

Esoteric Dimensions of Deep Ecology

by Paul Davies

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“ All beings have their properties which spread
Beyond themselves, a power by which they make
Some other beings conscious of their life —
Spirit that knows no insulated spot,
No chasm, no solitude. From link to link
It circulates, the soul of all the worlds.
This is the freedom of the universe, U
nfolded still the more, more visible
The more we know—and yet is revered least,
And least respected, in the human mind,
Its most apparent home. ”

William Wordsworth, 1798

“ The ecological crisis, in short, is about what it means to be human. If natural diversity is the wellspring of human intelligence, then the systematic destruction of nature inherent in contemporary technology and economics is a war against the very sources of mind. ”

David W. Orr, 1993

A transferable description of ecology

As eco-consciousness has touched more and more fields formerly thought irrelevant to it, so it invites a close inquiry into its connections with esoteric tradition, and from this, a rethinking the relationship between self and other, and between humanity and environment. When an environmental thinker such as Stephen Kellert says, for example, ‘the mitigation of this environmental crisis may necessitate nothing less than a fundamental shift in human consciousness’¹, he is making just the kind of direct invitation to which Tradition is originated to respond. I suggest that the term *deep ecology* applies ecology’s core principle to more fields than the environmental one.

Ecological theory has one principle at root: the universe is one being and not an assembled mass of separate objects. Any theory of existence which proposes the contrary is not fundamentally ecological. We can restate and expand this root principle. The Reality of the earth is one autopoietic (self-creating) and autognotic (self-reflexive) being and not an assembled mass of independent existents. Since many theories of existence with which western humanist culture is imbued presuppose a universe of separate existents, this basic principle of ecology is revolutionary for culture generally and goes far beyond the analysis of the natural environment. If we take ecology seriously in an analysis of world problems, we must logically extend our theories of existence to conform with the ecological principle. Whatever aspect of existence is being contemplated, the ecological principles apply. The food

chain, for example, or a soil system, extends immediate analogical signification to the planes of identity, psychology, and culture. In other words, according to the same rule, a disaster in the planetary ecosystem has its analogic disaster in the human interior.

My intention is to suggest that essentially the same account of existence is given by i) the ecological world picture, ii) the worldview of traditional metaphysics, and iii) the capabilities of poetic analogy and metaphor. This account of existence is not the one offered by an ordinary modern education, nor the one we might most immediately associate with scientific method. And looking at any of the three named areas in isolation we might expect them not only to have little in common but even to exclude one another. But the ‘holistic logic’² of ecology suggests the contrary: its premisses apply not only to environmental issues but with equal force in culture and in the effects of culture on individuals.

What, then, is deep ecology, or symbolic ecology? The common principle of the *holon* links the three areas of ecology, the philosophy of esoteric tradition, and metaphorical/poetic communications. This linking is itself a symbolic act, which potentially abolishes the distinction between them. A brief but direct explanation of the informing structural principle is necessary. Ecology maintains that living systems cannot be understood nor properly managed unless they are viewed as interrelating elements instead of separate independent existents. Esoterism holds that ‘the Absolute only is real, [it] is the sole reality, and, consequently, nothing else is real. The differentiated world of multiplicity is therefore essentially ‘nonexistent’. That does not in any way imply that the differentiated world is a void, an illusion, or sheer nothing. The ontological status of phenomenal things is rather that of relations, that is, the various and variegated relational forms of the Absolute itself. In this sense, and in this sense only, they are all real.’³ Poetic language, too, is defined by its relationality: what a poem refers to is usually a number of interexistent levels, related by non-exclusive definition. A conspicuous example is the title and first two lines of Shelley’s poem:

““ *To a Skylark*
Hail to thee, blithe spirit!
Bird thou never wert,...

The further one reads into this poem (and it is typical of thousands of others from varying places and periods) the clearer it is that the poem is not about a lark, a spirit, a bird, or another thing that is supposed to stand in for these images. It is about the *relatedness* of them all (or else it has no meaning). Metaphorical and analogical language of all kinds is clearly aimed at just this outcome.

When the language of direct description—one label for one thing—opens out into the ‘wild country’ of metaphor, then the established mode of thinking, relating and discoursing is rendered useless. What takes its place is a system of analogical or imaginal knowledge, initially seen as madness by habitués of direct description. The anthropologist Richard Nelson writes of the Navajo:

““ Among the instructions given to hunters is this statement attributed to the divine Deer-people: ‘*Animals are our food. They are our thoughts.*’ Reading this statement is like walking through a doorway into a wild and illimitable terrain: it opens in all directions. These few words epitomize the pervasiveness of animals—and the natural world as a whole—in the cultures of hunting-gathering peoples.”⁴

They also epitomize a world in which metaphor is the ‘natural form’ of human expression. An ecology of symbolic practice directly negotiates these bewildering borderlands of expression and establishes a working relationship between specifically metaphorical, poetic language use and the languages of history, science and economics.

The implicit homology between disciplines here shows that a practical science, an arcane mystery tradition, and a form of artistic practice all conform very closely at the structural level. It is therefore no surprise to find the mystics calling the cosmos the *poem of the Absolute*, to find Gaia-theorists speaking of the dance of life, and poets talking about the oneness of life being observable only through metaphor, the ‘perception of resemblances’.

It follows that the environment cannot be absolutely isolated or distinguished from mind, but only relatively. Recognizing the crucially deceptive confusion of the relative and the absolute in this context is often the starting-point of a genuine esoteric education. Failure to acknowledge the right relation of relative and absolute, a relation or order which I have elsewhere called ‘sacred grammar’,⁵ while it might appear an abstract issue, has a political consequence. The misperceived physical and natural environment appears to deteriorate precisely to the extent that it is misperceived. In the suitably dark-tinted words of Samuel Beckett, ‘the observer infects the observed with his own mobility’⁶—and the mobility or mutability being meant here is of the mind-set with which human beings image themselves and their perceiving capacities according to their culture—in Beckett’s case, as in ours, the dualistic culture of humanist materialism. The same problem besets conventional science. ‘The intellectual effort to solve the mystery of the physical universe is in vain since the scientist is trying to separate himself from the universe. It is a single unit. Nature and man are not two different things.’⁷ Thinking that they are is what transmits a misperception: the post-Cartesian world-frame that dictates duality as a model for vision. Deep ecology presages on the other hand the obsolescence of western humanism’s dominant metaphor for perception, and this is its special use as a hermeneutical tool.

We could press the point further and say that deep ecology takes us beyond any separatist dichotomies which traditionally try to distance metaphysics from practical concerns. That separatizing habit is a frequent influence on cultural judgement, by which, for instance, *mystical* has become synonymous with otherworldly, impractical, even inane; and *down-to-earth* a commendatory for what could equally be called blinkered or unimaginative. Since a rich symbol-system is essential to the imaginative life of humanity, we are reminded just how severe are the limitations of this type of dismissive judgement of the metaphysical realm. That dismissal could be likened to the global capitalist monoculture derived from the alienating perspectives of the Cartesian dichotomy, or Kantian imperative, that suggests beings other than man are simply means to be used to man’s ends. We are realizing the contrary. Human operations of destruction and appropriation evident on the level of natural ecosystems are accurately reflected in the cultural operations of judgement by which the utilitarian ethic is used to delimit the activities of the psyche and imagination.⁸ But our cultural perspective could change and develop a ‘sustainable mind-field’ to partner and revive the biophilia hypothesis,⁹ which proposed that the completeness and meaning of human being in the world depends on humans’ conviction of actual *affiliation* with the remainder of life (as opposed to neutral detachment or isolation, from it). Such an inclusive imaginative mind-field has in fact been the province and occupation of poetics, myth and mysticism for much longer than humanism’s recent, if persistent, denial or degrading of imagination.

Non-dualist Symbolic action

In any act of *interpretation* based in dualistic thinking, we see the process of ‘othering’ at work which sets in train the illusion that the world is composed of separate existents instead of being a whole of interexistence. In the arts this ‘othering’ is seen to be the ‘representational’ capacity of the artist or the artistic method; in science we recognise this process as the imposition of the criteria of the experiment onto the world observed; in mysticism it is the veil of illusion with which our perception of the human witness and the reality witnessed is, in a certain sense, ‘corrupted’. In non-Christian mystical traditions this projection is thought as morally neutral, like the image of the cinema-screen used by Ramana Maharshi to illustrate the process of human perception.¹⁰ In Judaeo-Christian tradition the moral connotations of *corruption* are familiar. In an ingenious disclosure and simultaneous evasion of both traditions, Shelley used the image of stained glass to illustrate the intermediary nature of observation:

“...Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of eternity.”¹¹

Here the moral signification of *stain* is cancelled as soon as it is evoked, by virtue of the significations of beauty for its own sake (the dome of many-coloured glass), and of the devotional (the tinted glass of cathedral and mosque). In a seemingly spontaneous gesture Shelley uses the language and imagery specific to the artist and artisan in order to evoke a principle of metaphysics and, by analogical extension, of ecology. According to the esotericists, the *desire* of eternity is to devolve into ‘screens’ of visibility, and this is how creation arises; William Blake is succinct—‘Eternity is in love with the productions of Time.’¹² Or, as Lao Tzu says, ‘the existential perfections call for their own externalization. As a consequence, ‘existence’ spreads itself out in myriads of self-determinations.’¹³ Or again, to quote an ecologist, the evolutionary play needs an ecological theatre in which to come to realization.¹⁴ Observation and interpretation are in all these cases analogous to the differentiation of the unique into the numbered, of the Unmanifest to the Manifest. Aptly perhaps, the Qu’ranic image for this process is that of the Pen.

The basic claim of the ‘othering process’, which is to freeze-frame its apparent results into a ‘concrete reality’, is undone by the metaphorical act of symbol-making. Symbol, the ‘bandwidth of soul’,¹⁵ offers a view of materiality not as separate objects in space but as a modality of soul/psyche; in short, it reclaims alchemical structures with the key of eco-consciousness. The 110 elements of the periodic table, for instance, are the objective pole of the observation of the elements, but the four elements of the ancient world remain an imaginal *poem* which can be experienced directly as well as imagined. Modern studies of alchemical symbols, notably Titus Burckhardt’s extraordinary book *Alchemy: Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul*,¹⁶ have confirmed the operability of dissolving through symbolism the distinction between dual and total being, an event represented by the alchemical process, or spiritual journey.

Henry Corbin, in his studies of symbolizing practices,¹⁷ avoids using the verb *symbolise* transitively, preferring a preposition *with*. One thing cannot symbolise another, only symbolise with it. He gives metaphysical reasons for this, rooted in the proposition that analogies and that with which they are drawn cannot be immutably established. This relational nature of analogy echoes the biophilic image of life on earth as a unified spatiotemporal system with no exclusive or impermeable boundaries, and suggests that symbolism is similar to prototaxis—in other words, that the elements in symbolic relation are

not related as label to designate, but as a *conjunctio oppositorum*—a relationship whose elements affect each other, or in terms of the biophilia hypothesis are ‘life-affiliate’. Corbin’s proposition about symbolism, written several decades before the articulation of the biophilia hypothesis, implies once again that the ecological principle extends from the organic sphere into the metaphysical. (Or, more accurately, imbues the organic sphere from the metaphysical.)

Symbolic ecology likewise extends in the other direction—certainly as fully into the ‘material universe’ as it pervades the world of imagination. The correlation between a principle of wholeness in systems theory and in the creative arts is actually latent within the term *permaculture*. While this term was originated to imply sustainable agriculture as the basis for permanence in culture, we might add that the interexistent condition of all living beings *and of all levels of being* makes it inevitable to revolve the concept and say that to be *educated in the logic*¹⁸ of sustainable *culture*, (which is often one of the visible results of an esoteric current) will be the basis for a sustainable agriculture and politics. So the relation of agriculture and human sciences is not a relationship of one-way causation, but a reciprocal exchange in which awareness attends not only the agri-biodiverse system but the mythological, spiritual and creative context that is the ‘imaginative biosphere’. One level which we are belatedly recognising in physical terms as the Geosphere instantly necessitates, indeed uncovers, its co-eval imaginal counterpart in the human being’s inner life.

Permaculture design is said to consciously relate conceptual, material and strategic elements in a pattern which functions to benefit life in all its forms. The word *conceptual* is important: the philosophy behind permaculture is one of ‘working with, rather than against, nature; of protracted and thoughtful observation rather than protracted and thoughtless action; of looking at systems in all their functions, rather than expecting only one yield of them.’ This is not only consonant with ecology, but with Wordsworth’s view of landscape and mind:

“ All beings have their properties which spread
Beyond themselves, a power by which they make
Some other beings conscious of their life —
Spirit that knows no insulated spot,
No chasm, no solitude. From link to link
It circulates, the soul of all the worlds.
This is the freedom of the universe,
Unfolded still the more, more visible
The more we know—and yet is revered least,
And least respected, in the human mind,
Its most apparent home.”¹⁹

And this perspective is in turn identical to the Buddhist’s. The expression Wordsworth uses, ‘all beings’, automatically established in the biophilic principle, is also included in nearly every Buddhist benediction, as are the principles of the involvement of all matter in the chain of being, and of the sacredness of space. Both the latter are denoted by Buddhist stupas, the architectural symbol of landscape expressing and being read as sacred space. A human expression of a spiritual intention, stupas at the same time affirm the sacredness of the remainder of life—in fact, of physical reality organic and inorganic.

The Self according to Esoteric Ecology

Whilst ‘environmentalism and related bodies of thought are diffusing outside the academic

sphere’, writes Richard Nelson, still, ‘for the most part, our society remains embedded in the Western worldview which isolates us from the natural community and leaves us spiritually alienated from nonhuman life. We have created for ourselves a profound and imperiling loneliness.’²⁰ This loneliness applies not only to academic discipline but to the human interior whose humanist reduction is ego. Re-visioning the meaning of self-identity is as fundamental a consequence of deep ecology as it is of an orientation towards the esoteric.

And this revisioning is no less inevitably a *correlative process* to revisioning biosphere. Just as a new ecocentric perspective on territory changes our knowing in respect of terrestrial nature, and opens up our vision to planetary stewardship, so, in exact step with this change, self/ego opens out to a view of the wholeness of consciousness in consequence of the principle of the unity of existence. Far from reinforcing the individual ego-state as the culmination of a cultural endeavour known as Humanism, thinkers like the Buddhist Joanna Macy insist on our recognising first and foremost how our ‘isolation as persons’ has come about, in order that we can break through that isolation and recover a larger identity that is not tied to the personality but to the biome. An integration of personality in this context will be a markedly different thing from the particular pursuit of social order that has resulted in freemarket (democratic?) Capitalism. This reorientation of individual initiative and action is fundamental to any culture in which an esoteric tradition is current. If evolution is essentially understood as a symbolic expression of the desire-for-form of the One Existence, then in strictly relative terms, the terms of delimited being, its quest is the linear/organic outcome we identify as Time or History or Biography, and its attendant sense of ‘self-as-doer’. But the process does not stop there. Having recognised our apparent ‘isolation as persons’ in modern culture, and modern culture’s isolation of itself from the dreaming of the biome, we do not jettison the existence on earth that is our sustenance no less than our Self, any more than we abstract ourselves into an ‘Arcanea’ of theory as an escape from the destroyed Arcadia of our prophetic dreaming and symbolic consciousness. Rather, human individual initiative is strengthened and prioritised in its agency, having realised the nature of the larger agency of which it is a part but from which an excrescent cultural-political system has caused it to appear alienated. Rather than the destruction of the ego, we see in mysticism and symbol-making only the annihilation of the old or obsolescent ego—what Ted Hughes called the ‘hard ego of tested routines’, the relic of the patristic enterprise of Humanism against the submerged Goddess cult.

Poetics of attraction and affiliation

In this equation it will be obvious and as obviously axiomatic that Gaia and the Goddess are intended as indicators of the same reality. Hermeneutic traffic between ecology, esotericism and the arts offers not only a powerful alternative analysis of self-identity and agency to the one offered in post-Galilean humanism, but also insight into the characteristic preoccupation of artists with the refractory and incomplete psychology of sexual love, and equally into the mystical poets’ recurrent use of sexual imagery for the mystic’s contact with the divine or creative force, for example, in the *Tarjuman-al-Ashwaq* of Ibn’Arabi. What we find is that if we acknowledge a basic unity of perspective at the same time as temporarily entertaining the apparition of a ‘dualism’ or separation in relativity, we can conclusively explain the longing of what is basically the one existence for its return from devolved being (and sexual separation) into its state of premanifest perfection. Neither the relative nor the absolute state is here morally primary: it is the outcome of the intention described, for example, in the esoteric axiom of Sufism: ‘I was a hidden treasure, and I desired to be known, so I created the universes in order that I might be known’.²¹ Here the universe as knower is identical in essence with the universe as known. This idea is not only the province of mystics; likewise,

says Keith Floyd, ‘neurophysiologists will not likely find what they are looking for outside their own consciousness, for that which they are looking for is that which is looking.’²² One and a half centuries earlier on the same thread, Shelley, engrossed in conversation with Byron on the origin of the principle of Life, agreed that ‘we are ourselves the depositories of the evidence of the subject we consider.’²³ And both he and Byron, in their own ways, were, along with the other Romantics, at one and the same time pre-eminently the poets of love as well as of nature. In all these articulations, the effectual link between unity and otherness is desire. Not for power, but for integration and intimacy with the loved and yet incompletely known. In Wagner’s *Ring Cycle*, the story seems designed to illustrate that the only active force which can cast real doubt on the massively invested lust for power, wealth and domination is the desire, not yet fulfilled, to understand the true meaning of love.

The recurrently high value placed on the imagery of attraction and affiliation reveals the ethos of Biophilia and the creative topos of Romantic love to be from the same ontological source. At the end of the Postmodern age, the supervention of the holistic body of oneness is imaged both in eco-feminism and the myth of the Goddess. Starhawk and Ted Hughes both traced the dis-ease of modern Western culture to its industrious refusal of the deep relationship between the feminine mythos and non-dualist metaphysics. Likewise, ecofeminism attributes the dereliction of modern culture in both environmental and political terms to the fact that dualist thought systems are largely male edifices whose consequences are evident in war, technological exploitation and human exploitation. Ecofeminism is one of the few contemporary theoretical pursuits not to insist on any effective division between spiritual and political literacy; and this is an advantage, precisely because of the liberating effect of the ecological principle in action in the intellectual and material environment. Indeed the essence of ecofeminism is precisely the transvaluation of the meaning of *environment*, for in a non-dualist perspective the old meaning of environment (what is out there) is exchanged for a fluid model of perception in which there is no longer an *I in here* and *You/It out there* of culturally inherited Cartesianism. Hence such different voices as Hughes²⁴ and Camille Paglia²⁵ can justifiably ask, if the being of the Goddess is indeed complete, then is there living being of any kind, female or male, human or animal, which does not partake of the same being and therefore whose beauty is not unconditionally sacred? The sex war is described by both thinkers as a situation in which male fear is precipitated as a restrictive and forbidding treatment of the Other, ironically producing the phenomenon of the ‘Othello complex’ in which the beloved is exclusively targeted as object of hatred (in fact, perverted worship). Similar arguments suggest connections between biophobia and biophilia: ‘The manifestation of biophobia explicit in the urge to control nature has set in motion a vicious cycle that tends to cause people to act in a fashion that undermines the integrity, beauty, and harmony of nature—creating the very conditions that make the dislike of nature yet more probable.’²⁶ Vandana Shiva suggests how fear similar to that male fear adverted to by Hughes is projected onto the natural environment by globalist monocultures to resist the principle of diversity and abundance:

“ In giving food to other beings and species we maintain conditions for our own food security. [...] This worldview of abundance is based on sharing and on a deep awareness of humans as members of the earth family.

When giant corporations view small peasants and bees as thieves, and through trade rules and new technologies seek the right to exterminate them, humanity has reached a dangerous threshold. The imperative to stamp out the smallest insect, the smallest plant, the smallest peasant comes from a deep fear—the fear of everything that is alive and free. And

this deep insecurity and fear is unleashing the violence against all people and all species.

” [27](#)

Earth-as-Beloved is here itself shown to be subjected to the Othello-complex. Biophilia, life-affiliate thinking, on the other hand, solves this and also the opposite problem. It prevents the fixations of a ‘Cartesian ecology’ or soft ecology which tries to claim the ‘independence’ of the biosphere from the ‘contaminant’ human presence about which the only human potential that can be admitted to is the capacity to do harm. Such a reflex reaction, sadly evident in some conservationist movements, has little in common with a traditional perspective on the human and environment. The biophilic principle, though, has far more; it is the root-and-ground axiom that the human ability to survive inheres in *prototaxis*—relatedness—with the beings and systems that are the environment, biospheric living being, or Gaia. Call it what we will, the being with which we have to do—in *prototaxis*—is one being, and that is the lesson of the most rigorous of esoteric metaphysical disciplines as much as it is the conclusion towards which the ecological perspective invites us.

Cosmos and Metaphor

While casual use of the phrase ‘cosmic significance’ might imply considerations loftily or unreachably obscure, the *immediate or proximate region of cosmos* is the natural environment and its living beings. A theory of proximity and intimacy in studies of symbol and metaphor is directly parallel to a theory of *prototaxis* (mutual tropism) in biology. This is the underlying reason why landscape is such a powerful presence in poetry and in the disciplines of meditation—both being intentional means by which a ‘lost’ proximity is regained. And the lesson of these is the lesson of deep ecology as well. The proximity was never really lost—the apparent loss is a projection of an error of perspective due directly to the Cartesian world-frame of Self and other. The conductor Karajan said *à propos* Wagner’s *Ring*: ‘A sense of living nature goes through all Wagner’s work. If you do not carry this sense of identity of music and nature you are not telling the truth to the audience. What is the *Ring* in the end but a parable of violated nature?’ [28](#) If we are to read alienation as the cultural illness of the 20th Century, arising from the grand illusion and disappointment of humanism, then alienation’s opposite—its effectual as well as semantic opposite—must equal intimacy, and a sense of connectedness between the environment and its human forms of expression. This reintegrative intimacy is discovered to be aesthetically possible in music and poetry, sustainably possible in an ecological model of geospheric management, and metaphysically possible in meditation, a practice with which the word *union* is more closely associated than is the name of any particular deity. If it is the property of metaphor to speak of several things at once without separating them, such a property is also the outcome of a consistently extended ecological world-picture. We return to where we began—the fields of economics, culture, science, art and spiritual practice are not exclusive territories so much as the living expression of the one field which is simultaneously human, imaginal space and biosphere, since man is an instrument by which the universe is conscious of itself. E.O. Wilson’s words serve as much to inspire as they do to define the situation: ‘Humanity is exalted not because we are so far above other living creatures, but because knowing them well elevates the very concept of life.’ [29](#)

I’d like to close with the suggestion that the only world-view that has ever thought anything other than that the entire universe is alive and conscious is our present post-humanist materialism. And to follow that proposition, another: that in such a culture, the work of living esoteric tradition, as of poets and other symbol-makers, is the only sphere in which humans may get a taste of the orientation to other beings and substances in the universe that is

anything close to that of the innumerable worldviews which preceded the one we are in. And a third proposition is that we are being shown that our worldview is now so aberrant that it is endangering the self-organizing capacities of the geosphere. We need not demand the proof of philosophers. Environmental problems are a blatant warning that our mindset is wrong.

And since mindsets are inevitably symbolic, it's crucially important to dispel the illusion that the function of our creative imagination is simply to reflect the materialism of the last few centuries' philosophical development. One of the most enduring deceptions that has hypnotized the general population, and which the media culture has done little to dispel, is the view that consciousness is restricted to the human brain and its individual ego-state or personality. The dreaming of the biome is completely excluded by such a location of consciousness, but esoteric communities, healers, and artists throughout recent European as well as other cultures have availed of another possibility altogether, using a technique of identity-dissolution to accomplish this. Hence they have been and still are subversive of the normally accepted worldview. The only other areas in which this is being done are the ecological movement, Gaia theory and the biophilia principle.

Of course, although the eco-spiritual hermeneutic I have outlined here applies to any representations (artistic, cultural or doctrinal) of the human's fundamental relationship with Being (the being that is no other than the Living), it does not validate a massive number of representations whose main function is historical, analytical or satirical. Deep ecology as a philosophical or metaphysical perspective inevitably entails a reevaluation of many forms of cultural representation and perhaps reformulates the essentialist claim for art, affording that perspective more regard than it has enjoyed in recent decades. An essentialism derived from a compassionate/affiliate relationship is obviously more respectable than an essentialism which suborns us into assent from a humanist idolatry which privileged the contingent empirical self as the entirety of man, and ignored his spiritual and metaphysical composition, his 'deep-ecological' place and role in a reality immeasurably larger than his own immediate ground, and moreover in a living reality not divorced from the human but constitutive of the human in the deepest significance of the word. The poet Kathleen Raine spoke of Nature as 'House of the Soul'; the druidic thinker E. G. Howe echoes this from the other direction in saying 'The house is not to be exploited by the tenant, but is to be used properly and rhythmically in the order of life by the tenant, not only for the advantage of the tenant, but for *all life*.' In both these uses of the word *house*, we see the ecological, poetic and esoteric principles in co-statement, expressing the deeper meaning of the oecos, which at root is the expression not of three principles, but of one. And in the voice of William Blake also, do we not find the oracular continuity of esoteric tradition meeting the modern environmental movement:

“... all are Men in Eternity, Rivers, Mountains, Cities, Villages, All are Human, & when you enter into their Bosoms you walk In Heavens & Earths, as in your own Bosom you bear your Heaven And Earth & all you behold; tho' it appears Without, it is Within, In your Imagination, of which this Mortality is but a Shadow.” [30](#)

¹ Quoted in *The Biophilia Hypothesis*, ed. Stephen. R. Kellert and Edward O. Wilson (Washington and Covelo: Island Press, 1993), p. 26

² See Eric Toms, *Holistic Logic: A Formalisation of Metaphysics* (Edinburgh, 1991).

[3](#) Toshihiko Isutzu, *Creation and the Timeless Order of Things* (Ashland, Oregon: White Cloud Press, 1994), pp. 26-7.

[4](#) Richard Nelson, 'Searching for the Lost Arrow: Physical and Spiritual Ecology in the Hunter's World', in Kellert and Wilson, op. cit. p. 204.

[5](#) See P. Davies, *Romanticism & Esoteric Tradition: Studies in Imagination* (New York: Lindisfarne Books, 1998), chapter 2.

[6](#) Beckett, *Proust and Three Dialogues* (London: Calder, 1970), p. 17.

[7](#) U.G. Krishnamurti, interview with J. Mishlove (Berkeley, California: Inner Work Videotapes # 050, 1992).

[8](#) See Davies, op. cit. pp 11-16.

[9](#) E. O. Wilson, *Biophilia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984).

[10](#) Ramana Maharshi, ed. S. S. Cohen, *Forty Verses on Reality* (London: Watkins), 1978, p. 19.

[11](#) Shelley, *Adonais* (1821), stanza LII.

[12](#) Blake, *Complete Writings*, ed. G. Keynes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 151.

[13](#) Isutzu, op. cit. p. 27.

[14](#) R. MacEwan, 'Ecological Theatre and Evolutionary Play', *Beshara News Bulletin*, July 1986, pp. 4-7.

[15](#) See P. Davies, 'Art and Isthmus', *Sacred Web* 3 (1999), pp. 81-94.

[16](#) T. Burckhardt, *Alchemy* (Shaftesbury: Element, 1985).

[17](#) e.g. Henry Corbin, 'Mundus Imaginalis' in *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, tr Leonard Fox (West Chester, Pennsylvania: Swedenborg Foundation, 1995), pp. 12-13, 16-17, 31.

[18](#) I intend *logic* here to indicate *that which proceeds from Logos*, in preference to the casual usage which contrasts reason ('logic') with emotion.

[19](#) William Wordsworth, MS (unpublished, 1798), in *Romanticism: An Anthology* (Second Edition) ed. D. Wu (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), p. 298.

[20](#) Richard Nelson, op. cit., 223.

[21](#) See W. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn' al-Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), pp 66, 126, 391 n141; also T. Isutzu, op. cit. p.91.

22 Quoted in Michael Talbot, *Mysticism and The New Physics* (London: Penguin, 1993), p. 32.

23 P. B. Shelley, *Shelley's Prose*, ed. D. L. Clark (London: Fourth Estate, 1988), p. 185.

24 Ted Hughes, *Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being* (London: Faber, 1992). In fact the greater part of Ted Hughes' later life-work aimed to demonstrate how the tragedies of modern civilisation have had their roots in a determination to ignore the esoteric human current in religion and culture, in favour of the so-called empirical and moral enlightenment of the West from the 17th Century. See Hughes, *Winter Pollen: Occasional Prose* (London, Faber), 1994, p. 293; *Shakespeare and the Goddess*, pp 18-37.

25 Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae* (London: Penguin, 1992), chapters 1-4.

26 Kellert and Wilson, op. cit., p. 419.

27 Vandana Shiva, 'Poverty & Globalisation', BBC Reith lectures (broadcast BBC Radio 4, 10.05.2000). Text at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/events/reith_2000/lecture5.stm

28 Quoted in Richard Osborne, *Herbert von Karajan: A Life in Music* (London: Chatto & Windus), 1998.

29 Wilson, in Kellert and Wilson, op. cit. p. 21.

30 Blake, *Jerusalem*, Chapter 3, ed. G. Keynes, *Blake: Complete Writings* (Oxford, 1969), p 709

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