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CHAPTER FOUR
Ecophilosophy in the Light of Tradition

While the science of ecology may be used to support a comprehensive environmental ethic like ecocentrism, the tenets of religion, which treat as objective that which science takes to be unreal, are found wanting in just this regard. Religion, because it deals primarily with the relationship of people with a Divinity or their higher Self, too easily falls prey to the perceived shortcomings of a "humanistic" or "anthropocentric" outlook; it cannot easily resist the tendency to bear our own interests in mind before that of other species (if not disregard their interests altogether). Ecophilosophers are often passionately concerned to distance themselves from a style of thinking that either takes no account of the interests of nature *in toto*, or downgrades those interests. However, in attempting to divest itself of a humanistic or anthropocentric framework, ecophilosophy has relinquished not only any allegiance it might have had to human priority over other creatures but, by association, allegiance to those very human qualities that religion sees as part of our nature and *which create for us our position in respect to nature*.

The polymath Jacob Bronowski once made an important observation about human uniqueness. "Man," he said, "is not a figure in the landscape—he is a shaper of the landscape. . . . [He] is distinguished from other animals by his imaginative gifts" and his reason.[1] It is in exercising those faculties that we stand apart from, and objectify nature. But this is only half the story. The senses, by contrast, bring nature *to* us; they are a means by which nature—the environment—communicates with us and we become, in a way, nature's subject. The senses bring form, texture, colour, sound and so on; they also channel more subtle perceptions like those of beauty or the sacred. If it is our nature to harbour such perceptions, then they are also a part of what distinguishes our humanity—no less a part of our nature than the faculties that give us the power to break nature apart and put it back together in new ways. To conceptually remove us, therefore, from

[1] Jacob Bronowski, *The Ascent of Man* (London: BBC, 1976), pp. 19-20. All the research into animal behaviour in the last three decades has not fundamentally changed this reality.

our position of observer, assessor, manipulator, or recipient of the world's properties, and then place us into nature as beings similar to all others, is to divest us of the very attributes that form a part of *our* nature, and which, in the context of environmentalism, lend wings to the passionate and voluntary involvement in, and compassion for, the state of the natural world. Although the science of ecology has *conceptually* removed us from a position of centrality, this alone does not entail an ecological *worldview*.[2] Equally, there is no evidence that instilling an ecocentric outlook will foster a feeling of identity with nature.

Interestingly, and in contradistinction, it is precisely *feeling,* resulting from the operation of just those perceptions that are part of our nature, that is (as we saw in part one) of the greatest importance. Our unique sense of beauty, and the sense of the sacred into which it extends, is indeed what engages us in our concern and love for the world. If it is impossible to be moved by evidence that we are a species like any other, it *is* possible, through an engagement with those higher, human, faculties to be moved by the sense of the significance and value of other beings and the world in general. When, therefore, it is suggested that we need a completely new paradigm to inform our interaction with the environment, the assumption seems to be that, unless the outlook is broadly *eco*centric, there exists the danger of attempting to marry a less than appropriate philosophy to a movement that asks only that all of the world's life be worthy of consideration. Yet this assumption is fallacious. It can be demonstrated empirically that a non-ecocentric approach is not at odds with suitable environmental practice. A tendency to minimize impact and destruction, to seek to repair what has been damaged, and to care for nature as well as human life, is to be found no less in "anthropocentric" philosophy. The older Leopold's outlook is a classic response in this mould, as too is the lifestyle and pragmatic ethics of Albert Schweitzer.[3] Nor need we exclude many of the Eastern religious traditions, which are easily able to balance a metaphysics that includes the supranatural and human pre-eminence with an ethical

[2] Bertrand Russell, responding to what science had revealed, could even express a moral superiority to the Universe: "In the world we know, there are many things that would be better otherwise, and the ideals to which we do and must adhere are not realized in the realm of matter" (Bertrand Russell, "A Free Man's Worship," in Why I Am Not A Christian [New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957], p. 16).

[3] See Albert Schweitzer, *My Life and Thought* (London: Unwin, 1966).

and compassionate concern for all life that minimizes environmental impact through a general philosophy of detachment from the world.[4] Nor, as we shall see shortly, need we exclude even the Abrahamic religions. It may appear contradictory, but a genuinely lived philosophy of this type—that is, one that directs consciousness *away* from a preoccupation with the world—can be environmentally sensitive and conserving of resources. This is because, as Nasr says, traditional "man,"

> who over the ages lived for the most part in harmony with nature, viewed himself, not so much as what he "was" but as what he should be . . . before the modern period, when man came to be seen as having ascended from the ape with no spiritual and ethically significant prototype, traditions all over the world envisaged man as having a spiritual archetype from which he had fallen or descended, and that archetype remained as the goal of perfection to be reached.[5]

In the Middle Ages, humanity's position in the hierarchy of Being was considered to lie between the phenomenal world and the "noumenal" one, and was likened to a bridge connecting the two.[6] Humanity was

[4] To take just the example of Hinduism, as well as incorporating the idea of the Divinity as immanent, the Yogic ethics of *Yama* and *Niyama* carry the ideals of *Ahimsa*, and *Aparigraha*—that is, non-violence whenever possible, and the minimization of material possessions. In this regard John Chryssavgis reminds us that "the present ecological crisis is a result precisely of our action—of considerable human effort and success to 'change' or 'better' the world—and not only of our greed or covetousness. The primary cause of our devastation and destruction is the relentless pursuit of what many people consider a good or desirable thing—namely, the modern, industrial-technological model of development" (John Chryssavgis, "The World of the Icon and Creation," in *Seeing God Everywhere*, p. 263).

[5] S.H. Nasr, "Man and Nature: Quest for Renewed Understanding," p. 8.

[6] Interestingly, and ironically for ecophilosophy, our position in the hierarchy, and the hierarchy in general, was not conducive to hubris. For while we may have been "bold" enough to conjecture that we expressed something more in the way of perception and consciousness than the plants and animals around us, we did not claim for ourselves a pre-eminence of the sort often made by science. The ascending ladder of creation continued on above us into "angelic" realms of being. This meant a psyche held in check and often a reverence for Earth as creation. In contrast, it can be argued that humanism and the discoveries of science actually elevated humanity's status, and that ego-consciousness, having become pre-eminent, promoted a hubristic belief in "man" as lord of creation, with the sanction to treat

pontifex (Lat. "bridge-maker") by virtue of the operation of the "faculty" known as Intellect (Lat. *Intellectus*, "perception" or "comprehension") which makes known that which belongs to an essential realm. When this realm is considered to be distinct from the world, it is natural to represent the Intellect as superior to or "above" the reason, "closer" to the transcendence of Divinity. But alternatively, from a perspective that acknowledges immanence, the Intellect may be conceived as lying *between* the senses and reason, unveiling divine qualities in nature by pre-empting the rational mode of consciousness. In this traditional metaphysics, then, the Intellect allows two things: a transcendence of the rational or discursive mind, and through this an *Intellective intuition* of the "underlying" substance or essence of nature.

By virtue of being the link or bridge between earth and heaven, the human being "bears responsibility to both the Divine Principle and to nature and is not free to do with the created world simply what he wills." Rather, freedom can be "realized fully only inwardly by reaching the Divine Realm, which is infinite and beyond all constraint."[7] By contrast, a secular philosophy applied to the world is no guarantee of ecologically sound practice, probably because its usually materialist view works against any motivation towards such practice. As Nasr explains:

> Paradoxically, those who have denied that man has any mode of existence beyond that of the earth have helped to turn the powerful forces within the soul solely *towards* the earth resulting in its degradation. Men have come to seek the Infinite in our finite earthly home with devastating consequences for that home. The fact that traditionally man was seen as a being made for the spiritual realm, but living in this world, served to emphasize the sacred quality of nature and man's responsibility towards it. The reduction of man to a merely terrestrial being with merely earthly needs and desires, but earthly needs and desires without limits, cannot but lead to the destruction of the terrestrial environment itself.[8]

nature—no longer sacred—as he willed.

[7] Nasr, "Man and Nature: Quest for Renewed Understanding," p. 8.

[8] Nasr, "Man and Nature: Quest for Renewed Understanding," p. 9.

Ecophilosophy can hardly be unaware of the paradox at the heart of an environmental ideology. Certainly, it is precisely because modern science is neutral about how one should respond ethically to its worldview that ecophilosophy has sought an ideology that might affect behaviour. Accordingly, it has been obliged to take into account the philosophies and religions which *do* apparently influence human behaviour—examining, for instance, the practices of Taoism, Buddhism, and Hinduism.[9] But in turning hence, what do we find? That the *fundamental concern* is for awakening or developing the very faculty within ourselves of which science is ignorant, but which is believed to define for us our humanity, our difference, and *allow us* to appreciate the sacredness of the natural world, thus diverting attention from the primacy of the material. Since modern science is at a disadvantage when talking about non-material aspects and the faculty that relates to these things, it might be expected that it would be deemed deficient, and religion correspondingly valued. Yet ecophilosophy, now reliant on the principles that underpin an ecological understanding, must acquiesce to certain "inarguable facts" such as modern cosmogony and cosmology, or the transformation of species through natural selection. Hence, only those aspects of religious belief that are suitably ambiguous towards this scientific knowledge are permitted a precarious foothold, while in the background hovers science's judgement that these things have their basis in the psyche, which is itself ultimately tied to the material realm.

"Transpersonal Ecology"

The conception we now have of *psyche* stems from a belief in the illusory

[9] See, for example, for Hinduism: L. Gupta, "Purity, Pollution and Hinduism," in *Ecofeminism and the Sacred*, ed. C.J. Adams (New York: Continuum, 1993), pp. 99-116; K.A. Jacobsen, "The Institutionalization of the Ethics of 'Non-Injury' toward all 'Beings' in Ancient India," *Environmental Ethics* 16 (1994): pp. 287-302; and E. Deutsch, "A Metaphysical Grounding for Nature Reverence: East-West," *Environmental Ethics* 8 (1986): pp. 293-299. For Taoism see R.T. Ames, "Taoism and the Nature of Nature," *Environmental Ethics* 8 (1986): pp. 317-350; C-Y. Cheng, "On the Environmental Ethics of the Tao and the Ch'i," *Environmental Ethics* 8 (1986): pp. 351-370; and P. Marshall, *Nature's Web: An Exploration of Ecological Thinking* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1992). For Buddhism see K.K. Inada, "Environmental Problematics in the Buddhist Context," *Philosophy East and West* 37 (1987): pp. 135-149; P. Billimoria, "Indian Religious Traditions," in *Spirit of the Environment: Religion, Value and Environmental Concern*, eds. D.E. Cooper and J.A. Palmer (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 1-14; and P. de Silva, *Environmental Philosophy and Ethics in Buddhism* (London: Macmillan, 1998).

nature of the higher element, the Intellect. The psyche, now an autonomous, localized entity (often correlated with the brain), is deemed not to have the capacity for any *real* connection with that which lies beyond its small sphere; its ability to "transcend" itself and "connect" with the environment around it being termed "identification," a process limited by imagination and empathy.

It is now usual to consider some form of identification or communication as an obvious corollary to the ecocentric position.[10] However, the restricted view of the psyche—the nature and potential of which is effectively a two-dimensional parody of the traditional view of the human being—is reflected in a readiness by some ecophilosophers to re-conceive the traditional view of *Self-realization* (the replacement, or subsuming, of the "self" by the "Self") as a matter of identification. Arne Naess, the originator of the "deep" ecological approach to environmentalism,[11] begins with the pronouncement that all beings should be permitted to self-realize—that is, realize their full potential.[12] For humanity, the term means an invitation to expand the sense of self to include nature as a whole. For Fox, who applied the term "transpersonal ecology" to this process, self-realization becomes "a this-worldly realization of as expansive a sense of self as possible."[13] He isolates three different types of identification,[14] one of which, as mentioned earlier, relies on the modern scientific narrative of the "creation"

[10] For instance, Freya Mathews' panpsychist view, which ascribes "a 'psychist' or mentalistic dimension to all matter, or to the physical realm generally . . . renders [the world] an arena not merely for causality but for communication" (Freya Mathews, *Reinhabiting Reality: Towards a Recovery of Culture* [Albany: SUNY, 2005], p. 14).

[11] Naess, whose philosophy is characterized by the attempt to uncover and then promote the most profound reasons for why the environment should be protected, utilized the terms "identification" and "self-realization" in several papers. See, for example, Arne Naess, "Identification as a Source of Deep Ecological Attitudes," in *Deep Ecology*, ed. Michael Tobias (San Diego: Avant Books, 1995), pp. 256-70; and, "Self-Realization: An Ecological Approach to Being in the World," *The Trumpeter* 4(3) (1987): pp. 35-42.

[12] In Naess's normative system, "Ecosophy T," the foundation of deep ecology, his first norm is "Self-realization!" and his second, "Self-realization for all living beings!" (Naess quoted in Fox, *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology*, p. 103).

[13] Warwick Fox, "The Meanings of Deep Ecology," *Island* 35 (1988): p. 34.

[14] They are the "personal," "ontological," and "cosmological" bases of identification. See Fox, *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology*, p. 249.

and evolution of the universe. In a sense it is a persuasion that, faced with the modern account of science that demonstrates the inextricable connection of all things, we should feel a relationship to everything. Not only are we composed of star stuff, but the cycling of virtually indestructible atoms throughout the planet also means that we all contain thousands of the atoms that previously went to make up any historical personage we care to imagine, or, indeed any other being at all.[15]

Now, given the concerns of environmentalism, which focus on the preservation of the natural world, deep ecology's suggestion might seem to answer well. Yet the foremost concern of philosophy *per se* should be to ascertain the truth, not to serve a particular doctrine. The world does not obviously demand identification, and, deprived of this request, we have no more than a decision to accept the promptings of an ecological understanding and claim identification as a laudatory act. More importantly, in this regard, if the nature of humanity is not defined completely by modern psychology, or the world by ecology, then the urging of humanity in the direction suggested will be in conflict with nature, not in harmony with it.

The Self-realization that is a familiar theme in traditional metaphysics is a lessening, even dissolving of the self, to be replaced by a Self which in no way consists of an individuated consciousness, but is rather the withdrawal of that consciousness in favour of the expression of a Unity. Much sacred literature (as we shall see in part four) makes this clear. For example, the process is described in a *hadith qudsi* thus: "When I love him, I am the Hearing wherewith he heareth and the Sight wherewith he seeth and the Hand wherewith he graspeth and the Foot whereon he walketh."[16] Regardless of this profound "psychology," and to suit the particular purposes of environmentalism, deep ecology is apparently advocating the expansion of the sense of individual selfhood, a very different thing. Isolated from a metaphysical framework that describes and guides the process of transformation, this might well be a prescription for either delusion or disaster. Identification becomes very much like the attempt to swallow the sea rather than be part of it. In a "this-worldly" expansion of self, it is hard not to see an expansion rather than diminishment of the ego.

[15] An observation made by Bill Bryson in *A Short History of Nearly Everything* (London: Doubleday, 2003), p. 120.

[16] Bukhari, *Riqaq*, 37; quoted in Martin Lings, *A Sufi Saint of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1993), p. 37.

Ecocentrism, although it may be equated with ethics, is foremost a *descriptive* term derived from ecological information. Prompted by ecological insights we may think of ourselves as "one knot in the biospherical web," but this conceptualization does not in itself offer any great insight into appropriate behaviour. Deep ecology suggests a supporting non-prescriptive "ethics" of identification, so that "care flows naturally."[17] But, in practice, identification would not allow any of the destruction essential to live.[18] Remove identification, as we must to be practical, and we have to fall back on *decisions*. And here we reach a turning point, for identification and ethical considerations in general are subtle ideas that belong in the first place to an area of reality beyond the scope of modern science. Their origin is consciousness itself, and seemingly only our own—no other species demonstrates consideration for the ongoing working of the ecosphere. It is by virtue of our consciousness that ideas like "ethical considerability" and "intrinsic value" have their existence. And, significantly, it is through our consciousness that knowledge of how Gaia operates and what its aims are, exists. It is *we* who decide to preserve the Gaian ecosystem, and *we* who then decide on a management strategy. Given our unique standing in this regard, ecocentrism is impossible in any practical sense. Realistically, we can hardly place ourselves other than in the role of managers or, better, guardians of the system of which we are aware. We always *have* needed to make the decisions of stewardship, and there seems no choice—especially now that our adverse impact has become so apparent—but to continue in this vein. In this respect, the only relevant question is *how to be* wise stewards.

To be wise in the original sense of *sophia* would be to understand the nature of nature and, especially, our own nature. The ecocentrism of ecophilosophy subtly undermines the foundations of the human *qua* human by suggesting that human nature has no bearing on moral considerability. The empiricism of ecology is linked to a non-empirical axiological system to create a new paradigm. Fundamentally, this is to make a

[17] Naess writes: "Care flows naturally if the self is widened so that the protection of free nature is felt and conceived as protection of ourselves" (Naess quoted in Fox, "The Meanings of Deep Ecology," p. 34).

[18] Both introspection and experience shows that the cutting of trees, the destruction of soil life in order to grow food, and many other activities depend on deliberately *not* identifying with life.

prescription for a particular mode of thought, then dismiss as irrelevant anything that does not fall into that pattern of thought, even though it might be true, and might be a reason for altering that thought. Unwittingly, ecophilosophy, through recourse to the scientific disciplines of ecology and psychology, has forestalled any further consideration of the human being as standing apart from the world, or our need to stand apart to be truly human. A basic tenet of ecocentrism is that we should not deny the rights of other species to be truly what *they* are—Naess's philosophy is founded on this belief. Logically, then, we should apply this principle to ourselves, and be willing to carry Naess's policy of asking "deeper" questions[19] into the arena of metaphysics.

Origins of the Environment Movement

It is no coincidence that the "worship of nature" began at a time when Christianity in Europe was in decline.[20] In fact, the Romantic Movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries can be partially defined by just this turning away from a centuries-long preoccupation with "another" world and a re-orientation towards "this" one. In the shift of focus, the world of nature suddenly appeared very differently. The historian Kenneth Clark, quoting Thomas Gray, identifies the beginning of the change in sentiment: "Not a precipice, not a torrent, not a cliff, but is pregnant with religion and poetry."[21] So began an attraction or devotion to the majesty, the beauty, the sublimity and the sacredness of nature, expressed in painting, poetry and prose.[22] In 1798, Wordsworth could write of his youthful experience:

[19] The "deep" of deep ecology derives from Naess's injunction to always ask "progressively deeper questions about the ecological relationships of which we are a part" (Fox, *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology*, p. 92).

[20] Kenneth Clark's account of the collapse of religious faith and its resurrection as the spirit within Romanticism remains one of the most perceptive. See Kenneth Clark, *Civilisation* (London: BBC, 1969), chapter 11.

[21] Clark, *Civilisation*, p. 271.

[22] The major writers in England were the Lake Poets, and Blake, Scott, Byron, and Shelley; in France: Rousseau, Lamartine, Hugo, and Chateaubriand; and in Germany, the Schlegel brothers, Novalis, and Jean Paul Richter.

> For nature then
> To me was all in all. — I cannot paint
> What then I was. The sounding cataract
> Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
> The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
> Their colours and their forms, were then to me
> An appetite; a feeling and a love,
> That had no need of a remoter charm,
> By thought supplied, nor any interest
> Unborrowed from the eye.[23]

The conviction expressed here, that a profound quality resides within nature and that its unveiling occurs through a pre-rational mode of consciousness, is typical of the Romantic temperament. For Coleridge, this inner essence far transcends what is normally perceived or believed to be there, and its deep intuition corresponds with the abeyance of ordinary thought:

> O dread and silent mount! I gazed upon thee,
> Till thou, still present to the bodily sense,
> Didst vanish from my thought: entranced in prayer
> I worshipped the Invisible alone.[24]

Rousseau, alone upon the shore of "his" island on Lake Bienne, describes a similar experience where absorption in nature induces the cessation of the sense of individual identity:

> I liked then to go and sit on the shingle in some secluded spot by the edge of the lake; there the noise of the waves and the movement of the water, taking hold of my senses and driving all other agitation from my soul, would plunge it into a delicious reverie in which night often stole upon me unawares. The ebb and flow of the water, its continuous yet undulating noise, kept lapping against my ears and my eyes, taking the place of all the inward movements which my reverie had calmed within me, and it was enough to

[23] William Wordsworth, "Lines Composed A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey" (1798).

[24] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Hymn Before Sun-rise, in the Vale of Chamouni" (1802).

> make me pleasurably aware of my existence, without troubling myself with thought.[25]

In these experiences, we have the distilled essence of today's environment movement: the natural world is the embodiment of a significance that far surpasses its outer form; at the same time, it mysteriously harbours a means of transcending the narrow confines of the individuated consciousness. Seen as a response to the goodness, beauty, and meaning in nature, "Romanticism" has always been with us; its seemingly dramatic historical appearance is a function of its antithetical status: in an age of reason and science, it attracts our attention as would a bright flower in a desert.

As the Enlightenment faltered, the *conception* of a transcendent Divinity which had occupied post-Renaissance Europe—the remote, but almost human Creator, the "father in heaven" Michelangelo had painted[26]—began to be replaced for some by a renewed subtlety of *perception;* a departure from the humanist stance—where man, "the measure of all things," had defined nature and God in terms of his own conceptions—towards a witnessing of realities within nature that vastly transcend such conceptions, and are testimony to the validity of direct experience. The beautiful and the sacred were found to be immanent, a "discovery" that has its prolongation in the perspective identified in part one. The associated word *sublime*[27] described that aspect of nature with the power to effect a change in ordinary consciousness. Nature must always defy humanism, however heroic;

[25] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, trans. Peter France (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), pp. 86-87.

[26] Philip Sherrard refers to the "tendency within the post-mediaeval Christian world to look upon creation as the artifact of a Maker who as it were has produced it from without. This has provided us with a picture of a God in heaven who, having set the cosmic process in motion and having left it to run more or less on its own and according to its own laws, now interferes directly on but rare occasions. . . . The result is that the relation between God and creation tends to be seen predominantly as one of cause and effect: God is a world cause, a supreme or first cause or principle of being; and the world and its laws are what He has produced" (Philip Sherrard, "The Desanctification of Nature," in *Seeing God Everywhere*, p. 110).

[27] The word was first used by Longinus in about 200 CE. *On the Sublime*, translated into English in 1712, was just one book that helped to define the "new" outlook. Edmund Burke, in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, defined the sublime in terms of nature's overwhelming power.

against the power and majesty of nature the self is diminished, and this may become the prelude to the dissolution of the rational, or egoic, consciousness, and the emergence of another mode of consciousness responsible for the perception of a deeper beauty.

Two reasons for the change in outlook regarding nature may be identified: modern science itself, and the introduction of an Eastern mysticism. Clearly, the catalyst which produced a reaction as potent as the decline of one form of religion and the consequent redirecting of human consciousness, must be singular. Indeed, the scientific revolution, that in only two hundred years had both instilled a mechanistic view of the world and been responsible for a vigorous new age of the machine, had severely eroded the conventional conception of God's creation as something to be revered. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, Wordsworth could write, "I now affirm of Nature and of Truth . . . that their Divinity Revolts, offended at the ways of men."[28] The spirit that rallies to the perceived oppression of people under the tyranny of the machine is the same one that responds to the subjugation of nature itself. And the adverse treatment of both must stem from a machine-like mentality:

> For Bacon and Newton, sheath'd in dismal steel, their terrors hang
> Like iron scourges over Albion: Reasonings like vast Serpents
> Infold around my limbs, bruising my minute articulations.
> I turn my eyes to the Schools & Universities of Europe
> And there behold the Loom of Locke whose Woof rages dire,
> Wash'd by the Water-wheels of Newton: black the cloth
> In heavy wreathes folds over every nation: cruel Works
> Of many Wheels I view, wheel without wheel, with cogs tyrannic
> Moving by compulsion each other, not as those in Eden, which,
> Wheel within Wheel, in freedom revolve in harmony & peace.[29]

Blake's Eden reminds us of a nature free of the strictures of Enlightenment science, and of the "paradise" of an alternative perception of nature that existed prior to this new thought. Blake, though, was not pointing in the direction of an already enfeebled exoterism, but to an earlier age still

[28] William Wordsworth, "The Excursion" (1814) I, 983-985.

[29] William Blake, "A Vision of Albion," in *Jerusalem: The Emanation of the Giant Albion* (1820).

cognizant of the inner dimension of religion; towards that state of consciousness capable of discerning the error of rationalism and materialism, and where they would lead. It is no small irony that the eventual inheritors (in the twentieth century) of this first—and ultimately unsuccessful—defence of nature would initially be prepared to overlook the decisive role of the scientific mentality in the environmental crisis, and instead attack that which, for Blake, held a remedy for the spreading malady of this "scientism." In "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis,"[30] Lynn White rounded upon the already recognized adversary of modern science—religion—delivering a putative *coup de grace*. Drawing attention to various biblical passages (and, it must be said, ignoring others) White believed he had identified key inducements to a pattern of thought that had motivated a harmful response to nature for upwards of two thousand years. As Nash observes, "this exposure of the shortcomings of Western religious tradition . . . [was] taken for granted by environmentalists after the 1960s."[31]

The validity of White's thesis has been challenged many times since its first publication, often by apologists who claim that it is always possible to read scripture more sympathetically. However, it cannot be seriously denied that almost from the beginning in Christianity there were corruptions of the original teaching that came about due to its impact with temporal powers.[32] Nor can it be denied that this "weakness" provided an opening for the development of a secular science, even though, as Nasr points out, this "paradigm . . . was created from many strands during the Renaissance, the 17th century and the Age of Enlightenment, often in opposition to Christianity whose teachings on nature became ever more eclipsed and marginalized."[33]

[30] Lynn White Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," in *Western Man and Environmental Ethics: Attitudes Toward Nature and Technology*, ed. Ian G. Barbour (Reading, Massachusetts: Adison-Wesley, 1973), pp. 18-30.

[31] Roderick Nash, "Aldo Leopold's Intellectual Heritage," in *Companion to A Sand County Almanac*, p. 70.

[32] For Sherrard, when Christianity "became the religion of a civilization it was forced to incorporate Roman and even common law into its structure. . . . This has meant that it has always been more easy to detach . . . the political, social and economic sphere of human life from the framework of the Christian revelation and so to leave it exposed to domination by purely secular interests and influences" (Sherrard, "The Desanctification of Nature," pp. 121-122).

[33] Nasr, "Man and Nature: Quest for Renewed Understanding," p. 7.

Notwithstanding the above, White's thesis remains spurious because it encourages an *exoteric* understanding of religion. By creating for us an association between the written word and the consequences of applying it straightforwardly to the world, White gives us an image which we inevitably project upon the past, thus blinding ourselves to the clear distinction that should be made between the way scripture *may* be interpreted and the way it *was* interpreted. To reason as White does is to infer that the consciousness of the past was sufficiently like the present so that scripture would have been always and everywhere interpreted in the same way.[34] It is to propagate a view which cannot but hide for us a religion's *esoteric* side. Clearly, the interpretation of any written material will mainly depend on the preconceptions, beliefs and perspectives that form the *Weltanschauung* of the times. While "dominion" (or any similar term) would mean one thing to a culture which believes the world to be mechanistic, to a culture that already saw the world in terms of sacred presence, it would mean something else entirely. Sensitivity to this distinction is vital. The fact that Judaism or Christianity is capable of being read in the way White reads it, implicates not religion as such but rather the decline of an esoteric element which in turn led to the modernist state of mind—*the platform from which White now speaks*. If modernist ears are sensitive to the biblical terms and phrases that suggest control, it may be because they are no longer sensitive to the deeper dimension of religion. The failure to find in scripture a clearly stipulated environmental ethic of the sort we now ask for can just as easily suggest that this missing ingredient was once too well understood to warrant enunciation.

For traditionalists, the decline in question amounts to an increasing inability to distinguish between two modes of consciousness, the rational and the Intellective. Effectively this means that over time there are fewer and fewer individuals within a religious tradition who, by virtue of the inner dimension of consciousness, are responsive to the inner dimension of the world. The course of Christianity bears witness to this, the early centuries standing in some contrast with what Christianity would later become.

[34] Wendell Berry makes the same point when he says that to read and understand the Bible "entails . . . the making of very precise distinctions between biblical instruction and the behaviour of those peoples supposed to have been biblically instructed" (Wendell Berry, "Christianity and the Survival of Creation," in *Seeing God Everywhere*, p. 54).

For the first Christians, and many of the Church fathers, the teachings of Christ contained a complete message pertaining to "inner" knowledge, summarized in his affirmation that "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you." Expressed in parable and symbol this knowledge was recognized to be compatible with the metaphysical inheritance from the Greek world.[35] Thus, St Dionysius the Areopagite forged a link between Christianity and Plato,[36] who spoke of the same potentialities of human consciousness and the same spiritual underpinning to the world to which that consciousness was open.

Following Christ's death there were, for the evangelists, inevitable political exigencies to deal with in their encounter with other cultures.[37] Consequently, their writings contain a mixture of the profound and the mundane; the Pauline letters illuminate both a consciousness in touch with deeper realities, and a mind attempting to confront the temporal power of the Greek and Roman world. Later Christian writers of mystical bent—more or less removed from worldly affairs—equally well understood and expressed the Intellective consciousness and the mystical quality of the world. They include the saints, Thomas, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Athanasius, Gregory of Nazianzus, Isaac of Nineveh, and Maximus the Confessor.[38]

[35] The compatibility of the esoteric teachings of any of the great metaphysical traditions is accepted by traditionalist authors, whose writings endeavour to reveal the parallels. See, for example, Frithjof Schuon's classic work *The Transcendent Unity of Religions* (Wheaton, Illinois: Quest Books, 1984), and Whitall Perry's *A Treasury of Traditional Wisdom* (Cambridge: Quinta Essentia, 1991).

[36] See O*n the Divine Names* and *The Mystical Theology*, trans. C.E. Rolt (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1920-1940).

[37] To take one example, an early controversy hinged upon whether the Gentile converts could be exempt from traditional Mosaic Law (such as circumcision, or the ban on the eating of pork) but still achieve equal status with the Jewish converts. See Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990). Paul, cognizant of the way the esoteric teachings of Christ had attempted to cut through such outer detail, had to remain mindful of those for whom the deeper truth was opaque. A controversy such as this one, well represents the inevitable and endless clash between the exoterist and the esoterist.

[38] The Gospel of St Thomas is a Coptic manuscript of the fourth century CE from Egypt, probably adapted from an earlier Greek work. St Irenaeus (130-202) was a theologian and Bishop of Lyon. Clement (150?-220?), a Greek theologian, flourished in Alexandria as head of the catechetical school. Athanasius (293?-373) was Patriarch of Alexandria. St Gregory

After an authoritarian Roman Empire absorbed Christianity in the fourth century, intellectuals like Augustine developed from Plato and the neo-Platonists an elaborate doctrine compatible with scripture. But over time, Plato's and Plotinus' original sense of *nous* (the Greek term corresponding to *Intellectus*) became hazy. The incorporation of Aristotelian thought into medieval Scholasticism[39] meant an increasingly rational doctrine. In the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas could still judge that "if God's essence is to be seen at all, it must be that the intellect sees it through the divine essence itself."[40] However, the attempt by the rational faculty to provide a fixed and coherent rational basis for belief meant the marginalization, and eventual eclipse, of Intellective consciousness. Esoterism resists being institutionalized within a dogma. Nor can it be wholly captured or objectified by discursive thought or reasoning; "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life," St Paul had said.[41] As a bridge, the Intellect—which, above all, defines esoterism—exists as the only pathway to the indwelling Spirit in both nature and "in" our consciousness. The Church, as a vehicle for preserving Christ's teaching, may offer scripture, sacred ritual, and other sacred forms such as art and architecture,[42] to support or be a reminder of this other knowing. But when these things are taken to exist in and for themselves, a definite bifurcation ensues, and the esoteric dimension, although never absent, is no longer recognized. Within an ever more confining framework of orthodoxy, the early teachings, and later ones like those of Saint Francis[43] or Meister Eckhart, were increasingly misunderstood as unorthodox or even heretical.

(325-389) was Archbishop of Constantinople. St Isaac, mentioned in the *Philokalia*, flourished in the sixth century, and St Maximus (580-662), a theologian, was abbot of Chrysopolis.

[39] Chief among the Scholastics were Albert the Great (1200-1280), Thomas Aquinas (1225-74), Bonaventura (1221-74), and Duns Scotus (1264-1308).

[40] Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles,* III. li.

[41] 2 Corinthians, 3: 6.

[42] Among medieval cathedrals, for example, Chartres may be counted a supreme crystallization of the subtleties of Western Christianity. See Titus Burckhardt, *Chartres and the Birth of the Cathedral* (Ipswich: Golgonooza Press, 1995).

[43] The life of St Francis (1182?-1226) epitomizes the respect and reverence for nature that results from the vision of God within. It is recognized by White as a pre-eminent example of a wise stewardship. See White, "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis."

After the centuries following Aquinas, then, during which time an outer carapace of rationalism closed over and concealed the inner essence of Christianity, the sudden arrival, in the eighteenth century, of translated scriptural texts from the East—especially India—represented nothing less than the irruption of the undisguised esoteric doctrine into the European consciousness.[44] "Hinduism," it is recognized, never encountered the need to conceal the inner teaching of religion—something almost mandatory in the West to counter charges of heresy and a persecution wrought by the rigid and literal-minded.[45] The *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, and *Bhagavad Gita*[46] revealed to the German, French, and English poets and philosophers of the nineteenth century the relationship between the consciousness of the perceiver and the world that is perceived. "What cannot be thought with the mind, but that whereby the mind can think: Know that alone to be *Brahman*, the Spirit," says the *Kena Upanishad*.[47]And, in the *Isa Upanishad*, we are told: "The Spirit . . . is incorporeal and invulnerable, pure and untouched by evil. He is the supreme seer and thinker, immanent and transcendent."[48] These scriptures also revealed the relationship of the Divinity to the world. In the *Katha Upanishad*, it is said of the Supreme Spirit, "In space he is the sun, and he is the wind and the sky. . . . He dwells

[44] One can speak of *the* esoteric doctrine because the esoteric is the common essence of all religions. Hence, the Indian texts, although first and foremost introducing the doctrine of the Vedanta to the West, actually served to disclose inner meaning in the Christian writings, now largely forgotten. Oldmeadow, commenting on Friedrich Schlegel's adoption of Catholicism, says, "[an] immersion in Eastern thought and spirituality [is often] followed by a return to one's own religious tradition" (Harry Oldmeadow, *Journeys East* [Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2004], p. 21).

[45] Martin Lings writes: "the Advaita Vedanta has the advantage, shown by its altogether direct manner of expression, of never having had to speak in veiled terms in order to avoid a conflict with the limitations of exoterism" (Martin Lings, *The Eleventh Hour* [Cambridge: Quinta Essentia, 1987], p. 79).

[46] The *Vedas* are the oldest sacred writings, and comprise The *Rig-Veda*, the *Yajur-Veda*, the *Sama-Veda*, and the *Atharva-Veda*. The *Upanishads*, philosophical treatises, were composed between 400BCE and 1500CE. The *Bhagavad Gita*, c. 500 BCE, forms part of the Indian epic the *Mahabharata*.

[47] Juan Mascaró, trans., *The Upanishads* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), p. 51.

[48] Mascaró, *The Upanishad*s, p. 49

in men and in gods, in righteousness and in the vast heavens. He is in the earth and the waters and in the rocks of the mountains."[49]

In one burst of light from the East, a world that had been darkened and drained of life and soul by modern science was renewed and sanctified by a vision of God within. As J.J. Clarke has said,

> the Hinduism of the Upanishads offered an exalted metaphysical system which resonated with [the Romantic philosophers'] . . . own idealist assumptions, and which provided a counterblast to the materialistic and mechanistic philosophy that had come to dominate the Enlightenment period.[50]

Far from being a lifeless mechanical contrivance wound like a clock at the beginning of time (as it had come to be viewed by the science of Isaac Newton's day) or even a living creation brought forth *ex nihilo* by the Creator, the world was affirmed as a manifestation of Divinity. In the *Bhagavad Gita*,[51] its essential oneness is revealed to Arjuna:

> I am the soul . . . which dwells in the heart of all things. I am the beginning, the middle, and the end of all that lives. . . . I am the beauty of all things beautiful. . . . Know . . . that I am the seed of all things that are; and that no being that moves or moves not can ever be without me. . . . Know that with one single fraction of my Being I pervade and support the Universe, and know that I AM.[52]

Unsurprisingly, the most affected were those of poetic sensibility. Yet, while the German Romantics—notably Schelling, Goethe, and Schopenhauer—were profoundly moved by the "music" of the Orient, their influence in the English-speaking world has remained limited. Instead, we find that the chord struck in the hearts and minds of the English Romantic poets is what reverberates today:

[49] Mascaró, *The Upanishads*, p. 63

[50] J.J. Clarke, *Oriental Enlightenment: The Encounter between Asian and Western Thought* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 61.

[51] This text, first translated into English in 1785 by Charles Wilkins, was familiar to Blake.

[52] *The Bhagavad Gita*, trans. Juan Mascaró (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), pp. 85-88. Unless otherwise noted, all subsequent citations are from this text.

To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour.[53]

And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
and the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.[54]

The idea of the presence of the Spirit in nature and in humanity created a clearly distinct and alternative avenue of thought from the one science was taking. Those who subsequently encountered this new path, including the American transcendentalists Emerson, Whitman, and, especially, Thoreau[55] (whose classic, *Walden*, is now recognized as a significant influence in environmental thought), Spinoza, Schopenhauer, and, more latterly, T.S. Eliot and W.B. Yeats, have all espoused a philosophy that is deeply mistrustful of the direction of modern Western thought. Carl Jung, on encountering the Eastern tradition, was even moved to wonder whether all Western knowledge was not just abstraction.[56]

Metaphysics

Indian metaphysics stands as counterpoint to modernist thought because it affirms the "faculty" of perception adequate to the realizing of the na-

[53] William Blake, "Auguries of Innocence" (1803).

[54] Wordsworth, "Lines Composed A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey."

[55] The influence of an Eastern metaphysical tradition is apparent in Emerson's "Brahma" and "Hamatreya"; in Whitman's "Leaves of Grass"; and in Thoreau's *Walden.*

[56] C.G. Jung, "The Dreamlike World of India," in *Collected Works* Vol. 10 (London: Routledge, 1969), p. 518.

ture of nature, while relegating reason to a secondary position. "Beyond the senses is the mind, and beyond the mind is reason, its essence. Beyond reason is the Spirit in man," (Skt. *Buddhi*, Intellect) says the *Katha Upanishad*.[57] In contrast, by assuming the absence of just this dimension to ontology—as Enlightenment philosophers did—an artificial discontinuity between the mind (perception) and nature (the perceived) was established. The two are now sustained as separate things, so that, rather than engagement with nature, there is study of it. Moreover, this *objectification* of nature through the use of reason acts to maintain the duality; while "knower" and "known" persist, identity is not possible. Reason and the senses prove to be poor collaborators in finding Truth. Nature comes to seem more and more elusive, and what at first seemed objective reality begins to look more like a construct of the mind itself. Hence, by the time Kant suspected the limitations of reason, and declared that the true nature of nature could not *be* known, the Western philosopher had become as a man confirmed in the practice of swimming, who claims that the other shore of a river is unreachable because he can no longer see the bridge that spans it. The fate of philosophy has been to remain spellbound by Kant's view ever since. The discoveries of science—even the science of the twentieth century—were taken to confirm the finality of this view. The assumption that there is no state, or form of consciousness, that definitely subsumes the apparent duality of observer and observed, has meant an entrenched dualism. It is no help, existentially, if quantum physics describes an interactive relationship between mind and world, or even postulates a ground of existence that subsumes the two, for the *conceptualization* of such a process or state, itself confirms the separation of psyche and world.

To identify Divinity within nature is to re-establish a non-material (that is, non-measurable) essence to nature. Nature is then more than outer, or material, form because it is composed of qualities that belong to the reality that is God. One way to interpret this insight would be *pantheistically*: nature, being the sum of those qualities, is what the Divine is. Alternatively, the *panentheistic* outlook—that nature is God but does not exhaust what God is—reverses the image: now nature, in Schuon's words, "is mysteriously plunged in God."[58] The panentheistic outlook—the only legitimate

[57] Mascaró, *The Upanishads*, p. 65.

[58] Frithjof Schuon, "Apercus sur la Tradition des Indiens de l'Amerique du Nord," *Etudes Traditionnelles* (Paris: Chacornac, 1949), p. 164.

one from the traditionalist point of view—implies several things. Because nature includes many of the attributes of God, a reductionist approach to nature, which uses empiricism and reasoning to remove many of these qualities, cannot result in finding out what nature (or God) is, and is therefore inappropriate.[59] Instead, a holistic approach, which seeks a means by which all the attributes of nature may be known, is essential. Now, since we are a part of nature—immersed in the Being of God—a clue to what these attributes are is provided by our own consciousness. An ultimate ground of being must subsume the apparent distinction between our consciousness and an "outer world" of nature—of perceiver and perceived.[60] It is our *perception* of qualities, precisely, that indicates their objectivity. If a consciousness that has beauty as its perception is part of a greater whole, then beauty suggests itself to be no less a part of that whole. Beauty *is* in nature only because it cannot be anywhere else.

We know that perceptions of beauty vary. But to acknowledge this is only to acknowledge the relative persistence of an illusory duality, wherein an understanding of beauty (or any quality) in depth must remain limited. Bridging the gap between the two "realities"—the self and the Self—is to bridge the gap between a limited perception of beauty and its full reality. Crucially, if God and God's attributes are "in" the world, then the aspirations of the self to transcend its limited view, realize the state of non-duality, and so become aware of all that beauty is, need not be aimed wholly towards a *transcendent* reality, but may be helped by recourse to the "natural world."

To recognize that the Eastern view of immanence is not unique but is just the clear exposition of a doctrine at the heart of all religions, is to see that what White had struck at was really only an outer shell formed

[59] The Christian concept of creation *ex nihilo* led to what is almost a cliché in physics: God as supreme mathematician. Once mathematics was conceived of as a description of the objective truth of things—the innate structure of nature—it implied that the creative element of God's mind must take the form of mathematical propositions. Entertained by Newton, Einstein, and some more recent physicists, it is perpetuated today by Hawking, although in a "tongue-in-cheek" way—mathematics has long since become transcendent itself, not to be contradicted even by "God." For a discussion of these ideas, see the chapter "The Fetish of Mathematics and the Iconoclasm of Modern Science," in Philip Sherrard, *Human Image: World Image* (Ipswich, England: Golgonooza Press, 1992).

[60] This, as we will see in the next part, is similar to, but not the same as, one interpretation of quantum physics.

by centuries of humanistic thought and scientific rationalism. Since Blake's day, the march of science has tended to further obscure the true dimensions of religion, while at the same time lending credence to the legitimacy of science. The deep misgivings Blake had for the overall benefit of science and for the ethos of science have largely dissipated. Because of this, the chasm that actually separates religion and science appears less wide and even bridgeable. In the Christian West, which has born the full brunt of science's impact, we find that the Church—failing to defend a dimension no longer apprehended[61]—has slowly acquiesced to science and seen the necessity of modifying its doctrine to suit "unquestionable" truth.[62] Thus, the Church's position today often reflects some version of Teilhardism.[63] Here, the traditional metaphysics accepted by the Church up until the Renaissance (wherein the *ultimate* origin of outer manifestation is a pre-existing essence or archetype), is abandoned in favour of the speculations of a modern mind (Darwin), uniquely—and surprisingly—favoured by God

[61] Ananda Coomaraswamy writes: "[Christianity's] intellectual aspects have been submerged, and it has become a code of ethics rather than a doctrine from which all other applications can and should be derived; hardly two consecutive sentences of some of Meister Eckhart's sermons would be intelligible to an average modern congregation, which does not expect doctrine, and only expects to be told how to behave" (Coomaraswamy quoted in Brian Keeble, "Ananda K. Coomaraswamy: Scholar of the Spirit," *Sophia* Vol. 2, No. 1 [1996]: p. 82).

[62] Paul VI, responding to one of the moon landings (perhaps the pre-eminent achievement of science to date) manages, in one telling statement, to express an anti-traditional humanism and scientific hubris: "Honour to Man, honour to thought, honour to science, honour to technique, honour to work, honour to the boldness of man, honour to the synthesis of scientific and organizing ability of man who unlike other animals, knows how to give his spirit and his manual dexterity these instruments of conquest. Honour to man, king of the earth, and today Prince of heaven" (Paul VI, *Doct. Cath.* No. 1580, January 21, 1971, quoted in Rama Coomaraswamy, *The Destruction of the Christian Tradition* [London: Perennial Books, 1981], p. 95).

[63] See Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Future of Man* (London: Collins, 1973). Teilhard combines the Christian religion with evolutionary theory to posit the continuing emergence over time of more subtle levels of consciousness. From a traditional perspective, the "evolution" of consciousness for a person is an always-existing potential taking place in a non-temporal dimension. The desire to reconcile religion and science generally involves, says Sherrard, "an attempt to adapt the principles of religion—transcendent and immutable—to the latest findings of science, and so to make religion 'reasonable' or in keeping with the 'spirit of the age' by appearing 'scientific'" (Sherrard, "The Desanctification of Nature," pp. 119-20).

to comprehend His real manner of working. Science, for its part, when it *is* willing to approach religion, does so only with *its* mode of thinking, and wielding its own terminology. Thus, in the present day, Fritjof Capra, seemingly without any sense of irony, confidently assesses Eastern religious traditions dating back thousands of years in the light of the latest physics and believes there are parallels to be made.[64]

Both these approaches obscure the fact that the fundamental nature of religion is not being truly represented, and make too much of a relatively recent mode of thought, or consciousness, peculiar to modern science. The fundamental nature of religion is suggested by the word itself. In the Latin *religio* (from *religare*, to "bind back"), we have reference to the element capable of re-establishing a connection between our own consciousness and a more comprehensive reality. It is the Intellect or Intellective faculty—once orthodoxy—that fulfils the essential function of religion. However, in the glare of modern science it has become part of an invisible esoteric dimension. Having first reduced the world to material and psychic components, and more latterly to the material alone,[65] science cannot recognize this other, vertical, dimension. Implacably pressured, as it were, to remain "reasonable" and "objective"—to in fact *align ourselves with a particular mode of consciousness*—there is little chance to see that this mode, valid within its own sphere, might be justly suspect when it shines its light at religion and pronounces: "nothing found." Yet the traditional perspective (no less valid simply because science repudiates it), which posits an alternative mode of consciousness, stands always ready to be vindicated by contemplating the very quality that cannot be tackled by science—beauty.

The Perception of Beauty

Enclosed within the sphere of scientistic thought, there may be fewer times than once there were, when the mystery, miracle, and beauty of the world impinges, and allows insight into "another" nature. But there are occasions. To wake in the early hours and, as the darkness slowly fades, to be drawn into the song of birds greeting the dawn, their melodies rising and

[64] See Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics* (London: Fontana, 1983). Most of the suggested similarities are spurious, however, as chapter 6 should make clear.

[65] The psychic, whether conceived of as independent of its physical matrix or not, is nevertheless individual and subjective.

falling; to stand under the unfathomable and still canopy of night awash with stars, and then turn to glimpse the full and silent moon edge over nearby hills; to experience the piercing light of a thunderstorm alive upon the glowing backdrop of clouds while the roaring wind is heard but not yet felt. A cascading stream in a forest glade; the unexpected scent of a single rose, breathed in; the white foaming surf collapsing forever on a lonely shore—events such as these are without number. They move the soul in ways that challenge the outlook of the rationalistic mode of consciousness. They evoke the sense that the beautiful and the sacred do not just reflect a way of perceiving but are qualities that belong to nature. Crucially, since it is a pre-rational and contemplative mind that first becomes aware of beauty, it is only the same mind that will endorse this perspective. In analysis, in reasoning, in discursive thought, much of the substance of beauty disappears. Under the scrutiny of science, beauty becomes a disembodied entity, destined to haunt the landscape of our mind as a ghostly remnant of its true self, either existing tenuously in the "eye of the beholder," or, worse, not seen at all.

Rational consciousness is not perceptive; rather it *interprets* sensory data. Only a consciousness that is non-discriminatory, impartial and passive when it comes to that which the senses bring to it—that evaluates holistically so to speak—could rightly be termed perceptive. Thus, beauty is given back life only when the pre-rational intuitive consciousness is granted legitimacy as a faculty of perception. In this regard, it must be seen as of the highest significance that the traditional understanding of human knowing included a faculty adequate to the perception of the subtler aspects of the world. If we were to look for a remnant expression of this faculty "beneath" the now dominant rational consciousness, we would surely fix upon the perception of beauty. The subtle but profound and indubitable character of this perception (before it has been subjected to the pronouncements of reason) seems to confirm the reality of the Intellect. By virtue of these linkages, beauty's reality is upheld and the common thread uniting environmentalism and religion is made more evident. Beauty's inextricable association with religion makes uncompromising the distinction that is often made between science and religion. The attempt to bring together what are, at root, two ways of seeing, is not possible without either drastically weakening religion or making more claims for science than can be substantiated. The question that beauty poses for ecophilosophy is whether it will resist the momentum it has gained from a materialistic science and move instead to realign itself with a tradition of *sophia* that is

adequate to an understanding of the nature of nature. Only by studying the key philosophical developments that shaped modern science and led to the demise of the *sophia* in Western civilization and the demise of beauty, do we begin to appreciate what this choice involves.

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