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The Split Between Spirit and Nature in European Consciousness

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It is widely agreed that the global ecological crisis which confronts the world today represents one of the most critical turning points that human civilization has ever faced. While earlier cultures have left in their wake a legacy of environmental destruction, including the classical civilizations of Mesopotamia, Greece, Rome, Mesoamerica and China, it has always been possible, in the past, to migrate elsewhere to escape the consequences of deforestation and desertification. In fact, to escape from ecological destruction and overcrowding was probably one of the chief unacknowledged motives behind the mass migrations from Europe to the Americas during the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. That great icon of the 20th century, the view of the blue-green Earth from space, reminds us of two inescapable facts, challenging two of our most cherished illusions: one, that national boundaries do not exist on Earth, except in the maps and minds of humans; and two, that the Earth is finite, its carrying capacity is limited.

Because of these two fundamental facts, the oneness and the finitude of the Earth, the present situation represents a profound historical discontinuity. First, the globe-encircling power of the multinational, techno-industrial, profit-driven growth monster is now destroying the entire biosphere, including the life-support systems for humans. And secondly, the relentless operation of the exponential population growth curve, which is acting as a multiplier on all the other factors of pollution, toxic waste accumulation, loss of soil fertility, loss of biodiversity, impoverishment, famine, urban decay, and so on, is exceeding the carrying capacity of the biosphere, the inevitable result of which is massive ecological collapse. Many ecologists estimate that we have less than a decade to turn things around, before the entire global system goes into irreversible catastrophic collapse.

There is reason to believe that the present situation may even represent, not just a historical crisis, but a discontinuity on the evolutionary time-scale of planet Earth. While species have gone extinct in previous periods of the Earth's evolutionary history, some scientists calculate that the present rate of extinction, which is estimated to reach 50% of all remaining species within the next 100 years, is unprecedented since the climatic catastrophe that brought about the extinction of the dinosaurs 65 million years ago. Not only humanity, but the Earth itself is at a turning point. I would like to address the question of how it is possible that our species, homo sapiens, the "knowing human", has contrived to get itself into this predicament of truly terrifying proportions.

A growing chorus of voices has been pointing out that the roots of the ecological crisis must lie in the attitudes, values, perceptions and basic worldview that we humans of the global industrial society have come to hold. This worldview of the Industrial Age is a product of European and Euro-American culture that has spread throughout the globe with its capital accumulation approach to economic development. The apparent short-term successes of this capitalist model, and the complete collapse of the only alternative, communism, have blinded us to the insidious factors of social degeneration inherent in this model. They have also made us seemingly oblivious and helpless in the face of the

catastrophic ecological destruction taking place in almost all the planet's major ecosystems. The capital accumulation model of economic growth is still being presented, as by an American president recently at the UNCED conference in Rio, as the desirable model to imitate and apply to Third World underdeveloped countries, who can't even feed their impoverished populations and keep their children from dying. Meanwhile the indigenous people of the Earth, sometimes referred to as the Fourth World, are standing by, not at all inclined to follow this model, watching in disbelief while the techno-industrial-consumerist-addictive growth complex self-destructs before our very eyes, - pleading with us not to destroy the last surviving remnants of rainforests, wetlands and wilderness.

Several different metaphors or analogies have been proposed to explain the ecologically disastrous split, the pathological alienation, between human consciousness and the rest of the biosphere. One metaphor, put forward by the American theologian Thomas Berry is that the human species has become autistic in relationship to the natural world (Berry, 1988). Like autistic children, who do not seem to hear, or see, or feel their mother's presence, we have become blind to the psychic presence of the living planet and deaf to its voices and stories, that nourished our ancestors in pre-industrial societies. Another metaphor for our species pathology, put forward by the ecologist Paul Shepard, is that we are suffering from a case of arrested development, a fixation comparable to that of juvenile psychosis (Shepard, 1982). This metaphor fits with the kind of boisterous, arrogant pursuit of individual self-assertion that characterizes the consumerist, exploitative model of economic growth, where the short-term profits of entrepreneurs and corporate share-holders seems to be not only the dominant value, but the only value under consideration.

A third analogy from psychopathology that offers considerable insight, in my view, is the model of addiction. We are a society whose scientists and experts have been describing for forty years, in horrifying and mind-numbing detail, the dimensions of global eco-catastrophe - "Silent Spring", "The Population Bomb", "The Limits to Growth", "The Death of Nature", "The End of Nature" - and we do not seem to be able to stop our suicidal and eco-cidal behavior. This fits the definition of addiction or compulsion: behavior that continues in spite of the individual knowing that it is destructive to family and social relationships. This metaphor of addiction or compulsion, on a vast scale, also parallels in many ways the teachings of the Asian spiritual traditions, especially Buddhism, which have suffering or dissatisfaction as an inevitable feature of all human consciousness and craving or desire at the root of suffering.

Yet another analogy is the notion that we as a species are suffering from a kind of collective amnesia. We, as a species, have forgotten something our ancestors once knew and practiced - certain attitudes and kinds of perception, an ability to empathize and identify with non-human life, respect for the mysterious, and humility in relationship to the infinite complexities of the natural world. I wish to develop this idea further in this talk, by examining some crucial turning points in the history of human consciousness, in which we chose a particular line of development and thereby forgot and neglected something - with fateful consequences. I find this amnesia analogy to be very hopeful, since it is clearly much easier to remember something that we once knew, than it is to develop an entirely new adaptation. We can also see that the indigenous peoples of the Fourth World, whether in North and South America, Southeast Asia or Australia, have been trying for some time to help us remember certain vital attitudes and values that they have preserved and maintained in their own ways of life.

Finally, there is a fifth diagnostic concept that has been advanced. This is the notion of "anthropocentrism" or "homocentrism", which has been described by a number of eco-philosophers and particularly the spiritual philosophy of the "deep ecology movement", formulated by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess. President Vaclav Havel referred to this idea in his 1985 interview with Karel Hvizdala, when he said (and I am translating

from the German edition) "I sense that the proud anthropocentrism of modern man, who is convinced that he can know everything and subordinate everything, is somehow in the background of the present crisis." The Czech president's remark underscores the fact that by "anthropocentrism" is meant not only man's apparent inability to empathically identify with other species and life-forms, i.e. to transcend his human self-identification, which is bad enough, and certainly seems to condone and encourage a reckless exploitative attitude. (Indeed most of us apparently find it hard enough to identify with other human groups - particular those who are "different" in some way, whether racially, ethnically, nationally or whatever - a lack that has lead and continues to lead to the well-known story of war, aggression, colonialism and neglect in inter-human relationships).

The deep ecology critique of the modernist anthropocentric worldview goes further than this lack of empathic identification with non-human life-forms. Rather, it is saying that humans tend to assume, with both religious and scientific rationalizations, that we as a species are superior to other species and life-forms, and therefore have the right to dominate, control and use them for our own purposes as we see fit. Nature has instrumental or use value only, not intrinsic value, according to this human arrogance or superiority complex. It has also been referred to as human chauvinism, or speciesism - the assumption of superiority and implied right to exploit and abuse. I suggest that the precise comparisons to this attitude are sexism, racism, nationalism and classism: in each of these forms of collective psychopathology, one group of humans assumes superiority to another and therefore the right to control, dominate and use the other. This leads us to the perhaps surprising conclusion that humanism, that much prized core idea and value system of Western civilization, is a precise parallel to sexism, racism, nationalism and classism (Metzner, 1992).

The religious rationalization for humanist arrogance has been the well-known set of instructions from God to Adam and Eve, in the biblical Book of Genesis: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over...all the wild beasts that move upon the earth." (Gen. 1:28). Even though ecologically-minded theologians in recent times have justly argued that "dominion" does not mean "domination - exploitation" but rather "wise stewardship or management", like a gardener tending his garden, it cannot be denied that as a matter of historical fact, domination, control and exploitation have been Western humanity's guiding values in relationship to nature.

Some historians (e.g. White, 1967) tell us that in Europe the controlling and conquering relationship to nature began in earnest during the Middle Ages, at the high point of Christianity's ascendancy, with a combination of factors: the invention of the iron plow, which allowed greater food production compared to wooden ones, but also increased soil depletion; the rapid deforestation of Europe's vast forests (which it is estimated originally covered more than two thirds of the European land-surface) to feed the growing number of iron foundries and metal shops, needed to make plows and tools, armors and weapons; and wood was also needed to build houses for the growing populations, as well as ships for the navies of the warring monarchies....The domination and exploitation of nature was not an explicit teaching of the Christian church, of course, but it was condoned and not prevented by a transcendental theology which saw the divine realm, the *civitas dei*, as high above and inaccessible to human beings, and saw the natural world of earth and water, animals and plants, flesh and blood, feelings and pleasures of the senses, as the corrupted world of the fall, of sin, and of the devil, one of whose names was "Lord of this World".

Clearly, wise stewardship and management of resources for sustainable development, especially in an era of population explosion, is a better value system in relationship to nature, than the reckless and ego-centric conquest and exploitation attitude which has prevailed until recently, and which still guides the activities of the great multinational energy corporations. Like the pirate bands of former centuries, the multinationals, and the capital markets which finance them, operate largely free from the constraints of national

laws and governments, plundering the material resources of the planet, - the forests, minerals, fossil fuels, animals - without even any regard for sustainable human use, much less ecosystem integrity or the intrinsic value of non-human forms of life. The deep ecology critique of the anthropocentric worldview asks us to at least question whether we in fact have the knowledge, or the wisdom, to be wise stewards; and whether we have the ethical right to simply assume that nature exists for us to use. They advocate instead a biocentric or ecocentric attitude, which acknowledges the complex web of human interdependence with all other life-forms, and calls for us to develop a "land ethic" and an "ecological conscience" - two terms coined by the American ecologist Aldo Leopold in the 1940's (Leopold, 1948).

I would like to discuss now what I earlier called the scientific rationalization of the humanist superiority complex. The exploitation and destruction of the natural environment by technological means, developed in the absence of any ecological sensibility or ethical consideration of the rights of non-human life-forms, which began in the Middle Ages, increased dramatically during the times of the scientific revolution of the 16th century, and then again with the industrial revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries. With the work of Galileo, Copernicus, Isaac Newton, Johannes Kepler, Francis Bacon and Rene Descartes, came the shift away from the medieval worldview toward the mechanistic-materialistic worldview of the modern era. No longer was the Earth the center of God's creation and humans the "crown of creation", halfway between beasts and angels in the great chain of beings. According to the new "mechanical philosophy" as it was called, the Sun-centered cosmos was like a gigantic clockwork, with Earth and other planets orbiting with measured regularity, set into motion by the Creator God, but otherwise not interfered with. Man's role, enhanced by the already considerable successes in mastering natural processes, was to function to improve on nature, to discover her secrets, by experimental and quantitative means, and to put them to use for better living conditions for humans. In short, humans were to be God's appointed mechanics, formulating and applying the new mechanical science.

The psychological motivations and the cultural-historical situation of the founding fathers of modern science were complex and challenging. Their political struggles with the spiritual and magical conceptions of medieval hermeticism, and their evident masculine gender bias, have been documented and analyzed by feminist scholars (Merchant, 1980; Keller, 1985). They were men of religious conviction and some, like both Newton and Kepler, were deeply involved in studies of the hermetic spiritual traditions of alchemy and astrology. I also do not by any means wish to minimize their achievement, particularly in helping to free European culture from the dogmatic excesses of the hierarchical, theocentric ideology of the medieval world, which gave us such systemic collective perversions as the crusades and the inquisition, and was helpless in dealing with the ravages wrought by plagues, famines and incessant feudal warfare. I only wish to point out two crucial aspects of this worldview transition that have generally not been appreciated.

One is that a kind of deal was struck between religion and the new science, resulting in a split worldview, a culture of two worlds: the world of the creator, of spirit, of divinity, of transcendent realities and of moral concern, was the realm of religion, and science agreed to stay out of it. On the other hand the world of matter and forces which could be perceived through the senses and measured and manipulated was the realm of science, and the church gave the scientists free rein to develop their value-free, purpose-less, blind, yet totally deterministic, mechanistic conception of the universe. Thus the stage was set for a further and complete desacralization of the natural world, with the transcendent creator progressively marginalized, until we have the totally life-less, non-sentient, purpose-less world of the modern age, in which the technological-industrial destruction of the environment is accepted and ignored, until it becomes too obvious, in which case a further technological fix is proposed, leading to further disruptions and dislocations.

The second aspect of the 15th/16th century paradigm transition that I wish to point to, is that the development of the new mechanistic-materialistic worldview occurred synchronistically (i.e. not coincidentally) with the birth of Renaissance humanism, the Protestant reformations, and the first explorations of the Americas. Each of these movements, unintentionally and unconsciously, further deepened the split between human consciousness and the natural world. Renaissance humanism, with the rediscovery of the culture of antiquity, celebrated the intrinsic worth of the human beings and gave a much-needed boost to human self-esteem, burdened as it was with a thousand years of indoctrination about original sin. The early Italian humanists, like Marcilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola, surely could not foresee the subtle beginnings of the humanist arrogance that was to have such devastating consequences later.

The Protestant reformation, with its emphasis on the individual's direct access to spiritual and moral guidance from scripture, free of the corrupted and controlling hierarchical priesthood, attacked the exaggerated idolatry of medieval Catholicism, with its Mary cult and numerous images of saints and pilgrimage shrines. Early Christianity had to some extent incorporated the old European pagan nature religion by placing chapels and churches on natural sacred sites, by turning ancient seasonal festivals into church holy days, and by transforming some of the ancient gods and goddesses into Christian saints. The protestant reformers and puritans, in their iconoclastic zeal, contributed to the elimination of the last vestiges of pre-Christian European paganism, thereby further deepening the alienation of the urban populations from the psychic renewal found in a spiritual perception of the natural world.

Chief among the pagan-to-Christian transformations of religious imagery was the Mary cult, which was the essentially the popular Christian retention of the Goddess religion of ancient times. The most powerful Mary images, in terms of miraculous healings and pilgrimage magnetism, were and are to this day, the images of the Black Virgin, of which there are about 500 in various churches in Europe, including Chartres in France, Einsiedeln in Switzerland, Altötting in Bavaria, Czestochowa in Poland, and Loreto in Italy. Although enjoying great popular appeal, the images of the Black Madonna are a source of some embarrassment to the church, which tries to explain away their blackness by ludicrous references to the blackening effect of centuries of smoke from candles and incense burners. The Black Virgin has been identified with ancient black goddesses such as Artemis, Cybele and particularly the Egyptian Isis (Begg, 1985). Black was the color of fertility in the old Goddess religion, based on the blackness of the fertile earth.

I turn now to the third of the movements which changed the world in the 15th/16th century. The explorations of the Americas initiated a period in which first the Spanish and Portuguese, and later the English, French and Dutch colonists-imperialists were able to extract and ship to Europe unbelievable quantities of gold, silver, foodstuffs, spices, drugs, and other raw materials, providing the fuel for the explosive growth of capital accumulation (Weatherford, 1988). This laid the foundation for the growth to world-wide dominance of the Euro-American capitalist-industrial economies, continuing to this day to ravage the biosphere with ever-increasing efficiency and intensity.

The shadow side of this European colonialist enterprise - the genocidal holocaust perpetrated upon uncounted millions of the indigenous people of South and North America, via the introduction of virulent new diseases, outright massacre, dislocation and theft of land, slavery and socio-economic oppression, is to this day not fully known or acknowledged by the dominant Euro-American society (Sale, 1990; Crosby, 1986). Indians of North and South America, in this year of 1992, are not celebrating Columbus' "discovery of the new world", but instead their history of "500 years of resistance". They are remembering and mourning the loss and destruction of ancient cultures (over 600 separate nations with different languages existed in the Americas before Columbus), the devastation brought to unimaginably beautiful lands, and the irreversible loss of numerous species of wildlife. Nor should it be thought that this injustice and the

oppression of Native Americans is a thing of the past, even in the United States.

There is another feature of the modern scientific worldview which has tended to support the human assumption of superiority toward animal and natural life, - namely certain unexamined value judgements inherent in the popular understanding of the Darwinian theory of evolution. These were not necessarily features of Darwin own's belief system - and they are features that the current view of evolution has totally discredited. Darwin dealt a severe blow to our human self-esteem and humanist self-importance by showing that humans were not the "crown of creation", but "descended from the apes". We were able to salvage our battered self-image somewhat by arguing that at least we were the most advanced and complex of mammals. Evolution had clearly progressed from the simple to the complex - as in the 19th century Tree of Life diagrams, where one-celled organisms were at the root and *homo sapiens* at the top, the crown of the tree. This view then permitted a comfortable continuation of the old belief that we humans were superior to all other animals, because we were the most highly evolved species, and therefore had both the knowledge and the right to tinker with nature and use it as we saw fit, for our own purposes.

Current evolutionary biology has shattered all of those assumptions, depriving us of this last rationalization for the humanist superiority complex (Gould, 1989). Evolution is not equivalent to progress; later in time does not mean more advanced; and the more complex organism are not more highly evolved than the simple. Evolution is simply changing adaptations to changing environments. Since the discoveries of the Burgess Shale, it is not even true any more that later organisms are more complex than earlier. The evolutionary tree of life is not so much a single-trunk progression from simple to complex, but rather an exuberantly branching bush with many past experimental forms that Nature has long discarded because they failed to adapt to changing conditions. Nor is it true that more complex organisms are better adapted, or more successful, than simple ones. If anything there is some reason to believe that complex specialized organisms are more delicate and hence vulnerable to slight variations. Indeed, by the criterion of adaptive longevity, the evolutionary champions on this Earth are the single-celled prokaryotic bacteria, which originated 2 1/2 billion years ago, were the only life-forms for two-thirds of the total duration of life before complex multi-celled organisms arrived on the scene, and will almost certainly survive us, if *homo sapiens* contrives to make the planet uninhabitable for the so-called "higher" forms of life.

I would like now to summarize the main point I have been making by saying that, due to a complex variety of social and historical reasons, a core feature of the European psyche is a dissociative split between spirit and nature. We have a deeply engrained belief that our spiritual life, our spiritual practices, must tend in the opposite direction than our nature. Spirit, we imagine, rises upward, into transcendent realms, whereas nature, which includes bodily sensations and feelings, sinks or draws us downward. In some versions of this core image, the contrast between the two realms or tendencies is even sharper: not only separation, but opposition. In the Christian, especially Protestant version of this myth, we feel we have to overcome our "lower" animal instincts and passions, to conquer the body, in order to be spiritual and attain to "heaven", or "enlightenment". In the modern psychological, Freudian version, the conflict is between the human ego consciousness, which has to struggle against the unconscious body-based, animal id, in order to attain consciousness and truly human culture. Our conflicted relationship with the natural, what Freud called *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*, the discontent of culture, was for him the price we had to pay for the possibility of civilization.

We can see here also that the split or opposition between the human spirit and nature applies in both meanings of "spirit" (or German *Geist*): spiritual as the religious, transpersonal realm of consciousness (*geistlich*) and spiritual as the mental realm (*geistig*). The Christian version of this core image deals with spirituality as what we now call the transpersonal dimensions of consciousness, the realm of the sacred, the *civitas*

dei....This image says: to enter into the city of God, the divine realms, you have to work against your nature (the opus contra naturam.). In the modern Freudian model, in which the reality of any spiritual or transpersonal realms is denied, the split and conflict has been transferred to the psychological realm: in order to attain truly human consciousness, the mind or ego has to free itself from the constraints and distractions of the natural realm of bodily impulses and feelings. The similarity of the two formulations lies in this dualism: we could say that throughout the history of Western consciousness there has been a conception of two selves - a natural self, which is earthy and natural, and tends downward, and a spiritual or mental self, which is airy and ethereal, and tends upward.

The roots of this image go back to the Hebrew Old Testament, where we read in the words of the prophet Isaiah: "My ways are not your ways, says the Lord; just as heaven and earth are apart, so are my thoughts separate from yours" (Isaiah, 55:8). Perhaps its most vivid formulation is by the 18th century German poet-philosopher Goethe, who formulated this core dualistic image in a famous passage in his drama Faust. The story of Faust, with his restless and ruthless quest for knowledge as personal power, strikes us as somehow a mythic key to the European psyche.

Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach, in meiner Brust, Die eine will sich von der anderen trennen:
Die eine halt, in derber Liebeslust, Sich an die Welt mit klammernden Organen;
Die andre hebt gewaltsam sich vom Dunst Zu den Gefilden hoher Ahnen.
Two souls, alas, are dwelling in my breast,
And one is striving to be separate from the other.
One holds, with sensual, passionate desire, Fast to the world, with clinging organs;
The other rises strong from earthly mist To the ethereal realms of high ancestral spirits.

The deep-rooted pervasiveness of this spirit-nature dualism in European consciousness is such that it is hard for us to imagine how it could be otherwise. Indeed, in speaking here as a psychologist and historian of ideas, I am not concerned with assessing the metaphysical truth or validity of this conception. I personally believe there is an essential valid core to this image, although it has become distorted and oversimplified. Its disastrous consequences become clear when we reflect upon the fact that if we feel ourselves mentally and spiritually separate from our own nature (body, instincts, sensations, and so on) then this separation will also be projected outward, so that we think of ourselves as separate from the great realm of nature, the Earth, all around us. Western culture - this great civilization of which we are so proud, in both its religious and its humanist scientific worldview - all have this dualism built into them. The material world is inert, insentient, and non-spiritual, and no kind of psychic or spiritual communication or communion between humans and Earth or Nature is possible, according to this worldview. In an ironic linguistic twist, the magna mater, the Great Mother Goddess of ancient times, has become the dead matter of modern materialism.

It does not take much imagination to see how the disastrous consequences of this distorted perception have been played out in the spread of European civilization around the globe. And it *is* a distorted, counter-factual image: we human beings are not, in fact, separate, or above nature. We are part of nature - we are in the Earth, not on it. We are like the cells in the body of the vast living organism that is planet Earth. The kind of population pressures and ecosystem destruction that we humans are now wreaking upon the body of Earth, are exactly analogous to the excessive multiplication of cells and systemic malignancy that we recognize in medicine as cancerous tumor. Indeed it is no exaggeration to say that humans have become a plague upon the Earth. Disseminated primatemia is the name suggested for this planetary disease by the biologist James Lovelock, the originator of the Gaia theory (Lovelock, 1991).

The difficulty we might have in extracting ourselves from this malignant oppositional dualism between the spiritual and the natural, can be alleviated somewhat when we compare this conception to the worldview of the indigenous inhabitants of North and South America, or indeed, primal, shamanistic, cultures all over the world. For these

people, spirituality is not separate or above nature - the spiritual is the natural. Spiritual practice consists in communing with the living intelligences, called "spirits", perceived to be indwelling in nature, with conscious respect and reverence. Methods of heightening consciousness to bring about such communion include altered state "journeys", with hallucinogenic plants or drumming, wilderness vision quests, sweat-lodge and other healing ceremonies involving singing, and trance states induced through postures, dancing, fasting and other practices. This is the worldview known to anthropologists as animism, which sees all life-forms, including animals, plants, rocks, forests, rivers, mountains, fields, seas, winds, as well as sun, moon, stars, and the total cosmos, as pervaded by and interconnected with spiritual energy and intelligence. In theological language, such a view is known as immanentism, or panentheism - that divinity, the creative spiritual forces, exist within and pervade throughout everything.

I should point out that the dualistic split I am claiming is characteristic of the European psyche, applies to the dominant collective consciousness, and that there have been exceptional individual mystics and artists who have articulated quite a different view. I give three examples. There are the visionary teachings of the great 11th century Rhineland Benedictine abbess Hildegard von Bingen, who spoke of *viriditas* - the greenness, as the creative power of God manifest throughout the creation. Hildegard said that "the soul is in the body the way the sap is in the tree" - in other words, the soul nourishes and sustains the body, instead of having to rise above it or struggle against it. She represents part of what theologian Matthew Fox calls the "creation spirituality" tradition within Christianity - as distinct from the mainstream tradition which has taught a spirituality concerned with the fall and redemption (Fox, 1985; Metzner, 1988).

There are the works of the visionary English poet and painter William Blake, who in his book *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* wrote that "the notion that man has a body distinct from his soul, is to be expunged". This would result in a cleansing of "the doors of perception... (and) everything would appear to man as it is: infinite. For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern." Blake is saying that in ancient times our perception was more extended, we perceived the spirits of nature and of places, even of cities and towns, and that we have lost this clairvoyant spiritual perception, due to erroneous beliefs and the power politics of the priesthoods, which emphasized abstract, mental deities, instead of the directly perceptible spirits. (Aldous Huxley used Blake's term "The Doors of Perception" as the title for his account of his mescaline experiences - and psychedelic experiences induced by hallucinogenic plants are one of the time-honored means by which animistic-shamanistic cultures have maintained their communication with the spirits of nature).

My third example of a philosopher who succeeded in transforming this fateful spirit-nature dualism is Goethe, who in the second part of the *Faust* drama, described a series of visionary experiences, in which the sorcerer travels through multiple worlds of many realities and many deities. Duality is dissolved to plurality and multiplicity. In fact, in the lines immediately following the passage I quoted earlier, about the two souls moving upward and downward, Faust says: "if there be spirits of the air, that float and rule between the earth and sky, descend I beg you from the golden vapors, and sweep me forth to rainbow-colored life." ("O gibt es Geister in der Luft, Die zwischen Erd und Himmel herrschend weben, So steigt nieder aus dem goldenen Duft, Und fuhrt mich weg zu neuem bunten Leben!") Interestingly, the "intermediate spirits" that the poet-sorcerer is here invoking, the spirits of the air, are precisely the spirits, with that name, that the early Christian fathers, including St. Augustine, concerned as they were with counteracting pagan animism, said were demonic spirits and should be avoided.

To return to primal societies, we would expect that societies with such an animistic, shamanistic, panentheistic worldview would have a very different, more respectful and less destructive relationship with their natural environment. And indeed, although pre-conquest Native Americans intervened in sometimes drastic ways with their environment,

there is no evidence that in the tens of thousands of years of habitation of the American continent, they ever achieved anything even close to the kinds of massive destruction that has occurred in the past 500 years. Ecologists in all parts of the world who have been searching for ways to formulate ecologically sustainable ways of development, have increasingly come to the realization that the indigenous peoples of the Third and Fourth World, with their so-called "primitive" animistic and shamanistic beliefs, have in fact been practicing the kinds of sustainable life-styles that we are now trying to develop (Mander, 1991). Indeed, how could it be otherwise? An ecological adaptation has to be sustainable for it to have survived. The primal cultures surviving today far exceed our Western civilization in longevity.

The situation becomes even more hopeful, and our chances of overcoming the pathological consequences of the European humanist superiority complex are even better, when we realize that not only have other cultures the world over not had this division, but our own pre-scientific and pre-Christian ancestors also did not have it. The religion and worldview of the Celtic, Germanic, Baltic, and Slavic people, who inhabited Europe prior to the Christian era, was animistic and shamanistic: gods and goddesses were perceived and worshipped in forest groves and sacred springs, on mountain tops and in great stone circles. In addition to gods and goddesses there were other classes of beings associated with nature, who were not human, but certainly equal, if not superior, to humans and deserving of respect, - such as giants and dwarves, elves and trolls, fairies, leprechauns, gnomes, satyrs, nymphs and mermaids...and the little river spirits, the vodnici, that live in Prague, under the bridges of the Vlatava. These deities and beings could be communed with by anyone who was willing to practice the methods taught by the shamans and their successors the witches, the wise women of the woods - using magical plants and stones, chants and incantations, dances and rituals.

This is the nature religion that was eliminated by Christian monotheism during the first few centuries of our era. The monotheistic religions devoted considerable energy to eliminating the competition, as it were, and thereby denied and denigrated the creative spiritual energies inherent in nature, that the ancients had worshipped from the earliest times. The Hebrew priests and prophets railed and raved against those of their people who followed the Canaanite great goddess called Asherah, or Astarte, or Ashtaroht, whose devotional shrines, known as asherim, were set up in trees, or rocks, or other wild places. St. Augustine and other Church fathers wrote that the many deities and spirits, known as daimones, that the Greeks and Romans were apt to consult and commune with, were really "intermediate spirits", of the air. Since God was a transcendent Creator, far removed from the affairs of humans, one could not communicate with him directly. The intermediate spirits of the air were therefore *demonic*, in the sense of "evil spirits" working against the true religion, and ruled by Satan, referred to as "prince of the air" or "lord of this world" (von Franz, 1980).

The direct communion with divine spirit, as taught and practised by the Gnostic sects, who held rituals which ordinary men or women could conduct, was banned by the Church as blasphemous. Gnosticism was violently and completely suppressed in the early centuries, so that even the Gnostic texts were lost, until they were re-discovered in Nag Hammadi, in the 1950's. Pagan deities were either disparaged or demonized: the image of Pan, the goat-bodied nature god of the Greeks, became the image of the horned and hooved devil. Likewise, Odin-Wotan, Nordic-Germanic god of ecstatic trance, of warriors, shamans and poets, became demonized. Many of the goddess figures, including the Germanic Freya, goddess of love, sexuality and fertility, were equated to maleficent witches. Those who followed the old nature religion were branded as "pagan" or "heathen", which originally simply meant "country dwellers" or "heath dwellers". The country folk were more likely to have preserved beliefs in spirits and knowledge of healing and magical herbs than those who lived in towns with walls, who worshipped in churches of stone, under the direction of priests. Many Christian chapels were built on the sacred sites of the old religion. In the 8th century the Frankish emperor Charlemagne, in an attempt to forcibly convert the Saxons, caused to have cut down the Irminsul, a great

ash tree that represented the central holy world tree of the Germanic people. One can appreciate the magnitude and impact of this attack if one were to desecrate or destroy St. Peter's in Rome, or the Kaaba in Mecca, or the temple in Jerusalem.

When, starting in the 12th century, the Church began to be concerned again about the numbers of followers who were joining reform movements like the Cathars in Provence, it launched the internal crusades and inquisitions against those it suspected and accused of heresy, including the Cathars and the Knights Templar. Anti-semitism also increased again, as the Spanish monarchy forced the Jews out of Spain in the same year that Columbus sailed for America. Finally, in the 14th century, the Church turned its full inquisitorial fury against the pagan witches, who were branded as being in league of the devil and therefore heretical and therefore punishable by burning to death. A simple accusation of witchcraft, then defined as "harm doing" (maleficium), was enough to set into motion the process of extracting confessions by torture - which then led to death anyway, plus the names of further suspected witches, who would then also be tortured and burned, and their property confiscated by the church and civic authorities.

No one knows to this day how many witches were killed - estimates range from 2 to 9 million. It seems clear that the vast majority were women, many simple country women, some of whom were maintaining the herbal knowledge, especially as related to midwifery, contraception and abortion. Some were shamans who used hallucinogenic plants (particularly of the solanaceous or nightshade variety) to induce visionary experiences of shamanic flight, referred to as flying through the air to the witches's sabbath. The brutal persecution and extermination of witches, originally simply the "wise women of the woods", which continued for three centuries in all the countries of Europe, ranks as a biophobic, misogynistic holocaust, a karmic stain on the history of the Church that has not to this day been even fully acknowledged, much less atoned.

It also cut Christianity off even more from the natural world, by denying and demonizing its pagan heritage. It is my belief that the Christian churches will not regain their diminishing spiritual authority, until they can reconcile with their historical suppression of paganism and witchcraft. There is nothing in the nature of a religious movement that requires these kinds of forced and brutal conversion methods. For example, Buddhism spread from its native India, to Tibet, Southeast Asia, China and Japan, in each country integrating in a peaceful and respectful manner with the pre-existing animistic, shamanistic religions in those countries.

To summarize my argument: I have suggested that at the core of the psychic alienation of Western humanity from the natural world, with its disastrous consequences of global ecological destruction is a humanist superiority complex that is a deeply rooted feature of the European psyche. For a complex variety of historical reasons, Europeans have come to experience spirituality and nature as separate or opposed. "Two souls, alas, dwell in my breast".

It was not always so, but for the last 2000 years, under the influence of Judaeo-Christian transcendental monotheism, we have become further and further removed from the kind of direct awareness of the spiritual presences in nature, that our pagan ancestors enjoyed. For the last 500 years, as the worldview of medieval Christianity gave way to the mechanistic-materialistic worldview of modern science, the alienation from the Earth has become even more profound. Humanity in the modern era confronted nature as an alien and terrifying world, without even any of the other-worldly solace that religion had provided. In the modern atheistic, materialistic worldview, there is no spiritual being anywhere, either in this life or after death, either in nature or above it. Nature, consisting of inert, random, machine-like processes, had to be conquered, subdued, controlled and dominated - and a phenomenal technology developed to do just that.

In pointing to the role of mechanistic science and industrial technology in aggravating our

alienation from the Earth, I do not suggest an impossible neo-Luddite return to a pre-industrial era. I do suggest that it is possible to recall certain values that we have lost, and that it is desirable to examine the value systems with which we develop and apply technology. Economist-philosophers such as E.F. Schumacher, Ivan Illich and others have suggested "small-scale" and "appropriate technologies". Instead of being used to feed runaway cycles of exploitation and addictive consumerism ("producing more and more goods for more and more people"), technology needs to be re-directed toward the preservation and restoration of damaged eco-systems, which can sustainably support all forms of life, including but not limited to the human. Models and designs for this kind of ecologically sensitive technology exist - we only have to muster the political will to choose them.

Similarly, in pointing to the role of transcendental monotheism and the Christian anti-pagan bias in the severing of our spiritual connection to the natural world, I do not imply that we must all become pagans and deny 2000 years of Christianity, plus Judaism and Islam. These traditions have become an indelible part of our psychic constitution. I do believe it is possible for Christians, Jews and Muslims to re-connect with the nature religion of their ancestors, and that when they do so, a tremendous spiritual revitalization can take place, in which the natural world and the divine world are recognized as one and the same. I see this as a kind of remembering, like Odin the shaman-god drinking from the well of remembrance, situated at the root of the great world tree - from which he gained ancestral and evolutionary knowledge of the origins of things, and the value of such remembering for the present and the future.

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