JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH'S INTELLECTUAL QUEST

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the North Texas State University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

Eugene R. Forst, B.A.

Denton, Texas

December, 1980
Joseph Wood Krutch, literary critic, biographer, and naturalist, played an important role in twentieth-century American intellectual thought. As a drama critic at The Nation in the 1920's, he was disturbed by his fellow-intellectuals' wholehearted acceptance of the verdict of science on modern man. Krutch believed that science lessened the stature of man when it refused to see men as anything but animals. Thus, the modern intellectuals subjected themselves to an attempt by communists and common men to overthrow western culture. The 1930's saw a concerted effort to defend communism by intellectuals, ironically, Krutch believed, at their own peril. Krutch's bitter argument with Marxists eventually forced him to nurture Thoreauvian individualism which culminated in a move to Arizona and a new career as a naturalist. He embraced a pantheistic philosophy. His search for order in a chaotic world made Krutch an interesting figure in American intellectual life.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION: SOME MAJOR IDEAS IN JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH'S THOUGHT</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. THE MODERN TEMPER: THE FAILURE OF SCIENCE AND THE THREAT OF THE BARBARIAN</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. THE MARXIST: THE USE OF LITERATURE TO DEFEND THE BARBARIANS</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. POST-WORLD WAR II: SCIENCE, LITERATURE AND THE COMMON MAN</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. MAN AND NATURE: PANTHEISM VERSUS A NEW KIND OF BARBARISM</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. CONCLUSION: THE CHANGING THOUGHT OF JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During his lifetime, Joseph Wood Krutch, a distinguished literary critic, biographer, and naturalist, experienced all of the significant changes which shaped American intellectual and cultural life. As a strident critic of American social conditions, he found science moving from absolutes of the nineteenth century to relativism of the twentieth century. He disputed communism's inevitability and the advantages of a socialist philosophy in which many American intellectuals had taken refuge during the Great Depression. He was sensitive to the impact of two world wars on artists and intellectuals. During his life, large-scale production of the automobile, the telephone, the radio, and the television became the significant elements in the American economy. Atomic weapons, urban growth, ecological concerns, and overpopulation contributed to a concern of the environment by Krutch and other intellectuals. All of these factors had an influence on the personal intellectual life of Krutch.

Throughout his writing career, Krutch struggled with four main ideas. First, he felt that the world must have an
order and that order could be explained by science and literature. Second, he knew that man's most important characteristic was his individualism. Third, he argued that a barbaric attitude, whether it was the communist philosophy or the rise of the common man, threatened American culture and science and, thus, America itself. Though he was never explicit on what kind of order he hoped to find or the real danger of barbarism, both ideas encouraged his individualistic stand. In his search for order, in his battle against barbarians, and in his nurturing of individualism, Krutch developed a fourth idea toward the end of his career. The unity that he found in nature spurned his original conception of order, lessened the gap between intellectuals and common men, and augmented the need for individualism. Krutch ended his career embracing a pantheistic philosophy which was far different from his earlier arguments that man and nature were of different worlds; however, Krutch did not reach his conclusions through only intellectual reasoning. World events, cultural and social changes, and personal problems contributed to his changing thought and ideas.

Krutch's career can be divided roughly into four phases, but there is much overlapping and in some instances one phase existed simultaneously with another. Since he reached intellectual maturity in the early-twenties, most of the intellectual and scientific stability he had seen as a youth was already in disarray. He chose not to defend
the natural order of the past, but turned his hopes to an honest belief that science would restore or re-establish a more permanent order. The search for order, buttressed by scientific reasoning, characterized the early years of the first phase of his career. His hopes proved futile and the first phase ended with Krutch being overburdened with a sense of failure and doom. Science had not created a solid foundation for order, but only demonstrated uncertainty in the world. It had not created values, and, indeed, it only showed the futility of values. In the world of science, man was treated as if he were another object for experimentation with no spiritual qualities. Science could not even prove the superiority of the intellectual over the common man since it dashed all hope that the pursuit of knowledge was worthwhile in creating an understandable universe. True, science added to man's storehouse of information and helped in his manipulation of the natural world, but it could not attach that knowledge to man's need for spiritual fulfillment. Krutch saw science as a method by which men disinterestedly studied nature by denying their interests as human beings.

For Krutch, order in the universe could be summed up in two ideas. First, he had a belief that man was a part of the natural world as shown by science, yet he possessed the unique capability to find spiritual attainment in the world. Man assumed his role by recognizing that his intelligence
put him on a higher level than the rest of the natural world which, in turn, enabled him to create permanent values. Krutch turned to science for proof that man was a unique being in nature. He wanted science to show that man was in the natural world but not of it. He looked, not for a traditional great chain of being—a designed world where everything had a place and man was God's emissary on earth—since that religious doctrine placed man outside of nature, but for evidence that man held a unique and superior position in the natural world. The importance of man relied on his own conviction that he was unique.

Second, Krutch was convinced that there was an order or hierarchy in the relationship of men. He believed that the pursuit of knowledge was the ideal calling of man and those people who obtained knowledge deserved a higher esteem than those men who did not. Individualism was the cherished accomplishment of knowledge. Because of his failure to practice individualism, totalitariansim or an uncontrollable technological society threatened the common man. Contradictions and disappointments continually arose in Krutch's search for order. Since he was never interested in religion, Christian or otherwise, faith did not present itself as a viable option. A trust in science necessitated physical proof that order existed and was necessary. But twentieth-century science was not as trustworthy as nineteenth-century science had been. The latter proved that order
existed--putting man one level below God--while the former showed that order was, at least shaky, if not actually untrue.

In the next phase of his career, Krutch turned his attention more exclusively to literature. He now argued that the creative intellectual could invent values and explain the order of the universe in his writings. Although the young critic agreed with these ideas in the first phase of his career, science had presented itself as a disturbing influence. Now, in the second phase, Krutch tried to overlook earlier pessimistic speculations that the artists had been affected by new scientific trends and they would reflect what values and knowledge science gave them. Even without the revelations of science, the literary world found itself in the throes of a significant transformation. The Great Depression, and the world of misery and poverty which it brought, deeply concerned some artists. Many writers chose to turn their art into political tracts and argue for sweeping changes in American life. Those who did not wholeheartedly embrace socialism attempted to show the modern world's chaos and hopelessness. While sympathetic to the plight of the poor and the displaced in the depression era, Krutch rejected the idea of the literary artist as a political activist. Literature per se could bring hope and order out of the modern chaos. Ideology only added to the cultural confusion. He cautiously agreed with a number of
writers that the literary tradition of the western world was the handmaiden of capitalism. Logically, this relationship meant that socialist writers should repudiate the western literary tradition, an idea which incensed Krutch, a spokesman for a centralist position. He defended western literature and culture, but his liberal and socialist friends and colleagues accused him of defending capitalism. For Krutch, the artists-intellectuals' participation in social and political causes disavowed their historical roles as disinterested observers. Hence, their works could not bring about a reasoned and orderly world. In fact, a number of writers argued for the virtues of the working class and against what they considered the pretentious intellectuals. Krutch saw that the literary world failed in its mission to uphold intellectual values. Such literary artists discouraged Krutch; in their barbarism, they sought the destruction of a centuries-old cultural heritage. Despite his literary war with the communists, Krutch remained in the center of the political spectrum. Unlike intellectuals such as Max Eastman or Granville Hicks—men whose literary interests mingled with politics—Krutch's political views remained quite consistent.\(^1\) His superficial attempts at political immunity meant personal alienation and difficult times professionally in the 1930's. Consequently, individualism became his intellectual fortress.
With the collapse of communism as a viable alternative to American capitalism just before World War II, coupled with the war itself, Krutch's career entered a third phase. Again he turned cautiously to science and literature, but found only disappointment. Science, under the leadership of behaviorists, suggested a degradation of man. The behaviorists questioned any innate or teleological work in man. In other words, they denied man's need for values and spiritual fulfillment when they confined him to a deterministic world. Krutch accepted the behaviorists' method to find order in human affairs, but he rejected their conclusions. Totalitarianism, no matter how benevolent its intentions, was not to his liking for man was treated as a means and not as an end. For Krutch, post-war literature also mocked man's dignity. Literary existentialism stressed the meaninglessness and hopelessness of man's life. Existentialists saw only an order that was very personal and very tenuous based on individual choice. Krutch understood the situation, but he was not convinced of such a conclusion. For him, order must be both universal and lasting.

At the same time, he did not celebrate the innate will of the common man. While he did not castigate the common man as did many intellectuals of post-war America, he warned of the inherent dangers if coddling of the average person became too extreme. A leveling off of society would
contribute to a kind of cultural common denominator. Again, society, through conformity, would become more ordered, but the debasement of intellectuals would denigrate any hierarchy obtained through the pursuit of knowledge. The rise of the common man replaced the communist philosophy as the most immediate threat of a barbaric element coming to dominate American life.

Meanwhile, Krutch turned more expectantly to nature, which marked the beginning of the fourth phase of his career. In this phase Krutch celebrated the unity man had with the natural world. He came to accept that science's place for man in nature was not altogether dispiriting, but emphasized the ubiquity of uniqueness in the natural world. Thus man might be unique in that he had a higher level of intelligence than animals, but the different animals had certain qualities that made them unique also. All in all, the possibilities Krutch found in nature were more far-reaching than anyone realized. Because of nature's apparent approval of pluralism, man could nurture individualism, yet because of its unity, man could not afford to become oblivious to his social responsibilities. A transformed barbarism nevertheless became a greater possibility in the final phase of Krutch's career. In a perverse and ironical fashion, the common man's drive for a mediocre equality and the value-free science and technology joined forces to assault the natural world. When technologists agreed with the
common people that the accruing of more and more goods was the ultimate purpose of man, then pollution, destruction of ecological systems, and the bulldozing of scenic areas became mandatory. In his later years, a new wave of pessimism overtook Krutch.

Joseph Wood Krutch was born in Knoxville, Tennessee in 1895. He grew up in what he called "the uneventful pattern of Knoxville existence," attended the University of Tennessee, and at one point considered becoming a mathematician. Upon graduation from the University of Tennessee, he entered the Columbia Graduate School to pursue an interest in literature. Although, it is doubtful that Krutch chose Columbia and literature over the University of Chicago and mathematics, as he said in his autobiography, because the city of New York was more alluring than Chicago, it does show that he seriously considered a career in the sciences. At Columbia, he met Mark Van Doren, who became a life-long and influential friend. Van Doren had just completed his master's thesis on Henry David Thoreau. He also introduced Krutch to his brother, Carl, who also became a direct influence on the young Tennessean. Carl Van Doren suggested that Krutch write his master's thesis on Henry Boker, a nineteenth-century American dramatist. He completed the thesis and managed to have a short article on Boker published in the Sewanee Review. After receiving his master's degree, he re-enrolled in Columbia to begin work
on a doctoral degree in literature. He centered his attention on the drama of the Restoration period in English history, partly because he realized a nascent interest in the theater and partly because the bawdy comedies of that era tended to shock Krutch's contemporaries, an idea that was not wholly unappealing to him. After a brief stint in the army in World War I, he returned to Columbia and finished his degree program. At his own expense, the result of his dissertation was published under the title *Comedy and Conscience after the Restoration*, although it received little critical attention.

Krutch slowly took an interest in writing, and in 1921 he contributed a short essay to the *Smart Set* edited by H. L. Mencken and George Jean Nathan. In the essay, Krutch considered the aesthetics of suicide. Although meant to be a spoofing essay with shock value, the short article indicated Krutch's early interest in how the modern world belittled man. He wrote that many of the ancient men, such as Socrates, committed suicide heroically while modern man bought "his vial of laudanum" and sneaked off to die "like a dog."

Krutch took a teaching position at Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute, but continued his writing. Henry Seidel Canby invited him to contribute a few short reviews to the *Saturday Review of Literature*, and his long career as a literary critic ensued. In 1922 the literary editor of
the Nation, Carl Van Doren, asked him to deliver short novel reviews to that publication and his long association with the liberal New York weekly began. In the fall of 1924, he became the full-time drama critic for the Nation. He quit, for an extended period of time, full-time teaching. As Krutch recalled, the twenties were an exciting time to be a drama critic. Playwrights such as Eugene O'Neill, Maxwell Anderson, and Sidney Howard were in their most productive periods.7

Artists, and intellectuals in general, concentrated on attacking puritanism in the twenties and the Monkey Trial at Dayton, Tennessee, presented itself as a prime opportunity to expose the absurdities of religious fundamentalism. The Nation sent Krutch to cover the trial in his home state. Rather than follow the usual pattern of critics in verbally lambasting the Southern common man, he attacked the more learned minds in the South. He accused Southern universities of letting backwardness persist.8

In 1926 Krutch published a biography of Edgar Allan Poe. In Edgar Allan Poe: A Study in Genius he experimented with Freudian psychology in which he tried to show that Poe's genius was due to his personal difficulties.9 Although "the future was bright and the present was good fun," Krutch agonized over nagging intellectual problems in the mid-twenties.10 In 1926 he sent several chapters of a book in progress to the Atlantic Monthly and in 1929 the
book itself was published. The Modern Temper became Krutch's first examination of the intellectuals' and artists' plight in a world where science indifferently treated man's spirit. In the winter of 1928, he toured the Soviet Union. Although not shocked by Russian society, he was disturbed by the idea that Soviet artists felt an obligation to social function and, in some respects, attempted to discard all European art that was of no use to the Revolution. After The Modern Temper, Krutch worked on a study of five writers, Boccaccio, Cervantes, Samuel Richardson, Stendahl, and Proust, which he eventually entitled Five Masters: A Study in the Mutations of the Novel (1930). Meanwhile, his mind returned to ideas he formulated in The Modern Temper and he expanded on his idea of literature in the modern world. Experience and Art, published in 1931, failed to sell. The depression changed the public's reading preferences, both academic and general, and Krutch became discouraged since he believed that any work by him would bring, at least, modest notice. The depression also brought a great drift of intellectuals and artists toward a romance with communism. Krutch held adamantly to his liberal views and he noticed division on the staff of the Nation. He exercised more power on the Nation editorial board when publisher Oswald Garrison Villard sold the magazine. The new owner gave Krutch, Freda Kirchwey,
Ernest Gruening, and Henry Hazlitt authority to set editorial policy for the journal. Naturally, Krutch concentrated on the literary section of the journal and was soon accused of making those pages a forum for anti-communism.

Was Europe a Success? was published in 1934. It presented Krutch's case against the communists. Meanwhile, attracted to country life, he gave up a full-time home in New York City and moved with his wife, Marcelle, to Redding, Connecticut. His stays at Redding were usually for the week-ends, but he gradually worked out a schedule whereby he could spend the mid-week in the city and an extended week-end in the country. He soon called Redding home.

The political conflict on the staff of the *Nation* forced him to give up much of his say-so on editorial policy in 1937. He also returned to teaching at Columbia University. In 1939 he published what he considered an overview of all the important developments in the American theater since World War I. It was titled *The American Drama Since 1918*. He continued to drift from his earlier confrontation with the Marxists into a more academic life. In 1943 he published a biography of Samuel Johnson. His life in the Connecticut countryside and a recent reading of Thoreau's *Walden* increased his interest in nature. Another biography, *Henry David Thoreau*, soon followed. After completing the Thoreau book, Krutch seriously considered
writing what he called a "nature essay" and after writing several essays, he combined them in book form and published them as The Twelve Seasons. The book consisted of twelve short chapters on each month of the year and the natural phenomena that went with each. It was published in 1949. He also began work on The Best of Two Worlds which was finally published after Krutch made a dramatic decision to change his lifestyle. In the book, Krutch made it clear that he felt he knew much about city life, but nothing about life in the country. The Best of Two Worlds presented what he learned in the Connecticut countryside.

In previous years, Krutch and his wife had taken several automobile tours of the Southwestern United States, especially New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah. By 1953 he became convinced that Arizona was a good place to live and he made a radical change. He gave up the Eastern intellectual center and moved to Tucson, Arizona. There were many reasons for the move, including his new interest in nature. He had a respiratory ailment that, at times, resulted in severe asthmatic attacks, and the dry air of the Southwest would significantly improve his health. Also, the theater became less interesting, partly because his interest had "passed its crest" and partly because the subjects of modern playwrights failed to impress him and, at times, genuinely disturbed him. Perhaps there were even some lingering effects from his bitter struggle with the Marxists while
he served on the Nation in the 1930's. Regardless of why, Krutch quit his professorship at Columbia and retired from his role of drama critic on the Nation. His first book after the move was The Desert Year, where he told of his early experiences and thoughts on the Southwestern desert. He, however, kept intellectual ties with the East, and in 1953 he published "Modernism" in Modern Drama, wherein he insisted that many intellectual playwrights "were leading us down a blind alley" because of the deterministic, perverse, and absurd characteristics of their works. He continued his ideas on the intellectual climate of America with The Measure of Man printed in 1954. He rethought the pessimistic conclusions he arrived at in The Modern Temper. The Measure of Man and an introduction to a new edition of The Modern Temper in 1955 summarized his changed attitudes; however, he stood by many of the pronouncements he made in the 1929 work.

The Voice of the Desert marked a return to nature writing. Krutch described life on the Arizona desert. The Great Chain of Life (1956) was both a nature book and another view of the intellectual climate made from an ingenious point of view. He accepted the idea he feared in The Modern Temper that man was more and more seeing himself as nothing but an animal. The Great Chain of Life, then, attempted to show the unique and extraordinary
capabilities of some animals. Human Nature and the Human Condition (1959) continued the theme started in The Measure of Man.

Also, in the mid-fifties Krutch became a regular contributor to the American Scholar and was soon given a personal column. In his space allotment Krutch could write about anything which interested him. Knowing that an intelligent audience was always "at least potential," Krutch enthusiastically kept up his column until his death in 1970. Many of the American Scholar essays were collected along with other magazines pieces, in two books in the 1960's. If You Don't Mind My Saying So and And Even If You Do.

Meanwhile, he turned his pen to particularly interesting regions of the Southwest. Grand Canyon: Today and All Its Yesterdays told of several journeys he made to that natural wonder. He used the Canyon to discuss both geology and man's ignorance of the power of nature. The Baja peninsula also attracted Krutch's interest. He made several excursions into the Mexican territory by foot, airplane, and four-wheel vehicle and described the natural phenomena and scenery he saw. The first book he wrote on Baja before it was "discovered" was The Forgotten Peninsula. Later he wrote Baja California.

In 1962, he published his autobiography, More Lives Than One. Obviously, the title explained the significant
debt he owed to Henry David Thoreau. He also edited two books which showed his broad interest in nature. *The World of Animals* was a collection of stories and descriptions of animals which Krutch excerpted from the writings of theologians, historians, artists, and naturalists from ancient times to the modern age. He edited a book on gardening, *The Gardener's World*. With the aid of an illustrator, he wrote *Herbal*. The book contained descriptions and told of the uses of most herbs and medicinal plants found in nature. Krutch's last book publication was *A Krutch Omnibus*, which he prepared shortly before his death in May, 1970. It contained a sampling of what he considered were some of his most important writings over the past forty years.

Krutch's death closed a long career in which he struggled to find order in the world, cultivated individualism, cautiously guarded against barbarism, and finally developed a pantheistic philosophy. His hundreds of articles attest to the fact that his journey to a pantheistic philosophy was in earnest. Ironically, Krutch began and ended his literary career on the brink of total pessimism. The story of how he conquered one problem only to discover another problem makes him an interesting and important contributor to American intellectual history.
FOOTNOTES


3. Ibid., p. 79.

4. Ibid., p. 82.


35. Thoreau explained that he left his hut on Walden Pond because he had other lives to live.


CHAPTER II

THE MODERN TEMPER: THE FAILURE OF SCIENCE
AND THE THREAT OF THE BARBARIAN

As Roderick Nash has demonstrated, the period between the first world war and the Great Depression was not a time of wide-spread intellectual disillusionment, bohemianism, free-flowing booze, flappers and flivvers, gangsters, and jazz. True, elements of all of these were evident in the twenties, as they are in most decades, but they did not reflect the prevailing mood of the people which was basically conservative and optimistic for the future. There were some intellectuals, as Nash conceded, who had "really shaken minds" and stood "at the fringe of the American intellectual community." Joseph Wood Krutch was such an intellectual. Although World War I shook his confidence, it did not push him into post-war disillusionment. For Krutch, the disheartening problem of the twenties arose when intellectuals put too much faith in science without realizing the lowly position it held for the arts and for man himself. Of course, in the twenties science was going through transformations. The natural order world of Darwin and Newton was under constant assault from scientists of the Progressive Era right on into the twenties. Albert
Einstein's theories in physics caused Newtonian ideas to collapse. Everywhere science was in disarray. Krutch recognized the claims and predicaments of the scientific world. Science had promised much and could not deliver because it was collapsing from within. As Nash pointed out, Krutch's despair was extreme for intellectuals of that period, but Nash was not wholly accurate when he said that Krutch "came back to belief" in the late-twenties.\(^2\) Nash generalized that Krutch used existential philosophy to rationalize an honorable position for the intellectuals whose services were devaluated in the modern world. Krutch's intellectual reconstruction was a slow and difficult process. In the mid-thirties Krutch began a re-evaluation of his earlier pessimism of the twenties; by the fifties he presented his new position on the "modern temper" and, thereby, he returned to belief.

*The Modern Temper*, published just before the United States plunged into the depression in 1929, showed Krutch's disillusionment with the country's intellectual climate. He warned that science taught a valuable lesson for the modern man in that it showed the world as being a place where the human spirit could not be happy. He wondered if a more primitive race of men, one less devoted to science and learning and, therefore, a race of men which believed in its importance, would be happier in the modern world. He feared that the communist experiment in Russia was an
attempt to create this new race with men who would be more primitive in their wants and beliefs, and thus, more barbaric. Or perhaps, he speculated, the rising conditions of the common man in the United States indicated a coming of the new barbarians. Although, over the remainder of his life, Krutch continually considered the problems of modern barbarianism, *The Modern Temper* remained the best analysis of the minds of his intellectual contemporaries at the end of the 1920's. Both *The Modern Temper* and Krutch's next book, *Experience and Art*, were largely personal accounts of one intellectual's attempt to make sense of new ideas in science and their effects on literature and society in general. In *The Modern Temper* he examined science's influence on art, the artist's notion of romantic love, and the feeling of uncertainty that prevailed in many quarters of American society. Krutch considered the problems of "the modern temper" throughout the 1920's, and while he vacationed in France he put his thoughts together for a book. As he recalled, one chapter just flowed after another, and soon he had written one of the more controversial books of the early-twentieth century. In his treatise, Krutch narrowed the definition of science to mean the disinterested study and observation by scientists of men and nature without considering the impact their findings might have on the human spirit. Scientists were not interested in any unobservable traits of man.
As early as 1922 Krutch speculated on the result scientific understanding would have on the idea of romantic love. He guessed that one result would be the intellectuals' acceptance of the biological reason for love while still trying to hold on to some idealistic and romantic reasons. As he put it, the intellectual would learn to accept love as "the blind appetite which he shares with the amoeba and the link which connects him to God."\(^4\) Yet, Krutch recognized that the artist might have problems with any dual purpose of love. For example, Aldous Huxley, he believed, looked for love in his novels, but only found "ridiculous and obscene biological facts."\(^5\) Although, he sympathized with Huxley's analysis, Krutch felt that Huxley was making an intellectually lazy response. Krutch insisted that man must understand that man himself created the ideas of romantic love, God, beauty, and justice. Not innate elements of nature, these ideas demonstrated that man had the capability to transcend his place in the natural world and find spiritual ideals. Krutch argued that these "laborious inventions" were all that made man's life tolerable since otherwise he would be trapped in an indifferent nature. Those intellectuals who refused to create values and ideals took a cowardly attitude toward the world. They, in fact, hesitated because they distrusted their power to create.\(^6\) By 1928 Krutch himself showed signs of hesitation in his confident attitude. He admitted that
"knowledge had marched on," but he was disappointed that increased knowledge did not necessarily lead to better understanding. He wondered if "the most essential things were eluding us." In fact, he claimed that science destroyed or, at least, showed to be implausible some of the spiritual creations of the intellectuals. His own trust in the power of man to base values and emotions on something other than scientific reasoning proved to be wavering. True, science rid the world of much of its superstitions and irrational ideas, but Krutch lamented that the ideas that intellectuals cherished also came under the probing eyes of science and were proved to be unsubstantial. For Krutch, scientists seemed uninterested in the spiritual need of an idea or value. They approached science as a method in which everything was biologically, chemically, or physically observable; all else was ignored. Ideas such as romantic love and justice, which were spiritual creations of man, had no scientific foundation in the world and were disregarded by those men who saw science as the only truth in the world. Krutch predicted that since science destroyed many of the values of mankind, intellectuals would be left with two choices. They could either accept the verdict of science that the world was an emotional and spiritual "vast emptiness" or they could believe that science's validity was somehow deceptive. Personally, Krutch's intellectual honesty and respect for scientific rationality
coupled with his desire that the world have some spiritual significance forced him to refuse to embrace neither of his conclusions fully. Instead, he tried to steer a safe passage between the two choices, but in doing so he accepted a world of dual realities. The real world, the world of science, was alien to the individual. It was the world of atoms and was barely discernible. The other reality, the world of illusions, was the place where man's sensations, desires, and emotions found a home. It was the world of poetry and literature. The two worlds clashed from time to time and since the world of illusions was "fragile and imperfect," the world of science always prevailed. Science attenuated or destroyed parts of the world of illusions, but it never enriched it.  

In The Modern Temper, Krutch defined the world of illusions to be that of poetry, mythology, and religion. These illusions represented the world as man would like it to be; scientists showed it as it really was. God, who had been perfectly understandable in poetry and religion because He had human desires and purposes, was reduced to nature in the world of science, and nature's purpose was not comprehensible in human terms. An intellectual such as Krutch accepted the validity of science, and more and more he began to doubt the world of illusions. Yet, only the world of illusions gave man reason to believe that his life had meaning and importance. His life became that of "the
humblest insect that crawls from one annihilation to another." Still, man was the only creature of nature who could question its purpose. But for Krutch, the thought of asking nature such a question made man even more miserable since either he would not be answered or the answer would not be to his liking.  

Krutch continued his discussion of theological ideas in secular terms with an examination of the fate of romantic love in the modern world. Up until his generation, he believed that the need for romantic love was an unquestioned and unshaken value. The twentieth-century novelist and scientist, Krutch generalized, had no intention of questioning romantic love or even the need for love. They really wanted to assign more freedom to it. When scientists recognized the biological function of love, they soon assigned it only biological values such as the need for the survival of the species through propagation. The novelist, too, in trying to free love looked to science for inspiration. According to Krutch, if he did not accept the strict scientific interpretation of romantic love, the novelist did admit that love had less spiritual value. Consequently, novelists such as Huxley viewed love as only sexual gratification which could be translated as "simple animal pleasure." Viewed in that light, love became very accessible and common and, therefore, very trivial. Since scientific rationalism destroyed sexual taboos that were
instigated by societal morals and beliefs, love became "less often a sin," but since it had been devalued by scientific probing and easy accessibility, it became also "less often a supreme privilege."\textsuperscript{12}

Believing that romantic love was created by civilized man, since he could not recognize it in the savage world, Krutch admitted that man could give up the notion of love. Yet, since man had not blessed himself with many values, Krutch insisted that he should not complacently give up any. Nature, which was very rigid in its laws for man, gave him limited choices in the values he created. An important one of those choices, romantic love, was reduced by science to a biological urge. Krutch admitted that man became used to a Godless world, but he doubted that he would want to live in a loveless one as well. A loveless world, he mused, would teach man the true meaning of atheism.\textsuperscript{13} Krutch insisted that in the past men had lived "in order to love or even in order to eat," but the world science opened for future generations was a world where men would live "in order either to gestate or to digest." Krutch doubted whether the intellectual and artist would want to survive in a loveless world, yet they were in an inescapable bind. Modern man, with all the truth and knowledge science bestowed on him, could not retreat to a less complicated era; therefore he accepted the verdict of science on romantic love.\textsuperscript{14}
Science even had bad effects on art outside of the fact that values such as romantic love were changed or destroyed. Man, with his new vision of his unimportance in the world, could no longer create literary tragedy. As Krutch argued, Shakespearean tragedy depended on the audience seeing man as an essentially noble creature or "how like a God." Science taught man about his insignificance and, consequently, man also forfeited his nobility. In other words, science compelled man to witness art's submission to nature. Since science dissected nature but did not explain it, the artist produced works that agonized that man was caught in a chaotic world. Unfortunately, some learned men still held a blind faith in the goodness of science. Bertrand Russell, Krutch noticed, proclaimed his faith in the scientists to the point of throwing "overboard all those values they dismiss as merely literary."16

Alarmed, Krutch related what he feared would happen; a new civilization would arise—one which could salvage love, honor, and duty in its literature. This new civilization would not be the world of the intellectual because "vitality is all on the other side." The common people comprised the new society. The new civilization's fascination would not be with art and learning, but with machines. The machines became fascinating, not because they saved labor, but because the civilization's "heart is there."16 Krutch felt that any art the common man developed would have
to justify the civilization. He was convinced that the intellectual-artist of his generation failed man. The intellectual-artist refused to stand up to or expose the dangers of scientific learning. Science, which persuaded the artist to explore naturalism where one is invited "to eat, drink, and be merry" and end up deprived of his appetite, threatened the most important function of literature. For Krutch, the human mind turned to art for order and form, but science denied order in nature and the artist let that influence his work. The best that Krutch's contemporary writers achieved was pathos "and the most that we can do is to feel sorry for ourselves," he lamented.

For Krutch, since science denied that there was any humane order in the universe, the world was lacking in its need for moral restraint and it soon would lapse into anarchy and chaos. The individual would discover that disharmony existed between himself and the world. If this discovery happened, a more primitive man would be better suited for happiness and survival. A primitive man, unlike modern intellectuals, would not demand that life justify itself. The modern common man resembled primitive man in that he had his religions and customs, but he surrendered any idea of individualism and was "therefore most perfect in the social virtues." Krutch described the primitive life as the life of an animal since it consisted only of being born, reproducing, and then dying. He knew that
the modern mass man was not yet given over completely to primitivism since common man cherished values. But the common man of the modern world saw his life reduced to exacting rounds of duty in an industrial society, and his dreams of fulfillment became intended for his children and not himself. In his ideals, the common man looked for more than the biological need for survival, but Krutch felt that mass man deceived himself into believing that his social virtues would create a better world. Krutch considered this belief to be an important difference between the common man and the intellectual. While the intellectual thought in terms of the individual, the common man thought in terms of society. In other words, the intellectual required the world to meet his requirements while the common man surrendered to societal needs. The common man listened to the dictates of a government because that insured advantages to society even if it took freedoms from the individual. The "stronger wills" of the intellectuals, Krutch argued, could never accept the deceitful life of the common man. The intellectual demanded meaning and was set against nature whose meaning, if it did have one, was shown by science to be practically unintelligible. Indeed, the common man would never trust the intellectual since his demands on life were different. The artist-intellectual proved to be a "bad father and an unreliable citizen" because he recognized his animalistic impulses and chose to detach himself from them.
In other words, the intellectual could divorce himself from his environment through rational thought and art, processes which the common man failed to understand. Thus, the intellectual, for example, could voluntarily deny the biological need to propagate and survive, an idea unthinkable to the common man who was inured with societal presumptions. The belief that man's paramount goal was that of survival of the species, a belief that Krutch thought characterized primitive man and was enforced by science, led common man to accept social virtues at the expense of his individualism. Science, Krutch believed, was on the side of common man since it showed that survival was the final goal of any species of animal, including man. He insisted that no man would ever be able to live "comfortably or safely in the universe of nature" for catastrophes such as the Great War were natural. The war to insure democracy for the world was a dismal failure according to the young critic. Man, in displaying his animalistic social virtues, came close to blowing his society to bits.22

But the most telling chapter in The Modern Temper was "The Phantom of Certitude." At one time, Krutch pointed out, there existed a world of certainty--the universe was orderly, man held an esteemed position in that order and his role in nature was purposeful. Furthermore, he believed that he was constantly progressing and improving. The scientific mind invaded the world of certitude and cast
doubts on the role of man in the scheme of things. As Krutch reasoned, it was not that modern man had suddenly found the ability to think along rational lines and want practical results from science; it was that for the first time he decided it was the only way to think. Plato or Socrates, Krutch argued, certainly had inquiring minds that could have even penetrated the problems of the modern era; they could have put their minds to work on inventions that came later such as stoves and light bulbs. But, as Krutch insisted, the ancient philosophers did not consider those problems to be worthwhile.23

It was not until the seventeenth century, he continued, that man considered science, and all the practicalities that went with it, a desirable goal. The culprit, according to Krutch, was Francis Bacon. Through science, Bacon opened the realm of nature to man, but in doing so he also confined the human spirit to the realm of nature. In other words, man could no longer seek God, but he should be content with what his own ingenuity could create. Actually, Krutch admitted that he gave too much credit or blame to Bacon since the erudite scientist-scholar only formulated the prevailing ideas of his society.24 Yet, the scientific attitude damaged the human spirit while it improved the physical lot of the people. As Krutch put it, man limited himself to studying the physical world. Thus, he renounced his "right to find the key to heaven," but he was able to
devise ways "to keep chimneys from smoking." The seventeenth-century scientists assured the people that they served humanity. Ironically, Krutch noted, the twentieth-century scientist was certain that he aided mankind with his profession, but the critic noticed a little uncertainty in the scientific community of his day. Hence, Krutch argued that the popularity of the quantum theory among scientists was their reaction to the very narrow world they created.

Modern science even destroyed past notions formulated and proved by earlier scientists. Even as man learned to live with the laws of Newton's physics, scientists such as Einstein worked to alter them. In other words, Krutch explained, Newtonian physics taught man that he could know the universe as he knew his own backyard, but modern science taught man that he did not even know his own backyard.

With his avowal that science promised two things, an increase in man's powers and an increase in his happiness or wisdom--it was more likely to keep the former--Krutch demonstrated his personal disillusionment with the laboratory. The pessimistic conclusions in The Modern Temper showed that he discovered "the trick which has been played upon us," and accepted the result that there was no place for the intellectual in the natural universe. The intellectual could choose to die as a man, but he would not
choose to live as an animal. Thus, the intellectual stepped aside for the new man. Krutch speculated that the new man could be the Russian communist or the American common man.

The intellectual community received *The Modern Temper* with both praise and measured caution. For example, Reinhold Niebuhr, the theologian, lectured that Krutch emphasized the pursuit of knowledge as being an important value, yet it was that very knowledge that threw Krutch's life into disarray. Niebuhr warned that a modern rationalist was too quick to surrender when "a purely analytic approach does not yield the concept of purpose" in the universe. Ironically, he found Krutch to be "irrational in order that he may cultivate rationality." Niebuhr praised him for having the "virtue of realizing what it is that is lost when faith is gone." While Lewis Mumford scolded Krutch for wishing "the dilemma upon himself," others debated parts of the book, although they did not refute the general thesis. Bertrand Russell recognized Krutch's anguish to be "the despair which has beset intelligent people in recent years," but he claimed that it was "a passing malady."

The popularity of *The Modern Temper* in intellectual circles gave Krutch an immediate opportunity to expand on his perplexing conjectures. He contributed a short essay to *Living Philosophies*, a collection of philosophical
sketches written by a number of world thinkers of note in the 1920's. In his contribution to the book, Krutch continued his probe of the modern intellectual's alienation from the natural world. He insisted that the greatest questions facing man were "how great is the difference between man and nature and what does this difference mean?" For his part, Krutch claimed that "a gulf" lay between man and nature. He divided the world into "the world of matter and animal instinct which we call nature" and the "world of human motives and values." To be sure, he insisted that virtue existed in the natural world since animals and insects were known to defend their homes and offspring. But the problem was that animals lived on instinct; man had to make choices. The instinctive nature of an animal allowed it to live in harmony with its world, but since man relied on choices, he developed an attribute the animal did not have. Man possessed intelligence and he, alone, could make value judgments. Man depended emotionally on the values he assigned to love, art, knowledge, duty, honor, and patriotism. Of course, the intellectual came to rely more on his capabilities since the common man allowed his societal values, which were more animalistic and instinctive, to override his individualism. Krutch's intellectual elitism caused him to search for proof of hierarchy in America, and he placed common man at the bottom of that hierarchial scheme. He was not the first
intellectual to speculate on the differences between man and nature, but his idea that common man lived in more accord with nature's laws than did intellectuals presented problems that he faced throughout his life.

Krutch's publication of *Experience and Art* bolstered and defined many of his charges against science's undesirable effects on literature, but he also attempted to rescue literature from the clutches of the scientists. As Kenneth Burke pointed out, this rescue required a change of attitude on Krutch's part. In *The Modern Temper* he doubted whether literature could avert the challenges of science, but in *Experience and Art* he declared that that was exactly what the artist-intellectual must do. Science had not really destroyed the basis of poetry by disavowing magic, religion, or metaphysics. Krutch insisted that literature was inspired by whatever man "is capable of believing." In other words, although science disrupted the world, literature "rationalizes and gives temporary form" to life. He expected literature "to read some sort of order into the bewildering complexity of phenomena." The artist's imagination could rise above the dictates of science; he could create values and they were not necessarily dependent on the tenets of science. So, through literature, Krutch began to work himself out of the dilemma he found himself in with the conclusion of *The Modern Temper* in 1929. He reaffirmed man's creative powers. The intellectual could
still live happily in the natural world even though nature opposed him. The powers to create and imagine enabled him to transcend nature's grasp. Of course, the common man still lived in accord with nature, but the intellectual could guard against any domineering tactics from nature. But even as Krutch discovered and reaffirmed the role of the intellectual, it became endangered—not from without, but from within. The rise of Marxist literary criticism threatened the roles literature and intellectuals were to play in Krutch's strategy. The young liberal critic concentrated much of his writings on refuting the Marxists over the next several years. He saw the communist as a new man—the barbarian he feared who would arise at the expense of the intellectual. Incredibly, American liberal intellectuals defended and fortified the new barbarian. Krutch entered the second phase of his career—a literary war with the Marxists.
FOOTNOTES


2. Ibid., p. 125.


8. Ibid., pp. 372-4.


10. Ibid., p. 9.

11. Ibid., p. 99.

12. Ibid., p. 97.

13. Ibid., p. 114.


20. Ibid., pp. 34-5.


22. Ibid., p. 55.

23. Ibid., p. 187.

24. Ibid., p. 189.

25. Ibid., pp. 189-90.


27. Ibid., p. 71.

28. Quoted in *A Krutch Omnibus*, p. 35.


33. Ibid., p. 268.

34. Ibid., p. 266.


CHAPTER III

THE MARXIST: THE USE OF LITERATURE
TO DEFEND THE BARBARIANS

Modern communist and socialist thought had its real origins in America in the late-nineteenth century with various farm and labor movements. Though mid-nineteenth century reformers organized utopian communities, their reforms did not involve the whole of American society. In the last decades before the twentieth century, writers such as Edward Bellamy and Ignatius Donnelly developed utopian novels with socialistic leanings to reform America economically and socially. Even more eminent writers, such as William Dean Howells, experimented with socialism in their novels. The Progressive Era continued the call for socialism from various quarters of American society. A socialist, Eugene Debs, ran for the presidency, northern labor unions became stronger, and a literary magazine sympathetic to socialism, the *Masses*, was established by Max Eastman. The *Masses* failed to survive World War I, but the *Liberator* took its place in 1918 and continued exhortation for a socialist government in America.

Meanwhile, the success of the Russian Revolution in 1917 thrilled American socialists. They exclaimed that the
Soviet experiment moved Americans one step closer to accepting a socialist government for their country; however, socialists disagreed on exactly what route American socialism should take. For the most part, American socialists were convinced of one thing: the individual as artist was independent of the individual as social critic. As Daniel Aaron pointed out in *Writers On the Left*, socialist critics only applied Marxian standards to works which were undoubtedly meant as social commentary. A purely aesthetic work with no intention of being treated as social criticism was completely acceptable to those early exponents of socialism. Even the avowedly socialist magazines, such as the *Masses*, printed articles submitted by bohemian writers along with those contributed by socialists. But as Aaron concluded, the writers of the early-twenties who had hedonistic tendencies gradually reformed or drifted from socialistic thought. Most became or were replaced by writers with "a new attitude of social seriousness." Art and politics became fused. Artists and critics such as Eastman, Floyd Dell, Mike Gold, and John Reed led the way in calling for a new socialist-artist. Yet the movement was definitely a minority venture; novelists such as Ernest Hemingway, Sinclair Lewis, and other critically acclaimed writers of the twenties seldom dealt with or advocated socialism. The "nervous generation" of the twenties was more concerned with Americans' puritanical habits and
businesslike attitudes than it was with a genuine socialist revolution. Even socialists such as Eastman and Dell strayed from strictly Marxist ideas. The New Masses, founded in 1926, became the voice of literary communism in the United States and soon displayed the concept of the artist seen only as a social critic.

The coming of the Great Depression in 1929 brought communist thought a new influx of young artists eager to make changes in American society. It also brought an even stricter editorial policy for the New Masses. Writers such as Malcolm Cowley, Matthew Josephson, John Dos Passos, Erskine Caldwell, and many others openly flirted with communism, although few actually joined the Communist Party. The New Masses' new formula for communist writers demanded that character development in novels be sacrificed for revolutionary action. The plot of the new fiction revolved around things such as strikes and unemployment. The hero of the story always in the end became a militant revolutionist. Anti-communists in America found themselves as the target of vicious written attacks engineered by talented communist writers such as Granville Hicks. The liberal anti-communist infuriated the socialists more than the conservative right wingers did. Liberals such as Joseph Wood Krutch were labeled by Mike Gold, of the New Masses, as "a small mob of faded lilies" who refused to see their savior in socialism.
Of course, by 1935 the threat of fascism in America and the rise to power of Hitler in Germany forced world communist parties to formulate a new policy of cooperation with the liberal community. The new Popular Front approach of American communists relieved the tension between liberals and communists. The Nazi-Soviet pact of non-aggression of August, 1939, literally deprived the American Communist Party of most of its intellectual support. Krutch rejected both the communists' attitude for the use of literature as a social weapon and their reconciliation attempts beginning in 1935. Convinced that the barbarian he had envisioned in The Modern Temper might be the Russian communist, Krutch was sincerely disturbed to see many of his colleagues and friends surrender their objectivity to become part of the cult of communism and, thus, become spokesmen for the barbarians. He set out to tell them so.

Krutch's only first-hand exposure to communism before the thirties was a trip to Russia in 1928 to review the Soviet theater for the Nation. Although he confessed a distrust of communism in his conclusion to The Modern Temper, he was fair to the Russian theater. He expected the plays in Russia to have social implications, especially in reference to the Revolution of 1917, and in this he was not disappointed. Yet, he found also less censorship than he expected. For example, he saw the workers' distrust of bureaucracy presented in several plays, and there was even
a portrayal of "pseudo-Communists" who terrorized neighbors with the power of the Communist Party. But for the American theater, which had suddenly developed a gigantic social consciousness, Krutch became more critical. He admitted that the theater "ought to have some influence on society," but he insisted on criticizing plays on their artistic merits and contents rather than on their social awareness or socialistic viewpoints. In other words, a play had to be artistically good regardless of political content before Krutch praised the performance. Unfortunately, he believed that most of the leftist plays he reviewed were not only bad plays, they were not "even good propaganda." He told the League for Industrial Democracy in 1932 that radicals who wrote plays failed for three reasons. First, the plays were not entertaining, and consequently people refused to go see them. Second, the plays were too melodramatic, even though the radicals introduced a new twist to the melodrama. Instead of relying on the old standard that good eventually triumphed over evil in melodrama, the radical playwright concluded his plays with the opposite idea. He reflected the belief that even activism would meet with failure for the individual, although it represented ultimate victory for the masses. This negative outlook provided a reason why most people found the plays uninteresting and unentertaining. For Krutch, a third reason why the radicals' plays failed was
the most important. He claimed that the good playwright tried to convince or inform his audience through subtlety, not bluntly as the radical often tried to do. To clarify his point, he used the example of Americans' changing attitude toward sex. Americans were no longer as puritanical in their views of sex because artists had convinced them that sex was not sinful. They did so, not through blunt or vulgar force or through didactic sermonizing, but through subtle suggestions. With violent incantations, Krutch argued, the radical lost his audience. In the end, *The Nation* critic urged, the drama "must remain in the hands of the artist." If the theater were to present radical ideas, it would not be because of the "radical who has turned playwright but the playwright who has turned radical."\(^9\)

Krutch warned that the person who concerned himself with politics and economics would be disappointed and impatient with the good dramatist. He felt that the artist was a skeptic by nature and was always filled with doubts. The artist might become involved with seemingly trivial things and appear to forget society. As an antidote, Krutch cautioned patience. In general, he urged that everyone should support good theater regardless of content. After good theater had been gotten, then everyone's idea had a chance to get in; the theater would become a marketplace of ideas. To further alienate himself with the
left, Krutch refused to say whose ideas were preferable; he merely stated, "May the best man win."  

Many intellectuals and artists in the 1930's failed to agree with, or even to understand, Krutch. More and more he discovered that the intellectual-artist, such as Granville Hicks, thought "of himself as enlisted in one service or the other of the army of social reform." Intellectuals found America "rotten with individualism." They claimed that America did not need more cultivation, but more indoctrination into socialistic ideas. Krutch refused to comply. He lamented that the intellectual-artist had spent centuries arguing for independent values which he termed aesthetic values. Now, the artist became too willing, even too eager, to surrender his hard-earned victory. Krutch explained that it was not art's job to reform society. Instead, art's purpose was "to make existence tolerable to those who are compelled to accept Things As They Are." Furthermore, Krutch claimed that the artist never said that the world could not or should not be improved; it was just someone else's job to make the improvements.

Krutch, as literary critic, wanted art to remain as an independent moral force, but during the trying times of the depression years he struggled with his self-proclaimed role as an impartial observer. He believed that popularity was not the supreme test for literary criticism. He
He maintained that a certain amount of skepticism was always necessary for the intellectually sincere critic. By the early 1930's a prominent voice at the Nation, Krutch complained that absolutist critics assumed they knew "what literature ought to be without knowing just what man and nature and God are." The Marxists' argument that all criticism should take for granted that social commentary was a worthy absolute muddled the role of the critic. Krutch objected that when the critic set up absolutes, he forsook his role as critic and assumed the role of creator or artist. He insisted that only the true artist should create and that might entail setting up absolutes that the artist accepted with a confident faith. Krutch hedged on his argument that the artist was always a skeptic. He qualified his position by insisting that the artist was skeptical of other's absolutes, not his own. Krutch therefore acknowledge that the artist had the dual role of skeptic and creator; the critic remained only, as much as possible, as an objective observer whose business it was to describe, to communicate the quality of a work of art, and to tell whether or not the artist accomplished his intended goals. Krutch admitted that criticism was not worthless if it contained social, moral, or political opinions. Disengaged art criticism was intolerable when it presented an independent essay on the critic's viewpoint. Claiming a
pluralistic technique, Krutch argued for the merit of varied approaches to criticism. Also claiming a personal objectivity he believed in his abilities to see the merits and demerits of any particular work.

Despite Krutch's refusal to join the far left of the thirties, he was not comfortable with the America he saw. A youthful complacency upset him. The young apparently did not recognize the reality and possible permanence of the Great Depression. Popular idealism supported such complacency; it was a "natural tendency" for things "to get bigger if not better." Young people of the thirties faced a contracting world with high chances of unemployment. Students as a whole were "not rebellious, or cynical, or even melancholy." They refused to see that difficult times lay ahead. They believed that unemployment would not last long "and they waited calmly for it to fall--not because some Joshua has blown his trumpet, but quite simply of itself." Few students actually entertained communistic or radical thoughts. Krutch claimed that they were "less discontented than even a moderate liberal" felt they should be. He was, no doubt, that moderate liberal.

Nevertheless, Krutch continued his criticism of the radical left. He found, like his fellow-intellectuals, that America had two pasts. The first, as espoused by Ludwig Lewisohn, H. L. Mencken, and Carl Van Doren, was the history of the American artist escaping the clutches of the
Puritan. The second view, that of the radical left, was a history of the Spirit of Capitalism as formulated by Granville Hicks and V. F. Calverton. The rebel of the first interpretation always displayed his individualism, but the rebel of the latter view surrendered willingly to the dictatorship of the proletariat. Krutch delighted in the fact that neither side could claim Thoreau as a precursor of its ideas as easily as both could claim Emerson.17 For the first time, Krutch indicated that Thoreau, the individualist, could function as a role model for him. Krutch's discovery of Thoreau's individualism came at the same time that he was experiencing difficulties with the American leftists, many of whom were his friends. He was growing weary of his embattled role on the Nation and with his position in the intellectual community.

From his perspective on the left, Krutch unveiled his real fears of communism. In 1934 in a series of articles in the Nation, he questioned the democratic effectiveness of Soviet communism. The articles, entitled "Was Europe a Success?," brought widespread comment from the intellectual community and were quickly printed in book form.18 In the book, Was Europe a Success?, Krutch wondered if the barbarian, first discovered in The Modern Temper, was the Russian communist. He insisted his book was not an apology for capitalism. He demanded that socialism and communism be subjected to the same type of analytical criticism as the
Marxists used on capitalism. He was skeptical of any theoretical society and insisted that communism as outlined by Marx and Engels had not gone beyond theory. In other words, the Soviet Union was not a perfect society and Krutch asked if it ever could be. American radicals were convinced that either it was or it would soon be. Krutch feared that socialists were too eager to go from "the frying pan" of the Great Depression into the "fire" of unproved socialism.

Krutch's book disputed communists' claims of the Western culture's decline. Although Western culture had faults, Krutch argued that it must be respected for certain accomplishments. For instance, he judged that Western art and thought were far superior to all other thought and art of any previous age. Also, European culture reduced suffering and cruelty more than any previous civilization.

True, Krutch agreed, European culture was far from perfect and, in fact, "only a fundamental pessimist" would argue that she alleviated all suffering and all political and economic subjugation. Europe had, indeed, moved ahead by, at various times, advocating slavery and war. The ownership of slaves allowed aristocrats to escape the burden of work and gave them time to patronize the arts. Wars insured the well-being of European nations by increasing their wealth with resources from weaker countries. Admirers of European culture tended to ignore the brutal aspects of her
history and culture and promoted her arts and sciences. Krutch argued that to believe that slavery and war were inevitable and necessary for the progress of a culture was pessimistic reasoning to say the least. He saw World War I as a natural outgrowth of such thinking. The communist advocated much of the same thing when he espoused revolution, violently if necessary, and the idea "to make man over." The communist wanted to revamp Western culture for the betterment of the community, yet Krutch wondered what would happen to the individual who refused to go along with the changes? At least, he felt, a person should have the right to veto radical ideas that were "either not good enough or offered at too high a price." He insisted that the radical was sold on large scale cultural changes and listened to no one who proposed calmer ideas.

The danger in the radicals' proposed revolution was that it made clear to Krutch that Western culture would be destroyed in order to make political and economic changes. Part of the "making man over" entailed changing the individual psychologically. Another part of the changes included the curtailment of individualism, freedom, and disinterested study. Krutch called the idea a "monstrous paradox." Man under socialism, a supposedly better state, would be obliged to give up certain luxuries of the intellect while people under "less advanced" political systems would still find time to enjoy them. Thus, Krutch
concluded, an individual's stake in capitalism was also his stake in culture. He insisted that the communists' program implied to give up one was to give up the other. For him, the communist as the new man was the barbarian of The Modern Temper.

Krutch asserted that historically the revolutionist wanted all men to share in the richer life of the more affluent people. The communist revolutionary, on the other hand, according to Krutch, despised the notion of sharing in Western culture. He wanted, not only a new government, but also a firm rejection of capitalist culture. Krutch lamented that the communist mind acted in barbaric fashion when it proposed to destroy the traditional European man. He rejected the argument, presented by a few communists, that Western civilization would be restored after the revolution was assured. In pointing to the Soviet dictatorship, Krutch insisted that no restoration process was evident. In addition, he suggested that the Moscow government was unpopular and politically unstable despite Russian official statements to the contrary. Why else, he asked, did the Soviet dictatorship feel compelled to suppress civil freedoms?

Regarding the communist artists' appraisals that capitalist culture was too standardized, Krutch wondered what was better: capitalist standardization or communist uniformity. For the communist, a hundred theaters showing
a capitalist movie was degrading, but a hundred theaters showing a socialist film was inspiring.28

Personally, Krutch was dismayed by his friends who became communists. He tried to visualize a time in ancient Rome when Christianity was first introduced. The Roman pagan, he thought, probably did not understand how his friends who turned to the Christian religion could be irritated by every question that challenged their faith. Krutch, too, saw himself as an Old Pagan who watched as his friends converted to the communist faith. He suspected that communism contained something of value as did Christianity, but he wanted communists to first lay their religion open to debate and criticism. Instead, communists discouraged debate and settled all arguments by damning a detractor as "bourgeois," Krutch noticed.29

Response to Was Europe a Success? poured in from intellectuals around the world. For example, Albert Einstein and Aldous Huxley agreed completely with Krutch while H. L. Mencken showed vague agreement. Bertrand Russell hinted that perhaps Europe might be evolving into a higher civilization that was, at least, no worse than past civilizations. He agreed, however, that Krutch could not be proved wrong. The radical left viciously attacked Krutch. James Burnham, for example, accused the Nation critic of making a "moral attack on revolutionary movements."30 The New Masses, a communist-inspired magazine,
offered even more vehement assessments of Krutch's liberal stand. Granville Hicks became the literary editor of the *New Masses* in 1934. Hicks argued that the critic and novelist had prominent roles in the transition of a society from capitalism to socialism; the author must make the revolution a reality. In other words, Hicks expected the novelists always to include social concerns and commentary in their novels. Undoubtedly, the capitalist would always be the villain. Naturally, Krutch, the independent critic and disbeliever in communism, became Hicks' nemesis. After "Was Europe a Success?" appeared in the *Nation*, Hicks fired off a rebuttal. Krutch, he claimed, saw the preservation of culture in the defense of capitalism. But, he countered, capitalism did not create the good art of western culture; it merely tolerated it. Hicks agreed that an intellectual such as Krutch would have to surrender certain freedoms in order that others could share in his freedom. He concluded that Krutch was dishonest and tolerant of injustice. Furthermore, he claimed that Krutch misused his liberalism since he refused to take an active role in liberal causes such as in the fight to save Sacco and Vanzetti from execution. Nor did Krutch ever actively support striking workers. Hicks felt "resentment if not hatred" for Krutch.

Another critic with sympathy for communism, Malcolm Cowley, writing in the *New Republic*, stated that Krutch
favored inequality and injustice because European culture depended on "the suffering of the masses." According to Cowley, Krutch offered two cultural alternatives for the world: either one could accept the present western culture with all its corruption or one would have to destroy it altogether and create something new. Cowley argued that Krutch decided it was best to preserve the bad in western culture in order not to endanger the good; thus he accepted the unenviable plight of the working man. He claimed that Krutch cornered himself and could not offer a suitable argument against fascist philosophy. Cowley quickly added that he did not believe Krutch sympathized with fascism and that he was, indeed, a liberal "who hates all dictatorships." Of course, Krutch recognized that people suffered under capitalism, but he was not willing to risk destroying Western culture with the communists' program to eliminate the suffering. Furthermore, he saw that communism created no utopian state in Russia. He constructed no alternative ideas for communism or capitalism for that would violate his self-proclaimed role as an independent observer.

Krutch's disagreement with Marxism became a public issue in the pages of the Nation. He insisted that the left-radical distrusted the free speech ideal. When yesterday's liberal became today's radical, according to Krutch, such a person thought "less of the importance of
free discussion" and more about the means to "indoctrinate youth." Krutch insisted that he, too, wanted "a genuinely and consistently liberal state," and he agreed that America was not a liberal state, but he preferred America over totalitarianism.

In a series of letters to Roger Baldwin, founder of the American Civil Liberties Union, which appeared in the Nation, Krutch questioned the ACLU's commitment to civil liberties. Since the ACLU approved of Communist Russia, even though free speech was curtailed there, Krutch thought the ACLU's support of free speech was hypocritical. In his response, Baldwin agreed that criticism was a good thing and that free speech was mandatory for the criticism of government, but that the Soviet Union must be given a chance to establish itself. Baldwin insisted that the denial of free speech was necessary and acceptable.

Understandably, Krutch was shocked. How paradoxical, he mused, that in communist thought "true liberalism can be achieved through the violation of liberal principles." He continued with more specific charges at the Soviet Union. Communism had been in existence in Russia for almost twenty years, he noted, and still there was no indication of the beginning of a classless society. In fact, Russia had "established neither a decent minimum standard nor an equitable sharing of the little that is available." Furthermore, Krutch pointed out, a magazine such as the
New Masses was published and distributed in the United States while he doubted whether a publication advocating capitalism would survive in the Soviet Union. 40

Although fascist ideas and actions became a real threat to both liberal and communist philosophy in the mid-thirties, Krutch doubted whether the two could ever co-operate with one another. He believed that any co-operation would be, in the end, only temporary and therefore dangerous. He claimed that eventually one temper would become dominant and the other would be forced underground. 41 But since fascism had become a threat, he noticed that the Marxists looked to liberals for friendship; the same liberals whom the socialists despised before. Krutch refused to accept the socialists' friendship with open arms. He sourly noted that "one is sometimes inclined to feel that liberalism could protect itself from its enemies on the right if only someone would manage to protect it from its friends on the left." 42 Krutch, who was always more literarily than poltically inclined, came out of the liberal-Marxist debates somewhat hurt. Reflecting in 1936 that contemporary critics too easily relegated certain writers to the past, he left the impression that he, too, felt relegated to the past. 43 His self-assured brand of liberalism would never be quite the same.

Holding off the "peace offers" of Popular Front solidarity, Krutch concentrated more intently on the issues
raised in *The Modern Temper*. The experiences of the thirties had altered his perspective. *The Modern Temper* was an exceedingly pessimistic book, yet the deluge of pessimistic books in the 1930's disturbed him. Noting that almost all the books the *Nation* recommended as important reading in 1936 had nothing "favorable to say of human character or human institutions in America," he continued, "Probably no other age ever libeled itself as persistently and as enthusiastically as ours has done." Was a crisis of the human spirit at hand? Krutch admitted that writers were over-reacting. They wrote too hastily reports of the unhappy, mistreated, and oppressed people. Krutch sensed that "a writer feels an almost overwhelming pressure upon him to make out the worse case against his fellow-men."

He thought one reason for the surge of pessimistic writing was that a cheerful book would be dismissed in intellectual circles. A second reason was more consistent with liberal ideals. Krutch argued that writers were more sensitive to inhumanity and "we hate cruelty and injustice more than any age ever did before us." Since social sciences taught that man created his world, intellectuals felt responsible for existing social conditions. Their denunciation of human institutions which tolerated or caused cruelty and injustice showed their stewardship to the people. They assuaged their feeling of guilt.
Krutch did worry about this crisis of the spirit. The whole liberal-Marxist argument which had so embittered him was a part of the crisis. The intellectual Marxist was too willing to give up his individualism, as was the intellectual of The Modern Temper who put his best hope in science. The artist, who provided health to a society by being its critic, protestant, and heretic, saw himself as a propagandist for the Marxist cause. Consequently, much of his art bordered on political philosophy and philosophy was "often merely an inferior kind of art." It lost "the warmth, the vitality and the eagerness of genuine art." It assumed a more definite and positive statement even at the risk of giving up creativity and originality. Krutch insisted that the role of the dogmatic philosopher was unbecoming to the true artist. It was not the role of the artist to explain himself. Krutch said that the duty of the artist was "to say something, and when he has done so it becomes our business to recognize what that something is."

But the artist-propagandist of the thirties assumed the role of the cold philosopher, and Krutch looked elsewhere for something "to make existence tolerable to those who are compelled to accept Things As They Are." That new something was Henry David Thoreau's writings. Krutch became more and more enthralled with Thoreau's uncompromising individualism. Thoreau "took an attitude more
radical than most radicals have dared to assume." Krutch not only saw that he took a type of Thoreauvian individualism in his literary battle with the Marxist writers, but that Thoreau might be the answer for the dilemma he found himself in after *The Modern Temper*. According to Krutch, Thoreau's first lesson was "keep the world simple." As the critic saw it, life in the 1930's became more and more complex; "organization and machinery were gradually becoming more powerful than humanity itself." He understood that the communist agreed; however, the communist wanted man to give up luxuries such as freedom, the useless arts, and disinterested scholarship for the sake of revolution and the reconstruction of society. Consequently, the Marxists' material view of the world prevented them from assaulting the machine-made complexities of modern society. Krutch, on the other hand, interpreted Thoreau as saying that "perhaps the individual will be saved or is really savable." He agreed with Emerson that "things are in the saddle and ride mankind," but instead of trying to teach them to ride man less hard, Krutch wondered if it would not be better to "unseat them instead."

The reading of Thoreau naturally led Krutch to a reconsideration of nature and man's place in it. In *The Modern Temper* he found man to be alien to the natural world and needful of a way to disassociate himself from it through literature, religion, and metaphysics. The purpose of the
intellectual was not the purpose of nature, he concluded. Obviously, this message was not the message of Thoreau. In a 1936 review of Donald Culrose Peattie's *Green Laurels*, a nature book, Krutch reiterated his conviction that man and nature were at odds. History showed, he argued, that man's progression tended to be away from his central position in the scheme of things. Krutch departed from earlier speculations that mankind presented a hopeless case in the natural world. He found man's ability to live in nature and his opportunity to develop a fellowship with other creatures were quite alluring ideas. His readiness to accept unity in the natural world, where mankind would not have to be given a superior place, owed much to his reading of Thoreau. The idea "that we are co-equals sprung from the same source and engaged, each in his own way, in the common adventure of living" was the second lesson of the individualist who had lived in a hovel at Walden Pond.⁵⁰

Krutch's burgeoning pantheism would become more refined after he gave up life in the city and moved to where he could be closer to the natural world. But his appetite for science and literature had not been sated and he looked to both of them for support after World War II. To his dismay, he found most artists and scientists going in the opposite direction from his ideas, and the continual rise of the common man prevented him from escaping the threat
of a barbaric civilization. In the next phase of his career, he returned to the dangerous fallacies inherent in both modern science and literature. He coupled this theme to his previous fear of mass culture and mass man.
FOOTNOTES


2. Ibid., p. 95.


4. Quoted in Aaron, p. 417.


9. Ibid., p. 468.

10. Ibid.


12. Ibid., p. 143.


20. Ibid., p. 15.

21. Ibid., p. 16.

22. Ibid., pp. 1-2.

23. Ibid., p. 3.


25. Ibid., pp. 3-4.

26. Ibid., p. 12.

27. Ibid., pp. 29-30, 32-3.

28. Ibid., p. 40.

29. Ibid., pp. 35-7.

30. "Was Europe a Success?" *The Nation* 139 (1934), pp. 373-5.


32. Ibid., pp. 247-8.


36. Ibid., p. 450.


39. Ibid., p. 362.


41. Ibid., p. 391.


49. Ibid., p. 507.

CHAPTER IV

POST-WORLD WAR II: SCIENCE, LITERATURE
AND THE COMMON MAN

With the advent of international calamities, post-
World War II America went through several significant
change. The war meant that the United States must accept
its economic and military power in the world. Two world
wars in such a brief time convinced many Americans that
future stability was uncertain. Communist Russia, boasting
economic and military might, scared many intellectuals into
"red" witchhunts. Alienated artists wrote of the world's
hopelessness and absurdity. A new literary style came to
America letters. Novelists such as Norman Mailer and
James Baldwin portrayed their characters as perverse, sex-
ually insatiable, and, sometimes, inhumanly cruel. Literary
critics hailed their works as decisive interpretations of
modern life. Behavioral science, with its deterministic
attitudes and manipulative techniques, assumed a respected
position in the curricula of colleges and universities.
Educators emphasized the need for students to "adjust" to
their environment rather than their ability to change their
situation. Many frustrated liberals turned to verbally
lambasting the common man whose lifestyle had become more
comfortable and his buying power more influential. They saw television and popular culture as direct threats to the traditional roles of art and higher learning in America.2

His final years at the Nation were difficult for Krutch. While he believed in his position regarding the controversy with the Marxists, the confrontation, nevertheless, challenged some of his fundamental artistic beliefs. Literature, which expressed for Krutch man's unique position in the natural world, appeared inadequate for the task. As Krutch saw it, The Modern Temper pointed out modern thought's threat to certain human values; unfortunately, some intellectuals and artists, such as the Marxists, really did not consider them worth preserving. When Maurice Wertheim sold the Nation in 1937, Krutch accepted a full professorship in the Department of English at Columbia University.

He remained at the magazine as drama critic with a substantial reduction in editorial responsibilities.3 After joining the Columbia faculty, he wrote The American Drama Since 1918. Reviewing literary trends in the American theater since the Great War, Krutch disliked the drama of the thirties, although he found Clifford Odets and a few others to be very talented. He later recalled that political propaganda made the theater of the depression years "somewhat distasteful." The later dramatists of the forties and fifties, Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller, were not of Krutch's "spiritual generation." He could not sympathize
with their works since they emphasized the vile side of man. He saw them as typical examples of the new generation of writers.

Krutch respected literature in which man could make significant value judgments and meaningful decisions. The literary search for values was "assumed to be the most important question of all." Although the harbingers of literary existentialism insisted that values were discoverable, they emphasized the personal and relative nature of the values. Krutch simply could not find comfort in values that were not universal; he could not see himself in the character of the existential novel. The existential hero lived in an absurd world where even his rebellion seemed to be without purpose or motivation. The novelist expected the reader to identify with the hero, all the while accepting the hopelessness of his cause. The hero could not even "trip up a policeman or land a custard pie in the face of his tormentor." The existential writer retreated into a world of private angst and bewilderment which emphasized sexual perversion, unmotivated crime, and anti-heros. Krutch could not sympathize; he saw both modern novelist and scientist reducing man's stature. Enthusiastically, Krutch turned to nature writers to carry on the rightful role of literature.

He began his series of nature books in Connecticut, but after moving to Arizona his intentions became obvious.
Encouraged by his study of nature, he attacked trends in scientific thinking, especially those of the behaviorists. Essential to his thinking were three questions he uncovered in *The Modern Temper*. Krutch asked, had science exposed as shaky those external values and convictions man built his civilization on? Secondly, had science, thereby, caused a loss of faith in humanity? Lastly, could man, despite science, find a way to restore faith in himself? In the preface to a new edition of *The Modern Temper* in 1955, he answered "yes" to the first two questions, the same conclusions he reached in 1929. Unlike 1929, he also answered "yes" to the final question.\(^7\)

He explained in *The Measure of Man*, published in 1954, his new ideas concerning man in the natural world. He started with the argument that Thomas Hobbes said that man was an animal, Rene Descartes followed with the idea that an animal was a machine, and modern scientists, such as some behaviorists, insisted that logically man was a machine.\(^8\)

Although in the 1929 *Modern Temper* Krutch resented the idea of living as an animal, the beginning naturalist's new relationship to nature showed him that man was not necessarily beastly. Man as an animal was no longer distasteful to Krutch, but he rejected the analogy of man as machine. For Krutch, man thought in terms of "values," something a machine could not do. Descarte's idea that man was not an animal—"I think; therefore, I am"—was used by Krutch to
prove that man was not a machine. Human values determined man's future. "Objective" scientists could not analyze man's unobservable traits. Scientists never saw man as man, the Kantian ideal of a thing-in-itself. Behaviorists viewed man as a machine, but never as a whole man.9 Krutch insisted that non-behavioral psychologists, such as Sigmund Freud, saw the problem, albeit they stubbornly tried to cover it up. They analyzed unobservable traits in man—for example, man's subconscious self—but since they wished their field to be scientifically respectable they denied that they were involved with man's spirit. Through word games, the Freudians kept their field in the realm of science. According to Krutch, they replaced man's soul with another phantom—the psyche.10 For Krutch, there was no difference between the two terms, except "soul" suggested spiritualism while "psyche" sounded scientific. If the Freudians admitted that they dealt with man's "soul," they were closer to theologians than scientists.

As for the behaviorists, such as B. F. Skinner, they denied the importance of man's "soul," no matter what terms were used to label it. For the behaviorists, species survival was the only human value and adjustment was the means. Krutch therefore mused that "the termite society is triumphantly successful."11 If man were a machine, then the world was environmentally deterministic. For Krutch, it became understandable why modern social science treated man
as a victim. Krutch never denied that the environment had no effect on man; but he saw an intellectual link between the deterministic psychology of Skinner and the deterministic naturalism of Theodore Dreiser. Even existential novels of the forties and fifties gave man more credit than the behaviorists were willing to give. As Krutch understood them, the existentialists gave man free will and the power to make choices, but since the universe was meaning- less, it did not really matter whether he chose to be good or bad.

Krutch, too, believed that man could make choices. Man was capable of reasoning and thinking, he could exercise free will, and he could make value judgments based on innate morality instead of the mores of his society. As an individual, man could cultivate his realm of freedom and respect the realm of freedom of others. Krutch created, what he termed, a minimal man—a person of conscious thought who could never be just a mechanism. He agreed that perhaps the destiny of mankind was predetermined, but the individual was still free. "The trap has been sprung and we are not caught in it," he celebrated.

Yet, Krutch realized that by simply declaring that individuals could choose and make value judgments would not change modern man's religious faith in science. He recognized that faith in science resembled the medieval faith in God and the Church. It would take a strong argument to
temper any faith. Krutch asserted science's usefulness. Science explained some of the phenomena of the natural world and made it more enjoyable and beautiful. The gadgets of science and technology were good enough in themselves even when they were received at too high a human cost. Scientists however overstepped their bounds, declaring that man's observable traits were the significant aspect of his existence. Scientists reduced man to the image of a machine. Man's acceptance of mechanistic and scientific ideas belittled humanity at some cost to the individual. Scientists' reliance on statistics stressed the aggregate, the group importance, to the neglect of the individual's innate worth. According to Krutch, man assumed "that happiness is directly proportional to something that can be measured—say income, standard of living or even horsepower available per unit of population." Thus, power was the true and useful result of science. Unfortunately, science created power, but could not tell how it was to be used. For example, scientists developed the principles behind the atomic bomb, but they were powerless in directing the use of their work. If science disparaged and denigrated man as a mechanism to be manipulated and conditioned, soon not even a humanist would be able to make humanistic decisions on the uses of scientific discoveries. Intellectually, the world invited totalitarianism.
Krutch wanted science to become a utilitarian tool. By the late sixties, he argued that more scientific facts were incomplete; man must make "a more wise use of them." He continued, "It is time to remember that science should exist to serve human beings, and not, as the more intoxicated disciples of this new god sometimes assume, human beings to serve science." Again, Krutch reiterated his argument that modern man treated science as a religion. He pointed out that in the mid-twentieth century there was a definite bias toward scientific and pseudo-scientific theories that lessened the stature of man. For example, he argued that economic determinism, mechanistic behaviorism, and relativism were all scientific ideas that were in favor with American intellectuals. Yet, all three reduced the individual's power over his world. Krutch believed that the main problem with science was that it told only half the story. By ignoring intangible aspects of life, science could not really discern why a particular individual behaved differently from another when environments were identical. He insisted that science never really answered questions; it merely raised more questions. Scientists manipulated nature, but never taught one to understand it. He pointed out that scientists could "count atoms and even disintegrate them. But it does not know what they are."

In his early books, Krutch considered the animal world to be one of instincts and reflexes. He understood that
since man was also an animal, logically his world should be one of instincts. When he observed animals in their natural habitat, he found that animal life could not be reduced to simplified conclusions. Of course, animals relied on some instincts, but they also had numerous non-mechanical attributes. If Krutch could shatter the idea that an animal was nothing but a machine, then he succeeded in rescuing man from the same narrow view. The Great Chain of Life began with the proposal that man should take a close look at the extraordinary capabilities of animals. "To be an animal is to be capable of ingenuity and of joy," Krutch found. He continued that an animal achieved beauty and demonstrated affection. He maintained that the big horn sheep displayed courage and honor and that birds demonstrated love when they protected their young. The cardinal and robin showed joy in their lives through song. Krutch renewed the late-eighteenth century and early-nineteenth century way of looking at nature for human truths. He insisted that if man refused to see animals as a series of conditioned reflexes and instincts, then he rescued himself from the same determination. But if man accepted science's verdict, man had more to lose than his stature. He could easily become subject to the whims of a dictator. In totalitarian states, Krutch explained, science freed civilization from literary, religious, and philosophical restraints because man was reduced to an animal. And an
animal in the eyes of science was not an extraordinary thing. Thus, if an animal could be brutalized, then so could a man.\textsuperscript{28} Humanities became a coercive method to insure the dictatorship's power.

Modern science robbed man of the emotion of experiencing beauty in nature. Since evolutionary biology required scientists to examine flora and fauna with the idea that survival was the only purpose, they overlooked aspects of nature that were contrary to evolutionary law. Krutch did not dispute evolution theories or that survival was a goal in nature.\textsuperscript{29} He merely found other goals in the natural world. For example, the simple beauty in nature had no utilitarian purpose. Scientists claimed that a flower's fragrance and color attracted bees and other insects in order that pollen be transferred from one blossom to another, but that did not explain why man found flowers beautiful. Nor could science explain the gold dots on the chrysalis of the Monarch butterfly. Apparently, they had no function in the insects' struggle for survival, but they added beauty to the natural world. For Krutch, beauty in nature was as much a goal as was survival of a species.\textsuperscript{30}

Krutich blamed science for other damaging contributions to modern society. Since technology depended on science, the two could not be separated. Technologists received the same homage paid to scientists in modern times. Thus modern man came to exist for technology as much as he
existed for science. Since man's adoration of technology became fanatical, Krutch believed that modern man looked to it to solve all his problems—many times problems which were caused by technology in the first place. Theorists who claimed that technology helped make the United States a republic in that its benefits were readily democratized were correct in a perverse way. Krutch sourly noted that "now as never before nearly everybody can have rather too much of many things not worth having." As scientists did in their fields, technologists used statistics to judge progress. Production became mandatory. The future depended on more and more production and, consequently, it depended on more and more consumption. If production slackened, then unemployment rose. It became a patriotic duty to be wasteful in order that consumers could buy more. Unfortunately, disposed goods did not actually disappear. Americans forgot that by increasing the gross national product they also increased "the gross national junk pile." Krutch figured that what he called the "Krutch Plan" would not be enthusiastically received by the people. The plan called for non-productive labor. He wondered if man would plan an economy with an optimum level of production and not go beyond that point. Krutch knew that man was capable of making such a decision; man could make his world more manageable if he wanted it.
The mid-twentieth century was the age of the common man, and Krutch understood that the common man judged success by wealth and power. Because he concurred so willingly with the assessments of technologists and scientists, the common man threatened the United States with a new barbarism. He adapted easily to his meager role in the scheme of things, assuaged any doubts with religion, and bowed to the law of survival and material progress.

Krutch never saw the common man as composing a "boobocracy" as did many intellectuals throughout the twentieth century in America. Ironically, he was quite paternalistic toward the common man over the span of his career. For example, in 1928 he rejected the idea that New York dramatic productions suffered because of popular culture. A number of drama producers and theater owners claimed that people in search of cheap entertainment flocked to the fledgling movies. Consequently, movie houses became thriving businesses and attracted the investments of wealthy people who would have ordinarily put their money behind stage shows. Krutch bought none of the argument. He countered by blaming the financial woes of theater on the plays of 1928. They simply cost too much and were worth too little. If the public wanted to be bored, he continued, "it can be bored at a lower rate" at the movies. He also refused to mock the plays of Sidney Howard, although they appealed greatly to the middle classes. For example, he mentioned that
Howard's *They Knew What They Wanted* was a play that was "essentially serious" without being "highbrow." He wondered why critics ignored writers who appealed to the general public. After some thought, he decided that the reason was that some works were "too clear to require explaining and too popular to need defense." Some critics just did not know how to approach them.39

Although Krutch's paternalistic attitude toward the masses verged on relativism, he never forgot that he was an intellectual elite. For him, mass culture was an interesting diversion; he considered popular culture as a stepping stone to high culture for the masses. For example, in 1932 he went to a burlesque show to see a spectacle "addressed to man's lower nature." He recognized that most people there were common people of the middle and lower classes. The audience was "languid though large." Krutch insisted that he was a democrat and that the lower classes "have as much right to erotic stimulation" as did the upper classes, but he could not understand the show's appeal. He left "as pure in heart as I went in." Alas, burlesque gave nothing more than did legitimate theater.40 In 1939 he attended the New York World Fair. He went because he liked "such public playgrounds" and he liked "places where the populace gathers." He did not go, he emphasized, for culture, but to gape at things made "to be gaped at."41
Krutch saw some cultural hope in popular art. In the mid-forties he became interested in the staple literature of much of the reading public—the detective novel. He read Sherlock Holmes stories and tales by Mary Roberts Rinehart. By 1944 he set out to become truly acquainted with the detective story genre; he read 150 volumes in a year. Again, Krutch used his position as a literary critic to patronize the public's taste in culture as he chastized the attitude of more serious fiction writers. Popular writers were better off, he said, because they were not read as a "cultural duty." He contended that serious novelists would improve their art if they incorporated some of the virtues of popular books into their novels. Earlier he advised that literary criticism be taken out of the hands of pedants and aesthetes, since, following Samuel Johnson's opinion, any intelligent man with common sense could understand literature.

When Krutch heard an opinion that radio stations should not play Bach, Beethoven, or Brahms's music, he was offended. When he considered the argument that radio listeners were not properly prepared to hear classical music and that their listening would debase the masters, he mused that "a half a loaf is better than either no bread or bad cake." He insisted that his "tenderness toward the common man" was real and that the public was entitled to whatever cultural level it preferred. Krutch discouraged "any effective
effort to dragoon" the common man. His attitude was not relativistic, democratic, or pluralistic; it was one of condescension toward the masses.

In the areas of education and the pursuit of knowledge, Krutch refused to castigate the common man. For example, when the Nation sent him to cover the Scopes trial in Dayton, Tennessee, in 1925, he parted from the mocking line of attack used by other Eastern reporters toward religious fundamentalism. Instead of jumping on Mencken's bandwagon and damning the ignorance of the South's common people, Krutch investigated the real reason why backwardness persisted in Southern states. He concluded that Southern men of higher learning, the educators and politicians, were the culprits. When the people asked for leadership, Krutch speculated, only the religious fundamentalists stepped forward. The politicians and educators cowered in the background. Similarly, the educators in the 1950's refused to take a leadership role. Instead, they offered a new idea in education--adjustment. Krutch argued that at least earlier common people held "an exaggerated respect for book learning," but the modern educator insisted that the common man "had a right to his own opinion whether or not he knew anything about the subject under discussion." Modern trends in education, Krutch lamented, were directly responsible for the rising conformity of the age. When educators taught the young people to adjust to modern
society rather than change negative aspects, they ignored the individualism of each student. The young passed "almost without interval from tutelage to domesticity." Educators neglected their duty to instill in their students the need to question and study their world. They sacrificed the pupil's individuality to conformity. Quoting from Thoreau's *Journal*, Krutch asked, "If I am not I, who will be?"

Although he was unsure to what extent modern technology influenced educational techniques, he was sure it played a role. Technology, such as television, could never replace the printed word. In fact, the true enemy of the reader was not the television set; the true enemy was the educator who became "increasingly opposed to the printed word." But there was also no reason why technology could not be a positive force in education. Krutch wanted "Sophocles instead of Milton Berle, and Plato instead of Arthur Godfrey" to be the fare of television. The intellectual had the responsibility, through the television set "to sell tolerance, good will, the scientific attitude and even, perhaps, wisdom itself." Krutch recognized that TV advertisers might be opposed to quality shows on television. After all, he reasoned, the advertiser's purpose was "to hypnotize and condition. The last thing they want is any thinking-for yourself." Krutch realized educational shows could be the tool of totalitarianism; they could become "one long commercial designed to sell science, culture, and right
political thinking." His intellectual elitism prevented him from seeing that "selling wisdom" was also coercion; of course, it allowed the common man to rise to Krutch's standard of excellence.

Technology played other roles in the life of the common man. The concentration of wealth in the hands of the middle classes forced great changes in the nation's cultural faves. Movies became more popular than literature. Krutch saw value in motion pictures. He agreed that the "public has an insatiable appetite for the second-rate and worse" and that usually popular art was "mere trash," but that certainly did not mean that one should assume "that only trash is every popular." He argued, for example, that Charlie Chaplin and Walt Disney movies had aesthetic value. The decline in some literary forms, especially poetry, had more to do with the difficulty to understand the modern artists' messages than it had to do with the rise of popular art and culture.

Various forms of popular culture affected Krutch's life, though he tried to keep his distance. Once he found himself tapping his toe to the rhythm of a jazz tune and was properly ashamed, wondering if the music awakened a subconscious desire to return to a primitive state. He also became more interested in popular magazines, claiming that their emphasis was always on the happiness of Americans while high-brow journals dwelled on the misery of the people.
Krutch understood the appeal of the former.57 Even the newspaper greatly concerned Krutch. After he moved to Arizona, he refused to subscribe to a daily newspaper, but he did take a weekly edition. He said that a daily paper emphasized the urgency of things when they really were not urgent. For example, if he learned that the Russians had attacked New York and were on their way to Arizona as well, he certainly would appreciate being told that they were on the way, but he was sure that it would take them at least a week to arrive. Hence, a weekly newspaper would do nicely. For similar reasons, Krutch balked at having a telephone installed in his Arizona home, although he eventually agreed to the installation. For that, "I blame my wife," he jokingly added.58

On a more serious note, Krutch wondered why he became interested in reading newspaper coverage of a particularly gory murder instead of settling down with something written by Plato. After all, since he was "officially a member of the intelligentsia," he had no business "behaving so precisely like any one of the mass men whose tastes I formally deplore." But he also felt he had an excuse for his disturbing behavior. He asked if the "noise, hurry and bustle" of the modern world had not reduced all men, regardless of intelligence, "to the same condition?"59 Technology became so ubiquitous in the modern world that man accepted it without question. Equally unquestioned were the blessings of
technology. It promised "even greater speed, power, wealth and possibly health."\(^6^0\) Since, for the common man, all those products were ends in themselves, he was content to live in the world of the machine. Therefore, the mechanistic arguments of the behaviorists were understandably palatable to the mass man. As Krutch argued, man "tends to compare himself with what he knows best, and what he knows best are the machines."\(^6^1\)

Common man came to dominate society at the expense of past culture and civilization. He was a new man, encouraged by scientists and technologists. The man-of-letters stood helplessly to one side riddled with fear, hate, and envy. The new tide of barbarism was in full force, and man, in awe of his powers, intensified his relentless assault on the natural world. Krutch entered his fourth phase, reporting the outrages on nature and speculating on what was in store for Americans if they continued.


4. Ibid., p. 297.


10. Ibid., p. 181.


15. Ibid., pp. 119-20, 198-9.

16. Ibid., p. 158.
17. Ibid., p. 190


27. Ibid., p. 108, 223.

28. Ibid., p. 154.


52. Ibid., p. 350.

54. Ibid., p. 586.


56. Krutch, And Even If You Do, p. 173.


58. Ibid., p. 358.


CHAPTER V

MAN AND NATURE: PANTHEISM VERSUS A NEW KIND OF BARBARISM

When Joseph Wood Krutch turned optimistically to nature in the late-forties, he developed the idea of order in the universe through a pantheistic philosophy. A study of nature re-enforced the lesson of Thoreau that man had to nurture individualism while recognizing the links which tied man to civilization and the natural world. As did Thoreau, Krutch found that nature exemplified a pantheistic philosophy. All things in the world, including man, could live in harmony. Yet, the 1950's and 1960's were also a time of great discouragement for him. Even a hermit could not ignore the great changes science and technology brought to the modern world. And Krutch was no hermit; he actively participated in the intellectual life of the nation. He wrote books of natural philosophy, The Measure of Man and Human Nature and the Human Condition, he kept up a keen interest in new literary trends, and he served on the editorial staff of the American Scholar. But technology changed the landscape. Problems which were once considered minor nuisances, such as pollution, were now major concerns. Hundreds of books were being written to expose man's harmful effect on his
environment. \(^1\) Post-World War II housing shortages caused an explosive growth of suburbs and the commercial development of more land. Large cities, once considered the destroyer of American innocence by intellectuals, became helpless victims of suburban growth, as did the countryside. \(^2\)

Krutch began his career as a naturalist at the very time when the survival of much of the natural world was in doubt. Since nature played the key role in the development of his pantheistic philosophy, he was disgruntled when he realized that most people viewed the natural world as a means for commercial exploitation. He set out to find why men harbored contempt for nature and participated gladly in its destruction. Also, he wished to point out how man could obtain what he considered the good life by learning to appreciate natural beauty.

Arizona became a kind of refuge for Krutch. No longer as interested in literature as an interpreter of the world as he once was, he turned to the natural world to restore his faith in man. Although scientists, such as behaviorists, denied the existence of a minimal man, Krutch was convinced that one existed. Contemplation of nature and the observations of animals showed Krutch that the lessons of Thoreau were still true. Individually man could trust in himself and individually he could recognize his own responsibilities to his civilization. In the opening chapter of *The Twelve Seasons*, Krutch's first nature book, he affirmed his own
sense of togetherness with the natural world. After all, we are all in this together he told the tiny peeper, a small frog whose appearance introduced the spring to New Englanders.³ At about the same time in the Nation he remarked that Thoreau's originality had to do with his treatment of other life-forms as fellow-creatures.⁴ He later declared, "Mankind, like the individual man, is not an island. All living things are in this together."⁵ With his idea of unity with the natural world, Krutch reversed his conclusion he reached in The Modern Temper. Of course, it was not all that simple. He recognized that the natural world required a type of obedience. He admitted, "If we do not live as it insists, then it is difficult to see how, as a race, we can live at all."⁶ In some sense he agreed with Tennyson who said that nature was "red in tooth and claw." Krutch claimed that the natural world dictated that man live "in bloodshead and hate." But man could mitigate the viciousness of nature by retreating into individualism. He argued that sometimes it would be necessary to lose the world to save your soul; he even speculated that "ultimate goodness" required this retreat.⁷ Yet, he refused to dwell on his negative image of nature and concentrated on its positive attributes. After all, he reasoned, civilizations came into existence from the minimal man's power to make choices. The power to choose allowed man to subjectively learn from nature and to nurture his ability to discriminate.
Man could truly cultivate himself in the appreciation of art, beauty, literature, and the good life. Krutch felt that man could only discover the good life after he experienced joy which existed only in nature; man substituted recreation, fun, amusement, and pleasure for it. Man innately knew that joy could only be found in nature because, as Krutch said, he "had hardly got himself urbanized before he began, in imagination at least, to return to it." Krutch insisted that his escape from city life was not an affront to the cities. Without the cities, he admitted, civilization would be impossible, but he also argued that without nature man renounced an equally valuable part of his heritage. It was this heritage that Krutch sought in Arizona. He went, he said, to be close to nature and the Southwest offered closeness without the need to resort to primitivism. He argued that there was a difference between living close to nature and being a primitive man. Thoreau, he pointed out, was an obvious example. Thoreau lived at Walden Pond to find what bare necessities were needed for a full life, yet his seclusion was not an affront to civilization. As Krutch noted, he walked almost daily into Concord. Of course, Thoreau lived at Walden to be close to nature, also. "Communion with nature" was no empty phrase for Krutch. It implied a corrective or, at least, an escape from a wholly man-made world. When man took his week-end trips to escape the city, he escaped into something
as much as he escaped from something, Krutch said. He added that the vacationer "joined the greatest of all communities." But the escape into nature, as Krutch had done when he went to Arizona, was not something that could or should be easy. To him, the Southwest suggested "patience, struggle and endurance. It is courageous and happy, not easy or luxurious."

Ironically, Krutch did not demand of nature the same things he asked of science and literature. Discouraged that neither could assure man an importance in a natural order, he turned to nature. Yet, he found order in nature to be suspect. At times, the natural world went through the most complicated of routines to accomplish a goal that could have been attained in a more simple way. Personally, Krutch was not convinced that nature always knew best. However, it usually found "an arrangement which will work, even though, often, quite inefficiently." On the surface, it appeared that Krutch gave up his search for order. After all, a disorderly world, confirmed by nature, proved no eminence for mankind. But through closer examination, Krutch discovered order on top of all the apparent disorderliness. For one thing, the permanence of nature offered security to Krutch. More importantly, the real order of nature was its allowance for man to cultivate himself. Yet, man could only improve after he learned respect and appreciation for his world. The fact that man was a part of
nature assured Krutch that he was not estranged from the world. A "sense of oneness, this conviction that we are all, as it were, in the same boat," proved that man was subject to some greater power than himself. Even science, with its emphasis that protoplasm was the key to all life cemented the bond. Indeed, science proved "the unity of all living things is not an elusive spirit but a definable material thing." "Life itself... is the bond between fellow-creature." With this knowledge, man could abandon his superior attitude toward nature and live within its realm. Actually, Krutch realized that for man to accept his place in nature required a complete change in his consciousness. Man would have to give up his false pride that he could entirely control the world and nature. Man's limited realm suggested order, perhaps even universal design.

Krutch understood that man had incredible power to transform nature, but he agreed with Thoreau that man's vast powers did not compare with something in the natural world that was "more powerful than we." Man could not create the beauty of the Grand Canyon and the attitude that he could, displayed by visitors to the natural wonder, incensed Krutch. Many tourists asked whether or not the Works Projects Administration under Franklin Roosevelt's presidency had dug the Grand Canyon. Krutch recognized that man's ingenuity was beyond question. After all, a replica of the Canyon had been created at Disneyland in
California and many visitors reported amazement at the spectacle. Krutch envisioned a world of plastic plants, stuffed animals, and amusement park scenes. He realized that some people preferred a completely man-made world, but he became a dissenter. He argued that if man completely destroyed nature he would be "not men like gods, but men like ants." Meanwhile, man's dependence on his own technology and inventions forced him into a dangerous position. A simple error in machinery design or a slight malfunction of the machines could cause paralysis or even death for a civilization. Krutch recognized that man's technical know-how was permanent. Once it was acquired, man's ability to control and manipulate nature could not be forgotten. However, Krutch insisted that man could arrest or slow down his dependence on machines. He pointed out that he did not consider a drastic or immediate change necessary. Nor did man have to contemplate a return to nature or to some type of primitive life. The primitive life of the Havasupai Indians, who lived in the Grand Canyon, impressed Krutch, but he saw the disadvantages of such a life. Although their community was "a blessing, not a blot on the landscape," physical, intellectual, and cultural deficiencies became obvious. Krutch wondered if it were possible to find a happy medium between life in a small impoverished town and a large city overrun by technology and population. In other words, he asked for more than a choice between
stagnation and frenzy. His experience in Tucson, Arizona, suggested to him that many people did not see any other choices. When he moved to Tucson, Krutch discovered a small town dominated by the desert at its doorsteps. For Krutch, the desert signified everything that was right about the Southwest; however, residents of Tucson did not agree with the naturalist. They insisted that Tucson be allowed to grow into a large city. In fact, they campaigned for such an occurrence. "Boosterism" became the goal of many in the town. Once, Krutch was asked to speak at a Chamber of Commerce meeting and speculate on the rewards that would come with the growth of Tucson. His speech displeased many in the audience since he attacked the idea of growth. He claimed that residents should not be asking how they should go about increasing the size of the town, but he asked them to find ways to keep Tucson small. Of course, some in the audience thought Krutch was joking since no true citizen would ask a town not to grow. Krutch claimed that the attitude of the people of Tucson was the same attitude that could be found anywhere in the country. Arizonians proudly pointed to the natural beauty of their state, but Krutch wondered if they really preferred that beauty over the chance to industrialize the state. Arizona tempted tourists with her natural beauty, but Krutch lamented that the state "really prefers billboards." Although he admitted the necessity of cities for civilization, he argued that
unplanned growth was irresponsible. He objected that one day suburbs would cover the earth like a slime.\textsuperscript{27} He could not believe that man wanted to live in a world of cities where one moved "from one group of glass boxes to another."\textsuperscript{28} Even if man insisted that cities be allowed to grow, Krutch wondered why they all had to grow in the same manner. He saw that Tucson was rapidly becoming indistinguishable from any other American city. The suburbs, factories, automobiles, people hurrying to and from work, and buildings looked the same in all cities. Therefore, all cities made man feel the same and insured a kind of conformity for the entire country.\textsuperscript{29}

Of course, the growth of cities presented other problems. The natural world, which Krutch came to depend on and admire, stood in the way of progress. Many industrialists saw the subjugation of nature as a heroic conquest. Originally, Krutch felt the desert would not fall victim to the industrialists' onslaughts. Plains and valleys in other parts of the country offered limitless opportunities for the expansion of factories and shopping centers. They were easily bulldozed, manipulated, and controlled. Furthermore, the green of valleys and plains suggested that resources were inexhaustible. The desert was quite different. It was hot and dry. Until industrialists found ways to conquer it, it remained as a reminder of man's limits. If it encouraged anything, it encouraged "the
heroism of endurance, not of conquest." Krutch recognized that the desert would soon lose its security from the expansion of cities. The reason was twofold. First, man as a technologist would do something not because it needed to be done, but because he simply could do it. For example, the damming of the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon region was unnecessary, Krutch argued, yet the technological effort would be proof of man's powers. Since it could be dammed, it was dammed. Krutch suggested that recent interest in space travel and exploration came from similar sentiments. He believed that scientists were not convincing when they tried to show a reason for getting to the moon and beyond, but it became obvious that such ventures were possible. Therefore, it almost became a duty to build rockets and spaceships and launch them into space.

Second, the growth of cities insured a growth in population. Next to the dominating power of the machines, Krutch considered overpopulation to be the most severe "threat to humane living." He recognized that eventually time and nature would solve any overpopulation problems, but he did not feel that nature's "rough-and-ready fashion" was desirable. He suggested that if man did not want nature's alternative, then he should devise some for himself. One solution, he mentioned, might be that when an area became overpopulated, licensed sportsmen from other regions might be allowed to pursue "healthy recreation" by thinning
out the people. Bag limits and other rules would have to be set up, but they could be similar to rules game managers set up for wildlife preserves. Of course, Krutch was not serious with his proposal, but it emphasized two points. First, if population steadily increased and man failed to check it, then the solution to the problem would be found by nature through a similar method. As living space decreased and hunger increased, wars would break out. Second, Krutch's proposal pointed out that a search for solutions was necessary lest man fall to the whims of a "game manager" or dictator. He argued that the earth's resources were limited as were man's ability to exploit them, but human fertility was not. He implied that it was a pet conceit of Americans that one day they would be able to transform the entire world into a society which would enjoy their standard of prosperity and comfort. Krutch warned that in the near future American agriculture probably could not care for the existing United States population. Though he considered it noble to wish want and poverty would cease in other lands, the only reliable solution he saw was a decrease in world population. He stated that what the world needed was not more men, but better men. Furthermore, he considered Americans' imperialistic, albeit benevolent, attitudes toward third world nations to be wrong. To Krutch, Americans seemed to be telling underdeveloped countries to follow their lead and
soon they could "enjoy the benefits of overproduction, overpopulation and atomic fall-out."\(^ {39} \) He felt that Americans must solve their own problems before they could present themselves as the envy of the rest of the world.

Meanwhile, Americans found themselves in an unparallel age of prosperity. Although he saw and warned vociferously of the dangers such an age produced, Krutch also insisted that Americans learn to appreciate abundance. Many conscientious people, realizing that much of the world was enmeshed in poverty and suffering, insisted that it was wrong for Americans to enjoy their wealth. Krutch admitted that such an attitude led to generosity, but he could not understand "the mere refusal to enjoy." He considered the refusal to be "the ultimate waste of good things."\(^ {40} \) When man appreciated his abundant life, he noticed things and simply did not take them for granted. The appreciative man noticed "a sunset or a really fine dinner."\(^ {41} \) Thus man, particularly Americans, had the chance to become truly civilized and cultivated. Once man learned to appreciate, then he could learn to discriminate, also. He would then see that nature and art offered "feasts of delight" and develop taste.\(^ {42} \) As one's interest grew, one's power of discrimination improved. The better projects of artists and nature would enjoy a rebirth in appreciation.\(^ {43} \) Unfortunately, Krutch saw little chance for a renaissance. Either Americans felt guilty about their wealth of they took
it for granted. Those who took things for granted were not easily thrilled or amazed. Their most common expression was "so what?" For Krutch, it expressed "the great sin against life itself." With their attitude, Americans merely developed bad taste and that was "simply the next thing to no taste at all." Nature and art remained unappreciated and, therefore, could be brutalized. Man lost out in his search for joy and settled for recreation, amusement, and entertainment. Common man underestimated his own creations. For example, a beautiful lawn became merely a status symbol. Scientists shared in the debasement of the good life in America. They offered a utilitarian purpose for flowers. In other words, they could not appreciate Emerson's romantic dictum that beauty was its own excuse for being. For Krutch, beauty in the flower was as natural as a species' struggle for survival. He insisted that nature strove for beauty. To hold such a belief was not fantastic to him.

Yet, since man failed to learn the value of beauty, he could not understand the harm when he did violence to nature. The sportsman became Krutch's most obvious example. It puzzled him that a hunter would rather see an animal dead than alive. He decided that when a man could bring terror, agony, and death to an animal, it assured the hunter that he possessed power.

On a deeper level, Krutch realized two conflicting impulses that characterized men of all ages. Undoubtedly,
man desired to create as his many inventions and works of arts attested. However, man had a simultaneous urge to destroy. Since the destructive desire was much easier accommodated, man demonstrated his power over nature with destruction. Krutch felt that the act of destroying something fulfilled a basic need of man. "Why else," he asked, "should anyone not hungry prefer a dead rabbit to a live one?" Zoologist Harold E. Anthony agreed with Krutch that the urge to destroy was fundamental in the make-up of man. He argued that to deny any basic need would ultimately do harm to the individual. He added that the role of sportsmen was to relieve many of the tensions of modern life. It was worthwhile that man pursued an activity which was both natural and a linkage to the habits of his ancient ancestors. Since hunting was vital to primitive man, modern man reaffirmed his ancestral inheritances when he took to the fields after wild game. Krutch took a contrary position; he agreed that the need to hunt and fish was instinctive to man, but he still maintained that killing an animal proved to the hunter that he was superior to the animal. In the end, man threatened all nature. Krutch wondered why it was considered vandalism to destroy a work of man, but no crime pertained to the killing of God's creations.

The whole problem with hunting underscored Krutch's argument that modern life increasingly drove man into an
alienated position with nature. It explained why man was more at home in the artificial world of cities, automobiles, and plastic plants. It explained why man put his best hope in technology and growth. To refute arguments that modern man was returning to nature, especially the generation of the sixties, Krutch pointed out that it was true that some people noticed their environment more than they had in the past, but the reason was more because of fear than love. In the end, conservation and environmentalism would not be enough; first man would have to learn to respect, appreciate, and love his natural world.50

Krutch neared death convinced that man adopts a barbaric attitude. Man’s awe of machines and his uncomfortableness in nature curtail his ability to experience beauty. Although, Krutch found personal peace and happiness in his pantheistic philosophy by approving of both the unity and individualism in nature, he could not be comfortable in the world of his fellow man. Ironically, man seemed to be violating the very law that scientists claimed all natural creatures adhered to; man threatened the survival of his own species. "What we ride toward at high speed," Krutch warned, "may not be a more abundant life, but only a more spectacular death."51 The new barbarian prepared the way for his own demise with his emphasis on technological growth and progress at the expense of nature.
FOOTNOTES


16. Ibid., p. 128.


27. Ibid.


30. Ibid., p. 47.

32. Ibid., pp. 3-4.


35. Ibid., p. 64.

36. Ibid., p. 67.

37. Ibid., p. 71.


41. Ibid., p. 186.

42. Ibid.


CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION: THE CHANGING THOUGHT OF
JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH

Although Krutch's thought significantly changed during nearly fifty years of social and literary commentary, in his later years he returned to many of his original ideas. Having altered his views on order in the universe, he reaffirmed the importance of individualism. He continued his speculations on modern barbarism. For Krutch, all the problems he analyzed in *The Modern Temper* were resolved by the 1960's; he was not "inclined to bewail" his life.  

Ironically, the final conclusions were similar to those he reached in 1929. Of course, his pantheistic philosophy was new, different from his thought of the twenties and thirties. Yet, his pessimism was constant from *The Modern Temper* to his last years.

Disillusioned with the laboratory in 1929, he argued that science demonstrated man's incompatibility with nature. Accepting the scientific premise that man was in nature, Krutch insisted that man was not of nature. In other words, he doubted that man was of special creation—he evolved biologically as did any animal—but he felt that man possessed qualities which were not found in the animals. Man
transcended the natural world by applying his intellect to creating values through literature, poetry, and religion. After Krutch developed a pantheistic philosophy—"we're all in this together"—he merely amplified his belief that man was in nature, but he continued to assert that man created values through his literature. The fact that writers, such as the literary Marxists, the literary existentialists, and post-World War II modernists, created values that were obnoxious to Krutch's mind did not negate man's ability to transcend nature. Values more in tune with his own beliefs would have pleased him. Thus Krutch's original argument implied in The Modern Temper that man was in nature but not of it remained true throughout his life, though his later naturalist's interpretations showed that the improvement of man's intellect was in harmony with nature.

A second argument in The Modern Temper also went through minor changes in Krutch's thought. As a method of studying man disinterestedly and judging his worth in nature by applying the law of survival as his immediate goal, science reduced the stature of man. The intellectual-artist listened to the scientists and agreed that laws of nature determined human lives. Consequently, the artist saw himself as mean and trivial and his works reflected a lack of self-esteem. Again, later investigations by Krutch into his original notions only intensified the belief that his early conclusions were accurate. Krutch believed that
behavioristic determinism continued the scientific trends of reducing man's stature. Trapped in a deterministic world, Krutch argued that literary existentialists and post-World War II modernists reflected the scientists' view of man. Their works concentrated on man's perverse and absurd aspects. Krutch was not surprised; he predicted it in *The Modern Tempe*.

Certainly he erred when he considered all scientists to be strict determinists, but he was convinced that behaviorists' ideas predominated in the scientific community.

The pursuit of knowledge as man's ideal calling was Krutch's central thought throughout his career. This idea went through several changes since *The Modern Tempe*. It became a major point in Krutch's estrangement from the common man. In the conclusion to *The Modern Tempe*, he admitted that the scientific contention that survival was the rule of nature mitigated the value of learning. New ideas, especially those of scientists, showed man to be nothing but an animal and weakened man's opinion of himself. For Krutch, science denied man's ability to transcend nature and create values. Krutch however never reputed the value of learning; instead he insisted that by learning the intellectual gained superiority over other men. Unfortunately for Krutch, he faced a dilemma.

New ideas demonstrated that unreflective men lived according to the law of nature because they were primarily
concerned with survival. The common man denied his individualism to more perfectly live as an animal. Showing the common man's harmonious relationship with nature was disconcerting to Krutch. Actually, the dilemma was not as hopeless as he declared it to be in *The Modern Temper* where he stated that the intellectual lived as a man instead of dying as an animal. Krutch's humanistic knowledge—the value of justice, honor, duty, and patriotism—was not necessarily a victim of science. Instead of cherishing the idea that man's ability create values was natural, Krutch emphasized that it was unnatural.

He concluded therefore that the American intellectual elite was at odds with nature and other men. His belief that the pursuit of knowledge widened the gap between the intellectual and nature gradually became reversed in his later studies of the natural world. The conflict between the intellectual and the common man was never accentuated. In his nature books, Krutch insisted that the improvement of man's intellect was as natural as his desire to survive. Man was innately curious. Since mass man denied his curiosity, Krutch found that the common man was not living in harmony with nature.

Krutch's intellectual elitism did not despair about the common man; instead Krutch was paternalistic toward those who subscribed to a spiritually poorer culture. Claiming the validity of a pluralistic culture, Krutch's
intentions were democratic—the people had a right to their own cultural levels—but his writings proved otherwise. For example, New York's World Fair provided entertainment, if one did not go with the intention of learning anything. \(^3\) Television was a significant mode of instruction if educational programs replaced Milton Berle. \(^4\) The means of cultural democracy were desirable only when the end allowed people to attain a higher culture. In other words, Krutch gave the common man no choice in his cultural fares.

This cultural conflict between the intellectual and the common man was the central problem in *The Modern Temper*. Krutch believed that the common man's improved material conditions unfortunately contributed to cultural barbarism. He felt that science showed the life of the common man to be in accord with the natural world, and the mass man was destined to assume control of the country at the expense of the intellectual. Krutch insisted that the common man lived as a social animal and unlike the intellectual, did not demand that the universe have meaning. Hence, common man created no values. Krutch failed to see that catastrophes such as the Great War, which he blamed on the animalistic social goal of survival of the species of the common man, actually involved the making of value judgments. Common man was subject to the delusion that the war was needed to make the world safe for democracy as was the intellectual. \(^5\)
Furthermore, Krutch speculated that communism was in accord with the social nature of the common man. Under communism, independent intellectual thought was subverted to the needs of society. After all, Krutch insisted, man's infatuation with communism was a result of his attempt to adapt to his environment in order to survive. Yet, common man opposed communism vehemently after both world wars. The barbarism that Krutch attributed to the common man was more apparent in many intellectuals. Pro-communist writers dominated the intellectual life of the early-depression years, and Krutch honestly believed that Marxists became enamored of the common man's life. The literary Marxists talked of the need to discard all western culture since it was the product of capitalist ideals. They wanted to "remake man." Krutch confused the life of the common man with the ideals of the Marxists. When Marxist thought lost influence in American intellectual life, one threat of cultural barbarism was quelled.

Other ideas of barbarism in The Modern Temper were not easily dismissed. Krutch believed that machines infatuated the common man and dominated his life. Again, he felt that coming years bore out his contention. Common man accepted machines wholeheartedly and did not speculate on the problems they could cause. A machine-dominated society gave rise to a new kind of barbarism. Krutch could not look to intellectual enlightenment to fight the new barbarians;
many intellectuals were enthralled with the scientists and technologists who made the new civilization possible. Technology enhanced republicanism in that all people were consumers, but it threatened America with the mediocrity of mass production. People's lives were standardized and conformity cost individualism. Ironically, the new barbarism denied the law of survival in nature. Man built a precarious technical civilization which became less and less controlled by his desires. A failure in a simple electrical switch jeopardized an entire city or the pollution of a river or lake threatened the safety of millions of people. Krutch recognized that modern man was so fascinated by technology that he depended on it to solve all his problems. Krutch did not see the very conservative nature of man's infatuation with the machines: machines allowed man to trust in something other than himself to make rules and goals for his society. Instead, Krutch saw machines as proof of man's belief that he held power over nature. Man could divert the course of a river; he could destroy the ecological balance of a particular region; and defying gravity, he could send men into space.

Conformity was a threat of the new barbarism. Krutch's intellectual elitism remained intact; he knew that a cultural common denominator pulled all men to the same cultural level, but the properly enlightened intellectual could resist. Resistance in other areas of American life was not
assured. For example, industrial technology was the same whether it were in the North or the Southwest. Hence, Americans drove the same kind of cars, built the same types of homes and cities, and wore the same kind of clothes no matter where they lived. Individualism was lost in modern America.

The individualism of Krutch's *The Modern Temper* and the individualism of the later years came from different motivations. In 1929 Krutch was a secure staff member at the *Nation* and the individualism that he admired was that of other members of America's intellectual elite. He recognized that the opinions from diverse points of view were desirable, if they were intellectually inspired. Although he felt that science showed that individuality was anathema to the laws of nature where social animalism prevailed, it comforted Krutch to know that no intellectual would give up his individualism. Thus, when the intellectual chose to live apart from the natural world, as he did in *The Modern Temper*, he truly expressed individualism. The literary Marxists attacked this "selfish" or "anti-social" individualism. Suddenly, the originality of an artist was something to be frowned on rather than admired. Intellectual discourse conformed to Marxist philosophy. Krutch's individualism attacked this assumption; he rejected Marxist rules and thereby became somewhat of an outcast within the intellectual elite. Of course, after Marxism lost favor
among American intellectuals, Krutch's individualism was seen in a different light; by then it was one of retreat and escape. Thoreau became his mentor.

Krutch left the Eastern intellectual center for the Arizona desert and a new life. Escaping into nature, he found to his amazement that one could have "a satisfactory life in an increasingly unsatisfactory world." But some of the same charges that interrupted his intellectual life in the East held true when Krutch defended the environment while in Arizona. When at the height of the liberal-Marxist debates in the early-1930's Granville Hicks accused Krutch of not participating actively in liberal causes such as worker strikes, the charges were true. Although Krutch voted the Socialist party ticket several times in his youth, he did it more because he was neither a Democrat nor a Republican than because he was a Socialist. He continued to support liberal legislation until his death, but he was never an activist. He was not much of a joiner. He chose to write on the issues instead. He defended his individualism by quoting Samuel Johnson's dictum that "the remedy for the ills of life is palliative rather than radical." Krutch called the pronouncement to be "the profoundest of political and social truths." It was also an excuse not to be an activist; something which did not change in Krutch's conception of individualism during his lifetime.
The pantheistic philosophy which Krutch cultivated after "discovering" Thoreau and nature influenced some of Krutch's ideas on order, individualism, and the relations between men. Krutch found that animals could not be reduced categorically to instincts and reflex motions. Thus, man, who Krutch, in his early writings, maintained was different from animals in that he was not a creature of instincts and reflexes, became more akin to animals. Animals were different from one another in hundreds of ways; each animal was unique. To say that a man was an animal was not to say that he was beastly. Man had many unique features, most significantly the ability to nurture intelligence. Animals, too, showed faint signs of intelligence--more advanced in some than in others. For Krutch, there was ample evidence to show that all animals were in nature together. It proved that order existed in nature--not a theological great chain of being, but an ecological order of purpose. Since everything, including man, had to live in nature, it was best for everyone to respect the rights of others whether they be an animal or fellow-man. Krutch warned that it was possible for man to forget that he was a member of the human race. When he did so, he lost his chance for survival.11

Krutch's study of nature convinced him of another aspect of the universe he was not prepared to admit in his early life. Nature represented a power which man could not understand, yet he needed to put all his faith in it.
"Faith in wildness, or in nature as a creative force," he said, "has the deeper, possibly the deepest significance for our future. It is a philosophy; it is even, if you like, a religion. It puts our ultimate trust, not in human intelligence, but whatever it is that created human intelligence and is, in the long run, more likely than we to solve our problems."¹² Krutch did not dismiss the creative powers of man's intellect, but merely insisted that there was a creative force more powerful than man. He reached his conclusion shortly before his death in 1970 and did not reveal whether he discovered that a God outside of nature was the creative power. Probably, the creative power of nature itself was the reason for Krutch's religious zeal.

Regardless, Krutch came to depend on nature at the very time when its continued existence was in doubt. Man's destructive powers transformed, altered, or tamed much of nature's wildness. His drive to duplicate his many feats throughout the land, coupled with the explosive population growth, threatened the remaining wilderness. Krutch's doubts about the survival of man, at least man's western civilization, became more obvious as America entered the 1960's. The pessimism of The Modern Temper with its fearful speculations that a more primitive man was happier in the world than an intellectual gave way to doubts whether any man could survive. Krutch admitted that his advanced age might explain part of his pessimism and that "a man
past his mid-seventies should believe the world is in a bad way and getting worse will surprise no one.\textsuperscript{13} But it appeared to him that modern man celebrated his possible demise and, indeed, encouraged it. In one startling sentence in 1969, he summed up what he saw in the modern world. He asked:

\begin{quote}
Is there, I sometimes ask myself, some impulse that unifies all the seemingly diverse tendencies in modern life: the creation of more and more powerful weapons of destruction; the poisoning of the very air we breathe; the search for the absurd in art and the preference for the antinovel and the antihero; the insistence that man himself is not human but mechanical; and finally, the rejection of reason itself?\textsuperscript{14}
\end{quote}

Krutch never found a completely satisfactory answer. His lifetime search for values was undoubtedly his closest arrival at a personal truth. A paradoxical "satisfactory life in an unsatisfactory world" was his legacy for modern man. Nature and individualism provided Krutch a haven in an irrational world which impeded the intellectual's search for the City of God.


3. For Krutch's discussion of the Fair, see page 79.

4. On Krutch's ideals for educational television, see page 82.

5. For Krutch's view on the common man and the Great War, see page 32.


14. Ibid.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Books


Primary Articles


Burnham, James. "Was Europe a Success?" The Nation 139 (1934): 373-5.


Einstein, Albert. "Was Europe a Success?" The Nation 139 (1934): 373-5.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>407-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>120-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>432-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>516-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>515-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>510-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>16-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>496-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>162-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>530-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>34-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>181-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>410-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>356-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>394-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>572-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>16-21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


"What Are Flowers For?" House and Garden 125 (1964): 150-1.


"But Is It Art?" The Nation 137 (1933): 711.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>127</td>
<td>&quot;The Nihilism of Remy De/Gourmont.&quot;</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>The Nation</td>
<td>40-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>128</td>
<td>&quot;The Not-So-Gay White Way.&quot;</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>The Nation</td>
<td>40-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>142</td>
<td>&quot;The Not So Hopeless Movies.&quot;</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>The Nation</td>
<td>585-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>115</td>
<td>&quot;A Note on Irony.&quot;</td>
<td>1922</td>
<td>The Nation</td>
<td>473-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>143</td>
<td>&quot;Novelists Know What Philosophers Don't.&quot;</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>The Nation</td>
<td>277-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140</td>
<td>&quot;On Academic Freedom.&quot;</td>
<td>1935</td>
<td>The Nation</td>
<td>449-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>159</td>
<td>&quot;Only a Detective Story.&quot;</td>
<td>1944</td>
<td>The Nation</td>
<td>647-8, 652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>142</td>
<td>&quot;On the Difficulty of Modern Poetry.&quot;</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>The Nation</td>
<td>283-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>155</td>
<td>&quot;An Open Letter on Critics and Criticism.&quot;</td>
<td>1942</td>
<td>The Nation</td>
<td>95-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>142</td>
<td>&quot;Our Critics, Right or Wrong.&quot;</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>The Nation</td>
<td>22-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125</td>
<td>&quot;Paul Valery and the Intellectualist Critic.&quot;</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td>The Nation</td>
<td>377-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125</td>
<td>&quot;Plastic and Temporal in Art.&quot;</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td>The Nation</td>
<td>643-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>158</td>
<td>&quot;Samuel Johnson as Critic.&quot;</td>
<td>1944</td>
<td>The Nation</td>
<td>218, 220, 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>169</td>
<td>&quot;Science and Literature.&quot;</td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>The Nation</td>
<td>302-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>126</td>
<td>&quot;The Season in Moscow I. The Scene.&quot;</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>The Nation</td>
<td>663-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>126</td>
<td>&quot;The Season in Moscow II. The Plays.&quot;</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>The Nation</td>
<td>691-2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Mencken, H. L. "Was Europe a Success?" The Nation 139 (1934): 373-5.


. "Was Europe a Success?" The Nation 139 (1934): 373-5.

Secondary Books


Secondary Articles and Dissertations

