role of the cat as a predator is still accepted. Therein lies the most paradoxical aspect of Finnish love for nature.

The cat can actually be seen as an extension of the hunter: down to the shrew, all small game that cannot be killed by either shotgun or rifle is handed over to the cat. Of course, there will be some overlap in this division of labour when it comes to medium-sized game. The snipe was removed from the list of game species thanks to the new legislation; yet, when a couple of snipes settled by my house, they were still treated as prey. The two birds romped about the gulf until mid-summer. Then the neighbour's cat brought one of them to me as a gift, whole, shimmering, with drops of water glinting on its feathers — I have no idea why the cat

brought me the bird instead of its owners. Some time before there had also been a mongrel dog and another cat in the same house. The miserable dog, slow and dull-witted, managed to track a brown hare and set off on a real, if rather slow, chase. The cat observed the chase from across the field and planned its attack: ambushing the hare, it killed it quietly and unaffectedly. The dog, outwitted, immediately gave up.

The list I have drawn up over the years of animals defeated by cats is vast. By my door I once found a familiar-looking cat carrying a couple of young goldeneyes: beautiful birds still unhurt, covered in drops of water like the snipe, the male displaying an astounding plumage. As far as I am aware, the goldeneye — particularly the male — never touches the ground: near lakes, it sleeps on rocks or reefs. So I cannot figure out whether they were caught while swimming to a rock, or if they were snatched together or in separate attacks. The cat was not some half-starved farm cat trained to chase rats, but a perfect pet: a furry and fluffy Angora cat that received as much food from its owners as it could swallow.

In August, when the fledgling flocks of little birds move low in bushes and grassy banks, I have seen a female cat carry a little bird to its autumnal kittens every half an hour past my ornithologist's workplace — not a particularly encouraging message about my work. Compared to the cat, the sparrowhawk and hobby are just amateurs.

A certain garden district of the capital city has become so familiar to me now that I have reached certain firm conclusions. Its sumptuous gardens, rich in trees, would suggest a maximum density of birds; its thick bushes offer ideal nesting places. Actually, not even frogs are to be found there, nor butterflies, large beetles or mice for that matter. A small number of birds arrive at spring, but during summer they strangely disappear. The only solid, permanent population is that of cats — one or two for every house — large, shimmering and groomed.

The best period to observe the strategy of city cats is for a few weeks in summer and autumn. When a spotted flycatcher on its way to migrate arrives at night, it spends all day within a couple of yards of its temporary habitat. Some cats will then wait under a leafy bush, hidden from sight, and stalk there for as much as five hours, unflinching. With quick sweeps, the bird usually catches a few flies in the yard or by the road. Eventually, it will spot a fly on a road two or three meters away from the shrub where the cat is waiting in ambush. I couldn't tell whether a cat's lightning strike takes a tenth or a hundredth of a second, but I have yet to witness a failed strike. Two more seconds and the cat, with amazing agility, has slipped away with its kill into another thicket.

In the same yard I witnessed another interesting scene, as a cat dashed up an apple tree to seize a wandering blue tit. As the tit easily managed

to fly away, I wondered why the cat might have behaved in such a silly manner. I soon realised that the cat hadn't yet switched to its autumn mode: evidently, it was still used to catching tit fledglings that had just left their nests and would sluggishly be perching on branches. To defend cats, it is often argued that they mostly hunt harmful mice and moles. Well, what can I say to this? Such a claim, at least when heard from someone calling himself a friend of nature, is outrageous: small rodents and shrews are an integral part of the Finnish fauna, and have as much right to life as any other animals. Any talk of general harmfulness is sheer nonsense. Even if we were to consider only those rodents living in settled areas, only one in a hundred might be said to cause intolerable damage to buildings or gardens. And if some of these animals are ever fated to suffer as part of the food chain, then it should be because of owls, ermines and weasels — not cats.

There is one respect in which I feel slightly less pity for a field or bank vole than I do for a little bird killed by a cat: rodents multiply at a far greater speed than birds. As an animal group, birds are characterised by extremely limited progeny and a correspondingly long lifespan. Only a few species of birds in Finland manage to leave more than one living descendant each: hole-nesting birds, some ducks and — in exceptionally good years — fowl. When a cat succeeds in catching a chaffinch in a forest, this is a more serious loss than a layman might imagine: it may well be a nearly ten-year-old bird that has had hundreds of close encounters with sparrowhawks, merlins and earth-dwelling predators; that has survived maybe twenty risky crossings of the Baltic Sea, thousands of electric wires and cars — and perhaps succeeded in breeding only that summer and has only two offspring to take care of until autumn.

There seems to be no census for the cat population in Finland, as these animals have never been taxed, registered or listed. In any case, there must be many hundreds of thousands of cats in the country — an almost endless supply. When a friend of nature starts confronting this nightmare in earnest, the end is nowhere in sight. A friend of mine from Pälkäne, whose wagtail nests never survived, finally lost his temper and laid a cat trap. He set it in his barn at midday; by evening, he had silenced seven cats (I cannot remember how many he caught later on). I have lived in many places, and in all of them the parade of multicoloured cats was endless (a cat that is uniformly of the same colour is more of an exception than a rule). I know from the powdery white of springtime snowfields that in the whole of Tavastia there isn't a single field where cat tracks are not the most common pattern. On spring mornings, the same paw prints extend across Vanajanselkä for miles.

The cat problem is growing all the more serious now that animal protection authorities have passed a new insane resolution: they have decreed that putting a cat down by drowning is illegal. The breeding patterns among domestic cats have long infringed all natural boundaries: each cat now has a life span of twenty years, brings forth two large broods a year, is fertile under the age of one and knows no natural enemies. Nothing even close to this has ever been observed in nature. I am not sure how many years it would take cats to cover the face of the Earth, but it wouldn't be many. Across the ages, a necessary method of defence has been the drowning of kittens and other unwanted cats. If anything, this is a humane act, considering that even in the case of humans drowning is the easiest and most blissful way to die. There are few guns in this country: Finland is not the United States. Besides, anyone even slightly familiar with Finland and the fees charged by its veterinarians knows that anaesthetic injections will not stop the cat catastrophe. I cannot predict what will happen, but the situation seems hopeless.

Currently, hordes of cats are posing a severe threat to the conservation of birds and wildlife. A minimum requirement would be for cats to be registered and kept on a tight leash when outside; were any cat to be found slaughtering a protected animal, its owner should be prosecuted. This, however, is pure utopia — as is always the case with attempts to protect nature that clash with people's ardent desires.

The Cat Disaster
(1994)

Hannele Luukkainen and Sari Ulvinen have rightly emphasised the difference between a conservationist outlook and one that privileges the protection of (domestic) animals. A rift has now been created. Woe to thee, nature! Woe to all wild animals! I wish that all those interested in the cat disaster would consider my previous articles, clarifying the place of these artificial predators in Finnish nature. My remarks contain all the answers to the points raised by cat advocates.

I would now like to say a few words about the relationship between the cat and man, although I might be straying from the subject of conservation. The cat has been imported to Finland in order to exterminate rodents and harmful birds that feed on seeds, crops and berries. According to a rough estimate, about half of our cats are still occupied with this outdated task: while the soil is not frozen, these cats are fed nothing but the occasional bowl of milk.

The explanation for the popularity recently acquired by the cat as a pet lies in the fact that it requires only a fraction of the care a dog needs.

Granted, there are many other easy pets out there, whether mice, guinea pigs or turtles. The cat, however, is superior to all of them: except in January and February, it acquires its own food.

The cat's unassuming frugality and hunting ability not only spell doom for wild creatures (as I have already suggested), but constitute a dire problem for the animal itself. So many abandoned cats starve in the heart of winter because they are hardly noticed: in villages it is hardly ever known which cat belongs to whom. Besides, a cat might be spending many days away on a hunting trip and be nowhere to be found when its owners must suddenly leave their cottage to head for the city. Were a dog to be left in a similar manner, it would howl and inform the entire village of its plight.

Because of this, it is utterly impossible to accommodate cats in the northern lands: the cat simply remains a grievance to be rooted out. Sure, cats are linked to some solid traditions, but so are spitting on the floor and tobacco. In any case, cats must be got rid of. I believe that the only positive invention of mankind was the domestication of animals (particularly the horse, cow and dog). Why in Heaven's name must Hannele Luukkainen hang on to that pest alone?

Speaking of drowning cats, here's an abridged lecture on ecology: in nature, (long) moments of joy and mirth alternate with (shorter) periods of pain and agony. When a hawk eats the flesh out of the chest of a starling or woodpecker, its prey is still screaming in agony. The cat too plays with its prey for a long time before it kills it. When animal protection, with its morbid interest in slaughter, asks whether drowning will kill a ten- or twenty-year-old animal in one or three minutes, it deserves no answer.

Joyful Chickens and Sad
(1993)

The life and politics of primitive people revolved around their relationship with animals and the natural world. In modern society, decision-making operates almost entirely within the realm of man. Even though almost all resolutions and laws indirectly affect the conditions of other living beings, these influences and connections are left unexamined, and usually simply ignored.

Still, some currents — like movements for the protection of animals or environmentalist groups — go against the grain. The common aim of these movements is to safeguard the rights of living creatures other than man in a world that is dwindling — because of man. Organised into as-

sociations and leagues, these movements represent the interests of animals, plants and mushrooms, in the same way as trade union movements stand for workers' rights. The school of Peter Singer, the best-known philosopher focusing on the protection of animals, is currently seeking to draw parallels between the treatment of animals and that of humans; it thus emphasises — quite rightly — that the oppression of animals at the hands of humans is by far a more ruthless phenomenon than the racist oppression practised among people.

These thoughts of Singer raise some profound philosophical questions. If the status of man in the world is too elevated at present, just how excessive is it? Similar questions in fact have been receiving an increasing amount of attention in recent years because of the spread of biotechnologies. Whole schools of thought have been founded in the United States to ponder upon the rights of animals and plants, as well as those of inorganic nature. In Finland, philosophers Leena Vilkka, Juhani Pietarinen and Eero Paloheimo have explored the field of bioethics from a profound theoretical perspective.

The biologist must always be wary of any shift in the morality of one nation or the whole of humanity towards either compassion or cruelty. Sooner or later, these shifts will be found to be merely transient, ideologically conditioned fluctuations; the biologist will then have to affirm his argument once more: basic human nature will not change — certainly, not in a hundred or thousand years. Besides, exceptional ethical choices — pacifism, for instance, among conservationists — are usually made only by small minorities, even when the ethical standard in question is at its peak of popularity.

At times, it must seem both surprising and paradoxical for decision makers to see conservationist or animal protection laws popping up on their agendas. These individuals, who represent the interests of most of the population and are happy to deal with housing benefits, investments and provincial border questions, are then faced with issues radically different in nature from the mundane problems of inbred human culture. These issues are pushed into the lives of many citizens through rounds of statements; in the best of cases — as with the present hunting law — this debate, spreading to panel conversations and newspaper columns, forces the sated 'ordinary citizen', who is rotting in his own garbage, to focus on the rights of other organisms — at least for some time.

I may already have come across as a little over the top in warning against the wisdom and emotionalism of the majority — 'the people'. But such things should not be ignored, either. The average person is not an utter idiot when it comes to the treatment of Creation: he won't just swallow everything. In nature, there are some favourites like dogs and horses, or swans, which almost enjoy the standing and rights of humans.

And then there are those distinctive and blatant — and well-documented, too — acts of cruelty like the bludgeoning of seal puppies on glaciers, or whale hunting, that have caused waves of compassion across the entire Western world — at any rate, well beyond animal-rights circles. This is all very revealing.

It is an unpleasant surprise to discover that in the treatment of animals raised for slaughter, of fur animals and farmed fish the level of cruelty has reached an all-time high, and yet such practices continue to be tolerated. I am not referring here to the most excessive among excessive practices: things like accelerating the growth of cattle with hormones, the use of artificial light night and day or the artificial swelling of livers in geese. These matters are too repulsive — "over the top" — and I do not wish to write about them. A simple order would suffice to deal with similar practices: death penalty for those responsible! What I wish to talk about here are only the terribly cramped cages in which mentally and physically sick pigs and foxes or deformed and finless rainbow trout are imprisoned.

I personally remember when in the 1970s the first battery henhouses were introduced. I attended a presentation by a pioneer in this trade while on a private visit to Itä-Uusimaa. I remember a large dusty hall packed with fodder and barred coops, each housing three or four hens perched side by side on bare grating: an assembly line from which eggs were gradually dropped; I recall the owner, who was full of contempt for those foolish old-fashioned hen farmers, who knew nothing about the expenses involved in the production of eggs. Another sad thing was that while the man was a doctor by training, he still farmed those hens as a second job. I remember his skin as strangely greyish in colour — or is this a later addition, this being such a grey and burdensome recollection?

The memory of those caged hens always springs to my mind when I look at the free-range chickens some of my friends are raising: lively, brisk and intelligent animals.

The cruelty involved in rearing caged chickens differs from that of whale hunting — or any other form of hunting, even the worst — in one fundamental respect: hunting affects animals that have lived a full life according to their own needs, perhaps for decades; when death arrives, it is sometimes painless, sometimes agonising — just as in nature. When hunting, man is a predator in the food chain, one cause of death among others. Of course, the issue becomes very serious in those cases — like whale-hunting — where the practice is not taxing interests alone, but affecting the whole capital: when, that is, it reduces the population of a given species, or even threatens it with extinction. This, however, is a matter of conservation rather than animal protection. By contrast, caged

animals spend their whole lives, from birth to death, in unnatural anguish, not like animals but like objects. In this case, the very character and pride of the animal has utterly been devastated. Nothing could be worse than this. No doubt, the same issue is at stake in the keeping of household animals: the rights of a domestic animal to its own nature, freedom and pride must always be restricted. These limitations, however, can be seen as the price paid by the animal to be alive in the first place: most of the time an animal would not exist at all, at least here in the north, had it not been domesticated. Usually, this seems like a fair exchange. In old-fashioned farms, for instance, the cow is tied up during the long winter season — albeit not that tightly — and its calf is taken away right after it is born. Still, the cow is allowed to graze in the pastures for half the year somewhat according to its nature, at the small price of being milked. Cow barns should of course be increased in size, to improve the conditions of the animals they house.

It is quite striking that society not only allows animal rights to be completely ignored in factory farming and the fur business, but also supports the kind of unscrupulous research and experiments that sustains these activities, even at an academic level. In Kuopio we have a faculty of "applied zoology" where biotechnology, gene transfer and the kind of horrors futurologists dream of are being developed in the attempt to master and forge all life. Methods of making animal raising more effective are also being researched there: for instance, to find out at what point the economic loss brought by the death of animals from stress and overcrowding outweighs the profit made by limiting the building and maintenance expenses. In plain language, these people are seeking to cram as many cages as possible into one place.

When brought into the spotlight by horrified animal protectors, these researchers have claimed that a fox in nature lives a life of constant suffering, doomed to be always on the run because of despair, unquenchable hunger and fear of enemies; whereas a fox that is caged and well-fed will have experienced the dream of all foxes. Well, if this is the case, the most blissful state of existence for man must be detention in prison with an ample supply of calories! How can science and academic research ever get so low?

Those zoologists, be they professionals or amateurs, who possess both the gifts of empathy and perceptiveness, and who spend long periods among animals, are forced to admit that the barriers between man and other animals tend to become blurred. The more precise the observations they are able to make, the closer to man Creation becomes and the clearer the guideline: do unto animals as you would wish them do unto you. The most sensitive of people are able to perceive even the souls of plants.

Many identify with the spirit of a living tree; some can also see other plants as their sisters and brothers.

When I carefully — and passionately — follow the actions of animal-rights activists, I feel some false emphasis is being placed. The presence of one greater issue certainly does not justify the ignoring of smaller ones. But animal protectors pay too much attention to the slaughter of animals, and whether their death is painful or painless. To be sure, the killing of an animal in hunting or fishing must be as humane as possible. But from the perspective of the continuity of all life, the death of either an animal or a human being is a minimal occurrence. If we keep this in mind, it is clear that animal protection is certainly connected to a cultural phenomenon that is characteristic of our time: fear of death and physical hardship. There is something disproportionate and morbid in all this.

When animal-rights organisations fight to secure animals a good life rather than a good death, they are supporting a cause a thousand times more important. Currently, their cause is among the most important matters in the world, and certainly in our society. Even this summer, a petition to shut down all battery henhouses is circulating in Finland. It must succeed. Switzerland and Sweden have already pointed the way. All animals confined throughout the year to a prison cell, regardless of whether they live on land or in water, must be freed. The caging of animals should never have been allowed in the first place: in no way is it in keeping with the civilised practice of protecting seal cubs and whales; rather, it goes against the morals of the vast majority of people. No legislation is as urgent as this one.

The Animal Protector As an Apostle of Doom
(1997)

How could Veli-Risto Cajander have ever come up with something as insane as the protection of the wild mink, a predator imported from a foreign continent, which poses such an additional burden on our avifauna? It is clear to every friend of nature that this kind of vermin (mink, raccoon) should be vanquished down to the last paw print. Those mockeries of Finnish fauna (the muskrat, Canadian goose, white-tailed deer) that do not directly feast on domestic animals, but may affect competition for food in the environment, are already suspicious enough.

Since 1948, travelling for tens of thousands of hours, I have personally studied changes in the nesting population of water- and coastal birds, their breeding patterns and, most importantly, the presence of fledglings all around Finland (particularly Tavastia). Last year, from May to July, I spent about 1500 hours on the beaches and isles of my observation

grounds (the nights I also spent on the shores, in sixty different places on the whole). I am aware of certain matters, therefore, and I know that the wild mink poses a mortal threat to the Finnish avifauna. The case of the mink in our country is fully comparable to that of the dingo in Australia and of all the imported alien predators that have destroyed the original ecological balance in various islands.

The current number of water bird fledglings can only be described with one word: catastrophe. Compared to that in the 1950s, when the population of wild mink amounted to a fraction of what it is now, the present situation is pitiful.

The number of black-headed gulls in Tavastia, which still amounted to ten thousand in the 1970s, has now dwindled to a few hundred. These birds have completely deserted their natural nesting habitat — lush ponds and lakes — due to mink having started to devour all of their young. Now the gulls have retreated to rock isles in the middle of large lakes, but still fly off every year to find new spots. This occurs because mink can hear the birds from the shores of the lake, and will swim after them to kill the fledglings — not to feed off, but merely to slay: to cram the dead birds in piles under rocks and sedges.

The mink has learnt very well how to find the fledglings of the common gulls, which nest sparsely in single couples, by running along the beach line: kilometres of shore inhabited by dozens of gulls are stripped bare within minutes after the fledglings are hatched. Few spots survive untouched between one mink territory and another. Maybe one out of five couples of common gulls still manages to get its nestlings to fly.

The nesting population of the lesser black-backed gull by what is by far the best lake for the species, Pälkänevesi, numbered approximately 215 couples in the 1970s; only sixty-four remained in 1997. These couples laid around 180 eggs, most of which successfully hatched. Then mink raided the little fledglings from island to island, from rock to rock, and only sixteen made it to adulthood. Eventually, these surviving birds bred at the age of four, when only four or five of them were estimated to be alive.

The havoc wreaked by the wild mink is made all the worse by the presence of four other strong predators, all of which man has either imported from the ends of the Earth or increased tenfold in numbers thanks to his junkyards; these animals complete the work carried out by the wild mink on islands and shores. Of these birds only the crow is an old pest. The raccoon dog and eagle owl were unknown in Tavastia in the 1950s; herring gulls numbered a fraction of their population today, and the same goes for mink (Vanajanselkä, for instance, that only had three couples of mink, now has 190). Thanks to the cooperation between mink and herring gulls, the five-hundred recorded nests of terns yielded only a few

dozen flying fledglings last summer: the worst outcome I have ever heard of in Finland.

The total impact of these new predators represents by far the worst threat to water and coastal avifauna, a much greater threat than that immediately posed by man, denser settlements and all other assaults on the environment. Yet even these unnatural beasts have their defenders: imbeciles like Cajander — a small but vociferous group of people. These people are the same as the self-proclaimed cat-protectors. When we pass from the shores to the land, to backyards, gardens, fields and the edges of villages, the number one enemy of avifauna becomes the army of domestic and wild cats that our conceited society, which always leaves a desert in its trail, has swollen to millions.

What are these animal protectors aiming at by nurturing minks imported from Canada, cats from Egypt, raccoons from China? Like their protégés, these predators are archenemies of environmentalism, of friends of nature and of nature itself.

Aspects of Animal Protection
(1999)

R. Halttunen has accused[1] me of using double standards on the grounds that while I am opposed to fur farming, I simultaneously create suffering for animals in my trade as a fisherman. Halttunen is quite correct with regard to suffering: the languishing of fish in the nets and their slow death are certainly more painful than the swift slaughter of the fox and mink.

But the question is not about death: it is about life. While nature and the whole animal kingdom are animated by an ardent desire to preserve life and freedom, nature is blind to temporary suffering. The starling and blackbird do everything they can to avoid the hawk's claws. But when the hawk finally manages to capture its prey, it holds the starling in a firm grip and surely does not care about humanely 'putting it down'; rather, the hawk plucks at it and starts eating the best bits of flesh, as the starling is still screaming. No doubt, the last few minutes (or hours or days) in the life of an animal that has lived for many years are of no great significance.

The difference between the netted pikeperch and the caged mink is as great as that between night and day. My fish have lived from five to

[1] This article was originally written for a Finnish newspaper in response to a letter by a certain R. Halttunen commenting on earlier writings by Linkola.

fifteen years the lives of free animals when a stronger predator, the fisherman, intrudes. I am also consoled by the knowledge that 99.9% of fish end up either being killed by predators other than man, or dying of diseases or old age. The life of a caged fox or mink from cradle to grave (or rather certain slaughter) is instead chillingly dreadful. Still, I believe that they 'suffer' all the time as little as Halttunen does: someone sentenced to life cannot 'suffer' every minute; rather, he will turn apathetic and numb. The issue, then, is about respect for the lives of animals (and human beings).

Another crucial difference between fishing and fur farming is that one produces sustenance, the other needless luxury. The agonising death of fish in the net is certainly a grievous matter, but it is also inevitable. Methods of fishing that reduce the pain of death (such as sport fishing with hooks) yield only a meagre catch and, of course, the size of the catch is an essential factor for the feeding of people.

With regard to production of food I take a completely different stance from that of the most fanatical animal protectors, who oppose all hunting and all breeding of domestic animals. Following their views, human life would be impossible on half of the Earth. Even in Finland, north of Jyväskylä, no sustainable farming can be practised except for the cultivation of grass and, through grass, the production of dairy products and meat. How could a vegan survive in Inari and Utsjoki? If I came upon an animal protection activist burning down a slaughterhouse or a butcher's car, I would take a hawkish hold of his neck and walk him to the police.

A different matter altogether is the fact that outdoor grazing for three to five months a year should be made compulsory in the farming of bovines and pigs; and similarly, that battery henhouses and excessively large poultry farms should be absolutely banned. But here we get to the most important question of all: the price for nutrition. The insane clearance sale of food that is promoted nowadays and senseless intensive farming are policies of death. Before any demand is met, production prices must be made at least three times higher: only then will it be possible to meet the requirements of animal protection, nature conservation and environmentalism.

Animal Rights in the Bible
(1999)

These last few years I have located the impressive battle for animal rights that is currently being waged in European countries (including Finland) on an ideological chain that links the attempts to abolish institutional slavery, to free oppressed women and to uphold the rights of children.

This might clearly be seen, in ethical terms, as a magnificent chain of progress: as the sole positive ripple in the crushingly negative tide of brutal market economy that has enveloped the Western world.

I have rejoiced over this small sign of justice in our otherwise dreadful society; my only grievance is the fact that the animal protection movement focuses almost exclusively on domestic animals (including all caged and laboratory animals). In other words, the outlook of this movement is still anthropocentric, and it recklessly leaves the vast majority (99.999999%) of animals to fend for themselves. But perhaps I am being rash in my judgment. Maybe the time for conservationism is approaching.

I recognise that my education and knowledge of history have failed in one respect: I fooled myself into thinking that the animal-rights movement represented a new — and for this reason all the more brilliant — ideological current in our own culture. (The relation of so-called primitive peoples to nature and their sense of brotherliness towards certain animals I would see as a separate phenomenon, as it is conceptually based on different foundations). I also had the flimsy idea that the cornerstone of the Western culture, Judaism, was entirely anthropocentric (even urban), reserving animals a cold and harsh treatment. I even assumed that this could be seen as one reason for the clash between naturalist, romantic Nazism and chillingly rational Judaism.

But now, I have gained some new insight after browsing the magazine of the Jehovah's Witnesses, *Herätkää* [*Awaken*]: an altogether splendid, well-edited journal. This magazine described how the most horrendous blood sports had first been introduced for the amusement of man, and surprisingly emphasised that many "modern" attitudes to animal protection and animal rights can be found in the Bible — most of them even in the Old Testament. Once more we are reminded of the old adage: "nothing new under the sun".

In the second book of Moses (23:4-5), one is encouraged to rescue a lost ox or donkey and to return it to its owner even if the owner is an enemy. Also, the donkey belonging to an enemy must be helped to its feet if it has fallen under its burden. Verse 23:12 advises to stay away from work during the seventh day of the week, "that thine ox and thine ass may rest". Guidelines calling for the good treatment of animals can also be found in the fifth book of Moses (22:10 and 25:4): "Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together" and "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn".

Clearly a practical outlook is here combined with the protection of animals. Verse 4:11 of the book of Jonah expresses general feelings of compassion for animals: "And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city,

wherein are more than six-score thousand persons... and also much cattle?"

In verse 12:10 of Proverbs it is said: "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel".

Finally, in the New Testament a beautiful sentence is found expressing the basic philosophy behind conservationism, including the absolute value of nature's animals: "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?" (Luke 12:6).

These I have quoted are some of the passages contained in the New International Version of the Bible. Strangely enough, the fabulous vision of the future described in the book of Hosea, verse 2:18, is completely missing from the new translation of the Bible provided by the Finnish Evangelic Lutheran Church; this, nevertheless, does not make the passage any less grand: "And on that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely." The eternal dream of all pacifists, environmentalists and vegans is here condensed in a single sentence!

A Look at Vegetarianism
(1999)

So many passionate opinions are given on vegetarianism that tackling the subject is a little like poking a beehive. Yet the subject of vegetarianism is far too important from an ecological perspective to simply be ignored.

Let us first examine vegetarianism from the point of view of health. A discerning expert in the field, Leena Vilkka, who recently described an international vegetarian conference in Juha Rantala's small *Elämänsuojelija* [Guardian of Life] magazine, pointed out that this is among the foremost factors to consider in relation to vegetarianism.

According to his build, teeth and bowels, man is certainly not a carnivorous predator; but neither is he a pure herbivore. Biologically, man is an omnivore: like the bear, badger and rat.

It is a simple truism that anyone who performs strenuous physical work (like the author of the present article), whose life-long health problem has been the battle against imminent emaciation, cannot thrive on 'grass and salad', but must seek to assimilate enough calories through animal fats.

And yet... Human ways of living change, even to the point that the intrinsic biology of man becomes a questionable matter. The modern

man who performs intellectual work is such a thoroughly different being from a ditch digger or saw-wielding lumberjack that he can hardly be said to belong to the same species. A diet based on light vegetables and fish undoubtedly fits this new type of human much better than one based on heavy, nutritious, warm-blooded animals.

A similar mental leap is required by the generation of those who have experienced war and economic depression (those above sixty today): people who in their early youth could hardly conceive of wasting any piece of meat or fat one could lay his hands on, and who had never even heard of vegetarianism. Elderly people like me must also accept that the younger population must "be fussy with food" for the sake of their health — unless they are to improve their way of living, which is a far more complicated matter.

At present, however, the problem of human sustenance is still quantitative rather than qualitative. One must eat neither too little nor too much. What one eats is less important, as long as one does not swallow sharp shards of glass or badly bent nails.

Leena Vilkka lists various kinds of vegetarian diets: 1) vegetables, milk products, eggs and fish; 2) all of the above products with the exception of fish; 3) no animal products to be eaten whatsoever; 4) living food alone (no dead ingredients); 5) fruit alone; 6) veganism: identical to point three above in terms of nutrition, but with the additional avoidance of all animal-derived products in clothing, medicine and the like.

The reasons behind these choices might include not only health, but also animal protection and ecology. Behind the issue of animal protection lie profound ethical values that must always be cherished: an animal should not be killed, made to suffer or imprisoned in any environment incompatible with its needs.

These ethical values would be difficult to dismiss, particularly in a way that vegans would find compelling. Hunting and fishing represent the primeval means of human sustenance. I, for one, fully believe so. Sure, vegans will reply: the institution of slavery was also the most perfect economic system... The burning of wise women as witches has also been — or still is — an ancient tradition among many cultures; so too the custom of forcing young children to work all day, or genital mutilation... Why, what about war and torture? No doubt, they are central to human culture! Does this mean we should unreservedly approve of similar practices?

I find it a remarkably good thing that vegan ideology emphasises the intrinsic value of animals: that it voices such important questions. At least there is something new and positive to be found in these horrifying times of distress!

Nevertheless, many arguments can be raised to counter those of vegans. First, I would like to make a brief remark about animal suffering: in my eyes, cattle that are grazing in the pasture glow with satisfaction; similarly, I have personally witnessed the happy chewing and mooing of cows in a warm winter shed. And besides, creamy whole milk is the most divine of nature's gifts: the highest of life's pleasures. Of course, a modern byre is even more of a paradise for cows, and the cowshed, no doubt, only a winter home. Obviously, the summer (which in Finland lasts from the beginning of June to October) should be spent outside by the animals, in forests and pastures. A ban on keeping farm creatures inside during summertime should feature as one of the first articles in the legislation to protect animals. I certainly agree with every vegan and animal-rights activist with regard to the raising of fur animals and poultry in cages.

I see the taming of domestic animals as one of the most splendid inventions of mankind, if not the only truly brilliant one. I have gathered that vegans generally accept pets — even if these do not lead a fully natural life. In the list I would also include bovines, horses, pigs, sheep and chickens, without which human life would be unspeakably poorer (at least here in the arid north) — poorer, say, than without music, art or books. I don't suppose even a vegan would argue that these animals should be kept — and with what resources? — once they cease providing meat, milk, eggs, wool, leather or work. A strict vegan will ask for these animals to cease existing: but would cows, horses and sheep vote in favour of a similar resolution?

I will raise another objection here: many vegans won't even attempt to persuade the whole population to support their cause; they do not strive to uproot the economy of domestic animals. But vegans have chosen their own way to protest the cruel forms of the streamlined economy. And surely, it makes a tremendous difference whether protests are directed against McDonald's and the grazing of cattle in what were former virgin forests in Brazil, or against a small Finnish farm, whose few cows are almost like family members and calves named after the children — even if these animals will eventually be slaughtered, when their rather comfortable lives will abruptly be ended.

Vegetarians think that the strongest ecological argument in favour of their dietary choice is the fact that in the process of turning grain and other cereals into meat, food reserves decrease by 90 per cent. Some people genuinely believe that the entire human population could easily be fed, were an end put to the production of meat.

From an ecological perspective, the above reasoning is altogether untenable. Firstly, large areas on Earth can only grow cattle fodder, and hence can only produce meat and dairy products. Even in Finland, the

area north of Jyväskylä-Vaasa could not sustain any human life — were vegans here also to boycott the slaughter of game and fish in the region. Ecologically, this would be an exceptional scenario, given it is a basic ecological principle that the population of any major region must produce its own food. Admittedly, it would be brilliant if central and northern Finland could be stripped of all human presence and previously inhabited territories be used for the storage and absorbtion of carbon and the production of oxygen. However, I feel that this is not what vegans are aiming for.

That whole vegetarian plan begins from utterly incorrect assumptions and ends in certain ruin. All energies must be directed not at increasing food reserves, but at suppressing the explosion of population and — in accordance with Arne Naess's principle of deep ecology — decreasing the number of people. Considering the population of the globe first increased thanks to grains (should the vegetarian plan be implemented), things would not be looking good.

In the short run, it is not hunger that poses the greatest threat to the preservation of man, even with the current levels of food production. At present there are other ecocatastrophes to deal with, all of which have been brought about by the vast number of people and their way of life: environmental disruption, collapse and depletion, deforestation, desertification, pollution of earth, water and air. Hunger, at least for some time, seems to be a factor under control. Yet, the huge imbalance between those areas of the Earth that are self-sufficient and those that are not makes it difficult to face the problem of world hunger. Besides, mass-transfer of food to the other side of the world entails a terrifying increase in transportation, with further construction of storages, harbours and airports, not to mention energy expenditure.

Affluent countries produce so much food thanks to highly intensive forms of agriculture, which will unavoidably lead — and rather soon, too — to soil depletion, field erosion and a crash in production. Maintaining adequate agricultural yield becomes even more difficult if cattle manure is left out of the equation. The advantage provided by increased field acreage, once fields will have been converted from the growing of fodder, will only be transient.

The worst thing is that the population growth brought about by the production of grains will contribute to further climate change. As has already been predicted, these changes in the climate will upset the agricultural balance, both when the sea will submerge the land and when drought will affect the most fertile fields.

Decimating or shrinking the huge numbers of cattle would obviously help reduce the dissipation of ozone by cutting down on the release of

methane gas. The depletion of the ozone layer, however, is just about the only ecocatastrophe that is likely to be solved anyway.

There are further weaknesses in the "ecology of vegetarianism". Many unproductive and nutritionally poor vegetables demand immoderate acreages for cultivation. In fact, only a few plants provide sufficient (peas, beans, cabbages) or good (grains) nourishment in themselves.

Some of the smartest vegans have noted what is perhaps the greatest inconsistency in the ecological perspective of vegetarianism: the food to be eaten is frequently imported from faraway countries and continents. The people who strive to eat only what is grown domestically, or at least as much domestic food as possible, call themselves "fennovegans". I have a funny recollection about this subject that dates from last summer. I was then conversing with a young farmer, Antti Ilola, in my home village, who began talking about vegetarianism. He was quite knowledgeable about vegetarianism, but was wondering what the meaning of the term "fennovegan" might be. I informed him that the term originates from the word "fennia" [for "Finnish"] and was used to describe the practice of eating only food grown in our country. Antti reflected for a while, and concluded that that diet too requires expensive transport: shouldn't food be entirely produced on one's own farm? Antti instantly came up with a name for these truly orthodox vegetarians: "hemmavegans" ["home vegans"]! So now, in honour of Antti Ilola, I would like to complete the vegetarian list drawn by Leena Vilkka by adding: 7) fennovegans and 8) hemmavegans.

In addition to the question of ecological balance, one more central issue remains to be addressed: the cherishing of nature's diversity. Let's pick an example from our own country. A large section of Finnish fauna and flora are part of an ecosystem that developed over thousands of years and is based on a prerequisite: that its soil be stirred and fertilized by domestic animals. Small-scale human settlement and agriculture based on domestic animals once hugely enriched nature. Now, all this is falling into ruin as large domestic animals are disappearing.

A field of crops, a plain where wheat or barley grow, even a swamp drained of its water and packed with pesticides, is still by far the poorest habitat in our land. Its population is many times poorer in terms of the number of species and individual animals than even the centre of a metropolis. A friend of nature can hardly ever be a vegan, however noble the principles of veganism might be from one point of view.

But is there anything more to human life than food? If so, let us turn to aesthetics and ask: what looks more dreadful than a grey-black field of crops between September and November or April and May? And, by contrast, is there any civilised landscape more delightful than a green pasture on which mottled cattle, horses and sheep frolic and graze? What

backyard is livelier than one in which smart chickens freely potter about? And finally, if pigs (undeniably the worst animals in ecological terms) were to be removed, but sheep kept for wool, hens for eggs, cows for dairy products and horses as steeds, what could be done with aging animals or with all the bulls, calves and roosters? Would they be made to die of old age or by the veterinarian's needle, and then buried in a hole? What ecological balance or national economy could withstand a similar waste of nourishment? In the future — in the near future, in fact — when all attempts to avert ecocatastrophes will have failed, we will have to ditch the taboo of consuming human flesh — whether we reach this stage by temporarily switching to vegetable food or by clinging to the mixed diet that is most common today.

The Value of Humans and That of Animals
(1999)

It is not uncommon for discussions to bounce across several newspapers. In *Vihreä Lanka* [*The Green Thread*], Anto Leikola took on Bishop Voitto Huotari's columns in *Etelä-Saimaa* [*South Saimaa*] and *Kymen Sanomat* [*The Kymi News*]. In turn, I would now like to take part in the discussion.

Huotari writes: "An animal has some intrinsic value, yet not in the same way as a human being; an animal does not possess the inviolable, absolute right to life that all humans are acknowledged to possess in all circumstances." He continues: "It is certainly questionable to speak of animal rights in the same way as one speaks of human rights."

Leikola shows some appreciation for the careful use of expressions like "we acknowledge" and "is questionable" on Huotari's part; he writes:

"This ethical principle seems to be generally accepted nowadays, and partly informs the concept of "human rights". Nevertheless, like all values, it lies more in the mind of its adherents than in the object it applies to, unlike for example biological facts; thus, it is inevitably subjective: it is all about what I think or we think. We cannot proceed past belief — or faith — here."

"It is entirely possible and justifiable to draw a sharp line between man and animal with regard to absolute values, like the bishop does. This would be better than first assigning an absolute value, in addition to humans, to anthropoid animals, and then extending this value from mammals to lower vertebrates and invertebrates, all the way down to the paramecium and amoeba."

In conclusion, Leikola thanks churchmen for at least paying attention to the issue of animal rights, and for emphasising how humans are responsible towards the natural world: "Churchmen never used to speak of these things when I was young."

As far as I am concerned, respect for life is a clear — or pretty clear — principle that I share with many people committed to the preservation of nature.

Like Leikola, I think it is quite self-evident that it is impossible to extend absolute respect (which includes protection from slaughter or damage) to all animals, for we would soon find ourselves discussing the rights of parasites, termites, mosquitoes and dangerous bacteria and viruses. If we begin trying to avoid every ant that we encounter on the forest trail, we will soon be hopping to death. Of course, it is unethical to needlessly kill these little fellows (but the plant kingdom too must be protected from unnecessary slaughter).

The intrinsic value of animals, however, and the degree to which they are seen as inviolable beings, depends on their status: their position, that is, in the biosphere and the ecosystem. The whole, the system, the maximum amount of species and diversity is the most sacred thing; the second most important thing is the total number of individuals for every given species across the entire Earth and in every specific area. The greatest, most beautiful and most important value on Earth is the richness of nature (actually, for me, this is the most important thing in the whole universe, as my consciousness, identity and interests do not extend to other celestial bodies).

The concept of "endangerment", then, is central: the extinction of species, subspecies or local populations threatens dramatically to impoverish nature. The notion of extinction implies that a greater value will be placed on "rare" animals than "common" ones — and the size of any given animal population is a sheer fact.

Value can also be assigned on the basis of the phylogenetic status of an animal: of whether, according to the gradual process of birth and development, the animal in question is one of the earlier, more "primitive" creatures or one of the latest and more "advanced". Evolutionism has placed a greater emphasis on the latter kind of animals. So an endangered tiger and mountain gorilla would be seen to possess more value than a species of shellfish that is threatened with extinction.

It has been pointed out that while phylogenetic classification is advantageous for the human species, a valuation according to population size would be devastating. Man is entirely in a class of his own in this respect: he has broken away from the natural system, eluded the laws of the food chain, and vastly increased his numbers. He is by far the most

populous animal on the Earth in proportion to his body size and dietary requirements.

Any "merit" man might have acquired through phylogenesis almost disappears, however, when one considers that humanity has made itself even more of a burden by unscrupulously satisfying a large number of artificial needs, in a manner unknown to any other life form but highly detrimental to nature. Man is by far the least favoured species among friends of nature. A friend of nature will regard human beings as bullying and most often corrupting nature, and will seek to protect ecosystems from human influence as far as possible. According to this perspective, the value and rights of wild animals will always surpass those of domestic animals (which are closer to humans). Likewise, preference will always be accorded to the (surviving) indigenous fauna of any given region rather than animals imported by man. In the worst of cases, the non-indigenous animals are those predators that dramatically diminish the number of original, natural animals. These animals (the mink, raccoon and cat in Finland) will have to be stripped of all rights.

Man also practises the active impoverishment of nature when he disproportionately increases the amount of beasts of prey in the ecosystem by offering them an abundance of unnaturally good nesting places (as in the case of owls nesting in birdhouses), or by feeding them in the winter, when their natural pruning by hunger is prevented and the population expands to destructively large numbers (this is the case with the crow, eagle owl, herring gull and great black-backed gull, great spotted woodpecker and squirrel in Finland). The friend of nature must strive to correct all these mistakes.

I will now return to the issue of human rights. The term, as it is commonly conceived, unreservedly clashes with both my ethics and logic. A definition I once gave again springs to mind: "human rights = a death sentence for all Creation." A few factors in the formulation of human rights will probably always remain obscure for me.

First of all, my logic refuses to accept that the value and rights of a human individual might remain the same ever since the beginning of time, regardless of how many humans there are on the planet. It is quite clear to me that the net increase in humans is constantly lowering the value of existing individuals (and with six billion humans, not much individual value is left on average...).

Secondly, I cannot understand why human rights are seen as being applicable to everyone in the same way — to quote Anto Leikola's paraphrase of Bishop Huotari: "Each human being possesses a certain intrinsic value, which does not depend on good or evil or the quality of his reason."

I find this kind of thinking truly worthless. I could never find two people who are perfectly equal: one will always be more valuable than the other. And many people, as a matter of fact, simply have no value. Some individuals exceed the "environmental allowance" by a factor of a thousand: they vastly decrease the richness of nature and squander its resource reserves, both through their own way of life and through their influence. There are also plenty of evil people around, who have no moral standards: downright criminals who in extreme cases cause a horrid amount of pain to other members of their species. What mysticism, what black magic can allow such creatures to possess full human rights? What is the philosophy of those who oppose the death sentence?

Life, which is hierarchic by nature, demands that we extend "this value from mammals to lower vertebrates and invertebrates, all the way down to the paramecium and amoeba." But just as necessary should be the classification of people according to their degree of humanity; in other words, according to the extent to which they possess those abilities that represent the unique qualities of their species and define the place of man in relation to other animals: intelligence, wisdom, culture, emotion, empathy. Physical deficiencies do not affect intrinsically human qualities like spiritual life or the exercise of the mind. Retardation with respect to emotional life or intelligence, however, is another matter. Some individuals, in this respect, are on the level of chimpanzees, some of the beaver, some of the pipit. Some totally deficient individuals cannot even be compared to the most primitive expressions in the animal kingdom: why should a higher value and better rights be assigned to these people rather than to the chimpanzee, beaver or pipit?

I believe that without an adequate knowledge of the way in which nature operates and an awareness of the limits of human rights, the animal-rights movement stands on tenuous ground indeed.

Chapter 4

The World and Us

A Refresher Course in the State of the World
(1992)

An ecocatastrophe is taking place on Earth. Local ecocatastrophes are everywhere. Increasingly, vast tracts of green and productive land are being paved to make way for buildings, roads and parking lots. Vast spaces turn to desert or are poisoned, made barren and unfit for living. Wind and water erosion wash the topsoil of the most significant grain reserves into the sea. Finite natural resources are on a clearance sale, while renewable resources like forests are being depleted at an ever-increasing speed. The gas balance of the atmosphere has been thrown out of kilter; seas have been polluted with oil and their food chains ransacked. The rapid warming of the climate poses insurmountable problems for natural plant life and crops. The amount of waste and pollution is growing uncontrollably.

The above was only a refresher course: a summary of everyday information. Most of mankind more or less ignores these mega-trends and their multifarious subdivisions, which are nevertheless familiar to inhabitants of so-called enlightened countries of the cooler part of the Northern Hemisphere. These trends and their causes are generally accepted as scientific facts in these countries; only numeric estimates are known to fluctuate within certain limits. I am not taking into account here all worldviews based on pure faith, including those held by the few thinkers who — even with sensible-sounding arguments — would deny that the biosphere is facing any emergency. To the end of the world, there will always be someone ready to claim that the sun rises in the west and sets in the east, that females impregnate and males give birth.

As for the public, the problem no longer regards the volume of information about the state of the world and its availability, nor the assimilation of this information. It is interesting to observe how well certain facts are understood, and how deep they have sunk into people's consciousness. However, what kind of connection is the informed person capable

of making between the state of the world, his own community, and his personal life? Ultimately, the essential question is whether awareness of this global situation — the distress of the biosphere — affects the individual's actions as a decision maker and citizen.

Man: an Irresponsible Thief

This interim report doesn't bring a glimmer of hope. In fact, there is no apparent difference between the behaviour of the communities and individuals that are part of mankind's unenlightened majority and that of the enlightened, aware minority. Everywhere, man remains a complete lout, a destroyer of the biosphere. The only difference is that among the enlightened portion of mankind there is more chattering to be heard and more rustling of papers thanks to things like the UN-appointed Brundtland Commission. The minimum demand of the committee was for industrial countries to reduce their energy consumption by half within a few decades. In Finland too, then, one would expect all construction work, industrial production, traffic, road maintenance, lighting and household appliances to have being reduced by 50%, and half of the power plants to have been shut down.

In reality, the Finnish producer and consumer, whether student or pensioner, farmer, metal worker or doctor, fiercely hangs onto the dreadful material standard of living that already, decades ago, had exceeded all rational boundaries, while in addition demanding that his purchasing power should continue to increase. Finns perceive economic stagnation as a stunning backlash, and its overcoming as a national mission, even though, as enlightened men, they should be praising it in all churches, praying that the depression might worsen tenfold. Luxury and glamour marked every aspect of the 1992 exhibition of medical science: tons of chlorine-bleached enamelled paper, amazing conference rooms, fabulous presentation halls, fancy flights and five-star hotels.

Will the Population Explosion be Averted — or Will Awareness of It?

Let us now return to the subject of this article. I apologise for the digression: the bitter ecologist got carried away again. I was meant to deliver a lecture on the population issue, the notion of value and medical ethics. We'll get to them, too.

It is worth stressing once more that the chief cause for the impending collapse of the world — the cause sufficient in and by itself — is the enormous growth of the human population: the human flood. The worst enemy of life is too much life: the excess of human life. A secondary cause that is accelerating the process of devastation is the increasing burden that each new member of the population brings upon nature. First and

foremost, in what follows, I will be discussing the fundamental problem of the population explosion.

Experience shows that the dire news about the population bomb, even in the enlightened world, is never allowed to spread far: here logic will dim and judgment stray in an imbalanced battle between optimism and realism. Optimism, that most wretched of all human characteristics, successfully projects the gravity of the population issue both forward in time and geographically away from home, to foreign lands.

For as long as I have actively been following demographic diagrams — say, forty-five years — population growth has been seen as a critical threat. It was then claimed that the Earth was barely able to cope with the population it had, and that further growth would have been unsustainable. This law of forward projection is generally still valid today. But what is really the case? Already millennia ago, man had caused irreparable damage in limited areas of the globe: where density in population had exceeded all boundaries, humans depleted green land and altered the biosphere by creating permanent deserts and semi-deserts. The most shocking and irrecoverable loss caused to the biosphere is the number of species that have become extinct: extinction, which centuries ago occurred at a natural pace, began spiralling out of control a few decades ago.

What is truly significant, however, is the fact that severe damage to the natural systems of the air, sea, and soil was first wrought when there were around two to three billion people on Earth who had significantly lower standards of living and represented far less of a burden for nature. It has been suggested that we are only still in existence because the chemistry and physics of the Earth react, change and absorb shocks rather rigidly: because they are slow to get going and slow in coming to a halt. The idea that the Earth could permanently bear the current burden of five billion people without a dramatic change such as the abandonment of the whole Western culture and way of life, is purely absurd: the faith a child or animal might have in the future. Just as it is certain that all fallouts always originate from somewhere other than one's own country, similarly any government, and the sophisticated people they lead, would claim that there is no overpopulation problem in their own country. Well, there are still two partial exceptions, China and India: the leaders and enlightened minorities of these countries admit that even their own populations are too large. China and India, however, are only exceptions: countries that, thanks to their ancient cultural traditions, are ahead of the majority of savages that inhabit the Earth.

The Reality of the Population Explosion

A while ago the president of the Finnish Centre for Statistics visited me, wishing to hear how a man could endure being aware of the aspects of global collapse. The president said that he had tried to avoid the inevitable conclusions in order to keep his peace of mind, but was afraid, being close to retirement, that without the bustle of work and meetings he would be left with too much spare time to think. The two of us had a very serious and personal discussion about depression and its causes, about cures and self-treatment, amidst the racket of a ceremonial reception. We agreed that indicators that the end of the world is approaching — matters I will soon be discussing — certainly belong not to the sphere of personal opinions or worldviews, but to that of statistics, facts, and arithmetics.

So, what do statistics tell us about how the population explosion will be divided geographically? For the next few decades — which is probably to say, for the remaining time allotted to humanity — the bulk of this explosion will take place in industrial countries: Europe, Japan, and the United States. These countries are highly populated and, most importantly, their citizens' lifestyles are environmentally very burdensome. According to the most positive estimates, individual energy consumption in these countries exceeds that found among the majority of non-industrialised humanity even by a factor of twenty. Of course, crucial indicators such as the use of food and the depletion of forests do not show such vast differences. Naturally, the threat posed by non-industrialised populations is increasing all the time, since they are growing at a significantly faster rate than the populations of industrial countries. But if the current disparity in living standards endures, these countries will only become major players in the destruction of ecosystems in a faraway future.

When making certain estimates, it is also important to bear in mind that a major share of the use of natural resources and perpetration of environmental damage in non-industrialised countries is in fact caused by industrial nations. This point is always brought up when discussing world economy or the Third World. By contrast, what is generally ignored is the fact that immigrants from poor nations, whose birth rate is at par with that of their cultures of origin (if not higher, thanks to the social care they now benefit from), dramatically increase the wealthy population and environmental burden of industrial countries. As Matti Kuusi once put it, there is no use counting the immigrants at the border: one should wait a while and look in their nurseries.

The Value-Basis of Protecting Life

From a philosophical perspective, the doctrine of the protection of life — or its basic message, which I have personally promoted for decades — is neither that ingenious nor new. In short, the doctrine is based on the notion of enabling the survival of life in order for future possibilities to be open. As such, the doctrine says nothing about the quality of life. Still, it is the most important of all messages: it represents the highest objective, all other goals being subordinate to it. Even the most beautiful of mankind's aspirations loses its meaning if there is no life or humanity on the planet. The protection of life is thus justified at whatever cost.

The guardian of life, however, does not derive all of his power and assuredness from reasoning and logic. The basic principle of life protection, the conservation of the Earth's life as a lush and diverse whole, is also perceived as being sacred: as something incomparably holier than anything man might regard as such (not that in this age of cynical despair much holiness is left!).

The diversity and richness of life is contingent on both a maximum number of species and of specimens — meaning that the greatest number of ecological niches might be populated as fully as possible. The number of species, however, is by far more important than that of individuals, particularly when the two clash: when a given species immoderately discriminates or even destroys another. The latest estimates regarding the current pace of extinctions caused by man suggest that 525,000 species of animals, plants and fungi are becoming extinct every year: one species per minute. The protector of life believes that man has no special right to act in such a way; that this is a horrendous sowing of death, in comparison to which the merits of humanity, its life and culture, are irrelevant.

One thing is certain: there will be no need to struggle to discover our place in relation to the natural world or to appreciate the right to life of man and other forms of life on the planet: for in the end, ecocatastrophes will prove perilous for humans as well. Even though humans will first destroy vast numbers of animals, plants and fungi, they will inevitably be crushed by the avalanche they have caused: humanity will ultimately consume itself. Even the most narrow-minded humanist, in the name of reason, must agree to the conclusions of a protector of life.

The Doctors' Burden of Sin

It is often stated that the greatest culprits of our drifting to the brink of destruction are engineers and doctors, who together have made the human flood possible. But what does a more specific analysis tell us about

the doctor's work and its justification? The matter is a two-fold one. Maintaining the population as physically and mentally healthy as possible is certainly a goal that withstands criticism. If mankind itself, this gang intent on robbing the biosphere, this species of tyrants, is sick, wretched and full of suffering, the sensibility of protecting its life might be questionable.

Anyhow, the most remarkable achievement of the medical profession has been the prolonging of human life. Given the present condition of the world, I have reached the conclusion that anything that even remotely fosters progress is to be seen as negative, for it pushes us further towards complete ruin. In a world where the keywords for salvation are stop, return and regress, old people are extremely valuable. Man has been formed in such a way that the little wisdom that certain individuals possess tends to gradually accumulate in the course of the years. One of the insanities perpetuated by the frenzied times we are living in is the trivialisation and marginalisation of the elderly. Only a small percentage of elderly people suffers from illnesses leading to dementia: most people are certainly wiser at the age of ninety than they are at that of eighty-nine. The young human being will always be an unripe fruit and crude specimen: both wisdom and sense of responsibility tend to develop in one's old age (if they were ever there in the first place, that is), while irrelevancies fade away. If the minimum age requirement for all the decision makers of mankind were, say, eighty, much would already have been achieved. Many harmful delusions would have been avoided, and destruction would now be advancing at a far slower pace.

Much of the positive work carried out by doctors, therefore, has been diverted by the miserable youth-worshipping Zeitgeist. It has ultimately been ruined, however, by doctors' stance on population growth, birthrates and child mortality — to the foetus and child. Due to its key role, the medical profession should always have exercised a superior authority despite its being a tool of society: to a large extent, it could have determined the demographic policy.

Now, however, the medical profession is adopting no common strategy: as such, it can easily be divided into the 'good' and 'bad'. On the one hand, doctors can prolong the life of a wise old man with surgery and cardiovascular interventions; on the other, doctors are engaging in irrational and extremely destructive behaviour to save five month-old premature infants, regardless of the cost — that is, the cost in natural resources. As a side note, the cost of medical care can be seen to touch the conscience of all doctors alike. Certainly, the pills, intrauterine devices and condoms developed by medicine deserve our praise. But a huge burden of sin falls on the shoulders of a share of paediatricians and gynaecologists — and, by extension, the whole medical profession. The deep

drop that has been achieved in infant mortality alone should be deeply distressing to a biologist. Besides, every step forward in the pharmaceutical industry or national health system should at the very least have been accompanied by an effective programme of education with regard to contraception and family planning. Only as the leaders of a firm policy of population control could doctors have been acclaimed as the benefactor of mankind.

Tabula Rasa: a Clean Slate

Western culture has brought humanity to a state that has been described in various ways. We are living in the eleventh hour, at the edge of the abyss, on the verge of extinction, two minutes to midnight. One expression may be more eloquent than another, but unfortunately all are equally true. Most people take no stand: they either live their lives romping about like before, or drain even more material resources just in case these might run out. Even among the thinking minority many surrender: they simply give up, as if nothing could be done. This, I believe, is a coherent and realistic assessment of the situation.

Then there is this policy of fiddling: recycling, filters, catalytic converters, solar panels, electric cars... These aimless and misguided actions can be illustrated with the familiar metaphor of the leaking boat, which is tearing along two seams while the third is being sealed. People sink almost to the level of idiots when discussing the birth rates of developing countries: they argue that standards of living and education must be improved the Western way, like the condition of women, so that after five generations — a long time for man — birth rates may eventually halve and the pro-capita burden on nature increase twenty fold. These "environmentalists" are pretending to aim for the same goals as the protector of life, but they cannot grasp what even quitters have realised: how low Western culture has sunk. Its societal systems, with all their structures and legislations, have been directed towards the one objective of economic growth and global collapse: nothing in these systems is worth improving. The most stubborn believe that the boat of junk we are living in could after all be made waterproof by developing an entirely fibreglass canvas. Too bad the boat is worthless for sea travel to begin with: it will sink as soon as it is hit by the first waves. As a matter of fact, the boat will sink while still moored in the harbour, because it has been loaded full of rocks. If one seriously begins to ponder what kind of world might survive, he will soon realise that a tabula rasa is what is needed. We almost need to start from Adam and Eve again.

The Protection of Life and Humanism

I am particularly interested in humanist thinkers who have reached conclusions similar to those contemplated in biology with the doctrine of survival. Among Finns, Georg Henrik von Wright — along with Matti Kuusi — is the most notable thinker seriously to consider — albeit in cautious academic tones — the possibility that humanity might become extinct. In his public statements, von Wright, like Kuusi, puts his prestige at stake in an exemplary manner. I will now quote von Wright's personal letter of gratitude for a book I wrote two years ago: *Johdatus 1990-luvun ajatteluun* [*An Introduction to the Thought of the 1990s*]. Von Wright was struck by the metaphor I used in the opening section of this book:

> What to do when a ship carrying a hundred passengers has suddenly capsized, and only one lifeboat is available for ten people in the water? When the lifeboat is full, those who hate life will try to pull more people onto it, thus drowning everyone. Those who love and respect life will instead grab an axe and sever the hands clinging to the gunwales.

I should point out that a personal letter may be the product of a momentary state of mind and is not meant to be turned into a public lecture. Nevertheless, the honest confusion of such lines should have a heuristic value. Von Wright writes:

> As you may know, I hold you in high regard as a thinker. At least in this country, you are the most lucid and profound among truthful prophets. As to what practical conclusions to draw from realising the truth, this is a different matter. Perhaps I too would strike at the hands that are clinging to the boat, but hardly for the love of life: rather, out of fear, in an attempt to save my own skin. Perhaps, it would be a better solution for all of us to drown, a final proof of the human species' inability to survive.

The above letter proves how difficult it is for a great humanist to let go of the overemphasis on the value of human life. I think I can sense some fear between the lines, something I have previously encountered when discussing the issue of overpopulation. I call it the fear of breaking loose and of disgrace. People fear that if any actions are taken to limit the world population, the situation will spiral out of control and human life will somehow lose its value forever. It is also thought that after similar actions mankind will forever lose its sense of self-worth by sullying its ethical values, and will be unable to restore any norms and conventions. This fear endures, regardless of how elegantly the reduction of the

population might take place, were it even to occur more artlessly and discreetly than with the German gas chambers during World War II — possibly by limited nuclear strikes or through bacteriological and chemical attacks against the great inhabited centres of the globe (attacks carried out either by some trans-national body like the UN or by some small group equipped with sophisticated technology and bearing responsibility for the whole world).

In the light of human history, I find this fear to derive from an obvious misconception. Whenever wars and mutual slaughter have ceased, societies have returned to their ordinary routine after only a brief period of transition. The massive depopulation operations of Stalin and Hitler, even the most gruesome tortures perpetrated by secret police forces, when described to the world audience in detail, have not overturned our ethical norms. It is often the case, in these scenarios, that in the block next to the secret police people are writing poetry, philosophising or helping their elderly neighbour.

Our age has witnessed the gas chambers and many other atrocities. On a global scale, the main problem is not the inflation of human life, but its ever-increasing, mindless over-valuation. Emphasis on the inalienable right to life of foetuses, premature infants and the brain-dead has become a kind of collective mental illness. The same phenomenon can be observed in the absurd history of capital punishment: when there were five million people on Earth, it was a self-evident fact that the death sentence might be enforced upon the most twisted members of the human community. Now that there are five billion people, one society after another is shirking away from the execution of even the most diabolical criminals. Amnesty International bitterly complains about the few countries that still endorse capital punishment. Unrelentingly, new means of rescue are being developed, so that helicopters might be able to fish out every raving mad fisherman who has ventured into a storm with a boat made of bark, thus salvaging another unique and irreplaceable individual from the embrace of the waves. The mind boggles.

In themselves, legalising euthanasia, re-instating capital punishment and abolishing overzealous rescue services would not have any significant impact on the population growth. Yet, as a matter of principle, these actions would be extremely important. As long as distorted practices prevail, an insane respect towards human life will reign: thus, even the possibility of a solution to the population explosion will be lost, and all lifeboats will sink into the depths of the sea.

Unless Man Grows Humble...

It is somewhat peculiar that so few thinkers have questioned the philosophical foundations of our culture. Most of those who try to observe the world receive a bad shock, after which they do their best to maintain a sense of solidarity with their own species, and values like human rights, individual freedom, equality and democracy. These people refuse to acknowledge that the world has not gone to ruin regardless of them, but because of them. The old saying, that thinking is unavoidably dependent on values and very rarely genuinely free, fits this case perfectly. It should be obvious, logically speaking, that the underlying values of a society ought to be questioned, when such a society is headed to its doom.

In this respect, I find myself to be an exception among contemporary thinkers. It is not difficult for me to envisage man returning to his place in a harmonious biocoenosis. Might this be due to a greater clarity on my part regarding the notion of man? In my eyes, humanity is an infinitely grand species: I too fight for its survival. Yet, I believe that human brilliance manifests itself only in flashes, among rare individuals. For this reason, humanity as a whole is enormously destructive: the creation of something as devastating as Western culture, which is now allowed to spread throughout the world, offers sufficient proof of this fact.

I find it almost inconceivable that, despite all contrary evidence, an intelligent individual might still have faith in man and the majority, and keep banging his head against the wall. Why won't such a person admit that the survival of man — when nature can take no more — is possible only when the discipline, prohibition, enforcement and oppression meted out by another clear-sighted human prevents him from indulging in his destructive impulses and committing suicide? How can such a person justify democracy? Does he not see that unless man, unless all of Western culture, grows humble and takes a deep bow of submission, it will assuredly ransack the whole Earth and strip it to the bone, no matter how it might manage to change some chemicals into others or switch to alternative sources of energy? How can such a person not perceive that if we maintain man's rule over nature and preserve the value of human life as it is conceived in Western nations, what remains is but a straight path leading to the pothole of extinction? How can anyone be so crazy as to think that all human life has the same value and all humans the same morality, regardless of numbers? It is clear to me that every time a new child is born, the value of each human on the Earth slightly decreases. It is obvious to me that human morality during the population explosion is wholly unlike that adopted when in the beginning man was a sparse and noble species.

A Protector of Life is Forced to Compromise

Harsh reality suggests that the thoughts of neither the public nor decision makers in Western countries come even close to addressing the aforementioned problems, which is to say: to reducing the present population, at least by curtailing its rights. The little debate we are capable of only concerns the basic level of birth control.

In the furthest outposts of ignorance, people have started pondering about the rights of a newly inseminated ova or foetuses. I am so dumbstruck by such an idea that I cannot even enter the debate on such matters: as a protector of life, I simply won't retreat all the way back to the last defensive trench — I'd rather surrender. At gunpoint, perhaps, I could be persuaded to discuss restrictions on childbearing. "If I can't get a life-jacket, then maybe a life-vest, and if not a vest, then maybe at least a cap." In an emergency, the guardian of life parts with demanding an end to extinction, and explores the possibility of delaying it by prolonging life. Everything is bound by time, even though the time estimated until the diminishment of the sun's energy and the inevitable quenching of the globe's biosphere, ten billion years, is difficult to differentiate from the idea of eternity.

The perspective of the protector of life with regard to birth control is simple enough: given the present condition of the world, under no circumstance can procreation be a family decision in the hands of parents or individuals. Of all the actions of man, procreation should most evidently be a matter regulated by society and, ultimately, a world council. How child quotas are to be divided among families and mothers should be a matter of family social policy. It may be that large families have to be supported as well; it is of paramount importance that we do not give in to the idea of equality, which will never bring anything about but misfortune. The average quota of children, anyhow, must certainly — everywhere and for some decades at least — be limited to one child per fertile woman. If the human population across the globe then settles to a suitable size, it will be possible to return to a quota of around two children per couple.

Other unequivocal ideas include making free contraceptives and abortion available. The fine-tuning of the system would decide whether the child quota would be controlled by forced abortions — which would still enable the conception of new children in case of the first one's death — or forced sterilisation of either or both sexes. It will be advisable to make controls as stringent as possible, in order to avoid killing babies already born — although infanticide has commonly been practiced even in recent times.

All this, perhaps, is but mere speculation. However, I would like to apologise again to my audience: I am afraid I forgot that man can neither limit the birth rate nor reduce overpopulation — and ecocatastrophe is around the bend. Man, with his technical talents, is an ingenious creature, yet a mindless animal in all other respects: driftwood in the merciless and capricious stream of evolution. Few realise how many individuals man is treading upon. We are heading for extinction, as one species among millions of others that have became extinct.

Or are we? Do we still have one chance in a million? Might the enlightened minority hold a joker up its sleeve after all? Will there be enough individuals to prove that man can have free will? Individuals who fully commit themselves to opposing the grey majority, while simultaneously fighting for its survival? Individuals with a powerful heart ruled by crystalline logic?

The Intolerable Misfortune of Technology
(1994)

By the solemn stone church of Sääksmäki, which dates to the fifteenth century, there is a beautiful graveyard. Here, in the shade of grand old trees, many of my former friends and acquaintances lie buried. Why do people visit the cemetery? To reflect and refresh their memories, to put small and great values into perspective, to think melancholy thoughts and to experience peace and quiet.

In the autumn I sought the graveyard on three forenoons. Only the third visit was successful: the first two times a large and speedy tractor had raced along the narrow pathways of the cemetery, shaking its gravestones and stone wall.

Before fleeing, I saw what the tractor was doing: with its front shovel it was carrying withered garlands from a grave to a nearby refuse heap. The capacity of the shovel was small, about the same as that of a wheelbarrow. Next, it would probably have transported some dry leaves. I didn't feel like checking, though, and immediately left.

On a daily basis, both at work and in my garden, I carry many things in a wheelbarrow and a small wheel cart, even heavy things and for long distances. I am well aware of the limited efficiency of these means of transport. On the other hand, I am not familiar with the way the parish of Sääksmäki is organised: is the church council in power there, or is it — as is often the case in Finland — some financial executives with mixed-up values? In any case, whoever may be in charge there has mixed-up values. Besides, I am not that familiar with the economic status of that particular parish. I have read about the great financial difficulties the

whole Finnish Church is experiencing, and how many of its employees are getting fired. What I do know, is how much a tractor costs for one hour's work and how much a man's labour. I also know the price of a wheelbarrow.

There would be enough examples of the insanity of machines to fill a book. I will pick another recent example, from the time when economic depression struck Finland. For a week in July I took gentle walks in the outskirts of Tenajoki. Here I encountered, among many other things, several farms that were still in good condition. I closely observed them, and spent my nights in their barns, as was once my habit. All of these farms only produced hay: a share for the cattle and, presumably, a share for the additional feeding of reindeer. None of the farms had more than five hectares of grassland. All of them, however, had a new tractor (which costs 150,000 Marks); a few even had wagons for the compression and unloading of hay (each of which costs 80,000 Marks).

For a few years I have been harvesting the hay alone in one hectare of land I own in Kuhmoinen: I meticulously cut it with a scythe. I do not only reap the harvest and stack it, but much extra work is involved: the hay has to be fluffed up a few times before stacking, even in the best dry weather. In a few adventurous years I even transported the dry hay to the barn through the woods, either by dragging it with alder poles or by carrying the pole on my shoulders.

It was not a huge task: I reckoned that in the course of a normal season a man in his fifties could harvest five hectares of grassland by hand; young men, of course, would harvest even more. I remember gazing at noisy tractors and thinking to myself: you wretches, with your quarter of a million Euro investments and vanity! All that is needed are a scythe, rake, hayfork, axe and knife!

Now, things are not always that simple. At least in the south, the grass has to be renewed every four or five years. Men here cannot plough on their own: they need tractors after all. If farms are five hectares large at the most, one tractor for every ten farms should be enough. In a farm cooperative, each farmer has a 10% share in each tractor. If the tractor is employed year-round in other tasks, that grassland's share of the annual work probably only amounts to a few percent. On the other hand, the sowing of hayseeds and spreading of fertiliser can be accomplished just fine with a sowing basket, by hauling the compost or manure with wheelbarrows. I have much first-hand experience with these options. Still, I would prefer a pair of horses to a tractor.

The examples I have presented were not chosen at random: they illustrate the essence of technology well. In the parish of Sääksmäki two religions go hand in hand. Faith in technology has absolutely nothing to

do with reason or wisdom: it is religion — an insensible, uncritical, unquestionable religion. Technology is the foundation of the most anti-intellectual and religious culture Western civilisation, or indeed the world, has ever known. The two religions at Sääksmäki, however, offer an interesting contrast: the Church nowadays, whatever its faults, is gentle, understanding and preserving; the religion of technology, on the other hand, is aggressive and destructive.

The remoteness of Finland is dramatically evident in the context of Europe. Finns top the list in terms not only of individual consumption of resources — from energy to paper — but also when it comes to machinery and automation. Finnish agriculture is so dully over-mechanised that it defies all statistics and diagrams. Every village in Finland, far from being an embodiment of farming and the rural way of life, reminds one of a technological exposition, whereas serenity and the values of tradition are still visible in the countryside of all other European countries. Finland — at least a few years ago — was the world leader of electronic financial transfers. Ideas about electronic systems and computers enter our silly heads like knives cut through butter. Personally, those who feel so important and busy that they couldn't survive without mobile phones in their cars, I would send to the mountains for a year, or rather five years, for them to reflect on the values of life. But perhaps that wouldn't help either: if a mind is dull, it'll stay dull.

At times, technology is justified on the basis of seemingly rational arguments. Attempts have also been made over the ages to find evidence for the existence of God. The foundational argument for technology is that it makes life easier: easier and easier, invention after invention. In reality, man has been dominating the globe without rivals ever since the discovery of the stone axe, and our life has been unnaturally and hopelessly comfortable. Since then, our only real problems have been our physical ease, meaninglessness, rootlessness and frustration.

Only evolution cannot fathom the derailment of the human species into the whirlpool of the technological religion: it doesn't even understand enough to be puzzled. From human mothers evolution still produces creatures bulging with strength, speed and endurance: untiring runners, jumpers, squatters, lifters, twisters and carriers. Now that man has developed an article of faith and trembling house of cards all of his own, material excess, physical performers all the more astounding are born with the help of vitamins, micronutrients and prenatal clinics. These tall and strong, muscular and sinewy girls and boys are then seen staggering in our streets and yards, full of wasted energy, apathetic, pale and desperate.

The situation is only worsening now that our religion has plunged its culture into mass unemployment, so that even the most imaginative cannot come up with any satisfying tasks for individuals to perform amongst machines: mankind is left with no role. Currently, a new president is being elected in the Republic of Finland. A reporter asked the candidates how the problem of unemployment might be solved: that bewildered band of believers, those embodiments of all human mistakes, just gave a blank stare. No one was capable of crossing the sacred boundaries to blaspheme God by uttering two simply words: no machines. Yet, there is no other solution nor will there ever be.

Through all his technical inventions and celebrated innovations, man has made himself useless. In recent years technological progress has been explosive: humanity has been successful in obliterating the roles of producer, refiner, transporter, distributor and serviceman. When we manage to also rid ourselves of the role of the consumer, everything will be over. A clanking of robots for some time; then, only deep silence.

Women As the Protectors of Life
(1996)

At least in Western culture, if not throughout mankind, that of the nurse is usually a woman's job. The current cultural trend of challenging established values and customs has called the gender bias of the nursing profession into question: shouldn't men be nurses as well? At any rate, shouldn't the most physically demanding tasks of working with patients be assigned to men?

Any change in this direction seems rather forced to me. There are clear reasons, in terms of both qualification and motivation, why the nursing profession might be said to suit women better than men. Whether the reluctance of the average man to take care of others is inherent (genetic) or culturally determined is difficult to say; nevertheless, it is an evident fact of life.

The gender distribution of nursing careers accurately reflects a distinction that underlies the whole civil community. Among any kinsmen, friends and acquaintances visiting a patient in hospital or an elderly person in the hospice, eight out of ten, if not more, will be women. Many men know that personal problems are easier to discuss with female friends than male (and possibly problems within the community with men?). Similarly, when struck by depression, one tends to lose his male friends. A woman close to you will at least attempt to help in such a case, although assistance is of little aid in the case of severe depression.

There is no doubt that the soul of a man, beneath its rough surface, is paradoxically more sensitive, fragile and weak than that of a woman. That of frail men and tough women is not a myth, but an established fact of human life. What I consider in my writing are always typical, average cases.

In some extreme cases, the strength of a woman will be incomparably greater than that of a man. For some time news regarding the spiritual collapse of the male population — a collapse also reflected on a physical level — have been coming from Russia, a country that is facing a profound cultural crisis.

Judging that personal observations will always prove more convincing than anything read or heard, last autumn, with a small expedition, I set out to visit some villages in Vienan Karelia in order to witness the cultural collapse with my own eyes.

There are 1,500 people in the large village of Jyskyjärvi, of both Russian and Finnish ethnicity. I left the place where I was staying at 7 am. The village was thoroughly asleep even as late as then, as were two young men sitting on the front seats of a Lada, blissfully and symmetrically reclining, their heads resting against each other (as this was taking place on the only bridge of the village, the two men were effectively blocking the main road that leads to Rome through St. Petersburg).

My walk soon led me to a cemetery, where I compiled a small statistic regarding the life expectancy of different genders. I didn't take any notes, but I remember that the survey included thirty men and women, spanning a period from the 1960s to the present. The result was rather shocking: the age of death for men ranged from twenty-eight to sixty-three, that of women from sixty-five to eighty-three. The ages between the two genders didn't even overlap: rather, they were consecutive. Certainly, we also saw the odd old man on our trip, but old men were such an exceptional sight that they had no influence on the overall statistics.

Following some interviews, we found a possible explanation for the sorry state of the male population in the region: unrestrained alcohol consumption, accompanied by equally unrestrained smoking habits, which impaired health by causing illness and death, not least through common accidents. We were given a taste of the extent to which alcohol consumption is rampant in the area at the beginning of our trip in Uhtua (now known as Kalevala), when we were only able to find soft drinks in the third store we visited. Every store sold vodka, which was displayed on the shelves and counter and was the easiest product a customer could lay his hands on.

It is important for me to point out that women did not yield in the same way to the alcohol epidemic. Everywhere in the village were cheap greenhouses with cucumbers, cabbage and potato patches; everywhere

were basketfuls of mushrooms and people picking berries by the roadsides. These, however, were only women (whereas in Finland gatherers are usually men). We gave a lift to a few spirited, merry Russian women carrying enormous buckets to the village, their mouths smeared with blueberry.

If there are reasons why Russian men have fallen so low, why have the women of Russia not turned into alcoholics and chain smokers? There is no reason other than the fact that women are stronger: women take care of the continuity of life to the very end. Women in Russia may not be over-generous in their care and might fail to keep a man off booze or guard his health until old age; nevertheless, they handle the food, chop the firewood, turn on the oven and offer men shelter from the cold. Men only live long enough to seed the next generation.

On our brief trip to Viena we also noticed the odd fact that women do not limit their care to mushrooms and potatoes, but also extend it to culture. We came upon a village festival, which people from other villages attended thanks to a couple of (Finnish) special buses that travelled to and fro for the occasion. There was choral and solo singing, dances and party games in a meadow by the village. There was only one man among the performers: the accordion-player, who was relatively sober. No more than a quarter of the spectators were men (possibly Finnish tourists). Again, we decided to investigate matters. So we set off through the village, where we found more men: it was a fairly warm day, so everyone was outside; men were seen on the shore, in yards, by the walls, in groups of half a dozen, all lying on the floor after having downed a dozen bottles of vodka.

Little boys, from toddlers to adolescents, mingled with the groups of men — learning from them. The future does not look too rosy at the moment.

The future, however, is unpredictable. The wind blows from different directions, and many are the influences that might come into play, even from afar. Suddenly the atmosphere might change: depression might turn into recovery or vice-versa. Shifts and transitions can be positive or negative, depending on one's perspective. The current human community in Russian Karelia does not particularly threaten the environment. In this respect, it is a good community. But if I stick to the perspective of the cultural anthropologist — that I have adopted so far — I would wish to see a new glimmer shine in the eyes of men at Viena. I would like these men to saunter by their women's side in the cabbage field and firewood shed. Predictions are always tricky, but there will never be a future where woman stumbles and man does not.

I will now return to my original object of enquiry: the Finnish man — and his woman, the omnipresent leader in the background.

I recall when a year ago, one autumnal night, the phone rang. I had a friend twenty years younger than me, a good fishing pal named Jokke. An exuberant man, robust rower and leader among friends his age, Jokke was a terrific joker, who would make people die with laughter. He was also an unrelenting fisherman in both inland waters and open sea, jigging burbots at night, snatching perches and pikes by day. Yet, he was as soft as the fluff of a goldcrest. I guess I was a kind of a father figure to him, or perhaps a mother figure (a father too has a role to play at times, if only a surrogate one).

Anyhow, the phone rang one night. It was Jokke, who in a state of shock had just made his way back from Helsinki. I was aware that his family was awaiting its firstborn child and that Jokke had attended a prenatal course to support his wife during her delivery. The long-awaited moment had finally arrived that evening, and Jokke had rushed to the women's clinic... yet... Gradually, amid stuttering and weeping, Jokke managed to explain the situation to me. He described the long white corridors, the swarming white nurses, the buzz of electronic devices... and the terrible fear of what might have happened to his wife. Jokke had panicked: he had fled from the hospital and was now trembling over the phone filled with terror and with a damaged self-esteem.

The reader might be eager to learn what happened next. Well, Jokke proved a loving and tender father, despite certain tendencies. He kept on repeating the same word to his firstborn son for weeks, until he achieved his goal: the boy's first word was "fish". Soon after, another son was conceived: "because" — Jokke explained — "in many jigging competitions a family team of three men is needed." Alas, the fishing team was never formed: a routine appendectomy, then clinical bacteria, inflammation and death after a couple of days. For quite some time, Jokke's large circle of friends was bewildered and utterly beset with grief. Life's cruelty sometimes knows no boundaries. The only consolation for Jokke's friends came from the fact that his wife was known to be a strong woman: they could be sure that she would pull through and take care of her little ones. She wouldn't necessarily take them jigging on ice, but would otherwise give them a good start in life.

Psychology is teeming with theories and hypotheses. It is my personal belief that man is more susceptible and weaker than woman, and that he probably cries more too — although he does so away from others. Man, however, is more egotistic in his sensitivity: he relates to human suffering and disillusionment very sympathetically when the sorrow and disappointment are his own. Man is more apt to be consoled than to console: deep down, these construction builders, army generals and industry councillors remain mummy's little boys. Why did the Creator (evolution) make man so? Mysterious are the ways of the Lord.

Still, differences between genders are not all that great. Man is better able than woman to disregard friends in need, patients in the hospital and elders in the hospice, by keeping himself active and busy. Yet man too is empathetic: it is all a matter of degree. Man is more clueless than careless. Many other men besides my friend Jokke feel confused in those long, white corridors: they do not know how to talk and what to talk about with patients and elderly people. Man, perhaps, is more stupid than evil.

Human Nature and History
(1998)

Again and again, "human nature" is fatalistically invoked as one of the reasons for the impending collapse of the world. The deeds of mankind are determined by "drives and instincts"; as such, they are inevitable and irreparable.

It is of course a truism that human nature is behind all human actions. This, however, does not make all deeds unavoidable — not those perpetuated by individuals or communities. It would be intellectually absurd for anyone to argue that the prevailing culture and way of life in his era, the direction life has taken in his age, has been unavoidable For example, the well-known statement by a Finnish prime minister that economic growth, the EU, EMU, competition and information technology are the sole options in this epoch and for this country, is foolish. These options have nothing to do with historical inevitability: they are arbitrary choices made by a small group of individuals — small, yet amazingly powerful and influential in its folly.

Even a brief glance at history brings forth a vast spectrum of alternatives. The human species has developed a huge variety of cultures and ways of life. Now, at the brink of global ruin, the most interesting of these cultures are those that are preserving, life-affirming and humble towards nature, and which adopt a conservationist approach to natural resources. It is a notable fact that similar cultures include not only the local societies that still flourish in parts of Africa, Australia and the rain forests of Brazil and Indonesia, but also what were once dominating societies. This was, for instance, the case with the Neolithic culture that ruled Europe a few thousand years ago: a culture that did not go to war and, most importantly, was in control of technology (then a useful tool rather than a master).

The urges and instincts of humans do not vary only according to geographical distribution: even the same population — Finns, for instance — might be at one time furiously devoted to killing other men (Germans,

Poles, Hungarians, etc.) and getting its own population killed; and at another time (e.g. the 1990s), seek to preserve human life with an hysterical lack of common sense (through incubators and rescue helicopters, with no regard for costs).

One must be unflinchingly attentive and open-minded in assessing the cause-effect relations, connections and influences on the lives of various cultures, of different stages in the same culture, as well as changes in the spiritual climate. A complete detachment from the confusing spell of one's own age, an ability to perceive the tendencies of that age objectively, externally, by comparative means, are an absolute requirement. Knowledge of history is critical for thinking, but most essential of all is to be able to examine one's own epoch — the only epoch one is capable of influencing.

What will an objective historian of his own time, an observer of human movements, a cultural anthropologist, make of contemporary Western culture? No doubt, what he will find is a truly unique spirit and way of life that has exceeded all bounds. Western culture, pervaded by capitalist market economy, knows no historical parallels in terms of greed and frenzy: even the slightest humility it has turned into its opposite, particularly in its relation to nature (but also in the relationships it fosters between humans). So far, it is the lowest point ever reached by humanity.

Never in history has economy — money — played such a central role in culture as in the countries leading world culture today. Never before has the kind of vile, hellish gambling connected to stocks, exchange rates, basic interests, prime rates, investment funds, options, derivatives, trading incomes, annual profits and other similar variables spread from a limited band of crooks to the very core of society.

Never before in history have natural resources been so depleted. Almost the entire globe has already been stripped bare. The few resources that still remain — oil in the Barents Sea, wood in Siberia, Karelia and the Pacific Islands — are being preyed upon by crooked claws striking with unparalleled efficiency (Finnish claws, as always, are even longer and more crooked than those of others). Construction, the suffocating of green land, knows no boundaries; nor do the production, transfer and consumption of goods, or the bolting of tourists from one place to another.

Never before in history have the distinguishing values of a culture been things as concretely destructive for life and the quality of life as democracy, individual freedom and human rights — not to mention money. Freedom here means the freedom to consume, to exploit, to tread upon others. All rights, even the most seemingly beautiful — women's rights, children's rights, rights for the disabled — only express one thing:

ME, ME, ME. Pure selfishness has been given a new name: "self-realisation", now considered the noblest of all morals. Words like responsibility, duty, humility, self-sacrifice, nurturing and care are always spat upon, if they still happen to be mentioned.

For all their mistakes, even such recently buried ideologies as fascism and socialism, both of which emphasized communal values and contained restrictive norms, were on a higher ethical level. The same goes for Christianity: only a while ago the Church spoke of fear of God, of humility, and of the need to counter sin with virtue, altruism, and care for one's neighbour. Now this yes-man of an institution, hankering after earthly power, is promoting only forgiveness and mercy. How tremendously distant this feels from the guideline "we came not to be served, but to serve" that only a few decades ago the Church was following!

Cultural anthropology is familiar with failed, merciless cultures, in which fear and terror rule the life of man. These cultures have only developed in small areas, lasted for a short period of time, and have never threatened the whole biosphere. Now, all those countries that hold sway over the Earth are experiencing the most uncontrollable, menacing and cruel of all ages.

When such a colossal amount of faults have been piled on human culture that the whole human society has become one uniform, giant Fault, the resoluteness of an attentive and mindful guardian of life is truly put to the test. How to unravel this chaos, how to fight against some flaw when it is linked to a thousand other flaws? The market economy of contemporary capitalism — this veritable religion of ruin, global destruction and extinction — might seem overwhelming. Many are crushed, and choose to end their own lives. Many more surrender, paralysed, and attempt to find a tiny hovel of their own, a place where they can keep busy and cover their ears. It would be easy to draw a long list of such people among our "Green", "environmentalist" brothers and sisters.

And yet... History, and history alone, will strengthen the faith of he who strives to keep his wits about him and use his energy to change the course of the world. Enormous, stunning changes have taken place even within single cultures or regions: some of these positive changes, aimed at improvement.

A reasonable man will thus always choose his models from history. The known history of mankind is already so vast that it contains all the positive exemplars required. The past will always provide the best guidelines when fighting for the future. But if the future is fashioned after a madman's belief in progress and development, delusions and science fictions, the game is most certainly over.

The Decline of the World Knows No Mercy
(1999)

Eija-Riitta Korhola is a wise thinker: a ray of light in the wretched panorama of Finnish culture (and, what is most important, the European Parliament). In a splendid article of hers, Korhola addresses the issue of survival. This fundamental theme is very dear to me — as Korhola herself points out; I would here like to add a few more comments on the subject. I have dealt with the issue before, but audiences change; and besides, not even Korhola can be familiar with all that I have written.

The way the future of billions of wastefully consumerist human beings is envisaged depends on one's imagination: are we capable of vividly imagining the final days of humanity in their unfolding? I think that Korhola falls into a slight contradiction when she discusses the subject. On the one hand, she provides a keen and obviously correct portrayal of the contemporary age: "What if humanity had already said farewell to goodness? This impression is conveyed not only by the horrible, inconceivable news we find in the papers, but also by the general cynicism that characterises our day." On the other hand, when censuring my criticism of Mother Teresa, Korhola writes: "I would rather see the whole of humanity step into the grave while continuing to express mutual love until a distant, honourable end, than witness a future without love."

But it is not honourably, I would argue, that humanity will disappear: the coming years will prove increasingly cynical and cruel. People will definitely not slip into oblivion while hugging each other. The final stages in the life of humanity will be marked by the monstrous war of all against all: the amount of suffering will be maximal.

My own dream is to avoid a similar end by means of both emotion and reason. Logically, the only option would be to implement a controlled pruning (of both the population and its material standard of living) before chaos breaks loose. In this manner, violence could be minimised, and life could go on.

Of course, in reality, chaos and a ghastly end are far more plausible alternatives. My own dream is perhaps only a fraction more realistic than that of Korhola.

I am not altogether satisfied with Korhola's use of the term "charity": I myself have outlined a model of living where brotherly love is held in high esteem because without it the life of any community would be intolerable or even impossible. However, I have a literal understanding of the term "brotherly love": a brother to me is a human I have direct contact with. I will always be friendly with such a person: I will ease his grief, give him my advice and rescue him when he is trapped in the ice.

"Species solidarity" — the extension of love to faraway populations — is a completely different matter for me: a forced, artificial behaviour that goes against human nature. Species solidarity is unnatural — and fortunately so. There is no need for us to practise such a twisted form of charity, for it contributes to the depletion of natural resources: it spoils the ecosystems of land, sea and sky by nurturing and feeding overly-dense populations across the world that have squandered the material prerequisites for life, thus inevitably guaranteeing torment and inhumanity.

Eija-Riitta Korhola, in her article, has brought up the fundamental questions of life. Yet, she is still wrong as regards one fundamental point. Evolution has developed — the Creator created, if you prefer — millions of species of organisms on the globe. All these organisms have cultures, activities, joys and sorrows of their own. The swelling mound of human flesh that now already weighs three hundred billion kilos is suffocating all its sisters and brothers. Is it ultimately destined to choke itself as well? Yet what must take priority?

One minor detail remains to be clarified: what position must the friend of nature adopt here? Are we first to worry about the tragic disappearance of our own species rather than that of all others — a tragedy a million times greater?

The World at the Turn of the Millennium
(1999/2000)

Man is not a sensible creature, not in the least. Rather than *Homo sapiens*, the wise primate, man should have called himself *Homo insipiens*, the insane primate. Every zoologist, even an amateur, can see how inexplicably more practically and reasonably animals arrange their lives than humans, who are now getting ready, according to their strange calendar, to enter a new millennium. Amidst the vast chaos and devastation it has wrought, humanity will just barely make it to the year 2000 — it will hardly make it much further.

Man is a lunatic, not a *sapiens*; but *Homo*, the handed one, that he certainly is. Hands have made man a luminary: thanks to his technical ingenuity, he has turned into the great bully of all living creatures. If only some other animal species were as dextrous as man with its hands, and endowed with reason, it would have long ago wiped the human species off the planet.

Democracy: The Seal of Ruin

Stupidity reaches a climax among those people who argue — without having learnt a thing from history or being able to read a single sign of our times — that man knows what is good for him: "the people know". From this absurd assumption derives a suicidal form of government, parliamentary democracy, born among the tyrants of mankind, the West. Alas, it looks like the bubble of democracy will never burst: as we struggle to enter the new millennium, we can abandon all hope.

Democracy and the public right to vote guarantee that no one other than the sycophants of the people will rise to power — and people never clamour for anything other than bread and circuses, regardless of the costs and consequences. Even the one possibility, comparable to winning the lottery, that some intelligent exception might rise to the positions of power, is completely lost with democracy. Our hapless species might also produce a rare mutation within its ranks: someone capable of controlling the people without being led by it; someone capable, when necessary, of taking a stand against the people. But unfortunately the era of hereditary kingship and feudal lords is over, and even the rise of dictators has been made impossible: mankind is carefully planning its own demise.

What Do We Mean by "End of the World"?

In the human mind, the end of the world does not mean the end of the universe, nor that of our solar system or planet. The globe will continue its course. Surely, some form of life will survive after man is gone, at least in the depths of the ocean, whose creatures will take their energy from the warmth of the Earth's core rather than the sun. The "end of the world" is understood as the extinction of one's own species, its death down to the last individual. A few millions of these ends have taken place in the past and will take place in future centuries. For mammoths, the end of the world meant the disappearance of the last mammoth; for the Glanville Fritillary butterfly it means the death of the last Glanville Fritillary.

People who speak about the human end of the world, which looms in the very near future, are belittlingly labelled doomsday prophets. The gift of prophecy, however, is no longer necessary to predict certain events: only an ability to differentiate between uncertain optimism and actual reality is needed. The end of the world is a calculable fact. A pair of eyes is all that is needed to predict it — a pair of eyes wide open.

Is There Anything Good in Us Humans?

Man, no doubt, deserves even the most painful of labels: "the cancer of the Earth", a terrible mistake of evolution, etc. But is there (still) anything good in the human species, as part of the biosphere? I am here thinking in terms of my own culture and country.

Science (standard research, science for the sake of knowledge) and art are still being practised: these represent the original contribution of humanity to the animal kingdom. The essential achievements of science took place long ago: the Golden Age of visual and musical arts occurred centuries ago. Thankfully, even today there are some humans who are doing things wise and beautiful. And — something even more rare — here and there some civilised people still lurk.

Individuals can still be found who perform deeds of compassion with all their heart, in the Church, social services and health sector. Similar people can also be found in everyday life: individuals who are good in the most genuine sense of the word, who brighten and warm the whole human community around them; people who are not swayed by the "passing fancies of the world".

All of these people look out for their friends and relatives, and practise neighbourly love. True greatness, however, is only encountered among those few rare individuals who extend their protection to the whole of Creation, the whole living layer of the globe. Amid the raging and clamouring rabble, among the frantically accelerating *häkkinens* and *mäkinens* [race drivers Mika Häkkinen and Tommi Mäkinen], there is still a group of people committed to environmentalism and the guarding of life. Some of these people, each in their own way, attempt to influence others through associations and unions.

It is a miraculous thing that this small, sane core of humanity, which combines knowledge with emotion and is still attempting to preserve what is fair and good for as long as possible, is able to show such patience amid all of the fuss. While these people cannot tilt at windmills, they still cling to the last shreds of nature that have not been raped by man, the last remaining forests, in an attempt to delay the coming end and give the biosphere some extra time, however short it may be.

These people still ponder, discuss, write, negotiate and try to develop conservation programmes, which are then inevitably torn to shreds by ignorant property owners and their lackeys. The greatest wonder at the turn of the millennium is the fact that there are still some protectors left, who in their hearts still cherish the values of faith, hope and love.

Bull's Eye

(Elonkehä [The Biosphere], 26.9.2001)

On September 11, hijacked passenger planes destroyed some of the tall buildings of the World Trade Center in New York and a corner of the main military headquarters in Washington.

This incident had little impact on mankind as such, yet the reactions it elicited in the world were huge. Overfed Western countries, choking on their wasteful consumption, experienced the same shock, panic and chaos that had struck the United States. Because of these reactions, the attack became genuinely significant. Still, overstatements like "the world has lost its course" and "the world will never be the same again" are nothing but rubbish.

Hysteria has even spread to Finland: articles were written that oozed with bloody fury, a flood of flowers was showered upon the US embassy, and emergency aid was offered even by the government. One commentator recalled the list of US states recently drawn by the perceptive Hannu Taanila, the last ones being Alaska, Kuwait, and Finland.

Never before have foreign casualties elicited such great sympathy, never before has so much attention been paid to the suffering of families. And still, judging merely by the number of victims, this incident amounted to little more than a brawl if compared to other events in the recent history of mankind. Hundreds of thousands of civilians died in the bombings of Dresden and Hamburg, masses of people also in London, not to mention the loss of life in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In Leningrad a million civilians died of bombings, artillery fire and hunger. Or to consider even more recent episodes, where are the mourning flags for Grozny, Baghdad and Kosovo?

That confused nation cannot count the full number of casualties in New York — after all, we never even got to know who they voted for as president in the last election. However, from what I have gathered, only a couple of thousand people died.

Those who died in the attack were not simply humans: they were Americans; and not ordinary Americans, either, but the priests and priestesses of the supreme God of this age: the Dollar. The passengers of the domestic flights are not a valid sample of humanity either, but a wealthy, busy, environmentally damaging and world-devouring portion of mankind.

The force and pull of money and power, which is apparent everywhere, including the way in which governments fawn upon the United States to prove their friendship, is almost incomprehensible.

It took days before something other than human evil and the hatred of madmen was suggested by our media as a possible cause for the incident — and this explanation is still the favoured one.

As a matter of fact, the United States is the most colossally aggressive empire in world history: the number of US military bases around the world is simply bewildering. Through its bases, the US spreads its economic and cultural influence by profaning, subjugating and silencing others. On all continents it finances and arms the governments and guerrilla movements it favours, frequently switching sides. The US employs death squads to do away with dissidents, and wages war when needed. Every now and then, as a reminder, the US bombs old proud Iraq. The US is the most wretchedly villainous state of all times. Anyone aware of global issues can easily imagine how vast the hatred for the United States — a corrupted, swollen, paralysing and suffocating political entity — must be across the Third World — and among the thinking minority of the West too.

On these grounds, it may be assumed that Third World activists are behind the bombings in New York and Washington. These people are waging a desperate battle for their fatherland and faith against an overpowering, gigantic enemy — not unlike Finns during the Winter War. Regardless of how alien their religion or culture may be, they certainly deserve all our sympathy. Opposition within the United States is also strong. The case of the Unabomber springs to mind here: his planned, thoughtful model for an alternative society was presented to the Finnish public with a translation of his manifesto. Domestic opposition in the US, however, will hardly have the energy and ability to carry out an operation such as the one we have witnessed in New York: the skill, competence and courage behind the attack has stunned even Western military experts (who, nevertheless, publicly voiced their condemnation of the action).

In the US, search for the 'culprits' has now turned into a farce. The blockhead who, following obscure procedures, was appointed president called the kamikaze pilots "cowards" in his first statement. He later claimed that the matter is no longer about terror, but war: a war between the US, with its 250 million citizens, and a private individual, an admittedly noble-featured and clearly determined Sheikh from the Middle East, who must "be caught either dead or alive". This individual hired a large group of madmen to commit expensive atrocities (this being the only point of view that Bush understands).

The workings of the small Finnish state also border on farce as, following September 11, emergency status has been declared on the border. From small beginnings great things may develop. I am reminded of how, after an attack by the German Red Army Faction, large police forces were

mobilised in Lapland to search for a young German citizen. It was later revealed that he was only a student gone hiking.

With regard to our own country, there is one further point I would like to make: it would be desirable at least for those people who idolise our Winter War to stop being sanctimonious about violence in general.

One should also bear in mind that the difference between a terrorist and a freedom fighter is a matter of perspective: it all depends on the observer and the verdict of history. One clear example springs to mind: that of the Finnish soldiers who took a violent stand against a legitimate government. These soldiers received their military training in foreign countries, exactly like the Palestinian guerrilla group that made its attack at the Munich Olympics or the Reds in Italy and Germany. For all we know, they were trained in Southern Yemen or Lebanon. Some of these infantrymen were madcap adventurers, others fanatical patriots. Had our own civil war ended differently, they would readily have been labelled as terrorists.

Still, the oppressive measures taken by the US against other cultures and populations are not the worst of catastrophes. The most serious aspect of US supremacy is the leading position this country has acquired as the cradle and engine of global economic growth. Unbounded economic growth rapes nature, exploiting the natural resources of land, ocean and sky.

What now remain are the Father, Son and Holy Ghost — or, rather, the Dollar, Economic Growth and Market Economy. Two Gods clashed against each other in New York: Allah and the Dollar.

The servants of Allah sacrificed their own lives and the lives of a few disciples of The Dollar. The aim of the servants of market economy is to murder the whole of Creation and mankind as soon as they can. The deep ecologist and protector of life, the guardian of the continuity of life, would certainly choose Allah when things get tough.

Given the situation, the towers of the World Trade Center was the best target among all the buildings of the world, both symbolically and concretely. It was a magnificent, splendid choice.

No matter how great the joy that followed this bull's-eye, certain questions were raised soon enough: what will the long-term effects of the attack be?

Although human mass deaths are always a positive occurrence in the light of the population explosion, a few thousand lives are nothing — even if quality were to make up for quantity. In other respects, the incident seems to be having truly significant repercussions at the moment. Economic growth seems to be plummeting — at least to some extent. Air traffic, the worst kind of traffic, is decreasing. Foreign trade seems to be slowing down; destructive tourism and international cooperation seem

to be growing more difficult. Surveillance and police actions are always an impediment to raging business life. All incidents of this sort "give nature extra time".

The bitter tenets of life have always proven optimism to be unfounded. Will it be justified on this occasion?

A Perspective on the State of the World, or The ABC of the Deep Ecologist — Part One

(2002)

Philosophy for the Everyman

Repetition is the mother of education: there is nothing new under the sun. I intend to return to some basic issues regarding the biosphere. Patience, after all, is a virtue.

First point: the explanation of the world is simple. Matters are always easy to understand when one wishes them to be so. Very many people have a peculiar tendency to complicate things. Perhaps, they reckon the world is more interesting that way. A thinker, however, does not complicate matters and thus favour confusion. Thinking is reduction, pruning.

Second point: the relativist (one of those "on one hand... but on the other..." kind of people) is wrong. From the same starting point, foundation, premise, only one conclusion can be reached. In other words: there is only one truth to each thing.

There are only a few important matters in existence, and only few significant equations. And there is only one considerable problem in the world: the impoverishment of life on Earth — the diminishment of life's richness and diversity.

Only one remarkable process is taking place: mankind is battling other creatures for living space. Mankind's inner disputes are only indirectly interesting, depending on the degree to which their effects either preserve or destroy the biosphere.

There is No Place for Nihilism in This World

There are wise guys who pretend to question the value of life, and say that the continuity of life on the globe is of no concern. Or, they will claim that the continuity of life is of lesser interest than some source of temporary pleasure that threatens it (like human rights or democracy in the world of men). The only truth is that the continuity of life is a basic foundation for every creature, including every human individual. When

the obliteration of life will become tangible, even nihilists will change their ways.

There are also know-it-alls who point to the meagre significance of our own planet in relation to the universe as a whole. The sole truth here is that no animal, not even man, is capable of comprehending the value of the universe. The cosmos, space, is unimportant. Our own solar system is the only reality.

The relative importance of the most significant matters is quite self-evident. There is nothing above the requirement of the continuity of life: all other interests fall below it. As the deep ecologist emphasises those factors beneficial to the preservation and continuation of life, his arguments will always be above all others.

The Useless Strategy of Man

Already, centuries ago, man had broken loose from the system of nature, the equilibrium of populations regulated by food chains. Mankind is no longer a part of nature. Humanity in no way competes with other forms of life and — now that laboratories have defeated all notable diseases — is no longer threatened by nature. Humanity is the complete sovereign of the biosphere.

Like other animal species, humanity has checked its production of offspring throughout the ages, yet — unlike other species — in a wholly inadequate way. Prosperous and sufficient regulation is known to have been practised only in some periods of early human history. Man has also limited his use of natural resources, but again in an entirely insufficient manner.

Now the majority of mankind has entered a new historical age, that of market economy, in which the clearance sale of natural resources knows no boundaries. With breeding still unchecked, the human population has risen to a monstrous, murderous size. Mankind has reached a stage of development where it is superseding all other life forms on the planet at a very fast pace, and is ultimately destined to consume itself.

The Objection Raised by the Deep Ecologist

The guardian of life, the deep ecologist, will not accept progress as the end of evolution and will reject the dominating position man has assumed. The deep ecologist notes that the human species also has a preserving side to it: qualities of humility and abstinence. These qualities manifest themselves in some populations through customs, ways of life, ideas and worldviews. The protector of life will try to strengthen them so that the progress leading to utter devastation might stop, or at least

slow down. The best example for the inclusion of sustaining elements within the human species is the deep ecologist himself.

The World's Greatest Love

The deep ecologist does not see evolution as something suicidal, but rather as a form of perpetual enrichment (destined to endure until the sun dies out): the filling of an increasing number of new ecological niches, leading to a greater diversity of forms, races and species, and a greater number of organisms. Evolution is marked more by speciation than by the extinction of species (more by success than failure), adding more and more joy to life.

What the deep ecologist loves is the whole. Therein lies the grandest beauty, wealth, and love. The deep ecologist does not understand the Christian-Humanist love of man, which even at its best only extends to a nation or mankind: this he sees as a form of inbreeding, egotism, masturbation.

What is the position of humanity for the guardian of life? It is that of an interesting, splendid species; for the survival of this species the deep ecologist will fight with all his might. Billions of people, however, represent a threat, not an object of love.

Even to conceive of the development of humanity, as a species, into a seething mass is insane: to approve of it is unthinkable. By his own nature, man is already a large predator that consumes a lot of resources to sustain its vital functions; thus, the only way mankind can inhabit the biosphere is in small numbers. It must also be remembered that the distinguishing characteristic of the human species, self-awareness, calls for limited numbers: among masses of billions, man loses his identity, while his life is deprived of value and meaningfulness.

A Perspective on the State of the World, or The ABC of the Deep Ecologist — Part Two

(2002)

The Insight of the Deep Ecologist

The deep ecologist recognises and perceives that the relationship between nature and man is a matter of space. Human rights = the death sentence of Creation. Ultimately, the survival of the human species is itself a matter of space. So: human rights = the death sentence of mankind. Only quantities are essential. The globe has a given size: it will not grow any larger. Its resources are limited and will not increase. Life may not be mathematical, but its framework is.

The deep ecologist both ponders upon and incessantly observes the surrounding world, mankind and society, in their relation to nature. Public authorities already appear to have moved slightly towards the protection of life (the Kyoto protocol, nature reserves protected from economic exploitation, etc.), yet these actions are only superficial, considering the overall avalanche. They will also remain superficial if they fail to address the underlying questions of overpopulation and Western economy.

It is still the case that the worst enemies of life are, on the one hand, an excess of life (human life, in particular) and, on the other, the legislation and structure of societies based on market economy. The sturdier a society, the more peaceful it is; the more efficient economic growth (i.e. the ransacking of natural resources), the quicker other forms of life will step aside. Everything that upsets the established order of society, causing chaos and panic, gives extra time to nature and, ultimately, humans too.

War

Wars between men are of great interest to the preserver of life, because they seem to carry certain possibilities. War is an institution that is frequently resorted to by nations, which love and worship it. War is like an already established organisation for the pruning of human populations.

Still, the rules of war until now have always guaranteed that the population explosion might continue its course. It is difficult for the deep ecologist not to plunge deeper into despair: is ecocatastrophe an unavoidable consequence of humanity after all?

Following their rules, wars have traditionally only removed young males in any significant numbers: individuals who only minimally contribute to the breeding potential of their species. Even a massive number of dead males causes a buckle of only one generation in the population because there are practically always enough of these males left — along with the old males dismissed from warfare — to procreate with the fertile female population that was almost fully spared.

Then, the law of large age classes known throughout the animal kingdom swiftly helps replenish the population, nullifying any achievement of war. The replenishment might even yield an interest, so that in the long run the population grows more with war than without it.

On the other hand, business (i.e. the war against Creation) is seriously disrupted when people battle with each other: wartime is always magnificent and life-preserving in this respect. Yet, the same disastrous law that applies to the population also applies to business: war is followed by a frantic period of rebuilding, which enlivens and inspires technological advancement and raging investments, so that economies leap forward.

Along with business, the most destructive forms of human recreation like tourism, vacation-home building and harmful sports also come to a halt in wartime. In the aftermath of war, however, the population will frenziedly 'make up for the losses'.

It would be a spark of hope if only wars were to morph in such a way as to target the actual breeding potential of a population: young females and children, half of whom are girls. Unless this happens, war will mostly remain a waste of time or even a harmful activity.

Democracy: The Religion of Death

Man has learned almost nothing even when confronted with the impending end of the world. The majority of people continue to make their daily choices on the basis of what they desire and what pleases them.

The deep ecologist never confuses human preferences or distastes, whether his own or those of others, with what needs to be done. He will formulate his judgments and establish his guidelines on the basis of what is feasible — without diminishing the possible richness of the biosphere or endangering its continuity. Democracy, by contrast, caters to the whims of man: the will of the people. The consequences of this are frightening: what democracy leads to is the kind of suicidal society that we see all around us.

Democracy is the most miserable of all known societal systems, the building block of doom. Under such a system of government unmanageable freedom of production and consumption and the passions of the people are not only tolerated, but cherished as the highest values. The most serious environmental disasters occur in democracies. Any kind of dictatorship is superior to democracy, for a system where the individual is always bound one way or another leads to utter destruction more slowly. When individual freedom reigns, humanity is both the killer and the victim.

The Heresy of Non-violence

Man has learned almost nothing: there are people who are still sanctimonious in their opposition to violence regardless of the state of the world, and who will presumably continue in the same way until its end. Frolicking in peace and love must be sweet — no doubt about that. Yet it is a nonsensical and disastrous attitude. With a smothering shroud of six billion people and all their demands covering the surface of the Earth, pacifism is dead.

Nothing is as much a case of its own and an unsuitable example for pacifism as Gandhi's teaching. Mahatma Gandhi was backed by 400,000 Indians who faced 1,000 British soldiers: what a fine moment to preach

peace! The minority, on the other hand, has no chance other than to resort to violence against violence: to a tougher, sharper, more astute, massive and fanatical violence; an iron will capable of facing no matter how superior a power. Examples can be found throughout history of both heroic defeats and victories. Finns have a fine example of their own for how violence at the hands of a tiny minority can prove successful: the Finnish Winter War. An example a hundred times more brilliant than even that can be found: a recent act of war, in which a handful of morally and intellectually superior people managed to severely wound a mighty world power.

Changing Morals

The thinker and author Eero Paloheimo, who of all Finns has been the most tireless in considering possible alternative models to preserve life on Earth, commented upon the attacks at New York and Washington. Paloheimo argued that these incidents nullified all "prattle", as he likes to call writings, presentations, declarations, demonstrative marches — the only methods that he himself, like the author of the present article, has ever dared to resort to. These methods are useless. The only thing that is effective, which weakens and shocks the present order bent on world destruction is extreme violence.

I myself would not go that far. I believe debate is needed as groundwork: it is first necessary to establish what the question is all about. Prattle and groundwork are only futile if they do not lead to any tangible confrontation — if cowardice, sloth and a desire for comfort prevail.

As the world's collapse looms near and the population explosion gains momentum, the conclusions and doctrines of no single thinker or lodestar will prove enduring: we are all but children of our age. Even the knowledge and teachings of a great philosopher and ethicist like Jesus of Nazareth must be measured against the backdrop of the number of people present in his day and the frequency of extinctions. It will then be noted that Jesus' message and moral teaching are for the most part obsolete and no longer applicable.

The crippling human cover spread over the living layer of the Earth must forcibly be made lighter: breathing holes must be punctured in this blanket and the ecological footprint of man brushed away. Forms of boastful consumption must violently be crushed, the natality of the species violently controlled, and the number of those already born violently reduced — by any means possible.

One must realise that now that we have entered the third millennium according to our calendar, there are no longer human individuals: only populations; no individual suffering or pleasure, but only the pruning and survival of populations. And innocent animals, plants and fungi: those that still remain.

Chapter 5

The Prerequisites for Life

The Sum of Life
(1993)

I consider predators and the largest species of their respective genera to be the most successful vertebrates in contemporary Finland. The losers' group is larger. Among mammals, the worst hit species are the mink and garden dormouse, who share the fate of the peregrine. The number of arctic foxes, western polecats and flying squirrels has greatly dwindled. I have met only a limited number of mammals: it is strange how few mammals an ornithologist encounters on his path; and even when he does meet them, it is only indirectly, via his birds: mice, voles and wood lemmings found dead in the nests of owls, weasel bones and tails, squirrels, rabbits and muskrats in the nests and on the feeding rocks of goshawks and eagles.

Even the flying squirrel became familiar to me thanks to birdhouses. Forty years ago, as I was approaching a couple of starling nests, I was met not by the stern gaze of a starling mother, but by the astounded stare of a cuddly, silky, silvery-grey creature. Flying squirrels, however, vanished from my life a while ago. Once, the nests of starlings could be found in sumptuous aspens, as well as in common alder and walnut groves. Each grove I calculated as having 800 bird pairs per square kilometre, including five species of woodpeckers. Now only some spruce scourers linger on in them, and the bird density is barely 200 pairs per square kilometre.

Long ago, in Kuhmoinen, when the children were small, I had a polecat as a pet, and a large group of rabbits dwelled in my stables. The polecat made its appearance in our backyard in winter; it dug a passage to the stables and began attacking the young rabbits. I snared the animal with a trap and carried it five kilometres off on my way to the village. A

couple of days later, its phosphorous eyes were again glowing in the dark of my barn.

I could name a long list of current losers in the world of birds: unlike the winners, they share no common characteristic. These birds are spread across many families and include the white-fronted goose, the black guillemot, the black-backed gull, the ringed plover, the dunlin, the cuckoo, the nightjar, many woodpeckers and a great host of sparrows. The greatest losers among birds are ultimately the capercaille and the black grouse. My home villages on the shores of Vanajanselkä are an extreme example of the plummeting of the black grouse population. Many years ago black grouse landed on every cape, and the sound of their courtship could be heard across the ice in spring. Now, for three consecutive springs only a lone survivor was spotted in the vicinity of three villages. For the first time in presumably thousands of years, spring last year was completely silent up until the end of February, the end of the mating season, when an unexpected wandering grouse made its appearance.

A list of the most endangered species has been prepared, and it is a wonderful thing that attempts are being made to protect them through tangible conservationist campaigns. Still, it feels as if in mapping primeval forests, for instance, a disproportionate emphasis is placed on a few of the most endangered and uncommon species. It is certainly true — and this is one of the founding principles of environmentalism — that the extinction of a species is the most overbearing of losses. Extinction is irreversible, the worst blow that could befall the biosphere. The question of conservation is hardly ever framed in these terms in the case of our fauna, however, as we are not dealing here with ocean isles or isolated mountains which represent the only habitat for the entire world population of a given species. Almost all our species of mammals and birds are also found across the border.

Eljas Pohtila of the Department for Forest Research (Metsäntutkimuslaitos) has emphasised some interesting aspects of the extinction issue. Pohtila believes that the protection of the white-backed woodpeckers is not a priority for Finland because the bird has strong populations in Estonia and Russia. This, however, is where he goes wrong: he claims that our white-backed woodpecker population can fade away because it is a scarce and untypical population experiment, pushed to the edges of its distribution area. If this kind of thinking were to be followed, every animal would soon face the danger of extinction: if the living zone of a species is limited once, it can be limited again and again.

Yet Pohtila's remarks also contain some valuable observations. First of all, it is clear that the Saimaa seal is more important than the white-backed woodpecker from the point of view of biodiversity. Secondly, it

is true that the most significant richness lies in the number of animals: the sum of life. Whether there are seven or five million pairs of chaffinches who are living, bustling and rejoicing in our woods, makes a fundamental difference. This is precisely what nature is about.

My impression is that the population of our most common small birds has sharply diminished in recent years. I am aware of only two rather common bird species that have steadily increased their numbers: the greenfinch and blue tit. Even those species that were thriving thirty or forty years ago have either stopped growing in numbers, like the scarlet rosefinch and dunnock, or are reverting back to their original numbers, as is the case with the lapwing and black-headed gull.

Eljas Pohtila's remarks on extinction merit further consideration. Ultimately, extinction has a definite meaning: it means the complete disappearance of a species from Earth. Nevertheless, we have grown used to perceiving, experiencing and mourning extinctions according to state borders. Finnish birdmen have also been profoundly shocked by the extinction of the middle spotted woodpecker in Sweden, and are unrelentingly fighting — much to Pohtola's vexation — in defence of the Finnish white-backed woodpecker. It is certain that if the whitebacked woodpecker, or some other animal, were to vanish from a comparable region in Russia, its disappearance would be perceived in Finland as only a minor occurrence.

The above reasoning is not as foolish as it seems. Our conservation work is rather tied to state borders: international cooperative campaigns simply do not yield the same results as national ones. Unavoidably, lists of endangered species will be written by individual countries, be they large or small.

But when nature, with its flora and fauna, diminishes, it results in the increasingly frequent loss of different species in small areas such as provinces, counties or villages. These local losses are already so significant in themselves that they should be treated as forms of extinction. For example, the whitebacked woodpecker has become extinct over the whole of western Finland. It is a bitter truth that in the "home territory" covering perhaps a thousand hectares on the northern cape of Vanajanselkä, an area I have been closely observing since 1948, twenty bird species have grown extinct and only two new ones have appeared in their place.

A long time ago, in 1949, I remember spending my summer holidays as a full-time bird-watcher in the villages near my home. At that time I was not yet in the habit of taking notes every day: merely surveys every five days or once a week. In a section of my writing dealing with midsummer, I noted that the females of the yellow wagtail were "commonly having nestlings" then; and that northern wheatears seemed "extraordinarily numerous all around the village". In my notes, I mentioned many

nests and broods. It is years now since a feather belonging to either of these bird species has been spotted in the region. As I eye my banding lists from the year 1953, I notice that I had marked 210 out of the 263 starling fledglings in this village — despite the fact that the village blacksmith Sandsten would not allow me, under any condition, to search through the particularly large number of birdhouses he had built. Furthermore, dozens of starling broods grew in holes in common alders and aspens, and were thus unreachable. I have followed the current starling population closely: for many years, there have been no more than four or five nests of this species. The ratio of decline is about twenty to one.

I observed that when ornithologists illustrate changes in the avifauna, whether that of starlings or of other species, they are generally much more conservative in their estimates. Maps that only record complete losses are a major factor of psychological distraction: whether a hundred pairs of northern wheatears have been discovered in an area of 10 square kilometres or only one nest, the entry on the map will be the same. The herring gull, for instance, is marked on many maps of Vanajanselkä with the same circle it had in 1950, although its population has risen from 3 to 165 pairs.

While large animals and predators, the victorious species of our fauna, usually number in the dozens or hundreds, the loss of birds species is frequently a matter of thousands or even millions of individuals. If we could successfully bring back the tree covering of our sapling plains, we would also regain a tremendous amount of animal life. Our mixed forests would have to be restored, our groves and ditches, weeds, berms, cattle, meadows and cultivated fields, while all unnecessary roads and overlarge courtyards and parking lots would have to be closed. This is not utopia, at least where small regions are concerned: every property owner, even the humblest, can take part in the task of bringing back nature.

On the Reversal of Finnish Society

(Mustiala, March 30, 1996)

Finnish society needs to radically change its list of priorities and its direction: to undergo a complete reversal. The development of our society in recent decades has been entirely negative. The only true and sensible goal for a society, the good life of its citizens, has been sacrificed before the idols of economic growth, efficiency and competition. The atmosphere of our society has become more restless, fearful and spiteful than

ever before. In particular, Finns' faith in the future has seriously been shaken.

The only criteria to measure the satisfaction, happiness and future faith of citizens and societies are the following:

- the number of suicides
- the need for psychiatric services and medicine
- the need for drugs and alcohol
- the endurance of relationships or the number of divorces
- the degree of firmness and warmth in gender relations
- the degree of harmony and respect between citizens
- the quality of the environment.

Judging from the above criteria, the current objectives of our society and leaders have led us — and will continue to lead us — to utter disaster. There are no other indicators. The need for a full reversal means that the decision makers, the leaders of the country, must begin working without reservation to improve the factors of well-being alone. A completely new path must be sought.

I am here talking of a turnabout capable of rooting out all demands for performance, rationalisation, automatisation and renovations from our society. Most importantly, competition, which is nothing but the immoral subduing of others, must be disposed of in all areas of life. Even the thought of vying between nations or economical coalitions must be extinguished: no country is an enemy to be overcome. Domestic products are vital for all countries, and Finnish products must not be displaced by imports. The word kilpailu [competition] must be eliminated from the Finnish language.

Man, and specifically northern man, is first of all an active creature, who sees pleasant toil as a prerequisite for life. Unemployment is so severe an affliction that its magnitude is impossible to overestimate: according to psychological surveys, Finns cherish a secure job in the future incomparably more than they do a high material standard of living.

We demand that the destruction of human work be stopped: to end the replacement of physical work with machines and mental work with computers. We demand that toil be returned from machines to man. The overall focus of all policies must be the welfare of human existence. Instead of efficiency, workplaces should strive to make their employees feel happy and relaxed in their second home; and besides, only a moderate amount of absolutely necessary goods and services should be produced for sale.

At the heart of any viable and enduring society will always be agriculture, including all secondary sources of livelihood like gardening, cultivation, gathering, fishing and hunting. Any society that has severed the

link between the majority of the population and the basic foundations of life — green leaves, soil, earth and water — is destined to collapse.

Professions that provide sustenance are not just one kind of trade among many others. Agriculture is not merely one livelihood among others; rather, it is the prerequisite for all secondary crafts, and is thus situated above them. Humans will continue to farm for as long as they inhabit the Earth.

The position of agriculture as the country's primary source of livelihood should clearly be acknowledged: society should contribute to strengthen the agricultural sector by all possible means. In addition to good working conditions, we ask that the number of farming people, the backbone of society, be quickly increased. A prominent (and wasted) workforce reserve is represented by the half a million of unemployed individuals: these might be sent to work both as independent farmers and farm labourers.

All deserted farms, their entire acreage of fields and buildings, must be put to use. Leased fields must be restored as independent farms as soon as possible.

A natural increase in agricultural yield ought to allow smaller areas under cultivation to provide sufficient sustenance. In the 1950s, the average acreage of a lucrative family farm (used to grow crops in southern Finland and raise animals further north) measured around ten hectares. Today, it could be reduced to five hectares; in the future, to three or even two. I am here referring to an average yield of grain, milk and meat. The land required for the production of any additional, specific and rarely used agricultural products would be even less.

Small farms would be made more profitable by increasing the price of agricultural products (i.e. food). Increased incentives would be given to support any new smallholdings.

The current mindless and unjust practice whereby a person who has just entered the farming trade is forced to pay large sums of money for his workplace — something which does not occur in any other profession providing an ordinary income — will immediately have to cease. Generational turnover must be spared inheritance or legacy taxes. Siblings will not receive their share of the inheritance in those cases where their schooling in a trade that will secure them a living has been paid for them from the farm's funds.

To make an expanded agricultural sector profitable, the price of food must return to a reasonable level. The contemporary clearance sale of foodstuff will then be seen as only a brief error in the pages of history. The farms must derive their profit from the sale of their agricultural produce through the sufficient pricing of their products. The current subsidy system — the recycling of a farmer's earnings through tax reserves

— will be abandoned. The only part of this system to be kept would be profit balancing in favour of the smallest farms.

A substantial rise in the cost of nutrition will reduce the budget available for entertainment: wasteful consumption will decrease throughout society — expenditures in the agricultural sector will be reduced as well. These changes will lead to forms of robust and vital cooperation and socialisation in both villages and suburbs.

A strong, controlled agriculture creates total nutritional self-sufficiency. In the present climatic conditions in Finland the self-sufficiency level is very unlikely to be exceeded (i.e. produce more than is required just for living), as we would move towards natural means of farming — an imperative action for environmental reasons. This would mean smaller crops. People's nutritional needs would grow in unison with every bit of industrial energy to be replaced with the physical energy and work of man. If we decided to reintroduce the workhorse to assist in farming a significant acreage of fields would of course have to be reserved for the production of food for this domestic energy (horse).

In the present situation, there is no point in striving to secure the business of the most hard-working farmers and large estates: these will survive anyway. The protection of small, and particularly the smallest, family farms is essential.

Just as banks, offices and industries guarantee the livelihood of their less skilled or slower employees, so would the slacking owners of small estates or cottage farms be guaranteed a minimum income. Half of every population is always more inefficient and less skilled than the rest. Society must always be structured in such a way as to meet the needs of its weakest citizens.

Globally, as statistics suggest, there will soon be a shortage of crops and food: famine will come knocking at our door. One must bear in mind, after all, that even now agricultural conditions are worse on a major portion of the Earth (for example, the whole continent of Africa) than they are in Finland. On a global scale, southern Finland is an excellent area for cultivation; central and — to a lesser extent — northern Finland are similarly good for animal husbandry.

This global perspective strongly suggests that Finnish society should concentrate on agriculture: while the products of forest economy (paper) are ultimately superfluous, food is not.

Forecasts regarding climate change point to a future diminishment of the world's granaries because of drought, erosion and rising of sea levels. By contrast, an increase of harvests is expected in Finland. Even when the notion of overproduction will have been transcended in the future, eventual surplus in foodstuff will be in high demand on the global market.

It follows from these grave facts regarding the nutritional balance of the world that the EU must adapt to Finnish agriculture rather than vice-versa. Currently, the societal and agricultural policies of the EU are badly misguided. If no adjustment will be made to face the facts, fatally harmful directives will have to be systematically disobeyed, or — if worse comes to worse — Finland will have to leave the EU.

Can We Survive? A Model for a Controlled Future
(1999)

Mankind, the human species, seems to have reached its end. We are in the midst of ecocatastrophes, in the eye of the storm. No natural scientist or serious futurologist believes we have more than thirty or — at the most — one hundred years left. Researchers hired by the fanatical business world spew out their data for money and contradict the views of true scientists. The human language makes it possible to formulate any twisted claim to be formulated: it is easy to say that the sun rises in the west and sets in the east.

Plenty of severe warnings can be found: individual biologists, population scientists, philosophers and thinkers have issued terrifying warnings to the public; a hundred Nobel laureates have signed a declaration calling for an immediate end to economic growth.

The most wretched of all current trends is of course the mass extinction of organisms, which has been escalating for decades and is still increasing in magnitude.

While doomsday omens can be said to be old news, in the present century they are based on something other than intuition or revelation: modern forecasts are founded on scientific facts, data, calculations and figures. This kind of news is no more than a century old.

The point, however, is that neither mankind nor the nation — I am here referring to Finland — are reacting to this information in any way at all. In the media, news about the impending end of the world is drowned amid thousands of other news items. Even though news concerning the gradual suppression of life is really the only significant news, which all other human aspirations are subordinate to, it never really makes the headlines.

The most striking titles and the most enormous amount of space is reserved for unbelievably uninteresting nonsense: Diana, Clinton, Sundqvist, Vennamo and so on. Political and business leaders speak and act as if there were no threat to life. A man aware of what is actually happening wouldn't know whether to compare the behaviour of a minister, president or general manager to that of a lunatic or an ignorant

brat. When asked about the current endangerment of life, ordinary citizens will stutter in bewilderment. All signs of collective suicide are perceptible in our society.

Many are the ecocatastrophes that threaten land, water and sky, or are already occurring, and which amplify one another. I will here mention only one among many possible examples: climate change, a phenomenon that is unfolding before our very eyes at an even faster rate than what was predicted.

To put it briefly, what follows the warming of the climate is the submerging of wide, fertile coastal plains under the sea level, and, most importantly, the destruction of the essential cultivated areas around the world because of drought. Then again, in the north — in places like Finland — harvests seem to be increasing, although the lack of direct sunlight may balance the rise in temperature. Yet, the massive increase in rainfall will prevent harvests from being gathered either mechanically or by hand. According to a different scenario, the Gulf Stream will change its course, and Finland, along with its neighbouring regions, will turn into tundra. No other scenarios than these two are possible.

The supposed awakening of governments to the reality of climate change has produced shows like the conferences of Rio and Kyoto. Despite all the buffoonery, business-making and cynical swindling, climate researchers and ecologists have calculated that to actually stop climate change it would be necessary to cut emissions by ten percent. Other plans to end various ecocatastrophes also yield similar estimates. Naturally, overall consumption in industrial countries would have to be reduced by over ninety percent.

All these programmes, figures and percentages are remodelled in such a way as not to call for the most essential thing, an end to the extinction of organisms, by forcing the human species to retire from the domineering position it has acquired. Such a step would mean a return to the so-called natural frequency of extinctions, which is one thousand times smaller than the present one (or something close to that — I cannot recall the exact figure). Undoubtedly, human population would also have to be reduced to about ten percent of what it is now.

In drafting a few guidelines, I will here limit myself to a less ambitious programme that only aims at the preservation of mankind and its few companion species. I will provide a brief outline of what changes in society would really be needed to stop climate change.

It is possible that even this more limited objective would require lightening the intolerable burden of human population — although the present population would in this case not be reduced to one tenth, but only stripped of around two billion people. The resulting figure would roughly be equivalent to that of the world population just over half a century ago,

when the great ecosystems of the world began to waver and collapse. A reasonable hypothesis can be formulated: that the globe could handle a demographic load of such a size, provided that the levels of material consumption do not rise to what they are today.

In my presentation, I will be even less ambitious: I wish to begin by outlining a reckless attempt to lessen the present demographic strain by the sole means of controlling human birth-rates. This policy is deeply humane — and, precisely for this reason, probably too soft. Whatever the case, what is required is a radical turn, under the guidance of reason, away from the stray path of Western culture.

I will proceed in such a way as to first suggest some practical solutions, and only at the end address philosophical and psychological questions.

A Demographic Plan

The cornerstone of any population platform is the dismantling of the freedom of procreation, the most senseless form of individual freedom. Puzzlingly, this policy has only been implemented so far in the country with the oldest culture of the world: China.

Procreation should be licensed: on average, every woman should be allowed to bear only one child. This policy should be followed for several generations, until a sustainable population is reached. The quality of the population must in all cases be taken into account as well: procreation licences would be denied to homes deemed genetically inadequate or unsuitable for the raising of children, whereas families capable of providing a stimulating environment for children would be granted several licences.

Various means of contraception and abortion would be made freely available anywhere.

The opulent excess of fat, even obesity, which is widespread in our present society, would be decreased by regulating, controlling and normalising the nutrition, vitamin and hormonal levels of adolescents. A drop of twenty centimetres in the average height could realistically be achieved; the same goes for a drop of twenty kilos in the average weight. This is a very important step to be taken — and among one of the most humane ones — in order to reduce the demographic burden.

Energy

Fossil fuels, including peat, will be abolished on the first day the programme is implemented. Even the production and distribution of electricity — the harnessing of which should probably be seen as a great misfortune in the history of mankind — will largely be brought to an end.

Electricity may continue to be used as a source of energy by the media and to illuminate rooms (strict quotas would have to be set in this case); but street lights and other external lighting would be banned. Households, as well as businesses, will have to switch to manual labour.

Firewood will be used in heating and its use will be tightly regulated. Fireplaces will be made as efficient as possible. Within walls, bodies will first be warmed by clothing rather than air.

The necessary electricity will be produced by wind power — yet with the awareness that the construction of wind power plants, with the transportation of resources it entails, and their use represent a considerable drawback in environmental terms.

Other power plants will be demolished. The worst kind of plants, energy dams, will be the first to go. Indeed, waterpower has caused the third great ecocatastrophe alongside the clearing of fields and the forest economy: the faltering of our whole marine economy. The new policy will restore our waters to their natural state.

The Collection of Carbon Dioxide

The only large-scale method of removing the colossal surplus of carbon that has already been released into the atmosphere is by absorbing it with vegetation: firstly with trees, then with bushes. In Finland the mean volume of living trees on growing forestland now amounts to 70 cubic metres per hectare. This figure will be increased to about 400 cubic metres, which corresponds to the natural density of forests. Additionally, a significant amount of carbon is stored in fallen trees: this increases the more north the woodland is and the slower the decomposition. Fallen wood also transfers a part of the carbon into peat, if the tree is left alone.

It will take about one hundred years to reach the suggested figure of 400 cubic metres. In the meanwhile, the forest industry will largely have to be shut down. Still, in order to deliver orders and announcements to the population, to maintain the media and literary culture (all of which must be preserved in order to sustain society), the production of paper will continue. Paper, however, will become the most strictly regulated of commodities: perhaps two percent of the current amount of paper will then be produced.

A remarkable obstacle to trees' absorption of carbon and a corresponding source of carbon emissions into the atmosphere will be the use of firewood, even when controlled as described. Firewood will be harvested from fast-growing deciduous trees in small, carefully outlined areas. For a long time we will survive by burning the waste wood of Suicidal Society.

When binding carbon, there will be no room for forest fires: fire-fighting troops will be trained to carry out efficient actions on terrain devoid of forest roads.

An increase in woodland acreage will also be necessary. All wastelands, banks and fields that absorb little or no carbon will be forested. In different phases of the programme, the forest acreage will progressively be incremented in a multitude of ways.

Reforesting a significant portion of field acreage is the most notable step that will be taken. This will be made possible by replacing grain with mostly animal protein for nutrition. The resources of inland and coastal waters, vastly under-utilised in Suicidal Society, will be put to good use: annual profit will be reaped from all species of fish, including fish species that have been dubbed "junk fish" because of fashion whims or popular prejudice, although they serve equally well as food. The fish catch can sustainably be increased a hundred fold, so that it will be possible to replace a third or even half of the nutritional content of grain and other plant-food with first-class animal protein. A corresponding percentage of fields will be forested to contribute to the binding of carbon.

Hunting will also be rendered more effective, although it is a less profitable activity than fishing. Small mammals and highly prolific rodents — and perhaps invertebrate animals too — will be added to the list of game species. With detailed research, care will be taken to keep food chains intact and functional through both hunting and fishing: both activities will take account of the natural growth rate of species.

Agriculture

Farming will be organised in small units, while machines will be abolished and a major portion of the population will be made to practise light agricultural work. Once methods of transport become limited, the population will have to disperse in order to live closer to raw materials and sources of sustenance: close to farming, fishing and gathering. Almost everyone else will have at least a plot of vegetables, and a garden with fruits and berries in the south. A comprehensive network of advisors will operate in order to secure sufficient harvests.

Depots, cleared of machines, and the inner road network of farms will either be added to the cultivated area or forested. Half a million horses will have to be reintroduced onto farms to perform heavy duties — even if this will mean that many hectares of land will be devoted to the production of fodder.

The collection, transportation and use of human and animal manure will be organised on a local basis.

Greenhouses will operate — when at all — exclusively by solar energy during the warm season. Fresh vegetables, fruits and berries will be available only in their natural ripening seasons. Food will be preserved in each household — either by drying, souring or salting. Forest berries and mushrooms are of great nutritional importance because they provide valuable vitamins and minerals. The lingonberry will be preferred to other berries as it keeps for years, when turned into purée. On good berry years hundreds of millions of kilos of this berry will be gathered and stored safely for many years to come. The same applies to mushrooms in good years.

Finland will be more than self-sufficient in its food production: some quantities of food will be reserved for export. Research into plant cultivation — like that into fish and game economy — would be greatly subsidised in order to develop subspecies that withstand moisture.

Traffic

Traffic conditions will change radically. The main rule will be for people to live in their native areas and home districts. Services will be provided that are reachable on foot, by skiing, cycling, rowing and paddling. Public means of transport on roads and water will be available for long trips. The old system of guesthouses will be restored.

Private car and motorboat traffic will cease. The only road traffic will be that of public transport vehicles and a small number of cars that will be used to transport goods. Most heavy transport will operate via railroads and on water.

Since metal, plastic and rubber junk will be in little demand in the future, the majority of cars, household appliances and other metal and plastic waste will be pressed into solid blocks and transferred to the unproductive rocky grounds of junkyards; the first places to be filled will be mine shafts. Most of the road network will be cleared and reforested, starting from forest roads and those roads built near holiday resorts.

Foreign Relations

After all international trade agreements will have been revoked and all trade coalitions abandoned, foreign trade will drop to a minimum. What will mostly be imported will be metals not found in our country and salt, as the use of salt will rise sharply due to food preservation. After some decades, when railroad and bus equipment will probably cease functioning despite all attempts at repair, equipment and mechanical parts that cannot be manufactured domestically will probably have to be imported as well.

Products of handicraft, woodwork and foodstuff such as fish and berries will be used as exchange currency.

Mass travel will end and will be replaced by hiking in one's home area. Only professional correspondents, negotiating officials, and individuals or delegations practising cultural exchanges will travel abroad. Ships will travel at sparse intervals to carry both these people and the mail. Most of the transport will be on open waters. Ships will not sail against the wind.

Foreign visas will be issues to hikers moving on foot and by bicycle. Presumably, they will survive on packed lunches and by working in the countries they visit. Customs will be able to inspect the backpacks and bags of these travellers without any hassle.

All air traffic will cease. Related equipment will be scrapped, while airfields and terminals will be reforested. Most ships, icebreakers and structures in most coastal harbours will be demolished, with the exception of what is left for inland traffic. Consideration will be given to preserve basic ice-breaking equipment, to be used in emergencies.

Industry and Wares

Industrial manufacturing will be subject to licensing: no product will be manufactured unless there is a buyer in real need of its use. In all cases, ecological balance will be a central factor in evaluating whether to issue a permit for industrial manufacture.

Most business enterprises will come to an end. Only a handful of large corporations will be maintained: for instance, those linked to the production of equipment used for public transportation, bicycles and paper. These industries will be in the hands of the state. Long-distance hauling will be avoided in the case of small production units and firms: many people will work in local handcrafting trades.

Only sturdy, well-built equipment will be used, which will last several generations. The mending and maintenance of objects will be central to society: the intentional abandonment of usable objects will be punished.

Construction

The construction of new buildings will cease. Once people dispense with electrical household appliances and excess furniture, more rooms will be available to inhabit. The number of currently uninhabited houses in rural areas would be sufficient to meet the needs of the population, provided a few repairs are made here and there. Most buildings in the suburbs will be demolished, along with construction sites, parking lots and streets, which will all be forested.

A small number of public buildings will be left intact to be used as schools and conference halls or to host cultural events. Smaller gatherings will take place in private households. Sports will be practised in the open in the appropriate season.

Holiday resorts will be demolished and replaced by tents, as holidays will take place in the wilderness. The wooden parts of these demolished buildings, like all wooden material gathered from elsewhere, will be stored and protected from damage by moisture and decay, to be later employed as firewood, in such a way as to save living trees.

Education

The school system will be cherished as the most precious aspect of society. Foreign languages will be removed from the syllabus of elementary schools (and transferred to that of the more specialised schools for the training of future workers in the field of foreign relations); less mathematics will also be taught. The greatest emphasis will be placed on all-round education (natural sciences, history, Finnish), sports, arts and, most importantly, civil skills (which the adult population will also be taught). Throughout the year camp schools will be set up in the wilderness.

Civil skills include responsibility towards one's neighbour, nature and mankind; social skills, behavioural education and practical abilities. Every citizen will learn how to mend, patch, handle the most common tools, build axe shafts, file saws, gut fish and skin animals. The handling of food will be painstakingly taught: everyone will learn how to bone a fish in such a way that only the largest ribs are left and to use their teeth in mincing food in such a way that the skin, innards, fat and bone marrow will not be wasted.

Right from the start, the school system will root out all competition from society.

Universities will be maintained whatever their cost. However, as universities will be investing in spiritual capital, their buildings and tools will be modest. Basic research will focus on the humanities, philosophy and natural sciences. Those fields of science and research requiring the most expensive equipment will be removed. Applied sciences will concentrate on research and the fine-tuning of the new economy (the development of soft technology, repair of buildings, production and preservation of foodstuffs). Commercial sciences will come to an end as society will shift away from materialism and trade will be reduced to a minimum.

While art and music will be widely practised and taught, heavy or bulky equipment and buildings specifically devoted to the practice of the arts will be abolished. In the literary field, the ministry of education will

grant permissions to print only fictional and non-fictional works of high quality: trashy novels will vanish. The inherited capital of public and private libraries will be carefully managed. Afternoon newspapers and pulp literature will be abolished. The number of pages in newspapers will be reduced by removing all advertising, making all announcements consist only of text, and banning the repetition of any item of news in the same publication. News, events and trends will still be thoroughly investigated.

The school system, like the whole of society, will be extremely prejudiced against technology. Suicidal Society has taught us that every new phase of technological advancement is more destructive than the previous one. It has also taught us that technology is never a servant, but always a master. Tested solutions will be kept for decades, preferably centuries. Discoveries unrelated to the repair or preservation of technology will not be allowed.

Law and Order

The people most responsible for the present economic growth and competition will be transferred to the mountains and highlands to be re-educated. To be employed for this purpose will mostly be ex-sanatoriums with a healthy climate located on pine ridges.

The supervising staff, whose function shall include the tasks and mandates of both educators and police officers, shall be purposefully trained to have a clear sense of direction and to be goal oriented. Enough staff will be found locally throughout the country, both in uniform and civilian clothing.

Property crimes will be punished harshly. Sentences will generally become harder.

From an economic perspective, society would not be able to endure the health damage and disruptions wreaked by drugs. Hence, society will forbid the consumption of drugs, including tobacco. Through pricing, the consumption of alcohol will be limited to only the largest festivities. With the population adequately under control, no home distilling will take place. Borders will be closed to prevent smuggling.

Subsistence Economy

Subsistence economy will penetrate the whole of society. Most commodities will be rationed: rationed foodstuffs will be allotted according to the age, body build and profession of each citizen. In such a way, even the bulkiest performers of heavy work will be guaranteed sufficient nutrition; but then again, obesity will be unknown. On the other hand, domestic cultivation and gathering of food will not be regulated. Attempts

will be made to avoid any wastage of food during the phases of transport, distribution and consumption. Not a crust of bread will be wasted.

The hysteria about freshness and hygiene that has caused such waste and frantic traffic will come to an end. From childhood, citizens will be made to develop immunity to the most common strains of bacteria (such as salmonella). In other ways too, the medical science will leave the path of Pasteur to embrace practices more in accordance with Darwin's teaching.

Money

Monetary transactions not aimed at immediate material acquisition will come to an end. Stock markets will be shut down; investments will stop.

The only function of banks will be to store currency, allow small-scale withdrawals and lend money. Payments will be made face-to-face, as automated systems of money transferral will only be seen in museums.

Information Technology

When human life and society will have made their way back from their most ghastly odyssey yet, from virtual reality to concrete, material reality, we will do our best to move all information technology into the trash bin of history. It might be the case, however, that the present bubble will burst, and nothing will remain at the bottom of the bin.

A reader who is contently living in the absurd world of modern delusions may think that what has been presented above is only a form of humour — dark humour. The thought is not altogether absurd, for anguish may give birth to humour, for all we know.

The programme I have outlined is truly born of agony: agony and fear of collective death, the dread of extinction. This fear, however, does not result in dark humour, but in an absolutely serious plan. Hardly any of the points I have listed could be ignored in drafting a country's policy — provided different applications of these points will be sought in different societies — if our aim is that of preserving human life on Earth. The figures and ratios suggested, of course, must be verified.

The above programme is based on a number of assumptions: firstly, that faith in humanity is the greatest of all follies. If man knew what was good for him, would history be full of wretchedness, war, murder, oppression, torment and misery? Would mankind have driven itself to the brink of total destruction by following millions of false beacons?

The programme also assumes that very few — perhaps one in a thousand or a hundred thousand individuals — are capable of being first-class mechanics, trapeze artists or pilots; and that similarly only very few are

capable of solving national and worldwide problems. Only rare individuals are capable of seeing the greater picture and ascertaining the causes and consequences of given phenomena.

At this moment in history, in this part of the globe, we are madly clinging to democracy and parliamentarianism, although we are all seeing that these are some of the most irrational and hopeless experiments of mankind. It is in democratic countries with a parliamentary system that world destruction, the sum of all ecocatastrophes, has reached its most advanced stage — and not by chance. The sole glimmer of hope lies in a centralised government and the tireless control of citizens.

I will stress this point yet again: the underlying error that is leading us astray is a political system based on indulgence. Our society and ways of life are based on what man desires rather than what is best for him. The two things — desire and necessity — are as far from one another as east and west.

In moving towards a conclusion, I wish to add a rather amusing observation. Besides guaranteeing its main goal, the preservation of life, the suggested model of society would also secure an incomparably better standard of living. What are the sweet, cherished traits of the modern world that man would lose? Record suicide rates, exhausting competition, unemployment, stress, job insecurity, alienation, desperation, the need for psychological medication, bodily decay, individual arrogance, quarrel, corruption, crime...

What would be left, then, would be: an endless spectrum of arts and hobbies (singing, music, dancing, painting, sculpture, books, games, plays, riddles, shows...); numerous museums; the study of history, local customs and dialects, genealogy, the countless pursuits related to biology; handcrafts and gardens; clear waters, virgin forests, marshlands and fells; seasons, trees, flowers, homes, private life... — in other words: a genuine life.

Why, then, is a strict central government needed? I have already referred to the shameful history of mankind. If ordinary individuals, the people, masses, are given the chance to choose, like magpies they will again and again go for the shiny things, leaping like butterflies into the flames. A government led by a few wise individuals is necessary to protect the people from itself.

Power

As the reader may surmise, I will leave open the question of how those few wise individuals might rise to power and how the programme for the preservation of life might be implemented: I simply do not know the an-

swer. Will salvation come at the last moment, after massive catastrophes? (Is there anything left to save?) Or will this happen suddenly, without notice, through some collective flash, like the utterly unpredictable collapse of socialist systems? Or will it perhaps not come to pass at all? This is by far the most plausible scenario. Despite its horror, extinction does not strike the biologist as something exceptional, for it is an ever-present possibility.

What I wanted to emphasise is how distant the life of Western man, of Finns, is from a reasonable existence; how hopelessly deep we have sunk into the mire. I also wanted to outline what kind of options are available, what kind of debate should be articulated in society, and what kind of questions politicians should address, given the present state of the world. All other actions are nothing but a way of playing with fire, waiting to get burned.