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*the* TRUMPETER  
*Journal of Ecosophy*

*Where Philosophy and Culture Meet the Ground*



Carolyn Button

*Vol. 12, No. 1    WN 46    1995*

CAPITALISM, METAPHOR & IMAGE, ESSAYS, STORIES

Box 5853, Stn. B, Victoria, B.C. Canada V8R 6S8 - ISSN 0832-6193

## Publisher

LightStar Press



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ERRATA: In the Summer issue, the final two lines were left off Sarah Browning's poem "I saw a bird this morning" on page 126, along with her bio. We reprint the poem in full in the current issue, with the correct ending.

IMPORTANT: The last issue contained the incorrect address and zip code of the editor. Please note the corrected address: David Rothenberg c/o Dept. of Social Science and Policy Studies, New Jersey Institute of Technology, University Heights, Newark, New Jersey, 07102.

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Journal of Ecosophy

Volume 12, No. 1

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**Subscription Information:** *The Trumpeter* is published quarterly by LightStar Press, Box 5853, Stn. B, Victoria, B.C. Canada V8R 6S8. Subscriptions are due the first quarter of the year. The rates for 1995 are \$25 Can. in Canada, \$25 U.S. to the U.S. Overseas surface is \$25 U.S. Institutions \$50.

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Date of Issue—February, 1995

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Publications Mail Registration No. 7026.

**Back Issues:** Vols 1 - 10 are still available. Vol. 1 presents basic ecophilosophical concepts and reading lists; Vol. 2 features a three issue focus on ecogriculture; Vol. 3 has a three issue focus on wilderness; Vol. 4 features articles on sex, ecology of self, magic, animals, and ancient ecology; Vol. 5 features papers on parks, bioexuberance, technology, sense of place, Wittgenstein, and paganism. Vol. 6 features forestry, agriculture, wilderness and world views. Vol. 7 features land trusts, aesthetics, wild animals, agriculture, ecology & literature, and the deep ecology movement. Vol. 8 features transpersonal ecology, bioregionalism, process philosophy, myth, and ecofeminism, environmental education, and phenomenology. Vol. 9 features narrative, religion, deep ecology, human place in nature, language. Vol. 10 features human consciousness, transbiotic awareness, and ancient ecosophy. Vol. 10 features sustainable development, ecofeminism, and elder visions. Price for back issues: \$12 each for volumes 1 & 2, \$16 each for 3, 4, 5, 6 & 7 & \$20 for vol. 8, 9 & 10. Postage and handling \$1.50 per volume in Canada, all other countries \$3 per volume, surface.

Printed in Victoria, B.C., Canada, by Albatross Printing.

Printed on recycled paper

# Editorial: Discipline or Perish

David Rothenberg

SEVERAL YEARS AGO I HAPPENED TO RUN INTO AN OLD FRIEND IN Berkeley, who it turned out had become an ecologist of the scientific persuasion. We began a discussion of the history of ecology, and what started as a friendly chance meeting became a heated argument: she had one version of the history of ecology, while I had another. She could trace a whole history of the empirical observation of animals and plants in nature, with statistical sampling and population analysis, all the way back to Aristotle. The roots of her science were clear.

I, on the other hand, insisted that ecology was an inherently interdisciplinary pursuit, involving not only scientists but philosophers, politicians, lawyers, artists and writers. I thought immediately of Ernst Hæckel, the German scientist who invented the word 'ecology' in 1866 in a treatise on organismic biology. Later on in his life, Hæckel became a popularizer and precursor of the New Age movement, writing books such as *The Riddle of the Universe* and *God-Nature*, which began with scientific principles and ended with hypotheses on the unity of matter and spirit in a Spinozistic kind of substance. Beginning with scientific principles, Hæckel reached out for less verifiable aspects of the human condition.

E.O. Wilson has done the same thing in recent decades, trying his keen scientific mind on unfamiliar ground. Like an amphibious jump from sea unto land, Wilson first invented "sociobiology" to hazard a biological basis for human social behavior, and then "biophilia" to guess an evolutionary basis for our affinity for other life forms. Risky but fascinating business. Is perhaps the drive to create science an evolutionary need as well?

Science is tough stuff, and has very careful rules as to what kind of reasoning it allows, and what it disallows. It is to the benefit of scientists' careers that they mark off a territory to call legitimately their own, and exclude the rest as rubbish or speculation.

But ecology has always meant more than science. It has a normative edge, a yearning for human affinity with the natural world through interconnection. Sometimes the tension runs tight. It is worth noting that the only person forbidden entrance into the British Ecological Society has been Edward Goldsmith, publisher of the activist magazine *The Ecologist*. Why wouldn't they let him in? They said he "did not have a genuine interest in the study of ecology."

Ecology implies a philosophical orientation of looking at how life forms in the world connect to one another. This includes human life forms, and to some, human social and

cultural forms. Thus it is possible to speak of an ecology of communities, an ecology of imagination, an ecology of art.

Ecology promises interconnection, wants for a Declaration of Interdependence. But all this interrelationship can lead to shallow waters, a very dangerous kind of quicksand. We who write and read *The Trumpeter* gather together many different perspectives, many styles of thought, many different disciplines. When too much is combined it can often sound thin, far-flung, and short on rigor and meaning.

My plea here is not to narrow anyone's focus, but to ask you not to forget discipline. Interdisciplinary thinking does not mean undisciplined thinking. When we combine many approaches to argument we should not forget to think carefully, clearly, and precisely defending each point so it flows from the last.

When disciplines are combined there are often conflicts. Each discipline has its own criteria for authority. Natural science thrives on refutation, not proof. You work to show your predecessors to be wrong. You need data, collected from experiments that can be repeated by others. Social science tries the same tact on human populations, and the subjective and reflective aspects of the sample are more than likely to talk back, and twist the purity of the experiment. (Then again, a biologist warned me that the same thing happens with cats: "Never use them. They'll always ruin your data.")

The mystic seeks individual experience, felt truth that is not meant to be duplicated by anyone. The philosopher tries to use logic to argue for one course toward truth rather than other, or decide when to use each method. The activist tries to protest convincingly against ruling authorities, be they corporate or governmental. The politician tries to change the system from within. The poet tries to evoke any of these practices in a more-than-logical way.

The practical, thoughtful ecologist can never be only one of these things. Scientists do not own the term 'ecology,' much as they would like to. We must combine all these different disciplines to urgently make a difference in the world. Ecologists in the wider sense are only called unfocused, imprecise, and uninformed when we don't know enough about the many disciplines we borrow from. As long as we embrace the discipline itself, not only the perspective, we can show the deep, multiple connections between things and the many ways of seeing the history of our problems and the diverse possibilities for solution.

# Can Capitalism Be Reformed?

## Notes on Creating a Green Economy

Steve Chase

**I**N 1989-91, THE WORLD UNDERWENT A PROFOUND CHANGE. IN A surprisingly brief period of time, the Communist states of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc collapsed, toppled by the organized and largely nonviolent resistance of millions of citizens. A seventy-year-old experiment had failed.

Yet, for many of the leaders of this revolution, the goal was not the restoration of capitalism. While ignored by most of the U.S. mass media, many of the revolutionary leaders who were instrumental in the collapse of Communism hoped to create a just, democratic, and ecologically sound alternative to both state socialism and multinational corporate capitalism. Not only was something old dying in 1989-91—something new was trying to be born.

The visionary hopes of the Velvet Revolution were not to be. For many reasons, history soon passed these leaders by, and their countries were rapidly integrated into the global capitalist marketplace. While heartbreaking to some, this failure was greeted as good news in several circles. The collapse of Communism and the fledgling "Third Way" alternative movements in Eastern Europe encouraged supporters of the industrialized West to announce the final "Triumph of Capitalism." Some went so far as to declare the present era the "End of History."

Yet, is capitalism's future secure? Can it meet peoples' desires for justice, democracy, peace, and ecological sanity? Is it the only, or the most viable, option available? Are there not current signs of popular disenchantment with the capitalist status quo that might one day grow into powerful movements for political and economic transformation?

In spite of all of their post-communist bravado, many capitalist leaders still fear threats to their future power, profits, and prestige. One of the key specters that haunts them is the environmental movement. As a staffer at the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund laments, "With the death of Communism, the radical right is targeting the environmental movement as America's number one enemy."

This should probably not come as a surprise. The environmental movement does challenge business as usual in many ways. Perhaps the most important is how environmentalism questions the myth of endless material progress that has so long been used to justify the pain, cultural dislocations, and environmental degradation caused or aggravated by industrial capitalism. Various wings of the environmental movement are asking tough questions about whether endless

material progress is possible, desirable, or worth the price. Should these sentiments become more widespread, the future of capitalism—at least as we know it today—will almost certainly be brought into question. While many capitalists take comfort in the collapse of the Soviet Union, they also fear what they saw on their television sets: the power of an organized populace to nonviolently overthrow a political economic system when its longstanding popular legitimacy has evaporated.

To be sure, the legitimating belief that an endless increase in the production and consumption of industrial goods and services will increase human happiness is far from exhausted. Where the bureaucratic command economies of the Soviet bloc were ill-equipped to create a liberated and classless society, industrial capitalism seems well-suited to the task of creating an expanding cornucopia of consumer goods for popular consumption. Over the last two hundred years, the success of our economic system in this endeavor has been breathtaking. The global "consumer class" is now estimated at 11 billion people. While there is a tremendous disparity of income and power among this group—due to class exploitation, racism, and sexism—its absolute material standard of living is unprecedented in human history.

Even much of the working classes of the United States, Japan, and Western Europe are included. While poverty is now growing in industrialized countries and real wages have begun to move downward, the dramatic economic growth since World War II has certainly called into question Karl Marx's ironclad prediction of the increasing misery of the working class. People living in industrialized capitalist countries are now, on average, over four and a half times richer than their grandparents. As Alan Durning notes in his book *How Much Is Enough?*,

We dine on meat and processed, packaged foods and imbibe soft drinks and other beverages from disposable containers. We spend most of our time in climate-controlled buildings equipped with refrigerators, clothes washers and dryers, abundant hot water, dish-washers, microwave ovens, and a plethora of other electric-powered gadgets. We travel in private automobiles and airplanes, and surround ourselves with a profusion of short-lived throwaway goods.

And yet, even with all this, there are signs of significant cracks in the believability of the myth of endless material progress

## **Beginnings at the End of History**

A key source of skepticism, of course, is the increasingly common-sense notion of environmental "limits to growth." As more and more ecologists have reported, the world can probably not sustain the current level of resource extraction, habitat destruction, species extinction, and pollution caused by industrial economic activities. The ecological limits of the biosphere suggest that we cannot continue to burn fossil fuels, consume raw materials, and dump toxic wastes at the current levels of the United States, Western Europe, and Japan. Even economic growth advocates now admit that we need to find new renewable energy sources, recycle, reduce waste, and control pollution if our economic system is to remain viable.

The impossibility of endless industrial growth on a finite planet comes into even sharper focus when we consider the consequences of what would happen if the world's 1.1 billion member consumer class were somehow to be expanded to include all of the world's people through economic growth and global capitalist development. The increased rates of resource extraction and pollution involved in such projections, even assuming greater efficiency, recycling, and expanded energy sources, is staggering. Its impact on global eco-systems would be devastating. The result of such an attempt would likely be ecological and social disaster, some say even causing the destruction of the Earth's ability to sustain any complex life forms, including human beings.

The upshot here is that capitalism is ecologically incapable of growing to the point of providing ever-expanding material abundance for all. The utopian vision of capitalism is impossible. The fact that capitalist societies have always produced squalor and poverty as well as wealth seems more and more inescapable. We are faced then with the choice of redistributing wealth within a dynamic steady-state economy or sustaining the privileges of the richest sectors of today's consumer class through an intensified war against the world's poor and intensified exploitation of our ecological communities. The limits to growth perspective is thus a two-edged sword. Yet, it is leading many people to demand greater justice and equity from our economic system.

Despite propagandistic celebrations of the consumer culture and the resulting narrowing of popular values in capitalistic societies, researchers have found, time and time again, that the most basic source of human happiness and health is not material consumption at all. The key determinant of happiness does not seem to be one's "standard of living," but rather one's quality of life. Not surprisingly, the sources of a high quality of life are family life, friendships, satisfying work, creative hobbies, occasional adventures, cultural activities, an active civic life, and enjoyment of the natural world.

Industrial capitalism is not only ill-equipped to nurture a "quality of life" civilization, it actually decreases the possibility of human satisfaction and health. It reduces happiness, for example, by reducing most people to little more than cogs in the corporate workplace subject to a bureaucratic chain of

command. Where once craftspeople combined both conceptual and manual labor under personal or cooperative direction, industrial capitalism has torn the organic unity of satisfying work asunder. Indeed, manual labor—and even much conceptual work—has been subdivided by "scientific management" into increasingly separate, minute, and repetitive tasks. By reducing people, including many in the middle class, to mere tools to be instrumentally manipulated to maximize production and elite power, the capitalist organization of the workplace assaults a vital source of human happiness and well-being.

The salve of consumption does little to heal the boredom and indignity of so many jobs in our corporate economy. Indeed, as Charles Kettering, the director of General Motors' Research Labs, has admitted, the two-fold mission of corporate advertising is "the organized creation of dissatisfaction" and then the offer of temporary relief through consumption. This addictive cycle keeps the profits rolling in. Yet, it is also a source of never ending tension which is leading increasing numbers of people to question the false promises of material progress. As economist Juliet Schor notes, "There is a growing public awareness of the need for change. For the first time since such surveys have been systematically conducted, a majority of Americans report that they are willing to relinquish even current income to gain more family and personal time."

The most powerful skepticism about the myth of material progress, however, probably comes from those who most intensely feel the pain our capitalist economy exacts as the price of progress. This skepticism is most often fostered through personal suffering, but it sometimes comes about through intense empathy for more oppressed people and the world of life itself. It should come as no surprise then that industrial capitalism is becoming increasingly questioned by those seeking large-scale wilderness preservation. It is even easier to see why native peoples all over the world have increasingly challenged the logic of industrial capitalism as they have sought to defend their homelands and ways of life from industrial development and the resource colonialism of multinational corporations. As Anishinabe treaty rights activist Winona LaDuke notes, "Extinction is about peoples, as well as species. Extinction is the price of colonialism and conquest. It is the price indigenous peoples resist paying, and people of conscience should work to stop."

Similar doubts about industrial progress have also emerged in the most oppressed communities within the United States. These communities are disproportionately effected by the destructive side of industrial capitalism. As long time community activist Cynthia Hamilton notes, the "consequences of industrialization" as the "price of growth" have forced more and more poor people, working men and women, and people of color to actively resist industrial development. "This is particularly the case," she says, "for those who live in central cities where they are overburdened with the residue, debris, and decay of industrial production." It is no accident, she notes, that some of the most forceful resistance to corporate practices "would manifest itself most dramatically within communities of color.

for they have experienced the most severe economic underdevelopment and the most contamination from industrialization."

Hamilton's observation powerfully hit home for me when I recently toured the Dudley Street neighborhood in Boston. In that one and a half mile square neighborhood, over 54 toxic industrial waste sites surround the 12,000 mostly poor and mostly black and Latino residents. These folks are only four percent of Boston's population, but they live amidst ten percent of the city's toxic waste sites which are known and listed with the federal Environmental Protection Agency. Yet, as the EPA admits, it doesn't know whether it has found and identified 90 percent of the existing toxic waste sites or a mere five to ten percent. Adding further to their pollution problems, the neighborhood is also home to a number of highly toxic and poorly regulated industrial enterprises. Indeed, the children of Dudley Street's largest housing project have to walk over ten blocks along a street with one of the highest concentrations of dirty businesses anywhere in the city just to get to the nearest city park to play.

The residents are understandably concerned for their children. In a recent community survey, a group of neighborhood volunteers and health professionals determined that an average of two children per block had dangerously elevated levels of lead in their blood. The source of lead poisoning in the Dudley neighborhood is house paint, the soil in the abandoned lots that comprise one third of the land area of their blighted neighborhood, and businesses such as battery manufacturing plants, foundries, radiator repair shops, and construction sites of which the neighborhood has several. It is little wonder that the neighborhood has been declared a Lead Emergency Zone by the State of Massachusetts.

This designation is no small thing. The consequences of lead poisoning can be quite horrifying, particularly for children. As Janet Phoenix, the director of health education for the Alliance to End Childhood Lead Poisoning, notes:

Lead poisoning, while completely preventable, is one of the most common environmental health diseases in the United States. Some of the... more serious symptoms include clumsiness, muscular irregularities, weakness, abdominal pain, persistent vomiting, constipation, and changes in consciousness. Lead exposure is particularly harmful to children. It damages their developing brains and nervous systems. Indeed, even low-level lead exposure can lead to attention disorders, learning disabilities, and emotional disturbances that can affect a child for the rest of his or her life.

What makes the experience of neighborhoods like Dudley Street so compelling is not just their victimization; it is their activist response. For over ten years the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, a vibrant grassroots community organization, has worked on a multi-dimensional 'Don't Dump On Us' campaign that has challenged and sought alternatives to

the economic and political forces that have trashed their community and workplaces. Similar groups have sprung up all over the country—in the barrios, urban ghettos, poor neighborhoods, rural poverty pockets, and Native lands all across North America. This new movement for environmental justice draws on the leadership of neighborhood women, communities of color, farm laborers, and industrial workers. It may represent the capitalist class' worst nightmare. As movement organizer Richard Moore notes, "We see the interconnectedness between environmental issues and economic justice issues. From our perspective you can't work on economic issues without working on environmental issues and you can't work on environmental issues without working on economic issues."

The environmental justice movement gained its greatest national prominence in October 1991 when the Racial Justice Commission of the United Church of Christ organized the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in Washington, DC. This ground breaking conference brought together over 600 delegates representing hundreds of local environmental justice groups from around the country to share experiences, build alliances, and adopt a movement-wide statement of principles. The declaration of principles was remarkable. It unquestionably challenged the business as usual status quo embraced by the advocates of the triumph of capitalism. The delegates enthusiastically voted, for example, to "build a national and international movement" that would "promote economic alternatives which would contribute to the development of environmentally safe livelihoods and... secure our political, economic and cultural liberation that has been denied for over 500 years of colonization and oppression."

### **How Can Our Goals Be Met?**

The search for economic alternatives continues. Yet, the way forward is not immediately clear. Many questions have to be answered. Can we rely on efforts to change individual values and economic choices? Will we also need to engage in political activism and change the public policies that guide and regulate our economy? Do we also need to go beyond policy reforms within the framework of industrial capitalism and structurally redesign our political and economic institutions in radical new ways? These are key questions which can no longer be avoided if we are serious about addressing issues of injustice, elite decision-making, and environmental degradation.

A common answer put forward by mainstream environmentalists—and the one most supported by the public relations arm of corporate America—is to focus on changes in individual values and to encourage more responsible personal economic choices, particularly consumer choices. Basing their strategy on the conventional economic notion of "consumer sovereignty," the leaders of Earth Day 1990 argued that the general public essentially gets what it wants from our economic system and that when we have any complaints about the impacts of our economy, we need to rethink what and how





much we want to buy and consume, and from whom we are going to buy goods and services. Ethical business choices, combined with strong green consumer demand, could work together and sufficiently green our corporate capitalist economy.

Few activists in the environmental justice movement believe that making personal changes are sufficient to achieve their goals. Given their daily experience of oppression and resistance, they are far less likely to believe the comforting notion that it is not the institutional logic of our economy that needs to change, but only the personal choices of each member of society acting individually as consumers or employees. These people see the fact that the capitalist market economy is not just a neutral tool guided by consumer and producer desires. They understand that the capitalist system has a logic of its own that ultimately renders it unresponsive to the general interest.

How does this logic work? For one thing, instead of operating on the democratic principle of one person, one vote, the market operates on the principle of one dollar, one vote. Thus, to the degree that our economy is guided by 'consumer sovereignty' at all, it is only responsive to those who have sufficient money to express their consumer demands in the marketplace. This leaves out most of the people who make up the environmental justice movement. Indeed the world's poor have very little impact on the direction of development and economic activity. This explains why capitalists invest millions of dollars to develop high-end medical procedures for the

affluent and invest almost nothing in lead poisoning abatement programs that could dramatically improve public health in poor communities.

Furthermore, for the proper allocation of resources to best meet even this elite-dominated consumer demand requires a competitive market, one free from monopolistic power of a few giant corporations which tends to distort profits and prices, and thus resource allocation decisions. Unfortunately, the normal operations of the competitive market erode its own requirements for consumer responsiveness by fostering monopolistic power. Economic winners in the marketplace become bigger and more powerful. Losers become smaller, weaker, and sometimes disappear altogether. The effect is cumulative and, in time, it increases the monopolistic tendencies of the economy as a whole and confers inordinate advantages of economic and political power on giant corporations.

This is a powerful tool in forestalling legislation in the general interest. Such power has also frequently been used, through concentrated corporate ownership of the mass media and public relations, to control the flow of information needed by consumers and citizens to make informed choices in the marketplace, the workplace, and the ballot box. This leads our

economy ever further in an undemocratic, unresponsive direction.

It would appear that the normal operation of capitalist economies will generate diseased and corrosive societies over time that cannot be successfully remedied by purely individualistic appeals to green consumerism or green business ethics. To reverse these inherent trends and move towards our goals, our system of commerce must be balanced and guided by some form of social guardianship beyond individual "consumer sovereignty."

This, of course, is the impetus behind many liberal reform programs for government regulation and the provision of unprofitable, but necessary, social services. The goal in this case is not to replace capitalism, but to save it from itself. We can see the outlines of such an approach from Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal to Al Gore's proposal to mitigate the worse environmental consequences of the capitalist economy through a global 'Environmental Marshall Plan.'

Many environmentalists, including many environmental justice advocates, believe that sufficient restraint and direction can be placed on our economic system by using existing governmental policy tools creatively. While there are debates over how to best utilize public spending, regulation, tax incentives, zoning, permits, tariffs, welfare programs, and international trade agreements, the basic principle is commonly accepted. Environmental justice leader Robert Bullard, for



example, has served as an advisor to the EPA and worked on the Clinton transition team after the 1992 election. He believes that through a combination of "insider" and "outsider" strategies, grassroots movements can organize themselves sufficiently to induce the United States' government to better support worker rights, make polluters pay for toxic clean ups, ban all toxins, and allow for greater citizen input in environmental decision making.

There is much to be said for this approach. Most important reforms we hold dear—including public education, the right to organize a labor union, social security, voting rights for white women and African-Americans, and racial desegregation—were won *because of the efforts of grassroots peoples' movements*. This is a proud legacy not sufficiently remembered. However, it is important to also remember that there are major limits to the democratic responsiveness of our government. To be effective, we need to keep in mind how often regulatory agencies have become the captives of the very corporations they were set up to regulate.

As James Madison once admitted, the U.S. Constitution was designed to thwart democratic rule. In *The Federalist Papers*, Madison argued that the structure of the U.S. government that replaced the Articles of Confederation would "make it less probable that a majority of the whole will have a common motive to invade the rights of the minority," or if such a motive develops, make it "more difficult for all who feel it to discover their own strengths and to act in unison with each other." Madison was not concerned with the rights of his 116 African slaves, of course. He was worried about the "opulent minority" of wealthy property owners and businessmen who stood to lose some of their power and wealth at the hands of a democratic legislature. These biases still shape governance in America and they provide the institutional edge for corporations to sabotage reform proposals or sidestep those that are put on the books.

Thus, even if a democratic party committed to an ambitious policy reform program did sweep to power against the odds of our electoral system, it would likely generate an extremely crisis-ridden and friction-prone political economy. The problem here would be that the party would be slamming down hard on the brake of an out of control economy rapidly heading over a steep cliff while forgetting to take industrial capitalism's foot off the gas. Something would have to give. The struggle for policy reform will either be a launching pad for making deeper structural and design changes in the legal/institutional framework of governance and commerce in this country or it will falter and ultimately be eroded by the demands of corporate power.

We can see this dynamic in the last twenty-five years of environmental policymaking. By the early 1970s, a loose coalition of thousands of local and national groups had formed and begun working on a cluster of related issues: wilderness preservation; natural resource conservation; worker and community health and safety; renewable and safe energy; and safe consumer products. This diverse social movement proved remarkably effective. During the 1970s, twenty pieces of major regulatory

legislation were passed, including the National Environmental Policy Act, the Clean Air Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the Consumer Product Safety Act. Furthermore, in an effort to avoid the traditional corporate-dominated federal regulatory agencies, three new agencies were formed: the Environmental Protection Agency, the Council on Environmental Quality, and the Occupational Health and Safety Administration. All of these new federal moves were instituted against the will of important sectors of corporate leadership.

This corporate opposition grew over the next several years to include most of the capitalist class. It is not hard to see why. During the so-called "environmental decade," U.S. corporations faced unprecedented competition in the global marketplace. Both markets for consumer goods and for capital goods were lost to foreign competitors, from East Asia to Western Europe. Even markets for raw materials, agricultural products, and energy were declining during this period. In order to maintain short-term profitability under these circumstances, U.S.-based corporations further expanded their global operations (in search of cheaper labor and material costs) and began a program of massive cost-cutting domestically. Part of this cost-cutting campaign involved trying to undermine the federal regulatory apparatus established in response to the efforts of the environmental, labor, and minority movements. This corporate fight-back campaign included a powerful shift to the right of our TV-managed political culture; the ongoing demonization of activist government and business regulation; and the corporate funding of the Wise Use Movement.

Some environmentalists have tried to portray corporate claims that the successes of the environmental movement impair economic health and vitality as nothing more than a propaganda ploy. Yet, as Daniel Faber and James O'Connor note in their article in the book *Toxic Struggles*:

A good case can be made that many environmental struggles and regulations have resulted in negative, if unintentional, effects on many sectors of the U.S. economy. In the United States, environmental regulations typically add to the costs of capital but not to revenues. Unlike new machinery that increases labor productivity and indirectly lowers the unit costs of wage goods, pollution-abatement devices and cleanup technologies usually increase costs, reduce profits, or increase prices.

The dilemma here is that while we cannot survive a "healthy" capitalist economy, we are also ill-served by a "sick" capitalist economy which performs poorly. The way out is to find a way to redesign the institutional framework of our political economy so its that its health promotes just, democratic, and ecologically sound outcomes.

This more radical approach to achieving our goals appears even more urgent when we consider the power of the capitalist class to restructure the global economy to resolve its problems and get around restrictive national legislation and regulation. As Faber and O'Connor have also noted:

The growing ability of multinational corporations and financial institutions to evade and dismantle unions, environmental safeguards, and worker-community health and safety regulations in the United States is being achieved by crossing national boundaries into politically repressive and economically oppressive Third-World countries. As a result, peoples and governments of the world are increasingly pitted against one another in a bid to attract capital investment, leading to one successful assault after another on labor and environmental regulations seen as damaging to profits. By not designing a comprehensive political and economic strategy to combat processes of capital restructuring and to develop radical alternatives to capitalism, the environmental and labor movements have failed to halt the growing environmental and health crises of the 1980-90s.

This is a sobering assertion. It is not good news. Many people in this country can barely imagine building a social movement powerful enough to pass legislation that restrains big business abuses. Few can imagine successfully transforming the system as a whole. Yet this is likely what is required of us if we are to be effective. To achieve our goals will require thousands, indeed millions of us, to engage in a democratic social struggle against powerful vested interests to transform the basic institutional logic of our political and economic system. As Richard Moore, a founder of the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice, explains:

I don't think an environmentally and economically just society is possible under capitalism... We are working towards worker control, worker-owned companies and cooperatives in the long run. I think that if workers and communities participate in their own interests, there is the possibility for a safe, clean community and workplace... In this context, there will be a conflict with the institutions of capitalism to bring our agenda forward.

Ironically, such thinking puts us in the same visionary ballpark as many of the leaders who worked so hard to overthrow Communism in the Soviet Bloc.

### **Towards a Green Economic Vision**

One of the more intriguing books published on alternatives to both Communism and capitalism is John Cobb and Herman Daly's *For the Common Good*. While hardly the last word on the subject, it provides a rough glimpse of an economic vision worth working toward. This is important in this unvisionary age, for as the Cheshire Cat said in *Alice in Wonderland*: 'If you don't know where you are going, any road will take you there.'

Perhaps one of Daly's and Cobb's most challenging ideas is their argument that instead of embracing the global economic marketplace, we should largely opt out of the global trade system and decentralize and diversify national production

and distribution to increase regional self-sufficiency. While not abolishing the market, they propose we contract its scale. This makes the economic pathways of production, distribution, consumption, and waste disposal and recycling easier to see and control by the community. Where foreign trade is necessary, they argue that it should be done through a progressive system of tariffs to protect domestic products from unfair competition. This, they argue, would also minimize the incentives of foreign companies to externalize the social and environmental costs of producing their products. Borrowing a page from the notebook of today's policy reformers, Daly and Cobb also provide a number of interesting suggestions on how social and environmental costs can be further internalized in the domestic marketplace through a system of green taxes and other market-shaping policy tools.

Beyond restructuring the market, Daly and Cobb also address questions of the ownership and management of economic enterprises. As they note, "It is our conviction that for the sake both of workers and the whole national community, worker ownership in combination with participation in the making of decisions should become the basic form of business in the future." While their vision would eliminate all multinational corporations from the national economy, it would still allow for a diverse pattern of other types of ownership options ranging from small private business and farms, nonprofit organizations, consumer co-ops, public ownership, and publicly regulated utilities and natural resource authorities. Daly and Cobb also argue that the organizational scale allowed for business enterprises be limited to further facilitate democratic workers' control and avoid monopolistic tendencies.

One can begin to see how all these pieces of a programmatic vision for structural change work together to make a just, democratic, and ecologically-sound economy workable. By transferring ownership and decision-making from profit-maximizing, absentee elites to workers rooted in local communities, you can structurally internalize a significant positive regard for working people and the local human and natural community in management decision-making without bureaucratic business regulation. By protecting these democratic, community-oriented workplaces from the socially and ecologically destructive competition inherent in an undemocratized, global, capitalist marketplace, you also allow them room to maneuver and make socially and ecologically responsible decisions.

Furthermore, within the primary national or regional economies, people can democratically decide together what kinds of business to encourage and discourage through various macro-economic planning tools such as green taxes. This can constrain unfettered market forces that can push even good-hearted producers towards waste, non-renewable resource use, planned obsolescence, toxic production technologies, habitat destruction, cost-cutting, speed-ups, and deskilling automation that reduces the power and cost of labor. Placing maximum limits on income can also help unplug the growth-mania of the current economy and open up more ethical incentives for

socially useful and ecologically responsible production. It can even encourage a shorter work week and provide working people with the free time required for participatory governance and soul-satisfying recreation.

**Can We  
Get There  
from  
Here?**

The economic structures and policies sketched out by Daly and Cobb would go a long way towards being a sufficient approach to achieving our goals. Making such a vision a reality will require much more than consumer education, wise

shopping, or making innovative suggestions to one's boss. It will require vigorous political education, workplace and community organizing, building alternative institutions, independent electoral work outside of either of the capitalist parties, coalition building, and aggressive nonviolent direct action campaigns. As Frederick Douglass pointed out so long ago, "Power concedes nothing without a struggle."

The creation and development of a green economy will thus depend on the capacity of people to boycott; to strike; to do without luxuries; to practice mutual aid; and to organize and effectively run producer and consumer co-ops, socially responsible small businesses, democratic labor unions, and community credit unions. It requires people who are skilled in democratic decision-making, critical thinking, the arts of persuasion, and militant nonviolent resistance in times of violent repression. It also requires people skilled in the subsistence arts of the household economy that provides essential goods and services poorly provided by the official, monetized economy, even a just and green one. Perhaps most importantly, it will require building a multi-class, multiracial, international movement with strong ties of solidarity that still respect the integrity of each part of the coalition.

This raises a very tough question: How can enough people be moved from a sense of powerlessness and hopelessness toward active engagement in grassroots movements for change? Can the cultural and structural changes described here be achieved only if people can be persuaded by activists and organizers that such a movement is both necessary and possible? Is the hope of our future completely dependent on the wisdom and communications savvy of today's grassroots movers and shakers? Is there any reason to believe that creating such a system of commerce and governance of, by, and for the people is possible?

Frankly, I think so. For one thing, there is an element of hope in the painful fact that the corrosive nature of industrial capitalism places crises at the center of more and more peoples' lives. People are not just moved to activism due to the logic and moral appeals of the organizers around them. While such political education is essential, the very circumstances of our lives can also disrupt legitimating myths and peoples' ingrained passivity.

Indeed, new opportunities for insight and action often open up as a natural result of how the contradictions of indus-

trial capitalism play out in our daily lives. As political strategist Maritza Pick points out, most new grassroots activists and organizers become active for the first time as a response to the "bombs" dropped on their communities and workplaces by unresponsive corporate and government bureaucracies. In her book *How to Save Your Neighborhood, City, or Town*, Pick observes

The bomb can explode with an infinite variety of bad news. Instead of a shopping center and high-density housing complex, you might read that a new airport is planned for the meadow near your home. Perhaps a lumber company purchased the nearby forest and intends to spray dangerous herbicides. Maybe your tap water tastes odd. You and your neighbors worry that your town's groundwater has been contaminated by leaching from the local garbage dump. Perhaps the factory across town is spewing out poisonous fumes.

I also think human nature gives us a little room for hope about the quality of our response. While we shouldn't ignore our capacity for evil and evasion, we are still quite a remarkable product of biological and cultural evolution. People can be brave, intelligent, ethical, and creative. We can think, we can cooperate, and we can change. Think of your own life. You have done all these things, at least in small ways. Explore history and you will see that large groups of people can work together and act powerfully in all these ways too. This has been true even under the harshest of conditions.

One of the stories that gives me hope is the history of the Spanish Mondragon Cooperative system. Most people in this country have never heard of it. Indeed, the story of the Mondragon co-ops has been buried because it tells us a lot about what is possible. Begun some forty years ago by a parish priest and four trade school students, people in and around the town of Mondragon have painstakingly built a network of more than 170 worker-owned cooperatives serving well over 100,000 people in the Basque region of Spain. The Mondragon cooperatives include a large worker-controlled bank, technical assistance and research and development organizations, a chain of coop department stores, high-tech firms, appliance manufacturers, schools, day care centers, and machine shops. The highest paid worker in each firm earns no more than eight times the lowest paid worker. All workers can vote on key policy issues and approve who will serve in management positions. Despite starting under the dictatorship of General Franco, despite economic recessions, and despite fierce competition from capitalist corporations, the Mondragon cooperative network has survived for forty years, created over 21,000 secure and well-paid jobs, and enhanced the spirit of democracy and cooperation in their community. Mondragon is not perfect, but it is real.

This, of course, does not mean that merely by creating a sizable alternative sector of cooperative enterprises we can create a green economy. As Paula Giese wrote years ago in her article "How the Old Co-ops Went Wrong," reprinted in *Workplace Democracy and Social Change*.

It is important to recognize the criticism made clear back in the eighteenth century by pre-Marx British Levelers: Namely, it is not possible to build an alternative society quietly and peacefully, wholly outside the mainstream society, for the latter's rules control most of the wealth and the means of producing new wealth (land, minerals, energy supplies, factories and tools). If an alternative looks likely to threaten this, they fight it. If you cannot defend your alternative, they win.

To be successful, a movement for structural changes in the political economy will also require a capacity to fight back and defend our alternatives.

Can we resist such powerful forces? I, for one, take heart in the fact that ruling institutions are often more vulnerable than we think. While they seem all-powerful and permanent, governments and corporations are very similar to biological organisms. They require a constant flow of external energy to stay alive and healthy. The 'energy flow' on which they depend is the social power made available through the

willing or unwilling cooperation, submission, and obedience of citizens, consumers, and workers. This energy can be—and sometimes has been—cut off through massive withdrawals of popular cooperation, often through boycotts, general strikes, and disruptive demonstrations. Such a massive withdrawal of popular support is precisely what happened in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in 1989-91. Which of us would have thought this possible ten years ago? Yet, the fall of Communism is now a classic example of both the vulnerability of a supposedly impregnable industrial state and the power of nonviolent grassroots action. As Gandhi wrote in 1905, "even the most powerful cannot rule without the cooperation of the ruled."

Clearly, history ain't over until it's over.

**Steve Chase** is one of the founders of South End Press, a collective publishing house printing books for social change. He edited the dialogue between Dave Foreman and Murray Bookchin, *Defending the Earth* (South End), a book that has done much to bring the deep and social ecological movements closer together.

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## Gwendolyn Scott

### Hard Water Walking

The first step is crucial:  
the ice along the shore is the weakest.  
Testing every step,  
we walk over to where  
a man is hard water fishing  
as they say in Minnesota.  
But we are walking on a frozen lake  
on the north west edge  
of the Flint Hills in Kansas  
Surrounding hills cut the wind  
down to a stinging breeze.  
The silence is not absolute:  
ice creaks and hums, birds call, we speak.  
Yet the cold absorbs sounds  
as though it demands silence.  
Our words, commonplace really,  
take on a weightier meaning.  
Perhaps because what we do  
is dangerous or we think it is.

We can see the ice  
is thick enough for safety.  
On spots bare of snow  
we marvel at the visible  
delicate structure which holds us,  
at how we can gauge the depth  
from trapped air bubbles.

It is a matter of trust  
to walk on such glaring beauty.  
Yet during the Ice Ages  
people walked cross the Bering Straits  
on a wide ice hridge  
People still hunt mollusks  
under the Arctic ice when the tide is out.  
This knowledge does not  
lessen our sense of daring,  
our sense of hearing or motion.  
Still we shuffle, testing  
the middle of the lake,  
the center of ourselves.

Gwendolyn Scott is a landscape architect and poet. She lives in Oakland, Iowa.

# Metaphors of Nature

## Old Vinegar in New Bottles?

Mark S. Meisner

**H**UMAN BEINGS LIVE IN TWO FUNDAMENTAL AND INTERRELATED worlds: the world of Nature and the world of words.<sup>1</sup> These places of dwelling are central to how we understand ourselves and to how we live. We are, in different senses, both created by them and creators of meaning with them. Of these two worlds, the world of Nature takes precedence, because its diverse facets are at stake. It is my concern for Nature, human and otherwise, that motivates my interest in language.

A widespread and largely false assumption about language is that it is a neutral, unambiguous set of symbols for representing the world, from which it is independent. That is to say, that the words we use stand for things and events in the world, and the ways we arrange the words stand for how those things and events relate to each other. This, however, is a dualistic and positivistic notion of language which sees it as a sort of mathematical calculus, where truth can be arrived at only if the labels are correctly applied and all the calculations properly executed. The reality of language (admittedly a risky phrase in this context) is that it implicitly and explicitly carries values and ways of seeing, it lends itself to contradictory interpretations and uncertain meanings, and it is intimately related to how we experience and give meaning to the world. Though I am simplifying many of the details here, the point is that language and worldview affect each other in an ongoing process of perception, construction, articulation, reproduction, and legitimation of ideology.<sup>2</sup> While language has opened humans up to the world, thereby enhancing our experience of Nature as a whole, it has also slowly closed Nature off to us by reifying that Nature. Is language part of the problem that is the "environmental crisis"? I believe so.

In this paper I want to briefly examine one aspect of the relationship between human language and Nature, namely the central role of metaphors in shaping human understandings of our relationship to Nature as a whole. The idea that metaphors are central to how we view<sup>3</sup> and relate to Nature will be familiar to many readers, and it is a theme that bears further attention. I will consider, then, what metaphors are and how they work, and I will ask how, from an ecocentric perspective, we are to judge the value of our metaphors of Nature.

### Metaphors and Nature

My sense is that metaphor is perhaps the single most important aspect of language with respect to our views of Nature. And in fact numerous environmental thinkers have noted the role of metaphor in the human

understanding of non-human Nature, and consequently in how we live in relation to it.

Many of these people have criticized particular metaphors. Donald Worster's book *Nature's Economy*, for example, provides a history of how the economic metaphor of Nature, expressed in such words as 'producers,' 'consumers,' and 'biological richness,' has pervaded scientific ecology's understanding of how Nature "works." Elizabeth Dodson Gray, among many others, has taken apart the anthropocentric and hierarchical view of Nature as a pyramid with humans as the pinnacle of evolution (Dodson Gray, 1981; See also Livingston, 1985a). This view is implied in phrases such as "lower orders of creation," "power over nature," and "subhuman species." She and others, including Patrick Murphy (1988) and Annette Kolodny (1975), have argued against the sex-typing of Nature as woman or mother because of how it contributes to both gender stereotypes and a potentially dualistic (humans and nature as separate entities) and resourceist idea of Nature. Thus, terms like "the rape of nature," "virgin land," and the pronouns "she" and "her" to refer to Nature may be problematic. Carolyn Merchant (1980) and Morris Berman (1981 and 1986) have led the way in critiquing the destructive implications of the mechanistic metaphors of Nature that emerged from the scientific revolution, and their successors, the cybernetic metaphors that now seem to be in vogue (See also Livingston, 1986). These reveal themselves in phrases such as "repair the ecosystem," "the machinery of nature," and "bio-computer." And John Livingston (1981) has repeatedly challenged the metaphor of wild Nature as an agricultural crop, and the resourceist and managerial assumptions and practices that go along with it. Thus, we see the terms "tree farm," "harvest the fish stocks," and "weed species," among others.

These and other environmental thinkers have advocated the adoption of alternative metaphors of Nature. Stan Rowe (1989, 1990a, 1990b), for example, praises the idea of Nature as home, the place where we live, and the place we must care for, rather than exploit. For Rowe, Nature is the "home-sphere" that envelops us.<sup>4</sup> Hwa Yol Jung (1990:96; see also 1986) and David Rothenberg (1990) have both suggested that the metaphor of Nature as music provides an evocative sense of Nature as a process of harmony in diversity. Thus, as Jung puts it, "to make the music of ecological *harmony*, there needs to be the *orchestration* of many different beings and things—each of which *plays* a distinct role" (emphasis added). Warwick Fox (1990:261-262) suggests viewing Nature as a tree, with each individual being seen as a leaf with its own identity, yet also part of the greater changing and growing whole, and all joined to

each other. And, numerous examples may be found where Nature is characterized as a living being and even as Self, particularly in the writings of deep/transpersonal/ecocentric ecologists.

Even fewer environmental thinkers have explicitly analyzed the relative merits of different metaphors of Nature. Alan Wittbecker (1989), for example, looks at numerous metaphors, including those of home, mother, father, sister, brother, and self, and concludes that these metaphors are counterbalances to the more degrading alternatives of mechanistic and atomistic metaphors. More importantly, he notes that Nature is simply itself, regardless of our metaphors. Along slightly different lines, Neil Evernden (1989) proposes three broad categories into which ideas of Nature fall: Nature as object, Nature as self, and Nature as miracle. He implies that it is to the last category, the idea that Nature is miraculous, beautiful, and mysterious, that we should turn for our new conceptions of Nature. And Andrew McLaughlin (1985:316) compares the instrumental and mechanistic view of Nature historically perpetuated by science, the holistic process view of quantum physics, and cybernetic images of humans as the controlling thermostats in the system of Nature, with such alternatives as an "oral science" contextual and experiential image of Nature, an "ecological" model's relational metaphor of "nature as an integrated system," and Buddhist notions of Nature which seek "to facilitate the experience of nature *before* it is taken as a text to be understood."

The preceding are but a few examples, but they do suggest that metaphors are at the heart of human conceptions of Nature. I have a sense, though I may be wrong, that when it comes to giving meaning to Nature through language, there is only metaphor. In other words, there are no literal, true, or universal views of Nature that may be expressed in language without resorting to metaphors. There are only choices between different ways of metaphorically characterizing Nature. Thus, we "understand" Nature through the metaphors we project onto it, sometimes in multiple layers.<sup>5</sup>

What I want to do now is not so much consider the relative merits and shortcomings of the numerous metaphors of Nature, but rather consider how we might judge the value of a metaphor. This requires an idea of what metaphors are, including a consideration of whether they are as important as they seem to be.

### **What Is a Metaphor?**

Interpretations of what constitutes a metaphor range from the view that it is either an aberration of literal language or simply a literary device of poets, to the view that all language is to varying degrees metaphorical (See Booth, 1979a and 1979b; Ortony, 1979, and Black, 1962). I am more persuaded by the arguments for a broad interpretation of metaphor, particularly as elaborated by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980:5 and 3) who say quite simply that the "essence of metaphor is the understanding and

experiencing of one thing in terms of another," and argue "that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action." Two related points are important here: the pervasiveness of metaphor and the fact that it is not just a linguistic phenomenon, but one that also affects how we think and act in the world.

With respect to the assertion of pervasiveness, Lakoff and Johnson argue the monumental idea that the human conceptual system, our thinking, works by using metaphor, and that much of what we perceive and experience, and how we define our realities is related to metaphor. That is, they are not simply saying that our language unavoidably relies on metaphor to communicate meaning (which it does), but that metaphorical concepts systematically structure our understanding. Using metaphors, we draw on our previous experiences and understandings of things and phenomena to help us explain, interpret, and understand new experiences, things and phenomena. Thus, well structured concepts are used to partially structure less familiar concepts. Perhaps the best example of this with respect to Nature is Charles Darwin's use of capitalism's competitive struggle as a partial model for the "mechanism" of natural evolution (Worster, 1985, Chapter 8).

The ultimate ground in which all this metaphorical growth is rooted, argue Lakoff and Johnson, is our preconceptual physical and emotional experience of the world, what they call the "natural dimensions of experience." These include such things as our understanding of three-dimensional space, our bodies, our experience with physical objects, and our experience of our environments (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: Especially Chapter 12). Thus, the growth of a system of metaphorical concepts tends to move from the concrete to the abstract.

The work of Lakoff and Johnson suggests that language, thought, and action are intimately linked. Similarly, Max Black (1962 and 1979) suggests an "interaction view" which sees metaphor as a process of projection of a "system of associated commonplaces" or "implications" from a subsidiary domain onto a principal domain, thereby constructing a particular idea of the principal subject. In doing this the "metaphor selects, emphasizes, suppresses, and organizes features of the principal subject by implying statements about it that normally apply to the subsidiary subject" (Black, 1962:44-45). Thus, a metaphor acts to create a way of understanding one thing by projecting onto it a view of something else.

Another way of looking at this is that metaphors tend to exert a sort of perceptual hegemony over how the things they are being used to characterize are seen. In other words, metaphors highlight certain perspectives and features, while blocking out others, especially those that are incompatible with the chosen metaphor. In this way, metaphors can keep us from seeing and understanding things differently (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980:10). This is especially the case with new and abstract ideas and concepts, since our experience of them and therefore our ability to see them in different ways is limited.

In the extreme case of this perceptual moulding, metaphors can create, or to use Donald Schon's term "generate"

realities. What can happen is that by so conditioning our way of seeing something, the metaphor can be taken as the whole truth regarding that thing. Thus, in some cases, metaphors cease to be perceived as metaphors and become literalized.

This notion of the ability of metaphor to create a literal reality in our minds is a point that is widely familiar within environmental thought. For example, ecophilosopher Alan Drengson (1984:3) suggests that

one of the pitfalls of the modern mind is that it tends to literalize metaphor because it tries to reduce everything to one level of meaning. It refines the result, and then turns the resulting abstract "entities" into concrete "realities"

Similarly, in speaking of resourceism and its view of all of Nature as a resource for humans, John Livingston (1985a:4; 1986) says:

The "realities" we perceive, in other words, are socially and culturally constructed. One such "reality" is the total dedication of nature to the human purpose. All of nature is one vast bank of raw materials, exclusively earmarked for the human enterprise. The metaphor becomes the reality.

Or, as John Allan Lee (1988:25) puts it in speaking of the competing versions of reality expressed in the language surrounding the East coast controversy over seal hunting, the risk is that "what begins as a convenient metaphor may become the official definition of reality."

Colin Turbayne's (1970:6) analysis of this process focuses on mechanism and the extent to which René Descartes and Isaac Newton were victims of the metaphor of the clockwork universe. Turbayne's main point is that a better awareness of the way metaphors affect our views, and in particular shape our metaphysical beliefs, might help us to avoid the same pitfall. Obvious advice, perhaps, but worth repeating.

These literalizations are the times when the metaphor has ceased to be apparent to those using it. When a metaphor becomes transparent, or is taken literally, we may become victims of it, since we are no longer able to recognize that it represents but a singular perspective. These are perhaps the most powerful and dangerous metaphors since they disguise themselves as literal truths. In the case of our metaphors of Nature, however, it is Nature itself that is ultimately the most severely victimized.

What this means is that metaphors may vary in the degree to which they are embedded in our everyday way of speaking and thinking, whether it be about more specific things, or about the world and Nature as wholes. Aside from the visible-transparent analogy, another way of considering this is through a metaphor of depth in the water. So, metaphors may range from being surface metaphors which are much more apparent to us as metaphors, to depth metaphors which do not appear so obviously as metaphors. Along the same lines, Paul Chilton (1988:60) uses the rather phallic concept of "metaphorical penetration," meaning "that some metaphorical structures are

more firmly entrenched (and thus less noticed) in our language . . . than others." A similar idea to this is suggested by Wayne Booth (1979a:50-51) who contrasts metaphors that are used for rhetorical effect in specific situations, with metaphors that are "embodied in a culture," and therefore part of its habitual way of speaking and thinking of certain things, indeed of understanding them.

It is important to remember here that I am speaking of a sort of continuum for analytical purposes. Also, there is nothing to say that certain expressions used for short term rhetorical effect, may not also be part of a systematic conceptual structure. Thus, as Andrew Ortony (1979:4) says, in the case of systems of metaphors, "there often is a sentence level 'root metaphor' . . . but from it grow many shoots which, taken as a whole, constitute an entire system or way of looking at things." I would suggest that it is more accurate to see the sentence level metaphors as the leaves and flowers of the conceptual and cultural root.

Up to now, I have only spoken of metaphor as part of our cognition, but metaphors do more than influence thought. Thus, metaphors can also convey, evoke, or carry feelings and values, along with cognitive suggestions. This process is dependent on the connotations of the metaphor for the person experiencing it. Paul Ricoeur (1979) thus argues that the metaphorical process is not just a matter of cognition, but also involves imagination and feeling.<sup>6</sup> Erazim Kohák (1984:55) goes so far as to suggest that "a metaphor does not describe a fact—it seeks to evoke a sense. . . The meaning of metaphoric usage is nonfactual and nonformal."

Another point with respect to metaphors that is interesting is that they do not always work in a single direction. That is, something that is characterized metaphorically (the "principal" domain) using something else (the "subsidiary" domain), may also give something back to that subsidiary domain. This is more likely to occur where the principal domain is not entirely structured by the subsidiary domain. This idea is expressed by Susan Sontag in her essay *Illness as Metaphor*. In it, she explores the relationships between our metaphors and our realities, and particularly the ways that disease metaphors affect our perceptions of situations. However, one of her main points is that diseases that are used to metaphorically characterize social situations are in turn themselves constructed by our experience of those situations. Thus, she says, patients with cancer are required to endure the equating of their disease with the most evil of situations:

But how to be morally severe in the late twentieth century? How, when there is so much to be severe about, how, when we have a sense of evil but no longer the religious or philosophical language to talk intelligently about evil. Trying to comprehend "radical" or "absolute" evil, we search for adequate metaphors. But, the modern disease metaphors are all cheap shots. The people who have the real disease are also hardly helped by hearing their disease's name constantly being dropped as the epitome of evil. Only in the most limited sense is any historical event or problem like an illness (Sontag, 1978:85)



According to Sontag, not only does the comparison of cancer to social evils affect how cancer patients feel, but it also affects how the disease itself is perceived. Thus, until recently, cancer was most often seen as likely to be fatal and therefore requiring the most radical of treatments.

An example of this process with respect to the natural world may be seen in the use of such nature pejorations as "greedy as a pig," "the political wilderness," and "they acted like animals." Such turns of phrase use facets of Nature to negatively evaluate human personalities, conditions, behaviours, and other concepts. In doing so, they serve to reinforce existing stereotypes and misperceptions about those facets of Nature.

### Evaluating Metaphors of Nature

Bearing in mind that metaphors function both cognitively and emotively, the appropriateness of a metaphor of Nature may be judged along two principal lines. First, what sort of conceptual relationships does it suggest for both Nature's internal organization, and the specific place of humans in or in relationship to Nature? Thus, for example, does the metaphor construct Nature as an integrated whole, or as simply an assemblage of parts, or both? In other words, how reductionistic is it? Also, are humans seen as "part" of Nature, or as separate from it? Is it a dualistic metaphor? I would also ask whether the metaphor has the potential to reify or resourceize Nature, but these are just a few possible approaches. The specifics of any analysis will depend on its goals and context.

Second, what sorts of feelings towards Nature does the metaphor evoke? For example, does it suggest a positive and caring attitude, or does it lead to feelings of indifference or fear? A possible third line of evaluation might be the relative likelihood of the metaphor's becoming literalized. Thus, metaphors that are less likely to be taken as literal truths would be more appropriate than those which are more easily reified. To illustrate these points, a few examples are in order.

Nature as home is an evocative image which is often used directly in statements that argue for seeing Nature as "our home," and which is implied in the word "ecology" and its derivatives. This metaphor has mixed values. It can connote an ethic of care, for when we recognize the Earth as our home we may be more inclined to take care of and respect it. Furthermore, on a cognitive level it expresses the partial truth that Nature is where we live. However, there is a difference between feeling at home (rooted, having a sense of place) in your community or in Nature, and feeling that it is your home. The dominant image of home in this society is that of house or apartment, and not everyone bothers with housekeeping. Furthermore, it is potentially an anthropocentric metaphor for it implies that humans are the owners of the Earth, since the Nature Home is the place where humans live. If the rest of Nature is our home, then presumably we can do with it what we wish. Arguably, the remodelling and redecorating are already underway, making the resourceist dimensions of the metaphor evident. Similarly, the

metaphor is dualistic and reifying in that it constructs an idea of Nature as a physical structure within which humans reside, and not something that humans themselves partially constitute. In addition to these problems, or perhaps underlying them, is the likelihood of this metaphor being literalized, home is where we live, and so is Nature. Finally, the notion of Nature as home may be related to the problem of the increasing domestication of Nature by humans. The home is a tame place and domestication itself means bringing into the home, so if all of Nature is home, will all of Nature become managed and domesticated?

A second example, the metaphor of Nature as a living being is becoming more widespread. It may be seen in such phrases as "healthy ecosystems," "skin of the planet," "face of the earth," "poisoning the environment," "killing the world," "violence against the Earth," "cause the biosphere harm," "nourish the soil," "healing the Earth," "the death of Nature," and so on. It is an appealing, but not readily apparent characterization; most often it lies below the surface of our conscious consideration. James Lovelock seems to have taken this metaphor to its extreme limit in that he literally believes the Earth to be a living organism.

When considered, the living being metaphor is evocative and non-reifying, but does not give a clear image of where humans figure in Nature. At its worst, it could lead to such conceits as "humans as the brain of Nature," making it a decidedly anthropocentric-resourceist image, such as one finds in Lovelock (For a critique, see Livingston, 1985b). Alternatively, Nature as a living being might be seen as a separate entity from humans (consider the implied human/nature dualisms in some of the phrases cited above), making it a dualistic image. Furthermore, given the poor ways many humans now treat each other, not to mention most other living beings, there is no guarantee that this sort of imagery will encourage less "violent" relations between humans and the rest of Nature. On the other hand, perhaps it is the case that our poor treatment of other beings is already related to seeing them as non-living.

The metaphor of Nature as a tree is a familiar example of organic imagery. Warwick Fox uses this to characterize how he sees humans in relation to the other beings of Nature and Nature as a whole, we are all leaves on the tree, always in relation with the other leaves, constitutive of the whole tree, and yet retaining our individual identities. No particular entity is any more important than any others. For Fox (1990, 261-262), the image suggests the ideas of nurturing, and of impermanence and change. Furthermore, humans seem to have an affinity for trees and not simply as resources, so the image is particularly evocative and familiar. And, it is unlikely to be literalized. Overall, I find this a compelling metaphor, although just a bit static, but perhaps that is more a function of my own perceptions of trees in comparison to the ability of other beings to move around.

Finally, I also find the metaphor of Nature as music interesting, although it is rarely expressed verbally other than in the idea of living "in harmony with Nature." The one person who seems to make an exception to this is Hwa Yol Jung who says, among other things, that the harmony of Nature "is a symphony

or an orchestration of the differentiated many (Jung, 1986:40). This is both an evocative and potentially cognitively appropriate metaphor, with two possible exceptions.

Most people feel favourably about some form of music and music evokes powerful feelings of involvement; it is emotionally and kinaesthetically resonant. Interestingly, Bruce Berger (1978:64) notes that environmentalists "tend to an interest in music...wildly surpassing probability," and implies that there may be deeper forces at work than we know relating music and Nature. For example, there may be significant parallels between how humans experience music and how we experience non-human Nature.<sup>7</sup> Cognitively the metaphor is appealing because it is an example of unity in diversity. Also in its favour is the fact that music is a process; it is ephemeral. Furthermore, the metaphor conveys the idea that all beings, including humans, are participating in the process, and that all are needed to make the proper music.

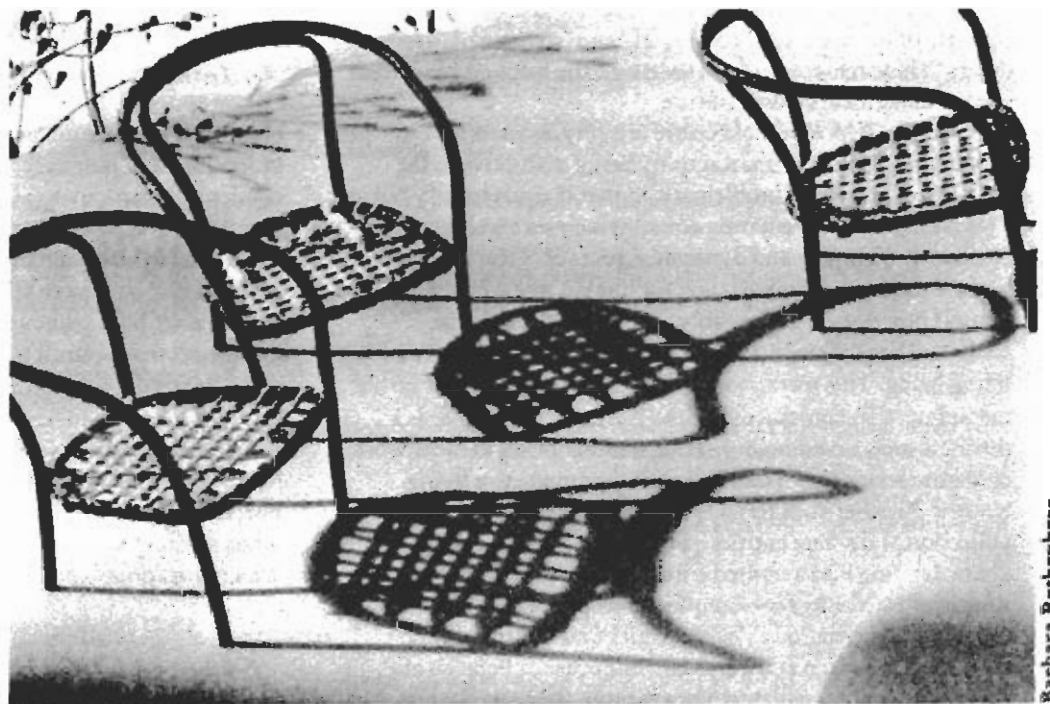
On the down side are the questions of whose idea of harmony we are to seek and how we are to know if we have achieved it. There are many different ideas of what constitutes musical harmony, just as there are many different notions of what is an appropriate human way of being in relation to the rest of Nature.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, there is the potential for interpreting this metaphor anthropocentrically by seeing humans as the orchestra conductor, band leader, etc. Despite these potential problems, I believe that this metaphor deserves further consideration, especially in conjunction with the quest for new, non-domineering ways of knowing Nature.

These are a few examples of what I consider to be the more interesting alternative metaphors of Nature. However, as I have indicated, these metaphors are not without their own potential pitfalls. Different people will interpret them in different ways, good and bad. All of this has made me wonder if this metaphorical reappraisal is not simply resulting in some of the same old vinegar being put into new bottles. This remains to be seen.

As with any analysis, the knife may be wielded along various axes. To add to the understanding of metaphors that I have proposed so far, I will now briefly note some of the trends in metaphorical usage within the critical environmental discourse. Given that certain streams of ecophilosophy are advocating a shift from the Western human view of Nature that is anthropocentric, resourceist, hierarchical, reductionistic,

reifying, and dualistic, to a sense of Nature that is ecocentric, non-domineering, egalitarian, respectful holistic, process-oriented, and relational, it is not surprising to see a similar shift in metaphors.

Firstly, it is interesting to note the shift in what Lakoff and Johnson call image-schemas, as used to characterize Nature. Historically, the pyramidal image-schema of an UP-DOWN Nature has predominated, and it is still widespread. This is a hierarchical, speciesist, dualistic, and ultimately anthropocentric conception, since it places humans above and separate from non-human Nature and serves to legitimate ideas of human



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superiority. Recognizing this, environmental thinkers have proposed an alternative image-schema—though I have not seen it presented in this way—of Nature as a CONTAINER in which humans live. In this view, humans are "within" Nature, "enveloped" by It, and "enfolded in" It. Nature is the "ecosphere" or the "environment."

Though it is meant to rectify the problems of the UP-DOWN image, the CONTAINER image is also potentially problematic. To the extent that it suggests an idea of Nature as that which surrounds humans, making them the focal point and object of concern, it is potentially anthropocentric. How much difference is there between seeing non-human Nature as something human society rests upon, and seeing it as that which surrounds human society? Furthermore, the CONTAINER image-schema of Nature still portrays humans as separate from Nature, even though we are inside It, so in this way it is also dualistic. A further irony of this apparently improved image is that it tends to reify Nature, by presenting a static view

One of the other problems with this image is that when humans are seen as "in Nature," there is a simplistic tendency to assume that all we do is therefore natural. This can lead to the belief that even nuclear weapons are natural. However, as Alan Drengson (1990) has pointed out to me, it is not a logical conclusion to draw: just because we are of Nature does not mean that all that we do is therefore natural, just as all that men do is not *ipso facto* male.

Two other image-schemas of Nature that figure in our language are those of PARTS-WHOLE and BALANCE. The PARTS-WHOLE image is expressed in the idea that "humans are part of nature," and in such other terms as "component," "element," "portion," and "fragments" used to refer to facets of Nature; in the word "whole" to refer to all of Nature; and in the constructions "made up," "composed," and "structured," among others. There remains in such language, the implicit suggestion of a reductionistic view of Nature.

The BALANCE of Nature imagery, as used, for example, in statements about human activity being disruptive to the "balance of nature," is problematic in that it tends to reify Nature. This is essentially a romantic notion which seems to ignore the constantly changing and dynamic aspects of Nature, and which is often used as a rationalization for human intervention in natural processes—to ostensibly "maintain" the balance.

I have already discussed the metaphor of Nature as living being. This metaphor can be seen as a response to earlier metaphors that constructed a dead Nature, for example as a machine or as a commodity. Thus, another trend in metaphors of Nature seems to be from a dead or inanimate to a living Nature. Another such trend is from characterizing Nature as a collection of discrete entities—a reductionistic way of seeing—to characterizing it as a unified entity, as holistic. Thus we have images of Nature as, for example, a "biospherical net," a web, an organism, a mosaic, or a system. Unity and holism may be conveyed, but often at the loss of some other dimension of ecocentric conceptualizing. For example, the metaphor of Nature as a Web of relations is somewhat reifying.

A further trend is from seeing Nature as a thing to seeing it as process, an antidote to the reification of Nature. Systems metaphors such as that of the biocomputer, try convey this, as does the music metaphor. But process is difficult to convey within a worldview that sees primarily things, and a language that emphasizes things over events. At present there are relatively few process metaphors of Nature.

Somewhat less positive than these three trends are two others. The first is a trend towards what I have already referred to as systems or cybernetic metaphors. These include Nature as computer, as spaceship, as information network, or most often as a generic self-regulating system. These are apparently intended to counteract mechanism and reductionism, however they seem to be little more than sophisticated versions of the same old ideas. Not an overly promising direction (See Berman, 1986; Livingston, 1986). The other less than promising trend is that from seeing Nature as a possession to seeing it as a partner. Thus instead of speaking as if Nature were a resource, crop, or commo-

dity—things humans use, some people speak of it as something we "work with," "follow," or "cooperate with." This is Nature as business partner, an assumed relationship of willingness on the part of Nature to "work" with its human facet. A variation on the partner theme is Nature as romantic companion (real or imagined), someone to "love" or someone that we have "raped." However, it is a human conceit to assume that our love is necessarily reciprocated. Such partner metaphors remain problematic in that they may be read in dualistic and anthropocentric ways.

### Be Aware of Images

Our language reflects the fact that we conceptualize our experiences metaphorically. What I have said about metaphor shows that the way language "works" is substantially different from the

objectivist idea of human thought and action as being independent of language. By creating limited realities and condensing particular values onto things, metaphors legitimize positions or responses to those things. Specifically, metaphors are central to how humans conceive of, feel for, speak about, and act towards Nature as a whole. And no matter how "natural" (in the senses of both seeming literal and relating to Nature) certain metaphors may seem, it is important to recall that they are only social constructions of Nature, and partial ones at that.

We seem to be in a period of transition and uncertainty. We do not yet have a new unifying paradigm or metaphor for Nature, and this, I think, is good. It gives us time to approach it purposefully, critically, and reflectively.<sup>9</sup> This allows us to do what Andrew McLaughlin (1985:318) suggests: be more aware of which metaphors and images we choose to characterize Nature:

Seeing the fundamental gap between thought and nonconceptual reality lessens, and may end completely, the attachment to any particular way of viewing reality. This would free us to see that the images we have of nature are not reflections of the reality of nature. In fact, they involve fundamental choices of how to image the world within which we exist, and how we choose to look at nature determines, in a most fundamental way, how we treat nature.

I have suggested that an ecocentric sensibility requires a new language and that new metaphors are an important part of this. I have argued that our new metaphors need to be both evocatively powerful and cognitively practical; they must evoke positive feelings about Nature, and suggest a conception that leads to humility, respect, and non-exploitive ways of living. Furthermore, we need metaphors that are not likely to be literalized and that are flexible and adaptive to individual ways of seeing. The majority of the alternatives that have so far emerged seem to fall down on certain dimensions of the anthropocentric-resourcist way of seeing Nature, while improving on others. This search for "better" metaphors of Nature is an ongoing quest.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Arguably we live in a multiplicity of worlds, but also arguably the two which I am referring to are fundamental in the sense of being foundational.

<sup>2</sup> The subject of the relationship between language and worldview may be explored in many places. Along with the other works cited in this paper, I have found Whorf (1956) and Rosenthal (1984) useful.

<sup>3</sup> By "view" of Nature I mean the attitudes, knowledge, beliefs, and values that make up how we feel and think about the natural world. Admittedly "view" is indicative of a visual bias which is part of our problem in perceiving Nature, so "senses," as suggested to me by Jacque Pearce, might be a better metaphor.

<sup>4</sup> Rowe reminds us that "ecology" comes from the Greek word *oikos*, meaning home. Thus, the ecosphere is the home-sphere.

<sup>5</sup> The layering of metaphors may be seen in the work of James Lovelock (e.g. 1979). He labels Nature "Gaia" (Nature as mother, goddess), says it is a unified organism (Nature as living being), and characterizes it as a cybernetic system.

<sup>6</sup> Despite using two words—thought and feeling—I do not see the process as involving two discrete activities. Rather, I see thought and feeling as intimately intertwined and inseparable anyway!

<sup>7</sup> For discussions of music and nature from an epistemological perspective see, for example, Jung (1986) and Rothenberg (1990).

<sup>8</sup> On the whole problem of our not being able to "know" Nature, see, for example, Evernden (1985 and 1992) and Bird (1987).

<sup>9</sup> This is the approach advocated by Morris Berman who is consistently critical of the ease with which humans in the West seem to adopt new paradigms. See Berman (1987 and 1989).

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**Mark Meisner** is a Ph.D. candidate in the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University (4700 Keele St., North York, Ontario, Canada M3J 1P3) (e-mail address: es051026@tonon.yorku.ca). His areas of research include environmental thought, language, representations of Nature, and environmental discourse in the mass media. He would like to acknowledge the support of the Tri-Council Eco-Research Doctoral Fellowship Programme for his work.

## Sarah Browning

### I Saw a Bird This Morning

I saw a bird this morning  
and it kept pace with me on my bicycle  
locked together in slapping propeller sounds  
of wings and wheels.

I was almost home. I was hot.  
The sweat of a million cells had broken out  
over my body. I wish I could say  
what kind of bird that bird was.

I can't. My life takes place in houses  
and attempts at the outdoors  
last thirty minutes. Not a study  
of trees, deciduous. Sometimes raccoons

startle me, that we kick around America  
with these gray cousins, their ringed tails,  
their dark shades. I see them most often  
as roadkill, quiet and curled by the side

of Route 47, like my cat  
curled to the sun.

**Sarah Browning** is director of the Amherst Writers and Artists Institute (AWAI), an organization which leads creative workshops for low-income women and children. She lives in Montague, Massachusetts.

# From Classical to Urban Wilderness

Andrew Light

IT IS A COMMONLY ACCEPTED NOTION AMONG MANY ENVIRONMENTAL philosophers, and in particular among those predisposed to deep ecology, that wilderness is something that should always be preserved because it contains an intrinsic value. I am entirely sympathetic to this idea. But sometimes it appears that the notion of wilderness is taken to be what philosophers call a "natural kind," that is, the name of the thing picks out some unchangeable essence in the world. The word 'wilderness' on this account identifies something that has always contained an inherently positive value. But to make such a claim ignores the important historical record of the legacy of wilderness. Examination of this record reveals that 'wilderness' began in the West as *the* term that marked out the physical and conceptual space that was not civilization. The wilderness was the jungle, the wild place, not fit for human habitation except for those beings who were not really fully persons, that is, the barbarians. And so, the wilderness did not just mark the geographical boundaries between human settlements and wild nature, but also a conceptual boundary between the civilized explorers and the 'savages' that were being encountered. The wilderness was, in short, the mental and physical boundary between humans and the radical/racial others. It is this particular conception of wilderness that I want to briefly investigate here as a way of opening the question of whether all sorts of wilderness are necessarily good.<sup>1</sup>

Now some may scoff at the mere suggestion that there are *different* sorts of wilderness. That reaction is understandable, but again, our historical memories are short and we can forget what most geographers and nature historians take as fundamental: our common perception of what we take to be the meaning of the term 'wilderness' today is the result of generations of disputes about what the word actually picks out in the world. So, even if we think we know what wilderness *really* is today, it is clear from the historical record that at times people thought it really was something quite different.

Very generally, there are at least two clear conceptions of wilderness identifiable throughout Western history. Some theorists distinguish these two as the classical and the romantic conceptions of wilderness. The classical view places wilderness as something to be feared, an area of waste and desolation inhabited by wild animals, savages and perhaps even supernatural evil. Here, human society is the standard by which the world is measured and hence conquest over the non-human areas, the wild areas, signals a form of human achievement "a victory over the dark forces and a measure of social progress."<sup>2</sup>

The romantic view (distilled, from among others, the Romantic poets) sees wilderness as an untouched space whose purity human contact corrupts and degrades. Here the wilderness is a place to be revered, a place of deep spiritual significance and a symbol of earthly paradise. Humans go into the wilderness for spiritual cleansing in the uncorrupted landscape. Meditation on the wilderness is encouraged as a path to mental clarity. The history of human encroachment into the wild represents a steady fall from grace rather than a victory over dark places.

The classical conception of wilderness was dominant in the West two hundred years ago, when the romantic idea began to gain ground (even though its roots are older). Today of course we tend to think of wilderness as a fairly innocuous place in terms of its danger to humans, and particularly in the United States have institutionalized (through for example the Wilderness Act) a sense of the wild as something that needs to be set aside and respected and hopefully serve as a conduit for beneficial nature experiences. Behind such attempts is a watered down version of the romantic ideal: wilderness is that form of nature that has remained close to its pristine state, meaning that it has not been corrupted by human intervention. It is around the romantic idea of wilderness that I believe many deep ecologists have formed an ecological ontology and ethic. Their claim is that experience with the wild results in a special understanding of the relationship between humans and nature.<sup>3</sup>

Interestingly enough the classical conception of wilderness as a place of great danger has persisted over time. Despite the fact that today in the first world we are largely at least neutral in our public conception of wilderness as wild nature, and at worst pseudo-romantics, the idea of an unknown evil at the edge of civilization still haunts us. But to understand how this idea is still around we need to know more about classical wilderness. We need to know what its core elements are, and for that task philosophy is well suited.

The classical view, to a large degree revolves around what I want to call a cognitive *dimension* of wilderness. Here I mean the sense in which the wilderness is a place that is always marked as the realm of the savage who is (in addition to other things) thought to be cognitively, or mentally, distinct from the civilized human. The savage is always marked as the thing that we outside of the classical wilderness, we civilized people, are not. We are superior to the savage simply in not being the savage and part of what makes us not savage is our possession of reason, our control over our passions. The savage is completely subject

to his passions and is in fact driven by them to the point where he may not escape the wilderness. But the escape from the wilderness is not merely a physical escape; if the savage leaves wild nature he is still wild because of the 'cognitive' wilderness within him. The cognitive dimension of wilderness refers then to the (mis)perceived wildness within the beings who are part of wild nature; it is not the mere physical surroundings but the claim of those surroundings on the mentalities of its inhabitants.

The classical view, with this important cognitive presupposition, was the dominant view of wilderness that traveled from the old world to the new and shaped the early Euro-North American perceptions of the Native Americans. For example, John Smith described New England in the seventeenth century as 'a hideous and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts and wild men.'<sup>1</sup> So uncontested was this assumption of a cognitive distinction between civilized and uncivilized in early North American history (with a few very notable exceptions), that different thinkers developed radically different views of the potential of civilizing various kinds of savages without ever questioning the grounds for their debate. While for example, in the US, some believed that the African "savage" could be made to be civilized (with appropriate "guidance") outside of their wild jungles, they held that other savages—most importantly Native Americans—were beyond hope. Others, like Thomas Jefferson argued passionately that the formula was reversed.

One way of looking at the extremity of this situation is in recognizing that the classical wilderness becomes a stand in for a place where the civilized do not want to go because it is the result of spiritual despair, that is, as a replacement for Hell. Certainly, one cannot help but think that the cognitive wilderness was, for at least the early Puritans, a projection of their deepest fears for what they could become in this new land

if they were not careful. The wilderness came to stand for the darkest reaches of the human psyche.

The classical position can be summarized as emerging out of three related (and often overlapping) theses, that is, three characteristics that must be present in some form, but not necessarily at the same time, for there to be a wilderness of the classical kind:

(P1) Separation. Since the wilderness is bad, evil, cruel, etc., it must be separated from humans—it must be marked off as distinct and kept out of civilized spaces.

(P2) Savagery. The inhabitants of the wilderness are non-human beasts and are accordingly demonized and vilified.

(P3) Superiority. In contrast, civilized humans and civilization may be celebrated in its successful separateness and triumph over wilderness as virtuous and superior.

The idea of the classical wilderness is of course a concept that is constantly going through revisions and so the relative existence of these characteristics, as applied to certain spaces, may indicate a kind of wilderness in transition. As, for example, Euro-Americans began to eliminate the threat of Native Americans in the 1800s the relevance of P2 diminished for a time, but for some the wilderness still existed as a place inferior to white civilization (P3).

Certainly wilderness on the classical account as identified in these qualities is a cultural construction with an identifiable history,<sup>2</sup> and as an antidote to this view, the romantic conception is likewise a cultural construction created for a certain purpose. Importantly though my claim is *not* that everything is a cultural construction (as some postmodernists might seem to suggest) or even that all referring expressions to parts of nature are cultural constructions. On my account, the hydrological cycle, to pick just one example, is not a cultural construction.

Wilderness, or as I prefer to think about it given this genealogical account, 'wild nature,' is somehow different in kind. While it certainly does contain a dimension that is scary and harsh, the experience of which helped to form the classical ideal, it can also be a place of personal transcendence as the romantics claimed. But the reality of the *wild* must lie somewhere between these two poles of terror and bliss: yes, wild nature is savage *and* it is also beneficent, but certainly not exclusively either all the time. Whatever this reality is, for good or for bad, 'wilderness' is a culturally loaded term whose reference is dependent on the social context in which it is used.

But nonetheless, those of us committed to preservation of wilderness can wonder how that which we find invaluable today was used to justify such an incredible system of injustice at one time. Mostly I think we accept this as an unfortunate historical legacy that has fortunately changed for the better. But how much has really changed? How often have we heard popular news accounts which imply a sense of this old concep-



M.J. Ankenman



tion of wilderness in descriptions of poverty stricken inner cities? How often do we count among our blessings *not* to be living in New York City or Los Angeles? Is this not a will to be separated? These concrete jungles sometimes seem to be the new heirs to classical wilderness and too often the descriptions of inner city inhabitants seem to mirror the descriptions of old notions of "savages" in the green wild.

A cursory examination of one location, Los Angeles, and one aspect of classical wilderness, separation (PI), demonstrates this transformation. Not specifically commenting on Los Angeles, but certainly with this city in mind, we can see this thesis at work in the dire descriptions of urban life in the final report of Richard Nixon's 1969 National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence: "...we live in 'fortress cities' brutally divided between 'fortified cells' of affluent society and 'places of terror' where the police battle the criminalized poor."<sup>6</sup>

Mike Davis' *City of Quartz*, a most impressive resource for fleshing out the particulars of these attitudes that fortify the separation thesis, explains how these earlier descriptions matured. Much of the vision of the urban wilderness can be attributed to the run-away white middle-class imagination, absent according to Davis, from any first hand understanding of the inner city, so that any real threat is seen only through a "demonological lens."<sup>7</sup> This lens though seems to be the same one that informed early colonial perceptions of the "natural" wilderness and its inhabitants. In both cases the perception of a classically savage wasteland was enough to designate an area as wilderness and justify its separation without needing a fully informed description of the actual physical place.

While the justification for such descriptions may stem from actual dangers in these areas the results of this perception on urban policy are nonetheless extraordinary. In an attempt to create a new urban center in LA, which would be attractive to "respectable people," Davis calls our attention to the construction of what he calls "Fortress LA," a stronghold I would contend, against the new urban frontier.

The carefully manicured lawns of LA's Westside sprout forests of ominous little signs warning: 'Armed Response'.

Downtown, a publicly-subsidized 'urban renaissance' has raised the nation's largest corporate citadel, segregated from the poor neighborhoods around it by monumental architectural glaciers...In the Westlake and San Fernando areas the LA police department barricades streets and seal off poor neighborhoods as part of their 'war on drugs.' In Watts... (a recolonization) of the inner-city retail markets: a panopticon shopping mall surrounded by staked metal fences and a substation of the L.A.P.D. in a central surveillance tower.<sup>8</sup>

Davis traces the fortress mentality at least partially to the plans for "re-segregated spatial security," outlined in the 1965 McCone Commission Report ("Violence in the City—An End or Beginning?") which followed the original Watts riots. Following the more recent riots, Davis traces these transformations more specifically as a deliberate movement responding to the

'surrender' of the cities by a decade of Republican urban policies (with Democratic complicity) designed to privatize the public sphere. This is a returning, he claims, of the cities to the Darwinian or Hobbesian wilderness.

Is this however just a harmless if somewhat misplaced metaphor? Perhaps to some it is. But there is a plausible case to be made that our accepted descriptions of persons and places are extraordinarily important in determining what are taken to be accepted political choices. Is this not the lesson of the story of the classical wild? Even though the descriptions of the places were false, the *effect* of the acceptance of the legitimacy of those descriptions provided an illusory context in which real harm could occur. And do we not, as wilderness activists, take the importance of descriptions to be one of our core assumptions? Surely we do, because it is our deep concern that wilderness be thought by most to be something that should be treated with dignity and a sense of justice. Let us hope that this same sense of justice is eventually extended to the inhabitants of the urban wilderness as well. "Wilderness Forever," is a useful and pragmatic slogan; it may not be true though that all types of wilderness ought to be preserved.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>This essay is in part a summary of the argument of my "Urban Wilderness," forthcoming in *Wild Ideas*, edited by David Rothenberg (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1995).

<sup>2</sup>See John Rennie Short, *Imagined Country: Environment, Culture and Society*, (New York: Routledge Press, 1991), p. 6.

<sup>3</sup>See for example Naess's remarks on the importance of interaction with the wilderness in the formation of his work in David Rothenberg's *Is it Painful to Think: Conversations with Arne Naess* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1993).

<sup>4</sup>Short, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>5</sup>See for example Max Oelschlaeger's excellent genealogy of the idea of wilderness in his, *The Idea of Wilderness: From Prehistory to the Age of Ecology* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1991), especially his account of the idea of wilderness in the Western middle ages.

<sup>6</sup>See National Committee on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, *To Establish Justice, To Ensure Domestic Tranquillity* (Final Report), Washington DC, 1969, *cit.* in Mike Davis, *City of Quartz*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), p. 224.

<sup>7</sup>Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 224. Another good source for the politics and ideology behind urban geography is Edward Soja's *Postmodern Geographies*, (London: Verso, 1989).

<sup>8</sup>Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

**Andrew Light** is a postdoctoral fellow in the Environmental Health Program and an adjunct professor in the philosophy department at the University of Alberta. He is the editor, with Eric Katz, of the forthcoming collection, *Environmental Pragmatism* (Routledge, 1996), and the co-founder of the Society for Philosophy and Geography.

# Knights of Nothingness

## Wildness in the Literature and Practice of Mountaineering

Mikel Vause

**H**UMANS, IN THEIR SEARCH FOR KNOWLEDGE AND DOMINION, have struck out on many memorable expeditions to achieve these desires, many times at great risk. The old adage "Nothing ventured, nothing gained" summarizes the attitudes that rationalized the risk factor. But another element attached to the idea of risk was that there must be some purpose connected to the venture, i.e., land, gold, science and personal fame. The idea of risk-taking for anything other than material gain or for science was sheer lunacy.

This is also clearly represented in other forms of activity that are risky such as Arctic exploration. Roald Amundsen, after being the first man to reach the South Pole, had little to show for it; he was greatly in debt and physically worn out. His only reward was the fact that he had done it.

The very birth of alpine climbing came as a result of an offer made by the Geneva scholar Horace-Benedict de Saussure, who, after first reviewing Mont Blanc, in 1760, offered a reward to anyone who reached the summit. It is ironic that an activity that, in the late part of the present century, is practiced for intrinsic, almost solely spiritual reasons, was the child of materialism. Material motive no longer accounts for mountaineering, yet the encouragement of individuality and personal liberty, the sort of romantic freedom that led visionary humans to great achievements and rewards in science, industry and exploration is still questioned when applied to mountaineering. This is possibly due to mountaineering being so purely visionary as well as so lacking in any material recompense. Robert Frost examines the idea of climbing for its own sake in his poem "The Mountain":

... It doesn't seem so much to climb a mountain  
You've worked around on foot of all your life.  
What would I do. Go in my overalls,  
With a big stick, the same as when the cows  
Haven't come down to the bar at milking time?  
Or with a shotgun for a strong black bear?  
I wouldn't seem real to climb for climbing it  
(quoted in *Luthem* 40-44).

Even in a time of constant thrill-seeking and "adrenaline highs," the most adamant adventurer sees climbing as a sure-fire path to suicide. Those generally associated with mountain climbing are seen as somewhat deranged, having a death wish. In a television documentary dealing with the American Everest

North Face Expedition the American climber, Jim Wickwire was asked why death seemed to override his wish to live, a question naturally directed to him as a mountaineer. His answer was that the death wish attributed to climbers is a fallacy, that, in fact, climbing is an affirmation of life and all of its goodness and joy.

The careful reading of essays dealing with ascent clearly illustrate that climbers are more than just sportspersons, they are artists, poets and philosophers. Like Emerson, Wordsworth and other great thinkers and poets who believed in the divine nature of humans, they reach their godlike potential through such challenges as those found climbing, not only in the wild back country of the remote mountain ranges of the world, but many times in local crags as close to home as Walden Pond was to Thoreau's Concord.

Wilfrid Noyce, a prolific writer as well as active participant in mountaineering, states that the desire for risk and adventure is innate:

If adventure has a final and all-embracing motive, it is surely this: we go out because it is our nature to go out, to climb mountains, and to paddle rivers, to fly to the planets and plunge into the depths of the oceans. . . . When man ceases to do these things, he is no longer man (quoted in Schultheis 33).

But the climber must realize that with the commitment to climb comes responsibility and possibly death as a result of personal choices.

An examination of the literature of mountaineering provides not only many exciting tales of high adventure but also, if closely examined, one comes to understand the psychology and philosophy of those who wish, through the medium provided them by the ice-covered faces of nature's grand and timeless monuments, to ply their art in places of limited access. It is my intent to focus on the intellectual and social implications found in mountain writing as offshoots of the romantic essay rather than adventure stories only.

The literature of the mountains is transcendental by nature. Because language is limiting it contains the inevitably incomplete record of the climber/writer's sojourn in the ideal world, which though incomplete, still provides the reader with a vicarious account of enlightenment achieved by the climb and a written vision of the climber's art achieved through his travels in the Earth's wild places and a record of the physical exhilaration

felt by the climber fortunate enough to reach the summit. It matters not if it be a first ascent or the hundredth visit to the top, the experience is the end in itself.

The promise of reward to those willing to risk possible catastrophe is of little extrinsic value, but the intrinsic reward is beyond value or price. This gift from activity in wild nature is possibly best explained by John Muir, who constantly sought after the prize found at the tops of mountains:

Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves (Wolf, *Unpublished Journals* 317).

The mountaineer is glad for every opportunity to return to the mountains in search of the divinity only available to the hardy. Muir put into words the inner feeling of all climbers upon their return to the mountain wilderness:

I ... am always glad  
to touch the living rock again  
and dip my head in the high mountain sky  
(Wolf, *Unpublished Journals* 221).

This communion of humans with nature does not have to be unique to the climber, but to all who are willing to make the efforts needed—who willingly reach deeper within themselves to overcome the most difficult problems for the sake of the spiritual reward. In this study of writings which are the works of climbers, the purpose is to show that mountaineers are not only superb athletes, but also deep thinkers rather than demented and suicidal, and who, through their writing provide those who lack the climber's gift a record of the experience and possibly the understanding of the motives that drive the climber to scale the few high places and break from the otherwise natural horizontal existence of the generic human both literally and figuratively. The climber, by providing the record of his climb, acts as a proxy for those who, for various reasons are unable to go into the wilds. One philosophy of the mountaineer is very clearly presented by the Italian climber, Walter Bonatti, who explains the psyche of the climber as being set for high achievement, unwilling to settle for the mediocrity so commonly found in industrialized humans, who willingly takes risks, not for anything material, but for the uplift of the inner spirit which directs the character of humans in all of their aspects. This is not to say that climbers are superhuman or semidivine, but that their philosophical perspectives are an explanation of why climbers undertake such risks.

Bonatti refers again and again to the effects of industry on society and how humans have come gladly to settle for a mere reaction of their whole potential. He contrasts this dull, over-civilized humanoid with the climber whose rebellion directed against the morbid effects one sees in "collective society" is manifest in their willingness to risk their lives in order to issues

their protest against such an anesthetized existence as is found in most human settlements. This philosophy is not unique to Bonatti but is patently romantic and could as easily be the words of Wordsworth who in his poem "The Old Cumberland Beggar" states his concern of how industry affects man.

Along with recognition of the romantic ideal that is clear in climbing philosophy it must be remembered that the rewards of the adventure do not come easy. Rob Schultheis explains the efforts of achieving spiritual growth by adventure this way: "Adventuring requires determination, curiosity, toughness, and—especially—the ability to solve problems with real creativity" (34), the same elements found anywhere there is success. It is with this in mind that the climber/writer writes.

All humans need to participate in adventure, to pioneer new frontiers, sometimes even at the risk of life, and to do it under their own power using few and possibly none of technology's products to add an even greater feeling of accomplishment and contribute to their ascent—physically and spiritually.

The philosophy of unencumbered progress as advocated most clearly by Henry David Thoreau, in *Walden*, is also the philosophy of Walter Bonatti, who states that though climbing starts out as a sport, the end result can be great spiritual rewards, and that the less material baggage one takes in the mountains, the greater possibility of reward.

Bonatti's belief is that mountaineering is an activity which provides inspiration and fulfills requirements set by his temperament, follows a tradition established "out of sacrifice, suffering and ... love," and which does not allow for the easy win or to win at any cost. Bonatti's philosophy fits the theory of Risk Exercise of Dr. Sol Ray Rosenthal, who after many years of research and study has found "that there is something in risk that enhances the life of the individual—some-thing so real, something with such impact that people who have experienced it need to experience it again and again" (Furlons 40).

The idea of risk must be clarified; it is more than just "the joy of survival or a sense of self-validation. It [is] a powerful psyche and visceral kick—an exhilaration, a euphoria, a sense of heightened awareness" (Furlons 93).

Heightened consciousness is reward of the transcendental experience common to Emerson, Thoreau and Muir. Dr. Rosenthal indicates that such "transcendent" experiences are common to the risk taker. Risk taking results in a very personal revelation about one's limitations and abilities. What is "risky" to one may be commonplace to another, but regardless, "risk ... heightens perceptions because it enforces an absolute concentration on the moment, as opposed to the ennui. This can pervade any endeavor in which there's nothing important at stake" (Furlons 94).

Dr. Rosenthal, in an interview with *Outside Magazine's* William Berry Furlons, explains the differences between Risk Exercise and risk taking this way: Risk exercise differs from the common concept of risk taking in that it is measured. Rosenthal is not talking about a mindless pursuit, such as diving off the Golden Gate Bridge to see if, just this once, you can survive. "In the manic risk, terror or despair is the only predictable emotion."

he says. One of the assumptions of Risk Exercise is that the risk taker has the skills to match or overcome the risk. "Otherwise terror simply overwhelms the Risk Exercise response."

In essence, this response is a sensation that envelops the risk taker, usually, though not inevitably, after the activity. The sensation varies in intensity and duration according to the individual and to the degree of risk. Rosenthal is careful to distinguish the Risk Exercise response from the "adrenalin high" some risk takers say they have experienced. Adrenalin, notes Rosenthal, is simply a "fight or flight" secretion that speeds up the body or gives it more energy. The Risk Exercise response goes further, taking on both a strong sensory and strong cerebral dimension.

**Sensory:** "In talking with people who've had a Risk Exercise response," says Rosenthal, "you find that they describe a very pronounced sense of well-being. In most people it's a feeling of exhilaration, even euphoria. They talk of having achieved more of their potential as human beings, of feeling fulfilled and yet having a greater expectancy of their lives." They talk, he adds, not only of feeling keenly aware of the world around them, but also of themselves and their own awareness. They not only see, for example, but they know what they see. And they know that they know. This accounts for the risk taker's vivid feeling of potency—he can control his increased sensory power beyond anything he ever knew. Unlike someone who is drunk or otherwise mind-altered, he is not separated from reality. "Reality doesn't intimidate him, because he feels so good within himself," says Rosenthal. "He has the strong feeling that his whole life has been enhanced, that he has been enhanced."

**Cerebral:** In the more pronounced Risk Exercise response, the individual enjoys the power and pleasure of summoning up the "wholeness" of his thought. His mind, given more information from his senses, somehow seems to give it all greater meaning. At the same time, the mind discriminates among the various sensations and meanings so that there is less mental clutter and an increased capacity for setting priorities. "The result is that people find their concentration is increased immensely," says Rosenthal. "They find that they can go to the heart of a problem and find a solution." What if the problem is emotional, not cerebral? "They manage to take the hardest step in meeting such a problem—they recognize that it involves their emotions, not their reason, which is an enormous discipline in itself."

For generations, risk activities were thought to be for the inane or the insane. "We've all been taught from infancy that danger, the presence of risk, is the signal to stop, to turn back, to cease whatever we're doing," says Rosenthal. People who persisted in risk taking were said to be unbalanced in a dazzling variety of ways. Some were said to have death wishes, the favorite cliché of journalism. Some were said to be exhibiting supermasculinity as a way of overcoming subconscious feelings of inadequacy. Some were said to be counterphobic, seeking to conquer their own worst fears by exposing themselves to whatever caused those fears. Rosenthal, on the other hand, believes that measure risk becomes understandable and even desirable when seen

simply as the act of a person seeking to enhance his life by exploring inner resources (Furlon 40-93). Mountaineering, clearly, is more closely related to Risk Exercise than to risk taking because its effects or rewards are mostly intrinsic.

The influence of mountaineering and the results of the influences are the creation of a more spiritual and ultimately responsible individual who is given over to spiritual intrinsic betterment which comes from increased personal awareness and self-control in all situations rather than a self-indulgent, self-centered being who receives uplift only through ratification of worldly appetites achievable by no effort or at best the slight effort it takes to unloose his purse strings.

The comparison made by Galen Rowell in his essay "Storming a Myth," dealing with the physical and spiritual, explains in elegant terms the necessary philosophical approach to climbing:

I know that climbing is merely a vehicle, a tool, and the climber a tool user. As a tool, climbing can be used to overcome 5.12 cracks, the difficulties of a Grade 6 wall, or an 8000 meter peak. But held only to this narrow definition, it can eventually bring boredom and despair.

The climbing tool has a spiritual component as well. At the heart of the climbing experience is a constant state of optimistic expectation, and when that state is absent, there is no reason to continue climbing. "I have found it" can apply not only to those who feel they have found God, but to those who, like me, continue to find Shangri-Las where we experience fresh, child-like joy in everything that surrounds us, including memories that are the most long-lasting and intense of our lives (quoted in Tobias, *The Mountain Spirit* 85-91).

It is the purpose of climbers/writers to provide the reader with at least some information that was uplifting to them during the climb and which not only provides extrinsic justification for climbing, but also is an intrinsic reward, that comes from sharing their experiences with others. No matter how eloquent or profound writers are they cannot live the total experience for their readers, but through their writing they can entice the reader to an active involvement, possibly on a firsthand level. This tactic was used, with great effect, by John Muir during his campaign for national parks in America. His glowing reports of America's wild places attracted a great deal of attention. He invited all "overcivilized" people into the wilderness and promised them "terrestrial manifestations of God." Because of his writings many national parks were established like Yellowstone and Yosemite.

Doug Scott is a leader in modern British climbing and an active climber/writer. His essay, "On the Profundity Trail," an account of his climb of El Capitan's Salathe Wall with Peter Habeler, carries the idea of participation and calculated risk to the more limited audience of the climbers but is applicable to non-climbers as well and again illustrates Bonatti's mention of the harmful effects a collective society can have on humans. Not

only does Scott support Bonatti's basic philosophy, but his ideas also tie in with the Emersonian theory of the transcendental experience from contact with wilderness. This results in personal growth as well as a "higher conduct of life" when one returns to the social world. But according to Scott the chances of achieving such spiritual and intellectual heights come from one's willingness to risk something of value—the longer the trip the more risk involved and the greater the possibility of growth.

These examples represent the psychological and philosophical ideas that help connect the realities of mountaineering, mountains, and travel. The next step is to see the effects mountains have had on literature. One can hardly read the works of the romantic writers, regardless of nationality, without coming across numerous references to mountains or wild terrain: man being naturally impelled to ascent in all its forms. This literature could hardly exist without reference to mountains and attempts to ascend them. As before mentioned, after he put aside the need for justification for climbing mountains, i.e. science and material wealth, mountains become a source of spiritual riches. The effort made to climb them was rewarded by spiritual uplift and a triumph of the inner. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, in 1802, made what has been recorded as the first descent of Scafell Cliff in the lake district of England. Just the small entry in his notebooks that recorded the event is filled with awe and wonder: "But O Scafell, they enormous Precipices" The description of Coleridge's climb appears under the dates of August 1 and 9, 1802:

The poet Samuel T. Coleridge made what he described as a "circumcursion" from Keswick by Newlands to Buttermere and St. Bees, up Ennerdale, thence by Gosforth to Wasdalehead, from where he climbed Scafell, descended to Taws in Eskdale, and the continued by Uiphaand, Coniston to Brathay and so back to Keswick. It is clear from his notebooks, now in the British Museum, that he descended from the summit of Scafell to Mickledore by the route we now call Broad Stand. He got down by "dropping" by the hands over a series of "smooth perpendicular rock" walls, got "cragfast" or nearly so, and finally slid down by a "chasm" or "rent" as between two walls. He recorded too that on reaching Mickledore his "limbs were all of a tremble," a phenomenon not unknown among modern cragsmen (*Mountain* 30:17-18).

It was sixty years before the next climb of Scafell was recorded.

The myth of mountains being terrible and the hiding places of evil was dispelled by the men who climbed and returned with a report of the sublime rather than dread. As John Ruskin explained:

Thus the threatening ranges of dark mountains, which in nearly all ages of the world, men have looked upon with aversion or with terror, are in reality sources of life and happiness far fuller and more beautiful than the bright fruitfulness of the plain (Smith *The Armchair Mountaineer* 182).

Lord Byron, in his poem, "Solitary," written in 1820, takes the idea of Ruskin further: "To climb the trackless mountains all unseen, the wild flock that never needs a fold, alone o'er steep and foaming falls to lean. This is not solitude, 'tis but to hold converse the Nature's charms, and view her stores unrolled" (Styles 337). Byron mentions the extrinsic beauties of the mountains but in "The True Shrine" he explains the intrinsic blessing derived from mountains by those who climb them:

Not vainly did the early  
Persian make  
His altar the high places and  
The peak  
Of earth-o'er gazing mountain,  
And thus take  
A fit and unwall'd temple,  
There to seek  
The Spirit, in whose honour shrines  
Are weak,  
Upreared of human hands.

The awesome power of nature is also recorded by Wordsworth in his poem, "England and Switzerland, 1802," in which he deals with the sea and the mountains and the freedom that wild places provide for the man who is willing to venture out:

Two voices are there; one is of the sea.  
One of the mountains, each a mighty voice:  
In both from age to age thou didst rejoice,  
They were the chosen music, Liberty!  
There came a tyrant, and with holy glee  
Thou fought'st against him—but hast vainly striven:  
Though from thy Alpine hides at length and riven  
Where not a torrent murmurs heard by these,  
—Of one deep bliss thine ear hath been bereft;  
Then cleve, O cleve to that which still is left—  
For high-soul'd maid, what sorrow would it be  
That Mountain foods should thunder as before,  
And Ocean bellow from the rocky shore,  
And neither awful Voice be heard by Thee!

As early as 1668 William Penn recognized the virtues and necessity of wild nature even from a religious point of view:

Christ loved and chose to frequent Mountains, Gardens, Seaside. They are requisite to the growth of piety; and I reverence the virtue that feels and uses it, wishing there were more of it in the world (Styles 157).

As mentioned before, we seek ascent, whether viewed from an evolutionary perspective or a religious perspective the need to move up is there. Our whole society is built on advancement. In 1740, Alexander Pope talked of the inborn need for ascent in the lines of his poem, "Alps on Alps":

So pleas'd at first, the towering Alps we try,  
 Mount o'er the vales and seem to touch the sky;  
 The eternal snows appear already past,  
 And the first clouds and mountains seem the last.  
 But those attain'd, we tremble to survey  
 The growing labours of the lengthening way:  
 The increasing prospect tires our wondering eyes—  
 Hills peep o'er hills, and Alps on Alps arise!

Even in times of sorrow and tragedy directly resulting from climbing the mountains, there comes intrinsic beauty. In 1903 three climbers were killed while attempting to climb Coleridge's Scafell Cliff. Here is the epitaph from the gravestone in Wasdale Head churchyard:

One moment stood they as the angels stand  
 High in the stainless immanence of air;  
 The next they were not, to their Fatherland  
 Translated unaware (Styles 105).

The number of references to the grandeur and beauty, the strength and power, and the spiritual necessity derived from mountain travel are many. And many of the poetic lines are direct results of firsthand experience of the poets in the mountains, but the writings of those who live to climb and participated in the ascents of the extremely high and wild mountains provide even better insight into the need to climb—for humans to continually scrape and pull themselves toward the clouds by way of the eternal rocks and snow and ice of which the mountains are made.

Basically, it is a romantic tendency: this emphasis on individuality, on close contact with nature as a spiritual matter, on the release and freedom that come from this kind of experience. And all this tends to be put in an elevated language, a kind of inspirational "chant." The selections also produce elevated ideas which are the result of serious craftsmanship not as mountaineers only, but as artists, as writers. As Hilair Belloc said: "The greater mountains, wherein sublimity so much excels our daily things, that in their presence experience dissolves, and we seem to enter upon a kind of eternity." (Styles 153)

The next logical step in the evolution of mountain literature is the essay. Mountaineers have the distinction of being prolific writers. Some claim it is ego that stimulates such outpouring, but Emerson's "chant" theory appears to be a more correct conclusion as to why climbers write. Of all the many activities defined as sport, mountaineers and explorers have produced a larger canon than other groups of sportsmen. This may be partly due to the nature of the participants i.e., scholars, scientists, philosophers, clergy. All of them are required by virtue of their vocations to write, so it appears natural that they would also record and make observations about their avocations.

History illustrates the special place mountains have held in the past. Is it any surprise that humans naturally look to mountains as sources of inspiration? Mountains represent a place of renewal, of rebirth which draw humans toward them.

This desire to visit and climb the mountains will always be alive in humanity regardless of the efforts of technology to make humans soft, their mind, their memory will pull them toward the pearls. Human potential is unlimited and climbing recognizes it:

However mechanised, or automatised, the conditions of human life may become the same number of human beings will, I believe, continue to carry this inherited memory reinforced for action by the new awareness of mountains and of mountaineering which has come with this last century. There will be men and women who find among hills forgetfulness of fear and of their anxieties in the restoration of their sense of proportion, the recovery, of reasonable measure, which was the mountains' original gift to men; or who, like Smuts and like so many, will see again upon the mountains spirits of religion—true symbols, founded upon the same inspiring mountain principles of measure, proportion, order and of an uprightness which points a way beyond clouds and, at least towards the stars (Young 115-116).

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- Mikel Vause** is a professor of English at Weber State University in Ogden, Utah. He is an accomplished mountaineer and the editor of *Wilderness Tapestry* (Nevada), a book of essays from the North American Interdisciplinary Wilderness Conference, an event he convenes each year. He has also edited a book on women mountaineers, entitled *Rock & Roses* (Mountain'n'Air Books).

This essay appeared in a slightly different form as an introduction to *On Mountains and Mountaineers*, published by Mountain n'Air Books, La Crescenta, CA 1993.



# Conceptions of Nature among Saami Pastoralists

Dag T. Elgvin <sup>1</sup>

**T**HE TERM 'WILDERNESS' HAS BEEN CALLED TOTALLY UNSATIS-  
factory with regard to native conceptions of the earth,  
as it originated among peoples who considered the land  
of the indigenous peoples as "empty," and who conquered their  
lands. Not everyone in industrialized Norway identifies with the  
'wilderness' concept, myself included. Where nature is living  
freely, without intrusion of industrialized society, we feel at  
home. We use the term *fri natur*, 'open nature', as Nils Faarlund  
has written.<sup>2</sup> For both these reasons I have chosen the word  
'nature' in my title instead of 'wilderness.'

The Saami relationship with nature has a physical as  
well as a spiritual dimension: As example of the first, people are  
drinking the water of the land and eating the meat of the land's  
animals. For the second, people show respect for the ancestors  
resting in the soil.

In the physical dimension, there is a naturalistic view.  
The spiritual dimension goes beyond this: nature has value as it  
mediates a historical identification with the land. There is also a  
third way of ascribing value to nature: Believing there is a God,  
having created all animals and plants, gives these value inde-  
pendent of eventual usefulness for humans, because they remind  
us of the Creator. This view probably exists in all cultures,  
although it is not often heard in the Western world, where  
consumer culture dominates.

All three types of value exist among reindeer-herding  
Saami pastoralists. This group constitutes less than 10% of the  
Saami population. However, as was stated by the Saami  
Parliament in 1990, the pastoralists' way of life is a central carrier  
of Saami culture. This is partly due to the position of Saami  
language, which has a superior status in this way of life.

Although I have had regularly contact with Saami  
reindeer nomads for several years, I dare not to speak 'on behalf  
of them.' Rather, I give glimpses of their way of life, and present  
my interpretations of life situations and utterances. This is  
therefore a work of 'cultural translation.'<sup>3</sup>

## Pastoral Life in the North of Norway

The family I have worked the most with has  
but a small flock of reindeer, and although  
this family, like all Saami pastoralists, is part  
of the monetary economy, they eagerly try to  
keep up traditional ways of nomadic life.

They live close to the village of Kautokeino,  
in the interior of Finnmark. Their reindeer are kept through the  
winter about 15 km away. It is January, temperature is below 30°

Celsius. We drove out on skidoos before the daylight came, it  
took us an hour to reach the grazing area. There the family had a  
'lavoo', a tent like the Native American tepee.

We drove about in the hills, looking for the animals,  
and checking the amount and quality of the vegetation. We soon  
found the animals, they had not walked too long distance during  
the night. We found out how close neighboring flocks were. The  
animals would move against the wind; therefore we moved our  
flock down the wind, to another partly forested hill. We felt  
sure that no other flocks would disturb ours the first coming day  
and night. This work took us less than one hour.

We then drove back to the lavoo, in no hurry. We cut  
down a silver birch, the dominating tree species, and made a fire.  
The warmth from the fire made us soon take off *pesken*, the  
reindeer fur outer coat. The snow in the pot melted, and soon the  
coffee-water was boiling. We fried dried meat and ate this  
together with bread. The living fire, with flames licking up-  
wards, invited us to talking. First of all about the grazing  
condition and the danger of other flocks intermingling with  
ours. Our minds got quiet, and we also talked about personal  
matters, of how we felt, and of religious matters.

The woman, Marit, leading this family's herding work—  
the husband had to stay home because of illness—kept her flock  
on its own. Earlier she had the flock together with her four  
brothers', 100 km further east, close to the Finnish border. "My  
brothers stay out for a week, two at a time," she said. "I decided to  
pull out of the cooperative work, partly because I needed to be  
closer to home. But also because I wanted to keep the flock in the  
same area as my father did, and his father before him. We have  
been grazing this area for generations. I feel it my duty to use  
this area, as my forefathers did. With care, without destroying."

The conscience of being part of a lineage chain also  
extends to future generations. She continued: "I have wanted my  
children to continue this life. But it is important that they want it  
too! I have brought them with me when herding, and also when  
we migrate from the interior to the coast in the spring. Every  
year, from they were born. It is important that they get to feel at  
home in the mountains. This means of course knowing how to  
manage, but more that they *feel* this is their home."

"This must be achieved in young years. If the children  
are not participating in the work in the mountain till they end 9-  
year mandatory school, it is *too late*. They don't get that inner  
feeling of belonging to nature."

She paused. "That mandatory school was extended from  
7 to 9 years was a *disadvantage* for us nomads. Even if the pupils



are free from school some weeks every year to join the family in the herding work, this is too little!

I was reminded of a migration in 1979. The youngest daughter was 2 years old, and her three brothers below 10. Migration would normally take 8-10 days, covering more than 150 km. Midway over the mountain we got a snow storm and could not move further for a couple of days. We kept the fire going during daytime, talking, eating and sleeping. The boys went now and then outside, clothed with fur from top to foot, playing in the snow. They had fun! They brought firewood with them, and cut off the needles, throwing them into the fire, resulting in crackling flames.

When the wind calmed down, the children were eager to know how their animals had managed through the storm. The all already owned some deer themselves. Already at baptism they got a few. When one of the children's female deer got a calf, the child would also own this calf. They regularly got some animals and built up their own flocks. They show interest in their own animals: How do they manage? Have their calves survived the winter? In this way they build up responsibility from early years.

Our thoughts suddenly were back at where we were. Marit said: "We don't have large available lands here. We don't have a large flock either. We must be careful if other larger flocks come close. If the flocks intermingle, we having fewest animals must find ours in the common flock, catch them with the lasso and pull them out. Lots of work. Hard work."

The warmth made us tired; we had a nap. It got dark before we left. The sun stays below the horizon for two months in the middle of the winter, giving daylight just for 3-4 hours. We drove back to the house, started making dinner for children returning from school.

A couple of years earlier, Marit's husband Nils was joining in the herding work. One winter day the family should slaughter an animal for own use. The husband walked slowly among the animals with his lasso ready, watching eagerly. Suddenly his right arm threw the lasso out, the animals started running for a few seconds, then they calmed down, continuing grazing. No animals were hit. The man walked in a bow, meeting the animals from the opposite side. Another try. Another miss. Once more this happened. It seemed to be one special animal he tried to catch. I whispered to his wife: "Why can't he catch another animal, why just that one?"

She answered: "He knows that that animal is not quite healthy."

I was surprised. I had seen no difference between the one and the others. All ran freely and seemingly healthy. I waited. One the fourth throw he caught the animal. He held the animals which tried to get freed from this strange hold in its antlers, and his wife came helping him. After a short struggle the fight was over. The animal didn't need to use its legs on this last travel back to the house. Nothing was told to me.

Back home started the work with dismembering the animal. When the lungs were taken out, Marit told me: "Here you see! I could see that one lung was deformed." She continued:

## The Yoik

ON THEIR TRAVELS ACROSS THE TUNDRA LEADING HERDS OF REINDEER, THE SAAMI ARE OFTEN HEARD SINGING THEIR UNIQUE KIND OF RHYTHMIC SONG, BLENDING IN WITH THE BEAT OF THE BOOTS ON THE GROUND AND THE PATTEN OF THE ANIMALS' FEET. THESE SONGS ARE CALLED "YOIKS," AND THEY HAVE AN AFFINITY WITH THE CHANTS OF NATIVE AMERICANS AND IN PARTICULAR WITH THE MUSIC OF THE MANY OTHER REINDEER-HERDING PEOPLES WHO INHABIT THE NORTHERN PARTS OF SIBERIA AND KAMCHATKA. (I ONCE HEARD A CONCERT OF SINGERS FROM ALL ACROSS THE CIRCUM-POLAR REGION. THEY COULD NOT SPEAK TO EACH OTHER, BUT THEY COULD COMMUNICATE THROUGH SONG.)

THE YOIK BLENDS SYLLABLES THAT ARE NOT WORDS TOGETHER WITH THE NAMES AND QUALITIES OF LOVED ONES, OR ELSE FAMILIAR STORIES OF THE ROVING LIFE ON THE WIDE OPEN SPACES. YOIKING TAKES THOUGHTS BEYOND WORDS, BEYOND MUSIC, SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN. "THE YOIK," WRITES POET PAULUS UTSI, "LIFTS OUR MIND'S SENSE OVER THE CLOUDS." I DON'T KNOW IF THEY MAKE MUCH SENSE ON PAPER, AND IN TRANSLATION, BUT HERE GOES:

### I

Little Elli, lilla Elli  
lollo lo lollo lo  
Lilla Elli lilla Elli  
na lollo lollo lo  
She's as sleek as silk  
and tasty as a berry  
lugolullu lullu lo  
lollo lo lollo lo.

### II

When he was a child  
the poor boy said:  
the woodpecker's belly has many spots,  
his feathers many colors,  
But the world has more spots  
and many more wild colors  
And it's pretty wild  
when one day a cowboy  
gets his own reindeer herd!  
I watched over the cows  
when I was a hoy  
and now I'm the owner  
of a reindeer herd.  
Isn't this an amazing world?

### III

Now it's time to yoik  
the small birches of Jetnejetvivvielg  
so fly away home.  
I hardly remember how,  
but yoik will I still  
and run after the reindeer  
aya aya aya aa.

Yes so, yes so I'll yoik  
Seuldotland's forests  
between which the rivers flow  
the forests where the water flows oh so  
and where you hear the calves grunting  
fly, fly away home..

Now fare you well one last time  
For I'll never pass this way again  
but generations after me  
will come to wander by  
aya aya aya oh.

### IV

He yoiked the bears.. *ayya valla ayya valla*  
The furbearing stares *valla valla valla*  
You terrible old man, you!  
"Sure, we scared him all right," *ayya ayya valla*  
and he went rambling  
down Bānu's bill  
with a swagger in his walk  
and he yoiked again:  
"Takes a strong man  
to make a bear run."  
He got them to run, the braggart  
But once he met two bear brothers on the trail.  
They dared him, all right.  
He never had a chance to boast.  
No and never will again.  
*Ayya valla ayya valla*  
*Ayya valla valla valla*

All yoiks from: Rolf Kjellström, Gunnar Ternhag, and Håkan Rydving. *Om Jojk*, (Hedemora: Gidlunds Bokförlag, 1988)  
Translated from Swedish by your editor.

"Nils knew this animal wasn't quite healthy. He knows all his animals. He knows which females have not given calf, and which are not clever in caring for their newborn calves. He knows which are stalking on their own, not keeping in the flock. He knows which bucks are clever keeping the female flock together during the rut, and which are not. In this way he knows which animals to slaughter, to make the flock the best possible."

Hours passed before the work was done, both husband and wife and children were busy. The meat from the back-bone was cooked this evening. Also the blood was collected for human use, mixed with flour, fat-pieces, salt and water into a dough, poured into the washed intestines and cooked. This was the luxury dish this day of slaughtering. Second class blood was collected for the dogs, being poured into the washed stomach-sac and hung up outside for freeze-drying. In the summer the blood powder would be soaked in water, mixed with flour and boiled to a nutrient-rich porridge.

One part of the intestine was eaten with its contents still inside. "This is our 'vegetable,'" Marit said; we stay healthy when eating this. Also the brain-mass she kept, mixed with flower and baked into a cake—"That's my husband's favorite! He was at the hospital some while ago. The doctor couldn't understand that he was still quite well, even without taking all the medicines he should have taken. That he eats all parts of the reindeer, is the answer."

Marit is proud of using all parts of the animal. The reason was not only economical. She told me: "All we have is given us by God. It is our duty to manage it wisely. Nothing must be wasted! When we let an animal die, we must use everything. In this way we show respect to the Creator."

This same ideology became apparent when expressing her meaning about the new policy of the slaughterhouse in the village. "A few years ago we could go there collecting blood and intestines. Now they don't allow this any longer. It is a shame that we, the owner of the animals, aren't allowed to collect our animals' blood and intestines. Much food is wasted."

Marit also gave credit to her husband for being very clever making sledges and other equipment of wood. Money was scarce in earlier times, and all that could be made at home, was made at home. Equipment was repaired over and over again. This practice rose naturally out of economical necessity, but also from her and her husband's belief in God. This practice made the nomads proud. They would master all difficulties, not being dependent on the outer world.

This ideal is still living, even when all that is needed and wanted can be bought. The introduction and use of skidoos, radios and machines that Saamis don't construct themselves, make them dependent on experts from outside. But knowing how to repair the skidoo is a necessity when being miles away from the nearest human being. When a nomad goes herding, it is expected from him that he manage himself. It is impossible to know exactly where he is, and he can't rely on others to rescue him.

One day Marit's oldest daughter expected her husband home from herding at the Finnish border, 100 km away. The

hours passed without the man appearing. They were to travel to Alta, 130 km to the north the next morning. I asked what would happen if he didn't come. "Well, then I must go to Alta alone," the young wife answered. There was no fright in her voice.

Close to midnight, it had been dark for 9 hours, the husband came into the house. As if everything was normal, he took off his *pesk* and asked for a cup of coffee. His fingers were dark of oil-dirt. He had some slices of bread before calmly saying, "I had some problems with my snow-scooter." Nothing more was said about that.

Many herders prefer to use imported clothes made of nylon, instead of traditional fur clothes. The reasons can be many. With excess of money it is no problem buying clothes, and one don't need to spend the time with tanning furs and sewing the clothes. The nylon clothes can easily be washed in a machine. It is also the case of being modern and not old-fashioned. The ideals come from outside.

Many have experienced that the artificial fiber-clothes don't let moisture out. Reindeer fur clothes both insulate and let moisture out. On special occasions traditional clothing is expected, as when going to church or to weddings. When the president of the Saami Parliament in December 1992 welcomed the Nobel Prize winner Rigobertu Menchu to Kautokeino, he dressed in fur clothes. But not only so: when going to church he gave her a fur (*pesk*) and used a sled pulled by a reindeer.

Some of the same was seen at the opening ceremony at the Olympic Games at Lillehammer February this year. Saamis clothed in traditional fur were entering the stadium on sleighs pulled by reindeer.

Artifacts from previous ways of living are being revitalized in new contexts, in the wider society. The artifacts

become metonyms for Saami culture. They symbolize the bonds to the past and the culture's close connections to nature. The participants convey their conception of nature as being the home of Saami culture. At the same time this ceremony can be seen as a quiet protest against the industrialized society's way of using—or abusing—nature. On many occasions Saamis have said that indigenous peoples know how to live in harmony with nature; something the industrialized society should learn from these peoples.

Nevertheless, the Saamis are part of this industrialized society. Many use cars and snow-scooters, also for short distances where an environmentalist would choose to walk or bike. Often the motor is kept running when the vehicle stands still. There seems to be little conscience of air pollution. The ideal "Think globally—act locally" is not generally found among Saamis, as it neither is among all Norwegians.

During the last 30 years the pastoralists have been integrated in the larger society also in an economic sense. An agreement was made with the government giving the nomads economical support. The motifs from the state's side was originally to protect the rest of the society against the nomadism, but later it has been to develop the nomadism similarly to other primary production in Norway.\*

In Finnmark there is much less lichen now than 20 years ago; some say a "desertification" of the mountain plateau is approaching. The reason seems to be plain: The number of animals has risen, and the average slaughter weight has gone down. Some don't have the same respect for others' traditional territory as in older days. It seems to be a competition all against all. Many believe that those with the most animals will have the best chances to survive through a crisis. Not everybody identifies with or takes part in this "competition." They say that those who do have lost the "conscience of their heart."

One of the reasons for the rise of the number of animals is the economic support given by the government since 1976. Having got support, there was no need to slaughter more animals. The pastoralists valued having a larger number of animals more than higher income.

The modernization also has had its influence on organization of the work within the family. In the traditional nomadism all the family followed the herd on migrations. Now, usually only the grown up males follow the herd. Further "pastoralism" has become a formalized 3 year education in



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high school (16-19 years old) chosen by some of the pastoralists' children. Although this education includes many weeks of practice each year, this cannot make up for lack of participation from younger days, as a 'traditionalist' bent is necessary.

Pastoralists are being dragged in two directions. On one side is modern society with its dominant way of conceiving nature as a resource to be exploited for an economic return, with a minimum of time input, getting the maximum 'free time' for other activities. On the other side, pastoralists hold a hand at the past, knowing this is giving their life a unique value?

### Key Saami Words

As can be understood from the last section, land is of utmost importance. Without land, no reindeer nomadism. The land for this woman and her family was not only the means of getting money to buy necessary

items. The land was their bond with their forefathers. The land gave meaning to their lives. We can understand this somewhat better by searching into some key words.

First, a Saami word for land: *meach'i*. That's where the reindeer find food, areas not inhabited by people. For the herders, this is the most essential land, the physical basis for the animals' and their own well being. The herders need *meach'i* of different qualities for the different parts of the year.

In the dry summertime lichen beds are of low value, because dry lichen is destroyed when a flock of animals passes over. It takes about 20 years for the lichen to recover. In winter, however, when the lichen is kept moist from the snow, it can stand a certain amount of trampling, and it gives nutrients, which dead grasses do not.

In inland parts of Northern Norway, Sweden and Finland lichen has been an abundant species. Not so at the coast. Here green plants flourish. The animals get nourished and fat on eating green grasses and different leaves. Here there are higher mountains, and due to heavy snowfall in the winter the snow will not melt totally during the summer. Therefore the animals can find a cool 'refugee' on hot days, getting away from mosquitos.

Springtime is critical, when the new calves are born. For an area to be a good calving land, the snow must melt early, the slopes must not be so steep that there is any danger of snow avalanches. There ought to be no big streams—which would represent a danger for the calves. Hilly land, shielded from hard storms from the ocean is best. But not too open; the females ought to be able to "hide" their calves from eagles. Wolves are so few that they no longer represent any big danger.

These glimpses into different natural requirements tells us that a reindeer herder needs an intimate knowledge of the land to find the best sites for his flock. *Meach'i* is the most valuable land to the reindeer herder! A herder further south told me, "One of the local community's officials watched the mountains from down in the valley, pointed and said "There is much grazing land." Such a statement is of no use! Measuring square kilometers does not tell much about the grazing qualities.

The word *meach'i* can be understood as grazing land. In the Saami-Norwegian Dictionary it is translated to *Ødemark*. *Øde* means barren land, desolated land, with no possibilities for farming, one can't make a living there. This is an urban interpretation, indeed. A common translation of *Ødemark* into English is 'wasteland'. How far from the meaning of *meach'i*! This tells us that translating words must not be made without taking into account the cultural connection in which these words are used.

Another example is the word for what the Saami call their own way of living, what we in English call 'reindeer pastoralism' or 'reindeer husbandry'—the term used on the parallel festivals of pastoralists. The Saami have (at least) two words. First there is *'ealladoallit'*. *Ealla* is a flock of reindeer, *'doallit'* is 'to hold'. To hold or to have reindeer, to live off the animals. This tells about the biological relationship as well as the economic.

The other word '*boazu eallahus*' is also sometimes used in a stricter meaning, livelihood. But it has a broader meaning. A direct translation is 'living with reindeer' or 'life with reindeer', which comprises social and emotional aspects as well as biological and economical. This content is not apparent in the Norwegian translation '*reindrif*'. '*Rein*' is reindeer, while '*drif*' may be translated into 'enterprise'. We use the term in *gårdsdrif* (farm-enterprise) and *skogsdrif* (forest-enterprise), but also about larger industrial enterprises. The economic perspective is closest at hand.

Many herders have said to me: "*Reindrif er ikke noe yrke, men en livsform*." The most likely translation would be: Reindeer pastoralism is no livelihood, but a way of life. Some herders intuitively object against the Norwegian, or Western way of thinking of time, splitting it into working hours and leisure hours. What one does, means something to the family, and the family is the core of the reindeer Saami community. Therefore all activity has a meaning to the local community. One is part of the local community all hours of the day, and this community is rooted in nature. *Nature is the home of culture.*

### North Versus South

Now, you have got a small glimpse of the pastoralist life from furthest north in Norway. However reindeer pastoralism occurs in approximately 40% of Norway's mountain areas. From the Russian border to the the southernmost groups south of the city of Trondheim is a distance of approx. 2000 km.

The major difference between the position of Saami culture in the south and in the North, is that many (not all) Saami in the South have lost their language. A tough policy of Norwegianization from 1880 and up to around 1960 forbid people to use Saami language in schools, and the teachers were allowed to use it only when necessary. In the south the Saami comprise a very small part of the total population. Many were made to believe that if they were to take part in the growing prosperity of the state, they would have to know Norwegian.

There is also another reason why the language is almost lost. Earlier on the Saami lived in turf huts with an internal framework of wood. In the 1920's they started building houses like the Norwegian farmers had. All furniture had Norwegian names, and there were no Saami equivalents. So the Saami started using these Norwegian domestic words. One herder told me: "We lost our language when we moved down into the valley-communities." A few Saami words had found their way into the Norwegian language; the words for the ear marks. Naturally, for the Norwegians did not have word for that, they didn't have such a complex marking system for their animals.

Has this change of language influenced the Saami conception of nature? I don't know the answer. But some reflections can be made. The Saami language has approx 120 words for snow and 400 for reindeer. In Norwegian there is less than 10 for each. Children from north and south get partly the same experience with both reindeer and snow, but children with Saami as mother tongue will get a much broader possibility of explaining in a precise way what they experience. Our concepts help us understand what we experience. The children speaking Saami therefore get a clearer picture in their mind of the different sorts of snow and animals.

We might further approach the subject by comparing Saami pastoralism with the reindeer herding enterprises run by Norwegians in the south of Norway. Farmers have set up shareholder-companies, some having many shares, others few. They have hired herders.

The practical work comprises much the same techniques as the Saami use, as the deer both places is the same species. But the economic organisation shows the clearest difference. The Saami own their animals privately, the farmers own a number of shares.

The Saami children grow up with the rhythms of reindeer life through the year. They can identify with the herding life much stronger than a boy growing up on a farm can, having a father who never takes part in the herding work.

### **Reindeer Herding in Southern Norway**

We had set a fishing net in a lake one night, but got only one fish. "We don't need more," the Saami told me, "that's enough for dinner." So? Does this illustrate a general attitude? Hard to say.

This was "his" lake, and it was close to his camp. Tourists were not allowed to use nets there. He didn't have to be afraid of others taking "his" fish.

While herding one day, we passed another small lake and saw part of a fishing net lying by the shore. The herder asked me to pick it up and bring it with us, saying: "The birds can get caught." This man was about 60 years old. He valued other species than his reindeer. Is this a general attitude? Again hard to say.

We talked about predators one day. This man was dissatisfied with the compensation system practiced by the Norwegian state: "We get the same amount of money whichever

reindeer has been killed, he said, a 1 year old, or 5 year or 12 year old. The real value of these animals is very different! The 5 year old female know much more than the 2 year old about how she shall take care of her newborn calf. And this is her most productive age."

His general opinion on predators came a little later: "Predators should not be allowed to exist in the areas of reindeer herding!" he said. But that was not all: "They could just as well be made extinct! I pointed to the ecological balance which would be destroyed. He replied that there might very well be more foxes, so that there could be more fox-hunting. I should perhaps add that this man was a keen moose-hunter.

I put forward the idea that all animals are *created*, and therefore have a right to live. Did he agree? I didn't get any answer.

In the summer there are lots of mosquitoes if the temperature and moisture is suitable. When taking a rest while marking calves, a couple of mosquitoes sat down on the shoulder of one of the herders. He didn't take any notice. I wondered: Why not? "There is an advantage in letting the mosquitoes get blood," he said. "There will be more of them next year. And when the mosquitoes arrive, the reindeer are driven up in the mountains, and only then can we manage to bring them together."

This man, about 35, did not value the mosquitoes for their own sake. But he defended what possible use there might be in it for himself.

The south Saami nomads always had a keen interest in their animals, if the pastures were good and if they were free from intrusion of tourists or farmers. Many herders uttered their concern for the reindeer, and for nature in general. All the same I saw one throwing used shotgun cartridges in a bog. Close to the area where the calves were marked a metal netting fence could be observed. It was lying there the year after, and the year after that, rusting.

I mentioned these metal netting fences to the mother of one of the herders, about 70.

She said, when young, she was told not to throw waste. She was convinced that the herders eventually would pick it up.

I replied: "I observed it at the same place three years ago, and it is rusty, it must have been lying there for years."

She answered: "At least I have taught my children to pick up waste. Maybe they have been influenced by the large society."

There may be a clue here. In the winter grazing areas one often sees empty plastic bottles, once filled with oil for the snow-scooter, and now thrown away. Is such a throw away action a remnant from earlier days, when they used only nature's materials, which all went back in the biological cycles of nature. The difference is simply that plastic does not.

One of the herders had criticized the authorities for not having environmental concerns when they built a new road through summer grazing land. It was higher than the ground on the sides, so that the snow should blow off. To manage this, they had scraped up the soil beside the road, in some places up to 15-25 meters. No vegetation was left. His criticism was in place!

I mentioned to him his environmentalism and asked why he was using his cars so much. The distance from the huts to the 10 families' marking fence was 1 km, but each of the pastoralists drove his own car. Yearly mileage was between 30,000 and 50,000 km for many of them. I asked one, 'Why do you not drive together with others, or walk?'

The reply was short: 'The road exists!'

I tried again: 'The more driving, the more pollution.'

No answer.

I tried to find the answer: 'Perhaps you have much equipment to bring?'

He answered with a retort: 'Why are there so many restrictions on snowscooter-driving in the mountains, while the use of motorboats along the coast meet no restrictions?' He not only felt an antagonism and injustice between 'north' and 'south,' also between working practices and leisure time activities: 'Urban people having a cottage in the mountains, easily get permission to use snowscooter to drive their firewood to the cottage, while those living in this valley, cutting trees and selling firewood, has to document a sale of 30,000 kroner a year to be allowed to use scooter. Why this different attitude from the government?'

All reindeer nomads seem to have a perspective of utility regarding nature. Their concern is focussed on the reindeer and what is best for them. 'When the animals have good living conditions, I am okay' was a general opinion both among south and north Saami pastoralists. Probably all pastoralists are conscious of continuing their forefathers' culture. This thought is growing stronger as part of a Saami cultural revitalization, both seen in the Saami Parliament and elsewhere. Some pastoralists also have a religious perspective: All species are created and have a right to live. This results in laying bounds on one's own practices for the sake of other animals.

#### Notes

This chapter is a revised and extended version of a talk held at the symposium 'The idea of the wild' at the 5th World Wilderness Congress in Tromsø, Norway, Sept. 28th 1993. I am thankful to professor Per Mathiesen, University of Tromsø, for comments on an earlier draft. I am also grateful for talks on this subject with professor Ørnulv Vorren, Tromsø Museum.



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<sup>1</sup>See Nils Faarlund, 'A Way Home,' in *Wisdom in the Open Air*, ed. Peter Reed and David Rothenberg (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

<sup>2</sup>Field work has been carried out among Saami nomads both furthest north in Norway, in West Finnmark, and furthest south, near Røros, just 400 km north of Oslo.

<sup>3</sup>*Reindriften som livsform*, Reindeer nomadism as a way of life, manuscript by Ørnulv Vorren, n.d.

<sup>4</sup>For those wanting a good book on the traditional Saami pastoralism (1960s) and the intervention of government, I recommend *Herds of the Tundra* by Robert Paine, being published this year. Paine is working at Memorial University in Newfoundland, and has been in Norway and with the Saami since 1953. He speaks both languages.

**Dag Elgvin** has taught for several years at the Teachers' College in Tromsø, the largest city in the world above the arctic circle. He may be reached at Lærerskoleveien 13, 9006 Tromsø, Norway.



# The Logistics of Epiphany

Don Gayton

I SET A FAST PACE UP THE TRAIL, WALKING TOWARDS A FIRST NIGHT IN the mountains of southeastern British Columbia. My small pack rode too lightly and I found myself wishing for the greasy and pleasant fatigue of a three or four day hike. The trail gained altitude steadily, making a series of switchbacks along the lower flanks of the massive Kokanee Ridge. I was still in timber, but occasionally the footpath crossed open and hrushy avalanche chutes, and from these I could see that treeline was not far above me. Downslope on my left lay the creek, invisible in the trees but plainly audible if you stopped to listen. Beyond the creek and sweeping upward again was the parallel twin of the ridge I was on, its granite peaks now fawn colored in the late summer sunlight. Far up ahead of me these two parallel ridges converged, and my destination was the high, level saddle that lay at the centre of that convergence.

The trail, having gained altitude and momentum through the series of switchbacks, now carried straight upward along the flank, on gradually moderating ground. I passed the rusted trucks of an old ore cart, artifact of a brief heyday of silver mining. Somewhere up above me lay the foundations of the Molly Gibson mine bunkhouse, which was carried down the mountain by a massive snow avalanche in the winter of 1908, killing eleven miners. Death by snow avalanche—not all that uncommon here—is known locally as “the big ride.”

Over my first winter in the Kootenays I learned what I could about this ridge, talking to people who knew it and reading descriptions in local hiking guides. From certain parts of town you could just see a single, jagged point of it, looming in the distance. It often caught me by surprise, as if it was watching me. People said winter storms often brewed on its slopes, and the glacier on its north side meant all the water in its drainage stayed cold right through summer. It was a ridge austere and lonely enough to be worthy of the Canadian painter Lawren Harris.<sup>1</sup> I bought a 1:50,000-scale topographical map and became mesmerized by the tiny, convoluted lines that outlined the ridge’s every fault and outcrop. Now, in this hastily arranged summer trip, I would get to know it for myself, to see how the two individualities—mine and the mountain’s—would react. After fifteen years as a resident on, if not a native of, the Canadian prairies, I was about to experience nature in the form of a profound opposite. Would there be any common threads to the experience of these two totally different landscapes? What about my earlier South American and Western American landscape experiences, would they enhance or detract from what I was about to see and feel? I hoped to find tiny grains of constancy in these diverse land-

scapes, bits of natural truth. The writer Barry Lopez once said that stories originate in the difference between the inner landscape and the outer one. I wanted to prove him right.

The heavy new hiking boots I wore had a resolute air about them. The stiffness that seemed so pointless in the sporting goods store began to make sense as the trail gradually turned from duff to rock. As I gained altitude, the trees became short and stunted, many of them showing bright exposures of new wood, where avalanches had sheared off their tops. The avalanche chutes that coursed downslope through the timber were becoming more and more common as I climbed higher, and finally, the individual chutes merged to a single avalanche field. I realized that treeline here was not determined by altitude, but rather by rock angle and how often the ridge’s snowpack broke loose. A single, teardrop-shaped grove of mature Engelmann spruce stood in the broken and brushy landscape of the avalanche field, having somehow gained the stature to withstand the awesome power of moving sheets of snow.

It is a curious term, this word “landscape,” that I find myself using so often. Profoundly human-centered, the “scape” in landscape refers to view, *our* view. We use the word extensively in art and photography, and even use it to describe how to orient paper. The word is hackneyed by developers, who will call a few anonymous shrubs “landscaping,” and soiled by bureaucrats, who refer to “the administrative landscape.” In almost every case, the word “arrangement” can be substituted for our use of the word landscape, since that seems to be the quality we look for. Yet in spite of all our self-serving uses of the word, I have a sense that “landscape” does have an existence totally outside our own self-serving definition of it—that there is a subtle coherence to the way nature arranges its objects in space.

We like to dissect landscape into components. Whether the spruces in the grove are *picea glauca engelmannii* or *picea glauca glauca* is important to us. Having made that distinction, then we tuck the trees into certain age and cover classes, and then go on to analyze the grove itself as having low interior-to-edge ratio, a feature common in disturbed habitats. Components like these are dangerous, of course, they being the deductive and isolated parts severed from some organic whole. Most scientists reject holism, not because they don’t believe in it, but because they have no idea how to work with it. A landscape-based view of nature is intermediate between holism and reduction. Curiously, it is an approach similar to the way nature seems to approach itself, by assembling components into a series of smaller, working wholes: a drainage, an unglaciated benchland,



or this open subalpine mountainside. The boundaries of these small wholes tend to define themselves, if we open ourselves to them.

This mountain I am on reeks of glaciers, of destruction, of late Pleistocene inevitabilities. There were times during that distant era when the ice lay four thousand feet thick in these valleys. Peaks of the higher mountains became nunataks, unglaciated plant refuges, that provided some of the first seeds to crushed and barren ground after the ice disappeared. Most of the plants that populate this trailside—Indian paintbrush, fireweed, glacier lilies—probably owe their existence to the peaks far above them. A few seeds may have actually survived under the ice. Canadian ecologist E.C. Pielou describes finding 10,000-year old seeds of the arctic lupine in fossil lemming nests in the Yukon.<sup>7</sup> Given moisture and warmth, the seeds broke ten millennia of dormancy and promptly germinated.

The trail rose through one last steep switchback before it reached the saddle. Again I wished this hike had consumed more time and effort, so as to increase the drama of my arrival. As it was, I was barely four hours away from home and office. I climbed very deliberately over the last few feet of trail, trying to substitute concentration for time, and then finally stepped out on to the open saddle. Here was lithosphere: the world of rock. I stood between the two jagged, electric ridges, two continuous fractures of granite. Loose and broken rock was strewn everywhere across the saddle. When could all this shattering of the ridge rock possibly occur? I had visions of nighttime eruptions, when shards of tensioned granite exploded off mother slabs, like popcorn off a griddle.

These two ridges and their saddle were born in an orogeny, an ancient, upward buckling of British Columbia's crust when some broken and errant plate of earth crashed against its early coastline. In the beginning, after the orogeny, there was nothing on the scalded rocks of this Selkirk Range to take away from their absolute lithic purity. But even from that first day, these mountains began to act out their internal and constant logic of erosion, from solid slab to broken rock, from broken rock to sand, and from sand, ultimately, to clay. And clay, with its ability to hold moisture, and its electrical charges that attract and hold the ions that are plant nutrients, becomes the foundation of soil. Movement downslope continues in boisterous rockfalls and airborne glitter of granite dust. Somewhere below the peak, lithosphere surrenders dominance to biosphere, to elegant bluebells and whistling marmots. Life on earth might have begun amongst a marine soup of complex molecules, but *terrestrial* life could be said to begin when sand turns to clay.

The nervous energy that had propelled me up the trail's switchbacks was still with me. It was getting dark and I was alone on a mountain, so I turned my attention to finding a place to camp. A few hundred yards further on to the saddle I saw a small lake ahead, cupped between the two converging ridges. I left the trail and found a level spot, almost a promontory above the lake, that was carpeted with elk sedge and moss. For the next twenty minutes I busied myself arranging lantern, tent and

sleeping bag, creating an odd little island of domesticity amongst a sea of rock. Setting up a wilderness camp is like going through a lab experiment in the hierarchy of needs, shelter, food, heat, light. My concentration, in rapidly fading daylight, was total. Finally I sat down in front of the erected tent, and the tension of the last several hours released. An unexpected, curious wave of emotion passed through me. I saw now that I had unwittingly chosen a campsite in the centre of a magnificent twilight amphitheater. In front of me, amidst the rock rubble, lay a lake of darkening indigo glass. The two ridges that buttressed each side were still phosphorescing from departed sun. The sky darkened steadily towards pure night. High above, on a vast proscenium arch, rode Venus and the great, wheeling moon. A sudden spasm caught and held my breath, then passed. For the next few minutes I cried, uncontrollably, until a well I had never known or acknowledged was finally emptied.

I take it as given that many of us search for these personal Epiphanies, these curious events of joy and transcendence. Epiphany has its roots in religion, but now I know there are secular flows, on mountain saddles and along forgotten rivers. Transcendence, mysticism, ritual ecstasy, redemption, epiphany, this is not a catalog of religious properties, rather it is one of fundamental human needs. If I can generalize at all on these intensely private quests for secular epiphany, the experience of natural landscapes, and perhaps of a certain kind of sexual intimacy, are its truest sources.

It was now fully dark and I lit a small camping lantern I had brought with me. I noticed a slight tremble as I held the wooden match against the asbestos mantle. The lantern was new, and probably a tenth the weight of the one my father used to lug around on our family camping trips, but the familiar hiss of white gas as it hit the glowing mantle had not changed over all those years. I slid my bag and sleeping pad towards the open tent flap until I could see the night sky. I knew I would not sleep well that night, but right then I felt profoundly comfortable. Above my head were the reassuring, lantern-lit walls of the tent and out past the tent flap, beyond the blazing pool of light, lay a dormant landscape and a blazing universe.

I tried to snuggle further down into my sleeping bag, cursing the short-limbed, right-handed, average-weight, medium-height individual that everything is designed for. In the end, I threw my jacket over my shoulders, and was grateful it was a warm night. The familiar hiss of the lantern was fading gradually, as was its light. Instead of pumping it up again or shutting it off, I decided to let the light slowly exhaust itself.

There was a commonality then, a natural constant that stitched this mountain to prairie, and to desert, and to jungle, the essences of these landscapes attract the spiritual (I use the word in a non-religious sense) side of my human nature, and give me leave for epiphany. I see myself now as part of every landscape, and every landscape part of me. What an anthropocentric view I thought, and for once, I didn't make apologies for it.

Natural landscapes attract the spirit because they are simply, in order. They possess a complex and complete existence.

that is totally independent of humans. Even the chaotic new landscapes created by receding glaciers or erupting volcanoes have an order. The change and evolution produced from that order may be rapid, uneven or incredibly slow, but a landscape knows its order just as surely as spawning salmon know home water.

No facet of human life possesses an order even remotely as complex and elegant as that buried within a natural landscape, and yet the human drive for completeness and understanding is not content with separate and implicate orders. We are often compelled to insert ourselves into them. Their opacity goads some to modify, others to dissect and research, still others to destroy. (How many mall parking lots owe their existence to this frustration?) In the end though, the complexity and unknowability of natural landscapes, their independence from us, and their sheer physical beauty, remain. Perhaps only as a symbolic memory, like the plains buffalo.

I slept fitfully that night, disturbed by my experience and unused to the demands of narrow sleeping bag and slippery mattress pad. My tent was a tiny, excessively human satellite, drifting amongst rock and stars. The air on the mountain was absolutely still and the silence was eerie. As I twisted and turned in my bag, I heard human voices in the distance. I had no desire to see anyone, content to let my little satellite drift alone into new territory. Then I heard the sound of a car engine, and shortly after that, the sound of the little bells hikers use for alerting bears. Finally I realized my consciousness was so disturbed by the lack of background noise that it was writing these audible notes itself, and beaming them out against the textured night silence.

It is in my nature to be suspicious of spiritual, untestable experience, but there seemed no point in denying what happened. I had established a commonality all right, but more than that, an unexpected window opened and let in a brief gust of vastness, of landscape-level emotion. A hint of embarrassment lingered; spirituality has always seemed risky in practical situations and I had half a lifetime of practical behind me. I dismissed the embarrassment as a luxury that, at middle age, I could no longer afford. It was clear that the epiphany was brought on by the chance to witness an independent, buzzing complexity, an elaborateness outside of myself. In my own case the complexity was provided by a natural landscape, but I could see how an artist—a jazz musician for instance—might experience that same sense of independent complexity through layers of cooperation, harmony, dissonance and innovation.

Sunrise the next morning was like a revealed secret. Getting on with its hundred thousandth, its millionth morning, the Kokanee ridge shared this one with me totally, without artifice. I crawled out of the bag and stood up. Exploratory morning light fingered its way through the jagged western ridgeline and slowly illuminated down the eastern face. Ribbons of mist moved across the windless surface of the lake, drawn by some unseen mechanism. Up in the rockfield, a single marmot whistled. The world had just emerged from the chrysalis of night and was still carefully unfolding itself.

Lawren Harris' mountain paintings came to mind, as if some mental curator had brought them out from storage. Even though I have no record of it, I know Lawren Harris would also have had his cry in the mountains, trembling at the passage of monstrous and unexpected emotion. It was obvious in his landscapes, even though I had never seen it before. They are strongly simplified, showing what he called 'changing the outward aspect,' with detail replaced by essence. Sky and brooding mountain are joined by shafts of binding light. The viewer's perspective is often detached and at some altitude above the ground, as if from a promontory or even a glider. Typical Harris subjects were those extreme environments of the Rockies, the Arctic and the Canadian Shield where vegetation is minimal and landscapes are profoundly simple. While his colleagues in the Group of Seven revelled in forested landscapes, Harris' trees are present only as lightning-killed snags in the foreground of his Shield paintings. He needed to confront unbending rock. In his best works, he was allowed to participate in the great natural rituals of light and illumination. Lawren Harris understood the landscape view of things, but even more importantly, he painted the connection between landscape and spirituality.

By the time Harris began painting mountains like these, he was a master at the logistics of epiphany. In the 1920's, he and fellow painters Lismer and McDonald fitted out an old boxcar with food, bedding and supplies, and would hitch it to Algoma Central trains heading into the Shield country of northern Ontario. When they judged the shapes and colors of sky and landscape they were passing through to be sufficiently new and different, they would ask the engineer to drop their boxcar on some lonesome siding, and then paint for a week. They even brought along a hand-driven pushcart "speeder" to give them more mobility up and down the rail line.

Harris and the rest of the painters of the Group of Seven jointly redefined the view of the Canadian landscape, freeing it from the oppressive influence of European tradition, but Harris took his painting a step beyond the rest. For a time he adopted Theosophy, a curious blend of Eastern religion and color theory. He, more than any of the others in the Group, seemed to be drawn to the spiritual aspects of landscape.

Through these four phases: copying nature, the decorative treatment, organization in depth, and purer creative work in changing the outward aspect of nature—through these four phases the artist has learned mastery of outward fact, he has become in some degree master of moods; and he seeks to become one with ever purer means of expression.

Harris sought that oneness more than most, and his search was not without pain.

I made hobo coffee and ate a granola bar for breakfast, and then sat down to write some notes. Then it was time to go. I repacked the tent and gear, feeling a bit smug. I had learned some logistics, and they were not difficult. Observe, and harvest the observations. Written words, in my own case. When life rises above the mundane, as it does rarely, observe passionately

and harvest immediately. Solitude would be another part of my personal logistics, since I am so subject to the instinctive practicality of the group

I took a last look back before I left the saddle. The landscape was there for me, not waiting, not subservient, but enduring and accepting. In spite of my precipitate and casual trip this morn, these parallel ridges and this pure, alpine lake had revealed themselves to me as realms of another kingdom. It is here then, precisely here, on remembered and future landscapes, on Saskatchewan penneplain or Colomhian high plateau, that I am allowed to bend the given and rigid line of reality ever so slightly. I have the great and rare privilege to change nature's outward aspect. Tawny mountain peaks can now swell up to magic fortresses along the frontiers of my vision. Venus and the moon can veer from millennial orbits to conjoin for me in this

amphitheater here, now, and I am connected. Allowed to join reason to spirit, and given leave for epiphany

**Notes:**

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**Don Gayton** is a range ecologist who lives in Nelson, British Columbia. He has lived and worked in Washington State, South America, and the Canadian prairies. His first book, *The Wheatgrass Mechanism* was published by Fifth House in 1990. He is currently at work on a second book of essays entitled *Remembering Landscape*.

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## Ben Lieberman

### **Imprecision in Their World**

In the grey light of the world,  
Amid the yellow walls absorbing grey light,  
Shifting their shade slightly,  
There are ghosts of another world,  
Of utter darkness and extreme light

In their world, they are not ghosts,  
But perfect animals of perfect cast,  
Their movement is beyond our sense,  
Yet our experience requires it  
Their gestures are unthinkable,  
But they bring ours to light

We hear them touch us,  
In spring's perfect blue sun,  
And their arching wails streak our skies

They are the creators and inhabitants  
Of a dry world, thinly aquatic,  
And distant from ours,

Our days and nights rise and fall,  
In the shadowy wake,  
The after image, of their movement

### **Yes to the Yes-Man**

There is only one reality  
Which adheres to itself. It is not gentle.  
Or eternal. The sky is in lonely transit.  
Distorted tree-forms are rising against it.

This is the landscape of December,  
Which knows less than itself.  
It does not admit  
A scraping sound. It is a keenest fancy.  
All spirits a-buzz, and no one to hear them.

### **The quickening of sentience...**

The quickening of sentience has no ground,  
If not in water's streaming  
And so swirling  
Down the shady ducts and down the ducts we go

The course of water wet with wisdom  
Made its way so easily, that by the river,  
In the sun, we needed wooden cover.

In the river's running, shining silver-sunned,  
The fish asserted nothing. Their somber  
Spirits broke the surface, all the water waking

**Ben Lieberman** was accidentally trained as a theoretical physicist at MIT. Now he is a poet who lives in New York.

# Judgment and Dilemma

Scott Erickson

You are good when you are one with yourself.  
Yet when you are not one with yourself you are not evil.  
For a divided house is not a den of thieves; it is only a divided house.

—Kahlil Gibran

If only it were all so simple! If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being.

—Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

**M**ANY OF US REJECTED THE MAINSTREAM BECAUSE WE WERE wounded by it. We carry these wounds unhealed into our activism. We may see the need for transcendence early, but avoid transcending that hurt place in our ego. This can't work because we're trying to transcend an ego with missing pieces—and each one becomes a blind spot which blocks transcendence. Many activists were unable as children to save their families, and as adults set out to save the world. This kind of activism is an excuse to avoid the healing process while forcing us to look at exactly what we need for the healing process. Our dual natures reveal themselves once again: half of us repeats the issue in order to resolve it, while half of us repeats the issue in order to avoid it.

Our wounded places become an empty place which must be filled in order to complete ourselves. Our personal task merges with the transpersonal; our activism becomes our redemption as we attempt to fill the same void in the world as well as in ourselves. Parents who lost children to drunk drivers have formed groups to fight alcohol abuse; a friend of mine was a victim of childhood abuse and now works to keep other children from suffering the same fate.

The difference between healthy and unhealthy activism depends on whether it fills our empty space or just covers it up. And this depends on how deeply we go into ourselves, the depth from which our activism comes—whether we are attempting redemption for our soul or our ego. When activism comes from low self-esteem it becomes an overwhelming need to please others while neglecting their own needs for 'the cause'—and expecting others to do likewise. The anger and suffering of the

martyr proves their superiority. This activism becomes a way of boosting the ego under the guise of transcending the ego. Activism can be used like any other addiction, but is especially subtle since it is for a good and noble cause.

This kind of activism becomes counterproductive for both the person and the cause. If our real desire is to get love by loving others, it never works for long. Our concern is less about the *quality* of caring and more about the humble greatness of the person *doing* the caring. Rather than empower and free others, it tends to foster dependence; rather than expand them, it unconsciously seeks to limit. Our 'service' becomes sensed as less a gift than a demand, and we are inevitably shocked that the ones we're "loving" react with resentment and disappointment. This kind of activism carries with it a blind spot which prevents clearly seeing its actual effectiveness in the world. It also carries a strong distrust of inner work as a distraction or form of denial. When a partner rejects our inappropriate love, we blame them of being unappreciative; when a foreign country rejects our inappropriate development policies, we blame them of being backward or too ignorant to understand the real world. A "holier-than-thou" attitude of being unquestionably right is when the biggest sins begin.

Our most genuine can only come from our center. It's vitally important that our "cause" *really* resonates as an expression of ourselves. The work is underpaid at best, not easy, faces resistance, and is never finished—so we have to *want* to do it with a motivation coming through us from someplace beyond us. There are countless areas in which to contribute, and only within ourselves can we discover the one to which we *naturally* want to contribute. The leader of the week-long Sierra Club service trip I went on repeatedly stressed a solid piece of wisdom: "Find a place in the movement you really care about. Better to be a part time activist your whole life, than to be full time for a while and then burn out."

## Consent and Reality

There is a balance between humor, where nothing is sacred—and spirituality where everything is sacred. I know that someone who takes themselves seriously is doomed, but so is someone who takes *nothing* seriously. I can get myself worked up telling someone about the importance of being ecological, and the response is, "Don't be so serious! Life is to be enjoyed!" And of course we're both right. It's true to say everything matters, and also that nothing matters.

Puzzles in life are like the paradoxical Zen koans that can only be solved from the vantage point of greater awareness.

Children have that wonderful quality of laughter—open and spontaneous and unpretentious. It can be harder for adults. A little awareness can destroy laughter—some never recover. The most evolved adults somehow combine childlike freshness with absolute maturity, simplicity with depth, the present moment with the infinite. The journey places us on the difficult crossroads between two worlds where opposing rules apply. Suddenly we find we know too much for our own good—but it's too late to go back. We may have a regressive yearning but it can't work because we *know* it's regressive. At times we may envy in others the unawareness we can no longer have, but at other times we realize no matter how hard the challenge is, it's worth it. We create endless trouble by asking ourselves questions such as, "How do you justify your existence?" but we know that although the answer is a continual challenge, the question is *real*. Others may not appear troubled by the difficulty of the answer, only because they never ask the question.

When I see babies I can't help but have mixed feelings: an absolute wondrous miracle, and another burden on an overburdened planet. Sometimes the world is full of wonderful people, each with unique ways of seeing the world and expressing their relationship to it. Sometimes the world is full of blind and selfish people destroying the planet and causing wars. Both sides are true. And the duality I acknowledge towards others I must also acknowledge towards myself. Isn't it just awful," I comment, "those guys looking at women as if they're just sexual objects?"—and sometimes the biggest difference between them and me is that they're being honest while I'm lying to appear superior. Whether toward myself or toward others, love and acceptance can't be fully unconditional. The dilemma is inescapable: Two sides of me interact with two sides of everyone. It's a dilemma I can only avoid by staying on the surface of life—which isn't fully living. Once I know this, I can't go back to not knowing. Once stepping out of Eden, the only path is toward Heaven.

The enlightened tell us that seeing clearly the workings of the ego ends the process. Sometimes this works—I catch myself being impatient and it vanishes. But sometimes it *doesn't* work. I don't go deeply enough—like everyone else. I don't want to go that deep. Sometimes I feel angry and frustrated, and other times I'm able to see clearly that "there exists anger and frustration" and it slips harmlessly by, vanishing into thin air. Sometimes I'm a pawn of reactive emotions, sometimes there is a great space through which appropriate emotions effortlessly flow. Sometimes nothing can faze me, sometimes everything rubs me the wrong way. Sometimes turmoil dissipates by looking at the starry night sky and realizing on the big scale my petty worries really don't matter—and sometimes I've just got to yell.

What changes in us is invisible, yet changes everything—our attitudes, our perceptions, our motivations. One day we're holed with life and the next day we're in love with it—but physically we are the same person. We hover between partially

human and something higher. People look different, yesterday's bully is now just a frightened person needing understanding. Things that brought us down yesterday don't faze us today. We not only feel this inside, but it changes us outside. Other people notice, and it changes them as well.

My life alternates between the consensual and the real between what is and what could be, between partial awareness and full. Those rare perfect times were the latter—where boundaries seemed to vanish for brief moments. It happens sometimes with people, sometimes alone in wilderness. It happens most reliably when exposed to art. In the museum I find a work that resonates deeply inside in a way beyond words. Something draws me into a mysterious internal logic that somehow moves within the static image. There is a "stillness," a "knowing," a certainty beyond description. But there is a profound and wordless "yes"—and I know utopia can exist, that there is a place called Heaven. Like wilderness, we enter a scene as well as a state of mind. The way of seeing becomes identical to what we are seeing. To become absorbed into dance or music is to become free of the hindrance of matter—free of the messy imperfect details of existence—and approach the feeling of being pure energy. Art is a hint of enlightenment, a reminder of what it is to be *fully* human.

Yet we inevitably come "back to earth" to return to the "real world." We are all members of the ideal reality, but we are also all members of the consensual reality, of the world where love and acceptance can't be fully unconditional, of the world where there are sometimes very good reasons to be angry, impatient, and frustrated. We return to the messy imperfect details of existence, and hopefully are inspired to make them less messy, less imperfect. After temporarily abandoning the struggle, we return with a reminder of what's really worth struggling for. Acknowledging the two realities is to acknowledge the meaning of being human. We are of two worlds, and our purpose is to bridge the two worlds, to accept them both and endeavor to join them—to evolve one towards the other.

### **Awareness and Ignorance**

Awareness is manifest in the hearts and minds and souls of individuals. But so is ignorance. Heaven and Hell enter Earth through the same medium. Love becomes conscious in the realm of human awareness but so does hatred. Activism opens us to dilemmas. Battling "ignorance" can't be done in the abstract, independently from fellow humanity. The difficult truth is that our planetary brothers and sisters are destroying the planet. Activism seems to impel us toward judging and opposing people.

I see the stupidity of tabloid newspapers and judge the level of intelligence of their millions of readers. If I say shopping malls are dehumanizing, what am I saying of the millions of people who *like* them? In the big picture, humanity is spreading over the Earth destroying the ability of the planet to sustain life, draining resources many times faster than can possibly be replaced. Yet as I look at each dreaded housing development,

and into each house. I see individual people just like me. To oppose 'development' opposes real flesh-and-blood people who need shelter, and who need to build it to make a living. One view sees innocent victims, good and decent people just doing their jobs, yet trapped in a system beyond their control that leads to bad consequences. The friendly neighborhood banker didn't choose the destructiveness of unrestrained economic growth; health professionals have little control over a medical system which largely works against health; home builders don't want to destroy the earth with housing developments. But another view



Carolyn Burton

asks that if we are trapped, who will free us besides ourselves? The good and decent people are the only ones capable of changing any of this, and there doesn't seem to be much desire to do so.

The dilemma requires us to separate the person from the actions. The creative challenge is how to invalidate what we believe to be false while respecting the essence of the person—in other words, how to love. How is it possible to say "no" to ignorance while saying "yes" to the person? It isn't love to pretend to be interested in someone's egotistical meandering; it isn't love to allow ourselves to be exploited—it isn't love for us *or* them. And of course, we have differing definitions of "egotistical meandering" and "being exploited." It seems we cannot love without making judgments. If we perceive someone depriving others of

their freedom, can we halt the process without depriving them of their freedom? Is violence justified to halt violence? The enlightened do not oppose anyone—even in self-defense. But in our part-way world, what else can we do?

My extremes are to unconditionally respect the truth of others, or to be an uncompromising crusader for my own truth. Neither alone is the whole truth, yet combining them both correctly for the demands of the particular moment is a continuous challenge. No formula can give the appropriate response to each situation. How to remain principled yet not dogmatic, flexible yet not indecisive? The enlightened tell us it's no use judging others unless we can get them to judge themselves—which sounds like the ideal in theory, but is an elusive goal in the dynamics of daily life.

The dilemma of activism was transcended dramatically in the examples set by Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., in their movements based on civil disobedience: we refuse to fight you because we love you, but we refuse to cooperate with you because we don't like what you're doing. And we feel strongly enough about it to put our lives in between you and your actions, and if you wish to continue with your actions that is your choice—but you will have to do it through us; you will have to pick us up bodily and remove us; you will have to look us in the eyes and deny your conscience looking back at you.

Awareness reveals that hatred cannot be stopped by more hatred. Awareness reveals hate directed at us is really not of the essence of the person—it's from the false self defending its falseness. Insults can't hurt us—we realize the hater only hurts themselves. There's no need to react out of hatred—and this is loving the hater whose addiction counts on our anger to feed the hatred. We are to become as nature, where what is unnatural is exposed as false and falls away—and we do this by transcending falseness ourselves. This is the oriental self-defense art of Aikido: becoming one with the universe so if anyone tries to fight you they have broken their connection to the universe and their action defeats them before they've even started.

Nature defied strikes back unconsciously and unselectively. It strikes back more at "humanity" than at individual humans. Often those the least to blame are hit with the highest price, and the cost can delay over generations to be paid by those who had nothing to do with the individual crime. Nature defied strikes back through a medium, and when this medium is human nature, the "striking back" cannot defy the laws of human nature. The "striking back" must be nonviolent. Civil disobedience is Aikido toward society: attempt to violate me and you will bring yourself down.

At a protest march we may chant or sing, "you can't kill the spirit." The movement of nature will exist no matter what, and the full potential of human nature will exist as long as even one person is alive. We can't suppress nature or any aspect of human nature—by gender or color or race or nationality—without an eventual backlash, no matter how long it takes. We reap as we sow—it's a law of nature which ignorance defies out of its ignorance. The protest march is consciousness aligned with nature—with spirit—moving together in solidarity and collectively singing, "we shall overcome someday."



## Survival and Denial

Awareness can be painful. It's difficult to know that it's a mistake to build huge cities in the desert, to fill in wetlands to build shopping malls, to drain aquifers as water tables fall and the land sinks—and to watch this all happening and be unable to stop it. It was difficult watching the country mobilize for war against Iraq—an action many of us felt convinced was absolutely wrong with the entirety of our souls—and being unable to stop it from happening. "Difficult" doesn't come close to describing the mixture of outrage and sadness and revulsion and shame.

I remember hearing on the radio when the Endangered Species Act was first compromised for economic reasons. I had the same pit-of-my-stomach sinking feeling at the outbreak of the Iraq War. They felt like an intimation of the end, real disasters that were also metaphors of greater disasters to come: increased desperateness—increased ravaging of nature leading to wholesale destruction—increasingly brutal wars over diminishing oil. I had the same feeling when Congress passed the North American Free Trade Agreement—another victory for the unconscious conspiracy, the further entrenchment of corporate power as democracy loses ground to the dynamic of economic growth.

I recall a story by Jacques Cousteau. He was in Jamaica studying coral reefs, and was struck by the lack of sizable fish. Because of too many people and a precarious economy, fishermen were being forced to over-harvest and catch smaller fish. He came across an old fisherman and noticed his small-mesh net. The fisherman knew that this eliminated the young fish and compromised the future of fishing. He sadly said, "I know this is not good, but I have to eat." When talking about his children, he nearly cried.

So few of us clearly see that this is all connected, and is potentially all reversible—a huge visible sign of us destroying ourselves with our own stupidity. And those who can see the destruction have to not allow that destruction into themselves—to not let the ability to see the beauty of life be destroyed as well—as we live a common fate with a species that doesn't understand itself and appears willing to methodically commit a gradual suicide.

Awareness is difficult when it forces us to look at our dependence. And those who are dependent are easily exploited by those they're dependent on. A very widespread dynamic consists of those who profit most from exploitation defending themselves behind the interests of the hardworking patriotic citizen. It always seems to be arranged that you can't get to the guilty party without going through innocent victims—who can be manipulated to defend their exploiters. To get to the timber companies making record profit, we're made out to be attacking loggers. To boycott the practices of a specific company, we have to do it by boycotting a local merchant who has nothing to do with the decision we're against. During the Iraq War the protesters were portrayed as being opposed to the interests of patriotic citizens willing to fight and die for democracy.

Greed and fear are tremendously effective motivators. Love is supposed to always find a way, but it seems ignorance does so more often. While love is challenging to do well,

ignorance has no trouble being very good at what it does. It has the resources of the entire conspiracy to draw upon and can count on the fearful dependence of people to defend it. Each battle of "jobs versus the environment" mobilizes powerful forces with political, economic and media clout, and enlists dependent employees in massive campaigns of letters and phone calls and protests. And an apathetic public is tired of yet one more environmental concern: "Why don't these ecologists give a little slack?"—or doesn't understand the entire issue and naturally sides with people over trees or fish or wetlands. Each separate controversy seems to point to an obvious choice—obvious for the ones with the power to make the choice.

So one more piece of the Earth is degraded, adding to the ongoing dynamic. The conspiracy will never reveal the totality of itself, but its endless manifestations will steadily take us down in bits and pieces. Each choice seems to be rational, but within a context which is irrational. It is the false homeostasis seeking its own false ecology, its own distorted version of health. There is "a method to its madness": it seeks balance along the wrong path, the most efficient way to be inefficient, the most rational way to be irrational. After 6,000 years of humanity steadily destroying the environment, a few years of beginning to slightly tip the balance back brings a growing environmental backlash and panicked demands to "put people back in the equation." It reminds me of the beginning of civil rights being protested as "reverse discrimination."

The process of denial is universal. As soon as we wise up and refuse to validate the false, we will be resented for doing so, and the addict can usually find others less wise as the dynamic reaches out for "whatever works" to continue its false life. If we stand firm and say, "Not in my backyard," then somebody else's backyard will be found—somebody desperate enough to have little choice. Within the microcosm of intentional community this happened with our disruptive resident, and within the larger society this happens with corporations and governments living on exploitation. In all cases, confusion and ambiguity will be deliberately thrown into the situation. In all cases, our sympathies will be used against us to divide us between ourselves, and public appeals for "compromise" will be secretly fought against and exposure of their lies results in angry denials to stall for time as they retreat behind an endless series of new lies. At what point do we stop being "fair" and "loving" and say *NO MORE*—and allow them to rant and yell about being cheated after using every possible trick and distortion against us?

## Politics and Agreement

In trying to alter the entrenched momentum of society, the minority of activists have trouble agreeing. The little energy they have can get lost in endless arguments over dilemmas with no solution. *Quantity* is easy to agree on, *quality* is not—*more* is easier to define than *better*. While Republicans have more easily focused their energy on a unified platform, the Democrats and Independents have often hurt themselves by splitting up the remaining vote. Activists groups of all types divide over whether to work within the



system, or radically overhaul the system, or abandon the system altogether. Should they join the mainstream and compromise, or remain pure and disenfranchised? Acquiring effective power to have their voice heard can defy what they want to say. Some feminists work for equality by gaining powerful positions within the system—but doesn't this justify the system which is based on values opposed to feminism? But if we ignore the system, doesn't this just enable it to continue? Should we celebrate because women held high ranks in the Iraq War? The dilemma becomes infinitely difficult when attempting to define exactly what feminism is.

Even if everyone agreed on goals such as "cooperating with nature" and "economic reorganization" and "appropriate production," we'd still fight over imperfect ways to achieve them. Should we organize work to be minimized to allow leisure time for creative and meaningful pursuits? Or should we organize work towards being creative and meaningful in itself—an opportunity to use our latent powers to provide a dignified existence? Should ecological protection be by centralized control? Or by a system of taxes and incentives which allow the free market to efficiently handle it? If we try to improve on what we have, we're suddenly open to widely differing ideologies which seem true yet contradict each other. Global security makes sense, as does individual choice. Should the fruits of our labors be distributed fairly—or do we resist all such intrusions into our freedom?

Some of us decided that the political status quo is hopelessly stagnant and out of touch with reality, and also that mainstream religion has been neglecting its role as moral beacon and radical critic of society. The result has been fundamentalist groups that develop highly organized campaigns in a grassroots drive to install right wing candidates across the nation. And these candidates are extremely hostile to the environment while being very friendly with big business. It's a perfect fit: a pattern linking fear and economic insecurity and politics and greed and a distorted view of ultimate truth.

The rising "wise use" movement is largely rural—based in communities trapped in an economy where the only source of revenue is extractive industry, and they are running out of things to extract. But rather than work towards changing the economy, they fight environmentalists and align with the huge corporations who profit most on the dynamic causing the whole dilemma. Fear of the worsening economy causes them to cling to the forces that are responsible for their fear. It claims what it calls "Dominion Theology" to justify absolute economic exploitation of all private and public lands, and the gutting of environmental laws. "We are real Americans," said one member, "just middle-class people who work hard and get dirt under our fingernails. We provide this entire country with food, clothing and shelter while the rich-kid preservationists and the liberal media elite stick up for the birds and the bugs."

They divide humanity from nature even though the core of spirituality agrees on the experience of oneness with nature. "Do you love people or trees?" they ask, perpetuating and reinforcing the division that is the heart of all our problems.

Despite their claims of supporting common working people, they support political and economic policies which divert money to the wealthy. They encourage corporate profiteering, then attack relief policies for those most hurt by it. Since they're being destroyed by forces out of their control, they seek saviors beyond their control. Unable or unwilling to align with the true transcendent power, they are forced to align with the transcendent power of the unconscious conspiracy. Many mainstream churches condemn them, but they're too "radical" to care. Their fundamentalist certainty allows them to destroy every aspect of Christ's message in the name of Christ. They advocate the same policies of over-grazing and over-cutting of trees which turned the Holy Land from "the land of milk and honey" to a barren wasteland.

Their views form a predictable interlocking pattern. Opposition to nature creates a ripple effect and distorts other values in a self-consistent way. Feminine values are secondary—a woman's primary role is to be a wife, they support nuclear power and a strong military, they are against family abuse legislation and labor unions, they are uncomfortable with different ethnic groups or different sexual orientations, they oppose any form of equal rights legislation as "special rights." Their "pro-life" position somehow also supports the death penalty. At this point we can easily guess their position on sex education and pre-marital sex. The strange logic of the pattern is how we can definitely feel it all "fits" even without understanding why.

It's curious that so many women are attracted to a movement that calls them lesser citizens. Why embrace a system that suppresses you? In return for *obedience* they are offered *safety, security*. And this fits perfectly with men who thrive on protecting and dominating in their own distorted way of feeling secure. And this relationship is a microcosm of the larger dynamic in which they're trapped: embracing the security of the downward movement which suppresses all of them. Fear supports a dynamic based on greed which is born of fear. Both interlock as one movement and circle downhill, as a force not of this earth continues to destroy this Earth.

**God's  
Love or  
Nature's  
Love?**

The force of ignorance opposes nature—causing eroded hillsides above dying rivers, causing homelessness and illiteracy and gang warfare and drug abuse. And volunteers are often expected to rush in and fix it—feed the homeless, rebuild lost self-esteem, rebuild the riverbanks and plant trees. But this is a dilemma: correcting the mistakes for nothing while those who caused the mistakes profit it seems to validate the process—yet until society installs a mechanism to make them pay, or preferably to avoid the problems in the first place, the problems are *here and now*. People are on the streets and somebody has to take care of them—but if that's *all* we do, it doesn't touch the root causes that guarantee we'll be taking care of them endlessly. If the pipe is leaking and the mess is getting worse, we need two simultaneous

processes mop up the floor, and more importantly, fix the leak, go to the roots. But the problem is that we can't do this alone—the problem is a holistic attitude within us reflected into every facet of society. The solution takes all of us, or most of us, moving in one direction with a united goal.

Nature's mission becomes the human mission, to advance awareness. But of what? Truth? The laws of nature? Another dilemma: Who am I—who are any of us—to claim to know truth? To "spread awareness" I'm implying others are unaware, and that I have access to truth that they don't.

While waiting at a bus stop one morning, a very sweet elderly woman engaged me in conversation, and I knew what was coming. Before long, she told me, "God loves us and has given us the way to live peacefully on this Earth and with each other." I closed my eyes and nodded as I responded, "Yes I hear you," while I simultaneously thought, "If you change *God* to *nature* you've really got it." This gentle woman was spreading awareness—"spreading the word"—but not quite the right word, almost right—but a fine line away. The difference is between ambiguous undefinable truth and certain metaphor—but this is just my opinion, of course. And one problem with claiming metaphor is a false certainty of being "above" opinion—but this is just my opinion, too. She'd opened our conversation by asking how I was, and I said, "Great! I just finished a three mile walk." And when I added, "Healthy people make up a healthy society," she nodded and repeated the words in agreement. But were we agreeing to the same thing? The pamphlet she gave me was full of Bible quotes telling of "new heavens and a new earth that we are awaiting according to God's promise"—with a cover depicting a simple rural home with bountiful gardens in a beautiful natural setting as multi-cultural children romped with wild animals. The pamphlet told of the end of war... the end of illness... planting vineyards and eating their fruit... building homes and living in them. Each "God" I replaced with "nature." "God's promise" became "the unfolding potential of nature."

A couple weeks later, two guys cornered me at another bus stop to tell me about the love of Jesus. This time I decided to be a little bold and tell them, "For me, I think of 'God' as the whole of nature—and God's laws are the laws of nature." They seemed slightly panicked as they told me, "Beware the rise of false prophets in the end times." We parted—neither of us converting the other—me thinking of them, "Too bad. They're almost on the right track," as they probably thought the same of me.

Every major downtown seems to have its desperate street corner proselytizers: "Armageddon is near unless we obey

God!" And every single one, in every downtown around the world, has the satisfaction of speaking with all the others with one voice; one transcendent movement united them all. Undoubtedly, Christian missionaries and nuns converting "savages" away from their traditional wisdom—and destroying their stable cultures—were satisfied in giving their lives to doing their small part in the overall movement. Yet all the love and caring in the world becomes distorted and counterproductive without adequate understanding.

I get uncomfortable when realizing how similar the religious zealots sound to myself. We both think we have the transcendent answer, and the other side is deluded. We both see humanity as part of a cosmic struggle. We both see impending disaster if we don't change our sinful ways. We both forgive humanity its sins, knowing that people are only acting out of ignorance. And as both of our messages are largely ignored and ridiculed—along with the messengers—I'm tempted to share with them the response of Christ on the cross, "Forgive them, they know not what they do." There is an impulse to shake people and say, "Look! Look all around you! Wake up! Open your eyes!" I can understand the missionary zeal to convert people. But I never go through with it. What would I convert them to? I make no claim to have found truth—I don't have the absolute certainty



Carolyn Button

of a guidebook written by God himself, or the full experience of God that few of us have achieved. My "converting" could only be to ask people to wander in the darkness with me. The ones who really know the answer universally stress to not believe a word of what they say—to not trust any authority outside their own direct experience.

I'm aware of the fine line between deep conviction and dogmatic stubbornness. I'm aware of the dangers of claiming to have access to truth. The greatest crimes have been committed

using such claims: The Third Reich, The Crusades, the Salem witch trials, Manifest Destiny. Our conscience rarely allows us to do evil while knowing it's evil. There's usually some high ideal or utopian label pasted on top of it: "God's Will," "Global Unity," "New World Order." And this idealism allows us some "flexibility," some less-than-idealistic means justified by those idealistic ends. If we're doing it to create a better world, or to glorify God, then it's okay to break a few rules.

Yet we also turn to great activists such as Gandhi and King who show us that good cannot be done without aligning with what we most strongly believe to be true. The difference with genuine activists is the same as everything genuine in life: the ends match the means. Evolution exists to evolve; love is a means of becoming love. As Gandhi said, "There is no way to peace. Peace is the way."

The more we know, the more we realize we don't know. Wise ignorance knows there is very little we can be certain of. But if we fail to act on our uncertain truth, the stupid ignorance which is *very certain* will act. Truth admits it may be wrong, while ignorance's needs no such encumbrances. Truth says, "Nobody knows truth," and ignorance responds, "Well, maybe you don't." Ultimately, it's not a question of "deciding" to act out of truth, because we cannot fail to do this to the best of our current ability. Every action in every realm has implications for movement upward or down. There is a sense in which the human realm of consensual reality is a battlefield from which we cannot remove ourselves. We have no choice but to act. All we can do is to endeavor to make the best choice.

The process of wise ignorance opens us to dilemmas the stupid ignorance "transcends" by avoiding. We are impelled to balance humbleness with decisiveness—a continuing questioning that doesn't stifle us in confusion, an analysis that doesn't lead to paralysis—and a confidence that doesn't lead us confidently into disaster. Partially aware human nature can be a scary thing. We can lie to each other with smiles, or destroy each other with love. We can use our best to justify our worst—using rationality to justify our most irrational, using religion as a club to destroy spirituality. The difficulty of partial consciousness impels us toward wisdom, toward a solid faith that is the exact opposite of dogmatic stubbornness, yet is only a fine line away.

### **The Filter of Philosophy**

We see the world largely through a filter, a screen that displays what we expect to see. Seeing reality fully and clearly is the ideal goal, but except for rare moments we're not there yet. It seems part of our evolutionary journey requires us to have concepts before we can transcend them. Free of instinct, we need a way of orienting ourselves within existence. Yet making a map of reality can blind us to reality; inventing a metaphor for truth can keep us from truth. Wisdom sees the reality beyond the screen, while ignorance denies the existence of the screen and assumes that what it sees is reality. The beauty of science is that it is aware that truth is

ultimately beyond concepts and that the evolution of knowledge is a series of increasingly accurate metaphors.

If thought was clear, we'd need no philosophy. If love was total, we'd need no laws. If spirit was achieved, we'd need no religion. In an aesthetic society we'd need no art museums. Once, everything was just 'the way of life,' and if we continue to evolve it can be once again. We can't pretend we don't have concepts, any more than we can pretend we don't make judgments. And very few of us can truthfully claim—as well as take responsibility for the claim—that they are fully beyond them both. Very few of us are truly radical enough to be that free.

My opinions are my concepts of reality. The judging part of me can't help but judge according to my concepts of human nature. If I ignore somebody or laugh at their opinion, aren't I committing violence? Defying another "for their own good" assumes we know more than them. Sometimes we do, sometimes we don't.

When our side is accused of being irrational we say, "Truth lies beyond the limits of objective science," yet when *their* side is being irrational we complain, "You have no *proof*." If the government doesn't listen to a minority of religious zealots or right-wing fanatics, then the government is sensible—until the government doesn't listen to a minority of peace and ecology activists. Our "suppressed minority" is their "lunatic fringe"—we're outraged when we are ignored, but relieved when *they* are ignored. We may be outraged that an activist is arrested for blocking a forest clearcut, but if we were in charge and a timber company attempted a clearcut, how would we react? Protesting against United States' policy may bring the reactionary slogan of "Love it or leave it!" Yet within our own group we may react against criticism in exactly the same way. When a public opinion poll agrees with our views, then "the people cannot be fooled." If the poll *doesn't* agree, then "the exploiters have them brainwashed." In either case, we imagine ourselves to know what "the people" *really* want. Maybe we do, maybe we don't.

Someone once said to me in all seriousness, "I'm not judging you; God is judging you through me." Yes, it was pretentious and self-justifying and impossible to argue against. But isn't there a grain of truth in there? Since beginning the journey of self-awareness—since we left Eden by eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil—didn't our power of choice give us all a certain God-like power? Each of us has a concept of reality out of which we make choices. Whether we're aware of it or not, we're all philosophers; we all have a religion. We have not only the authority to decide, but the responsibility to do so correctly. Out of our opinions—our subjective experience of the world—comes objective actions, our contributions to the movement of our collective world. Every day is Judgment Day; every action aligns or conflicts to lesser or greater degrees with truth, with nature, with the movement of life.

**Scott Erickson** lives in Portland, Oregon. He feels his life really began ten years ago, when he was twenty six, when he spent five and a half months walking around Lake Superior. This essay is part of a book in progress entitled *The Movement of Life*.

# The Second Restoration

Robert Glanzman

THE BLOOD RED SKY PRODUCED AN EERIE GLOW ON THE INSTRUMENTS of the craft as it sailed through the gates of the Asmotech Engineering plant. The shuttle was unusually quiet this morning devoid of the usual time passing chatter and small talk. Most of the passengers were too involved with their Virtual Reality headsets, which conjured images and experiences so real, that one could hardly discern the events from the actual thing. To the casual observer, it usually wasn't that hard to discern what program the user had chosen. Every so often, a passenger would appear to be trying to avoid an oncoming projectile or let out a sigh of relief.

Martin Fibuli would have no part of it. The short balding man in his late eighties looked around the shuttle at his fellow workers with disgust. "Idiots!" he thought to himself. "Always trying to escape from their lives with those damn things. As if the 22nd century was that bad."

As he returned his attention to an electronic notepad which currently spewed a multitude of chemical formulas across it, he was distracted once again by a screech of delight emanating from the rear of the shuttle. "How the hell is a man supposed to concentrate with all these bellowing fools participating in simulated orgies?," he muttered somewhat loudly, though everyone was too engrossed with their activities to hear. Sighing, he looked out the view port of the shuttle to occupy his attention until they reached their destination.

A horrific scene of desolation flew past the window. A barren wasteland, scorched red as if by fire, stretched to the horizon. The only discernible features of the desolate landscape were a small bubble some 200 miles away off to the west and a large structure directly ahead also encased in a large transparent dome. Martin smiled to himself knowing that he played an integral part in designing the domes which protected the distant city of Elradopolis from the harmful atmosphere of the Earth since the year 3093.

Before continuing, a little background seems to be in order. The year is 3149 and the Earth's atmosphere has become lethal to any organic lifeform as result of several failed attempts to revitalize the soil with a chemical agent known as *Terranep-tictrichloracyde*, which mutated into several viral strands and quickly spread across the entire planet in a matter of years. By the year 3050, most of the Earth's resources have been sucked dry due to population growth, greed, and ignorance. In an effort to counteract the forthcoming and inevitable death of the human race, government officials ordered the immediate

production of atmospheric domes to be built over every major city.

Asmotech Engineering was the most qualified at the time, led by Mr. M. Fibuli the foremost chemical and electrical engineering expert of the century. Countries who could not afford it or could not produce them in time, perished, along with any unique wild or plant life native to that region which practically no one cared about anyway. By this time in the wonderful evolution of the human race, we were able to produce practically everything we could possibly need synthetically. We had figured out how to prolong the average life span from 80 years to about 150. The Earth, despite it being a desolate wasteland outside of the domes scattered across the planet, was a utopia for the human being. Starvation, sickness, and practically all major problems of the 20th century have been dealt with and eliminated. Through the use of virtual reality places of the past such as acres of open grass lands, national parks, forests teeming with life, can all be simulated with frightening realism. There is no need for the real thing.

The wise officials who planned the future of the planet did realize however that it might be necessary to save at least some of the plant and animal species of the planet for research, so they adopted a policy that on each of the seven continents, a dome would be constructed specifically to shield the natural landscape and its inhabitants. The domes were to be 1/50th the area of the respective continent centered around a point designated by experts in biology and other natural sciences. Oceans were not to be included in these "Reserves" as they were simply known, and were basically left to die. Needless to say, the planet was terrified but, once technology filled the gap that had been lost, the human race was both proud and contented with itself.

As the shuttle entered the dome through a small portal, Martin hurried toward the front, eager to exit and begin his day's work. Remorse never seemed to be in his nature. When all this atmospheric trouble started, Martin claimed that, "it was bound to happen some day so why cry about it."

For some reason as he gazed out the dome at the atmospheric turmoil, he recalled the first time he saw footage of an unprotected region being overtaken by the viral wave. Images of shriveled life that would have haunted the most hardened person were simply happy memories to Martin. After all, if it wasn't for this unfortunate chemical reaction, he wouldn't be hailed as one of the saviors of the human race as well as a genius.

Martin simply viewed the destruction of the natural Earth as a 'page in history written by fate'. Selfish in his thoughts and ways, he had what he needed and that was what mattered.

The shuttle landed on a small platform with a slight jerk as the passengers, mostly garbed in white scientific smocks bearing the Asmotech logo, departed towards the labs. It was business as usual for Martin. Today he was supposed to improve the integrity of the dome field past the 40,000 foot level. Apparently, some people had complained that birds, what few were lucky enough to be encased in the protection of the dome, were somehow able to exit the dome in the weaker points. They were spotted on the ground outside of the dome, choking. Martin, while he was designing the domes, decided that it was not necessary to have the same strength field in the higher altitudes since the majority of the harmful atmospheric qualities, which emanated from the diseased soil, were concentrated below 20,000 feet. Therefore, the field strength could be reduced, thus saving valuable energy needed to keep the fields intact.

He did not even consider the fact that a field of such low strength, although adequate to shield the innards, could be punctured momentarily by the force of, for example, birds. Birds were not at all a priority nor a concern of Martin's. As far as he was concerned, who cares about a few surviving birds anyway? Martin recalled a favorite line from an ancient novel, *A Christmas Carol*: "...then they had better die and decrease the surplus population." He chuckled lightly and set to work to appease these sentimental fools.

After a hectic morning of calculation and eyestrain, Martin decided to take a break and head for the company lounge to replicate some lunch. He sat at a table near the edge of the dome where most people felt uneasy to be so close to the deadly exterior. As he sat and ate a greenish brown frothy mixture, he noticed a small black speck in the sky. He put down his food, stood up and took out a spherical object which illuminated at his touch as he held it up to his squinting eye. As the instrument located the object in question and brought it into focus, Martin was surprised at what he saw, a bald eagle.

The bird appeared to be flying somewhat erratically, as if fighting some unseen adversary. Martin pressed a button on the unit which started to beep and then put illuminated a green line in the viewer which represented its projected course, current distance from the unit, and probable estimated time to reach its projected destination. The unit guessed that its current destination would take it over the dome and out of sight and range.

Suddenly the bird seemed to falter and struggle to keep its altitude as the effects of the poisonous atmosphere began to take its toll on the

helpless creature. The unit attempted to adjust its course prediction which now suggested that if the projectile continued at its current rate of descent, it would crash into the ground not 10 feet away from where Martin was standing. Several people began to notice Martin's activities and gathered at the edge of the dome to try to spot what had gotten his attention.

After a few seconds a woman let out a horrified gasp as she saw the suffocating animal rapidly descending. Others had located the suffering animal now, and were all equally astonished, but not one person muttered a word. The bird slammed into the infected ground quite close to the small computer's prediction and twisted in agony, trying desperately to fill its lungs with a breath of clean air. The people inside the dome watched in horror as the animal choked and clawed at the dust until it finally lay motionless.

Most of the workers in the dome were young, 'children of the dome' so to speak. 95% of them never knew what it was to breathe fresh rather than purified air. None of them consequently, ever had to see death in such a brutal form. For most of them, this dramatic display was a first. Such an event to their sterile minds was almost unthinkable. They may have been able to duplicate, modify, improve, create, but never figured out how to suppress human emotion. A few workers began to weep at the sight of the now deceased bird. Martin simply shrugged it off, however, for perhaps the first time in his life, he felt a twinge of remorse. Why? He couldn't tell. "Perhaps all those weak fools blubbering got to me for a second," he mused. The crowd began





to disperse, most of which couldn't bear to look at the broken body any longer.

Martin continued to watch however, fascinated at how the elements immediately went to work on dismantling the bird's carcass. The dry air and soil feasted upon their prey, sucking the moisture from its body. "What have we done to this planet?" a small female voice from behind mumbled.

Martin turned to see Romana, a fellow engineer, sobbing lightly as she peered through the dome. Martin, not sure if the question was directed at him, hypothetical, or both, replied, "You said something?"

Romana, in a daze, turned to see who addressed her. After clearing the tears from her eyes and focusing on Martin, her expression of pity changed to one of anger and genuine hatred. "Yes, Mr. Fibuli, Mr. 'I saved the human race' Fibuli, I said, what the hell have we done to this planet?!"

Martin, confused at her anger, replied, "What do you mean?"

Now furious and shouting, Romana bellowed, "We should have all died just like that poor creature out there! If it wasn't for you and your damn domes!"

Martin stood motionless, although visibly touched by her biting words.

She continued, "That's right, you gave the human race a way out of their punishment that nature had so meticulously planned. We deserve to die just like the 90% of the species on this planet did 80 years ago! We deserve to die just like the selected unworthy did!" Romana had begun to attract the attention of others in the cafeteria who gathered around. Such outbursts were rare. "I suppose you're going to deny that in addition to being the Earth's savior, you're also its destroyer!" Romana shrieked.

A look of horror crossed Martin's face. "What are you insinuating?!" Martin fired back.

Romana calmed for a moment regaining her composure momentarily as a grim look crossed her tear streaked face. Romana glared at Martin and delivered, "I have, for the past 7 years been researching the chemical agent that caused this senseless destruction. You know it well don't you Martin? *Terranepctictrichloracyde*. My team and I have traced its 20 year development and uncovered an interesting bit of data. Ever since the virus ran rampant across the Earth, no one could explain why it reacted the way it did. Based on the chemical composition, there was technically no way for that to happen. You might say it was one of the great unknown mysteries, until now. We have traced it to you, Martin."

Martin seemed on the verge of collapse but managed to squeak, "Preposterous! I had nothing to do with its development. I wasn't even on the team!"

"Maybe so," Romana responded, "but, the development team used a chemical in their formula that you created. A chemical certified *by you* to be safe and stable. It was neither, was it Martin?"

Silence filled the large room. "We can't decide if your error was intentional or accidental, you begin the foremost brain

in the fields of chemical and electrical engineering. We found it hard to believe that it was an accident, especially in light of how important you knew the substance would be to the development. Not to mention that the chemical composition on record was in fact not the same as the one used by the development team. So I ask you, what was your intention? Did you know of the flaw?"

The entire room focused on Martin who was now reduced to tears. "It can't be!" he lied through his sobbing. The scientists looked at each other with unconvinced glances.

After that day, the Asmotech board of directors demanded a full-scale investigation into the matter. It was also decided that Romana and her team's findings would not be made public, for obvious reasons.

As the weeks passed and the investigation came closer and closer to finding the truth, Martin had changed both internally and externally. During the hearing, footage of death and destruction of practically every lifeform on Earth were shown. Test results were presented and the life seemed to drain from his face. He was finally beginning to realize just how much damage he had done. The scope of the destruction was practically inconceivable considering the only living things on the planet were huddled like rats inside little domed air pockets. Martin began to long for his own death.

After all, he was solely responsible for the death of almost an entire planet. As the evidence became more pronounced, Martin was kept under guard in his office which has been converted into a makeshift jail cell. After about a month, Martin was convinced that he had to redeem himself somehow. "Redeem yourself!?" he thought to himself, "You are responsible for the destruction of almost an entire world! And for what? Money? Fame?!" Martin dropped to his knees and began sobbing. A frequent practice lately. It was then that Martin swore he would attempt to reverse the process.

Time that he spent in his office/cell was no longer wasted during the following weeks. He began to formulate a hypothesis on how to reverse the process and restore life to the planet. After what seemed like endless hours of internal deliberation and calculation he had his answer. Based on his findings and research, he would require several elements that could not be replicated. Unfortunately, the required materials were most likely destroyed in the viral infection.

It then occurred to him, "The Reserve! That's it!" He immediately called up a technical schematic of "The Reserve" which detailed the security systems. It was fortunate that Asmotech had built and designed all such systems, otherwise such information would have been unobtainable. He was impressed with his colleagues' work. They had designed security systems to deal with any type of breach, chemical, physical, electronic, radio, etc. After several hours he had enough information to enter "The Reserve" unnoticed. After this, he then called up a mineralogical survey of the entire reserve closest to him, praying that he wouldn't have to cross continents to get to one of the other six.

This particular reserve covered the top portion of North America and about 20 square miles of what used to be Canada and was considered to be one of the most versatile reserves geographically. Checking his list of required minerals against the Reserve's stores, he was astonished that each of the required elements existed in some form within its boundaries. All he had to do was find them.

Martin spent the rest of the night pondering his escape, theft of a vehicle to escape in, ways to avoid any form of pursuit, and shortest route to the reserve.

Early the next morning, he slipped out of bed and grabbed a backpack filled with various chemical mixing devices and extractors, along with a rather noisy collection of small computers and a replicator to sustain his organics. As luck would have it, the assigned guard was fast asleep. Knowing where every door and corridor led inside Asmotech was an advantage he intended to exploit as Martin made his way towards the docking bay. Peeking into the bay, it was completely devoid of all activity and people. After all, no one was expecting him to try to get away and the only reachable places he could go in a short range shuttle was the city of Eldradopolis and "the Reserve," both of which are secured to the max.

"This must be the easiest escape in recorded history both fictional and real!" he chuckled to himself. As Martin climbed into the transport and sailed out of the dome, he saw out of the corner of his eye, the bones of the dead eagle below. The sight of this poor creature was now permanently etched in his mind. He knew this horrific scene could never be erased from memory.

"I am responsible for the past but, I will change the future that past has destined," he swore.

"Course?," the computer interrupted his thoughts.

"The Reserve, I have a world to restore."

The flight to the Reserve, a mere 450 miles from Asmotech, lasted only about an hour. During that time, Martin constantly scanned for signs of pursuit. No one. In the distance through the red dust storms, a huge dome began to take shape. Martin began preparing to breach the dome's security which he avoided without a problem.

Martin had never seen the Reserve—just pictures. The massive dome was an estimated 550 miles in diameter, and though its transparent surface, images of life began to take shape. Martin was in awe. Shadows of trees and creatures both airborne and grounded moved everywhere as far as he could see through the swirling toxic dust. While his attention was momentarily captured by the awesome scene before him, he suddenly realized that he had forgotten to disable one of the perimeter force fields. He desperately tried to turn the speeding craft to avoid smashing into it but it was too late.

The front of the craft rammed into the field shattering the shuttle into millions of flaming bits. A second before the impact, the collision system kicked in as Martin was launched from the craft enshrouded in a small bubble of protective air. He landed on his backpack with a sickening crunch about 15 feet away from the dome.

He tried desperately to shake off the urge to pass out knowing that if he didn't act in the next two minutes the air inside the bubble would run out. As he tried to get to his feet, a tremendous gust of wind slammed into him knocking him another ten feet away from the dome. He began to panic but was soon able to crawl over to the edge of the dome just as the life sustaining air inside his protective bubble began to wear thin.

He frantically fumbled through his backpack, desperately trying to locate his portable frequency modulation unit that would allow him to weaken the dome's integrity so he could slip through. As he plowed through the bag he noticed that several pieces of his equipment were damaged when he landed on his pack. Not a second to spare for grief, he finally managed to wrench the small unit free and plunge it into the dome. Suddenly, the bubble around him collapsed, leaving him completely exposed to the toxic atmosphere.

With an incredible leap, he threw himself into the small opening the unit had created just as he began to choke on the filthy air. Several inhabitants of the dome were startled by the sudden intrusion as they watched the odd looking creature plunge through the dome and crumple to the ground, motionless after bellowing out reddish brown air from its lungs.

The creatures one by one, approached the lifeless form, sniffed at it for a while and disappeared into the foliage a short distance away. None of them knew that the new guest was responsible for the death of most of their relatives and their once beautiful world.

The last thing Martin remembered before he passed out was hitting his head on something hard and consequently, painful. He awoke in a daze, feeling cool water trickling on his neck and shoulders.

As he began to open his crusty eyes, a scene totally alier to Martin began to magically take form before him. The first thing that came clearly into focus was a small flower atop a large green leaf gently floating on the edge of a small body of water to his left. "What the hell is this?!" he spoke aloud momentarily forgetting where he was and quickly attempted to get on his feet. Searing pain surging through his head however got the best of his actions as it forced him to the ground once again. He rolled over on his back and pressed against the spot on his head which was now clotted with blood.

Unable to move for the moment, he once again opened his eyes and stared into the purified sky which currently was filled with several groups of multi-colored birds. Martin, finally regaining his senses, smiled as he realized that he was in "The Reserve."

"I made it!" he cackled triumphantly while he began to unhook his backpack in search of his med-kit. After several minutes, he deduced that much of his electronic gear had been destroyed in the impact. Miraculously, his small portable databook containing his research, formulas, and pretty much every fact known to humankind was still intact.

After assessing the damage on the rest of his equipment which was now useless, he crawled over to the small pond with the lily pad floating in it to cleanse his wound. He had never see





a lily pad before, let alone a pond but, he was happy they were both there for some reason. Since his testing equipment was useless, he had to personally assess the quality of the water.

He thought to himself, "Wait, even though this is the Reserve, I recall that they felt it would be wiser to leave most of the natural diseases intact as to keep certain animal and plant life under control." He quickly punched several keys on his portable computer unit to confirm his suspicions. Slapping the unit shut, he pondered the situation and quickly deduced that he had no other choice since his food replicator had been destroyed as well. He scooped up some water and began to wash the gash on his forehead.

As he bent over the water he noticed that something was causing ripples next to him. He slowly raised his eyes to the left and jumped back in surprise. A fur-coated animal was taking small sips of the pond not three feet away from Martin.

Scared at first, he had no idea what kind of creature this was though at the moment, it seemed to be involved in its refreshment to pay him any heed. For the first time in a long while, Martin smiled. He sat for a few minutes quietly observing every detail he could absorb, hooved feet, white tail, brown fur with white spots... The harder Martin looked, the more detail sprang out of this magnificent animal. Martin had an incredible urge to touch this creature as he reached his hand out toward it.

The animal paused for a moment, to eye the approaching appendage. Martin stopped, sensing the animal was about to bolt into the trees beyond. Changing his tactics, Martin

cupped his hands in to the cool water and presented the furry beast with his offering. The animal hesitated for a minute or two and then slowly edged its way towards the makeshift basin.

To Martin's disbelief and pleasure, the animal began to sip. Before the animal was finished, it quickly jerked its head up and looked towards the outside of the dome. It froze in fear and then quickly disappeared into the forest. Martin looked out into the filthy atmosphere past his damaged vehicle and saw in the distance, the lights of a transport ship. He just realized that he had no idea how long he had been unconscious and hitting that forcefield probably alerted every Reserve watch station within 100 miles.

"Damn!" he screeched, quickly collecting his small computer, he gave a quick look at the ominous trees that stood before him. He couldn't believe how tall and beautiful they were! Momentarily stunned by the spectacle, the roar of transport engines quickly snapped him back into reality as he plunged into the dark forest ahead.

For a man of 80 plus years, Martin was making good time. He plowed through terrain of every sort; forest, open fields, marshes, canyons, etc... According to his chronometer, he had been moving for over 4 hours. He came upon a small clearing with an assortment of large boulders which he promptly sat down upon, exhausted.

While he sat and caught his breath, he reflected on all he had just traveled through.

He had never experienced such sights and sounds, real or simulated. Landscapes of indescribable beauty, waterfalls, wildlife of all kinds, canyons were all preserved just as if the viral tragedy never happened. He realized that he was probably one of the few people to ever see The Reserve in its raw beauty.

He began to weep, remembering once again that it was mainly his fault that places like this do not exist without the use of the protective domes. "No amount of credits or fame could ever be worth the destruction of such beauty. Had I known! Had I known!" he sobbed as he pounded his fist against the cold dark stone.

It was then that he realized he must begin his work in an attempt to restore the planet. He was now fighting an unseen and unanticipated adversary, time. He knew that the government and Asmotech officials would soon be entering the dome and searching for his fugitive carcass.

Martin spent the rest of the day searching for shelter and a home base. He finally managed to locate a small overhang in a cliff which provided the needed cover from the aerial sweeps the officials would be making to try to locate him. Weary from his long trek over the uneven and unfamiliar terrain he settled down in some soft leaves he collected and tried to sleep. However, dreams, horrible dreams of untold destruction haunted him throughout the night, dreams of the destruction he had caused.

For the next three weeks, Martin swept the landscape locating the required compounds he needed to experiment. His calculations were both elegant and frantic. He had to keep a constant watch on the sky for the patrols. All would be lost if they were to locate him before he was able to compose the

successful in restoring the planet. He knew that one chance was all they would have to undo the damage to the Earth. If successful, people would have to be taught that their planet, above all things, was the most precious of their possessions.

[ 3 MONTHS LATER ]

The hovercraft landed next to the body with a small thud as the animals scurried to safety. The survey team radioed in that they found a body and requested instructions. They were told to bring it back to Reserve HQ and forget they even found it. Since only a handful of people knew of the Asmotech incident and the work of Dr. Fibuli, the team thought nothing of it.

It was later deduced that this was the body of the late Dr. Fibuli by DNA sampling. "We also found this," one of the team members said as he presented a small computer device.

The chief Asmotech engineer switched on the unit and scanned its memory banks for a minute or two. As time passed the engineer's eyes began to widen as if he was reading a text on the true meaning of the universe. The engineer pushed through the surrounding scientists to the viewcom and demanded to talk to the chief engineer at Asmotech. "I have something here you have to see," he said simply.

[ 258 YEARS LATER ]

The sun warmed the freshly cut grass while a tiny brook bubbled past the fauna as a few birds sipped the cooling liquid on the banks. Children kicked a small ball around nearby as the domeless city of Eldradopolis glimmered in the distance. The ball went astray from their game and rolled to a stop at the foot of a glimmering white statue. As the child picked up the ball, she looked up and eyed a shining gold inscription. A small plaque on the statue read:

DEDICATED TO DR. MARTIN FIBULI  
THE HUMAN RACE HAS YOU TO THANK FOR THEIR PLANET.  
WE WILL PROTECT IT  
AND ALL THAT DWELL ON IT.

The child never knew of protective domes, toxic atmosphere, purified air, Reserves, and destruction. But she knew that her planet was her most valuable possession, and she, like everyone else, would always keep it that way. That's what she was taught from birth. That's what her children's children would be taught. A shadow suddenly covered the statue as a bald eagle landed on top of the stone. She smiled.

**Robert Glanzman** is a student at the New Jersey Institute of Technology. When not practicing the piano, guitar, and drums he writes video games and runs an internet BBS, while always making time for his cat. He may be reached at <REG7235@hertz.njit.edu>.



M.J. Aukerman

proper chemical formula. Every so often, he would spot a glimpse. He was always able to get out of sight before they reached him with a little help from the wildlife. The engines would cause an incredible commotion thus alarming any animal within a thousand foot radius. He paid a silent thanks for the help. It was as if the animals knew how important his work was to their future and were helping in any way they could.

Martin continued to work non-stop during the next few weeks. The patrols had all but given up. He suspected that they assumed some animal got to him and that was the end of it. The surroundings changed him during this time. What he once shrugged off as useless became the most precious thing known to him. Life. His eyes were opened to the world that once was. He began to understand the delicate balance that once existed throughout the planet and how easily it was to disrupt it.

During the past two months spent in the Reserve, Martin gained an appreciation of every living thing he encountered and each night he would cry himself to sleep. He had once heard a wise man say that it was always easier to destroy than create and that experience was the best teacher. In all the years of his schooling, he was always taught to achieve at any cost. He realized that he was more concerned with if he could than if he should, and values and education had to change if he was suc-

# Calling an Activist up from an Anthill

## E.O. Wilson's Reluctant Journey

David Rothenberg

### Reviews Of:

E.O. Wilson, *Naturalist*, Washington: Island Press, 1994. 380 pp. Photos, drawings, index. \$24.95 hardcover.  
Stephen Kellert and E.O. Wilson, eds. *The Biophilia Hypothesis*. Washington: Island Press, 1993. 484pp. Index. \$17.95 paperback.

**E**dward Osborne Wilson: World's foremost authority on ants. Winner of the Crafoord prize, scientific ecology's equivalent of the Nobel. Winner of the Pulitzer prize for literature, nonfiction category. Staunch and opinionated Harvard professor, inventor of the politically contentious instance of scientism known as sociobiology. After being so vilified by the Left in the seventies, Wilson returns to the public eye in the nineties, as champion of biodiversity, a politically correct hero at last. Who is this man? How did he get here?

In *Naturalist*, Wilson tells his own story. It's not the first time he has done so. Ten years ago he introduced the concept of *Biophilia* in a book of the same title, suggesting that evolution can explain why humans should love life, setting the grounds for its protection, preservation, and care.

With the bold way he has pushed the boundaries of science forward while maintaining its rigid principles, Wilson has been both cautious and daring. In *Biophilia* he championed a solidly mechanistic way of conceiving of science: "I open an ant colony as I would the back of a Swiss watch. I am enchanted by the intricacy of its parts and the clean, thrumming precision. But I never see the colony as anything more than an *organic machine*." The life of his favorite subjects, the ants, remains something mechanical for him, though wonderful all the same. His love is as much for the machinery of nature as for the mysteries of nature. He does not see his ants as animals with a different consciousness, an other voice, a part of nature that lives and expresses itself to us.

Wilson's science is impeccable within the criteria of his discipline. And he is to be commended for continuing to reach outside his discipline. The man has guts—he is not afraid to speak and write ideas to test them out on the public. Unfortunately, he is at times philosophically and politically innocent. He does not realize how anthropomorphic his mechanistic approach to science is, seeing all around him as mechanical and machine-like. He does not realize how his sociobiological vision of using biology to explain human social behavior misses the

complex political realities our species has invented for itself. Granted, he may be speaking on a larger species-wide scale, or he may be arguing something so modest as to appear obvious, but Wilson is just not interested in the complexities of human thought or human societies. He works at another level.

He is best at the level of describing the minute world of our insect neighbors. His writing is unusually lucid, and can be a model in style for other scientists interested in conveying enthusiasm for their discipline to a larger audience. I like him best when he veers away from the machine world to the strangely spiritual, echoing Kepler's evocation of God as he discovered celestial equations. Wilson prays for a cornucopia of creatures to examine:

Take me, Lord, to an unexplored planet teeming with new life forms. Put me at the edge of virgin swampland dotted with hummocks of high ground... Let me be the Carolus Linnaeus of this world, bearing no more than specimen boxes, botanical canister, hand lens, notebooks but allowed not years but centuries of time. (p. 171)

The scientist asks most for his raw material, a place to categorize and define. It is no small step from here to a position of advocacy for the preservation of the world's wild places. There are numerous hurdles in time to go through before that. First, a period when Wilson had to sustain continuous criticism from the molecular biologists at Harvard, among them DNA-discoverer James Watson and Nobel laureate George Wald. Wilson's ecological approach of studying the whole organism as part of an environment was seen as reactionary, limited, and far from the cutting edge in biological science, which looked at cells and smaller, foreshadowing the developments that would lead to today's genome analysis and genetic engineering.

Wilson's ecological biology has its antecedents in the classical activity of the naturalist, one who observes nature, pays attention to it, notes down the natural world as experienced. It is the same lineage that produced ecoheroes like Henry David Thoreau and John Muir. Now Wilson maintains much more mechanistic thinking than these two, but he tries for an experienced kind of spirituality, though it is learned, not innate. Wilson is not afraid to go out on a limb with his theological speculations—I admire his daring, but wish he took these speculations as seriously as he takes his empiricism; then he would be tempted to read more outside his own narrow field. The stabs at spirit would then be better informed.

Still, an activist ecology has much to learn from scientific ecology and Wilson's experience within it. He talks of a period in the 1960s where, for the sake of his own academic reputation, he had to avoid using the very word 'ecology' lest his sober research be linked with the wild insurgence of the times. It took twenty years for radicalism and the mainstream of science to converge; today ecology can thrive both as branch of science and movement for social change.

But is an ecologically-based philosophy of human culture yet another case of scientism, applying a limited form of empirical knowledge today into a rationalized explanatory force behind something multifarious and wildly in flux? Already in the 1970s Wilson was delving beyond the borders of his discipline. His sociobiology was an attempt to show that the social behavior of all animals, including humans, had its roots in biologically determined aspects of our past. As Wilson put it, "In this macroscopic view the humanities and social sciences shrink to specialized branches of biology; history, biography and diction are the research protocols of human ethology; and anthropology and sociology together constitute the socioethology of a single primate species."

Wilson's willingness to reprint this sentence here (p. 329) must mean that he still doesn't realize what a naive thing it is to say. In their most arrogant moments, all disciplines can claim to include all others. But they don't. Biology may inform history, culture, and art, but it does not include them. Science itself can also be seen as merely a branch of artifice or philosophy, just another story of origin and explanation we can choose to follow, or to reject. It certainly loses credence, though, when it becomes a kind of gospel, an unshakable faith that tries to explain too much. When any religion denies openness, it is doomed to fail. Ecology had best hold onto its elasticity before it becomes a dogmatic faith.

However politically unaware sociobiology may be, Wilson has chosen his mature career as the time to become overtly political. In the 1980s he began to consider himself an environmental activist, not just a naturalist. "I was, I will confess now, unforgivably late in arriving. Biodiversity destruction had troubled my mind for decades but I made little overt response... At what point should scientists become activists? I knew from hard experience that the ground between science and political engagement is treacherous" (p. 355-6). In the 1980s Wilson joined the Board of Directors of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and began to advocate a pragmatic environmentalism that "combines conservation projects with economic advice and assistance to local populations affected by efforts to salvage biological diversity" (p. 358). In Wilson's view, preservation and development go hand in hand, for no impoverished people will want to devote time and effort to preserve land for its own sake.

In the end, Wilson chooses a more modest formulation to summarize his credo: "My truths, three in number, are the following: first, humanity is ultimately the product of biological evolution; second, the diversity of life is the cradle and greatest natural heritage of the human species; and third, philosophy and religion make little sense without taking into account these first

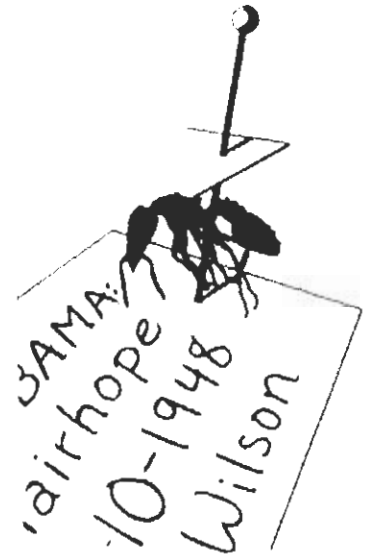
two conceptions." (p. 363). Finally, we see in Wilson a personal evolution from the more outlandish claims of sociobiology and mechanistic science.

It is in his concept of 'biophilia', or love of life, that we find a more politically correct convergence of scientism and philosophizing in Wilson's work. Sadly this notion is barely touched on in *Naturalist*, though a recent work that Wilson has co-edited with Stephen Kellert, *The Biophilia Hypothesis*, shows how he has come to understand the increased significance of the idea since he first posited it ten years ago. Back then, biophilia was simply the observation that human cultural evolution has progressed in such a way to be "incidentally congenial" to love of life. Today this outgoing love is not so accidental. In fact, it is crucial for the survival of so many species on a planet manipulated deeply by our actions.

This collection is the proceedings of a conference held at the Woods

Hole Oceanographic Institution in the summer of 1992. It contains quite a mixed bag of responses to the initial somewhat scientific hypothesis that affinity with living beings is good for us humans in a vague sense of evolutionary fitness. Like sociobiology, this is another example of scientism, albeit a more politically correct one. The responses are best when they are speculative, hopeful, often anecdotal, not necessarily conclusive or implicative for specific environmental policy.

Scott McVay tells a tale of a woman who befriended a porpoise in Naples, Florida, and became close enough to the animal that it would take fish from no one else, pining whenever she went away. He locates nine similar cases in Florida alone. (Now, Ted Mooney wrote about a woman who has an affair with a dolphin in his novel, *Easy Travel to Other Planets*, but that is taking biophilia just a few steps farther than this book does.) Psychologist Judith Heerwagen and zoologist Gordon Orians conduct a study asking people on the street what kind of tree shapes they most prefer, and certain broad, protective canopy shapes that would prove most beneficial to savannah-bound primates turned out to be the most popular. Psychiatrists Katcher and Wilkins found that the best thing to relieve anxiety at the dentist is not looking at a nice poster of a waterfall (or, presumably, listening to Kenny G as the drill penetrates the enamel), but contemplating an aquarium full of real, live fish.



Such observations may veer from the mysteriously sublime to the scientifically ridiculous, but they do suggest that life can matter to us in many more ways than just consuming it to stay alive. Richard Nelson finds a pervasive affinity with life in all the hunter-gatherer cultures he has lived with in the Far North, but he notes that this aspect of their being may be hard to see: "Perhaps, like the curved edge of the earth, biophilia only becomes visible from a distance." (p. 225) If so, we had best train our telescopes at the far horizon, for the need for this affection is great and immediate. Wilson already posed the tune-in-next-week question at the outset: "Will humanity love life enough to save it?"

This depends if we are willing to heed his principles of biodiversity and whether we can heed them as much as our guiding moral principles of culture:

1. Biodiversity is the creation.
2. Other species are our kin.
3. The biodiversity of a country is part of its national heritage.
4. Biodiversity is the frontier of the future. (p. 39)

This rousing outline suggests that care for life around us represents not only a biologically determined part of the past, but a cultural goal for the future. Seen in this way, biology is no longer the mother of all human attributes, but part of the equation, an inherent value that philosophy and policy must turn to in order to insure ours and the planet's thriving future. I like that picture more than the earlier, more simplistic one of deference to science and its absolutism.

It is biologist Michael Soule who raises some of the most provocative questions at the end of the volume. He is alone among the scientists here in considering the critique of science that has come from sociological and humanistic camps—wondering about the biases of science and the possible narrowness of its perspective. Soule asks the right questions throughout his essay: Are natural sounds better for us than mechanical ones? Can biophilia be traced to our hominid origins, or is it another phase of cultural development? Do we appreciate most the 'salient' forms of life that stand out from the crowd—is it the tree we see for the forest, or the other way round? Soule worries that life-protecting instincts are biologically valuable mostly for us, and that if we choose to preserve wild, more-than-human nature, it is a cultural construct, not an evolutionary antecedent. So in the end, while inspired by biophilia, he concludes that it does not explain why we are all gradually becoming environmentalists in this apprehensive time of worry and hope.

*The Biophilia Hypothesis* is most useful in showing how Wilson's concept, while provocative, is something hypothesized, not concluded. We need to compare it with all the other social and moral factors that influence our actions done to the Earth. E.O. Wilson's life achievement as an observer of the bugs and beasts of this world from backyards to backcountries cannot be underestimated. And his forays into philosophy are to be admired for their boldness. *Naturalist* offers a window into this brilliantly inquisitive mind, but it also reveals the holes in the screen door going out to the porch. They are equally important—that's how the most interesting bugs get to us, right? And they keep biting even after we think we can explain why they do what they do.

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## Around the World with Aldo Leopold

Andrew Light

### Review of:

J Baird Callicott, *Earth's Insights: A Multicultural Survey of Ecological Ethics from the Mediterranean Basin to the Australian Outback*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1994. 22pp \$35.00 Hardcover.

**E**arth's *Insights* is a remarkable book for a number of reasons. Callicott has done the environmentalist community a great service by providing a broad survey of the environmental outlooks of various world religions and

traditions. It's all here: environmental attitudes in Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Zen, Lakota shamanism, Kayapo thought, Yoruba wisdom—just to name a few—and of course, the Western religious and Greco-Roman views. Without exception, Callicott finds some sort of environmental ethic in every culture he explores. Of course, according to his standards, these world systems are not all equal in merit.

Though I am in no position to evaluate the particulars of his accounts of most of these positions, the text reads with a fine attention to detail that is clearly well documented. This is no slapdash comparative philosophy. Callicott has been working on the topic since 1983 when he was first approached to write a

paper on international environmental ethics for UNESCO, and the time and effort spent in trying to understand these different cultures shows.

Understanding is clearly the main purpose of the book. Callicott mostly resists the temptation to judge the cultures that have inherited these world views teeming with environmental wisdom. In a discussion of Zen, Callicott rightly points out the paradox of the environmental disaster of modern Japan that evolved out of this ecologically benign tradition. But the judgments of the culture are reigned in.

Whether or not it was Westernization and an abandonment of their traditional love of nature, or the alleged myopia and narcissism of that love which allowed the Japanese to ignore the untold environmental effects of twentieth-century industrialization is not the issue. How, rather, may a culturally harmonious, ecologically resonant environmental ethic be constructed from the conceptual materials afforded by Japan's intellectual heritage? That is the pertinent and the only practical question. (106)

This is a paradigm example of the methodology and focus of the book. Callicott is well known for his belief (at times hyperbolically stated) in the important role of environmental ethics in meeting the challenge of the environmental crisis. With this volume Callicott has shown us that he is sensitive to the importance of cultural pluralism in defining the role and function of the development of environmental ethics. His intuitions, I believe, are sound: the building blocks for an ethic as crucial as one demanded by environmental problems must of necessity come out of the diverse cultures which still exert so much influence on the day to day lives of different people in different parts of the world. To expect a significant number of people in the world to embrace, say, a Eurocentric environmental ethic as their own is shortsighted. By proving to us that there are sound environmental principles at work in traditions other than, for example, Native American spiritualism, Callicott has given us the direction to seek many more cultural referents for our environmental ideas.

But this book is by no means only a survey of the environmental ethical potential in the world's intellectual traditions. Baird Callicott has devoted the bulk of his intellectual career to advancing and articulating Aldo Leopold's *land ethic* in a particular, and sometimes peculiar way, and this volume does not deviate from that work. Briefly, on Callicott's account, Leopold gives us an argument for a nonanthropocentric holism based in a moral theory inherited from Darwin, and derived from David Hume and Adam Smith. On this account, ethics rests upon sentiments, which, while they may be amplified by human reason, are not based on the necessity of the existence of reason.

For Darwin, bonds of affection and sympathy (sentiments) of parents to offspring are the foundation of morality, which are eventually extended to others, by the formation of small, close, kin groups. "Social sentiments" then expand

through a recognition of the aid that sentiment gives to the fitness of the community (non-reductively conceived). Callicott claims that through this form of community expansion, ethics and community may be seen in this account as, in a strong sense, correlative. The evolutionary expansion of communities just is the expansion of greater circles of increasingly complex moral consideration. This is supposed to explain Leopold's remark that "all ethics so far evolved rest upon a single premise: that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts."

The next step of evolution of the "community concept" is according to Callicott, the land ethic. A land ethic will emerge however in the "collective cultural consciousness" only after land is perceived as a biotic community, in the same way that a collective cultural consciousness formed around the idea of the tribe or clan as a new and acceptable community. In this work, Callicott has expanded his interpretation of the land ethic to show how it is consistent with what he calls "postmodern science"—quantum theory, chaos, etc.

We find this same story of Leopold's land ethic in the penultimate chapter of the book, though now it is told more straightforwardly than before as a clear evolution from Hume and Smith to Darwin, Charles Elton, and finally Leopold. The function of this version of the land ethic is to provide Callicott with a "postmodern" environmental ethic which will be "firmly grounded in ecology and buttressed by the new physics."

Such an ethic is the 'one' in what Callicott calls the one many problem, or the need to have a single cross-cultural environmental ethic based on ecology and the postmodern science, while at the same time acknowledging the importance of a "multiplicity of traditional cultural environmental ethics, resonant with such an international, scientifically grounded environmental ethics and helping to articulate it." (12) The one and the many represent, respectively, our quality of being one species facing a worldwide crisis, and the historical reality. We are many people from many cultures and different places. The ethics representing these two are not at odds for Callicott, but each will be a part of the emerging world ecological consciousness.

There are three major problems with Callicott's move that I will mention here. First, though many have embraced Callicott's interpretation of Leopold, it is far from being universally accepted. The most important going challenger is Bryan Norton, who interprets Leopold as a *pragmatist* and argues that the land ethic is actually an anthropocentric holist management strategy, rather than a nonanthropocentric holist ethic. (See Norton's "The Constancy of Leopold's Land Ethic," *Conservation Biology* 2:1). Callicott does not acknowledge the competition here at all. If Callicott is going to propose, again, the undefended accuracy of his take on Leopold, he is putting at risk all of the conclusions he wishes to draw out of that interpretation. And here, given the work that this 'one' theory is supposed to do, that risk is quite high.

Second, both Norton and Gary Varner have also pointed out that Callicott's defense of moral monism is flawed, as is his claim that only a nonanthropocentric theory can provide an adequate environmental ethic. Both philosophers have argued



that a pluralism in the method of moral consideration is demanded by any holist theory given the plurality of its application. (See Norton's review of Callicott's *In Defense of the Land Ethic*, and Varner's "No Holism without Pluralism," both in *Environmental Ethics*, 13:2, Summer 1991.) Again, without going into the details here, this is a serious challenge to Callicott's view, and simply calling his account here a "reconstructive post-modernism"—pointing out its multicultural applicability—without clearing the way through these challenges, is not enough to satisfy the worries raised by these theorists. The arguments have been around long enough for Callicott to at least make a pass at a defense against these challenges.

Finally, though, again, I don't claim to be well versed in the traditions discussed in the book, following from these two worries, we may question the validity of Callicott's comparative critiques of some of the views he surveys. These appraisals are made in many instances on the degree to which these different world traditions do or do not favorably compare with a non-anthropocentric, ecologically based Leopoldian ethic.

If we may call into question this goal as the paradigm of an environmental ethic, then we may call into question some of these appraisals. So, it may just not be the case that "...Africa looms as a big blank spot on the world map of indigenous environmental ethics..." (158) because of the predominance of anthropocentrism in its various intellectual and religious traditions. There might instead be a good argument for an anthropocentric holist ethic, if Norton's interpretation of Leopold has merit.

Callicott's book will be helpful for a wide range of scholars as well as serve a useful role in the classroom. It is clearly one of those "musts" for any student or professional in environmental studies. It should be read, though, with an eye toward the eventual resolution of some of these aforementioned controversies. Callicott does not adapt his perspective to unfamiliar arenas, he just pretends to. The book dresses up his theory in multicultural clothing and justifies it with the conundrum of the one vs. the many. *Earth's Insights* is at least as devoted to singing the same old song about Leopold as it is to talking about forest people, dreamtimers or anyone else.

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## Reviews In Brief

**David Clarke Burks, editor, *Place of the Wild: A Wildlands Anthology*** Washington, DC: Island Press, 1994. 339 pp. Index.

The Wildlands Project is *Wild Earth's* quite rational dream for the preservation of large wilderness regions all across the United States. It is a noble vision, and one not so likely to gain much official support at present. This book hopes to change that, offering subtle forms of persuasion: stories, poems, essays, all fairly brief, all gripping, all convincing. It is an inspiring collection, and should be on any wilderness lover's shelf. Nabham, Williams, Drengson, Grumbine, Vest, Deming, Devall, McKibben, Snyder, Deming, Davis, Oelschlaeger and many of the usual suspects are here, all with brief, pithy pieces.

What's missing? The volume is North Americocentric for sure. Why not, since it's built around a regional problem of ours. But if more international contributions had been included, the reader might learn something about the *limitations* of the idea of wilderness, how it speaks to America's problems much more than the world's problems. Europe and Asia have not been colonized toward some imagined frontier, but around and through myriad cultures, most of which have not been eradicated or romanticized like we have done to our natives. They have lived close to nature and evolved a more human way of being close to nature, that does not place wilderness in one place and humanity in another. There might be more of the wild in this kind of settlement than in the fenced-out wilderness where, sadly, no human is meant to go.

But that would be another book! This one is great for what it is, and you should all take it with you up into the trees, out into the desert, onto the glaciers and down the rivers of your homes.

**Edward Abbey, *Confessions of a Barbarian: Selections from the Journals 1951-1989*, ed. David Peterson**, Boston: Little, Brown, 1984. 356 pp. \$24.95

Edward Abbey is without peer as the most insightful and cantankerous commentator on our pillage of the planet in general and the American Southwest desert in particular. He has inspired thousands and enraged

just as many. His writing sparkles with depth, humor, and originality while his political opinions turn awry just when you start to agree with them. Abbey remains outside any group that would have him, like the old one-eyed horse he tried unsuccessfully to tame in *Desert Solitaire*, his most celebrated account of his seasons as a ranger in Arches National Park in its bygone, dirt road primal days.

Some have called this loosely assembled series of selections from his journals his best book, and I can see why. Abbey is brilliant in pithy, sudden aphorisms, and this book traces this style from his youth in the unexpected locale of Edinburgh, Scotland (on a Fulbright fellowship no less), through his treks in the desert and his tirades on technology (though he could not write without a typewriter!). Abbey is obsessed with sex, and the pursuit of fawning young females keeps his life hurtling in disarray. Still, we learn of his deep awe for women and his remarkable affection for Hoboken, New Jersey.

Abbey loathed critics, calling them parasites of literature. Still, he was his own best one: "My style: something almost harsh, bitter, ugly. The rough, compressed, asymmetrical, laconic, cryptic. Cactus. Old juniper. Rock, dry heat, the stark contour. *NO FOG, NO GODDAMNED FOG.*" (p. 156) He wanted to do for the desert what Conrad did for the sea, but with a one-foot-in-front-of-the-other kind of swagger, leaping over quicksand in single bounds, rappelling into untrammelled canyons, dragging dead bulldozers over into the abyss behind him.

He is simulataneously funny, poignant, and obnoxious as all Hell when harping on his fellow American writers and the way the literary establishment consistently gave him the cold shoulder: "What a gutless pack of invertebrates you mostly are. What a fawning groveling writhing genteel array of gutless fence-straddling castrated neutered craven equivocating vapid insipid timorous high-minded low-bellied spineless cool hip cowardly moral jellyfish! Banana slugs of literature!" (p. 343)

Yet at times Abbey can cut right to the chase, and his intense descriptions of the ways words can matter most brings this critic nearly to tears. He eventually made the most of his grumbling years as a graduate student in philosophy at New Mexico, as he tosses his literary gifts at the hardest of questions.



Do I seem to write only of the surfaces of things? Yet, it seems to me that only surfaces are of ultimate importance—the touch of a child's hand in yours, the taste of an apple, the embrace of friend or lover, sunlight on rock and leaf, music, the feel of a girl's skin on the inside of her thigh, the bark of a tree, the plunge of clear water, the face of the wind. (p. 199)

The surfaces may be what we see, but great writing resonates with the depths of our memories, capturing our contact with where we come from. Abbey at his best is not sentimental, never compromising, and never one to turn reverse into pious dogma. He always knew how to laugh at himself and at God, at the same time being as serious as your life. *Desert Solitaire* and *The Journey Home* remain the best inroads to Abbey, but these journals are the only way out if you want the whole story.

**Jim Metzner, *Pulse of the Planet: Extraordinary Sounds from the Natural World***, Berkeley: The Nature Company, 1994, \$29.95 book + CD. [Call 1 800 227 1114 to order]

Jim Metzner's *Pulse of the Planet* is a real hybrid product, half coffee table book, half compact disc. It's a collection of gripping and fascinating sounds from across the globe, together with informative and accessible commentary explaining where the noises come from. Thirty three selections in all, each a few minutes in length, many of which originally appeared on Metzner's NPR-syndicated radio program of the same name. Some of these sounds were collected by Metzner himself, many by scientists as part of their research. Each sound piece is introduced by a brief phrase describing what is about to happen—you might imagine this could be intrusive, but it turns out to be informative and helpful instead.

This isn't a recording of music in the traditional sense, but the whole record is a composition, a sonic atlas of the wonders to be heard across the Earth. There are Siberian shamans invoking the spirit world, Zairean Mangbetu women playing the river as a drum, the obligatory and always incredible Tibetan chants, before moving on to the fantastic sounds of the more than human. Amplified marches of industrious munching ants, filing in and out of their hill. Courtship cries of leaf-hoppers, amplified into an electronic strangeness. Thrush songs are a familiar music here, but not so the laments of elephants in heat and bearded seals crying from under the polar ice. The disc moves on to greater and greater decibels and distances: tornados, earthquakes, finally the cosmic radiation of the universe itself.

The whole presentation is a rich sourcebook of soundscape, far more interesting than most sound effect recordings, and far more ambitious, because it is meant to present the cosmos of aural possibilities, not to provide effects for new creations. The project seems curiously poised between being an educational or an artistic noisebook, so it's hard to know where to place it. In the future, it might make an intriguing CD-ROM, a medium currently quite ambiguous. One thing for sure, though, is that listening to this rich plethora of sound changes the way you hear things. Your ears will never be the same.

**Robert Thayer, *Gray World, Green Heart: Technology, Nature, and the Sustainable Landscape***, New York: John Wiley, 1994. 352 pp. illustrations. Index. \$39.95 hardcover.

An inspiring, practically oriented investigation of the philosophy of landscape design as applied to an ecologically ravaged world. In the tradition of Yi Fu Tuan's classic *Topophilia*, Thayer uses examples and images from the built landscape around us to explain the experienced linked between the built and the natural. Thayer does not want to oppose technology to nature, but to reveal how technology reveals our attitudes to nature in its very construction. He introduces the concept of "landscape guilt" to explain why we today have an inherent fear of the manmade, and tend to resist its beauty: A photograph of the same body of water labelled "reservoir" was considered to be less beautiful than the same picture labelled "lake" in an empirical study. We want nature to be independent of humanity when we exalt it, while the realities of contemporary life demand a more integrated relationship.

We are destined to track nature but never capture it: to constantly reinvent nature but never get it patented. Our previous constructions of nature, like ethereal, animate spirits, seem to spring forth from our former landscapes and vanish, leaving them disempowered and disenchanting. We need landscape to help us literally make sense out of the dilemma of nature and technology. But as we search ever deeper into nature's expanding core, and as we chase technological development into the invisible realm, the visible surface of the landscape seems less and less relevant, and the center does not hold. (p. 194)

The book offers fascinating examples of the ways technology appears in the landscape, defining the sense of nature that surrounds it by overwhelming or at times fitting in. The book is aptly illustrated, and would make a fine textbook in the practical aesthetics of ecology if the pricetag weren't so high! Hopefully a paperback will be forthcoming for this is an accessible and provocative look at the design of human interactions with the surroundings, and should be widely read.

***The Encyclopedia of the Environment***, Boston: Houghton Mifflin 1994. 846pp. Diagrams. Index. \$49.95

This *Encyclopedia* is the first one volume reference for the general reader on the full range and complexity of environmental issues. The encyclopedia covers basic technical terms, but also humanistic and social aspects, entries of a few thousand words by diverse figures in the field, including Eugene Odum, Jason Clay, Karen Warren, Herman Daly, Daniel Botkin, and your editor. The book could have used more illustrations and other graphic elements, but it is certainly an essential reference work that belongs on every environmentalist's bookshelf.

***Ecopsychology Newsletter*** Berkeley: Ecopsychology Institute.

This beautifully-designed eight page newsletter is published twice a year to present brief excerpts from eco-writings that suggest the affinity between ecology and psychology. The Fall 1994 issue has brief articles by David Orr ("Our Evolutionary Affinity for Life"), Walter Christie ("Embracing Biophilia"), Melissa Nelson ("Reclaiming an Indigenous Mind"), and Patricia Cummings ("Ecopsychology in the Witness Stand"). There are also brief notices on events and courses linking the environment with mental health and inner understanding. Contact: Ecopsychology Newsletter, P.O. Box 7487, Berkeley, CA 94707-0487.

***Birds, Bats & Butterflies***, Jamestown, NY: Roger Tory Peterson Institute.

A series of occasional leaflets from the Roger Tory Peterson Institute, these four to six page publications are designed for adults who want to share nature with children, offering stories, primers, suggestions for family and school activities. The Institute is founded in honor of the great Peterson, pioneer field guide author and bird artist. For details write to: Roger Tory Peterson Institute of Natural History, 311 Curtis Street, Jamestown, NY 14701-9620.

***The American Nature Writing Newsletter*** Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment (ASLE). 24pp

This biannual newsletter is published by the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment (ASLE), founded to gather teachers and writers involved with the burgeoning field of nature writing. Contains comments from ASLE members, short articles and book reviews. The Fall 1994 issue is on native Americans and nature writing. An annual subscription is \$10. Write to: David Teague, secretary, ASLE, University of Delaware Parallel Program, 333 Shipley St. Wilmington, DE 19801. ASLE is having their first annual conference at Colorado State University in June, 1995. For details contact: Scott Slovic, president, ASLE, English Dept., Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos, TX 78666.

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Carolyn Button

*Hence, wherever they arrived, they were welcomed as with the joy of celestial paradise,  
because in the religious life they appeared full of honor.*

—Hildegard von Bingen (b. 1098)