

## Paul Shepard: His Influence in Thought, Word, and Deed

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### Introduction

Reflecting upon the work of Paul Shepard evokes a range of ideas about his many influences. In this paper we (three educators and authors) offer existential narrative accounts about the manner in which Paul Shepard helps us make meaning. We each focus on one of the realms of thought, word, and deed, an ecological trinity so to speak; however, we admit this is practically difficult because of their inherent relationship.

Douglas Karrow speaks about the influence of Paul Shepard's work on the realm of his "thought" through the action of hunting coyotes in Ontario, although in circumscribing this realm, he focuses on the relationship between humans and animals, drawing significantly from

Shepard's work, *The Others: How Animals Made Us Human*.<sup>1</sup> Shepard's ideas about the relationship humans and animals share help Karrow think through the hunting practices of coyotes in central Ontario. Jeanne Kentel shifts the discussion slightly toward the sign/symbol, or "word," and considers the influence of Shepard's words on her writing. Drawing on her first-hand experiences with animals and children in Africa, Kentel describes how Shepard's ideas evoke narration. Lastly, Bob Henderson brings the abstract to the concrete by considering how Shepard's ideas translate into practice. As a veteran outdoor educator, Henderson reflects on a variety of Shepard's works, citing favourite passages that proved seminal at various moments during his post-secondary teaching career.

A few caveats are necessary before beginning. First, each contribution could stand independently. Focusing first on "thought," then "word," and finally "deed," we want to demonstrate how Shepard has influenced each realm. The danger in this, of course, is leaving the reader with the mistaken impression, through such reductionism, that each realm operates in isolation. On the contrary, when the writers speak of their specific realm, the trinity is implied; Heideggerian existentialism,<sup>2</sup> by its very nature, engages each realm of the trinity. Second, the progression from "thought," to "word" and "deed" honours the original "saying" of the trinity and by no means implies an ordered hierarchical relationship. We could have just as easily reversed the order of the trinity by writing first about deed, then word, and finally thought. The ecology of this trinity, as mentioned previously, is reflexive. Third, structuring this work according to the three realms of the trinity is also meant to demonstrate, how the three separate writings could work together, how they might evoke the ecology of the trinity. Lastly, evocation of the word "trinity" itself is meant to confer multiplicity, creative power and growth. Furthermore, "trinity," or "three" has universal meaning and power. For instance, three has been equated with a moving forward of energy, overcoming non-duality, expression, manifestation, and synthesis. It is the first number to which "all" was given and as the "whole" is suggestive of beginnings, middles, and ends. Numerous other symbols include, the tripartite nature of the world as heaven, earth, and water; the human body, soul, and spirit; birth, life, and death; and the past, present, and future, among others. Our three existential phenomenological accounts, in the form of narratives, herald historical ecological wisdom. In doing so we hope that our three collective voices and experiences, our ecosophies, have something important to contribute to the memory of Paul Shepard.

It has been a decade since Paul Shepard departed, yet his original ideas and thoughts inform our ecosophies in significant yet unpretentious ways. We subscribe to Arne Naess's understanding of ecosophy where individuals and communities develop multiple meanings.<sup>3</sup> This contribution speaks to the remarkable and unique insight that Paul Shepard fostered regarding human and earth relationships, the manner of their influence upon us, and the cumulative effect on our developing ecosophies.

The influence of Shepard's ideas, for us, converges on the interrelated realms of "thought, word, and deed;" the ecological trinity. Ecological in the sense that the abstractness of thought, mediated through the semiotic of the word, informs our participation in the life-world. The relationship between realms of the trinity is reflexive too, in that our immediate experience in the world enlivens the words that narrate experience, be these oral or written, allowing us to reflect or think further upon these experiences. The entire arrangement and relationship speaks to a branch of philosophy referred to as existentialism. In using the term existentialism we wish to confer through the work of Martin Heidegger, despite his tendency to downplay the existentialist label, the immediate and direct participatory relationship humankind has with nature, or as he referred to it, "being-in-the-world."<sup>4</sup> We do not wish to create the impression that we favour a Sartreian existentialism, where in terms of our own "existence," we define life in isolation removed from the web of life in which we breath, eat, walk, and die. Such a form of existentialism, according to Paul Shepard, is reprehensible.

The existentialist division of man and nature is a reaction to the use of science on man's thinking about himself, to its generalizing and abstracting, to depersonalizing, to finding norms and averages and generally "reducing" humanity to statistical traits. The existentialist judgment is that these abstractions are irrelevant. It holds that therefore only what I experience for myself is real: events unique to me, about which no generalizations are important or any real descriptions are possible. Only specific contacts with other individuals are considered significant. Every moment I face the prospect of a choice, which I am actually free to make. I am free only in this. Such is the excruciating sickness of self-consciousness.<sup>5</sup>

Heideggerian existentialism, in contrast, demands our direct participatory experience with the world, our signification of this experience, and finally, reflection upon it. Such a form of existentialism, rooted more in phenomenology, fosters a relationship

with the earth that may become more sustainable. Therefore, trinity unifies the realms; ecology circumscribes their relationship; and our existentialism invigorates a more grounded and participatory epistemology.

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## **Thought**

I live in rural central Ontario on a fifth-generation family farm south of Georgian Bay. Although born in the city, I have been connected with the land for most of my life. As a young boy I spent many weekends and holidays exploring the woods, swamps, creeks, streams, and meadows of this land. My grandfather taught me how to fish as a child. As an adolescent, I learned how to shoot a rifle, set snares, and track animals. The forest is gradually reclaiming the countryside that my ancestors cleared. Much of the farmland in our community is marginal and is slowly being returned to its pre-agricultural splendour. Wildlife too, is returning, and in some cases flourishing. One animal, the coyote, presently the apex predator, has attracted the attention of many, especially hunters. The ease with which coyotes adapt to urban centres is paralleled by their ability to occupy more rural niches only because a former top predator, the wolf, has been extirpated. The coyote has been referred to as the “trickster” for its uncanny ability to adapt to a variety of environments and situations often defying human will and confounding human intension.

Over the past decade, coyote hunting has become increasingly popular. It begins the day snow first appears in the fall, and concludes upon its disappearance in the spring. Occasionally, when the snow gets too deep, hunters refrain from hunting, claiming that deep snow doesn’t allow a “fair hunt.” When hunting conditions are good, high-powered rifles and the bawling of tracking hounds interrupt the silence of the countryside. Convoys of pickup trucks frequently inhabit the side roads and concessions, normally devoid of traffic. Hunting has increased for a number of reasons in my neighbourhood, reason for concern in and of itself, however it is the character of the hunt that is particularly disturbing. Coyote hunting is commonly mediated by men traveling in trucks, organized in parties of three or four, each in their own vehicle, with tracking dogs fitted with electronic collars. Sitting within their trucks, the hunters watch GPS-like systems as their dogs traverse the countryside. Not unlike electronic “fish-finders” outfitted on boats, trolling open waters, these electronic devices indicate the location of dogs in relation to the hunter. They may also indicate whether dogs have caught scent of a coyote wandering through the woods or open fields.

Once dogs catch wind of the coyote, these monitors allow hunters to watch the progress of the hunt. Electronic bleeps and blips appear in sound and image allowing the hunter to gauge where the coyote can be intercepted. Meanwhile, hunting partners communicate continually over cell phones or CBs as they drive systematically around country blocks until they intercept an unsuspecting and exhausted animal. Only then, does the hunter abandon the comfort of his (hunters are almost exclusively male) vehicle, rifle in hand, walk up to the landowner's fence line (often beyond), scope the coyote through his sight, now standing still because of exhaustion, and shoot. Occasionally, the coyote senses what comes and darts off, with one last effort of escape. If this happens a fresh set of dogs are released to carry on with the "hunt."

Hunting has always been mediated by technology, however, in a relatively short period of time, the rate of its technological mediation has increased markedly. This rapid degree of change presents an unprecedented opportunity to document a new era in human/animal relations.

Preparing a paper for a recent conference examining coyote hunting in central Ontario, I found Heidegger's call "To let things be,"<sup>6</sup> inspiring yet somehow detached and overly romantic. Compelled to examine the complex issue of coyote hunting from multiple points of view (hunter, farmer, resident, academic, environmentalist, etc.) I completed the paper with utopian-like disillusion. With some trepidation, I presented the paper<sup>7</sup> but was left with an unsettling feeling that Heidegger's call was untenable.

This unsettling conclusion remained unresolved until I read Shepard's work. He summoned within me the childhood experiences I knew connected me with the land and its beings. In particular, in his work, *The Others: How Animals Made Us Human*,<sup>8</sup> I discovered a contrary way of thinking, so obvious and uncanny, I was left feeling slightly unnerved. That an individual could somehow sum up the whole of human history and its relationship with animals by arguing for a return to our "ongoing participation" with animals, was painfully obvious yet contrary to Heidegger's call for romantic detachment.

In contrast, Paul Shepard, by tracing the evolution of humanity from hunter/gathers, to pastoralists, and eventually urbanites, makes a convincing argument for our "ongoing participation" with animals. In his own words:

. . . the ethics of “let be” deals with the enigmas and perennial inquiry, finalizing the game by freezing nature in place and removing ourselves. But the true vocation of humankind, to puzzle out reciprocity, requires that we know, as the elders of a million years past knew, that there is no *solution*, but instead an *ongoing participation* [emphasis added]. Bystanding is an illusion. Willy-nilly, everybody plays. This play contains that most intimate aspect of the mystery—our own identity—signified in finding ourselves in relationship to the Others [animals].<sup>9</sup>

Shepard is not arguing that we abandon animals by killing them willy-nilly, nor is he saying “let them be” by standing back. What he demands is our full participation with animals. For the hunters tracking coyotes their attachment and ongoing participation is increasingly mediated through sophisticated technologies that fundamentally disconnect predator from prey, hunter from hunted. How are experiences with the Other, (coyotes in this case) affected through the compressions of time and space that technology proffers? Contrast this all with Aldo Leopold, who, while hunting wolves a little under a hundred year ago in New Mexico, knew that he, the hunter, and the hunting wolf were united when he saw “the fierce green fire” in the dying wolf’s eyes.

We reached the old wolf in time to watch a fierce green fire dying in her eyes. I realized then, and have known ever since, that there was something new to me in those eyes—something known only to her and to the mountain. I was young then, and full of trigger-itch; I thought that because fewer wolves meant more deer, that no wolves would mean hunters’ paradise. But after seeing the green fire die, I sensed that neither the wolf nor the mountain agreed with such a view.<sup>10</sup>

Shepard’s engagement is likely reminiscent of a relationship early humans would have had with animals during the great hunter and gatherer stage of our evolution. Referring to this as the “golden age” of humanity, and everything since then as the “downfall,” Shepard describes in detail how our hunting activities brought us intimately closer to animals and helped shape us.<sup>11</sup> In contrast with today, our disengagement with animals, through calls for the complete banning of hunting and so on, remove us so completely from animals that our primordial relationship (the hunter/hunted) is severed. In a way, Shepard’s appeal to ongoing participation helped me think through my call to “let things be,” by recognizing that our engagement with animals, through prey/predator relationships might hold within it the unforeseen dimension of our identify as that most “intimate aspect of mystery.”<sup>12</sup> As well, it helped me understand just how distanced the act

of hunting coyotes has become through the various technologies hunters use today.

Now, I am all for Shepard's claim for ongoing participation, however, the nature of this participation is so far removed from the act of the predator/prey relationship that it can hardly be called this. Technology, in its many guises, distances the hunter so significantly from its prey that one could argue the degree of "ongoing participation" is fundamentally deviated and perverted. Technological mediation began long ago and modern societies continue to experience its insidious effects daily. Speaking of the domestication of dogs and their use in hunting as a primitive technology, Shepard, adds:

Before the hound, men hunted with their minds and were on holy ground. With dog, an equilibrium was lost . . . As wild forms, they will always be locked in our hearts . . . They energized and symbolized the destruction of the Gaian sensibility—that humility and nurturing ethos which resists the pastoral exhortation to overtake, control and contain.<sup>13</sup>

Apart from dogs, imagine the effect such technologies as high-powered rifles with magnifying scopes, GPS systems, electronic tracking collars, cell phones, CB radios, and vehicles change the nature of ongoing participation. The combined effect of these technologies reveals the hunter as one who challenges forth the prey from a great distance at lightning speed. The hunter exerts his influence across dimensions of space and time that are contracted so significantly that prey can no longer navigate their earth world. The imposition of the cultural world onto nature is so aggressive, challenging, and violent, that natural beings have great difficulty surviving, let alone coping. This demonstrates clearly what Heidegger astutely concluded in his analysis of modern technology: Increasingly through the phenomenon of "Enframing," modern objects come to be "viewed" as pure energy resources revealed "to be" in aggressive and violent ways.

Enframing [Ge-stell] means the gathering together of that setting-upon which sets upon man, i.e., challenges him forth to reveal the real, in the mode of ordering, as standing-reserve. . . . Thus, where Enframing reigns, there is *danger* in the highest sense.<sup>14</sup>

Beckman adds that technology's enframing capacity is a process that has shaped our destiny in relation to the universe since the beginning of our time:

The concept of enframing suggests that human life in the context of the natural world is gathered wholly and cosmically *within* the essence of technology. Just as the technology that we now see ongoing in the world shows the characteristic of challenging-forth the objects around us, the whole process within which human life is developing *challenges-us-forth* to this mode of revealing the real or of ordering nature into standing reserve.<sup>15</sup>

Heeding the words of Shepard, it seems to me, requires a relationship with the beings of the world on a level where the dimensions of reality are compatible. We have so effectively sealed ourselves within the cultural envelope<sup>16</sup> that we no longer operate according to the same dimensions of reality. “Nature” operates according to her dimensions and culture defines what works for it. What is necessary is an acknowledgement, on our part, that we can no longer cross that cultural boundary without setting aside the supreme technologies that provide disproportionate advantage in the Game. This is the very least we could do to maintain a degree of ongoing participation along synchronous dimensions of reality. While an ongoing participation is essential, it must be a level playing field, where we check our technological gadgets at the cultural gate.

Heidegger’s astute analysis of technology and its relationship with us,<sup>17</sup> combined with Shepard’s call for ongoing participation<sup>18</sup> can each help us make sense of this confusing time, as I have tried to point out by examining the common practice of hunting. Enamoured, seduced, and blindsided by the effect of technology, we, at the very least, owe this to the Others who have made us what we are. Perhaps this could be our gift to them? Regardless, we have Paul Shepard to thank for inverting our thinking on these matters and bringing our essential, primordial, and participatory relationship with the animals to the foreground. Paul Shepard revitalizes the animal in me, and calls forth our histories; he reminds us of our original participatory relationship with the Other, how animals shaped what we humans were, and how technology increasingly shapes what we are becoming.

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## Word

It is challenging to describe the way in which Paul Shepard’s use of language penetrates to our very hearts. Perhaps it is because he himself lives his words. I say this in the present tense as an intentional and deliberate reminder that Shepard’s words have transcended any human mortality: they linger in our thoughts, they linger in our being.



Paul Shepard's way of having us think about the Others—the animals—without thinking that we are thinking about animals is his seamless way of speaking to the heart. Shepard does not merely pay homage to animals; he invites us to dwell with them. This dwelling does not mean giving up anything else;<sup>19</sup> rather this dwelling is a revival of what we have always had, of who we are. We are who we are because of animals.

Animals are among the first inhabitants of the mind's eye.  
They are basic to the development of speech and thought.  
Because of their part in the growth of consciousness, they are  
inseparable from a series of events in each human life,  
indispensable to our becoming human in the fullest sense.<sup>20</sup>

As humans, “we never actually arrive,”<sup>21</sup> we are first, foremost, and always becoming. And the way in which we become, “we ‘play out’ our lives”<sup>22</sup> is in mediation with the Others. Animals speak to the human condition.

Civilization—spurns—the Leopard!  
Was the Leopard—bold?  
Deserts—never rebuked her Satin—  
Ethiop—her Gold—  
Tawny—her Customs—  
She was Conscious—  
Spotted—her Dun Gown—  
This was the Leopard's nature—Signor—  
Need—a keeper—frown?

Pity—the Pard—that left her Asia—  
Memories—of Palm—  
Cannot be stifled—with Narcotic—  
Nor suppressed—with Balm—<sup>23</sup>

Emily Dickinson causes us to question whether the leopard has always escaped the numbing effect of the human desire to control, to suppress the Other. She brings to the fore the very being of the leopard; that is she acknowledges the Leopard. Leopards are difficult to spot. Their nocturnal and secretive nature conceals them from the human eye in their natural habitat. They hunt, eat, play, sleep, and hide.

*fierce carnivore  
awaits its prey  
luring human intrigue*

When I was in Kenya, over the course of four months I went on three safaris with my family. At the time, I was quite enthralled with the western idea of being able to see the big five. The leopard was a rarity among the five and in the end, the only place I was able to observe one was in a game park. The leopard is known for fierce attacks on its prey but this is only part of who the leopard is. The leopard can be restful, lackadaisical, serene. Perhaps the leopard's tawny camouflage permits this character trait.

Spotting a leopard in the grass is most unusual. Determined viewers will clamber to the tops of hills and cliffs to gaze upon the treetops where the leopards are found hanging on branches pausing to pounce on their prey. I wonder why the leopard is so enigmatic, so unwilling to play the human game. While the coyote appears to tease out or invite human participation, pervading farms and other human habitats, the African leopard seems to revel in mystery, in remaining hidden. Does the coat, the natural covering of the leopard, set forth its very nature, its existence in the world?



*spotted coat of imitation  
human bodies thus adorned  
with unmatched beauty  
become the leopard*

*a replication unfulfilled  
for with silhouette  
poise and gait unrivalled  
the leopard freely leaps*

In many ways, we as humans would like to be the leopard. Designers fashion rugs, coats, purses, and jewels to mimic the leopard's beauty. When I was in Kenya I found it interesting when the children would play and compete in athletics, how they would name their groups and

teams after animals. While animal names are also used for amateur and professional teams in North America, the designation does not appear to have the same rever. For instance, *Chui*, the Kiswahili word for leopard, was more honoured by the Kenyan people than I have observed to be the case in North America. In the Western world, the animal label is that of a mascot; the animal is breathless. Hence any possible identity or participation is with a lifeless, motionless, danceless object, not the animal itself. Observes Shepard, “All [animal group referents] inherit the idea of making the groups visible by an identity with species of animals.”<sup>24</sup> Through the ecology of narration, Shepard makes our identity clear; he shows us ways to feel, think, and dance the animal.<sup>25</sup>

The child’s natural inclination to imitate animals is often forgone as life progresses. Shepard notes that animals teach us the “art of metaphor.”<sup>26</sup> By identifying with the animal we realize we are not simply human. We are pigs and foxes, snakes and sheep. Yet our mimicry is inadequate. We cannot match the life-world of the animal, which is to hunt, eat, play, and sleep.



Why would we rob any being from this life? Does our own longing for Paradise<sup>27</sup> provoke this desire to capture, cage, and destroy the Other? We hunt and kill the other yet even in death the animal teaches us.

This is the hope that Shepard resonates in his narratives. He enacts a celebration of the life of the Other, the other in us. He reveals how animals are used in human growth and development, in our coming into being. He speaks not of the unimaginable, but of the imaginable. This indeed is the beauty of Shepard’s work. He does not frighten us with a foreboding consideration of the Others, rather he invites us to be acquiescent, to live the possible so the sins of humans against the

others—what we have done and what we have left undone—are overshadowed by the enactment of ordinary living. It is through ordinary acts of life that our undamaged selves are called up to dance the animal.<sup>28</sup> Paul Shepard's narratives, woven with stories, quotations, poems, and metaphors, describe ordinary living in a rudimentary yet mighty way. He uses ordinary language to describe ordinary life, which in itself is extraordinary.

One autumn I visited a class that was part of an integrated arts program at McMaster University. Part of my reason for being there was to initiate conversations of the intuition of deep ecology through embodied knowing. This group was quite different from the physical education majors I am accustomed to and I sensed they were not quite ready to dance the land. In many instances the situation felt quite contrived and unnatural. There was a moment, however, where a group of students lowered themselves to the ground in fascination. As I drew closer to them I saw that they were captivated by the work of ants; spellbound by a nexus with nature we humans might often overlook, if not exterminate. These students took notice. The life-world of the ant is an exemplary example of collaborative determination. In this moment the students honoured the work of the ant. This moment with the ants compelled me to ponder and to, in some way, identify.

I have not been to a zoo since my travels to Kenya. Despite their educational intent it somehow troubles me to see animals caged up, removed from their natural homes. After spending time with the animals, dwelling with them, I feel connected to the animals in a much different way than before. Shepard observes, "We are strangely composed of animals who flesh out our being."<sup>29</sup> We consume the earth, we consume the animal; we are where we dwell.

Paul Shepard's words are written into our stories and the way in which we interpret them. His narratives resonate in our thinking, speaking, and acting: in the ordinary way we live our ordinary lives. He reminds us that we need not recapture something lost for we never did lose the existence of nature, of the creature within ourselves. We need not go back or give up anything of our current way of being.<sup>30</sup> We need only become mindful that we are the animal; we are the earth. We need not summon up reconciliatory unity with the earth.<sup>31</sup> We have never left; this is our home where we dwell. The animal reminds us to care for this place. The task is unremarkably simple and clear. This is after all, "the only world we've got."<sup>32</sup>

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## Deed

I first met Paul Shepard in the early 1980's (okay, we never met but I've read enough by him for me to make this bold, delusional overstatement). I was starting out as an academic (age 24) teaching at a Canadian post-secondary institution; I had been a travel guide and student but now I would "lecture" about outdoor education and environmental inquiry. I was, at times, almost paralyzed with an urge to seek relevance for my students and myself. I was determined to do, "what was worth doing." The research literature in outdoor education seemed annoyingly obvious. Skill development for travel guiding, team building/leadership, and nature field-studies seemed outside the realm of the University, or at least, only a part of what a university curricular practice should be. I cast a wide net, reading fiction, philosophy, and anthropology, in an interdisciplinary haze. My own thesis supervisor had the nickname (belovedly so) of Dr. Vague. I realize now I had followed in suit in a blur of interdisciplinarity. Vague at times, quirky for sure. Then I found Paul Shepard.

The first article was in *North American Review*<sup>33</sup> from the 1970s. I found Arne Naess, Joseph Meeker, and Sigmund Kvakvloy all there as well. They are still favourites. Paul Shepard's writings, ideas, directions, and musings were vague and quirky. At times, but regularly in the blur of this lofty writing (difficult to fully comprehend for me), I found gems. No, brilliance; gems were soon committed to memory because of regular use. Now I have a rich collection of Shepard quotations. If my students knew how much I have learned from Shepard in terms of organizing my thoughts around the big questions of "how do we dwell on the earth," or "how did things come to be this way," they would suggest I am afflicted with "Sheparditis." Many of the ideas from my quote collection were "out there" in the early 1980s. Now they are no less powerful, but Shepard's ideas come into their own. Theodore Roszak coined the phrase ecopsychology in the 1990s.<sup>34</sup> Richard Louv recently coined the phrase "nature-deficit disorder."<sup>35</sup> They stand on the shoulders of Paul Shepard.

Shepard was ahead of his time, but we are catching up. Culture moves. I think we are moving towards Paul Shepard and my students are moving closer to me. I was, dare I say, pushing culture forward through my teaching and writing, thanks largely to Paul Shepard. In *Nature and Madness*,<sup>36</sup> Shepard suggests that culturally we have left adolescence in limbo, devoid of a cosmic participatory consciousness with nature. A disengaged adolescent grows into an immature adult without a "grounding" in our organic reality with nature. Earlier in *The Tender*

*Carnivore and the Sacred Game*,<sup>37</sup> Shepard valorized primal peoples for their culture-nature relation and their sensory richness in the world with others (animals). In outdoor education, I would be with students in nature. One must think of this now as cultural work to distil back into peoples' lives the latent genetic imprint for participatory consciousness and sensory richness in the world (not of human fabrication). This is Paul Shepard's fit with outdoor education. Outdoor education directly teaches camping and travel skills, citizenship, and inter- and intrapersonal relations with a naturalist's or adventure focus, or both. But all this can be framed from Paul Shepard's cultural ideas.

How to take you there to those 1980 efforts to invest the logic, ways, and manners students had to culture and nature? I followed Shepard's ideas, among others, but Shepard gave me zingers like no other. Shepard gave me strength as a lecturer and teacher. Shepard made those early efforts to communicate relevance entertaining and profound for my students and me. At times, armed with a Shepard gem, I sensed there was a release of an idea at the edge of our thinking, teetering with the question: "Should we allow ourselves to go there?" I sensed I had provided some moments of liberation. I read a quote from Shepard. They would fly and some landed. Shepard the trickster, Henderson the teacher: were hunter-gatherers more advanced than we "civilized beings?" Are we asking the wrong questions? Is reconciliation with nature still possible? Why are animals so important still in a human fabricated landscape? With Paul Shepard by my side, I never felt like a "spray and pray" teacher.

Some key ideas from Shepard's influence on me: We are who we are because we think animals.<sup>38</sup> No compromise here. Animals are not just important to us, they are everywhere in our psyche. As Alfred North Whitehead said, "The many become one and are increased by one."<sup>39</sup> Shepard reminds us that the mind is dependent on the survival of the animals and this connection of act and thought surpasses what it means to think about animals.<sup>40</sup>

Shepard strengthened my emerging aspirations for my field. Outdoor education is important work. I would impart this to students in the field and in classrooms. They would go onto teaching careers and parenting. This would be my legacy, I hope Shepard coined the phrase, "dispensable environment." As a beginning lecturer, I felt, because of my position, the need to say "things" of worth. I found much of my voice as an outdoor educator from the importance of "thinking about animals and dispensable environments and wild places."

Thinking animals is as old as erect posture and good eyes, born in us like a hunger for love, as real as the necessity to communicate or make order and sense. We seem to live now in a philosophy of Dispensable Environment. Where surroundings, like ideologies, are supposed to be arbitrary, where seeing, smelling, hearing, and knowing other creatures seem optional and frivolous. But the evidence is overwhelmingly against that narrow view of life.<sup>41</sup>

Being an outdoor educator at a university is to be a bottom feeder instead; amongst colleagues that is. Science is valorized. But armed with Shepard I had the conviction to be a front-line cultural worker. We, in outdoor education have a mission. Exposure to nature is not a want but a need, not recreation but often therapy.

From *Nature and Madness*: “Culture, in racing ahead of our biological evolution, does not replace it but is injured by its own folly.”<sup>42</sup> Put another way, a way with full Shepard zinger-like qualities:

Like zoo born lions trying to bury their uneaten leftovers in the cement floor, we put bumper stickers on our cars reading, I’d rather be sailing.<sup>43</sup>

As I see it, you can’t teach out-of-doors casually from the above view. Lofty purpose sings out to the Shepard-informed outdoor educator. Yes, I had something to lecture. Fortunately, I had ample time in the wild for student trips as well. Mine would be an ambience of Nature as home. We belong. It is natural: no big adventure other than the one of the spirit in relation. Shepard informed time with students in Nature as well.

From Shepard I learned to consider that the canoe trips I had led for adolescents were potentially powerful beyond my first apprehension. I also found explanation for the “emancipatory euphoria” I sensed in many during these month-long trips. I found a way to keep the canoe trip alive in the university curriculum despite hostility.

The task of adolescence is to become whole at a new level of consciousness. The individual is deeply aware of this, though it is not clear to him what that means or how it is to be done.<sup>44</sup>

What is happening “out there” which is really “with there” is an awakening—a surfacing.

An ecologically harmonious sense of self and world is not the outcome of rational choices. It is the inherent possession of everyone; it is latent in the organism.<sup>45</sup>

I, like Shepard, have worked from the perspective of, “a secrete person undamaged in every individual.” I have seen this part of the self burst forth. It has often moved me to tears.

Finally, all the above—and more—has had us outdoor educators labelled “back to nature freaks.” After all, the dispensable environment does take some hold. From Shepard I have learned many a trickster inversion. Shepard would have me say (and I have many times): “How can I get back to what I’ve never left.” Touché ! There is a wisdom here that is complex. It is a good place to end. Thanks Paul Shepard.

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## **In Closing**

We have shared with you the invocation of Paul Shepard’s ideas and thoughts upon our distinct lives and, in doing so, have attempted to illustrate the degree, range, and complexity of this influence. In relaying these distinct experiences and our meaning-making, we have appealed to a trinity of “thought, word, and deed” as a testament to Shepard’s degree of influence, and an existential phenomenological way of relating to the earth. Like the trickster coyote, or the enigmatic leopard, Shepard’s contribution to our humanity is uncanny yet profound, calling us to recognize our distinctness always in relation to the Other, appreciate this for what it is, and, in doing so, preserve the indispensability of earth. In closing, we thank you Paul Shepard for the thoughts, words, and deeds that help us navigate, “the boundary between the self-obsessed too close and the nonliving too far . . . ”<sup>46</sup>

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## Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> Shepard, 1996a.
- <sup>2</sup> Heideggerian existentialism is more commonly referred to as existential phenomenology.
- <sup>3</sup> Drengson and Inoue, 1995, 8.
- <sup>4</sup> Heidegger, 1962.
- <sup>5</sup> Shepard, 2002.
- <sup>6</sup> Bonnett, 1997.
- <sup>7</sup> Karrow, 2006.
- <sup>8</sup> Shepard, 1996b.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 319.
- <sup>10</sup> Leopold, 1987, 129–132.
- <sup>11</sup> Shepard, 1996b.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 330.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 267.
- <sup>14</sup> Heidegger, 1977, 20, 28.
- <sup>15</sup> Beckman, 2000, 5.
- <sup>16</sup> The term “cultural envelope” is borrowed from Northrop Frey, *Creation and Recreation*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 6.
- <sup>17</sup> Heidegger, 1977.
- <sup>18</sup> Shepard, 1996b, 319.
- <sup>19</sup> Shepard, 1973.
- <sup>20</sup> Shepard, 1978, 3.
- <sup>21</sup> Sawada, personal communication to author, October 1991.
- <sup>22</sup> Shepard, 1996a.

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- <sup>23</sup> Dickinson, 1960, 492.
- <sup>24</sup> Shepard, 1996b, 113.
- <sup>25</sup> Shepard, 1996a.
- <sup>26</sup> Shepard, 1996b, 85.
- <sup>27</sup> Shepard, 1978.
- <sup>28</sup> Shepard, 1996b.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid, 80.
- <sup>30</sup> Shepard, 1973.
- <sup>31</sup> Shepard, 1982.
- <sup>32</sup> Shepard, 1996a.
- <sup>33</sup> Shepard, 1974.
- <sup>34</sup> Theodore Roszak, 2002, 38–42.
- <sup>35</sup> Richard Louv, 2006.
- <sup>36</sup> Shepard, 1982.
- <sup>37</sup> Shepard, 1973.
- <sup>38</sup> Shepard, 1978.
- <sup>39</sup> Whitehead, 1972, 162.
- <sup>40</sup> Shepard, 1998.
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid, 237.
- <sup>42</sup> Shepard, 1982, ix.
- <sup>43</sup> Shepard, 1973, 221.
- <sup>44</sup> Shepard, 1982, 68.
- <sup>45</sup> Ibid, 128.
- <sup>46</sup> Shepard, 1996b, 331.