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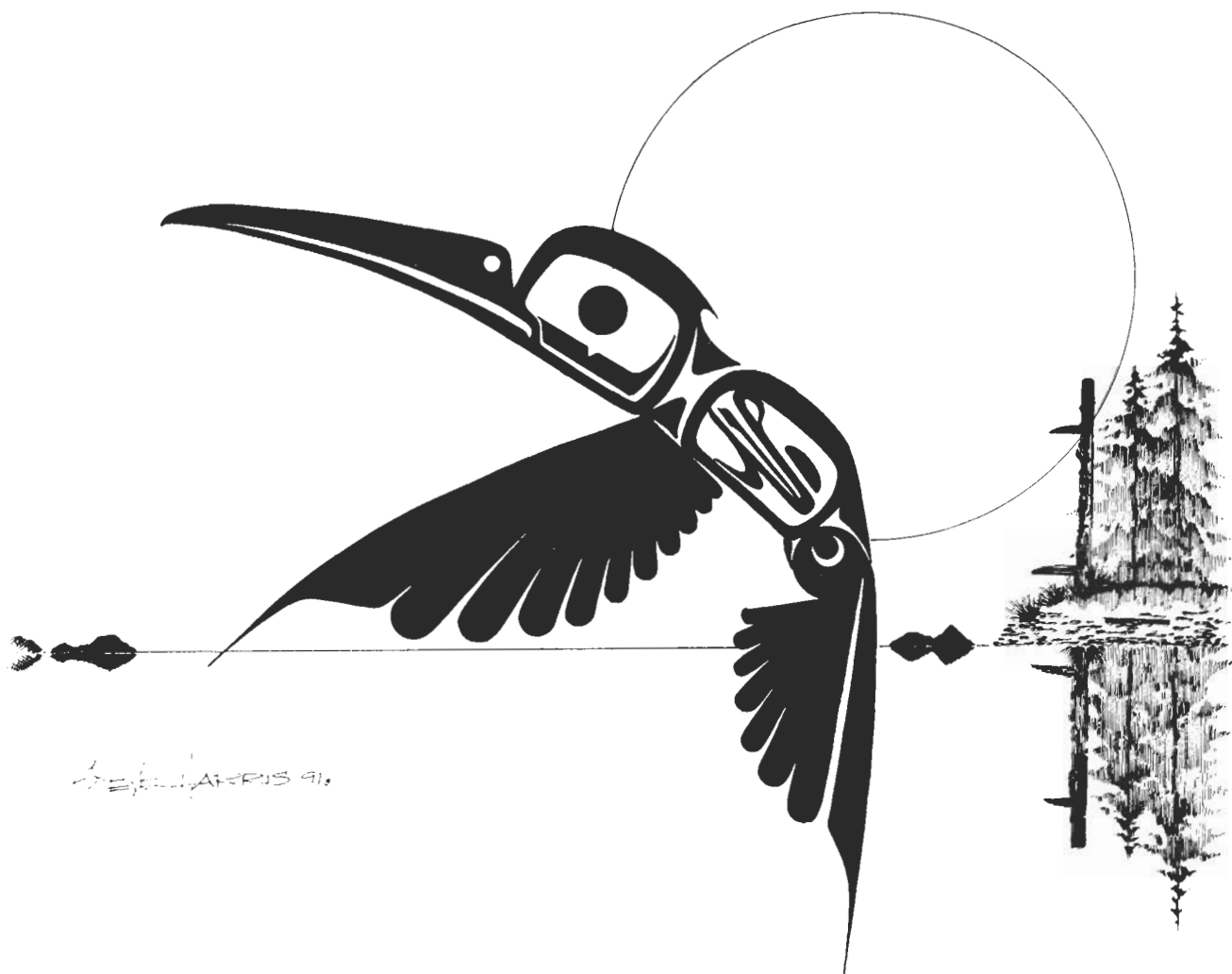
# THE TRUMPETER

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*Deborah Harris 91.*

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# THE TRUMPETER

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## COMING FULL CIRCLE: PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON THE TRUMPETER

Alan R. Drengson, Editor

With this issue of **The Trumpeter** we finish our 8th full year of publication. Since the first volume had 5 issues, as we started in the Fall of 1983, this issue is whole number 33. During these past eight years we have aimed to publish articles, stories, art, poetry, reviews and discussions which would illustrate the introduction of the ecological dimensions into every facet of human activity and thought. We have also published information on books, organizations, films, and popular music and culture, to show how the deep ecology movement is influencing these areas.

It was not our aim to be exhaustive. We have tried to avoid being overly academic, but have nonetheless published articles which make substantial contributions to a new ecosophic culture both in theory and in practice. We have received a small number of complaints over the years that we were becoming too ad-

vocatory or too academic, that we had ignored some important author or topic, or that we were not academic enough and too widely spread.

In retrospect, the letters of praise outweighed the critical letters by at least 100 to 1. In surveying where we have been, I am impressed with the territory we have journeyed through. Sometimes we were far from any recognized trails, at other times we followed well marked paths and saw things that had not been seen or appreciated before. We have always been guided by generous supporters who are both readers and contributors. The quality of the journal has continued to improve and our audience to expand.

As an editor, I have now come full circle, for in many ways the publication of this issue, with its two focuses, one on Native

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Spirituality and one on phenomenology, complete the ones on my original list of those to do, and for personal reasons this issue marks a return to origins. Let me explain.

As Donald Hughes notes, Carl Jung once remarked on the astonishing percentage of his clients from North America who were not Native Americans, and yet had Indian elements in their psychic makeup. He reported that when his clients encountered an Indian figure in their imagination or dreams, "it was often a sign that healing had begun." Let us hope that the open resurfacing of Native spirituality in North America marks the beginning of a healing process of ourselves and our relationships not only to one another but also to the land we all love.

When we examine the history of other indigenous cultures which at first seemed to be overwhelmed by another cultural group sweeping into their midst, we find a remarkable pattern. Time and again such invasions have led to the birth of a new culture which was initially characterized by features of the invader's past, brought with them from outside. Over a few generations, however, elements from the indigenous cultures began to reassert themselves, until the new culture was more heavily influenced by these elements. This was especially true in the area of indigenous spirituality in relation to the land itself.

As phenomenological studies of place and sense of place have revealed, the more deeply rooted a people is in a place, over time, the more their psyches and cultures become interwoven with the unique elements of those places. It is not possible to appreciate or understand the beauty and wisdom of indigenous cultures without we ourselves coming to know the places in which they have their being.

Who we are as a people depends upon what we identify with, both consciously and subconsciously. As immigrants we arrived rootless, restless and in search of home. Many of our ancestors were fleeing oppression and lack of opportunity, and had no desire or intention to destroy the lives of others. Yet they were instruments of a larger colonization which had a destructive impact on the Natives and other living beings of this continent.

Subconsciously we all have internalized, by now, varying degrees of Native culture and spirituality. Those who have come to love this land, this North American Earth, Turtle Island, and who have known its places of power, sacred mountains and groves, and its many animal beings, have internalized the spirituality of this land which resonates through all Native cultures. But many have gone even further. Like the main Character in "Dances with Wolves" they have followed the Native ways to find guardian spirits and the Creator.

As children, many of us grew up playing in wild Nature, finding arrowheads and other artifacts, identifying with the Native arts and skills. Some of us were taught these arts and crafts directly. With the U.S. "American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978" there has been an impressive **open** resurgence of Native religious culture and ceremony. Non-Natives are studying the ways of the shaman, and Native artists and performers are beginning to influence the dominant North American culture in ever deepening ways.

My own participation in ceremonial renewal, spirit and vision quests, has involved a lifetime of journeying and wilderness

wandering. I was astonished to find how close to the surface is knowledge of these powers and spirits, when I entered the ceremonial circle, with fire at its center and drum and invocation filling the air. It was all so familiar and characterized by a sense of coming home.

I was born on, and spent my early years as a plains dweller. Even by 1934 most of the tall grasses and native species had been plowed under. But there were places where they remained, and to those places we children were drawn, and there we began to "go native." Many years later I went off to University in the big city, having spent my former years on the fringes of urban life, in small towns or in the country.

In College I first came under the spell of a man who had then recently fled a Europe torn by war. He was a great teacher, a grandfather figure who was tough minded, disciplined, but gentle and compassionate. He introduced me to the life of the seeker of knowledge and wisdom, the way of philosophy. He had been as a young man a student of Husserl, the founder of phenomenology. He considered himself a phenomenologist and emphasized to me the importance of developing the skills of phenomenological analysis. He warned me about the deadend of positivism, with its too narrow forms of analysis. But then we parted company, and I went off to study -- as it turned out -- with those who followed the approach he had warned me about.

I learned new skills and became clever in their application, got degrees in philosophy, and wandered far from the introduction which this grandfather philosopher had given me to the spirit of philosophy as the loving pursuit of wisdom. However, I never forgot him or his teachings; and all the while at a deeper level the spirit of phenomenology as an open ended inquiring, opening to ever larger lifeworlds, was working its way deeper into my life.

I rediscovered this in journeying spiritually and philosophically to the Orient, to study the cultures and spiritual traditions of the East. But also I rediscovered this when I taught anthropology, while in my first teaching position. From anthropology I was able to escape ethnocentrism, but most importantly I came back to appreciate the depth and influence of Native culture. On the Eastern leg of the journey I rediscovered the spontaneous, unmediated, holistic consciousness toward which phenomenology pointed, and in some of its indigenous forms of spirituality, in particular Taoism and Shintoism -- the latter with its associated art of Aikido, I also rediscovered Native American spirituality and primal consciousness.

For all of the reasons mentioned above, I have wanted from the beginning **The Trumpeter** to have focuses on Native Spirituality and on phenomenology. Naming this journal for the swan was influenced by its totemic and mytho-poetic significance; but the subtitle was a bow to philosophy and especially to phenomenology. Thus, it fills my heart with joy to at last bring both of these together in one issue. For personal and other reasons, then, this issue brings a circling journey back to its origins.

In future issues we will return to the subjects of this issue, for we provide here only an introduction to them.

## FOCUS ON: NATIVE SPIRITUALITY AND ECOLOGY

Guest Focus Editor: Jay Hansford C. Vest

# KNOWLEDGE OF THE COSMOS IN AMERICAN INDIAN PRAYER

John A. Grim

On the contemporary college campus it is not unusual to find courses in the study of religion often oversubscribed and enthusiastically attended. No religious affiliation is connected with these studies, nor is there a denominational theology that sets guidelines. Rather, these courses provide students with the opportunity to explore religion from both a critical standpoint, that is, to think carefully about this activity, and from a humanistic position, that is, to consider its meaning to individuals. In these contemporary studies in religion two approaches may be singled out, namely history of religion and comparative religion. The former may be said to explore change and continuity in religious expressions over time; whereas the latter, comparative religion, focuses on religious ideas that are comparative across cultures and across different religions.

Using the approach of comparative religion, one theme that is a rich source of investigation for students of religion is "prayer." Generally speaking prayer is considered basic in most people's minds when they think of religion. In fact, this appears to be the case; for, prayer is often linked in religions to the myths that explain the creation of the Earth and the larger cosmos. In these highly differentiated myths of creation some picture is developed of the separation between the divine, spiritual realms and the human realm of limited possibilities. Prayer is the appropriate means for bridging this gap between the human condition and spiritual perfection. (Sam Gill, "Prayer" in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*. Mircea Eliade, ed. Macmillan and Free Press, 1986.)

Prayer, then, reflects a peoples' knowledge of the cosmos as well as manifesting more personal and subjective aspects. These subjective dimensions of prayer also provide the student of religion with insights into the act of self-realization in this culture. While transmitted in emotional tones, perhaps, and marbled with intuitive feelings of personal relatedness to sacred realms, prayer communicates deep insight into the values of both self and society.

Among the many American Indian peoples who inhabited this continent before the Columbian voyages of discovery, prayer seems to have developed with similar concerns. The earliest descriptions of these Native Americans in the 16th century Hispanic records, and the later northern European records of the 17th century, contain numerous passages quoting fragments or sentences of American Indian prayer. Usually the accompanying

textual interpretation of that prayer by Europeans was theologically critical. Indian prayers were seen as diabolic at worst, or simply as the rhetorical device of deluded creatures unaware of the true god behind their clouded religion. By the late 18th century when Indian people were confined on reservations, the authenticity of their prayer life was apparent to many sympathetic Euro-Americans. But even when Indian spirituality was appreciated for its aesthetic or rhetorical power, the larger whole in which that prayer life was developed remained largely inaccessible to these friends of the Indian. Indeed, Indian prayer life occasionally provided a supportive rationale for the reservation policy by many well wishers of the Indian. They believed Indian prayer was evidence of rational thought which proved that Indians could be brought up to civilization. (Henry Bowden, *American Indians and Christian Missions*. Univ. of Chicago Press, 1981; also Prucha, *Friends of the Indian*.)

The fate of America's native indigenous populations is not the focus here, but these remarks serve to emphasize the inability of Euro-Americans at the early exchange between cultures to understand American Indian prayer. In the transatlantic encounter of European peoples with American Indians there was a basic misunderstanding. Europeans largely considered prayer from the standpoint of the written text of the Bible. Prayer was a verbal supplement whose textual foundation was in its printed biblical expression. Spontaneous prayer had found favor during the European Reformation but in this Protestant milieu its biblical, and hence textual, basis was a doctrinal check of correctness. Indian prayer on the other hand was oral. The concerns of this oral prayer were primarily evocative. That is, oral prayer sought to make present the network of cosmic forces that were being named. In this sense, prayer was a performative act whose dramatic qualities were more primary than its credal concepts. But Indian oral prayer also maintained a traditional correctness. These oral features and the traditional wisdom that they transmitted are what I am trying to suggest by "knowledge of the cosmos."

The most arresting method to present some of these unique characteristics of American Indian prayer is to read a prayer or two even if in translation. The first prayer is from the Omaha people. They are Siouan language speakers who began a migration from the Ohio-Wabash region in the 1500's and by the late 1800's had been confined on a reservation in Nebraska. Even-

tually their lands would be individually divided and in the ensuing push to civilize these people almost all tribal identity would be lost. The current Omaha reservation has some thirteen hundred residents some of whom still practice the traditional ways. This prayer is recited as a child is held up to the powers which created and sustained the cosmos according to Omaha belief.

**Introduction of the Child to the Cosmos**  
(Omaha peoples)

Ho! Ye Sun, Moon, Stars, All Ye that move in the heavens,  
I bid you hear me!  
Into your midst has come a new life.  
Consent ye, I implore!  
Make its path smooth, that it may reach the brow of the first hill!

Ho! Ye Winds, Clouds, Rain, Mist, All ye that move in the air,  
I bid you hear me!  
Into your midst has come a new life.  
Consent ye, I implore!  
Make its path smooth, that it may reach the brow of the second hill!

Ho! Ye Hills, Valleys, Rivers, Lakes, Trees, Grasses,  
All ye of the earth,  
I bid you hear me!  
Into your midst has come a new life.  
Consent ye, I implore!  
Make its path smooth, that it may reach the brow of the third hill!

Ho! Ye Birds, great and small, that fly in the air,  
Ho! Ye Animals, great and small, that dwell in the forest,  
Ho! Ye Insects, that creep among the grasses and burrow in the ground--  
I bid you hear me!  
Into your midst has come a new life.  
Consent ye, I implore!  
Make its path smooth, that it may reach the brow of the fourth hill!

Ho! All ye of the heavens, all ye of the air, all ye of the earth;  
I bid you all to hear me!  
Into your midst has come a new life.  
Consent ye, consent ye all, I implore!  
Make its path smooth--then shall it travel beyond the four hills!

(*Literature of the American Indian*. Sanders and Peek, ed. Glencoe Press, 1976, pp. 56-57.)

The cosmos that is pictured here is three-layered, namely, the heavens of the celestial bodies; the air of atmospheric conditions and raptorial birds; and the earth of plant and animal life. The knowledge presented in these words appears to associate movement in human life with four hills which are themselves linked with the three cosmic regions. The fullness of life is imaged in four hills, a number akin to the four directions of the oldest known symbols among Indian peoples. The life that is sought for this child is presented as a lived meditation on a tripartite view of the world. It is in relation to the powers of these three cosmic regions that an Omaha Indian sought the means with which to live.

The most apparent knowledge which can be linked with human life and local cosmic environment is subsistence activity. The traditional Omaha were hunter-gatherers and limited agriculturalists. Knowledge of these life skills depended upon repetitive teaching from elders and spiritual blessings. The dedication prayer situates these activities and the foods they provided not in the context of commodities but as the shared giving of an interwoven community of all life forms.

Self-knowledge is portrayed in this prayer as the passage through the four hills of life. Self-realization is not undertaken apart from the community presented in this prayer as related cosmic forces in the three realms. One finds self-knowledge by interweaving individual effort with those cosmic persons. Thus, the dedication to the cosmos presents the expectation that the child will become a cosmic person. That is, someone in right relation to creative power in the cosmos.

Finally, this dedicatory prayer was not an isolated speech, but was performed as part of a ritual. This prayer is more appropriately studied as a performative act than as a textual recitation. As a prayer-act it is believed by the Omaha to evoke the knowledge and the cosmic presences that are named. The child is welcomed into life in this tribal context of walking in the source of life as identity. This is an identity which is itself performed, then, in human activity throughout life. The words of the prayer reaffirm the Omaha wisdom that human life develops in kinship to all forms of life in the cosmos.

Like the Omaha prayer, the Navajo prayer from the Beautyway Chant provides insight into these peoples' understanding of universe processes. The Navajo are an Athabaskan people who moved with the Apache from the Canadian north probably during the 14th century. They gradually migrated into the southwestern regions and encountered the pueblo people of the Colorado Plateau. Raiders, hunters and agriculturalists, the Navajo underwent a traumatizing military conquest at the hands of American armies led by Kit Carson in the 1860's. Eventually they were allowed to return to their traditional lands and given a large reservation centered in Arizona but also reaching into New Mexico and Utah.

Navajo religion is extremely varied. Its central features are associated with a chantway system that is used for individual healing and community welfare. A chantway is a complex nine-day ceremonial in which prayer-songs and extensive narrations from the origin mythology are recited by a singer. These prayers and narrations are accompanied by elaborate paintings on the floor of the traditional Navajo house, or hogan. These drypaintings of sand, pollen, soil, flowers and other materials are a traditional art that is wholly religious. Like the prayers the drypaintings are supposed to be reproduced in the exact manner in which the traditional hero or heroine received them from the spiritual world. (Gladys Reichard, *Navaho Religion*. Princeton Press, 1950.)

The prayer included here is from Beautyway, and is often used in this isolated form for shorter ritual occasions such as blessing a new business or at a wedding. Part of its literary force is in its repetitive quality, but for the Navajo its spiritual power is in its ability to impart transformative knowledge.

**Beautyway from the Navajo Night Chant Ceremonial**

Tsegihi. House made of dawn,  
House made of evening light,  
House made of dark cloud,

House made of male rain,  
 House made of dark mist,  
 House made of female rain,  
 House made of pollen,  
 House made of grasshoppers,  
 Dark cloud is at the door.  
 The trail out of it is dark cloud.  
 The zigzag lightning stands high upon it.  
 Male deity!  
 Your offering I make  
 I have prepared a smoke for you.  
 Restore my feet for me,  
 Restore my legs for me,  
 Restore my body for me,  
 Restore my mind for me,  
 Restore my voice for me.  
 This very day take out your spell for me.  
 Your spell remove for me.  
 You have taken it away for me;  
 Far off it has gone.  
 Happily I recover.  
 Happily my interior becomes cool.  
 Happily I go forth.  
 My interior feeling cool, may I walk.  
 No longer sore, may I walk.  
 Impervious to pain, may I walk.  
 With lively feelings, may I walk.  
 As it used to be long ago, may I walk.  
 Happily may I walk.  
 Happily, with abundant dark clouds, may I walk.  
 Happily, with abundant showers, may I walk.  
 Happily, with abundant plants, may I walk.  
 Happily, on a trail of pollen, may I walk.  
 Happily may I walk.  
 Being as it used to be long ago, may I walk.  
 May it be beautiful before me,  
 May it be beautiful behind me,  
 May it be beautiful below me,  
 May it be beautiful above me,  
 May it be beautiful around me,  
 In beauty it is finished.  
 (Literature of the American Indian, 193-194.)

The image with which this prayer opens is that of the cosmos as a hogan. It derives from the Navajo creation story in which the Holy People built the world in the same manner in which a traditional Navajo house is assembled. Just as the beams of the hogan support each other in a balanced relation, so also the male and female forces of the earth and sky balance each other. This balance is seen as beautiful, *hoozhoni* as the Navajo say. Knowledge of this harmonious relationship constitutes the beginning of wisdom, say the Navajo, and prayer serves to identify the human with the beauty of cosmic balance. (Leland Wyman, *Blessingway*. Univ. of Arizona Press, 1975.)

While movement in the Omaha world provided an interpretive frame for the dedication prayer, here movement is part of the problem. The beauty of the cosmos is its exquisite balance into which the human must move and in moving we bring upon ourselves unknown dangers--the spells which we must evoke or remove. The restoration of human beauty, then, is in acquiring

knowledge of transformation. One must know how to transform oneself into the Holy People who in the primal time of the myths incorporated the cosmic powers into the many forms of the Earth. This knowledge that transforms is the knowledge of the inner happiness and beauty of the cosmos, especially as expressed in the Earth. The inner form, then, of the Earth is evoked in this prayer-act of Beautyway.

The effect of this transformative prayer is to image oneself into an identity with the inner form or soul of the Earth. This inner form of the Earth is called "long-life/happiness." While this prayer is more general in its descriptions, the chantways in their nine-day ceremonies build elaborate and very specific identities between those treated for illness and the local landscape. More specifically, the drypaintings used in the chantways are the focus for performative healing. The patient sits in the center of the drypainting while the singer chants the myth which identifies the patient with the hero or heroine of that myth. The movement of the myth is described in terms of the local environment. Thus, the patient is urged to identify the drypainting as the cosmic landscape of the myths, which is also the local environment. The patient is rubbed with parts of the sandpainting which link the patient's body with locales in the region. The symbolic healing that is promoted, then, is one which is directly related to this peoples' psychic commitment to their land. In the ecology of animal-plant-land is a beauty of balance called *hoozhoni*. Establishing this beauty through identification with the inner form of the Earth is the intention of this prayer-act among the Navajo.

These considerations of two American Indian prayers give some indication of the richness of thought in these traditions. American Indians have been able to endure into the present because of the strength provided by their cultural heritage. As their languages weaken, however, the traditional knowledge diminishes because these insights depend upon oral transmission and oral evocation.

In studying these religious forms students encounter some of the most provocative and stimulating insights of different cultures. Admittedly, they are brief encounters and limited to the ability of each student to image him or herself into the knowledge imparted by the prayer. But in the effort of imagination a remarkable balance is achieved with the more critical effort needed to read these texts. In this act is a crucial insight for our own contemporary period. Critical thought and imagination are needed to evoke the cosmic story of our time.

Just as American Indians knew that healing or religion depended upon cosmic awareness, so we also begin to realize that our deepest awareness of ourselves begins in the fiery furnaces of the stars. Awareness of this scientific story of the universe is such an exciting discovery at present because it brings us into a new knowledge of ourselves. Prayer in the American Indian world evoked a traditional knowledge of the cosmos that provided identity for individuals and groups. Will future generations be able to say the same of us?

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# HISTORY, CULTURE AND NATURE

Bill Swanson

"From the masses to the masses" the most  
Revolutionary consciousness is to be found  
Among the most ruthlessly exploited classes:  
Animals, trees, water, air, grasses.  
- Gary Snyder, "Revolution in the Revolution in the Revolution."

Each animal knows way more than you do. We always heard  
that from the old people when they told us never to bother  
anything unless we really needed to.  
- A member of the Koyukon people

## Introduction

I want to start with a fairly simple but earth shaking idea: All history is natural history. To define history as merely the story of human beings, their triumphs and follies, their accomplishments and disasters, is to remain within the fixed sphere of anthropocentrism, and to deny the myriad ways in which human culture is inextricably linked with every facet of the natural world. The challenge of ecological thinking is to find ways to connect the pictures we have of ourselves as humans to the larger picture we have of the planet as a whole. In this essay I want to discuss a couple of works - one a work of history, **Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England** by William Cronon, and the other a work of anthropology, **Make Prayers to the Raven** by Richard Nelson - that display a theoretical shift in perspective that recognizes the bioregional vision of human culture as a part of nature rather than apart from it.

## The Puritans, the Indians, the Beavers and Money

In *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*, William Cronon argues that the historical change brought about by the emigration of European colonists to New England must be understood in ecological as well as cultural terms. The two are inseparable. The arrival of the colonists brought, "deforestation, the keeping of livestock, conflicts between Indians and colonists over property boundaries, the extermination of predators such as wolves, and similar matters."<sup>1</sup> The basis for Cronon's argument rests upon his conception of ecology as a process, an on-going series of transformations, something like a billiard table with a billion billiard balls all moving in slow motion. Some of these billiard balls are human beings. Cronon in this study attempts to reconstruct some of the changes that took place in New England between roughly 1600 and 1800. I want to describe Cronon's point of view and show its relation to more conventional approaches to historical change.

First, Cronon challenges the naive conception of nature in the new world as virgin, pristine and uninhabited at the time of the arrival of the first colonists. This teleological conception of

nature assumes that forests, for example, tend toward a "climax" of development, a steady-state of unchanging equilibrium. This is a conception of the new world as a Garden of Eden just waiting for human inhabitants. This, of course, overlooks the fact that native peoples had already lived on this continent for more than ten thousand years and had established a complex, historical relationship with the land, the plants and the animals. For Cronon the teleological view must be replaced by a more dynamic view of nature as an ecosystem that is made up of non-climax communities in which change is an essential part of survival. Cronon explains,

With the imperatives of the climax concept no longer so strong, ecology was prepared to become at least in part a historical science, for which change was less the result of "disturbance" than of the ordinary processes whereby communities maintained and transformed themselves...accepting the effects of human beings was only part of this shift toward a more historical ecology.<sup>2</sup>

This implies that ecosystems have histories - each place develops in its own particular way. Geological and climatic changes affect the plant and animal life cycles in innumerable ways. The effect of human beings on this process must also be considered. The two histories are part of the same process. When considering the colonists and the Indians, "The choice is not between two landscapes, one with and one without a human influence; it is between two human ways of living, two ways of belonging to an ecosystem."<sup>3</sup> Then he states his purpose: "The riddle of this book is to explore why these different ways of living had such different effects on New England ecosystems."<sup>4</sup>

The history that Cronon tells consists of four elements: 1) the ecological history of New England, 2) the cultural history of Indians from north and south New England and their ecological practices, 3) the European colonists' beliefs and practices in relation to both the Indians and the environment, and 4) the effects of colonization upon both the natural landscape and Indian culture.

His central argument assumes that these components have a dynamic and dialectical relationship to each other. Indian culture changed in relation to nature as a result of its new relation to colonial culture. The trade in beaver furs, for example, became a central part of Indian culture as a result of demand by the colonists; this in turn drastically reduced the beaver population, which led to the draining of the beaver ponds that contained deep sedimentary layers of decayed organic materials; this soil made possible increased yields for the colonists' corn crops. The colonists' one crop system of planting ultimately led to the exhaustion of the soil and the abandonment of these lands. As Cronon explains,

An ecological history begins by assuming a dynamic and changing relationship between environment and culture, one as apt to produce contradictions as continuities. Moreover, it



assumes that the interactions of the two are dialectical. Environment may initially shape the range of choices available to a people at a given moment, but then culture reshapes environment in responding to those choices.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, Cronon argues that the colonial culture was shaped by the forces of emerging capitalism that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries shifted from small scale artisanal production methods and localized trading, to an abstract monetary system based on industrialized mass production, expanding markets and world-wide empires. The colonies were part of the British empire and measured their success by their ability to extract wealth from the new world. America was seen as a vast treasure house of future commodities, not as a home where stable communities would develop sustainable, long term relations with the natural world and indigenous peoples. Cronon says, "...the development of a world capitalist system has brought more and more people into trade and market relations which lie well beyond the boundaries of their local ecosystems.... This erasure of boundaries may itself be the most important issue of all."<sup>6</sup> Capitalism, like Christian proselytizing and the conceptual structure of Western science, is a universalizing process. It crosses cultural as well as geographic borders in order to bring culture and nature within one totalizing system of economic relationships.

Cronon's analysis of the history of the relations of colonists and Indians differs from that of most historians because he pursues the chain of causes and effects beyond the political and economic realm into ecosystem as a whole. The development of the fur trade between Indians and colonists would normally be analyzed in terms of the economic consequences for the colonists alone. This might be called the Anglo-centric (or anthropocentric) point of view - the only one discussed in most American history textbooks. This would show how the colonists were able to increase their capital in relation to European markets by finding a commodity that was in great demand and relatively easy to transport. Selling beaver skins was a real boon for the New England economy. It made it possible for colonists to buy all sorts of products manufactured in Europe that they could not make on their own. The fur trade stimulated the buying and selling of other goods and made migration to the colonies seem attractive, and thereby enhanced the whole process of colonization. The increased migration also stimulated the local economy because it necessarily created more demand for locally produced commodities. Cronon recognizes these benefits, but he balances them against the effects the fur trade had upon the social structure of Indian society and upon the ecology of all sorts of natural phenomena - like beaver ponds and foraging areas for moose and bear and other animals, large and small. The destruction of the beaver communities, as only one example, had effects that the colonists neither predicted nor fully understood. Cronon in fact shows how little the colonists understood about either Indian culture or ecological principles. Their goals were few but powerful: acquire land and make money.

Cronon's historical method might be called post-Marxist environmentalism. He acknowledges his debt to the humanist tradition of Marx and Engels by quoting them on a page of epigraphs following the table of contents: "The writing of history must always set out from these natural bases and their modification in the course of history through the action of men." Both the value and the limitation of Marxist humanism is revealed by these words. On the one hand Marx and Engels are telling us that

history must free itself from religious and political prescriptions that are based in the ideology of feudalism and/or capitalism. Marx saw himself as a social **scientist** constantly striving to free himself from the biased historical assumptions that only tended to rationalize the already existing power elites (kings, priests, generals, factory owners, etc.) This effort to re-historicize the Western world kept Marx confined to political economy. He - and the whole Marxist intellectual tradition that followed him - displayed a lack of knowledge and concern for the "natural bases" that he saw as the foundation for his whole argument. They kept the study of economy separate from the study of ecology. From Cronon's point of view, this was a big mistake. Marx's belief in the inevitable progression of historical periods came from his study of Hegel, not Darwin. His assimilation of Darwinian ideas of evolution was probably not very complete. Marx simply understood the economic struggle as a component in **human** history and did not extend it to include **natural** history. Cronon extends the critique of capitalism from the factory to the forest, from the sweat shop to the Indian reservation and the polluted stream.

For this reason, Cronon makes a special effort to point out that the transformation of the ecology of New England by the colonists was multicausal. The burgeoning world of European capitalism certainly had a definitive impact upon the way that the colonists defined their relationship to both the Indians and the land, but Cronon also argues that other factors like disease and the actions taken by the Indians themselves were crucial determinants in deciding historical outcomes. As Cronon points out:

By making the arrival of the Europeans the center of our analysis, we run the risk of attributing all change to their agency, and none to the Indians. The implication is not only that the earlier world of 'Indian' New England was somehow static but also that the Indians themselves were as passive and 'natural' as the landscape. In fact, the Indians were anything but passive in their response of European encroachments. Faced with what they perceived as new opportunities, they took them as they saw fit; faced with threats to their political autonomy, they fought back as best they could.<sup>7</sup>

This suggests that the Indians were not merely the victims of capitalism, but were themselves **active historical subjects** pursuing their interests as they defined them. The Indians, for example, had their own socially defined need for wampum which only served to further their dependence upon the colonists. Cronon attempts to get beyond the Eurocentric views implicit in both capitalism and Marxism, its apparent opponent. The recent revelations of the ecological catastrophes resulting from the rapid industrialization of the Soviet Union, China and Eastern Europe confirm this blind spot in the whole Marxist critique of capitalism. The communist movement was born in the heyday of the industrial revolution, and it never questioned the necessity of industrial development, only its organization around private ownership. The irony is that in the ideological and military struggles between the capitalist and communist nations, both have maintained a constant war against nature. Both ideologies embraced the techno-mechanical myth of progress based upon conquering nature. Their differences of opinion were about how to split up the profits from these endeavors.

Cronon might be described as a post-humanist historian in that he goes beyond the exclusively anthropocentric interests that

have been the central province of historians since Herodotus. Cronon combines natural history, anthropology, economics and environmental concern with his historical analysis of human interactions. He follows out the chain of causes and effects to their endpoints in the natural world. In showing the contrast between the colonists' reliance on pastoral agriculture and the Indians' reliance on hunting, fishing and small scale, diverse agriculture, Cronon observes,

English fixity sought to replace Indian mobility; here was the central conflict over two ways of living and using the seasons of the year, and it expressed itself in how two peoples conceived of property, wealth, and boundaries on the landscape.<sup>8</sup>

Cronon cautions, though, against accepting a unicasual, economic analysis. He shows how disease resulted in a "demographic collapse"<sup>9</sup> of the native population. This, in turn, led to a breakdown of social structures that had supported the traditional way of life. Indians turned to trading with the colonists as a way to sustain themselves during epidemics of smallpox and influenza that were as devastating for them as the Black Death had been for Europe during the fourteenth century.

For Cronon, the belief system of the colonists is the root cause of the essentially destructive relationship they had with the ecology of New England. The Indians adapted to the environment, moved with seasons, wasted little. They had little interest in accumulating either abstract symbols of wealth or material things. This was not because of their innate virtue or nobility but simply because it was not practical. They moved their villages three or four times a year and therefore travelled light. The colonists, on the other hand, saw themselves as still connected to the European world of trade that they had only physically departed. Cronon observes of the colonists,

For them, perceptions of "resources" were filtered through the language of "commodities," goods which could be exchanged in markets where the very act of buying and selling conferred profits on their owners<sup>10</sup> ...The landscape of New England thus increasingly met not only the needs of its inhabitants for food and shelter but the demands of faraway markets for cattle, corn, fur, timber, and other goods whose "values" became expressions of the colonists' socially determined "needs."<sup>11</sup> ...Land in New England became for the colonists a form of capital, a thing consumed for the express purpose of creating augmented wealth. It was the land-capital equation that created the two central ecological contradictions of the colonial economy.... But there was a second ecological contradiction in the colonial economy as well. Quite simply, the colonists' economic relations of production were ecologically self-destructive. They assumed the limitless availability of more land to exploit, and in the long run that was impossible.<sup>12</sup>

The colonists became, in effect, predators with an infinite appetite. The transformation of nature into nothing more than a storehouse of commodities waiting to be sold and consumed has a double effect: alienation and self-destruction. Cronon draws a parallel between Marx's concept of the alienation of labor - a worker never derives the benefit from his own labor - and the alienation from nature - a consumer never learns anything about hawks, pine trees or salmon because the goal in life is to make money and go shopping. This is the pattern of development that once established in New England became the pattern for the

whole continent. We can see its consequences by looking out the window of any house in North America.

### How We Know What We Know About the Nature of Nature

In *Make Prayers to the Raven* Richard K. Nelson gives us some sense of what a European colonist might have been able to learn from Native Americans in the early seventeenth century if he had had the eyes to see and the ears to listen. In Nelson's account of his time spent with the Koyukon people, Athabaskans of central Alaska, he constantly observes their respect for every detail of the natural world. Their world view consists of elaborate knowledge of the infinite reciprocal relationships between human beings and the natural and spiritual entities of their cosmos. Nelson treats the Koyukons the way the Koyukons treat nature - with respect. He notes in great detail the Koyukon view of their world. The wild chives, the snow fleas, the shellfish, the loons, the voles, the martens and the moose represent the range of species, the chain of being, that the Koyukon have been a part of for thousands of years; they know all its members, and how they live and where they live. They are simultaneously a deeply practical and deeply spiritual people. They waste nothing. The subarctic world doesn't allow them to squander their food sources or the temperate months when they can hunt. Nelson's book is crammed with **knowledge** of the very specific type that only comes from long habitation in a specific place. Nelson's Koyukon informants hunt and worship at the same time; they seem to make no distinction between their spiritual beliefs and their daily practices. Nelson reports on the philosophical implications of this study:

Fundamental assumptions I had learned about the nature of nature were thrown into doubt...now I had to face an elemental question, as an anthropologist of course, but even more so as someone who had always been deeply involved with nature: Is there not a single reality in the natural world, an absolute and universal reality? Apparently the answer to this question is no.<sup>13</sup>

This suggests that Nelson wants not only to examine the assumptions of Koyukon culture but to examine them in relation to Western culture. He does not automatically assume that he possesses the fundamental claim to reality by which he can measure the validity of another culture. He takes a fairly radical step and suggests that there may be more than one way of looking at the world. He defines his relationship to his discipline by saying,

The basic premise underlying anthropological writings on this subject...is this: Reality is not the world as it is perceived directly by the senses; reality is the world as it is perceived by the mind through the medium of the senses. Thus reality in nature is not just what we see, but what we have learned to see.<sup>14</sup>

The central problem for anthropologists has always been how to be outsider and yet gain inside knowledge. This is a gap that may be impossible to cross, but Nelson goes a long way toward inhabiting both the physical and spiritual world of the Koyukon. His success at understanding this world is due both to his thorough knowledge of the natural world and his identification

with the ethos that underlies the Koyukon worldview. He observes,

Each human society bases its interactions with the external world on the implicit assumption that its reality is absolute...there is a world in which nature moves with power and humans are bound to a special system of environmental morality.<sup>15</sup>

Nelson has raised a philosophical conundrum that has been a part of anthropological study since its inception.

### Epistemology and Anthropology

Anthropology was born in the late nineteenth century, the age of empire and colonization. Its intentions have been benign: the goal is broader knowledge of other cultures and the deeper structures that underlie the processes of cultural development and change. Early anthropologists were, however, often overtly condescending toward the people they studied. The word "savage" eventually gave way to "primitive" then to "aboriginal," minor attitude adjustments at best. The central dilemma of how to perceive non-Western people in a non-judgmental way has plagued anthropology throughout its history. The root of the problem is epistemological and linguistic. An anthropologist is not a *tabula rasa*, but comes equipped with the theoretical constructs derived from five-hundred years of Western science and the elaborate rhetorical protocols of academic discourse. The very act of going to another culture and using other human beings as objects of study and analysis is quintessentially Western and necessarily implies a position of superiority and dominance. The other cultures, the Collective Other, are subject to evaluation and judgment. For example, Ruth Benedict in *Patterns of Culture* characterized the religious practices of the Kwakiutl as "dionysian," to the point of achieving "paranoid megalomania." Claude Levi-Strauss developed a structuralist analysis of the masks of Northwest Coast tribes based on the underlying principle of **bipolar opposition**. In both cases Western intellectuals have tried to explain the beliefs and practices of a Non-Western culture in abstract terms that do not exist in the culture being described. This raises several interesting epistemological questions that anthropologists typically don't raise. How is it possible to translate religious concepts from one culture to another? Is it appropriate to refer to certain spiritual beings as "gods" when there is no generic term like this in the language of, say, the Zuni? Should they be called "spirits"? Does it make sense to call them "supernatural beings" when a tribe makes no distinction at all between "spiritual" and "natural"? The Jesuits typically referred to these indigenous deities as "demons." The Church, of course, was seeking converts, whereas the anthropologists were ostensibly pursuing a rational description of cultural beliefs and patterns of behavior. The irony is that both representatives of Western culture have similar effects even though the anthropologists seek to avoid the more obvious forms of ethnocentrism. Whereas the Jesuits, and missionaries in general, are inclined to make value judgments about Native beliefs, the anthropologists cultivate an empirical methodology that strives for a neutral, detached point of view that attempts to apply the consciously scientific approach to whatever they find. The result, however, is something other than totally objective description.

Anthropologists impose a variety of theoretical constructs upon the reality of Native cultures. This is a kind of intellectual colonization and expropriation. They make use of these cultures in order to promote certain theoretical points of view that are part of the elaborate cultural debate that takes place in the Western world's intellectual culture. Claude Levi-Strauss, for example, can be partly understood as a reaction against the existential/phenomenological approach to cultural/philosophical/social issues that dominated the French intellectual and academic climate during the post-World War II era. Or, as another example, Margaret Mead's work in New Guinea can be seen as a reaction against the Victorian era assumptions about the role of women and the place of sexuality in society. Mead's work had a polemical agenda; she not only wanted to study the people of New Guinea, but she wanted to persuade her readers in the West that their views on what was "natural" and "normal" were specific to their own culture and by no means superior or universal. Mead's benevolent intentions conceal an inherent condescension which still regards Native cultures as just so much raw material for theorists of anthropology - not to mention psychoanalysts, linguistic theoreticians, mythographers, and all other experts who presume to speak or write about the nature of "culture." The central problem here is one of point of view. An observer is not the same as a participant.

Anthropologists often form personal bonds with their informants, but they also remain detached enough to continue to make observations. They must maintain the subject/object split in consciousness that is the epistemological basis for the scientific world view. If they "go native" by, say, marrying into a tribe, or by espousing the views of the culture they are studying, then they lose their credibility as social scientists and scholars. Anthropologists are analogous to Masters and Johnson watching other people make love and attempting to measure the pleasures of intimacy with electronic measuring devices and objective description. What kind of knowledge is this? Who does it serve? How is it used? What **can't** be learned by using these methods? These questions should be asked by every anthropologist. There is an old Zen parable about tasting sugar. If you didn't know what sugar tasted like, would you like to have the taste described to you? You would hear words like "sweet" and "mouth watering." Someone else might tell you its chemical composition or how it is digested in the body. None of this knowledge, though, could take the place of simply putting a sugar lump on your tongue. You would then know what sugar tastes like and no words would be necessary to explain the experience. In *Make Prayers to the Raven*, Nelson has tasted the sugar first. He writes like a man with first hand knowledge.

Nelson's work can be seen as an attempt to overcome anthropology's methodological problem. His book is not that of a mere spectator/note-taker. He has not attempted to subsume the beliefs of the Koyukons within some governing set of theoretical principles, but instead he has inhabited the Koyukon worldview and described the world as it appears from this vantage point. His analysis lacks the hauteur of the Western view that regards Non-Westerners as primitive or pre-scientific. He avoids the sense that the other cultures are interesting objects of study but necessarily below Western culture in the ontological structure of the world. Nelson actually seems to think Koyukon world view is legitimate and intelligent and ethical on its own terms. He, in fact, reveals how the lack of any theoretical construct that would allow the Western world to think about

animals, trees, and all the other non-human forms of being in a reciprocal and ethical way is one of the main causes of the ecological disaster that has now grown to planetary proportions. The importance of Nelson's work is that it shows how the scientific objectivity - so prized by the best thinkers in the West, including ecologists - may be one of the chief causes of the cycle of destruction that causes extinction of species unprecedented since the end of the Jurassic period. Nelson shows that there is a difference between caring about nature and identifying with it. The theocentric views of missionaries now seem outdated - the prejudices of an earlier historical epoch - but the anthropocentrism of modern social science is a belief still in dominant position in the Western worldview. Nelson's work challenges this assumption.

For Nelson the Koyukons have achieved the synthesis of spiritual and ecological understanding that Arne Naess and Gary Snyder, and other advocates of Deep Ecology have articulated in writing. The Koyukons don't write about it; they practice it. Their beliefs are not unique; they share many assumptions with other Native American cultures. Nelson describes their worldview this way,

The Koyukon people's traditional religious ideology is pervaded by elements of nature. Spiritual beings are predominantly associated with natural entities. ...In the moral system that this ideology encompasses, the proper role of humankind is to serve a dominant nature...Because spiritual power is everywhere in nature, gestures of reverence are nearly constant as people interact with their environment, as they carry out the necessary activities of subsistence and survival....Thus, one of the principles emerging from the Koyukon ideology - perhaps the basic principle - is that a moral system governs human behavior toward nature...Through this code, deference is shown for everything in the environment, partly through gestures of etiquette and partly through avoiding waste or excessive use...The Koyukon must move with the forces of their surroundings, not attempting to control, master, or fundamentally alter them. They do not confront nature, they yield to it.<sup>16</sup>

### Nelson, Hultkrantz and Cronon

Nelson's approach to Native American cultures differs from William Cronon's in *Changes in the Land* in that Nelson considers the spiritual and ethical dimensions of Native American worldviews. Nelson's view is corroborated by the work of Ake Hultkrantz, who has written more generally about some of the assumptions shared by many of the North American Native traditions. He has said, for example,

Four prominent features in North American Indian religions are a similar worldview, a shared notion of cosmic harmony, emphasis on experiencing directly powers and visions, and a common view of the cycle of life and death.<sup>17</sup> ... North American Indian traditions emphasize a direct experience of spiritual power through dreams and visions...Native Americans have a common view of time as a recurring cycle; they are interested mainly in how this cycle affects people in this life and have only a vague notion of another existence after death.<sup>18</sup>

Though Hultkrantz's intention here is not to focus on the specific beliefs of the Athabaskans, they are relevant to Nelson's description of the Koyukon worldview. Both Hultkrantz and Nelson see

Native Americans as religious thinkers, not merely hunters and gatherers; Cronon does not exclude this possibility from history. He, like most historians, simply fails to mention it. He doesn't see the larger construct that encompasses their practical methods of survival and subsistence and their spiritual and ethical system of beliefs. The cosmological assumptions are the foundation for all else:

Most North American Indians consider that human existence was designed by the creator divinities at the time of the "first beginning"...a change took place that turned many primeval beings into animals and birds...Because of this genesis there is still today a close affinity between people and animals: they are brothers, and it is people's task to respect and be in harmony with the animals...wild, independent animals...All over the Americas they have been thought to manifest the mysterious qualities of existence.<sup>19</sup>

This way of looking at the world - so different from both the theocentrism of Christianity and the anthropocentrism of scientific humanism - is simultaneously more detailed and more vague than the views of the world Nelson is more familiar with. He comments throughout *Make Prayers to the Raven* that he is amazed by the amount of knowledge the elder Koyukons have about the land they inhabit. He tells of going with an old woman to visit her fishing camp. She takes him in the forest and points to a nondescript place and tells him about how a Chief Henry and his wife Bertha had once used that site as their fishing camp some twenty years before. Nelson says he could see no traces of a camp ever having been there. Then the old woman begins to tell him what she sees. She shows him bands in the birch trees where bark had once been removed for basket making; she shows him ax cuts in some old stumps that remind her that Henry had not had a saw. Nelson is struck both by her eye for the telling detail and the resilience of her memory. He would not have noticed either of these things. She sees a world that is invisible to him. He comments:

The Koyukon homeland is filled with places like this, places invested with significance in personal or family history. Drawing back to view the landscape as a whole, we can see it completely interwoven with these meanings. Each living individual is bound into this pattern of land and people that extends throughout the terrain and far back across time.<sup>20</sup>

The Koyukons are apparently as keenly perceptive about their natural habitat as they are rather vague about their supernatural beliefs. Nelson says he frequently sought clarification about their metaphysical ideas but soon discovered that these were inconsistent from person to person. The Athabaskan system of beliefs seem to enjoy the mythopoetic freedom that the oral traditions all over the world enjoyed until the invention of writing and with it both literature and literalism. The Koyukon are, ironically, Christians as well as adherents to traditional beliefs. However, they see no contradiction between the two. This eclecticism of belief seems to them highly sensible and without worry regarding the doctrinal disputations that have been the lifeblood of theology since the Council of Nicea. The Koyukons allow for highly individualistic beliefs within the larger construct of their myths and ethical prohibitions. As Hultkrantz has observed,

When people perceive the universe as a unit, whole and indivisible, the figure of the single godhead stands in focus.

When Human attention is drawn to the particular acts of the divine, such as thunder, food giving, and healing, particular powers appear that express the activities referred to. The Supreme Being fades into the background, unless he is especially bound up with one of these activities. There is thus a tension between universalism and particularism in the concepts of the supernatural and the universe.<sup>21</sup>

The Koyukons have developed a belief system that is comprehensive, tolerant and ecologically sane. They have maintained themselves for thousands of years by forming a sacramental relationship with world around them. They don't see themselves surrounded by remote metaphysical deities, hostile predators or impersonal laws of nature; they see a world of other forms of being that must be treated with etiquette, consideration and prayer. According to Nelson the central tenet of their world view is, "The natural and supernatural worlds are inseparable; each is intrinsically a part of the other." This graciousness toward other beings provides them with a land ethic that sustains life by preventing mindless destruction of their own habitat - a level of consciousness that still eludes the developed and educated Western world. In *The Practice of the Wild*, Gary Snyder has offered a corroborating statement that neatly states the Koyukon ethos:

An ethical life is one that is mindful, mannerly and has style. Of all moral failings and flaws of character, the worst is stinginess of thought, which includes meanness in all its forms. Rudeness in thought or deed toward others, toward nature, reduces the chances of conviviality and interspecies communication, which are essential to physical and spiritual survival.<sup>22</sup>

The final irony is that anthropology shows us what we have forgotten: the values that last have their roots in the wild order of the world.

#### Notes

1. William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983) p. 7.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 164.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 161.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 166.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 167.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 169.

13. Richard Nelson, *Make Prayers to the Raven: A Koyukon View of the Northern Forest*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 238.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 239.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*, p. 240.
17. Ake Hultkrantz, *Native Religions of North America* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987) p. 20.
18. *Ibid.* p. 21.
19. *Ibid.*
20. Nelson, p. 243.
21. Hultkrantz, p. 26.
22. Gary Snyder, *The Practice of the Wild* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1990) p. 21.

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# A SIOUX VIEW OF THE LAND: THE ENVIRONMENTAL PERSPECTIVES OF CHARLES A. EASTMAN

Gerard Reed

Since the ecological crisis erupted, environmentalists have scrounged about, as if on a scavenger hunt, for reputable models which illustrate environmental wisdom and sanity. Some claim the Americas' First Americans (untarnished by European "civilization") lived harmoniously with Mother Earth and thus provide suitable principles for a sustainable land ethic.

Historians joining the discussion, seeking to determine whether or not American Indians were ideal environmentalists, resound with dissonant voices: one finds sterling examples (often shimmering in the impassioned speeches at treaty negotiations) of environmental wisdom as well as distressing documentation of senseless wildlife slaughters or trashed reservations. We are left wondering exactly what is the **real Indian** environmental perspective, for reputable documents, trustworthy witnesses, seem minimal.

Charles A. Eastman (Ohiyesa), however, gives Native American historians a translucent lens, a perspective on Sioux history and culture. His mother (Mary Nancy Eastman) was half English (the daughter of a noted artist, Captain Seth Eastman, and a Mdewakanton Sioux woman), who died soon after his birth. His father, Many Lightnings, took part in Minnesota's 1862 Santee Sioux rebellion, consequently serving time in prison. Thinking he had been killed, Many Lightnings' family (Ohiyesa included), fled to Canada's north woods' wilderness to escape retaliation.

A decade later, Many Lightnings, freed from prison and embracing the Anglo-American way of life, tracked down his son and took him back to the United States, insisting he get a white man's education and follow civilization's path. So as a teenager Eastman began a schooling process which ultimately equipped him with a B.A. from Dartmouth College and a M.D. from Boston University. Armed with the white man's degrees, he returned to South Dakota to serve his people, arriving just in time to help tend those wounded at the 1890 massacre at Wounded Knee.

Quickly frustrated by the corruption and inefficiency of federal bureaucrats, unable to reform things from within the system, he involved himself in Indian rights and reform movements and wrote many articles and books highlighting Indian culture and affairs. His early enthusiasm for American "civilization," however, wore thinner the longer he rubbed up against it, and his writings increasingly reflected a preference for Native American ways.

Eastman's rearing, education, and career experience coalesced to provide him a unique perspective: he intimately knew both the Indian and non-Indian worlds. He wrote, to a degree, as an "insider" of both cultures, yet, since he espoused Native American viewpoints, historians find him an illuminating indigenous source. And since he wrote long before environmental issues aroused much interest - certainly before any stereotypical Indian model of environmental consciousness had been

popularized - he helps us penetrate American Indian attitudes regarding the land. In this paper, to focus on some recurrent themes in Eastman's writings, I want to suggest that the fundamental goodness of the natural world, accurately observed by Indians, provided both educational and spiritual guidance for Native Americans.

## Nature's Goodness

In Eastman's opinion, America's Indians relished the beauty and bounty of the natural world. "To me, as a boy," he said, "this wilderness was a paradise. It was a land of plenty." Certainly Native Americans lived simply, lacking "civilized" luxuries. But they enjoyed a naturally **good** life which was sustained, like an ancient oak in fertile loam, by a fundamentally **good** creation.<sup>1</sup> Certainly they lacked the material items, the artifacts of civilization. But they enjoyed life, "and the truth is that we lived in blessed ignorance of any life that was better than our own."<sup>2</sup>

Working, in the 1890's, as a reservation medical doctor, he saw how adversely reservations and annuities and non-traditional ways affected the Sioux. For a people "accustomed to the purest of air and water" and used to "frequent air and sun baths, as well as baths of water and steam," confinement and crowding proved disastrous. For a people reared on food which "was fresh and wholesome: largely wild meat and fish with a variety of wild fruits, roots and grain, and some cultivated ones," the reservation fare of fat-laced bacon and refined white flour proved lethal. They "suffered severely from an indoor and sedentary life, too much artificial heat, too much clothing, impure air, limited space, [and] indigestible food...."<sup>3</sup> Even their water had to be hauled and stored in "open buckets or barrels for several days," where it incubated deadly bacteria. In short: Indian health declined precipitously, when Native Americans had to leave their natural habitats, the healthy out-of-doors environments, which had physically nourished them for centuries.<sup>4</sup>

The natural world also sustained what many Indians considered basic to the good life, the remarkable freedom they enjoyed. European observers often admired the wide-ranging liberties of tribal peoples which, Eastman believed, stemmed from their natural life - a life solely dependent on nature. When nature supplies all your needs, you live free from the political and economic constraints of human societies. In the most fundamental sense, the Indian was "Free Born, hence a free thinker."<sup>5</sup> With little "work" to do as children, native youngsters lived royally, secure and content within nature's abundance. Indeed, Eastman thought, "no life is happier than his! Food is free - lodging free - everything is free!"<sup>6</sup> In fact, as a boy he "enjoyed such a life as almost all boys dream of and would choose for themselves if they were permitted to do so."<sup>7</sup> Reading Eastman's works clarifies how he judged nature to be fundamentally good, the source of

the good life he and his people lived apart from Euro-American civilization.

### **An Accurate Knowledge of Nature**

Living close to nature, Native Americans carefully studied and accurately knew it. "In the endless laboratory of nature, there are endless secrets yet to be discovered,"<sup>8</sup> and though they had no "scientific" schools, they meticulously observed and understood the Earth's natural processes. They cultivated a depth of ecological wisdom that their Euro-American displacers almost always lacked - in Eastman's opinion because "the American Indian is the only man I know who accepts natural things as lessons in themselves, direct from the Great Giver of Life."<sup>9</sup>

One of the leaders of the conservationist movement in the early decades of the twentieth century, George Bird Grinnell, personally knew many Native Americans and also wrote some historical studies of, among others, the Cheyennes. Profoundly influenced by Indian perspectives on the land and its wildlife, he personally shared Eastman's appreciation of nature and praised Native Americans' environmental sensitivities: "The Indian's life was passed in the open air and in close contact with nature. He drew his sustenance from the Earth and from wild creatures that lived upon it. He was part of nature, and better than anything else he knew nature. A close and constantly watchful observer, nothing escaped his eye. He read the signs of the earth and the sky, and the movement of birds and animals, knew what these things meant, and governed his acts by what these signs told him."<sup>10</sup>

Growing up in Canada's woodlands, Eastman was reared by his extended family. One of his uncles became a "father" to him. "Few men know nature more thoroughly than he," Eastman said, and he could not tolerate "to hear some natural fact misrepresented."<sup>11</sup> Had his scientific skills been educated and unleashed in a scientific laboratory, he could have become a "Darwin or an Agassiz." Not all natives, of course, studied and masterfully knew nature, but some, like his uncle, developed remarkable insight and understanding. And their observations and ideas, of course, to some degree permeated native cultures.

As a medical doctor working on the reservation in the 1890's, Eastman appreciated the wisdom and natural knowledge of traditional "medicine men" whose psychological skills, "massage or osteopathy," steam baths and herbal medicines healed various ailments. Native healers worked skilfully and empathetically; they understood their patients (both psychologically and physiologically), and utilized traditional methods which had worked for generations.

In significant ways, "The old-time 'medicine man' was really better than the average white doctor in those days, for, although his treatment was largely suggestive, his herbs were harmless, and he did allay some distress which the other aggravated, because he used powerful drugs almost at random and did not attend to his cases intelligently."<sup>12</sup> Eastman asked medicine men to join him in treating patients, doing so because he knew how well they knew nature. Their natural knowledge and "home remedies" enabled them to help heal the sick.

### **Childhood Education**

This knowledge of nature naturally shaped Native American education. Traditional teachers sought to encourage, "first and

foremost, the development of personality, and the fundamentals of education as love of the 'Great Mystery,' love of nature, love of country and people."<sup>13</sup> Indian children went to school in nature's classroom, sharpening their senses on the polishing wheel of wilderness. "We could smell as well as hear and see,"<sup>14</sup> Eastman remembered, "We could feel and taste as well as we could see and hear."<sup>15</sup> Lacking books (which easily become mental crutches) they trained their memories, often storing up prodigious amounts of information concerning the living world around them (e.g. "the language of footprints"<sup>16</sup>) as well as tribal lore.

While still developing in the mother's womb, the infant started learning. Indian mothers sought to provide "spiritual teaching, at first silently - a mere pointing of the index finger to nature; then in whispered songs, bird-like, at morning and evening. To her and to the child the birds are real people, who live very close to the 'Great Mystery'; the murmuring trees breathe His presence; the falling waters chant His praise."<sup>17</sup>

The new-born baby was first presented to its grandmother, who placed it in the cradleboard. Then a second grandmother would pick it up and take it for a walk. "You must come with me," she says. "We shall go among the father and mother trees, and hear them speak with their thousand tongues, that you may know their language forever." Thus, the baby encounters "nature and becomes at once 'nature-born' in accord with the beliefs and practices of the wild red man."<sup>18</sup>

As soon as the mother held her child in her arms she began teaching her: "In the most natural, the simplest way, she established her child's sense of a vital relation with the Unseen, beside which all else is as nothing."<sup>19</sup> She urged her child to "'Listen, hear the birds sing to Him! Hear His voice in the waterfall! The trees are whispering of their Maker!'"<sup>20</sup>

In time, the youngster entered creation's school, finding behavioral wisdom manifest in all creatures.<sup>21</sup> Although the children's education focused on creatures easily observed, and although the instructional program largely focused on practical skills, its deeper purpose was thoroughly spiritual. Native Americans sought to usher their young into the invisible world by means of things visible. Thus the mother's early efforts were religiously motivated. Heir to the traditions transmitted through her mother and grandmother, taking "the accepted rules of her people for a guide," an Indian maiden learned "from ants, bees, spiders, beavers, and badgers. She studies the family life of birds, so exquisite in its emotional intensity and its patient devotion, until she seems to feel the universal mother-heart beating in her own breast."<sup>22</sup> Given prolonged discipline in such studies, youngsters spontaneously developed "the attitude of prayer, and speaks reverently of the Powers. He thinks that he is a blood brother to all living creatures, and the storm wind is to him a messenger of the 'Great Mystery'."<sup>23</sup>

Educating their young was significant, serious, and systematic. "All the customs of this primitive people were held to be divinely instituted, and those in connection with the training of children were scrupulously adhered to and transmitted from one generation to another."<sup>24</sup>

Their games, their dances, all moved to the pulse of creation, and they carefully studied their sacred text, Nature, noting "the habits of animals just as you study your books."<sup>25</sup> Youthful songs celebrated various animal attributes as well as proper ways of hunting and surviving. The people's history, through story and song, entered into every youngster's mind. It was the "sort of

teaching [which] at once enlightens the boy's mind and stimulates his ambition."<sup>26</sup> (Many of Eastman's articles and books, such as **Old Indian Days**, re-told traditional Lakota children's stories.)

### Adolescent Education

Indian educators stressed character formation. While they valued practical skills, they primarily stressed personality development. Shaping one's character through wilderness testing, discerning moral principles through careful observation of natural laws, undergirded the educational task. Most importantly, they sought to adapt themselves "perfectly to natural things," to "harmonize" with nature.<sup>27</sup>

Physical training, as Plato insisted, helps establish self-discipline, a basic characteristic of educated persons. Taught to treasure life more than possessions, "the Indian youth set about body-building rather than house-building. He perceived that if he built fine houses he must shut out nature, and he preferred to build the body and to be inseparable from nature. He read in nature the 'Great Mystery,' and in simplicity an abiding strength."<sup>28</sup>

Native American children learned to sleep quietly and "always rise early."<sup>29</sup> They were taught "to be silent and reticent" - highly regarded virtues for hunters and warriors, but also basic for "the foundations of patience and self-control."<sup>30</sup> Two daily meals, morning and evening, provided not only sufficient nutrients but also incubated temperance, developing "a true manhood, one of physical activity and endurance, [which] depends upon dieting and regular exercise."<sup>31</sup> Youngsters frequently followed a Spartan regimen which conjoined physical and moral development. Indians thought one's body ought to "be able to defy the elements, rather than be dependent upon shelter and abundance." The craving for "bodily comfort and luxury, which appears to be the main business of civilization, he despised, as tending to undermine the courage and vitality of the race."<sup>32</sup>

Eastman remembered being denied "beef soup or any warm drink," things allowed old men, as part of his discipline. Indeed, a young man was "expected to endure hardship without complaint," for as a warrior he "must, of course, be an athlete and used to undergoing all sorts of privations. He must be able to go without food and water for two or three days without displaying any weakness, or to run for a day and a night without any rest." Early discipline developed self-control, the true type of "bravery" needed by warriors.<sup>33</sup>

Native Americans judged a fit physique - "supple, symmetrical, graceful, and enduring" - necessary to establish "the foundation of a moral life! No man can hope to maintain such a temple of the spirit beyond the period of adolescence, unless he is able to curb his indulgence in the pleasures of the senses. Upon this truth the Indian built a rigid system of physical training, a social and moral code that was the law of his life."<sup>34</sup>

Eastman ranked his early lessons as the best and most valuable he ever learned. The education attained by the "untutored savage," strangely enough, "often puts civilized man to the blush. Silence and modesty of demeanor in the young, reverence for elders, and general family decorum, were surely more characteristic of the Indian children of my day than of the average American household."<sup>35</sup> On a spiritual level, "Long before I ever heard of Christ," he wrote, "or saw a white man, I had learned from an untutored woman the essence of morality. With the help

of dear Nature herself, she taught me things simple but of mighty import. I knew God. I perceived what goodness is. I saw and loved what is really beautiful. Civilization has not taught me anything better."<sup>36</sup>

### A Religious Sanctuary

Like the great Gothic Cathedrals, full of symbolism and sacramentals for Medieval Christians, the natural world provided a religious sanctuary for Native Americans. Religion pervaded Indian life, providing "the basis of all Indian training,"<sup>37</sup> and its tenets inseparably intertwined with nature's powers and creatures. Indian youngsters learned that the Great Mystery "looks at you from every creation. In the wind you hear him whisper to you. He gives his war-whoop in the thunder. He watches you by day with his eye, the sun; at night, he gazes upon your sleeping countenance through the moon. In short, it is the Mystery of Mysteries, who controls all things, to whom you will make your first offering."<sup>38</sup>

Spiritual truths, however, do not lay like roadside litter on the shoulders of life's highways. Like the medicinal roots which needed expertise and diligence to find, religious insights came as a result of careful study and discipline. Eastman's grandmother taught him that "the Great Mystery does not will us to find things too easily." Indeed, "there are many secrets which the Great Mystery will disclose only to the most worthy. Only those who seek him fasting and in solitude will receive his signs."<sup>39</sup> To become a man - a warrior, a hunter - to ready oneself for public service, required religious sensitivities developed through daily discipline.

Ordinary routines, such as eating, reminded Indians of the spiritual world. Before eating a piece of venison, they "would first whisper: 'Great Mystery, do thou partake of this venison, and still be gracious!' This was the commonly said 'grace.'"<sup>40</sup> Needed guidance for daily decisions came, at times, from human counselors. But "light" from the Great Mystery came only "in silence, in the deep forest or on the height of the mountain."<sup>41</sup>

Since throngs of people spread moral as well as environmental pollution, one often loses a certain "spiritual power" when sucked into a crowd. Outdoorsmen "know that there is a magnetic and nervous force that accumulates in solitude and that it is quickly dissipated by life in crowd."<sup>42</sup> So nature's solitary places served as the Indians' worship centers.

The red man frequently prayed, pausing to greet the dawn or to give thanks for wonders "strikingly beautiful or sublime - a black thundercloud with the rainbow's glowing arch above the mountain; a white waterfall in the heart of a green gorge; a vast prairies tinged with the blood-red of sunset - he pauses for an instant in the attitude of worship."<sup>43</sup> An aesthetic response prompted proper worship, for "beauty, in our eyes, is always fresh and living, even as God Himself dresses the world anew at each season of the year."<sup>44</sup> This was because the various elemental powers, "Lightning, Wind, Water, Fire, and Frost, were regarded with awe as spiritual powers, but always secondary and intermediate in character. We believed that the spirit pervades all creation and that every creature possesses a soul in some degree, though not necessarily a soul conscious of itself. The tree, the waterfall, the grizzly bear, each is an embodied Force, and as such an object of reverence."<sup>45</sup>

In Eastman's opinion, the Native American "loved to come into sympathy and spiritual communion with his brothers of the



animal kingdom, whose inarticulate souls had for him something of the sinless purity that we attribute to the innocent and irresponsible. He had faith in their instincts, as in a mysterious wisdom given from above; and while he humbly accepted the supposedly voluntary sacrifice of their bodies to preserve his own, he paid homage to their spirits in prescribed prayers and offerings."<sup>46</sup> Indeed, they believed "that the Spirit of God is not breathed into man alone, but that the whole created universe is a sharer in the immortal perfection of its maker."<sup>47</sup>

Later, when he came to understand and embrace the Christian faith, he found the "Christ ideal" (not the white man's practice of it) to be "in line with most of my Indian training."<sup>48</sup> For a while he served as an agent for the YMCA, organizing associations in western states and Canada. In the process he brushed up against missionary activities and wondered, in view of his early religious training, "how it is that our simple lives were so imbued with the spirit of worship, while much church-going among white and nominally Christian Indians led often to such very small results."<sup>49</sup>

Reflecting on this, he decided the problem was that most organized Christianity "was a machine-made religion." Whereas Native Americans continually wondered at "the Great Mystery" indwelling creation, Anglo-Americans forever wondered "'Will it pay? Can I make anything of it?' seemed to be the 'Great Mystery' of the white people."<sup>50</sup> Money-driven, like the rest of American society, the churches tended to seek "quantity rather than quality of religious experience."<sup>51</sup> An "old battle-scarred warrior" confirmed this suspicion for him, saying: "Why we have followed this law you speak of for untold ages! We owned nothing, because everything is from Him. Food was free, land free as sunshine and rain. Who has changed all this? The white man; and yet he says he is a believer in God!"<sup>52</sup>

Another time he received a strong rebuke from an old Sac and Fox chief in Iowa, rejecting Eastman's invitation to embrace Christianity. While he respected Eastman's position, the chief distrusted "the white man's religion and civilization" since they clearly lacked "respect for nature" and God, trying "to buy God with the by-products of nature" - as if one could "buy his way into heaven" without even knowing "where heaven is."<sup>53</sup> A bit later, one of the Sac and Fox handed Eastman his "pocket book containing my railway tickets and a considerable sum of money" which he had misplaced without realizing it. "I said to the state missionary who was at my side, 'Better let these Indians alone! If I had lost my money in the streets of your Christian city, I should probably have never seen it again."<sup>54</sup>

In Eastman's later years, he came to believe that most Christians he encountered lacked the qualitative depth which comes only from solitude, self-discipline, simplicity, those beatitude-type Gospel qualities so rarely found in the expansive temperament or religious life of frontier Americans. Native Americans, rooted in the more immediate realities of nature, attuned themselves more perfectly to the Creator's designs.

### Conclusion

Reading the works of Dr. Charles Eastman draws one into an authentic Native American perspective, rooted in a traditional Siouan culture. Pervading his presentations one finds the importance of Mother Nature - who is good, who undergirds the good life, who nurtures education in its fullest sense, and who gives

worshippers a holy sanctuary. Whether educating their young or worshipping the Great Mystery, Indians relied upon the natural world for guidance and sustenance.

While by no means consciously or systematically expounded, I think there is a clear environmental perspective, indeed a strong environmental ethic, in Eastman's works. While he may not represent or speak for all Native Americans, he certainly provides an authentic voice, one which deserves to be considered, when seeking to understand the First Americans' traditional ecological wisdom.

### Notes

1. Charles A. Eastman, *Indian Boyhood* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc. 1971; republication of 1902 ed., published by McClure, Phillips & Company), 184.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Charles A. Eastman, "The Indian's Health Problem," *The Popular Science Monthly*, 86 (Jan. 1915), 49.
4. *Ibid.*, 50.
5. Charles A. Eastman, *The Indian Today: The Past and Future of the First American* (Garden City: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1915), 4.
6. Eastman, *Indian Boyhood*, 15.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Charles A. Eastman, *Indian Scout Craft and Lore* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1974; reprint of 1914 Little, Brown & Co.), 2.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Quoted in George L. Cornell, "The Influence of Native Americans on Modern Conservationists," *The Environmental Review*, 9, 3 (Fall, 85), 111.
11. *Ibid.*, 133.
12. Eastman, "The Indian's Health Problem," 52.
13. Charles A. Eastman, "Education Without Books," *The Craftsman*, 21, (Jan. 1912), 372.
14. Eastman, *Indian Boyhood*, 3.
15. *Ibid.*
16. Charles A. Eastman, "The Language of Footprints," *St. Nicholas* (Jan. 1917), 267-269.
17. Charles A. Eastman, *The Soul of the Indian* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1911), 31.
18. Charles A. Eastman, *Old Indian Days* (n.p.: Fenwyn Press Books, 1970 reprint of 1907 ed.), 171.
19. Eastman, "Education Without Books," 373.
20. *Ibid.*
21. Eastman, *Old Indian Days*, 176.
22. *Ibid.*, 33.
23. *Ibid.*, 34.
24. *Ibid.*, 41.
25. *Ibid.*, 134.
26. *Ibid.*, 43.
27. Charles A. Eastman, *From the Deep Woods to Civilization: Chapters in the Autobiography of an Indian* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1977; reprint of 1936 Little, Brown, ed.), 164.
28. *Ibid.*, 372.
29. Eastman, *Indian Boyhood*, 9.
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Ibid.*, 17.
32. Eastman, "Education Without Books," 372.
33. *Ibid.*, 43.
34. Eastman, *Soul of the Indian*, 90-91.
35. Eastman, "Education Without Books," 377.
36. *Ibid.*, 87.
37. Eastman, *Indian Boyhood*, 49.
38. *Ibid.*, 90-91.
39. *Ibid.*, 18.
40. *Ibid.*, 186.
41. Eastman, *From Deep Woods to Civilization*, 26. See also Charles A. Eastman, "The School Days of an Indian," *Outlook*, 85 (April 13, 1907), 854.
42. Eastman, *Soul of the Indian*, 11.
43. *Ibid.*, 46.
44. Eastman, *The Indian Today*, 148.
45. *Ibid.*, 14.
46. *Ibid.*, 15.

47. *Ibid.*, 121.  
 48. Eastman, *From Deep Woods to Civilization*, 138.  
 49. *Ibid.*, 141.  
 50. Charles A. Eastman, "First Impressions of Civilization," *Harper's Monthly*, 108 (March, 1904), 587.  
 51. *Ibid.*  
 52. *Ibid.*  
 53. *Ibid.*, 149.

54. *Ibid.*, 149.

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## CHANGES IN OUR LAND: PLAINS INDIAN ENVIRONMENTAL CONCEPTS AND THE IMPACT OF TRADE IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Thomas F. Schilz

The traditional environmental ethic of American Plains Indians was not phrased as such, but was rather part of the religious system that intertwined humans, animals, plants, and the spirit world in a complex, multi-layered cosmos. Although individual beliefs regarding the cosmic order varied from one tribe to another, most North American cultures observed a common environmental ethos which Robert Redfield has identified as the "primitive world view." As such, the "primitive world view" consists of a belief in the interrelatedness of Nature's parts, a sense of "participatory maintenance" between humans and other forms, and a view that humans have an obligation toward nature to uphold and protect the cosmic order.<sup>1</sup>

Many Siouan tribes, like the Omahas and Poncas for example, believed that there was a direct link between the fertility of the corn they raised and the numbers of the buffalo they hunted. The proper balance between corn, buffalo, and humans protected the Siouan world order.<sup>2</sup> In Lakota Sioux belief, all humans possess a ghost (*waniya*), a spirit (*wanagi*), and a guardian spirit (*sicun*). Animals and other nonhuman entities have a similar three-part spiritual life.<sup>3</sup> The Lakota holy man Nicholas Black Elk explained this interrelatedness of the Siouan world order when he stated that the Great Spirit "is within all things." Another Sioux shaman, Lame Deer, believed that the Grandfather Spirit split itself into millions of myriad forms to occupy everything in the cosmos.

Eating plants and animals gave human beings a relationship with the respective worlds of their food; therefore, plants and animals had to be protected rather than abused for fear that their guardian *sicun* would withdraw their protection and cause sickness or even death. Many tribes believed that these powerful guardian spirits, or "game bosses", gave aid and assistance to those specific hunters who created a relationship between themselves and another species for life. The Cheyennes, for example, carefully buried many of the skulls and bones of the animals they hunted, keeping some for use in medicine bundles, or for carving into religious objects to enhance their power. The Cheyennes invited wild game to participate in tribal rituals by creating artificial environments where the spirit game could feel at home. Such rituals also served to purify hunters, who became holy warriors in search of spiritual food. Hunters were forbidden to take more game than was necessary, could not kill females or young animals, and could not leave a wounded animal to suffer.<sup>4</sup>

This ritual interplay with nonhuman entities became a central feature of Indian environmental beliefs. The Pawnees, for instance, insisted that their tribal ceremonies were themselves necessary for the regeneration and reproduction of other species, so that, in effect, Pawnee culture became perceived as an integral part of the natural world.<sup>5</sup> The cosmic order itself laid the foundation for such ceremonies. In Pawnee tradition, Evening Star gave the first woman and first man instructions for fructifying the earth through the ceremonies that surrounded horticulture and hunting. In another example, Tonkawa tribal stories told how the wolves of heaven had rescued the first man from an underground chamber and had taught him to hunt. The wolves commanded all of first man's descendants to be hunters like themselves, and to renew their allegiance to the tribal totem, Grey Wolf, through a ritual reenactment of this creation myth.<sup>6</sup>

Likewise, in Cheyenne tradition, the first man and first woman were taught spirit songs in the sky lodge where the universe was created. These songs concerned the proper way of calling animals and in the ritual use of game by hunters. As with the Tonkawas, the Cheyennes believed that the spirit of the wolf watched over wild animals and would punish those who misused them.<sup>7</sup>

Pre-Columbian trade, restricted by the inability of prehistoric Indians to transport more than they themselves or their pack dogs could carry, had been limited to a few nonperishable items like abalone, mica, or baskets, and to food. Nomadic tribes furnished meat and pemmican, while village Indians bartered corn and pumpkins.

This cultural universe consecrated the balance between humans and the nonhuman world as a part of proper ethical behavior. At the same time, pre-Columbian hunters on the Great Plains did not have the necessary tools to alter the environment drastically. While some hunting methods often killed more animals than needed for tribal sustenance, Indians lacked the deadly technology required to exterminate whole species. Because stone-tipped arrows and lances were fragile and limited in striking power, Indian hunters frequently used pounds - wooden corrals where large numbers of buffalo could be driven and trapped - or drove whole herds of buffalo over cliffs, or jumps, so that the animals died from the fall rather than from hunters' weapons. Despite tribal prohibitions against killing excessive

numbers of animals, these methods often destroyed more game than the hunters could consume or carry away.

The arrival of Europeans irrevocably altered the nature of Indian-animal relations and Indian trade activity. Early Europeans discovered the vast wealth of beaver pelts available in North America, and were willing to provide Indians enormous quantities and varieties of manufactured goods in exchange for them. As Europeans expanded their trading operations, they added buffalo robes and the pelts of foxes, marten, and other small animals to their shopping lists. Consequently, plains Indian hunting ceased to be as much of a communal activity, since hunting increasingly relied on the ownership of a horse. With a well-trained buffalo horse, a single man could manoeuvre within a herd and kill any number of animals using a gun, steel-tipped lance, or iron arrowheads. The spoils of this new individualized hunting belonged to the successful hunter, who could then trade them for a wide range of European goods.<sup>8</sup>

These European products did not augment but rather replaced native goods. They were essentially luxury items that provided improved convenience and adornment.<sup>9</sup> Guns fired further and killed more efficiently than stone-tipped arrows. Alcohol enhanced and even induced visions and their power. Hawkbells, dyed turkey feathers, Venetian glass beads, trade cloth, and ribbons were more colorful and more easily procured than traditional items such as the deer hooves, eagle feathers, seashells, leather, and porcupine quills they replaced. Even native tobacco, grown for centuries by tribes like the Cheyennes, declined in importance as the Cheyennes abandoned horticulture for the nomadic life. Brazilian rope tobacco, sold cheaply by the yard at trading posts, was easier to get than the locally grown product.

With the availability of so many varied goods, Indians frequently abandoned their environmental ethics in an efforts to procure the robes, hides, and pelts that Europeans demanded. James Isham's observation that young Indian hunters frequently killed scores of animals and then took only the hide, tongue, or head, and "let the body or carcass go a Drift [sic] with the tide" identified a state of ethical disregard caused by the fur trade. Europeans were only interested in hides, heads as trophies, smoked tongue, for which they would pay dearly. In such circumstances, Indians simply reacted to market demands.<sup>10</sup> To make matters worse, white hunters, who were devoid of any environmental ethic save profit, slaughtered game even more relentlessly than Indians.

Typical of this change in Indian cultural behavior were the Omahas. Originally self-sufficient horticulturalists, by the 1790s the Omahas and their Ponca and Otoe neighbors had become middlemen in a vast trade network connected to the Spanish outpost at St. Louis. The leading Omaha chief, Blackbird, used threats to keep the Spaniards from ascending the Missouri beyond his village, and thus managed to control access to the Brules, Mandans, and Cheyennes.<sup>11</sup> He used the threat of Brule attacks to control the Iowas and launched a series of raids against the Pawnees to keep them away from the Spaniards.<sup>12</sup>

Blackbird was successful because his people's lands still abounded in fur-bearing animals in the late eighteenth century. Smallpox killed large numbers of Omahas (Including Blackbird) in 1802. The Brules and Otoes inflicted crushing military defeats on the tribe shortly thereafter, and by 1807 James Aird reported that the Omahas possessed nothing with which to trade.<sup>13</sup> The Brules expelled the Omahas from their hunting grounds along the Big Sioux River, and forced them to trek westward to the

Sand Hills region to hunt buffalo. This long journey brought the Omahas into conflict with aggressive Arapahoe and Cheyenne war parties and soon was abandoned. By 1809 lands near the Omaha's villages were empty of large game animals, and the tribe was reduced to selling its supply of corn at a price of one bushel for a yard of cloth.<sup>14</sup> By 1819 the Omahas were reduced to eating red haws, wild rice, and bartering for pemmican with the Pawnees. The Omahas sold their corn crop to traders for goods, and tribal leaders complained that what game was available was killed by American soldiers stationed at Council Bluffs.

Other tribes suffered similar catastrophic dislocations. The Pawnees, for example, took over much of the fur trade from the Omahas after 1810. Successful horticulturalists and hunters, the Pawnees maintained their position on the central plains until the smallpox epidemic of 1838 killed half of the tribe's population. At the same time, the Pawnees faced increased competition for buffalo from Sioux and Cheyenne hunting parties, and from the emigrant tribes that crowded onto the eastern margins of the Great Plains. American officials offered cattle as a substitute for bison, only to be met with mystifying loophole in the Indians' environmental ethic: the Pawnees (and their Cheyenne and Sioux neighbors) viewed wild animals, especially buffalo, as sacred, possessing souls and protected by powerful guardian spirits. Domestic animals, like civilized men, were regarded as essentially soulless beings. Since parts of the holy buffalo were offered in tribal ceremonies, the buffalo had to be hunted until it was gone.<sup>15</sup>

The Cheyennes also suffered from this decline in bison population. Overhunting, the introduction of bovine diseases from European cattle, and the loss of grazing lands to horses and cattle all contributed to the buffalo's decline. Among the Cheyennes, bands of traders emerged who sought to exploit the herds for profit. In the early 1840s, George Ruxton estimated that the Cheyennes were harvesting and selling 100,000 robes annually, which required trading chiefs to take several wives as robe workers, and even to employ hunters. Old Bark, the leading Cheyenne trader, also refused to participate in traditional giveaways, a pattern of behavior that earned his band the name *Hovxnova*, or "Stingies".<sup>16</sup> Stingy leaders counselled peace with American settlers and, after the massacre of several hundred Cheyennes at Sand Creek in 1864, the tribe split apart. Trading bands retreated to the Indian Territory to be near American agents who would feed them, but militant Dog Soldier bands stole the sacred Medicine Arrows from the massacre survivors and went off to live with the Sioux.

As the price of robes rose in the 1840s, Indians and whites accelerated their harvesting of buffalo. Edwin Denig noted that the extinction of the buffalo was at hand by mid-century, and H.Y. Hind reported that the Crees and other tribes spent most of their time hunting - far more effort than was necessary for subsistence.<sup>17</sup>

Some leaders reasserted the old values, or sought alternatives to the grim realities of starvation. In 1846, the Cheyenne leader Yellow Wolf proposed that his people return to their former horticultural way of life, because he believed the buffalo would soon become extinct. Buffalo Hump, a prominent Penateka Comanche chief, proposed that whites establish a wildlife habitat in west Texas where the buffalo could graze in peace. He opposed the robe trade as a threat to his peoples' food supply and encouraged Comanche men to trade horses or goods stolen in Mexico instead of robes.<sup>18</sup> Buffalo Hump continued to press

American authorities for a game preserve for the buffalo, an idea that became central to Comanche and Kiowa diplomacy in the late nineteenth century. During the Medicine Lodge Treaty talks in 1867, the Kiowa chief White Bear proposed that the American government herd buffalo onto Indian lands and supervise controlled hunting. Some Sioux bands actually treated buffalo as semidomesticated animals. The Sioux would locate a group of buffalo, herd them through their territory, and kill only an isolated animal as needed.<sup>19</sup> Many tribes used soldier societies as police to control hunting. Some Cheyenne bands, for example, allowed the camp soldiers to confiscate illegally taken game and personal property from offenders.

Other tribes like the Pawnees and Tonkawas proved too weak and dispirited to survive the loss of animals and environment. Both became wards of the United States Army, serving as scouts and soldiers in return for rations.

The end of the fur trade left the Plains Indians in a state of cultural disintegration. Some tribes, such as the Blackfeet and the Arapahoes, survived because of geographic isolation and social cohesiveness. During the reservation era, the ecological problems of non-Indian towns and farms began to intrude onto the Indians' remaining lands. Tribal leaders sought to reestablish traditional values against the objections of white ranchers, loggers, and miners, who attempted to exploit reservation resources. The old values of environmental balance had never completely disappeared, but had been at time subordinated to the desire for quick riches available through the fur trade. With the end of the fur trade era, many of the traditional values reasserted themselves both among Indians and non-Indians concerned for the sanctity of life and the protection of the environment.

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# THE MEDICINE WOLF: THE WOLF IN BLACKFEET TRADITION

Jay Hansford C. Vest

## Introduction

Greeted by domestic livestock and government trappers, the wolf returned to Blackfeet Country in 1987 after an absence of more than 50 years. Its "medicine powers" were little appreciated by ranchers and bureaucrats, and what may be called the "mystery pack" quickly became a target for government hunters and trappers.

Traditional Blackfeet, however, welcomed their old "medicine" friends. Contemporary medicine man John "Buster" Yellow Kidney declared that if federal and state authorities had contacted the traditionalists in the tribe there would have been a different outcome.<sup>1</sup> What could he have meant by this? What implications does this situation have for the religious freedom of American Indians and implied "ritual" wildlife praxis, or Native environmental ethics?

These questions are best addressed through an understanding of the wolf's role in traditional Blackfeet culture. Accordingly, I will review the ethnological literature and mythic traditions of the Blackfeet in recounting their traditional regard for *Canus lupis*.

In 1754, when Hudson's Bay Company explorer Anthony Hendry travelled to Alberta, he wrote of "Wolves without number" and declared that "I cannot say whether them [the wolves] or the buffalo are most numerous."<sup>2</sup> Hendry recorded his remarks while searching for the "Archithinue" or Blackfeet Indians; no Englishman had yet encountered these people.

The Blackfeet consider the wolf a "medicine" animal possessing sacred "powers." At the outset of the fur trade, it was apparent that the Blackfeet respected the wolf: Hendry asked his Cree guides "why they did not Hap [deadfall-trap] wolves; they made answer that the Archithinue would kill them, if they trapped in their country."<sup>3</sup>

Wolves and buffalo were still numerous in 1877 when James Willard Schultz arrived in Blackfeet country, but the animals' demise was close at hand. His short story "The Eagle Creek Wolfers" colorfully but insightfully portrays the fur trade and its role in the demise of wolves, buffalo and, not incidentally, the Blackfeet.<sup>4</sup>

Wolf lore and "power" are of considerable utility in traditional Blackfeet family life. The wolf is called **Makuyi** or **Mahkwoyi** - "Big Mouth"<sup>5</sup> presumably because of these animals' great appetite. Mothers chasten children by singing: "Come wolf, eat this baby if he don't sleep."<sup>6</sup> A common ingredient in personal names, **Makuyi** has also been attributed to geography: the Little Rockies of north central Montana were known as "Mahkwiyi Stukists" or Wolf Mountains.<sup>7</sup> Two miles above the town of Wolf Creek, Montana there is a favourite Blackfeet buffalo jump known as Wolf-Also-Jumped **piskan**; it was given this name "because a wolf, closely following a buffalo herd that was being decoyed, also went off the cliff."<sup>8</sup>

The Blackfeet do not eat wolves,<sup>9</sup> but they have been known to keep them as pets.<sup>10</sup> While wolves have often contributed to the well-being of men and women, they have also been known to go mad; persons bitten by a mad wolf suffered the symptoms of rabies, however traditional Blackfeet medicine men exercised an effective cure for this disease.<sup>11</sup>

The wolf or wolf power plays a significant role in the cosmography of the Blackfeet. In the **Poia** myth which explains why the people honour the Sun, a wolf is among the animals or powers inquired of concerning the location of the Sun's Lodge.<sup>12</sup> Further confirming the wolf's place in Blackfeet cosmography, **Poia** (Scarface) returns home from the Sun's Lodge with the sacred lore of the Sun Dance (**Okan**) via the "Wolf Trail" or "Wolf Road" which is also called the Milky Way.<sup>13</sup> The "Wolf Trail" is acknowledged as the way to the spirit world and is connected with death: "They have passed over the 'Wolf Trail'" meaning they are dead.<sup>14</sup>

In the annual Sun Dance Lodge, which honours the Sun and celebrates all of Nature, the wolf's role is reflected by dancers wearing wolfskins and imitating wolves driving herds of buffalo.<sup>15</sup> This wolf power is translated into traditional Blackfeet social organization where, for example, the wolf band or clan comprises a significant tribal unit as explained through the legend "When Men and Animals Were Friendly."<sup>16</sup> Warrior societies also invoke wolf power and leaders of such groups - the All Brave Dogs and Raven Bearers, for example - wear a wolfskin robe during gatherings of their societies.<sup>17</sup>

Wolf medicine is particularly efficacious in scouting, hunting, warfare, and getting horses; while on the chase, scouts, hunters, and warriors carried wolfskins in their packs or wore them over their clothing.<sup>18</sup> Wolfskin camouflage invoked the power of the wolf in the person wearing it; wolf power was further solicited through a series of songs which originated in the long-ago when a war party heard someone singing, "Calf, I want to eat it." Looking about they saw only a coyote who ended each song with a howl. The party proceeded to kill a buffalo calf and speaking to the coyote, the leader declared "There is your calf, help us to have good luck." Departing, the war party looked back and saw the coyote eating the calf; these warriors were very successful and brought in many horses. Consequently, war parties continued to sing these songs for good luck.<sup>19</sup> Following the coyote's example, all wolf songs end in a howl because the wolf howl expresses the desire of whatever it is the singer wishes to obtain.<sup>20</sup>

As a creative force, the wolf plays a role in foretelling storms. While encamped in the Rockies with **Siksikakoan**, a Blackfoot scout, McClintock records that "The deep stillness of the night was broken by the mournful howl of a wolf in the forest close by..." and this act was interpreted to foretell a storm.<sup>21</sup> He also noted that wolves are very wise having received their wisdom from **Na'pi** (Old Man) - the Blackfeet Creator and trickster. The

wolf also has a creative relationship with horses and is a curious figure of humour when cavorting with Na'pi on the ice.

These notes on the wolf indicate that it was significantly integrated throughout Blackfeet culture and tradition; an examination of several legends, myths, and stories will confirm the traditional values and powers which mark the Blackfeet concepts of the wolf as a sacred being. We must first examine the meaning of myth and review its significance in Blackfeet culture.

Among these Native American traditions, mythological message has the power of immediacy; "cosmologies, world views, and religious and ritual expressions," all "have their origin and reinforcement in myth."<sup>22</sup> Mythic themes express sacred events in the now; they are "time outside of time." "The recitation of a myth defining creation, for example, is not experienced in terms of an event of linear past, but rather of a happening of eternal reality, true and real now and forever, a time on the 'knife edge between the past and the future."<sup>23</sup> Myth informs and explains reality; not in the linear fashion of science, but in the events of ever-active creation, occurring and recurring in the cycles of days or seasons and in death and rebirth. Myths respond to creation in the immediacy of process, informing of creation as it is "ever happening and observable through all the multiple forms and forces of creation."<sup>24</sup>

It is the beings of creation, such as the wolf, which most significantly empower traditional Blackfeet religion. This traditional Blackfeet ethos is affirmed through a rich metaphysic of nature wherein the natural forms or forces are directly expressive of the Ultimate Power, or essence, of the Great Spirit.<sup>25</sup> Neither monotheistic nor pantheistic, this metaphysic of nature "refers both to a Supreme Being and to the totality of all gods or spirits or powers of creation."<sup>26</sup> Accordingly, the wolf is a sacred being, in revealing the Great Mystery or Good Power.<sup>27</sup>

The wolf is prominently mentioned in several Blackfeet narratives; a review of these stories will provide a foundation for an ethnometaphysical interpretation of the wolf's role and meaning in traditional Blackfeet culture.<sup>28</sup>

## I

The "Legend of the Friendly Medicine Wolf"<sup>29</sup> affirms the traditional Blackfeet ecological ethos of morally considering animals. In this account, a young mother - **Itsapichkaupe** (Sits-by-the-door) - is made captive by the Crows and taken over two hundred miles to a camp on Elk (Yellowstone) River; there she is pitied by a kindly Crow woman who provides for her escape. During her long journey home, **Itsapichkaupe's** provisions are soon exhausted; she finds herself deep in despair when a large wolf approaches her. As the wolf lay at her feet, however she beseeches his aid, saying: "Pity me, brother wolf! I am so weak for food that I must soon die. I pray for the sake of my young children that you will help me." The wolf responds and draws near to her; **Itsapichkaupe** is able to walk by placing her hands on the wolf's back and the wolf seemed eager to bear her weight.

Thanks to the friendly medicine wolf, **Itsaphkaupe** safely reached the Blackfeet camp along Bear (Marias) River; the faithful wolf retreated from the camp to the mountains, but came everyday to a hill overlooking **Itsapichkaupe's** lodge. Believing the wolf and the coyote to be good medicine, the Blackfeet never shoot them; indeed, they have a saying: "The gun that shoots at a wolf or coyote will never again shoot straight."<sup>30</sup>

## II

The moral philosophy of traditional Blackfeet in regard to the animals is further confirmed in the "Legend When Men and Animals Were Friendly."<sup>31</sup> Early one winter in the long-ago, the Blackfeet arose from their camp to find no animals on which to sustain themselves. At first, eating dried meat and pemmican, no one in camp seemed concerned about the vanished herds, but as the supply of food diminished, the tribe decided to move off in search of the missing herds. One man, White Eagle, decided to remain where he was; he and his two wives and son soon exhausted their food supply and began to starve.

North of the starving family, all the various kinds of meat eating animals were in winter camp. With the power of metamorphosis given them by the Sun (Natos), the animals could assume human form; and one day the chief of the animals, Spotted Wolf, discovered the starving people, the animal chiefs counselled and decided to send the sons of Big Wolf, Coyote, Red Fox and Black Fox to the humans' aid. Carrying food and assuming human form, the medicine animals entered White Eagle's lodge. On behalf of the animals' head chief, Spotted Wolf, the four visitors invited White Eagle and his family to the great animal camp where plenty of food is available.

Throughout the winter, the animals hosted White Eagle and his family in their lodges; in supplying the family's needs for food, Big Wolf, the Chief of the animals, explains: "The reason I am having you all invite this human being to visit you in your lodge is, that he and his women are not our kind, and I want you to become well acquainted with him." The generosity of the animals is, however, dependent upon the right behaviour of White Eagle and his family. They are told never to pick up any property that might be lying about the camp or there will be trouble. When one day White Eagle's son picks up a "beautifully straight, flint-tipped arrow, with eagle feathers on it," the "people" of the camp begin snapping and biting the boy. Quickly sacrificing upon the fire, the gifts which Big Wolf had provided the family with, all the animals returned to their metamorphosed state as human persons. Responding to this trouble, Big Wolf admonishes White Eagle, telling him that this mistake must not be repeated. The other animals continue to feast White Eagle until the green grass season when the great animal camp broke up.

## III

The story of "the Wolf Man and the Treacherous Wives"<sup>32</sup> provides an explanation of the traditional social structure associated with the wolf. With its origin in the long ago, this story relates the account of two unfaithful, treacherous wives who conspire to kill their husband. Thinking that his wives would improve if he moved away from the camp, the man moved his lodge to the edge of the prairie at the base of a high butte. Every day this man climbed the butte to sit and look out over the country; on the top of the butte, there was a buffalo skull upon which he sat. After a time, one woman confided to the other: "It is very lonely here; we have no one to talk with or visit." "Let us kill our husband," conspired the other, "then we can go back to our relations and have a good time."

The next morning when the man set out to hunt, his wives climbed the butte and dug a deep hole; they covered it with light sticks, grass, and earth, so that it looked like the other soil nearby, and they placed the buffalo skull above the hole on the

camouflaged covering. When the man returned loaded with meat, his wives hurriedly cooked some of it so that he would soon finish and then climb the butte to sit upon the buffalo skull. When he did so, the sticks broke and he fell into the deep hole; seeing him disappear into the pit, the treacherous women took down the lodge, packed their dogs and set out for the main camp.

As they drew near their people, they pretended to cry and mourn for their husband. Hearing them, some of the people ask: "What is this? Why are you mourning? Where is your husband?" "Ah," they replied, "he is dead. Five days ago he went out to hunt and did not come back. What shall we do? We have lost him who cared for us"; and they cried and mourned again.

The man was bruised and hurt when he fell into the deep pit; the hole's depth and his injuries kept him from climbing out, and he thought that surely he must die of hunger. Travelling on the prairie, however, a wolf climbed the butte and came to the hole; looking in, the wolf saw the man and pitied him. "Ah-h-w-o-o-o! Ah-h-w-o-o-o!" cried the wolf, and when others of his kind heard his call, they came running to see what was the matter. Following the wolves also came many coyotes, badgers, and kit-foxes. To the others, the wolf declared, "Here in this hole is what I have found. Here is a man who has fallen in. Let us dig him out and we will have him for our brother."

This gray wolf had great powers; he was the chief wolf and when the rescue was near, he halted the others announcing, "We will all have this man for our brother; but I found him, and so I think he ought to live with us big wolves." The others thought this plan good and they agreed. When the man was dragged from the hole, he was nearly dead; the animals gave him a kidney to eat, and when he was able to walk the big wolves took him to their home. Here there was a very old blind wolf who had great power and who could do wonderful things. He cured the man and made his head and hands look like those of a wolf. The rest of his body was not changed.

In those times, the people made holes in the fences of their **piskuns** so that they could snare wolves and other animals for clothing. One night the wolves approached the pen to get meat when the man-wolf said to his brothers: "Stop here for a little while and I will go down and fix the places so that you will not be caught." Following his work to spring all the snares, the wolves plus others - coyotes, badgers, and kit-foxes - safely entered the pen and began feasting. In the morning, the people discovered the empty snares and wondered how this happened. Going regularly to the pen, the wolves found one day only the meat of the a lean and sickly bull; the man-wolf was very angry at this and he cried out: "Bad-food-you-give-us-o-o-o! Bad-food-you-give-us-o-o-o-o!"

Hearing this cry, the people said to one another, "Ah, it is a man-wolf who has done all this. We must catch him." They baited the pen with pemmican and backfat, waiting nearby in concealment; when the wolves came at dark, the man-wolf saw the good food and ran to eat it. The people then rushed upon him and took him to their lodge where, in the light, they learned who he was. In astonishment, they declared: "Why, this is the man who was lost."

"No," replied the man, "I was not lost. My wives tried to kill me. They dug a deep hole and I fell into it, and I was hurt so badly I could not get out; but the wolves took pity on me and helped me or I would have died there." The people were angry when they learned what the man's wives had done; they called on him to punish his wives. "You say well," he replied; "I give

those women to the **Ikunuh'kahtse** [punishing society]. They know what to do." And the treacherous wives were seen no more.

#### IV

During the long ago, one day, "Old Man Becomes a Wolf,"<sup>33</sup> in this creation myth, **Na'pi** (Old Man) was wandering along the forest edge having approached the mountains from the Cutbank River valley. Feeling lonely and wishing for a more exciting time, he approached a band of wolves sitting on the river bank, watching him. **Na'pi** whined out to them: "my younger brothers! Take pity on me: let me be a wolf with you!" The wolves were six: "the old father and mother, their two daughters, and their sons, Heavy Body and Long Body." Answering Old Man, the father wolf declared, "Just what do you mean?" "Is it that you want me to change you into a wolf - that you want to live just as we do?"

Old Man replied, "I want to live with you, hunt with you, but I don't want to be changed wholly into a wolf. Just make my head and neck to look like yours, and put wolf hair on my legs and arms, and that will be about enough of a change. I will keep my body just as it is."

The old wolf agreed to **Na'pi's** request saying "very well, we will do that for you," and he rubbed a gray medicine on Old Man's head, neck, legs, and arms in order to make the change. "There!" said he. "My work is done. I would like to have made you all wolf, your body as well as the rest of you, but you will do as you are; you are quite wolflike. And now, let me tell you something about our family. My old wife and I don't hunt much. Your two younger brothers there are the runners and killers, and their sisters help in the way of heading off and confusing the game. Your younger brother there, Long Body, is the swiftest runner, but he hasn't the best of wind. However, he generally overtakes and kills whatever he chases. Your other younger brother, Heavy Body, is not a fast runner, but he has great staying power, never gets winded, and in the end brings down his game. And now you know them. Whenever you feel like hunting, one of the other of them, as you choose, will go with you."

Old Man responded commending the wolf's kindness; moving away to the top of a high ridge on the north side of a valley, they all lay down to rest. Old Man found this barren windy place unbearably cold and he asked through chattering teeth, why not rest in the shelter of the timber? The old wolf replied, "we never rest in the timber, there our enemies would have a good chance to take us unaware, but on the ridgetop we can see all that moves and keep out of danger."

Early in the night, **Na'pi** became very cold and began trembling; responding to their guest, the old wolf declared: "You annoy us with your trembling, and your teeth chattering; you keep us from sleeping." Old Man answered that he should not annoy them long because he would soon freeze to death. Arousing his wife and children, the old wolf counselled his family: "This tender-bodied elder brother of ours is freezing. I suppose we have to protect him. Lie down in a circle around him and cover him with your tails." Soon **Na'pi** was overwhelmed with heat and he gasped: "Take your ill-smelling tails from my body; I am wet with perspiration!" Without the wolf tail covering, however, he again began to shiver and freeze, so he called again for the wolves to cover him. This alternation of covering and uncovering Old Man produced a miserable, sleepless night for all concerned.

At daylight, they arose and discovered a lone, buck mule deer feeding out from timber. Making plans to capture the deer, Long Body and Old Man crept down into the valley; the deer ran but Long Body soon pulled it down while Na'pi seized a rock and broke its neck, he felt very proud of himself. This feast lasted the wolves two days; afterwards they continued to kill game and Old Man became used to the cold nights, so that he no longer needed a wolf tail covering. As the plenty became scarce and only hard leg bones remained, the old wolf announced: "We must be saving of what we have left, for it may be some time before we can make another killing. Today we will take turns chewing the upper bone of a hind leg."

In a small circle, they gathered with their noses facing the center; the old wolf warned Na'pi: "Now, while this chewing is going on, bone splinters are bound to fly. You must keep your eyes tight shut until it comes your turn to chew, else you may get a splinter that will blind you." Old Man did as he was told and the old wolf began chewing, gnawing off the end of the bone; after getting a little marrow, he passed it on to the others. Around the circle the bone went until Long Body got it, so that Old Man's turn was next; Old Man's curiosity overcame his caution and he slowly opened his eyes. He could see Long Body busily chewing the bone while keeping his eyes tightly shut. "Huh! This is a queer way to feast," reflected Old Man to himself, when just then a splinter of bone struck his eye; the splinter did not put the eye out, but it did cause great pain and made him very angry. "I will pay him for that!" thought Old Man to himself.

After a time, Long Body passed the bone to Old Man; Na'pi began chewing the bone and presently he looked sharply at the wolves. They all had their eyes shut tightly, so in revenge, raising the bone high over Long Body, Old Man brought it down upon the wolf's head killing him. The other wolves opened their eyes and cried in horror, "Oh, what have you done! You have killed your younger brother!"

Old Man answered, "I didn't mean to." "When he was chewing the bone he let a splinter fly, and it struck me in the eye. I meant to punish him a little for being so careless, but I did not mean to kill him. I must have struck harder than I thought to do."

"You had your eyes open! It was your fault that you got the splinter!" declared the old wolf; afterwards, he and the others began grieving for the dead. They howled throughout the day and night; and Old Man thought that he would go mad from their mourning. Hating himself for what he had done in anger, he was very sorry.

Following the mourning, the old wolf scolded Na'pi: "Had you killed my son intentionally, we would have had your life in payment for his. As it is, we will give you one more trial: see that such an accident as that never again occurs!" Restless at what he had done, Old Man requests that Heavy Body go with him to make a kill; "the old wolf remained silent for some time, thinking, and at last answered: 'Yes, I will allow him to go with you, and remember this: if anything happens to him, we shall hold you responsible, and great will be your punishment!'"

Old Man warns Heavy Body that he must not cross any streams, even if they be small and easily jumped. Chasing a bull moose, Heavy Body bounds upon a stream, thinking: "He doesn't know everything. I must have that moose!" Just as the wolf begins swimming the stream, a water bear seizes him; killing Heavy Body, the water bear and her young feast upon the wolf. With a heart full of rage and sorrow, Old Man withdraws to the timber and makes plans to avenge his younger brother.

Several days later, Old Man wounds the water bear and subsequently kills her; declaring that he should never have created her kind, he renders the water bear's fat into the different animals - grizzly and black bears, the skunk, the badger, the porcupine, the beaver, the other animals, and last the rabbit. Concluding he declares: "I have done some good. I have avenged the death of my wolf partner and I have made fat many of my younger brothers!" Soon afterwards, Old Man was off seeking more adventures and so the story ends.

## V

In another creative adventure, "Old Man and the Wolves on the Ice"<sup>34</sup> Na'pi comes upon some wolves who were dancing upon the ice; he noticed that anything they wished for, they received from the ice. Curious, he asks them, "Let me do in that way. And he was told by them: come on, Old Man, it is not hard to do. Now we shall give you this dance of ours. This river here is the only one on which you should do it, do not do it on any other river." Following these remarks, the wolves gave Old Man their dance and anything he wished for would come through the ice.

Thinking that he should go to another river and dance, Old Man forgot the warning given him with the dance. His ice dance is ineffective on the other river; so he thought to return to the original river, but now, dance and wish as he would, nothing came to him through the ice. The wolves returned to him and declared: "Old Man, now you did not mind what we told you. And now we take our dance back from you. Now this river here shall not remain here any longer." And so they took the river away to the sky where it became the wolf road (Milky Way).

## VI

The wolf has a particular creative relationship with the horse; acting as a power of creation, the wolf contributed to the origin of the horse. In the legend, "How the Piegans got their First Horses,"<sup>35</sup> the medicine animals all contributed to the creation of the horse, at his turn the Chief Wolf declares: "'Great Chief, your work is good, but the saddle needs a soft cover. Out of my plenty I will give.'" "So Wolf gave a fur robe." "And the Great Chief murmured, 'It is good. The horse is complete'."

## VII

The wolf plays a small role in the story of **Kistapipokau** "Nothing Child,"<sup>36</sup> In this story, the cultural hero challenges for the Great Chief's daughters; and in order to win them, he must kill a white wolf with a black tail. Nothing Child is successful at this quest via the help of his Grandmother. Despite this success, he must kill other albino animals in order to win the daughters.

White animals are associated with the Creator, Na'pi; and their skins are annually given as an offering at the Sun Dance which celebrates all living things before Natos (the Sun). While life is dependent upon Natos, the albino skins are associated with Na'pi, "dawn-early-morning light" who is the bringer or Creator of the Sun. Thus white skinned furs are particularly significant in honouring Na'pi and Natos. The Grandmother in the story is associated with the earth principle who nurtured both the scared albino animals and Nothing Child, the cultural hero representing humanity.



## VIII

The "Weird Adventures of Some Young Men,"<sup>37</sup> is a myth which accounts for the medicine-healing powers of the wolf. The story deals with death and respect for the dead, as four young men went to war in the long ago. Two of the men survived the weird adventures; one experienced a vision of a wolf killing a deer. The wolves butchered the deer as humans would; they then ate the marrow of the deer bones and sat up like men and women. When they had eaten all the marrow from the bones, they sang a beautiful medicine song which astonished the young man. The wolves transferred this power to the young man who with his partner (a recipient of bear medicine) became the best healers of illness and wounds in the in the Blackfoot camps.

## IX

While the story of "Laugher"<sup>38</sup> is neither legend nor myth, it is a narrative story derived from a traditional medicine man - Red Eagle - who was James Willard Schultz's (Apikuni) matrimonial uncle. In this story, Red Eagle and his hunting companion - Nitaina - come upon two adult wolves who are living on an island; scaring away the adults, they discovered a lone pup who was the only survivor of rising waters which drowned his brothers and sisters: "Oh, how pitiful. What a poor, scared, shivering little one it is," Nitaina cried. "We can't kill it, can we!"

Nitaina decided to take the wolf pup home and raise it as a companion. Upon leaving with the pup, Red Eagle remarked about the parents' mourning: "We rode on and the old wolves circled around and back to the island and howled and howled. All their children but one had drowned, and now that one was taken from them. They felt very sad, the father as well as the mother. Wolves are not like dogs, you know. A dog father knows not his own children. A wolf marries and he and his wife live always together until death. When children come he hunts for them, and brings food for them, and watches over them faithfully while the mother goes out to hunt and run around, and keep up her strength. Ah, they are wise, true hearted animals, the big wolves of the plains. And what hunters they are; they never suffer from want of food."

At the camp, Red Eagle and Nitaina placed the wolf pup with a nursing dog who had three pups of about its age; she nursed and protected the wolf pup from other dogs who, resented its wild wolf scent. Eating meat at a much earlier age than that of dogs, the wolf pup grew very quickly, outpacing the dog pups. Nitaina named the wolf Laugher "because it was fond of standing up and putting its paws on his shoulders and shaping its lips into a laugh, just as a person does when pleased."

While Laugher was like a dog in many ways, he did not bark but howled in play; and his wolfness made the camp dogs mad with jealousy, although the female dogs liked him and often played with him. When nearly grown, he tore a big dog so that it died and following this act, all the male dogs gave him a wide berth; they could have killed him had they attacked in concert, but these dogs ran in cliques associated with their partners of a given lodge, and they were ever at war with dogs of all the other lodges.

Laugher's bond with Nitaina was absolute; he was friendly with no one else. When he disliked others, he would ruffle his back hair and show his teeth as they came near. Red Eagle explained that Nitaina taught Laugher "to help round up and

drive our horse herd; to chase and pull down wounded game; to lead a horse by its rope; to carry a pack, and to sneak along behind us when we were approaching game."

During the green grass season, Laugher became a war companion; and at the following Medicine Lodge - Sun Dance - Nitaina - declared Laugher's coups (war deeds): "He does not speak our language so I shall be his interpreter.... 'Laugher. That is me. That is my name. I went on a raid with Nitaina and Red Eagle. On a bare rock butte of the Little Rockies [Wolf Mountains] I discovered the trail of the enemy and gave warning, and saved the lives of my two men. Later, I helped them round up and drive off a band of Sioux horses. Still later, while I alone was awake, I saw the enemy running to kill my sleeping men and take the horses, and again I gave warnings, and assisted them to escape. There. I have said."

Following another successful horse raid, Laugher disappeared; gone for a day, at first, several days, and at last many days at a time. Red Eagle explained, "we knew why he went: his kind were calling him; He was looking for a wife among them, and we could not help it." Laugher returned to the wild and Red Eagle relates the moral which he and Nitaina learned from Laugher's departure: "We had thought in the spring to capture several wolf pups and tame them, and saw that it would be only a waste of time. The call of kind is stronger than any other love." And so, they left the wolves alone respecting their wildness.

## X

McClintock<sup>39</sup> bemoaned the wolf for ravaging moose, elk, and deer; he blamed the wolves for markedly reducing these animals in the Rocky Mountains. Yet, these animals had lived in balance with wolves long before McClintock and his forestry survey crew entered into the Rockies. In "A Day's Hunt with Eagle Head," Schultz<sup>40</sup> presents the traditional Blackfoot view of the wolf in a perspective much more charitable than that of McClintock's.

During the hunt with Eagle Head, Schultz and his companion noted an old, lone buffalo bull who had apparently been driven from the herd by younger, more virile bulls; while they watched, a solitary wolf called the pack in for the kill. Eagle Head maintained that this wolf was the leader and that he planned the attack. Watching the wolves tear at the old bull, Schultz decided to try and save him; he prepared to fire upon the wolves but Eagle Head stayed his aim declaring, "It is his time to die." Schultz responded, "But he wants to live as much as we do." To this plea, Eagle Head remarked: "Yes, he does, but it is not for us to interfere. Old Man - World Maker - created buffalo for food for men and wolves."

The wolves quickly severed the exposed tendons of the old bull's hind legs and it fell backwards. When the bull collapsed, the wolves began tearing away at their victim's flanks, enjoying a living meal.

Unable to stand this wolf-kill method, Schultz broke cover and hurried to put a bullet through the suffering animal's brain; thereby saving it the misery of a slow death. At this act, Eagle Head followed Schultz with the horses, and as they mounted to depart, "he remarked that the white's were queer people."

## XI

In one last narrative reference to the wolf, the medicine man,

Morning Eagle declared in "The Fatal Sign"<sup>41</sup> that the powers of the Wolf Chief may be invoked to aid a man in overcoming bad luck; addressing Raven's Voice, he declared that "in these late days the old gods, Chief Wolf, Chief Bear, and others, no longer come and talk with us in person, we know that they still roam the earth, that they live in some far part of it which the white men have not yet found and desecrated, and we have assurance that they still visit us in our dreams. Yes. And we know that they still heed our prayers and intercede for us with the sun, ruler of all, for his mercy and aid." And thus, they prayed to the Wolf Chief begging the Sun's favour in trying to break the threat of death which was over Raven's Voice.

## XII

These narratives confirm a rich and complex metaphysics of nature which is grounded in respect for both the Ultimate Power and the manifest Creation; moreover, the "natural forms or forces express most directly the Ultimate Power, or essence of the Great Spirit" which is knowable through integration with "the gods or spirits or powers of the creation."<sup>42</sup> Elements of this integration include: (1) purification of body, soul, and spirit, (2) spiritual expansion, in realizing a relationship to all that is, and (3) identity or realization of unity in a state of oneness with the totality.<sup>43</sup> Affirming this metaphysics of nature and spiritual praxis, the myths reflect a "total field imagery;" this perspective stands in stark contrast with the isolation and reductionism of the modern Western ethos. Furthermore, as myths, the narratives are "keepers" of cultural-religious values; they represent a world view distinctly different from the technologically-oriented Euro-American culture.

This metaphysics of nature is an ontology of "power;" it is manifest in the process of metamorphosis and reciprocity, in obedience and the situation of blessing, and in the context of morality. Beings of power are medicine animals who are capable of extraordinary actions in manifesting power and helping others. The Medicine Wolf, for example, prominently assisted **Itsapichkaupe** (I), White Eagle and his family (II), the "wolf man" (III), **Na'pi** (IV,V), humanity via the horse (VI), and generally in healing (VIII,XI). These "powers" have no analogue in the world of everyday experience; in the myths, however, such, "powers" appear as anthropomorphizations of wolf behaviour. Moreover, the wolves exhibit social characteristics (in all of the narratives) including volition, speech, emotion, rationality, generosity, and familial or communal existence.

"Power" is exercised through metamorphosis of the beings involved, whether it be the "actor" him- or herself or the other "person" or object which is being transformed. For example, the sons of Big Wolf, Coyote, Red Fox, and Black Fox become human in order to aid White Eagle and his family(II); the "wolf man" (III) and **Na'pi** (IV) are transformed and made wolflike so that they might live with the wolves; the specific characteristics of being are therefore manifestations of the Ultimate Power and all beings share in this power via the process of metamorphosis. **Na'pi** is thus known alternately as World Maker (as dawn-early-morning light) (VII, X), as Old Man (a human person) (IV, V), and as a wolf (IV); **this most sacred principle is therefore fluid, static in no single being, but dynamic in manifest Creation.**

Hierarchy appears implicit in the idea of a Chief Wolf (I, II, III, IV, VI, XI), that is a "keeper" of the wolves, but the "keeper" is, in fact, an exemplar of the Ultimate Power in its manifesting

Wolfness or the wolf species; therefore, the Medicine Wolf reflects wolf power as it is identified in all wolves. Mythic life with the wolves (II, III, IV) establishes a basis for reciprocity of spirit or power; generally these narratives are set in the world of "origins" before the fixing of an order; they reflect the world as fluid principle or Unknown Power. This perspective favours a world view of ever active process, occurring and reoccurring, wherein being is ambiguous or fluid in bodily form; the human form is therefore not the defining characteristic of being nor is it the apex of being, rather the category of "personhood" is extended to all manifestations of the Ultimate Power. Accordingly, the notion of "society" is cosmic, broadly ecological, and non-hierarchical.

A sense of reciprocity exists in the relationship between humanity and the wolves; for example, the medicine Wolf is respected for giving aid to **Itsapichkaupe** (I), White Eagle (II), the "wolf man" (III), **Na'pi** (IV), and the "young men" (X), in turn, humanity is expected to honour obligations to wolves - in "Laughter" (IX), in never shooting wolves (I), nor taking up weapons against them (II), in leaving them good food (III), and in avenging their wrongful death (IV). These views manifest themselves in Eagle Head's comment (X) the buffalo are "food for men and for wolves," in his desire to let nature take her course during the wolf attack, and in his reaction to Schultz.

This sense of reciprocity commits one to "right thinking" and "right action" as opposed to disparaging thoughts and negligent action. Obedience is therefore a central theme of life and it is prominently manifest through the giving of instructions; **Na'pi** is told to keep his eyes tight shut, his disobedience leads to the death of Long Body (IV), Heavy Body is told not to cross a stream or suffer the consequences (IV), White Eagle is warned not to take up weapons lest the animals become hostile(II), and Old Man must dance only on a specific river or lose the power given him (V). When the instructions are disobeyed, the offenders suffer negative consequences; the reward for obedience stands in contrast to arrogance and disobedience.

When obligations are faithfully fulfilled the blessings are likely to ensue; the receipt of a blessing alters (or potentially alters) one's circumstance for the better and it too must be respected. Blessings are generally motivated by compassion or pity, moving from the more powerful to the less powerful. **Itsapichkaupe** (I), White Eagle (II), the "wolf man" (III), and Old Man when freezing (IV) are all pitied because of their less fortunate circumstances, and as a result, the Medicine Wolf bestows a blessing helping each one as they are in need. In the aforementioned sense of reciprocity, these blessings from the Medicine Wolf entail obligation to wolfkind; accordingly, we observe the basis for an environmental ethic inclusive of wolves.

In addressing questions of morality, it should be acknowledged that the narratives convey not only the shape of the "real" world, but also the moral disposition one must take for the "good life." Thus a concept of the "Good" emerges from the myths; this then is the foundation for a traditional Blackfeet moral theory. In the case of the wolf, it is seen as a "person," a member of the moral community - the Blackfeet refuse to kill and shoot them(I, II, X, XI) or in taking them, there is remorse (III, IV). The wolf's place in the moral community is firmly grounded in kinship, e.g. brotherhood (I, II, III, IV). Taken with the limitations imposed on one's freedom of action in relation to the wolves, then one must conclude that a moral theory or environmental ethic is in place and working. Since the wolves are respected and admired

(I, II, IX, X, XI) then this conclusion is confirmed as a moral code rather than as a rule of enlightened self-interest.

Given this affirmation of the wolf in the traditional Blackfeet ethos, it may be concluded that Yellow Kidney intended to invoke reciprocity from the wolves by affirming traditional obligations. Moreover, since "power" is reciprocal, then ritual communication may invoke moral obligation; the wolves may be requested to and obliged to leave domestic livestock alone. While the sceptic may doubt this possibility, it is no less rational than many religious claims invoked by other traditions. Certainly the factors of the wolf's condition as an endangered species, its miraculous return to Blackfeet Country, and its prominence in traditional Blackfeet religion, merit extraordinary consideration and praxis. In fact, with the affirmation of Native American religion,<sup>44</sup> the Medicine Wolf may be constitutionally protected as a central element of the free exercise of traditional Blackfeet religion.

#### Notes:

1. John "Buster" Yellow Kidney, speech at the 29th annual Montana Wilderness Association Convention, Helena, Montana, December 1987.
2. Lawrence J. Burpee, editor, "York Factory to the Blackfeet Country: The Journal of Anthony Hendry, 1754-55," *Proceedings and Transactions, Royal Society of Canada, Series 3*, 1907, V. 1:332-336.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 344.
4. James Willard Schultz (Apikuni) "The Eagle Creek Wolfers," *Many Strange Characters*, ed. by Eugene Lee Silliman, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, (1901), 1982:3-34.
5. Edward S. Curtis, *The North American Indian*, Johnson reprint Co., New York, (1911) 1970, V.6:168; and James Willard Schultz, (Apikuni), *Blackfeet and Buffalo: Memories of Life Among the Indians*, ed. by Keith C. Seele, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1962:136.
6. Walter McClintock, "Tragedy of the Blackfeet," *Southwest Museum Papers*, no. 3, Los Angeles, (1930), 1970:42.
7. James Willard Schultz (Apikuni), *Why Gone Those Times?: Blackfoot Tales*, ed. by Eugene Lee Silliman, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1974:260.
8. Schultz, *Blackfeet and Buffalo*, p. 318.
9. George Bird Grinnell, *Blackfeet Indian Stories*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1913:208.
10. Walter McClintock, *The Old North Trail: Life, Legends and Religion of the Blackfeet Indians*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, (1910), 1962:246; Schultz, *Blackfeet and Buffalo*, pp. 136-137; and Schultz, *Why Gone Those Times?*, pp. 191-202.
11. George Bird Grinnell, *Blackfoot Lodge Tales*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, (1892), 1968:283.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 96.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 102; Grinnell, *Blackfeet Indian Stories*, p. 104; and McClintock, *The Old North Trail*, p. 498.
14. McClintock, *The Old North Trail*, p. 498, 506.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 300.
16. Grinnell, *Blackfoot Lodge Tales*, pp. 109-112.
17. Curtis, *North American Indian*, pp. 21-25.
18. John C. Ewers, *The Horse in Blackfoot Indian Culture*, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 159, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, 1955:184-185.
19. Clark Wissler, "Ceremonial Bundles of the Blackfoot Indians," *American Museum of Natural History, Anthropological Papers*, 1912, VII, part II: 268; Schultz, *Blackfeet and Buffalo*, p. 212; and McClintock, *The Old North Trail*, p. 243.
20. Wissler, "Ceremonial Bundles," p. 267.
21. McClintock, *The Old North Trail*, p. 56.
22. Joseph Epes Brown, *The Spiritual Legacy of the American Indian*, Crossroad Press, New York, 1982:84.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 84-85.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 86.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
27. Ake Hultkrantz, *Belief and Worship in Native North America*, ed. by Christopher Vecsey, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, NY, 1981:128; and McClintock, *The Old North Trail*, p. 167.
28. The ethnometaphysical approach is reflected in A. Irving Halowell, "Ojibwa Ontology, Behaviour, and World View," in *Cultural in History: Essays in Honour of Paul Radin*, ed. Stanley Diamond, Columbia University Press, New York, 1960:19-52.
29. McClintock, *The Old North Trail*, p. 476.
30. *Ibid.*
31. Grinnell, *Blackfeet Indian Stories*, pp. 76-80; J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong, *Blackfoot Texts: From the Southern Peigans Blackfoot Reservation Teton Country, Montana*, Johannes Muller, Amsterdam, 1914, p. 103; James Willard Schultz (Apikuni) and Jessie Louise Donaldson, *The Sun God's Children*, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1930, pp. 48-69; and Schultz (Apikuni), *Why Gone Those Times?*, 1974, pp. 208-215.
32. Grinnell, *Blackfoot Lodge Tales*, pp. 78-80; Clark Wissler and D.C. Duvall, "Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians," *American Museum of Natural History, Anthropological Papers*, v. II, part I, 1908, pp. 148-150; Grinnell, *Blackfeet Indian Stories*, pp. 3-9; McClintock, "Tragedy of the Blackfoot," pp. 2-24.
33. James Willard Schultz (Apikuni), *Blackfeet Tales of Glacier National Park*, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1916, pp. 112-127.
34. De Jong, *Blackfoot Texts*, pp. 29-31.
35. Ella E. Clark, *Indian Legends from the Northern Rockies*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1966, pp. 299-302.
36. George Bird Grinnell, *The Punishment of the Stingy and Other Indian Stories*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, (1901), 1962, p. 176.
37. De Jong, *Blackfoot Texts*, pp. 101-103.
38. Schultz (Apikuni) *Why Gone Those Times?*, pp. 179-202.
39. McClintock, *The Old North Trail*, p. 74.
40. Schultz (Apikuni), *Blackfeet and Buffalo*, pp. 165-168.
41. Schultz (Apikuni), *Why Gone Those Times?*, pp. 205-215.
42. Brown, *The Spiritual Legacy*, p. 60, 70.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 113.
44. See the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978, PL95-341, Stat. 469, 42 U.S.C.A. S 1996.

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# METAKUYASE

J. Donald Hughes

One by one, quietly, reverently, naked, our bodies smelling of the sage we had rubbed on them, we entered the round low lodge, circling to the left as the sun moves in the sky. Each of us spoke the word in Lakota Sioux, "Metakuyase," "We are all related." We sat in a circle on the earth where branches of sage had been spread, around the central pit, waiting for the incandescent rocks to be brought from the pinewood fire.

The altar had been prepared already by the medicine man, a musician, Lakota by adoption and carefully taught by the holy man, Fools Crow, to lead this ceremony. The sacred objects were brought out carefully and placed on a bed of sage on the earth. A stream murmured nearby as he prayed over each object and purified them, and us, with juniper smoke. The skull of Tatanka, the buffalo bull, painted in ritual colors; a rattle made of turtle shell brought from the eastern forest where the People lived before they came to the Great Plains; feathers of eagles from the Shining Mountains and distant China; feathers of owls and many birds. Ancient flint projectile point; huge crystal of clearest quartz; all things of great medicine. Nearby stood a staff with the flags of colors of the six directions. Earlier, four hundred and five tiny packets of tobacco, offerings for the ancestor spirits, had been prepared by my friend and colleague for whom the ritual was being celebrated, as a purification in preparation for his coming marriage. The bride acted in the important symbolic role of doorkeeper.

We sat in the dark, waiting, eight men of various races, national and religious backgrounds, and continents of birth. As each glowing round river-rock was placed in the pit, the fire-tender spoke, "Metakuyase," and we all replied, "Ho!" The first six stones received prayers for the six directions, and more were brought until there were twenty-eight in all, four times seven, the product of the sacred numbers of wholeness and completion. Then drums were brought and we sang the chants, picking up the Lakota words and melodies with strange ease. The heat filled the closed hemisphere of branches and thick canvas, and burned our faces.

The drums taken out, the leader poured water on the radiant rocks and sang the sacred songs. The steam filled the darkness with powerful, searing heat, coming down on our heads and shoulders painfully, bringing forth sweat from every stoma, making breathing hard, causing hearts to labor, making hands and feet tingle. The prayers began, moving around the circle in a sunwise direction.

There, back in the womb of Mother Earth, we offered our prayers in a sacred manner, as we were moved. No one spoke easily; no one used prepared words. The prayer were recognitions of our oneness with Earth and all living things, greetings of the power and spirit we could feel, affirmations of our closeness with one another and with our friends soon to be joined in marriage.

Then, at the moment when each of us wondered whether we could stand any more heat and steam without fainting, the medicine man called to the doorkeeper to lift the blankets from

the door. A blessed breath of chill November air came in under the steam, and the leader offered each of us a ladle of water to drink or pour on our glowing skin, saying as it was passed, "Metakuyase;" the response, "Ho!"

The ritual was repeated four times: chants, prayers, incredibly hot steam purifying the body, the welcome opening of the door, the giving and receiving of water, some mildly funny remarks. The Lakota ceremony, though of extreme holiness, not only does not exclude humor of a seemly kind, but actually includes it as part of the sacredness. "Lila washte," "It is very good."

Once more in the steam, we were invited to pray anything we might have left out before. This time the prayers were far more personal, for our friends and loved ones. All the remaining water then had to be poured on the rocks, and the steam billowed forth for a last awe-inspiring time. Then we came forth one by one, like children being born again from the womb of Mother Earth, out under the moon and planets in the greater lodge of Grandfather Sky. The air was much below freezing, but we were not chilled by it as we dressed.

Then, as we had done at the beginning, we faced in the four directions, above, and below, for prayers to the powers of nature. Forming a circle again, we passed two sacred pipes of immemorial tradition, made by Lakota Sioux holy men, and smoked the mixture of sacred herbs. One man had completed his purification, involuntarily, by vomiting after his emergence from the lodge. Him the medicine man treated carefully, brushing him from head to foot with a consecrated eagle's wing.

It was finished in beauty. We all walked up the hill to the medicine man's house, the House of the Four Winds, for a feast of posole soup, blue corn muffins, a vegetable salad, and apple juice. Talk went on into the night.

No one had asked before why we should do this. There in the room together were two Blacks, a Jew, two or three Anglos with Christian seminary training and ordination in their past, an Oriental, and among us only one of the Blacks with known Indian descent. Yet the ritual that united us all was Lakota Sioux, and it had been done in the most authentic way by a medicine man whose own adopted grandfather, a holy man, had taught him to leave nothing out. If I, in the telling of it, have omitted something important that is known to a reader who has more knowledge of these things than I do, or made a mistake, be assured that the error is my own, not that of my friend who led the ceremony. One of us, a Black man from Kenya, said afterwards that the ritual was for him an important reaffirmation of his own tribal background.

And for most of us, Americans of different backgrounds, I am sure there was a sense of reconciliation with the American earth and the spirits of the people who were its sacred guardians for thousands of years before the European invasion, and who continue to stand in a special relationship with this particular land, Turtle Island, as many Indians call North America. It may be that Vine Deloria is right when he says that Americans can find a spiritual relationship to this continent only if they do so in

an Indian way. We are aware on a deep level of the aboriginal presence of the Indians, and that awareness can become conscious. Carl Jung, when working with Americans in analytical psychology, found an Indian element in the psyche of the non-Indian American, which was unexpected to him and surprisingly strong. He said that when the figure of an Indian would emerge in the dreams or imagination of an American client, it was often a sign that healing had begun.

Americans to whom I tell my ritual sweat-bath experience often express the lack of a similar ritual of oneness with the Earth, life, and other people in their own backgrounds. They feel the need for it, though.

I am somewhat hesitant in speaking of this because it is something very special for me, and I know it can be misunderstood. There are those who will say that a Christian ought not to have anything to do with "pagan" rituals. Such an attitude does not seem to me to be genuinely Christian in the spirit of Him who accepted, among others, a Samaritan and a

Syro-Phoenician woman. There are Indians who will say that their healing ceremonies are only for Indians, and should not be shared with the descendants of those conquerors of their land. But holy men have chosen to teach those who are prepared and worthy to learn, regardless of race, in obedience to ancient prophecies that speak of a time when the sacred ceremonies shall draw together people of many nations. And many people now are open to experiences of value that come from the Indian tradition. It is good that we can return to the Earth together and affirm each other as human beings, and as life that wishes to live abundantly. Metakuyase; we are all related.

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## TOGETHER WE CAN COMPLETE THE CIRCLE

Randy & Diana Chipps

We have been sharing much of that which concerns our cultures, not only the differences, but also the similarities, hopefully to foster greater communication and understanding between our people. We believe there is more that can unite us, if we dare, than should be cause for strife. Both our peoples love this great land and our children-although we, Natives, perhaps see Mother Earth more as a living gift of our Grandfather, the Creator and thus we are heir to her bounties, rather than owners. Common courtesy and common sense suggests that we are responsible for her care.

While Mother Earth is the source it is her daughter, Mother Nature, who provides the means by which we may judge how well, or poorly, we are maintaining our competency as stewards. For Mother Earth demonstrates her unease only through very dramatic, often tragic ways - earthquakes, volcanoes, tidal waves, etc., while her daughter is more subtle. She may only hint at her pain by creating cooler winters and warmer summers, or warmer winters and too dry summers. She may lower water tables, where man-destroyed trees and plants once grew, and create a desert over a period of years. The elders would say that with the present changes shown by Mother Nature's forms and activities, that Mother Earth cannot much longer countenance such changes - not without becoming angry at the violation of her daughter.

The difficulty faced by the Native nations lies in discovering a way to survive physically in a material world which is slow to care about these things. Our hearts are filled with grief at our Mother's despoilage. And our spirits cry out that she should be free and unscarred. It seems that the only way to protect her has become a fight for her ownership. We, whose ancestors walked, rode, paddled and in a thousand other ways traversed the bosom of our Mother, know that we cannot own that which belongs to Grandfather Spirit, the Creator, God. The best we can do is share her love with our brothers and sisters of other lands - as honorable children. As all children realize, when they grow to be parents,

that in their childhood they had been the cause of much pain and suffering to their own parents - out of youthful ignorance. Is it not time to take a reckoning of the pain heaped upon our Mother's loving heart? Is it not time to search for ways to end her suffering?

You, who come from other lands, know the yearning to be home, to look out again at the place where your eyes first became aware of the world; to honor the places where your ancestors lie buried; to know that a demolition crew is not digging up their last resting places. We, who are Native to this land, have watched our sacred burial grounds eaten up by huge machines that know no sadness. We have cried into the night to ask for help. What people does it take to ignore our pleas? What people will it take to honor our sacred place? They are as important to us as churches are to Christians.

In times past, less than 150 years ago, the shells of our ancestors' bodies were placed in biers high in the arms of a tree. Over a period of time, the decomposing body would be eaten by animals, birds and insects, or fall to the ground to become part of the soil - soil in which other plants and small creatures would grow and flourish. Our ancestors became part of the rooted, the winged, the two-footed, the four-footed, the finned, and the crawling, and thus all living things became honored as relatives; and thus we renewed our belief in the circle of life, and our part within that circle. We may not, in an arrogant belief in our superiority, forget the consequences inherent in stepping out of that circle.

Those who can feel awe in the presence of a stately tree, or say a silent prayer of thanks by a beautiful waterfall, know that to destroy these is to test the mercy of the Great Spirit. We know that many do not understand. We know that many do not wish to understand, for wealth and power are intoxicating. There is an old saying that if the Great Spirit wishes to test a person's spirituality and fitness, He will give that person riches. A truly spiritual person will be able to handle wealth in a good way, and

will shun that which is won through pain given to others or earned through unnecessary destruction.

Our elders listened to the cries of their children as they were moved away to reservations, and then saw their grandchildren torn away to go to foreign schools - foreign to them. Some children hid in potato sacks, under logs and in the forest, and were "saved" for a year, but the government people would come back to get them. Many died, most were abused; and, with our children, our homes, our religion, and our social system forcefully removed, a whole culture was changed. We became a divided people, who are only now learning to hold up our heads in pride that we have survived - never to be the same - but still not too late to nurture our roots into new life. For our Mother Earth is ever kind and loving to those who return with respect to seek her healing and to those who are willing to sink their roots into her soil.

Brethren, hear our call, for you are no longer strangers in a foreign land. Our Mother can be healed of some of the scars we, in our foolishness, have given her. As you see, our Nations have

no choice, we must complete the circle. We who abandoned her out of pain and fear, and perhaps greed, must reclaim and renew our source; and renew our responsibility as caretakers, for not to do so is ultimately to die. We do not wish to take these new steps alone, for we realize that what was can never be again - nor is it all important. We ask for respect, and need integrity in our continuing movement forward. We have much to offer to you and your children, and you to us; and we hope that our few words will prompt the hearts of many to seek out what may seem strange and foreign, in our common wish for a healthy homeland for us all.

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## *FOCUS ON: PHENOMENOLOGY AND ECOLOGY*

# CONFRONTING TECHNOPHOBIA: A TOPOLOGY<sup>1</sup>

Robert Burch

In the summer of 1951, or so legend has it,<sup>2</sup> the cultural world of Munich witnessed a remarkable event. The Bavarian Building Contractors Association, for reasons hidden in the depths of the Germanic soul, invited Prof. Dr. Martin Heidegger to address their annual convention. For reasons no less mysterious and Germanic, Heidegger obliged with a talk entitled, fittingly enough, **Bauen Wohnen Denken** (Building Dwelling Thinking). The question of building, Heidegger declared, is more than a technical problem. It goes beyond all efforts to design, construct, and outfit ever more efficient and elaborate structures to house people and things, or to endow these with functionality and aesthetic appeal. To build genuinely, Heidegger said, is to construct a home, that is, an authentically inhabitable place where human beings could be at home in a world dominated by nihilism and the planetary triumph of technology.<sup>3</sup> Such construction, he showed, is essentially a kind of thinking, the sort that could recover a sense from the tradition, provide an orientation in the midst of a world pursuing unlimited technological mastery, and discover to the individual who she is and in what sort of space she is called to dwell.

Legend does not record what the reaction of the building contractors was. It is not inconceivable, given their professional interests, that some were actually sympathetic to the claim that dwelling is a matter of building (at least on their own terms). Yet one can scarcely imagine them being persuaded that genuine building is thinking. Even in the land of **Dichter und Denker**, this would be apt to seem too theoretical a point of view. And if perchance one or two of the contractors were convinced, Heidegger

offered them little, if anything, in the way of a strategy for the pursuit of this "fundamental building." In the main, one surmises, the result was confusion and misunderstanding.

The contractors no doubt listened to Heidegger's lecture as partisans of sound common sense, and hence from the stern vantage point of the expedient "local knowledge" (Geertz, 1983) with which most everyone in our culture as a matter of course is at home. When the issue is technology, however, the authority of this common sense is bolstered by our scientific and philosophical orthodoxy. These are one in advancing what Heidegger has termed the "instrumental anthropological" conception of technology (1954, pp. 13-15), characterized by a number of familiar and purportedly self-evident theses: that technology is essentially a "means to ends" and a "human activity"; that its implements and techniques are inherently neutral, and thus in principle under human discretion and control; that the distinctive feature of modern technology as a human activity lies in its systematic deployment as a means through the application of the modern physical sciences; and that its problematic feature lies in the increasing complexity of skills needed to deploy it effectively. It is assumed, then, that the question of technology is comprised chiefly of technological problems that admit, in principle, to technological solutions. The specific task of "confronting technophobia" is thus seen in the same way, namely, as a matter of technical education,<sup>4</sup> whereas radical questioning of technology is typically dismissed as fetishism, fatalism, or as simply medieval. At first glance, all of this appears obvious and uncontentious, for "who would deny that [the in-

strumental anthropological conception] is correct" (Heidegger, 1954, p. 14). The truth, however, is more complex.

### The Place of the Question

To the bewilderment of the contractors and to the derision and confusion of most philosophers and scientists, what Heidegger sought was not a new philosophical position more convincing than its antecedents, but a radical thinking (**wurzelhaftes Denken**) which would undercut "common sense" and the prevailing orthodoxy in all of its entrenched forms. He sought this, moreover, not to bring knowledge that was "better" than science, nor to provide precepts of worldly wisdom, nor even to solve cosmic riddles, but simply to take the measure of what is truly going on with us as human beings. He struggled to make intelligible in a more comprehensive and critical way the "place"<sup>5</sup> in which we presently dwell, not as points on a map that we delimit and command, but as the fundamental context of meaning that we discover and sustain. Thinking, he once suggested, is a "topology" and its "topic" is our historical being in the world, the "essential space" (**Wesensraum**) in which we are called to dwell.

Seen in this light, the "place" of the question of technology is the "topic" itself. The issue is not that of an isolated problem in a hierarchy of specific concerns and pursuits, but an interrogation into the essence of the "world" in which we now have our being insofar as our "being in the world" is determined technologically. Such a venture challenges both our taken-for-granted assumptions about the meaning of questioning, (i. e., about what is worthy of being interrogated, about the "way" of inquiry itself, and about the criteria and significance of legitimate response), and our familiar judgements about the essence of technology and the adequacy of the instrumental anthropological definition. It seeks to demonstrate (literally **monstrare** "to show forth") that contrary to the "sense" of common sense things are not really the way they seem in front of our noses, and that if we fix our gaze only there for the sake of "getting the job done," we risk a precipitous fall. In the process, it offers both a different gauging of the "Place" (topos) of our essential dwelling and a different understanding of how we are appropriate and must respond to this "place."

Nowadays, even common sense recognizes that ours is a technologically saturated culture and that technologies are implicated in virtually every dimension of our lives. This ubiquity alone demands a response, be that critical, adjuvant, resigned, or evasive. But there is more to our world, and to the question of technology, than these evident facts. Alongside the proliferation of individual technologies, a Promethean faith in the intrinsic power of technology has come to be a basic tenet of the Western ethos, coincident with our peculiar, modern conceptions of progress, liberation, and the realization of "reason." Although somewhat tempered in recent times by technical mishaps and intellectual criticism, this "faith" both belongs to the effective principle of what is presently going on almost everywhere on the planet, and beyond all competing ideologies and political economies, it serves to characterize our world essentially.<sup>6</sup> One may respond to it variously: from within as witness or heretic; from without as convert or infidel; and advisedly, fanatically, or by default as the case may be. Either way, simply to live in contemporary society is to take a stand with respect to this faith.

Indeed, the extent to which one is involved with it is today the very measure of contemporaneity.

That this faith should be common to us is neither accidental nor adventitious, but is the fulfillment of a destiny implicit to the Western philosophy of reason. That this destiny should be of world-historical significance is a consequence of the inner "logic" of that reason, that is, its presumption to radical universality and to an absolute ordering of all things according to its own self-determined categories.<sup>7</sup> Heidegger was not the first to point this out, nor to offer a response that placed the whole tradition into question.<sup>8</sup> But, arguably, he was the first to respond with a degree of radicalness appropriate to the phenomenon. The root of the question, he showed, lies in the implicit hubris of Western "subjectivism," that is, in the hegemony of a consciousness which in one way or another puts **everything** at its disposal for its own assurance, knowledge, and control. Such consciousness is concerned at all levels with "objects," and thus correlatively with how, as "subjects," we deploy and secure the world theoretically, technically, and practically. It is not, then, just the omnipresence of instruments and technics, nor in itself the hegemony of acquisitiveness and the will to mastery that marks our world. Rather, it is the presumption that our prime means of access to reality at all levels is a "stance" (**Stellung**), having various interests and purposes, by which we set the world up into discrete objective realms over which our concepts, technics, and precepts effectively rule. Our hubris is the conviction - sometimes tacit, sometimes boldly affirmed - that in principle nothing escapes our grasp, and hence that reality belongs to us more than we do to it.

Yet prior to all positing and all subject-object relations, and thus prior to all efforts to "take things in hand," there is the place (**Ort**) in which we dwell. This "place" does have essential limitations - the ontic boundaries of physical conditions and particular contingent circumstances, and the ontological horizons of what has been granted us to think and know. The "subjectivist" project, which recognizes no limit, a will to will without end, is intrinsically alienating. Its goal of total knowledge and total control of conditions is an infinitely receding ideal (see Fell, 1981, p. 268), achieving only partial satisfaction, though not in a genuine appropriation that would make the world properly our own, but through a dialectic of distancing and domination. The world is represented as an object to be made our own through expropriation and consumption, set over against our being as subjects and then dissolved without essential remainder. In the event, the world as a context in which we dwell is lost. To confront this alienation, to learn what it means to dwell, that is, to be truly at home in the world, we must go beyond all distancing and domination, and thus beyond all technics and "objects" of research, all assured answers, and effective results. The question concerns our very being and demands a "revision" of our essential building-dwelling-thinking.

To the thoughtful, however, questions and problems are not the same. A problem, Gabriel Marcel once wrote, "is something which I meet, which I find complete before me, but which I can therefore lay siege to and reduce.... A genuine problem is subject to an appropriate technique by the exercise of which it is defined" (1950, I, p. 211). Problems thus differ from questions in several decisive respects:

1. Problems concern "objects" in the broadest sense, that is, everything that can be the **noema** of intentional consciousness,

and thus can be held discriminately in view, set off from ourselves and dealt with, anything which, in Heidegger's terms, is a "being" (*Seiende*) and thus can be either "ready or present to hand." As such, "objects" are that which can literally or figuratively be "taken in hand," with implements or concepts, through action or theoretical cognition, as the case may be.

A question, however, concerns a matter in which we are involved essentially, an issue that pertains to our very being in the world. As such, it is indeterminate and nonobjective, eluding our certain grasp, however much that is enhanced technologically, scientifically, or philosophically. With it, the distinction between the questioning and the questioned, "what is in me and what is before me," intrinsic to all our debates over subjectivity and objectivity, "loses its meaning and its initial validity" (Marcel, 1950, p. 211). We do not so much posit a question, as we are encompassed by it; we do not so much **have** a question, as we **are in it**.

2. One attacks problems using the weapons of a predetermined method and a strategy of divide and conquer. Problem solving is intrinsically abstractive, calculative, and exacting. If the attack is successful, the problem is defeated once and for all. The goal of all problem solving is closure.

In contrast, one thinks upon questions, seeking by means of this not a definitive answer, but an ever more radical and comprehensive context of understanding. Questioning is intrinsically disclosive, integrative, and invocative, with no goal beyond the on-going and open-ended venture of existential ontological self-appropriation and self-understanding.

3. Problems are matters of cognition and control. Problem solving seeks "correct" knowledge and information in order to get results. Indeed, the answer to a problem which did not "work" would be no answer at all. IN this, cognition and control go together essentially. The opposite of correct knowledge is "mistake," whether figuratively or literally, theoretically or practically, to have the object elude one's sure grasp.

Questions, on the other hand, concern the elucidation of meaning, that is, that on the basis of which something is first intelligible as such. The deepest question is the question of the meaning of being itself. Being in this usage refers to the all-englobing set of interpretive horizons which, insofar as they illumine the mass of phenomena in a characteristic way, accounts for the existence of a "world." The term "world" names a context of meaning wherein objects are first freed for presence and absence, for correctness and mistake, for knowing and manipulating.

4. By and large the answer to a genuine problem concerns what we do, that is, how we can better deploy the various "objective" realms that our theoretical, scientific, and practical activities posit. The response to a question, however, concerns who we are as human beings. In all questions, it is we ourselves, our having and doing, thinking and being together, that is the principal matter at issue. The effect of questioning is not directly any technical empowerment or practical instruction, nor is the answer to a question a propositional statement about an objective state of affairs. In questioning, effect and answer are the same, namely a transformation of being, which is to say, of our building-dwelling-thinking.

The foregoing account is not meant to be exhaustive nor certain, but it does serve to clarify the assumptions concerning the question of technology that are implicit to the "topology" I

have been sketching. They are three: 1. The issue of technology cast in its profoundest terms is a "question" and not a "problem." 2. It concerns who we are, more than what we do and the results we accomplish thereby. 3. The response that it demands is a transformation of our way of thinking and being, not a tactical action at isolated points where things seem temporarily out of control.

Following Heidegger's "way," I have characterized the medium of this transformation as a "topology," not to suggest that Heidegger is the authority and the last word, but to indicate that a response to technology (and by implication, to technophobia) must in general be made along such paths. It would not be possible here to develop and defend the notion of "topology" in enough detail to quell most doubts. But some of its basic features do need to be sorted out.

1. Although beyond all "subjectivism," topology is a form of transcendental inquiry in the broadest sense, that is, it is concerned not so much with objects as with the condition of objects, with that which lies behind and makes intelligible all relations of intentionality.

2. In this sense, then, it is also a phenomenology, for it seeks to provide the "logos" of what "appears."

3. It provides this logos as the fundamental context of meaning, itself largely concealed in favor of what appears, that is, the essential lived-space, both synchronic and diachronic, in which we have our being.

4. Hence, it is hermeneutic insofar as it calls forth an implicit fundamental sense that is, a logos that is the hidden ground of what comes to be for us.

5. And it is historical, insofar as it appropriates this sense diachronically from the tradition, recovering and creatively projecting a meaning that is the "place" in which we dwell, making it more properly our own so that we come into our own (Langan, 1984).

However new this "topological" formulation may be, the question it carries out, namely, of what it means to dwell, is very old indeed. It is nothing less than learning the good life, which from time immemorial has been considered the true province of philosophy, the love of wisdom. Yet we undertake this task now in circumstances that are inauspicious and paradoxical. Along with our technical successes, the type of thinking that we accept today as preeminently rational and legitimate is technical calculative thinking, an instrumental reason whose hallmark is expediency, exactness, and control, a rationality for effective ordering, making, and doing. Professional philosophy, far from being a bastion against this hegemony, has been its herald. It has systematically converted itself into analytic methods and logical calculi. In the event, the question of the good life has lapsed, as Theodor Adorno wryly observed, "into intellectual neglect, sentimental whimsy, and finally oblivion" (1974, p. 15).

Herein lies a paradox. On the one hand, the question of the good life is for us especially dramatic and pressing, for we must raise it in a time when instrumental power and technological control have accelerated beyond all recognizable limit and comprehension, and when, like latter-day Babylonians, nothing seems impossible to us, but our pride and skill as builders outstrips our wisdom to ask "for the sake of what" we are building. On the other hand, it is instrumental reason which presently defines the concept of "legitimate" thinking and marks



out the bounds of what is valid and above all "rational." At present, then, noninstrumental philosophy, much like the language of women as women hitherto, lies outside the currently sanctioned bounds of "serious" discourse.

The question of technology requires a "leap" outside of these bounds, for there is no easy transition. And the leap is a leap of "faith," for it affords no instrumental guarantees of success, no assured results (Burch, 1984).

### On the Topic of Technology

In contrast to puzzles and curiosities which we can take or leave, genuine questions are the expression of needs, and the most fundamental questions are those rooted in the need of the human situation. In this regard I want to defend three propositions uncountenanced by present orthodoxy and common sense.

1. Although modern technology is at one level a means to ends and a human activity, at a deeper level it is a grace of being. Without pretending to reproduce in condensed form the logic of Heidegger's famous *Die Frage nach der Technik*, I would simply draw the reader's attention to the following points. No amount of analysis simply at the level of instrumentality discloses the peculiar character of the essence of modern technology, its intrinsic impulse to encompass all aspects of life and to render all things in terms of the instrumental will to power. The essence of technology, that is, the whole way in which technology comes forth and abides, lies ultimately in its character as a mode of disclosure, a way in which all the things-that-are get revealed. This essence is "of being," for it defines the essential space, always already in play, in which we have our being. It is a "grace," for this essential space is never simply at our disposal and under our control. By itself, no amount of voluntaristic busywork will change it fundamentally, neither that of rationally guided praxis, nor everyday, instrumental common sense.

2. Technology is at once a positive and a negative grace. It is positive, for it grants a perspective through which we do control and order the world, effectively deploying everything-that-is as a standing resource (**Bestand**) for use, control, and exploitation. Tangible benefits do accrue from this, a fact which the critics of technology are wrong to dismiss out of hand.

Yet technology is also a negative grace. In opening up the world as material for unlimited instrumental action, (and human beings themselves are not excluded from this), it tends to close off other possibilities for human building-dwelling-thinking, the caring, meditative, creative aspects of our being,<sup>9</sup> which along with exploitation and control, go to make up who we are. In the extreme, this closure threatens our very being, for it closes off the creative possibilities for realizing new meanings, of bringing forth and sustaining worlds other than that of instrumental action.

3. Yet, paradoxically, it is the negative grace which, in the face of all of our palpable successes, first engenders the "need" to raise the question of technology in a radical way. The urgency of the question is discerned precisely because, in the very midst of the technological society and because of it, one cannot help but sense that something is fundamentally lacking, something which continued technological virtuosity not only does not fulfill, but seems to exacerbate. It is a technological "night", one might say, in which the Owl of Minerva now "takes to flight."

Such talk will no doubt raise eyebrows, if not ire. In current discussions it is not always clearly acknowledged that technology poses problems, let alone evokes questions, not to mention the fundamental question of our time. This is especially true in nonacademic circles. James Young, a former senior vice-president of technical resources for General Electric writes: "Technology is all the techniques, knowledge, lore, methods, and tools that have helped society survive and improve its life" (quoted in Pascarella, 1979, p. 5). Taken literally, this is a rather curious view, for it would imply that technology is good by definition. Presumably, if in *extremis* we were to annihilate ourselves tomorrow with nuclear weapons, the weapons on Young's account could not be technology! Obviously, Young's expertise is not philosophical. But as a kind of "techno-Candide," he has his equally extreme technophobic counterparts. They are the ones who also see technology in normative terms, but regard it as uniformly bad. The naive radical technophobe appeals to nature in its naturalness, and regards technology always as a corruption of the pristine state. The sophisticated radical technophobe appeals to the purity of the life-world, which technology is thought to deny. Although none of these views is especially credible, each reveals something important about the topic of technology.

The radical technophobe is wrong, since to be human is to break the bond of natural innocence. Unlike animals, human beings realize meanings essentially, they have a world and they make history, and their use of tools is one of the ways in which they mediate nature, alter the environment, and transform their world. All philosophical appeals to an immediacy of nature in its naturalness or to the purity of lived experience, as Hegel long ago pointed out (Gadamer, 1972, pp. 324ff), are self-defeating. Nonetheless, the radical technophobe offers a valuable lesson. She can make us more attentive to the scope and meaning of the transformations and mediations that we do effect.

The radical technophile is wrong, since there is nothing intrinsic to technology as a human activity and a means to ends that on balance guarantees use towards beneficial purposes. But the radical technophile too offers a valuable lesson. In the face of seemingly more frequent mishaps, she reminds us that technology has been integral to our survival, and that its instrumental power does alleviate tangible needs.

Neither lesson is the last word. However wary the technophobe makes us, we cannot be blinded to the fact that we live in a thoroughly technologized world. This or that technology might be factored out selectively without serious collapse, but it is neither possible nor desirable to factor out technology radically. "To be technophobic in our time," Edward Ballard writes, "is to be willing to accept starvation and slavery" (1978, p. 1). The question for us is not one of doing away with the machines, nor of romantically invoking a pretechnological pastoral Eden (which never in fact was), but of keeping open the instrumental power of technologies in a properly human context.

On the other hand, however much we are comforted by the technophile's assurances, we should not be smug in our judgments about betterment and progress. This is a more complex issue. In the first place, ours is an age well acquainted with catastrophes and stands in legitimate fear of even greater ones to come, made more profound because of our technology. And although it may not be a situation without hope, scarcely anyone can be sanguine.

Second, precisely because, barring some apocalypse, we are irretrievably committed to high levels of technology, we need to

be more self-conscious and self-critical of the standpoint from which we judge its value. In this regard there have been radically negative voices. "Today," wrote Edgar Allen Poe, (writing in 1840's) "man is only more active-not more happy, nor more wise-than he was 6000 years ago" (quoted in Gallagher, 1979, p. 89). Jacques Ellul goes further and questions the very grounds of such judgements. "We cannot say with assurance that there has been progress from 1250 to 1950. In doing so, we would be comparing things were not comparable" (1964, p. 192). It would be easy, I suppose, to dismiss Poe as a romantic and Ellul as a crank. Still there is something right in what they are saying. On the one hand, there is no doubt that our technology grants us instrumental power. Moreover, just as we cannot recapture lost youth, we cannot win back a previous form of life. Hegel was surely right in this, that there is a certain irreversibility to the history of spirit. Our possibilities must necessarily be possibilities granted from out of the technological society itself, however critical or transformative we may wish to be. But, on the other hand, it is not self-evident that instrumental power is the exclusive nor even the principal benchmark of human value. If nowadays we are inclined to think so, it is because instrumental reason has no other criteria by which to judge.

We need to be clear about what is at stake here. I am not saying that instrumental power is not a value, and given the nature of our society, that it does not afford the leisure to pursue non-instrumental activities. I am just saying that it is not the absolute value. There is, of course, a paradox in this. The more we commit ourselves to instrumental power for the sake of leisure and see ourselves essentially as the wielders of such power, the less we seem open to those activities for the sake of which leisure deserves to be won (Arendt, 1958, p. 5). If we are technological beings essentially, then our leisure time free from the exercise of instrumental power is time for nothing. Ten minutes at any suburban shopping mall any night of the week will tell us what that means. (Out of sheer decency I shall refrain here from mentioning West Edmonton Mall, the largest shopping concourse and fun factory in the world, which sprawling on the hinterlands of Edmonton provides as compelling a symbol as any philosopher could demand.)

Yet I am also not advocating a radical nostalgia, as if leaving our technology behind (or at least its most obtrusive forms) we could transport ourselves back to some earlier time presumed to be "better." Such a notion is not just misguided, it is unintelligible. A past form of life is not a possibility for us at all, as long as we are who we are. That being so, we could not participate in what discernible virtues that form of life may have, since we are not of that world.

All this aside, what I am suggesting is that there are no straightforward, context free criteria by which to judge these different forms. As a child of the technological society, given the choice I myself would prefer to live even in the burnt out wastelands of the South Bronx, than in a cave in Mesolithic Iberia. But I am not prepared to say categorically that life in the Bronx is absolutely better than life in the cave. Inevitably we are compelled to judge and judge on the basis of our own situation as we perceive it. Yet, when we take seriously the claim that such judgments are not categorical, we are opened to the possibility that, after all, things could be essentially different and have been in other times and other places. Thus we need not, and should not, be locked into a univocal standard of judgement that leaves

open only a specific sort of possibilities, however efficiently they can be realized.

This brings me back to the comment by James Young. To see technological development in itself as progress is to overlook the fact that individual technologies are not isolated phenomena. Regardless of its demonstrable benefits, each one comes with a cost and is not just a means to an end, but is implicated in a transformation of ourselves and our world.

There is yet another check upon the technophile's enthusiasm. One cannot deny that Western science and technology produce results. Indeed, the uncanny thing is not that here and there our science and technology fall short, or that things break down, but that for the most part they "work" and work with a vengeance. Yet, as this science and technology spread out and threaten to absorb all other cultures and ways of thinking, leveling them to serve our demands, it comes to be assumed that ours is the only way of proceeding. Yet consider the encounter with Chinese medicine. "Herbal medicine, acupuncture, moxibustion, the yin/yang duality, the theory of the chi" (Feyerabend, 1978, p. 102-03) were all dismissed in the West as arcane and largely ineffective. When for political reasons, however, the Party in Maoist China allowed the old teachings back into medical schools, it became apparent that the traditional medicine had methods of diagnosis and therapy more effective than ours in the West. Feyerabend takes this point even further.

It is always taken for granted that older practices, for example rain dances, don't work. But who has examined that matter? And note that for examining it we would have to restore the harmony between man and nature that existed before the Indian tribes were broken up and annihilated. (1978, p. 138)

Western science and technology are universal in an abstract sense, that is, they presume to hold indifferently, irrespective of place and time (although how universal they are even in this sense is a matter of debate). The older practices, as revealed for example in Levi-Strauss' notion of *bricolage* (1966), are more deeply context dependent and context responsive, tied in with a whole web of practices, dispositions, and beliefs that support their effectiveness. When we invoke "nonstandard" techniques in the midst of current practices, this is something other than proposing an alternative universal method that we claim is more expedient. It is at root to propose a different way of life, in terms of which different practices are more effective. (Thus, for example, home births are not better purely and simply. But they may indeed be better for a society in which the event of birth is more sacred in which women have gained a better sense of their own bodies, where family life, friendship, community, trust, and risk have different values than they generally do now. It is the way of life itself, rather than a debate over the expediency and presumed universality of methods, that is ultimately at issue.)

Much of the foregoing was provoked by James Young's tacit, though probably unintended, claim that there are no "problems" of technology. At the very least it should be clear that however much political, ideological, and socio-economic forces stand in the way of it, we do need to learn to deal more efficiently and cost effectively with the instruments of technology, to be less foolhardy in what we venture to do and more adept at predicting the tangible, quantifiable effects of various uses. Even to the instrumentally skilled and committed, this should go without saying.

Such cautions, however, still move within the instrumental account of technology. Here the problems are thought by and large to be technical experts. The basic issue concerns what we do with the implements and techniques, in terms of which the consideration of the "effects" of specific uses comes afterward as a cost/benefit calculation. If technology is inherently problematic, the issue is one of "taming the tiger," of controlling technology more effectively by taking it more resolutely in hand.

Yet, even at this level, matters are not so straightforward. There is no technical expertise without vested interest, nor technology without the possibility of error. That is not to say that scientists and technicians are not honorable people or that our technologies are generally shoddy. But the commitments and agenda of scientific-technological research do entail implicitly self-affirming values, and nowadays are everywhere carried out directly or indirectly under economic and ideological imperatives. Moreover, a "a foolproof technology," as David Suzuki once remarked, "is a technology without fools," which means without any relation to human beings and hence not a technology at all.

It is important to realize that even the problems of technology point beyond themselves to the realm of questions. In what direction new scientific and technical knowledge should be taken "cannot be decided by scientific means; it is a political question of the first order, and therefore can hardly be left to the decision of professional scientists and professional politicians" (Arendt, 1958, p. 3), not to mention professional philosophers (if that oxymoron is permitted too). The public confuses the issue and abdicates its own responsibilities when it defers to so-called "experts" on such issues. And the experts overstep their bounds when they presume to fill the gap.

The instrumental conception of technology pushes beyond itself in yet another respect. At stake is the whole range of our nontechnical experience of technology, that is, not of what we do with the implements and techniques per se, but of what the use and proliferation of technology does to us (Ihde, 1984 & 1986). At this level it is a question of how technology is implicated in, and conditions in fundamental ways, our self-understanding, and our relations to other human beings, our whole experience of the world.

Questions of this sort arise at two levels. The first is the level of instrumentality itself, of how the equipment and artifacts that we make and use - those things employed for the sake of doing something - serve a mediating function between the experiencing subject and the object experienced. Contrary to the assumptions of the prevailing orthodoxy and common sense, this instrumentality is nonneutral. In saying this, however, I do not mean to side with either the technophiles or technophobes, who affirm an intrinsic positive or negative value. The thesis of nonneutrality claims instead that merely to have a tool ready to hand is in itself, **whether for better or for worse**, already a transformation of experience. With this readiness to hand, things come to be for us differently as a new range of possibilities opens up, whether it is specifically acted upon or not. Yet, this is not simply a matter of how things happen to appear. Reality itself is changed because of the possibilities the instrument grants. In their mediation, instruments effect both material changes and existential- ontological transformations. The use of tools is a form of our being in the world, and thus, a fundamental mode of the original disclosure of things, that is, of how the world comes to be for us as a world in the first place.

However "correct" this analysis, it is still too abstract, for it fails to disclose the full contextual meaning of instrumentality. All tool use is use in a context, and transformational functions are fully intelligible only against a wider background. It is this fact which pushes us beyond the level of intentionality. There is a basic "ontic" context inscribed in things and their interrelations, a context of particular artifacts, people, documents, natural resources, physical settings, forces and relations of production and channels of power; and there is an "ontological" context, a context of lived-meaning in various worlds, and an over-riding interpretive framework that gives a fundamental sense to things as such as a whole. It is in this latter context that the real essence of modern technology is to be found, that is, in that prevailing mode of discourse, understanding, and disposition that deploys everything first and foremost as material for ordering, control, and exploitation.

Taken on these terms, the most basic issues concerning technology are not those of technical expertise. They are more than a matter of finding "right" answers in the form of expedient and efficient methods and techniques to deal with seemingly self-evident and objectively posed "problems" in the field. Prior to all answering, the scope and meaning of the questions themselves must be considered. The real issue, then, is not a matter of asking "How Not to Have Technophobia" (Folio, May 1, 1986), as if this were some sort of fearful psychosomatic disease for which only the "techno-medical" experts have the cure. The prior task is to ask: "What does it mean to think in terms of 'confronting technophobia' in the first place?" "What is assumed when we take this for granted as a fundamental concern, as a problem that needs to be solved, and when we speak of it in almost pathological terms?" Yet to ask in this way is to alter our prevailing assumptions about what would count as a proper response.

### Confronting Technophobia

To our common sense, technophobia is a "problem" that admits of a more or less direct solution. The issue is one of educating ourselves to be more at ease with the implements of technology in order to take them more effectively in hand, exchanging fears based upon technical ignorance for informed mastery and control. To the extent that ours is a technological society, this is a rational agenda. One may, of course, be justifiably skeptical about the degree of technical skill required to get along effectively in our society (Burch, 1985), or question the meaning of "mastery" itself, or personally choose on rational grounds priorities other than technical expertise. Nonetheless, at the instrumental level, to lack technical knowledge is to lack a certain kind of power, to which technophobia based on ignorance precludes even minimal access. Without the possibility of such access, one is limited in real choices from the outset, whether pro or con.

But there is more to the issue than this, for rarely, if ever, is technophobia based just on the happenstance of technical ignorance. It almost always has its roots in social, psychological, and existential conditions, in a sense of estrangement from the world into which one is cast. Here common sense cannot help, for it is from the prevailing common sense that one is estranged. To the technophobe, the technological world seems alien; to common sense, the technophobe seems foolish.

It is not mistaken nor misguided to affirm the importance of technical education, but it is wrong to assume that this alone is an adequate response to the issue of technology and technophobia. Common sense is correct to insist that technology is not demonic. But to teach that lesson, to transform fear into technical mastery and control, alienation into a sense of what it means to dwell, is more than a "problem" and more than technics. At the level of skills, technical knowledge is better taught in a humane rather than an instrumental context, and no amount of technical expertise in itself makes a context humane. Moreover, the questions of estrangement and dwelling go beyond technical skill and instrumentality to the meaning of instrumentality in our world, and this is at root a philosophical issue. Confronting technophobia is a matter of thinking.

Now it is one thing to invoke "thinking" as a saving grace (among philosophers, almost a professional duty); it is quite another to say what this means. As a craft of "place," thinking does not provide universal injunctions nor technical recipes, that is, criteria or principles that can be directly applied with an easy assurance and validity. Thinking arises "out of response to what is owing to the situation - its demands" (Bakan, 1984, p. 76). Thus we only truly discover what it means to think in the situated venture of thinking itself, which united with building and dwelling, are the modes of our being in the world.

As a "topology," thinking encompasses two **topoi**: the ontic space of empirical conditions that define where we are as physical beings; and the ontological space of lived-meanings, the "worlds" of significance that constitute our "hermeneutic situation." Although irreducible one to the other, these two **topoi** belong together essentially as a single world of interpenetrating spaces. It is here that one must learn to dwell, and thus both "existentially, factually" (**faktisch**), that is, as the locus and medium for the generation of meanings, and "insistently, factually" (**tatsächlich**), coping with the ontic here and now. Neither mode of being, however, is exclusively active or passive.

This places thinking in a special relation to common sense, to instrumentality, and to positive science. Thinking does not seek to abandon or repudiate common sense, but to situate it in a more comprehensive context of intelligibility, which yet in itself presages a transformation of common sense. Thinking does not seek to preclude or belittle instrumental action. It acknowledges that our being in the world requires that we find out how to deal with things, if no longer just exploitively, nonetheless with competence. And it acknowledges that there are instrumental activities which are "thoughtful," that is, which besides merely producing or accomplishing, are in themselves a deliberate gathering and disclosing of sense. Thinking does not seek to replace or reform positive science, nor to dismiss it as merely a theoretical construction remote from lived experience. (After all, upon this science is founded our rockets, nuclear installations, and telecommunications networks - the majority our technology - and many would find this close enough.) Yet, amid the successes of science, thinking must ask about the proper scope of scientific knowing and the ground and limit of its effectiveness, and hence, among other things, recall science to itself.

Overall, this characterization of thinking as "topology" might well be seen as an attempt to mediate between two fundamental interpretive schemes, each having its own distinctive "metaphysics" (i.e., ruling truth relation and understanding of reality as such), its own "economy," (i.e., how in terms of the production and consumption of scarce values, the world is first

and foremost encountered and deployed),<sup>10</sup> and its own modes of discourse (i.e., its dominant "logic" and rules of "serious" speech). On one side is the intelligibility of instrumental reason rooted in "subjectivism," to wit, the prevailing sense of our time. As we have seen, it operates through a metaphysics of things, of objects deployed and secured in various ways and at different levels for our assurance and control. Its economy is essentially "extractive," expropriating resources and enhancing their value for sale through skillful manipulation. Its discourse is "nominalistic," that is, paradigmatically denotative and univocal, a tool at our disposal for the effective ordering of things and the processing of information. In this scheme, wisdom lies in the efficiency, mastery, clarity, and certainty with which we deploy all the things-that-are.

On the other side is a "mediative" intelligibility. Its metaphysics is that of meaning, the sense of things not just as such but "as a whole" (**im Ganzen**). Its economy is "providential," based on the exchange of gifts "from other persons, from divine beings, from nature, ...from 'good fortune'" (Bohm, 1985, p. 541), or, one might say, from being itself. Its discourse is disclosive, itself a gift rather than a tool, an appropriation of the lived meanings in and through which we dwell. Wisdom in this scheme "consists in being able to receive gifts (as a blessing, when opportunity knocks), and being able to give gifts in turn (as alms or as a sacrifice, for example)" (Bohm, 1985, p. 541).

The thinker,<sup>11</sup> (like the artist and the poet),<sup>12</sup> is presently caught in an explicit struggle between these two interpretive schemes. The struggle is paradoxical, and in the face of the irreducibility of the ontic and ontological, one that is without the possibility of absolute mediation. To meditative thinking the hegemony of the instrumental scheme threatens us in our very humanity. Yet this hegemony comes as a consequence of the inner logic of instrumental reason, that is, its intrinsic impulse to order, exploit, and control absolutely. Thinking, therefore, struggles against this hegemony at the risk of its own expropriation; for without its own effective means of ordering, exploitation, and control, it seems impotent. Thinking is thus impelled by a twofold demand: Negatively, it must resist the temptation to succumb either to the pragmatic willfulness of instrumental reason, or to the passive other-worldliness of philosophy; and positively, it must struggle "here and now and in the little things" (Heidegger, 1954, p. 41), which means with a certain amount of willfulness and control, to develop its own strategies for holding open the essential space in which a new revelation of sense and hence a new way of being can be received as a gift (Langan, 1982).

How then do we begin truly to confront technophobia? We do so by struggling for a deeper, more comprehensive self-understanding in the midst of technological transformations. As educators we must prepare students to live in the technological society by helping them (and ourselves) to perceive the full sense and possibilities of our world situation, and along with care and concern, providing them with the skills and tools to allow that perception to happen. However grandiose or star-gazing it may sound, what is required is a historical understanding that reaches to the essence of our civilization. Such an undertaking is the necessary, if not the sufficient, condition for the kind of self-direction needed in the midst of the powerful changes we are witnessing. Without such an orientation one could not understand the place wherein she is called to dwell, nor the dimensions of its true possibilities, and therefore would not stand a chance

of understanding for the sake of what and in terms of what she should seek to dwell. Indeed the question in this form would not even occur to her.

Heidegger climaxed his improbable lecture to the contractors with a line from the 19th Century poet Friedrich Holderlin. To the question how do we dwell, Holderlin responded: "**Dichterisch wohnt der Mensch auf dieser Erde**" (Poetically dwells human being on this earth). The poetic here is the coming to be of the genuinely creative, the struggle to open up new horizons of significance and to realize possibilities for human building-dwelling-thinking that are more than use, exploitation, and control. The Earth is all that to which we are indebted for our being, ontic and ontological, that from which our creative activities arise and to which they return. In this dwelling there are no guarantees of success, no assurances of control, just the on-going venture. But in the words of another poet: "For us there is only trying, the rest is not our business" (Eliot, 1963, p. 203).

## Notes

1. A version of this paper was first presented to a plenary session at the annual meeting of **The Association for the Advancement of Science in Canada (AASC)** in conjunction with **WISEST (Women in Scholarship, Engineering, Science & Technology)**, Edmonton, May 10, 1986 and was subsequently published in the journal **Phenomenology + Pedagogy**, Vol. 4, No. 2, (1986), pp.3-21. It is reproduced here with only minor additions, alterations and corrections. Given the diversity of the original audience (which included, among others, high-school students and teachers, WISEST members, a senior citizens club, scientists and university professors from various faculties), the discussion is more of a schematic manifesto than a concrete demonstration, which accounts for much of the sectarian vocabulary. Thanks are due to the Editor of **Phenomenology + Pedagogy**, Professor Max van Manen, for permission to reprint.

2. This opening is largely a paraphrase from memory of some remarks made by Professor Thomas Langan in the **Protokoll** to a seminar on the philosophy of history, April 1976. It turns out, however, that the incident is apocryphal, or at least that Langan took poetic license in recounting it. Still, as is often the case in philosophy and always so in literature (both **mythos** in the original sense), what is lost in faithfulness to the facts as such can be gained in the disclosure of truth.

3. On the semantic difficulties surrounding the term "technology" see Ronald Bruzina's remarks in Axelos, 1976, pp. xiv-xviii, and Burch, 1984, pp. 19-21. In the present discussion I use "technology" as an omnibus term whose specific sense must be gleaned from the context.

4. This view was starkly apparent at the AASC meeting. Although the conference theme was "confronting technophobia," with very few exceptions the papers were of the "science for the layperson" variety.

5. For a preliminary exploration of this notion of "place" see Burch, 1990.

6. Admittedly, among many Western intellectuals, (ones, moreover, who have of late moved decidedly from the wings into the limelight), this faith has been more than tempered; it has been renounced altogether. In the event, radical critiques of the hegemony of instrumental/technological rationality, far from being exceptional and revolutionary, have become in some quarters almost cliché. Were my task here to respond directly to this facet of the contemporary scene, a different focus and strategy would be required. Suffice it instead to offer two remarks to indicate how the present discussion opens upon this issue. First, however familiar the theoretical critique of instrumental/technological rationality has become, this rationality still endures as an essential component of the ruling "metaphysics" of our time, that is, of the fundamental ontological "world-view" that "Holds complete dominion over all the phenomena that distinguish the age" (Heidegger, 1951, p. 69). At stake, then, is not simply a juxtaposition **ab extra** of one theoretical perspective to another, but an appropriation of positive possibilities for building-dwelling-thinking that are both inscribed as possibilities in the intelligibility of the present situation, and feasible in terms of its ontic realities. This appropriation is to presage a transformation of our whole way of being by first of all subverting, not instrumental/technological reason per se, but its hegemony. Second, such is the leveling, universalizing power of instrumental/technological rationality that radical criticism of it runs the danger of devolving simply into its opposite, that is, into an anarchical

heterogeneity of incommensurate local discourses. Far from presaging something new, this result is **in its essence** the same as the world-view it opposes. To overcome the hegemony of instrumental/technical reason, thinking must instead meet a twofold demand. It must strive for an ultimate theoretical integration of experience without retreating into the sort of abstract universality that obliterates all difference, and recognize difference and particularity as what is properly one's own without devolving into mere tribalism and fragmentation or repudiating out of hand what is "correct" in instrumental/technological reason. Of course, it is one thing to announce this demand; quite another to meet it.

7. Despite appearances, this is not intended as a flatly idealist claim. To make that clear, however, I would need to go beyond the present discussion to show that: (i) material conditions and ontic accomplishments (including technical advancements) are themselves necessary to the fulfillment of this destiny; yet that (ii) as the ultimate situating context that defines the "logos" of what "appears," this reason still takes ontological precedence over such conditions and accomplishments; and that (iii) notwithstanding this precedence, there is a fundamental difference between the ruling interpretive framework and such conditions and accomplishments that cannot ultimately be sublated (**aufgehoben**) into identity.

8. In Nietzsche, for example, one finds a radical critique of Western rationality that goes beyond any previous skepticisms, and in Bergson's **L'evolution creatrice**, an attempt to contrast technology as the necessary expression of this "rationality" with creative intuition, the **elan vital**.

9. This is not to deny that science and technology too can be, and often are, "creative" activities and at different levels. Yet, if we understand the "creative" as engendering a significant "revision" or "reorientation" of experience and the essence of modern technology as a mode of "enframing" disclosure, that essence would impede fundamental creativity.

10. This notion of "economy" is a hybrid from ideas found principally in works by Bourdieu and Levinas. For the specific contrast of the two economies, as well as the encouragement to take matters in this direction, I am indebted to Professor Arnd Bohm.

11. It should be evident (I hope) that by "thinker" I do not mean chiefly or exclusively those whose training and job is to solve the problems of philosophy, Kant's **Denker vom Gewerbe**.

12. For the struggle with respect to artists and poets see Hyde (1983), especially Chapter 8, and Bohm (1985).

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## EVOLVING SUSTAINABILITY: A RE-THINKING OF ONTOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Ingrid Leman Stefanovic

Theologian Thomas Berry tells us that inasmuch as Western civilization no longer has a sense of what it wants the world to be, a new set of goals is required.<sup>1</sup> For many, these new goals are to be formulated within the context of the "global agenda for change", presented to the UN General Assembly in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development, and captured most succinctly in the concept of "sustainable development".<sup>2</sup>

According to this Commission directed by Gro Harlem Brundtland, strategies for achieving sustainable development balance economic and environmental interests to "meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."<sup>3</sup> It is to the Commission's credit that they have recognized that the term "development" is "being used here in its broadest sense",<sup>4</sup> and that the breadth of issues to be addressed in any global agenda for change demands an interdisciplinary approach: we read that "the ability to anticipate and prevent environmental damage will require that the ecological dimensions of policy be considered at the same time as the economic, trade, energy, agricultural, and other dimensions."<sup>5</sup>

While the growing ecological awareness of the public promises some major re-assessment of Thomas Berry's sense of what the world "wants to be", I would propose, however, that if genuine sustainability is to evolve, we must stretch our imaginations yet further, in a more substantive re-thinking of the ontological foundations of the human-environment relation than has been presented by the Brundtland Commission, or by many of the follow-up reports. In this paper, a critical review of the positivist methodological roots of our current approaches to the concept of "sustainable development" will be followed by the presentation of an alternative vision of how we may better hope to attain authentic sustainability by supplementing calculative forms of enquiry with a more originative, holistic mode of thinking.

### The Positivist Roots of "Sustainable Development" Concepts

"What is real is necessarily objective, quantitative, and law-abiding..."<sup>6</sup>

Samuels' description above of the positivist methodology describes the central characteristics of a vision of truth as scientific certitude which underlies many environmental approaches of both technical disciplines, as well as the social sciences.<sup>7</sup> Generally speaking, for a fact to be true, a positivist maintains that it must at least be tangible (empirically accessible), publicly verifiable (objective), capable of being described in logical and/or mathematical terms (quantitative and law-abiding) and causally derived, that is, by identifying the genesis of an occurrence, the aim is to ultimately predict and control its future development.<sup>8</sup>

The roots of such a predominantly Western interpretation of reality can be traced at least as far back as to Aristotle, who in his *Metaphysics*, Delta Book 7, presents us with a distinction between *ens reale*, real Being, and *ens rationis*, conceptual Being,<sup>9</sup> - two manners of approaching the world which, as we shall see, sustain our current environmental attitudes.

The first term (real Being) indicates the sort of entity which we can say has real and positive existence as an object in the world: it can perhaps be seen, touched, described and certainly, it can be objectively measured.

The second term indicates those entities which do not possess such "real" existence, but exist only in the mind, conceptually. For instance, the proposition "Le Corbusier's Ideal City consisted of the *Ville Radieuse*" is a true proposition about a thing which was never built in reality. We can say that the proposition about this non-existing thing "is" in some sense, (and therefore

qualifies as "Being"), even though it refers to something which never existed in actual fact.

Based on this distinction, medieval thinkers concluded that all privations, absences, negative entities (those which could not be subjected to empirical measures) were to be classed as **entia rationis**, conceptual entities. St. Thomas Aquinas offers the classic example of this when he describes the physical privation of blindness. Consistent with the Aristotelian distinction, he maintains that blindness itself is not real: the eye is real, the cataract may indeed be real, but the blindness itself, the not-seeing, "is" an entity only insofar as the proposition "the eye does not see" may be true.

To introduce a parallel case in the field of human settlements, consider that there is a house on the hill; both "house" and "hill" are "real" entities, according to the Aristotelian understanding. But then there is an earthquake, and the house is demolished; so we say, "there is no longer a house on the hill", or "no longer does a house exist on that hill". While in the previous case, the house and the hill were real, positive entities, in the second example, only the hill remains so. **The absence of the house** cannot be seen, touched or experienced in the same way as the house itself was when it stood on the hill. Therefore, it falls into the medieval thinker's second category, **ens rationis**.

Jean-Paul Sartre points to an example which helps to reveal a major flaw in this way of thinking about Being and existence - a flaw which has grounded our way of thinking for centuries, and which continues to be at the root of our most current understanding of scientific truth as correct correspondence between the mind and the external environment. He gives the example<sup>10</sup> of his looking for Pierre in a cafe. Pierre is **not there**; but Pierre's absence is quite different from the absence from the cafe of Napoleon Bonaparte, for instance. I have expected to find Pierre, and my expectation is not met. This absence of Pierre from the cafe will affect my life quite differently from the absence of Napoleon, whom I did not expect to see in the first place. In other words, the difference rests on **meaning** and the significance of expectation and anticipation.

To return to the blindness example, it can be problematic too. William Barrett puts it this way:

One fine morning, a man wakes up blind... He has fallen into a great black pit, his whole life has been swallowed up in a darkness. Non-seeing, a privation, has descended on him with more crushing effect than brick from a rooftop. Roaring with anguish, he crashes and stumbles about his room. A doctor arrives, and examines his eyes. If the doctor philosophizes in the manner of Aristotle, St. Thomas or Carnap, he will observe: the eyes are real, and the growth over the eyes is a real substance, but the non-seeing of the eye is itself not an object, and therefore, not an **ens reale**, a real entity. And if doctors still know Latin or if this one has a slight touch of Moliere, he may even pompously and soothingly quote St. Thomas: "Caecitas non habet esse in rebus" (Blindness has no being in things.)<sup>11</sup>

Barrett continues: "For my part, I rather hope this doctor is **not** able to get out of the room fast enough to avoid the blind man's fury. His language, for all its Latin gravity, is humanly frivolous; and what is humanly frivolous ought to be somehow and somewhere philosophically wrong too... For the man who has gone blind, his blindness may very well be the **ens realissimum** - or more accurately, the **esse** or **non-esse realissimum** of his life".<sup>12</sup>

In our human settlements example, no less than in the blindness example, the "absence of house" indicates more than mere conceptual being, more than mere propositional truth. It may well indicate the end of an entire way of life for the family who occupied the house, the destruction of a home and a center from which all other life activities emanated.

What these examples show is that when a tradition locates real Being exclusively in the positively existing object, in material entities, -as has done our positivist tradition - it becomes detached from complexities of meanings associated with the very essence of being-human. The scientific attitude, which locates truth and reality only in positively existing, measurable objects threatens to obscure a fundamental ontological significance of the phenomenon of absence, of the fundamentally incalculable, of the fluidity, dynamism and unpredictability of **relations between entities**.

For instance, one reads in the Brundtland Report that, despite the fact that the world produces more food per head of population today than ever before in human history, 730 million people did not eat enough to lead fully productive working lives.<sup>13</sup> When one locates the fact of insufficiency - and sometimes sheer absence - of food supply to a level of truth more fundamental than the level of an abstract proposition, more than a statistical number of hungry people, but instead, to the existential meaning of hunger, that is, to the fact that 730 million people's entire lives were handicapped under the shadow of hunger or famine and the depression, outrage and indignity of unsatisfied human needs, then the importance of locating reality and truth in other than a measurable, empirical entity can no longer be underestimated. Indeed, such a perspective can only throw a new and necessary urgency on the full meaning and breadth of human misery associated with the absence of proper sustenance.

When the fundamental metaphysical view on reality is - as in the Western technological, materialistic, positivist vision - one in which **things** become more important than relations, or hidden grounds, or phenomena which in some ways are beyond the bounds of empirical testing and measurement, then this has major implications on how our epoch defines the person-environment relation.

First, it affects the foundation of inter-personal relations themselves. Too often, in a calculative frame of reference, we forget that human beings are not objects, but living subjects, with all the richness of poetic and artistic imagination, pre-thematic awareness, as well as emotional and intellectual sensibilities. Perhaps no-one understood this as well as Martin Buber, who distinguished between the quantifiable world of the experience of objects, described in the basic word I-It, and the limitless world of relation, described in the basic word I-Thou. Buber writes:

When I confront a human being as my Thou and speak the basic word I-Thou to him, then he is no thing among things nor does he consist of things...Even as a melody is not composed of tones, nor a verse of words, nor a statue of lines - one must pull and tear to turn a unity into a multiplicity - so it is with the human being to whom I say Thou. I can abstract from him the colour of his hair or the colour of his speed or the colour of his graciousness; I have to do this again and again; but immediately, he is no longer my Thou.<sup>14</sup>

In a highly rational, over-intellectualized society placing the supreme value on geometric order and organization of discreet

objects and **things**, we are reminded that we must ever guard against the tendency to transform human beings into numbers, into components of a mere collectivity. Margaret Catley-Carlson, President of CIDA, points out the difficulty of finding a just and affordable way to enforce environmental controls, precisely on such an individual, human level. "For example," she writes,

[C]onsider a taxi driver in Calcutta, whose dilapidated old heap belches black smoke. If you fine him for polluting the air, or demand he get his car tuned, where will he find the money? He's just barely making enough each day to feed himself and his family. And if you impound his vehicle, how would he and his children eat?<sup>15</sup>

Catley-Carlson urges us to multiply this dilemma by five million cars, in order to begin to understand why Calcutta has such a huge task ahead of it in trying to battle air pollution; but to truly understand the magnitude of the problem requires much more awareness of the human implications, than such an easy calculation may appear to warrant. The point is that in order to solve a serious pollution problem in this case would involve intervening in an **entire way of life** that presently, has its just returns on some individual, human level. The issue here, of course, is not to abstain from environmental intervention, but to do so fully aware of the human dimension, and fully prepared to cope with the personal as well as social costs.

A second consequence of a metaphysical attitude which places importance exclusively on calculable, measurable entities, impacts on our current understanding of "**environment**". In the Hon. Charles Caccia's words, we tend to see ourselves as "managers of an entity out there called 'the environment', extraneous to us, an alternative to the economy, too expensive a value to protect in difficult economic times".<sup>16</sup> If, on the contrary, the environment is not seen as something external to ourselves, but as an extension of our selves, what emerges instead is a fundamental belonging of human beings to their world. The human being is not "one thing", and the environment, "another thing", "out there". On the contrary, they stand in mutual interdependence, and it makes no sense to speak of one without the other.

In his ground-breaking work, **City Form and Natural Process**,<sup>17</sup> Michael Hough points to the implications of a mythology which identifies the city as one thing, and the environment as another, the result involving an artificial urban design incentive of "green belts", and the exclusion of nature from within the city. He urges us to re-consider this myth, by recalling that the environment is not something external to ourselves, something to which we travel on weekends or on holidays, but rather, constitutes an essential and integral component of human settlements.

A third consequence of our metaphysical hypostatization of reality is felt in the way in which we understand the meaning of habitability and **dwelling**. Built environments - human settlements - are more than material entities to be organized and calculatively ordered. In the words of Gaston Bachelard, "inhabited space transcends geometrical space";<sup>18</sup> indeed, "space that has been seized upon by the imagination cannot remain indifferent space subject to the measures and estimates of the surveyor. It has been lived in, not in its positivity, but with all the partiality of the imagination."<sup>19</sup> The natural and built environments consist of more than a neatly-ordered system of bare

facts, but include always human interpretation of such facts, and the bestowal of significance upon the world of given entities.

A fourth consequence of a reifying positivist world-view is found in our approaches to environmental and urban **planning**. When master planning is seen to be an imposition of "**the ideal alternative**", the ideal utopian city, the best premeditated design solution, imposing from above a rational order to regulate the apparent disorienting sensibilities governing the human being's natural desire to build, then once again, there remains an insensitivity to the essential urban complexities at hand.

Finally, a fifth consequence of a metaphysical view of reality which defines truth in terms of "things" is found in our expectations concerning "sustainable development". If we restrict our definition of sustainability to a balancing of "things", entities, like natural resources, economic concerns and even social, cultural and political factors, we run the risk of taking for granted the fundamental fact that it also and primarily involves the preservation and creation of **quality of life**. To put this in perspective, I am compelled to quote extensively from the body of the Brundtland Report; the comment is one made by a Krenak Indian:

When the government took our land in the valley of Rio Doce, they wanted to give us another place somewhere else. But the State, the government, will never understand that we do not have another place to go.

The only possible place for the Krenak people to live and to re-establish our existence, to speak to our Gods, to speak to our nature, to weave our lives is where our God created us. It is useless for the government to put us in a very beautiful place, in a very good place with a lot of hunting and a lot of fish. The Krenak people, we continue dying and we die insisting that there is only one place for us to live...

We can no longer see the planet that we live upon as if it were a chess-board where people just move things around. We cannot consider the planet as something isolated from the cosmic.

We are not idiots to believe that there is possibility of life for us outside of where the origin of our life is. Respect our place of living, do not degrade our living condition, respect this life. We have no arms to cause pressure, the only thing we have is the right to cry for our dignity and the need to live in our land.<sup>20</sup>

It is not enough to "move things around" in our efforts to achieve sustainable development. As the privation of blindness consists of more than abstract, propositional truth but completely overturns the meaning of the blind man's life, so too, the Krenak Indian shows how the experience of a loss of home completely changes the meaning of his life.

If we are to attain true sustainability, we must learn to do much more than merely juggle environmental and economic concerns, "moving things around", assigning different priorities, however clever they may seem at the time. In the following section, we shall show how evolving sustainable environmental policies demands an essentially new way of thinking, one which challenges the positivist's claim to truth as correctness or correspondence between essents, be they objects, ideas, theories or laws.



## Toward an Originative Understanding of Sustainability

In 1955, Martin Heidegger presented a memorial address in Messkirch, where he suggested that, despite the fact that "there were at no time such far-reaching plans, so many enquiries in so many areas, research carried on as passionately as today", nevertheless, modern humankind was, in Heidegger's words, "in flight from thinking". Certainly, never before had calculative modes of enquiry prevailed as in modern times, nor had technical thinking progressed so far. Yet, another mode of thought had been forgotten, and yet "each [was] justified and needed in its own way".<sup>21</sup> The era was seen to be essentially "thoughtless", in the sense that humankind was implicitly fleeing from originative, or meditative thinking.

Originative, meditative thinking, as ontological and therefore open to the questioning of Being itself, "contemplates the meaning which reigns in everything that is".<sup>22</sup> Contrary to abstract, meta-physical conceptualizing, meditative thinking requires an openness to the mystery of taken-for-granted foundations, and a "releasement toward" - as opposed to a manipulative domination of - things in the environment. It suggests a caring, nurturing attitude to one's world, and a restoration of balance and belonging to the full depth and richness of the lived world of which we are a part. As sentimental as this may sound, the demands of such a caring attitude invoke much more than mere sentimentalizing may suggest. Required instead is a commitment to a holistic vision of sustainability, and an ontological breadth of thinking which will encompass the full significance of the person/environment relation.

In a recent work entitled *A New Theory of Urban Design*, Christopher Alexander and his colleagues provide some significant clues with respect to our task of re-thinking sustainability from such an ontological, originative perspective. Noting how many of our older settlements often impress us by a "feeling that they are somehow organic", Alexander et al. maintain that "this feeling of 'organicness' is not a vague feeling of relationship with biological forms", but on the contrary, is "an accurate vision of a specific structural quality which these old towns had... and have. Namely: Each of these towns grew as a whole, under its own laws of wholeness."<sup>23</sup> Such a feeling of growing wholeness existed in old towns, as it persists in all developing organisms, and in great works of art.<sup>24</sup> However, it is fundamentally lacking in the contemporary planning of human settlements whose growth advances "merely piecemeal, and produces unrelated acts", leading to chaos.<sup>25</sup> If there is an appearance of authentic wholes evolving in much of our modern development, the order which arises out of "conceptions, plans, maps and schemes" is merely "superficial, skin deep", as far too many of our current settlements evoke no "deep feelings", but are disorienting, sterile and ultimately alienating and confusing.

Alexander's work may be seen to provide some significant clues with respect to the meaning of authentic sustainability. If we are to do more than merely "move things around" to ensure sustainable built and natural environments, perhaps we should be guided instead by the sort of holistic vision presented in this work. It is a holistic vision which we recognize when it is present (or absent), although calculatively, it is very difficult to wilfully or manipulatively conjure up. Indeed, as vague as the task of "producing wholeness dynamically"<sup>26</sup> may sound, Alexander and his colleagues do evolve "seven major rules" governing an experimental process which is potentially capable of creating settlements consisting of a continuous structure of wholes

around itself.<sup>27</sup> Briefly, the rules recognize: 1. that the piecemeal character of growth is a necessary precondition of wholeness (p. 32); 2. that every building increment must help to form at least one larger whole in the city, which is both larger and more significant than itself (p. 38); 3. that every project must be experienced, and then expressed, as a vision which can be seen in the inner eye (literally) (p. 50); 4. that every building must create coherent and well-shaped public space next to it (p. 66); 5. that the interior design of buildings must be coherent and consistent with the position of the building in the street and in the neighbourhood (p. 77); 6. that the physical construction of a building guarantees that it stands in harmony with the volumes and spaces of the building, and with exterior public space (p. 85); and 7. that every whole must be a "center" in itself, and must also produce a system of centers and symmetry around it. (p. 92).

The rules sound general, and while their application to a simulation experiment was, according to the authors, essentially successful,<sup>28</sup> perhaps we may give their vision some more clarity by comparing briefly two communities: one old and "organic" in Alexander's sense, and the other, using its own rhetoric, a "New Town" - in the process, hoping to achieve a better understanding of sustainability as the generation of **authentic wholes**.

Consider first the town of Cavtat, a town which has become a summer retreat for me many times in the last twenty years. Nestled along the shores of a peninsula along the southern Adriatic, it rests within the confluence zone between Dubrovnik and Boka Kotorska, on the protected, natural twin harbour serving the fertile valley of Konavljje to the south-east. Only the southern slopes of the peninsula have been built upon, in a tight, closely-fitted settlement of approximately 1500 inhabitants, naturally protected from the north "bura" as well as from the south "juga" winter winds which are interrupted by the natural extension of the harbour. The houses have been designed so that the stone and tile capture the sunlight during the day for gradual release of heat to the interior during the cool of the night. Courtyard interiors are overflowing in vegetation, and palm trees lining the harbour and the walkways along the "riva" by the sea provide both shade in the summer, as well as protection from any unexpected turbulence in weather. Automobile access is restricted to a single two-lane road adjacent to the "riva". The treasured asset of the Adriatic sea constitutes the central image and focus of the town, the vital organ of a settlement which is dependent on the water for its form and for its spirit.

Preserving always a human scale rather than a scale suitable for the automobile, there is a sense of welcome as one approaches the "center", which is essentially comprised of the "riva", the walkway hugging the harbour, and its adjoining outdoor restaurants, shops and homes. From land and from sea, the Sv. Vlaho and Sv. Nikola church towers act as landmarks, anchoring either end of the settlement, as does the Racic Mausoleum on the hill. Indeed, the appropriation of a historical tradition is reflected in the meaningful visibility of the Mausoleum which somehow conveys to the visitor the "collective subconscious" of the generations of people who built this town, and who lived and died there.

Spontaneous social activity occurs naturally on the streets and throughout the town, reflecting the inhabitants' sense of belonging and identity with their community which is vibrant and multi-faceted. One is struck by the holistic sense of place which is conveyed by a town which balances not only private courtyard spaces with legible, central public areas, but which also remains

open to the extension of human settlements which surround it: Cavtat's natural links to the southern Adriatic coastline of settlements is represented by the indigenous building form, as well as by a sense that the sea is a natural link to settlements far beyond.

Christopher Alexander talks about the need for every project to be "experienced, and then expressed, as a vision which can be seen in the inner eye."<sup>29</sup> He adds that "what we are talking about is a much deeper level of human meaning. We have found that the increments of development will not produce wholeness, unless they come from a sort of dreamlike quality...unless they come from a childlike, almost childish quality of directness, direct concern for life...unless, in short, they are genuinely based on human visions."<sup>30</sup> Alexander does not explore the extent to which such "dreamlike quality" enhances the holistic sense of place, but meandering through Cavtat, one recognizes the oneiric significance of the need for the human imagination to be enticed by the hidden, to be enhanced through a call to explore settlements further. When everything is revealed, the human desire to explore is squelched. In Cavtat, an important element in this regard which is respected, is the essential dialectic maintained between the hidden and the visible spaces of dwelling.<sup>31</sup> Preserving the vital component of transition from public to semi-public, to semi-private and finally to private spaces, Cavtat possesses a number of narrow pedestrian streets, emanating from the harbour area, up the hill. One passes from the open area of the "riva", to the walled stone passageways which reveal from time to time wooden doorways - doorways which themselves signal the retreat from the public and semi-public exposure, to the semi-private courtyards sheltered within, serving to welcome the visitors prior to their final invitation into the private home. While one feels comfortable within the indigenous stone environment, yet one is also drawn to wonder what secret images lie hidden on the other side of the doorways, typically kept closed or only slightly ajar. Gaston Bachelard refers to the human being as "half-open Being";<sup>32</sup> if our settlements deny this essential aspect of being-human, involving a delicate balance between the exposed and the hidden, then they lack mystery - "vision", in Alexander's words - and the result is a tedious exposure of the merely banal.

Alexander's call to "produce wholeness dynamically" may sound nebulous to some, and yet the essence of his vision is revealed spontaneously and immediately to all who visit Cavtat. The clearly legible center; the symmetry among spaces, environment and physical construction, including the spontaneous progression from public, to semi-public, to semi-private, to private spaces; the natural extension to the larger wholes of settlement scales beyond its own borders; the meaningful "vision" as a "product of the inner shouting of the site, not a product of whimsy or [one's] fantasy"<sup>33</sup> - all testify to the organic unity of a settlement to which visitors and inhabitants alike naturally converge and with which they immediately identify in an "intensely personal feeling."<sup>34</sup>

Such a vision of wholeness appears equally absent, however, from the New Town of Meadowvale, in Southern Ontario, Canada. Basically, the Meadowvale project supports a utilitarian conception of urban form, one in which "things" - social activities, buildings, automobiles, parks and similar - have been manipulated and organized by planners to achieve maximum economic benefit to developer and presumably, convenient and efficient lifestyle for the inhabitants.

While it appears that some serious effort has been made to organize a graceful, winding parks system and walkway throughout Meadowvale, nevertheless, one cannot help but feel that the natural environment does not infuse the settlement, that it is a secondary thought, that it has suffered at the expense of development. The occasional line of pine trees, the clusters of wooded areas, are reminders that there were indeed trees on Meadowvale land, prior to the planning process. While Meadowvale South is situated along the riverbanks of the Credit River, neither the street pattern of the area nor the placement of houses responds to the invitation to dwell along its banks. In other areas, streams have been obliterated into "drainage diversion channels", reducing a significant natural phenomenon to the status of an engineering project.

The design response of the settlement to climactic changes is such as to neglect the impact of wind or sun: there is little evidence of efforts to shield entrances from the cold north westerly wind, or to invite the low winter sun through building design or orientation. The community design clearly indicates the need for a car to reach the schools, the shops, the "town centre". In the "New Town" of Meadowvale, the scale is such that one feels not a sense of place, but a sense of space, an expanse, with broad road-allowances and generous set-backs, large parking areas around the shopping centre, all of which are so much more accommodating to the speed and size of the automobile than to the human figure. Indeed, there is an overriding sense here that the human being is understood primarily as the "purchaser": the "Town Centre" consists primarily of an enclosed shopping mall. Here, Christopher Alexander's discussion of the need for "vision" in a project comes to mind. He writes that "the vision is an answer to the fundamental question: What shall we build in any given place...The question does not ask how it is organized, how it is designed...but simply the most fundamental question of all: What is it? What is going to be there? - In today's development, this question is asked and answered almost exclusively in economic terms. What can pay for itself there? What can make money there?"<sup>35</sup>

It is also extraordinarily easy to get lost as a visitor to the community: roads meander aimlessly, house placement is arbitrary, neighbourhoods lack landmarks and meaningful reference points to provide for a sense of direction. This lack of orientation appears to be best symbolized by the "Town Centre" tower, a triangular pyramid atop a triangular tower, which seems to be destabilized and changing its shape as one approaches the centre. Finally, there is a marked lack of implicit awareness of regional ties to the surrounding urban environment: designed as a "new town", there is a sense that it is supposed to offer an alternative to "big city living", but the result is that one is made to feel as a non-participant in the urban landscape which surrounds this development, and so one feels that for something interesting and exciting, one must escape from Meadowvale to go somewhere else, presumably to downtown Toronto.

Overall, one's reading is that the fundamental distinction between the New Town of Meadowvale and the historical town of Cavtat involves a basic difference in attitude toward the meaning of human settlements and of dwelling itself. Meadowvale has been planned unilaterally, from above, in what was expected to be a clever utilitarian manipulation of an accumulation of social, economic, technological, and regulatory elements. Cavtat has evolved not through the arbitrary "creative genius" of the specialist, but from the ground up. Decisions were made by

many, in response to the strict demands of environment and the intrinsic aspirations of a culture. Essentially, it has been a difference between calculative and originative ways of thinking and design.

Needless to say, today, with our burgeoning populations and exploding urbanization, we no longer have the option of evolving organic communities over the centuries. In a sense, we are committed to calculation to the extent that we are committed to the need (in the Heideggerian, ontological sense of the German **Not**) to plan, to construct, and to "develop". However, Christopher Alexander and his colleagues are pointing to a significant new dimension of such development, one which maintains that we may hope to "generate urban structure without a plan", that is, without the "kind of plan which is currently used, [which] creates order at the expense of any organic feeling".<sup>36</sup> With such an "entirely new theoretical framework for the discussion of urban problems",<sup>37</sup> Christopher Alexander may also be seen to be pointing to a new theoretical framework for the discussion of sustainability as well. Through application of this new framework on a simulation experiment, Christopher and his colleagues have found that "a process which is motivated and guided entirely by the search for wholeness, produces an entirely different effect from current practice in urban design, and goes far to remedy the defects which cities have today."<sup>38</sup>

Perhaps, however, we can say more in the following section, about such a "search for wholeness", to extend Alexander's theory even further, and thereby re-think substantively the very foundations of our search for sustainable environments.

### Sustainability, Dwelling, and Wholeness

To recapitulate for a moment, we recall the Brundtland Commission's definition of sustainability as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." My argument thus far has pointed to the need to intervene in the natural and built environments in such a way as to do more than "juggle things around" in meeting present needs, but to instead preserve a sense of unity and holistic purpose through a new kind of originative thinking in such intervention. While the concept of a holistic view of human settlements may suggest an accumulation of as many different perspectives as possible, I now intend to show that in fact viewing human settlements as a **whole** means something essentially different than viewing human settlements from the point of view of the **totality** of its elements and functions.

What is wholeness? Henri Bortoft raises this very question in his immensely relevant and thoughtful piece entitled "Counterfeit and authentic wholes: Finding a means for dwelling in nature."<sup>39</sup> In this work, Bortoft engages in some illuminating discoveries about the essence of human understanding of the environment. Noting the unique properties of holograms which provide an optical reconstruction of a photographed object as opposed to the traditional reproduction of flat images in standard photos, he points out the unique characteristic that:

[i]f the hologram plate is broken into fragments and one fragment is illuminated, it is found that the same three-dimensional optical reconstruction of the original object is produced. There is nothing missing; the only difference is that the reconstruction is less well defined. The entire original object can be optically reconstructed from any fragment of the original hologram, but as the fragments get smaller and

smaller, the resolution deteriorates until the reconstruction becomes so blotchy and ill-defined as to become unrecognizable... This property of the hologram is in striking contrast to the ordinary image-recording photographic plate. If this type of plate is broken and a fragment illuminated, the image reproduced will be that recorded on the particular fragment and no more.<sup>40</sup>

It is clear from this striking example, that there is a strong message here about the relation of whole to parts. We tend to find it self-evident that the whole is comprised of parts, but the example of the hologram seems to suggest not only that the whole is something other than the sum of its parts, but that **the whole can, in some sense, be seen to be present in the parts**. Moreover, "because the whole is in some way reflected in the parts, it is to be encountered by going further into the parts, instead of by standing back from them".<sup>41</sup>

The hologram is far from an isolated example of such a relation of whole to parts, however. When we read and interpret a text, we do much more than repeat the individual words as they appear sequentially before our eyes: the meaning of the **whole** text is something other than the **totality** of the particular words. This is clear when we realize that we do not require the totality of the text in order to understand its meaning. In reading, we certainly do not possess the totality of the text but only one part after another; nor must we "store up" what has been read until the totality of the text is completed, at which point it is suddenly made meaningful. On the contrary, the meaning of the text is progressively revealed throughout the reading.<sup>42</sup> As in the hologram, while the whole is present most clearly in the totality, the whole is also present as meaningful, throughout any part of the text. Thus, Bortoft concludes, "meaning is hologrammatical. The whole is present throughout all of the text, so that it is present in any region of the text. It is the presence of the whole in any region of the text which constitutes the meaning of that region of the text. Indeed, we can sometimes find that it is just the understanding of a single passage which suddenly illumines for us the whole meaning of the text."<sup>43</sup> This, in essence, points to the central significance of the hermeneutic circle which suggests that in order to read a text, we have to understand it first - that is, we must have some sort of comprehension of the whole in order to provide a meaningful context for the progression of the words - and yet it is necessary to read the text in order to understand. The task of reading, in short, goes beyond the logic of reason which states that we must progress linearly either from part to whole, or from whole to part. Reading is neither simply sequential, nor analytical, nor summative, but as meaningful, is holistic, and requires human interpretation of both whole and parts, rather than the merely cumulative significance of individual words.

Bortoft concludes that:

If we break the hologram plate into fractions, we do not break the whole. The whole is present in each fraction, but its presence diminishes as the fractioning proceeds... The whole is already present, present in the fractions, coming fully into presence in the totality.... The ordering of the parts with respect to the emergent whole, the essential ordering, is nested and not linear... The whole is nowhere to be encountered except in the midst of its parts.<sup>44</sup>

By standing back to obtain an overview, as if the whole were a superior entity above the parts, one only obtains a generaliza-

tion - a "counterfeit whole" - whereas in fact, the authentic whole is to be grasped by "stepping right into the parts."

In contradistinction to the process of interpreting a text, the positivist and scientific methodologies "can only approach the whole as if it were a thing among things. Thus the scientist tries to grasp the whole as an object for interrogation. So it is that science today, by virtue of the method which is its hallmark, is left with a fragmented world of things which it must then try to reassemble."<sup>45</sup>

Although it may not be immediately evident, Bortoft in fact has presented us here with a most illuminating set of insights regarding our understanding of the phenomenon of sustainability. If human settlements are to be designed, as Christopher Alexander suggests, in terms of a "search for wholeness" and organic unity, then it is clear from the foregoing discussion that built environments consist of much more than an accumulation of **things**, entities, objects - be they physical structures or economic functions or social processes. Building sustainable environments, consequently, means more than "moving things around", but in some sense, requires a new ability among planners to  **dwell in the phenomenon as a whole**, that is, to comprehend each individual act of intervention in a human settlement as a reflection on the Whole. Neither the "environment", nor the "economy", nor "essential human needs" are disparate elements to be managed as distinct entities, but on the contrary, evolving authentic sustainability demands a new way of thinking which understands such issues within a holistic, balanced context and the essential belonging of humans to the lived world of which they are a part.

"Dwelling in the phenomenon as a whole," as a condition of evolving authentic sustainability, may sound somewhat esoteric to some. But a comprehension of the holistic environmental context is no less mysterious than the pre-reflective awareness which we all possess of the meaning of the entire sentence as a context for understanding the individual words. If, in the pursuit of sustainability, individual actions are not evaluated within the taken-for-granted awareness of holistic context, then an integrated, balanced vision of sustainable programmes of action remains at risk. Perhaps we may keep in mind that originitive, holistic thinking is more a receiving than a wilful grasping; it is more an attitude of genuine care and openness to the mystery, than one which seeks to "manage resources."

And it is no less nebulous than the contextual textual awareness which is the condition for the reader having read this article.

#### Notes:

1. Cited in Michael Keating, **Toward a Common Future**, (Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, 1989), p. 46.
2. Cf. The World Commission on Environment and Development, **Our Common Future**, (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).
3. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
6. Samuels, Marwyn S., **Science and Geography: an Existential Appraisal**, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, 1971, University of Washington. Cited in David Seamon, **A Geography of the Lifeworld**, (London: Croom Helm, 1979).
7. Cf. Martin Heidegger, **The Question Concerning Technology**, (New York: Harper and Row, 1977).

8. For a concise and readable description of the positivist methodology, and a comparison with phenomenology, see David Seamon's illuminating article, "The Phenomenological Contribution to Environmental Psychology", in the **Journal of Environmental Psychology**, 2, pages 119-140, 1982.

9. Portions of the following discussion are taken from the superb work by William Barrett, entitled **Irrational Man**, (New York: Doubleday, 1958).

10. Cf. **Being and Nothingness: A phenomenological essay on ontology**, trans. by Hazel E. Barnes, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956), pp. 53ff.

11. Barrett, William, *op. cit.*, pp. 288-289.

12. *Ibid.*

13. World Commission on Environment and Development, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

14. Martin Buber, **I and Thou**, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), edited by Walter Kaufmann, p. 59. I have transposed Kaufmann's "You" with the more traditional translation of "Thou".

15. Catley-Carlson, Margaret, "Building and Sustainable Environments," Presented to the meeting of the 4th World Congress on the Conservation of the Built and the Natural Environments, May 23, 1989, Toronto; p. 6.

16. Cited in The World Commission on Environment and Development, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

17. Published in London and New York by Routledge, c. 1984, 1989.

18. Bachelard, Gaston, **The Poetics of Space**, trans. by Maria Jolas, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), p. 47.

19. *Ibid.*, p. xxxii.

20. Cited in World Commission on Environment and Development, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

21. Heidegger, Martin, **Discourse on Thinking**, translated by J.M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund, (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 46.

22. *Ibid.*

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26. *Ibid.*, p. 16ff.

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28. *Ibid.*, p. 234.

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31. Some interesting discussion on this theme can be found in the writing of Georg Simmel. See "Secrecy", and "The Secret Society", in Wolff, K. (ed.) **The Sociology of Georg Simmel**, (Glencoe: The Free Press, pp. 331-344, and pp. 345-376).

32. Gaston Bachelard, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

33. Christopher Alexander et al., *op. cit.*, p. 63.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

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37. *Ibid.*, p. 249.

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39. Henri Bortoft, "Counterfeit and authentic wholes: Finding a means for dwelling in nature," in *Dwelling, Place and Environment*, David Seamon & Robert Mugerauer, Editors, (Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1985), pp. 281ff.

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# PHENOMENOLOGY AND VERNACULAR LIFEWORLDS

David Seamon

This essay discusses the phenomenological contribution to research on "built form and culture," particularly in regard to vernacular environments. "Vernacular" here refers to places and buildings constructed by relatively unspecialized builders who themselves typically live in or use these places and buildings. Phenomenologists are interested in vernacular environments because they provide one means to explore the essential nature of environmental experience, place, and culture. Since vernacular environments are in one sense "more simple" than those of the modern Western world, they provide one context in which to see more clearly the essential core and foundation of our humanness. In relation to environmental design, phenomenological study of vernacular environments offers clues to "an architecture that would give full justice to the requirements of human dwelling" (Harries, 1983, p. 14).

This essay presents three topics which a phenomenology of vernacular environments might consider: (1) a phenomenology of landscape; (2) a phenomenology of environmental experience; (3) a phenomenology of environmental and architectural aesthetics as the vernacular world may know aesthetics directly through sacredness. Before I overview these three themes, however, I want to discuss, first, the diverse nature of research in built form and culture and how the phenomenological perspective relates to this diversity; second, the specific ways in which vernacular environments are seen by the phenomenologist to indicate the essential nature of human experience and existence, particularly in relation to the built environment.

## Research Diversity and Built Form and Culture

If one reviews the papers given at the first conference on built form and culture held in Lawrence, Kansas, in 1984, one might conclude that the greatest strength and weakness of this research field is diversity (Saile et al., 1984). One notes a wide variety of research methods, ideologies, and substantive foci. Research themes range from fourth-world nomadic groups to built form and community in the south Bronx. Methodological and epistemological stances include such diverse perspectives as phenomenology, semiotics, hermeneutics, and structuralism. Ideologies range from self-sensitization and self-help to Marxism and the benign guidance of professional elites. Is such a diversity of perspectives a help or hindrance?

One discussion which helps answer this question is psychologist Donald Polkinghorne's *Methodology for the Human Sciences* (1983), which concludes that the social and behavioural sciences have entered an era of "postpositivist human research" (pp. 1-3). Polkinghorne argues that the need is a reflexive tolerance for a varied menu of research stances, styles and methods such as are indicated by the diverse contributions to the 1984 Lawrence conference. Polkinghorne explains:

[M]ethods and research design for the human sciences must be able to yield information about being human as we ex-

perience it as embodied, historical and integral... [H]uman science requires a syncretic approach which integrates the results obtained through multischematic and multiparadigmatic systems of inquiry (p. xi).

As his keynote address at the 1984 conference indicates, Amos Rapoport (in Saile, 1984) would probably be pessimistic about Polkinghorne's argument for a multi-avenued human science. Rapoport suggests that philosophical diversity is generally a weakness in the creation of an academic field, since he believes the core of any intellectual system should be a set of common values, aims, theories, terms, methods, and so forth. In contrast, Irwin Altman's keynote address at the same conference (in Saile, 1984) suggests that he would be guardedly optimistic about Polkinghorne's suggestion, since Altman believes that conference participants' strong mutual interests in the person-environment relationship provide the momentum to overcome underlying philosophical differences.

Here, I would cautiously agree with Polkinhorne and Altman, adding the caveat that tolerance among multiple research stances is possible only if we set ourselves to be aware reflexively of their varying emphases and not ask of them questions or results which because of their underlying groundings they cannot give. It is wrong of the positivist researcher, for example, to demand that the phenomenologist demonstrate conclusively - i.e., empirically and in terms of exact measurement - that phenomena like *genius loci*, at-homeness, or heightened experience of natural environment exist. Similarly, a Marxist-structuralist should not demand that a positivist scholar seek to transform society as well as understand and explain it. Different research stances necessarily require their own sets of assumptions, methods and priorities. The need is to become aware explicitly of the variety of philosophical stances, methods and ideologies, and their various strengths and weaknesses. Only then can we avoid the dangers of fragmentation and confrontation which Rapoport (ibid.) so rightly suggests.

I make direct mention of philosophical awareness here because often when I present phenomenological work I find that some people unfamiliar with the approach become impatient, irritated, or dismayed. Three common complaints are: (1) that phenomenological research is trivial; (2) that it identifies phenomena which cannot be tested objectively and scientifically; (3) that it ignores economic, social, and political structures which restrict human freedom and therefore perpetuate societal inequities. If one becomes reflexively aware of varying research stances, he or she realizes that these censures are not so much the fault of phenomenology. Rather, these dissatisfactions uncritically demand that the phenomenologist carry out a focus, stance and style of working inimical to the inherent nature of phenomenology as a way of knowing.

If Polkinghorne is correct in arguing that a postpositivist human science needs to incorporate critically a range of research styles, then scholars must cultivate a wish to be open to un-

familiar and opposing research stances. We must be willing to accept - at least grudgingly - that in some way each stance has some amount of value and potential contribution. This need is especially great for researchers in a field as eclectic as research in built form and culture.

To help facilitate a greater openness toward the phenomenological contribution to built form and culture, I describe in the main body of this essay the three earlier-mentioned themes which a phenomenological vantage point might consider in regard to vernacular environments and architecture. Before I overview these three themes, however, I want to discuss in more detail how vernacular study can provide a deeper sense of who and what we are essentially as people.

### Phenomenology and Vernacular Lifeworlds

Phenomenology is a critical, descriptive science which seeks to present things, experiences and events as thoughtfully and thoroughly as possible (cf. Stewart and Mikunas, 1974; Polkinghorne, 1983). The aim is to approach a subject in a concerned, open way and to discover various underlying patterns which portray the essential heart of that thing, be it an object, process, experience, or situation. As Harvey (1958, p. x) suggests, phenomenology strives for "an imaginative sympathy [that is] receptive without ceasing to be critical." The question for the topic at hand is how this imaginative sympathy can shed light on built form and culture, especially underlying qualities and interrelationships relating to the vernacular world.

As a phenomenologist interested in the person-environment relationship, I give attention to human environmental experience and people's existential bonds with the geographical world, especially the built environment (Seamon, 1982, Seamon & Mugerauer, 1985). I am first of all concerned with the **lifeworld** - i.e., a person and group's everyday world of taken-for-grantedness, which includes surroundings, artifacts, gestures, behaviours, events, meanings and so forth (Seamon, 1979). Lifeworlds associated with vernacular environments - let me, for convenience, call them **vernacular lifeworlds** - are particularly interesting to the phenomenologist because as suggested above, they are less existentially complex in many ways than our own modern Western lifeworlds. By "less complex," I mean that people must more often deal with their world directly because they are not insulated as we are today from topography, climate, distance, resource procurement and so forth by layers of technological, economic and societal infrastructure. Vernacular lifeworlds are in one sense more essentially existential in that people must get by using directly what they are given as human beings. In other words, people must more frequently manage by their own human devices. Only when we in our modern Western lifeworlds experience, for example, political or technological collapse - let's say, the city where we live loses electrical power for several days - do we realize that our sense of control over the world is in many ways a fiction. We realize how far removed we are from the core of our human being once severed from the late-twentieth century socio-technical infrastructure that penetrates and maintains our modern style of existence in practically all ways.

At the same time, because of the greater existential simplicity of the vernacular lifeworld, people's experience are often less cluttered with existential "inessentials," such as the latest fashions or instant news from everywhere. In such a smaller

world of events and meanings, there may be more than a chance that people are more directly human - i.e., they make contact with, use, and are surrounded by things, meanings and events which truly matter. Unlike today, where, for example, we frequently misuse the natural environment and must consciously direct ourselves to be environmentally concerned, vernacular lifeworlds often appear to express kindness and care - what philosopher Martin Heidegger (1971) calls **sparing and preserving** - tacitly and unselfconsciously. This implicit environmental regard is so first for practical reasons (such as limited physical means available to modify the environment in any large-scale way). Yet, if we trust scholars like Eliade (1959), Nasr (1981), or Heidegger (ibid.), this regard is also present because these lifeworlds have contact with a sacredness that manifests and is experienced in firsthand fashion. The suggestion is that practical and sacred meanings more often meet and are understood in the vernacular lifeworld. What especially interests the phenomenologist here, then, is the vernacular lifeworld's spectrum of experience, which may be more basic and essential, yet of a wider experiential range than the reduced material existence of so much of our modern Western world. Since the phenomenological interest is with the complete compass of human experience, the vernacular lifeworld potentially offers an experientially basic and rich context for phenomenological examination.

One potential obstacle which may lead the outsider to reject uncritically a phenomenological approach to vernacular research is the taken-for-granted attitude of any current historical moment to be unknowingly prejudiced against other times and places. For example, how often does the phrase "drudgery of everyday life" appear in news reports which describe the drought in Africa or economic changes in mainland China? Steeped in continuous change and immediate, world-wide information, we as the dominant people of the current historical moment often uncritically assume that our complex Western lifeworlds are best. One useful insight provided by phenomenology is that people always strive to be at home in a place, no matter how bleak or backward conditions may seem to an outsider. People, in other words, "make do," and one phenomenological aim is to understand the underlying experiential aspects of this "making do." Particularly in vernacular lifeworlds, people's essential daily doing in a world can shine forth, since people must first of all carry out the endeavors which they inescapably require as **human beings**. Before one speaks of the drudgery of place on the one hand or proclaims a "golden age" on the other, he or she should portray that world in terms of people's day-to-day living. It is the clear, critical description offered by phenomenology which provides a first step in better understanding the wider, more general patterns of human experience and existence, including that of the vernacular lifeworld.

In one sense, the use of vernacular lifeworlds as an indicator of invariant existential qualities is related to a long architectural tradition which has sought the primordial origins of building (Rykwert, 1981). This return to origins "always implies a rethinking of what you do customarily, an attempt to renew the validity of your everyday actions, or simply a recall of the natural (or even divine) sanction for your repeating them..." (ibid., p. 19). For example, the eighteenth-century architectural theorist Languier used the "primitive hut" as a source of essential architectural elements, which he reduced down to column, entablature, and pediment (Languier, 1977, originally 1755). Harries

(1983) points out that Languier's efforts were biased and incomplete, since he based his argument on the temples of antiquity, thus his essential elements owe "more to cultural preferences, characteristics of the region and the period, than to the voices of reason and nature" (ibid., p. 15). Still, Harries believes that an invigorated modern architecture cannot be had without a return to origins. The crucial point is that these origins can **not** be found in history (as Languier and other architectural theorists often supposed). Rather, they can only be found in the invariant qualities of human living and dwelling: "We have to try to recover origins, where the return to origins is not so much a turn back to the past as a turn to what is essential...all great architecture recalls us to an ideal of genuine dwelling" (ibid., p. 15).

Harries (ibid.) believes that one practical route toward a rediscovery of origins is Heidegger's philosophy, especially his notion of dwelling (Heidegger, 1971; Seamon, 1984). As I've explained above, another potential route is phenomenological study of vernacular lifeworlds, which in their existential simplicity mark out crucial experiential links between people and environment. One way in which a phenomenology of the vernacular lifeworld might proceed is in terms of (1) landscape, (2) environmental experience, and (3) environmental symbols as experienced. I emphasize immediately that these three interconnected themes are my particular way of highlighting the phenomenological contribution to vernacular research. Other phenomenologists - e.g., Harries (ibid.), working from a Heideggerian vantage point - might pose considerably different typologies, yet all of these outlines should share a certain amount of commonality. I also emphasize that the following outline is a sketch and therefore only indicative of research topics and references. My main hope is that these three themes suggest to the reader the potential directions in which phenomenologies of the vernacular lifeworld might move and the potential value they might offer environmental design.

### 1. A Phenomenology of Landscape

A phenomenology of landscape explores the way in which the natural geography of a site and region contribute to an atmosphere, character and sense of place. In terms of built form and culture, the phenomenologist seeks to understand how a vernacular lifeworld meets the landscape and builds a place which sustains and reflects that landscape. Much of the phenomenological research on vernacular architecture and landscape has looked upon this topic from the vantage point of scholarly observer who seeks to empathize with the situation through artifactual evidence, interpretation of myth and ritual, or some other sort of secondhand information. Here, for example I think of David Saile's research on Pueblo dwelling (Saile, 1985), or Ardalan and Bahktiar's work on the Sufi tradition in Islamic architecture (Ardalan & Bahktiar, 1973).

Such vicarious, cerebral work is important because it brings an experiential thrust to the group-landscape relationship. Ideally, however, this secondhand style of considering experiential themes needs to be complemented by a program of firsthand experiential awareness which would develop the student's sensitivity to landscape character through a learning process arising directly from that landscape itself. In a sense, I'm speaking about a kind of academic **feng shui** whose main aid would be direct experiential discovery and awareness of landscape character (Rossbach, 1983).

A first step here is promoting phenomenological seeing in relation to elements of the physical environment that constitute landscapes - for example, geology, water and light. All phenomenological work strives to look in such a way that one sees the thing studied in terms in which it would describe itself if it could so speak. One such useful context is the way of science developed by Goethe, especially the set of experiential color experiments provided in his **Theory of Colours** (1810). Although Goethe's major aid was to establish a theory of light and color verifiable in human experience, his work is significant for a phenomenology of landscape because it helps the student break free of preconceptions and see the thing - in this case, color - better, in its own right (Seamon, 1978).

For a phenomenology of landscape, the need is to turn this style of looking to topography, weather, vegetation, and so forth. One significant indicator is Schwenk's phenomenology of water (1976), which examines the essential structure of fluids - for example, the patterns of wave and vortex. The next step would be to understand experientially how these various phenomena come together in a particular landscape to foster a particular sense of place. Norberg-Schulz's efforts at a phenomenology of **genius loci** are one example (Norberg-Schulz, 1980). Through careful observation and study of particular places throughout the world, Norberg-Schulz identifies four landscape types: cosmic, romantic, classical, and complex. These types are to be seen, however, as only a rough, preliminary indication of landscape character, since Norberg-Schulz's work reads too often as a cerebral, secondhand interpretation rather than as a firsthand experienced understanding.

For a phenomenology of the vernacular lifeworld, the understanding of landscape character must also relate to built form - i.e., how has a particular group met their landscape and devised architectural structure accordingly. One excellent model here is Fathy's **Architecture for the Poor** (Fathy, 1973), which in many ways is an implicit phenomenology of built form and culture (Seamon, 1984). Through firsthand observation and involvement, Fathy works out a village design for 7,000 displaced Egyptian peasants. Though the project is never completed, Fathy's account is significant to a phenomenology of the landscape/built-form relationship because he describes in detail how form, structure and materials of both buildings and village must first of all be considered in terms of the hot, arid desert environment - particularly in relation to air movement and thermal properties of building materials. Fathy's effort is a striking example of thinking and design striving to empathize with a people, culture, and landscape (Holod, 1983).

### 2. A Phenomenology of Environmental Experience

A phenomenology of environmental experience has a bearing on vernacular lifeworlds in that it attempts to identify and describe the multifaceted ways through which people reach out and make contact with the world. Again, the less complex nature of the vernacular lifeworld provides one special context for exploring dimensions of environmental experience. A first dimension, best delineated by Heidegger (1962), is that people are **immersed** in their world and that any talk of a subject-object or person-environment relationship is illusory and incorrect. By immersion-in-the-world, Heidegger in part means that in everyday living we are caught up in our world - it exists without

our recognizing or having to recognize that it exists (cf. Relph, 1985).

Recent phenomenological work has sought to identify various aspects of this immersion. The geographer Relph (1976), for instance, has identified aspects of a phenomenology of place, arguing that a key experiential quality transforming an environment into place is the degree of **insiderness** which a person feels for that environment. Relph goes on to identify various modes of insiderness and its experiential opposite - outsiderness. For vernacular study, Relph's notion of **existential insiderness** - a situation of feeling completely but unselfconsciously at home in place - is especially crucial to study of the vernacular lifeworld, since it identifies immersion at its most profoundly unreflective state (ibid., pp. 55-56).

The geographer Rowles (1983), conducting research on the elderly's environmental experience, has sought to clarify various aspects of existential insiderness. He speaks, for example, of **physical insiderness**, which involves the awareness of the body in relation to the places and environments of a person's lifeworld. Other phenomenological research, especially Merleau-Ponty's philosophical discussion (1962) on the body as intentional but preconscious subject (what he calls **body-subject**) provides a means for understanding the bodily grounding of physical insiderness. My research (1979) has examined patterns of body-subject extending over time and space, particularly bodily and time-space routines that are habitual.

Especially in a vernacular lifeworld, which is generally conservative and involves repeating routines and rituals, the notions of physical insiderness and body-subject might give considerable insight into behaviours and events related to the building, caring for, and repair of environments. Fathy (ibid.) describes, for example, how the practice of mudbrick vaulting - a knowledge grounded in body-subject - had been forgotten in the peasant villages of the lower Nile. He finds village craftsmen farther up the river who still know vaulting and brings them to New Gourni to teach the Gourni peasants the skill. Here, a building tradition has been lost because body-subject has **forgotten**.

The gathering of secondhand cerebral information on building and caring practices is crucial, but these practices themselves continue in the lifeworld because the **body as subject** knows the doing. Again, a firsthand experiential awareness of these practices would become a part of thorough phenomenology of built form and culture. Here students would become involved in actual building practices - for example, mud vaulting - with the aim of understanding what they reveal about aspects of environmental experience. At the same time, since these building practices usually involve local resources, such experiences may provide another means for becoming more directly sensitive to landscape character as it is expressed through built form and lifeworld.

Another important aspect of a phenomenology of environmental experience is consideration of the ways in which individual behaviours come together in physical space to support sociability and a sense of group. The focus is on a phenomenology of the social world and the ways in which spatial and formal qualities support and reflect that social world (Norberg-Schulz, 1985). Harries (1983), for example, argues that discussion of human dwelling must remember that it always turns around two foci: first, the **house**, associated with the individual, family, and repetitive, mundane events; second, the church, or **temple**, representing the social world, public contact, and festivity. A major concern for a phenomenology of vernacular lifeworlds is an

explication of the experiential relationship between home and temple, individual and group, privacy and sociability, mundaneness and festivity. This work would consider how qualities of the built environment facilitate such experiential possibilities as face-to-face encounter, social order, and sense of togetherness. Fathy's efforts (1973) using architectural design as a support for sense of neighborhood and community is one example of such work, as is Alexander's attempt in Mexicali, Mexico to create self-help housing organized around shared commonland (Alexander, 1985; Fromm & Bosselman, 1983-84).

### 3. Phenomenology of Environmental Awareness

A phenomenology of environmental aesthetics argues that particular building forms, spaces and surfaces evoke corresponding experiential and symbolic qualities. These experiential meanings can be studied in secondhand cerebral fashion where the researcher verbally describes meanings which the reader then arbitrarily accepts as correct on the basis of clarity, argument and reasonableness. Alternately, experiential meanings of built form can be studied firsthand; the student seeks to meet built form in a way through which symbolic qualities are experienced directly. In the vernacular lifeworld where symbolic significance often emerges through repetition of pattern, including building form (cf. Eliade, 1959; Nasr, 1981), it becomes especially important to develop means for establishing firsthand experiential contact with architectural and environmental symbols.

One practical route toward such direct awareness is a phenomenology of natural forms, patterns and processes and the ways in which they have been drawn upon - either consciously or unselfconsciously - in vernacular and traditional sacred architecture. Schwenk's water studies (ibid.) are relevant here, as is Goethe's way of science (ibid.), which attempts to provide experiential evidence that outer material forms and processes reflect inner psychological patterns and that the natural world reflects a deeper world of spirit. Also relevant is the growing body of research on sacred geometry (cf. Nasr, 1981, chap. 6; Meurant, 1984), particularly the work of Lawlor (1979), who provides a series of geometric exercises to sensitize students to the qualitative significance of number. This work demonstrates that various geometric proportions have been used in widely separate cultures and epochs, from India and ancient Egypt to Greece and Celtic Britain. A major assumption is that this knowledge is not culture-specific but reflects universal geometric patterns arising from sacred experience and awareness (Nasr, 1981).

One of the clearest and most accessible accounts of the experiential function of sacred geometry is Lawlor's description (1978) of a twelfth-century Cistercian abbey near the southern-French village of Le Thoronet. The dimensions of this abbey are based on specific proportions which parallel basic musical ratios, such as the octave (1:2), the fifth (2:3) and the major third (4:5). The interior spaces of the abbey, especially the naves support a special acoustic experience: "Here, each sound, even a pin dropped at the end of the nave some forty meters away, generates a full range of harmonic overtones producing the mysterious character of a heavenly choir" (ibid., p. 12).

Phenomenologically, Lawlor's most interesting point is that sight and sound affect us in considerably different ways. Sight takes in images from the external world, and the mind filters these impressions through association, habit, memory, and



reason. In contrast, sound creates an instantaneous awareness of tone, **without** the intervention of mind. This sound "may touch and connect regions of higher emotion and mindless knowing" (ibid., p. 16). Lawlor argues that the visual sparseness of Cistercian building may have been a means for awakening the ear and overcoming the domination of the externally-oriented eye (ibid., p. 17).

Lawlor's description is one example of the way that building founded on sacred geometry may subtly affect human experience. This work suggests that explicit understanding of the experiential function of architectural symbols and patterns can provide a significant means for promoting psychological and spiritual well-being. A need is to become sensitive to the ways that building form, space and surface foster heightened awareness of place and self. Because of the sacred dimension permeating many vernacular lifeworlds, traditional building may be able to offer useful insights, not only into that lifeworld itself but also into a basis for more sensitive design today. Again, an instructive example is Fathy (1973), who appears to make accurate experiential contact with traditional Egyptian architectural space and forms. In his house and neighbourhood plans, for instance, he depicts the multi-dimensional function of the courtyard. Though it definitely has practical environmental and social functions, it also works, he says, as a directly experienced symbol, joining earth with sky and drawing down the sacred into the everyday world of the peasant: "The sky is, as it were, pulled down into intimate contact with the house, so that the spirituality of the home is constantly replenished from heaven" (p. 56). One aim of a phenomenology of environmental aesthetics is to develop a series of methods whereby students can experience directly the ways in which environments like the courtyard can have a multifaceted experiential impact, including an affective, aesthetic dimension.

### Conclusion

My main aim in this essay has been to mark out in broad strokes three themes around which a phenomenology of the vernacular lifeworld might be organized. All phenomenology, no matter what its specific substantive focus, must strive to be holistic, exploring the phenomenon in a way whereby the parts are not lost or broken apart. The threefold thrust I identify here - landscape, environmental experience, and aesthetics - is one way to outline what a phenomenology of vernacular lifeworlds might include, though I certainly do not claim that this structure is the only typology possible. Clearly, there are others (e.g., Norberg-Schulz, 1985), and one phenomenological task is to provide them.

I want to repeat that a study of vernacular lifeworlds is important to the phenomenologist, first, because in many ways those lifeworlds are more existentially simple and real; they may, therefore, be more in contact with essential qualities and components of humanness, including aspects of sacredness and higher awareness. Ironically, vernacular lifeworlds are all but destroyed as we begin to realize their significant value in helping us to understand better who we ourselves are. A major question becomes how and whether we should strive to resurrect in our modern Western lifeworlds any of the positive qualities of the vernacular lifeworlds - for example, the ways they provide better environmental design, sociable and beautiful environments. Another important question is whether the tradition and conser-

vatism of vernacular lifeworlds can be balanced with more modern ideals - for example technological infrastructure; civil, women's and gay rights; a pace of living which is in constant change. More than likely, the need is a creative synthesis which, it seems to me, work like that of Christopher Alexander (1977, 1979, 1985; Rentondo, 1984), or Oscar Newman (1981) begins to provide. Toward this synthesis, a phenomenological perspective on vernacular lifeworlds could offer much, particularly in fostering a more sensitive environmental seeing.

At the same time, some scholars will no doubt feel uncomfortable with phenomenological research, just as phenomenologists sometimes have serious doubts about positivist and Marxist-structuralist scholarship. According to Polkinghorne (ibid.), however, each research must come to realize that all philosophical and research perspectives can offer useful material in the postpositivist quest for understanding. I hope that this essay gives some indication of how a phenomenological perspective can contribute to postpositivist research in built form and culture, particularly studies of vernacular lifeworlds and architecture.

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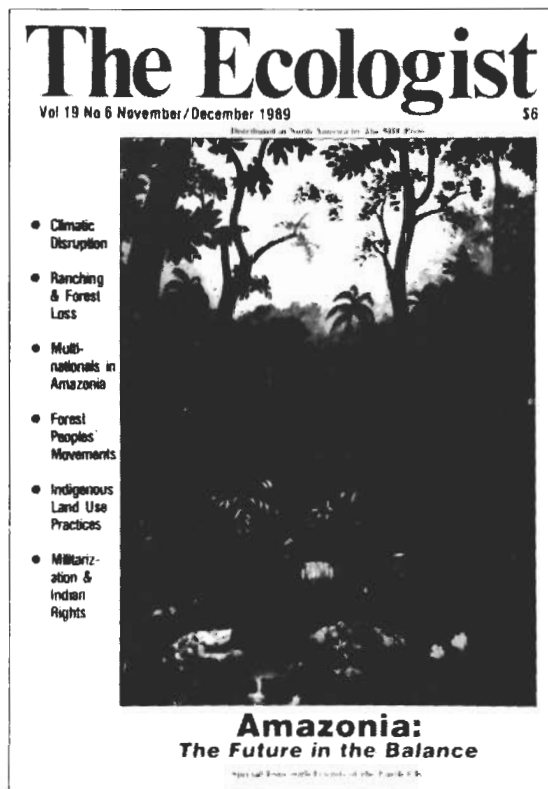
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