

Diana's Reign: The Evolution of the Hunter and the Hunted

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Last year, in deliberating on what sort of theme could be used to trace the evolution of humanity down through the millennia for a history course at the University of Dubuque, I decided upon the theme of hunting's relation to human development. It seemed reasonable that hunting, which had been the primary pursuit of ninety per cent of the 80 billion people who have inhabited the earth, would be a theme attractive to undergraduate students in a region of the United States where hunting remains a popular and widely practiced sport and recreation. This assumption proved correct and the upper level history course which unfolded proved to be exciting to me as an educator and—as near as I can tell by their faithful attendance and enthusiastic questions and discussion—to my students as well. Out of the experience of that course, which I am repeating this year, this paper has evolved. It is an attempt to emphasize some of the main points of a history of hunting, from the Middle Pleistocene period of humble *Homo erectus* with his trusty bi-facial hand-ax chasing the regal mammoth, to the Middle Twentieth Century Plasticene period of Princess Anne, astride her faithful horse in pursuit of the humble fox.

In a day when the preservationist-conservationist conflict is reaching the proportions of an Armageddon, it is not necessary to highlight the negative aspects in the development of hunting—for these the biblicist preservationist philosophy inculcated by the *New York Times* keeps us perpetually *au courant*. Instead I endeavor to show the contributions of hunting: its effect on the virtue, values, and artistry of primitive man; its educational influence as enunciated by Plato and Xenophon; its social and political impact, through medieval game laws, upon our democratic heritage; its contribution to present ecological and environmental consciousness-raising through the example of the American Indian; its catalytic role in our nation's first movement towards modern conservation; and its contemporary contribution to our ecological awareness, to our food supply, and to our ability, in the words of José Ortega y Gasset, to enjoy “vacations from the human condition,” to flee the concrete valleys and stone meadows of urban man and woman—this last named contribution illustrating that over man's relation to the natural world Diana still reigns.