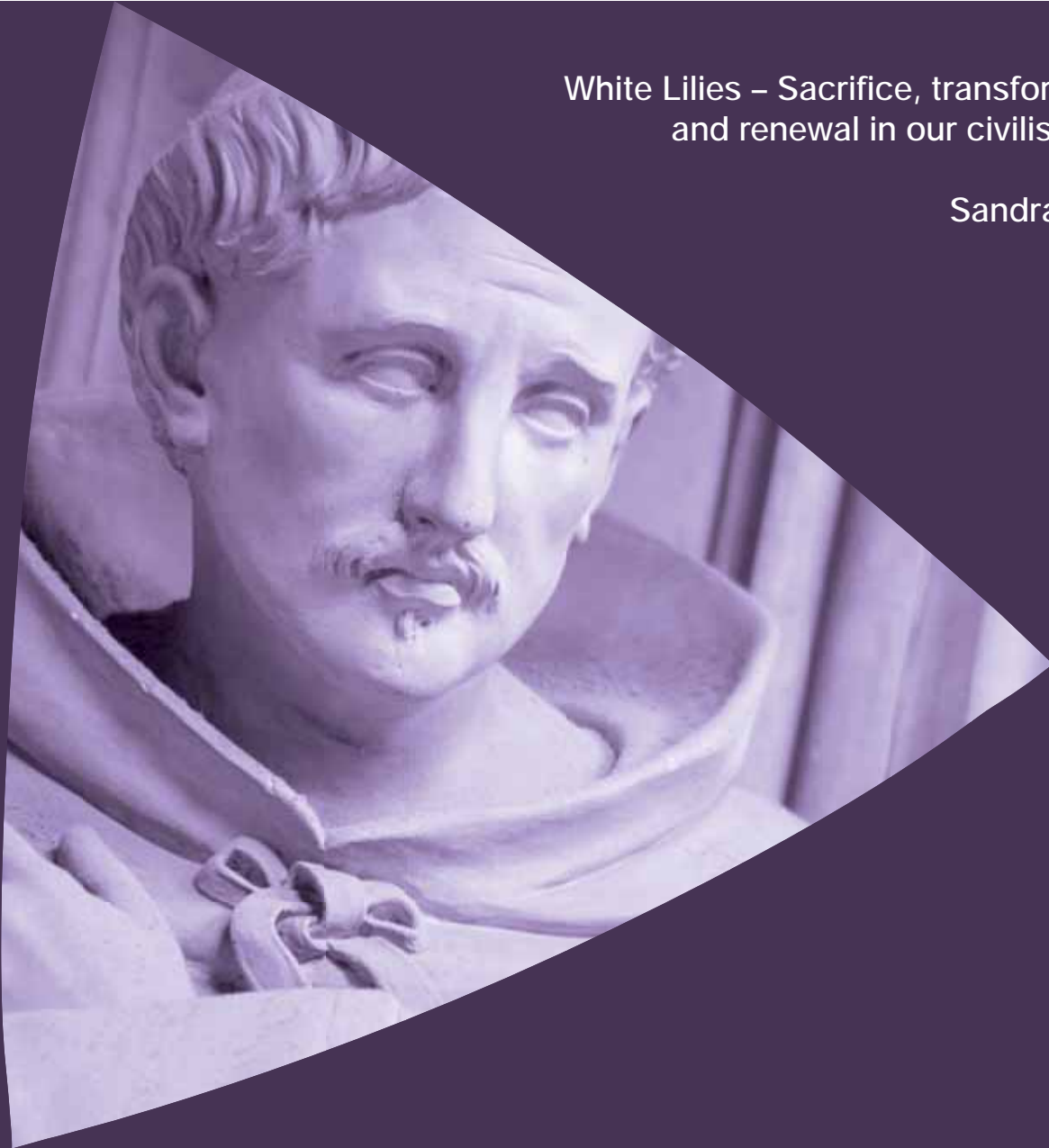


THOUGHTS ON SUSTAINABILITY

White Lilies – Sacrifice, transformation
and renewal in our civilised age

Sandra White



WHITE LILIES – SACRIFICE, TRANSFORMATION AND RENEWAL IN OUR CIVILISED AGE

Sandra White

My own understanding of The Great Work began when I was quite young. At the time I was some 11 years old. My family was moving from a more settled part of a small southern town out to the edge of town where the new house was being built. The house, not yet finished, was situated on a slight incline. Down below was a small creek and there across the creek was a meadow. It was an early afternoon in late May when I first wandered down the incline, crossed the creek, and looked out over the scene.

The field was covered with white lilies rising above the thick grass. A magic moment, this experience gave to my life something that seems to explain my thinking at a more profound level than almost any other experience I can remember. It was not only the lilies. It was the singing of the crickets and the woodlands in the distance and the clouds in a clear sky. It was not something conscious that happened just then. I went on about my life as any young person might do.

Perhaps it was not simply this moment that made such a deep impression upon me. Perhaps it was a sensitivity that was developed throughout my childhood. Yet as the years pass this moment returns to me, and whenever I think about my basic life attitude and the whole trend of my mind and the causes to which I have given my efforts, I seem to come back to this moment and the impact it has had on my feeling for what is real and worthwhile in life.

This early experience, it seems, has become normative for me throughout the entire range of my thinking. Whatever preserves and enhances this meadow in the natural cycles of its transformation is good; whatever opposes this meadow or negates it is not good. My life orientation is that simple. It is also that pervasive. It applies in economics and political orientation as well as in education and religion.

That is good in economics which fosters the natural processes of this meadow. That is not good in economics which diminishes the capacity of this meadow to renew itself each spring and to provide a setting in which crickets can sing and birds can feed. Such meadows, I later learned, are themselves in a continuing process of transformation. Yet these evolving biosystems deserve the opportunity to be themselves and to express their own inner qualities. As in economics, so in jurisprudence and law and political affairs – what is good recognises the rights of this meadow and the creek and the woodlands beyond to exist and flourish in their ever-renewing seasonal expression even while larger processes shape the bioregion in its sequence of transformations.

I am drawn to the elegant simplicity with which American cultural historian and ecophilosopher Thomas Berry articulates his vision of how we¹ could organise our affairs, upon which he expands in detail in *The Great Work*. He conveys that the underpinning of his life and work is a subtle, heartfelt knowing that everything, including humanity, has its place and time within the much greater world and that safeguarding the future of life on this planet involves honouring this reality. His propositions hold coherence and logic. Yet this coherence, logic and heart-sense seem not to be available to everyone – else we would not be here, worrying about our impacts on the sustainability of the Earth's systems and the future of our civilisation within them.

Berry's perception is radically different from that of most of us today. When I read these paragraphs, I feel at once both uplifted and uneasy. That we can consider the needs of the ecological systems in which we are embedded as a guiding principle for how we govern ourselves and conduct business, addressing those needs practically alongside, even as a way of meeting our own, is a vision of the future I find inspiring. I am struck that he expresses no corresponding sense of loss, impoverishment or sacrifice when he prioritises upholding the rest of life. I genuinely and wholeheartedly share his desires and yet notice that often, as I take steps towards them and imagine myself living more completely by them, I also experience pangs of discomfort and loss. It seems that they involve giving up aspects of my sense of myself: I 'get' his propositions and still I find myself thinking and behaving in small and large ways which counteract them.

How much more difficult is it, then, for the vast majority of people, including political and business leaders, who don't 'get' them to accept current widespread exhortations to change behaviours at work and home in ways they perceive mean giving up what they love and reducing their material way of life to prevent worsening planetary warming – to 'make sacrifices for the greater good'? It is clear that, if these exhortations continue to be responded to by relatively few, the endeavours of those few will not resolve our predicament.

We can see that the 'vision piece' is challenging. Our society as a whole no longer operates within a framework where sacrifice makes sense. Neo-Darwinist ideas on 'the survival of the fittest' have worked their way into our modern expectations of what it means to be successful in such a way that sacrifice seems near heresy. For many, the word 'sacrifice' itself carries strong religious associations, which immediately cancels out its validity. Those who embrace it for the sake of sustainability are often seen as misguided and weak, self-denying and killjoys. At best, sacrifice is seen as legitimate either for a minority of people pursuing a vocation or when immediate and extreme danger calls out an exceptional act.

In recent times, however, we have witnessed the attraction of images of sacrifice in books and films, with young and old, Christian, Muslim, Jew, pagan and atheist alike, flocking to see *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*, and the *Harry Potter* series. I suggest their popularity reveals the relevance of sacrifice to us all. For, according to the Swiss founder of analytical psychology Carl Jung, sacrifice is an archetype, an innate pattern embedded as a potential in the deeper layers of the collective psyche which can become active when circumstances demand it and the conditions are right.

So I offer this as an exploration of sacrifice. I want to delve into its nature and understand the conditions in which it becomes necessary and psychologically valid. Might it ever be necessary but psychologically invalid? In the context of sustainability, what is to be sacrificed? What is to be transformed and renewed? These are the central questions I bring. The path I take will spiral through domains of folklore, religious symbolism, story, dream and poetry, in order to unearth something more about a topic which provokes such strong feelings. For one of my central metaphors I will draw upon the Bible, which underpins the evolution of Western civilisation, in line with Jung's recognition "that the enormous domain of the history of religions provides an inexhaustible supply of terms of comparison with the behaviour of the collective psyche" (Eliade).

¹ The Great Work provides an analysis of the USA rather than the UK. I refer to 'we' and 'our' in this paragraph as an acknowledgement that our society faces the same need to rethink radically how we conduct ourselves and also that much of our thinking is influenced conceptually and materially by the USA.

THE LORE OF THE LILY

Many will remember young Prince Harry's wreath of white lilies lying atop his mother's coffin at her state funeral, attesting to the role and status of this flower in our culture. Wanting, too, to glean more about the enormity of Berry's experience when he crossed the creek and entered that meadow, I have looked up *Lilium* for its folklore (Lehner). Native to the Near East, the lily is an ancient plant with symbolic value in the mythologies of Sumer, Babylonia, Assyria, Egypt, Crete and Greece. Its central imagery is of the feminine territories of fruitfulness, childbirth, motherhood and the moon. This is echoed in the name of Eve, the first woman in Judeo-Christian belief, which means "mother of all living", and a reference to ancient Semitic legend adds that "the lily sprang from the tears of Eve, when ... she found she was approaching motherhood" just as she was expelled from Eden.

Just as she was expelled from Eden . . . I can imagine her standing there with Adam outside the gates wondering where to go next. For me, too, there are a number of directions in which I can proceed now. To help me choose, I want to play with their situation as a metaphor for a while, amplifying the spark of empathy evoked by the image of her tears at her banishment, no doubt fearful for the fate of her unborn child as she faced the unknown. I call upon the imagination to discover if there are other connections to be made.

LIFE-CHANGING THRESHOLDS



"Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden"
by Wenzel Peter.
Courtesy of the
Vatican Museum.



Lilium candidum L.

Though not religious in an orthodox sense, I find parallels between we generations who are alive at this moment in history and the first human couple of the Judeo-Christian creation story. Small wonder that Eve's tears were falling in the aftermath of crossing the largest threshold they were ever likely to meet and losing everything but each other, as it must have seemed. Leaving aside completely any notions of good, evil and punishment, we are told that they were in their predicament because they had recently acquired new, albeit forbidden, knowledge, and this precipitated their expulsion from the "paradise" of Eden, as the Hebrew expresses it².

In the Garden, they had been in a state of innocence which, in a certain sense, equated to an ignorance which we might call blissful. The image of Eden too is embedded deep within the Western psyche, inspiring great literature and shaping our aspirations in a range of ways. Even while contemporary culture expresses

² See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Garden_of_Eden

a pronounced disconnection from nature³, the desire to return to the Garden remains immense and may underpin at a profound level the collective popular concepts of what it means to be successful: rich, having a number of homes in all parts of the globe, able to take the best the world has to offer and living a life of comfort and ease. Alongside appreciating their real material benefits, these can be thought about as symbolic representations of living in the infinite abundance of the Garden of Eden. For Adam and Eve, the impact of its loss was immeasurable.

Respecting the limits of this analogy, I suggest that there are ways in which we⁴ now are in a similar position. For we stand at the other side of a threshold. We too have just crossed out of a state of what we may think of as 'blissful ignorance'. Our ignorance, as a society, has been of the incredible inter-connectedness of the Earth's systems and their quality of self-regulation which has been operating for billions of years. I say "incredible" because one of our guiding myths for centuries has been that, left to its own devices, nature is wild and chaotic and it has taken – even needed – humanity to introduce order to the world. Through the accomplishments of science we in the modern, secular age have observed what ancient tribal people, mystics and medieval alchemists intuited: there is order to life on Earth which originates outside the human realm and contains us inside it. For some people today this holds spiritual significance and for others the scientists are describing the purely physical functioning of the biosphere and its interplay with geology over aeons as, in different eras, the conditions for life at increasing levels of complexity have evolved.

Either way, we also are like Adam and Eve in the sense that there is no going back. No one can un-know what they come to know. I think that one of the huge questions facing us is: "As we go forward from here, how can we make the most of this new knowledge and interpret our ambitions for civilisation in its light?" It seems to me that this is the kind of guidance Berry was proffering with: "Whatever preserves and enhances this meadow in the natural cycles of its transformation is good; whatever opposes this meadow or negates it is not good." He indicates that, in our own ways, we must instate mutually enhancing links between our operations and those of the

rest of nature if we are to conduct our affairs better than we do now. The implications for our civilisation are so great that they cannot be overstated. As I imagine them standing outside Eden, Adam and Eve were wrestling with realisations similar in kind, if smaller in scale. In their efforts to survive as they made their way into foreign territory, I see them struggling to come to terms with their huge losses, of not only the Garden but also that state of ignorance. How did it change them, this sudden acquisition of the knowledge of good and evil? Perhaps like the first moment a young child discovers that actions have consequences, the change rendered them also alien to themselves. Their whole way of functioning, not only the landscape, was new.

Have we been rendered alien to ourselves? Is our whole way of functioning new? When we consider how most people and organisations, local and global, are conducting 'business as usual', it appears not. I wonder if this is partly because we do not collectively grasp that we **are** on the other side of a threshold. It seems to me relevant and important that we have been catapulted without our consent across this knowledge threshold. Unlike Adam and Eve, we did not choose to pick and bite into the fruit of this particular tree. Most of us were not requesting information regarding the Earth's highly developed, interdependent and sensitive self-regulating systems because we did not realise we needed to know. The vast majority have not yet assimilated this threshold's implications and are far from asking questions about how to go forward from here in the light of these discoveries.

There is also resistance. This arises partly from the cultural importance of the idea that humanity is the most sophisticated aspect of life on Earth. As American Jungian analyst Richard Tarnas has explored, successive revelations in centuries past about the material realities of life have already been profoundly wounding to our collective sense of value as a species. As British management consultant Alexandra Stubbings has summarised more fully in Volume 1 of this series, such revelations include that our planet is not at the centre of the universe and human beings are not separate from or above the animal kingdom. Thus, the latest, equally paradigm-changing realisation is most unwelcome. Alongside all the information about the need to lead

³ When referring to "nature" and "the natural world", the limits of language make it difficult to convey that I consider the human species as integral to it, rather than as separate from or outside it. Occasionally, to illustrate a specific point, it may be useful temporarily for nature to be thought about as outside us.

⁴ From here onwards, I will be describing collective, cultural ideas and norms of behaviour which constitute the prevailing industrial growth paradigm and often I will use the words "we", "our" and "us". This is in no way intended to deny the extraordinary diversity of human experience and behaviour, or the many people who embrace and live by entirely different ideas and norms.

life differently on the material plane, I think we have grasped at some level that there are many ways in which our intangible but powerful sense of ourselves as *homo sapiens sapiens*, our core identity, is also challenged by this new information about Earth.

Whilst we cannot un-know what we know, the field of psychoanalysis has revealed how the human mind has the valid and vital ability to protect itself from what it cannot cope with knowing. Indeed, British environmental campaigner Tom Crompton and American researcher Tim Kasser have recently made a thorough examination of widespread psychological defences relating to climate change. To me, this state of carrying unassimilated and defended-against knowledge is akin to being in an ersatz Eden, in a condition of assumed innocence, to which there has been a retreat in a psychologically valid attempt to preserve safety. As Crompton and Kasser articulate and I have described elsewhere, the enormous challenge is the direct clash of opposites created between what is psychologically safe and what is physically safe. Within the Eden metaphor, it is as if we now face a collective decision as to whether to hold out our hands to receive the fruit which we know has been picked for us and eat it, thereby conducting ourselves across the knowledge threshold 'for the first time'. A vital challenge facing change agents throughout our society is how to foster the conditions of psychological safety which would allow the reaching out, the receiving, the eating and digesting, and then the crossing. There, on the other side, we would take ownership of the new propositions, which I imagine would change our relationship with the whole subject of sustainability and sacrifice within it.

THE NATURE OF SACRIFICE

To understand what these conditions might be, we need to know more about sacrifice. The Oxford English Dictionary I consulted contains seven pages of entries regarding sacrifice. The first two entries relevant to this discussion are as a verb: "To surrender or give up (something) for the attainment of some higher advantage or dearer object"; and as a noun: "The destruction or surrender of something valued or desired for the sake of something having, or regarded as having, a higher or a more pressing claim; the loss entailed by devotion to some other interest; also, the thing so devoted or surrendered." The element of conscious choice involved

is clear and underlines the propositions above. A recent dream of mine elaborates on this, so I include it here:

In the first part of the dream, which largely took place in the remarkably Eden-like, beautiful, sun-filled and abundant gardens of a huge, rambling old house, the resident community were preparing a communal ritual to which I had been invited as witness. This community had been together for a long time and there was a strong foundation of love for each other and for the place where they lived. They regularly performed rituals as a way of expressing this love and solidarity and when they needed to take important, evolutionary steps forward; indeed the headman and headwoman of this community were renowned for the high quality of their ritual-making. Even though I did not know what I could add, I love ritual-making and felt proud and glad to lend my presence. As this ritual was about to start, a local government officer in a dark suit arrived and declared that the whole estate was to be taken on immediately by an elderly woman in the nearby town who had enough money to look after it properly, which the community, it was true, did not. Therefore the community would have to leave. The headwoman of the community summarily sent him packing. The ritual took place but was not shown in the dream and afterwards the scene shifted to the modern post office of the local town. I and the headwoman were standing together in the queue on an open spiral staircase leading up to the counters and a very close friend of mine arrived. She was sent away and soon returned with the same local government officer dressed in the same suit. Before he could speak, the headwoman gave her consent for the town's elderly woman to assume ownership of the estate and the end of the dream showed that this had transpired, the community had dispersed and its erstwhile members were happily and fruitfully pursuing their lives wherever they were.

Whilst a dream is itself and never fully transparent, there are aspects I see in it which hold relevance to my themes and I will expand on them gradually. First, let us consider when the decision to relinquish the estate to the new caretaker could and could not be made. When imposed by external authorities, it could not. That the dismissal of the officer was made by the community headwoman (rather than by, say, a disgruntled community member) indicates that there was order in this act. After the ritual, the headwoman came to her own resolution, the dream location moved to a communication centre within the modern world and the official arrived. He had no need to speak, for the outcome he had sought to impose earlier was volunteered. At the end, the dream revealed that the sense of order signalled in the earlier scene was upheld by the unfolding events, as the dispersed community members were thriving rather than wounded. It seems to me that the community, led by its headwoman, yielded its right to live in what had been its home for the sake of the future wellbeing of that place only once the conditions were right. Among these was that the decision became theirs to make. The headwoman, by originally sending the official away, was righting a false premise, namely that the decision could be made elsewhere and imposed. I suggest that there are close parallels with our collective situation. There is no sense among most people that the decision to embrace sustainability is theirs to make; it is being made elsewhere and imposed. As change consultants know, these are the conditions which ordinarily generate resistance and it is especially important to recognise this tendency in the context of sacrifice.

The dream reflects a microcosm of our macro-situation in two ways: First, the general condition of the estate, while run down, did not appear to be on the brink of collapse. When we look around at our world today, whilst there are some unsettling changes in weather patterns, most lay people do not see evidence of imminent disaster, which adds to the difficulties of quickly engaging a mass response. Secondly, the dream's central proposition was that the estate's future needed to assume the greater importance and this brings me back to the definitions. Currently, the aspect which is most explicitly and implicitly relied upon by those making the exhortations for sacrifice is "higher advantage" or "higher or more pressing claim". Environmentalists assume that the "higher [and] more pressing claim" is self-evident, namely safeguarding our larger ecological systems so that the well-being of people

living in other parts of the world now and everywhere in the future can be protected. This assumption is in part allied to a faith in the human capacity for logic and rationality and, as we are discovering, there is so much to being human that this is not enough. The word "higher" is interesting in this regard. In older, more religious times, it would have been readily associated with God, which would have strengthened people's ability and willingness to make the sacrifices within their frame of reference. Today our industrialised world is not only secular, it is also fragmented and there is not such a strong, shared sense of being part of something bigger and overarching. When families are spread around the country and the globe, when local community bonds are not robust, when jobs, and the corresponding relationships with employers, are no longer 'for life' and when, for most of us, the surrounding landscape is travelled through at great speed, it is difficult to gain a sense of anything "higher" that is large, compelling and inspiring enough to elicit the desire to make the envisaged scale of sacrifice. Perhaps this lack is part of why contemporary branding strategies have been successful; some people subliminally gain that missing sense of identity and belonging by being a loyal customer of a high street name. Thus the difficulty in making the kinds of sacrifices involved in creating a less consumerist society and altering our economic system are compounded.

LOVE: THE VITAL CONDITION

Also interesting are the words "dearer" and "devotion" which I think point to something which has not been sufficiently taken into account: For sacrifice to be possible, there needs to be the presence of love. I think of this as assuming two forms. First, the thing for which one is making the sacrifice needs to be so loved or highly desired that the transaction becomes worthwhile. Secondly, love needs to be experienced as available and present to those making the sacrifice. This second manifests in a range of ways: someone loving may be nearby and witnessing and supporting the sacrificial act as it is made; and perhaps the sacrifice is being made in a strongly bonded communal context where not only the belief in the necessity for the transaction but also the commitment by the whole community to uphold what the sacrifice represents are shared. This is vital to ensure that the sacrifice is not made in vain and pertains whether the sacrifice is being made by an individual on the community's behalf, or by the community as a whole.

These qualities of love were present in the dream. Although the theme of sacrifice was not manifest at its start, I was invited to act as witness, to lend my presence, and my love of ritual-making made me an appropriate person to fulfil this role. The community itself was bonded, loving and trusting of each other and their head-couple. We can consider that another reason for the local government officer being so summarily dismissed was that he delivered the edict without any expression of love, compassion or empathy. Finally, the dream signals the importance of love being present in the moment when a sacrifice is being made by including the "very close friend of mine" who escorted the local government officer back to the headwoman in the post office, for this friend regularly appears in my dreams representing unconditional love.

The motif of love is also comprehensively built into the *Harry Potter* series, where Harry is alive only because his mother sacrificed her life in order to protect his and, further, her love lives on in his very skin, protecting him from being killed by Voldemort's touch. Although he lived largely in ignorance of this in his early years, the implication is that his mother's love contributes to his rather innocent strength of character, fortitude and lack of malevolence, despite being raised among relatives who do not love him and for years closed him away in an understair cupboard. Love is often depicted as being of the highest order. In *The Lord of the Rings*, when Frodo undertakes to sacrifice everything, including the seductive power of the ring, and leaves the comfort of his home to make the arduous journey to return it to its source to destroy it, a 'Fellowship of the Ring' is constructed around him of people possessing diverse, valuable characteristics. This recognises the dangers involved and ensures he has support when he needs it. Sam, the simplest but most loyally devoted to Frodo of them all, holds close to him when the Fellowship is scattered by the various

challenges they face, depicting once more the need for the accompaniment of unconditional love when undertaking a sacrificial task.

When considering the presence of love in these ways, a precondition is that sufficient love of oneself must be available for, without this, an act of sacrifice can be a mask for an act of masochism. When, as now, there is not a collective shared valuing of the purpose and form of the sacrifice and where there is ample appropriate and necessary self love I suggest that two possibilities present themselves. For some, self love will manifest in their capacity to make the kind of conceptual and material sacrifices required by sustainability without feeling diminished or impoverished, as Berry models. For others, making material sacrifices feels like a self-inflicted impoverishment. Then it comes too close to touching pockets of poverty that we all have within us in different forms, and I contend it is psychologically valid to protect ourselves from activating those pockets. Once again a clash arises, this time in the arena of self love: a valid position of loving oneself enough not to perpetrate against one's own being a masochist act is working against the physical realities of needing to consume less in order to safeguard the future of ourselves and other people whom we love.

The presence of love to enable an act of sacrifice is so critical that I have turned to the English poet Shakespeare and also to the apostle Paul's lyrical New Testament prose to amplify some of its qualities. The first conveys something more about constancy, while the second expresses directly that sacrifice means nothing without love and then articulates some characteristics of love which render it the necessary accompaniment I am proposing:

*"Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom:
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved".*

Shakespeare, Sonnet 116

*"If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be
burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.
Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it
is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own
way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at
wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things,
believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."*

1 Corinthians, 13.3-7

Like Crompton and Kasser, who suggest that empathy be deliberately introduced into discussions regarding climate change, I think it important that this quality of love has been missing from environmental communication, even if it has been present as an underlying value. The apostle Paul actually addressed something akin to this in his preceding sentence: "If I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I gain nothing."⁵

Yet, as we know, one-sided love is not fulfilling. Irish poet and scholar John O'Donohue draws from the Buddhist tradition to paint a picture of:

"a lovely concept of friendship. This is the notion of the 'Kalyana-mitra', the 'noble friend'. Your Kalyana-mitra, your noble friend, will not accept pretension, but will gently and very firmly confront you with your own blindness. No-one can see their life totally. As there is a blind spot in the retina of the human eye, there is also in the soul a blind side where you are not able to see. Therefore, you must depend on the one you love to see for you, where you cannot see for yourself. Your Kalyana-mitra complements your vision in a kind and critical way. Such friendship is creative and critical; it is willing to negotiate awkward and uneven territories of contradiction and woundedness. ... It is beautiful to have such a presence in your life."

If we closely take note of the sentence in which the word "love" first appears here, we can understand love's absence as a cultural failure. Although we can clearly see this operating in our lives with close friends, to me the power of this passage is that it describes a set of valuable expectations which could be active if we were all willing to participate at a collective level. In order to be able to listen to and heed the perspective of our Kalyana-mitra, we must, first, recognise the likelihood that s/he will perceive something unavailable to us and then have the humility to give our permission to such commentary on our conduct. This is not currently a cultural norm for the majority of us. Politicians and business leaders most often model immediate, staunch defence of

and upholding of their actions and decisions, accompanied by refutation and denigration of criticisms. Although we may often wish for humility in our leaders after it is clear that a mistake has been made, I am describing something more than contrition. Greater compassion for our human frailties could herald a culture in which a deeper listening to the voices around us may lead to better decision-making. We prize, instead, individuality and lone heroism which sets out to conquer all frailty and holds failure in contempt. The Kalyana-mitra reminds us that this is a false enterprise, destined to fail. As we nevertheless continue to pursue it, to what extent do we notice the corresponding erosion of much of the fabric of communal life and our loss of a kind of wisdom rooted in more humbly and painstakingly building mutual trust? Perhaps this is why we are told that the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil was an apple: like few other fruits, when an apple is cut in half, its quality starts to deteriorate visibly and almost immediately. As American poet, painter and writer E.E. Cummings helps us to see: "One's not half two. It's two are halves of one".

We forget we need each other's love, and consequently allow the bonds between us to fail, at our peril.

RITUAL: HONOURING THE DANGERS

It seems peril is close at every turn. The definition of sacrifice as a noun contains the word "destruction" – there is much danger, death and destruction in the archetypal stories, old and new to which I have referred, and Shakespeare conjures up "the edge of doom" as the measure of Love's fidelity. Sacrifice is no small undertaking. In the dream, this is why the decision to make the sacrifice could only be arrived at through a ritual. A well-crafted ritual provides an ark to enable safe crossing of a life-changing threshold, with all its inherent investment and jeopardy, when it is crucial to secure oneself on the other side and move forward creatively from there. To underline some of what I explored near the beginning, such thresholds involve entering the unknown, and a ritual helps us prepare for its attendant risks. This is shown to us in nature, where a container is provided for every important threshold in the life cycle. Seeds, chrysalises, eggs, wombs . . .

⁵ 1 Corinthians, 13.2, from the *New Testament Holy Bible*, William Collins, 1971



The chrysalis of the Peacock butterfly

they each protect their delicate contents while great, invisible transformation takes place. Similarly, the dream revealed nothing of the content of the ritual. In this light, it is important that those of us with secular minds don't consign rituals to the history books as an outdated method to make contact with the divine. The threshold, as both an aspect of sacrifice and an archetype itself, holds transformative potential. Its associated rituals provide the necessary space and process in which to honour that potential and bring more consciousness to the endeavour. It is a matter of honouring fragility, for letting go of what no longer serves us well can be painful and what is new may well be delicate and in need of protection until it can establish itself. Ritual provides that quality of honouring and, in so doing, enables an exquisite quality of attunement to what is required at moments of both subtlety and sensibility. The container of ritual defends against and shields us from unrealistic expectations that can pressurise and shatter what is being transformed.



The Peacock butterfly at every stage of its development

Katherine Plymley: *Papilio Io*, Peacock Butterfly, male and female, caterpillar feeds on nettle. Reproduced with kind permission of the Darwin Country Museum: www.darwincountry.org

When we realise that a threshold is before us, we face two questions: What to take across? What to leave behind? In taking things across, we have to know, or at least intuit, how they will serve the purpose for which we are making the crossing. In leaving things behind, we recognise their lack of utility for the impending task. At the same time, we make room for something new and unknowable. The nature of transformation is that, while we will have ideas and desires, the ultimate outcome is beyond our control. We must only be willing to cross over and hold ourselves open to mystery. Perhaps this is why the heart of so many fairy stories can be so dark: The dangers are real and there are no guarantees. For me, this makes the Semitic legend of the lily especially poignant. How wonderful that, with all its promise of fruitfulness, it is the lily which accompanies pregnant Eve as the gates of Eden close behind her and her tears fall to the ground. And yet, hidden within a promise is the paradox that it is only a promise if it can be broken. The flower affords hope without assurance.

Another meaning of the references to “destruction” in all this is to do with how to leave something behind in a way which opens the door to transformation and secures us on the far side of the threshold – as the caterpillar is dead to the butterfly.

Such an image is typical of nature’s stages, where death and rebirth are intimately connected. This makes sense of Jung’s assertion that a sacrifice “only becomes a sacrifice if I give up the implied intention of receiving something in return. If it is to be a true sacrifice, the gift must be given as if it were being destroyed”. I find parallels here with the caterpillar’s sacrifice; albeit driven by instinct, I hope that the beauty of its metamorphosis can be valuable to us as we struggle with the choices before us.

This struggle is intrinsic to humanity, wrestling with the complexity and vulnerability of our own minds in a way which caterpillars and butterflies do not. An image closer to our reality may be that of the two faces of Janus, gazing in opposite directions.





Roman bust of Janus

Perhaps this Roman god of gates, doorways, beginnings and endings, after whom the first month of the Roman calendar year is named, captures more than any other our inbuilt drive to evolve and our corresponding longing to return to Eden. Must we destroy this longing? For the intensity of these conflicting desires gives rise to battles within, sometimes on an epic scale, and can hold us back from embracing the necessary new. This is writ large in Biblical imagery where the closing of the gates of Eden was reinforced by cherubim and a flaming sword to bar Adam and Eve's re-entry⁶. It is also worth noting that the required evolutionary step into consciousness and conscience was brought about by the intervention of the serpent, a creature which seems to lend itself to the shadows that Western mythology and folklore has

increasingly projected on to it⁷, indicating our ambivalence towards our necessary progress out of innocence. Self-consciousness is a heavy burden. Environmentalists who have long been holding out the apple know this, for they, too, have been cast into the shadows, (called "hair-shirt merchants"), out of our reluctance to bear the burden of consciousness about the relationship between the only two named trees in the Garden; remaining in ersatz Eden spares us from weighing up the consequences of our actions on the tree of life. Those consequences are indeed very difficult to face and, in this territory, ignorance really is bliss.

If the battle were confined to within us, the huge and urgent matter we face might be slightly less complicated than it is. Jung provided some insight into the interplay between our ego⁸ identity and the things we find, buy and make in our environment, which Crompton and Kasser have also explored. We can only make a sacrifice of what is ours to give. The gift, therefore, "bears the stamp of 'mineness', that is, it has a subtle identity with my ego". This "is an irrational, unconscious identity, arising from the fact that anything which comes into contact with me is not only itself, but also a symbol". Thus "several layers of meaning" become invested in what we see as ours – people, places, animals and other creatures, plants, inanimate objects and work projects. His elaboration makes the scale of the issue clear: "In reality, our psyche spreads far beyond the confines of the conscious mind" so that, when a man sacrifices anything he identifies as his, "he is *giving himself up* in giving the gift" (his emphasis). Hence, in a culture inhospitable to sacrifice, 'business as usual' is all that is available until conditions enable a more widespread emergence of our collective capacity to engage consciously with the archetypes I am exploring here.

IN SERVICE TO THE WHOLE

I say "until" rather than "unless" because it is not only that the caterpillar sacrifices itself; the 'determination' of the butterfly to emerge also kills the caterpillar.

At some level of its being, the butterfly 'knows' what riches await! Not only its gorgeous beauty, but also its capacities to flutter and fly, to roam far and wide, to view the beauty around it at height, to feast on nectar, to pollinate its food plant species and to mate – all these are attributes undreamt

⁶ Genesis, 3.24, from the Old Testament, *Holy Bible*, William Collins, 1952.

⁷ See Baring, A. and Cashford, J. *Myth of the Goddess: Evolution of an Image* (Arkana Penguin) for an account of how symbolic representations of the relationship between humanity and divinity have changed since earliest history and into the present day

⁸ The word "ego" is used here to denote our conscious sense of ourselves as "I".

of by the caterpillar which has more simply just been eating away at its food plant species to secure its life. For the butterfly to come into being and fulfil the whole life purpose of this particular organism, the life of the caterpillar must come to its end. What is as yet undreamt of by us?

With the caterpillar, butterfly and Janus all in mind, I return to Jung:

“Just as a man still is what he always was, so he already is what he will become. The conscious mind does not embrace the totality of a man, for this totality consists only partly of his conscious contents, and for the other and far greater part, of his unconscious, which is of indefinite extent with no assignable limits. In this totality the conscious mind is contained like a smaller circle within a larger one. Hence it is quite possible for ... a more compendious personality to emerge in the course of development and take the ego into its service.”

A little further on he clarified that this process does not result in the ego becoming enslaved but, rather, of an ongoing dialogue between it and the larger ‘self’ so that the proposition of free will is lived out as a reality. Individuation is developed as the ego becomes increasingly capable of making its own choices in the context of a larger vision of what it means to be human. Then, the ego is rooted in expanding self-knowledge gained by exploration of the unconscious, much less driven by hidden fears and desires, and free to take sufficient account of the authentic and legitimate demands of the whole, of which it experiences itself as a valid and valuable part. This whole is constituted by diverse aspects of mind within the individual person as much as family, friends, community, and wider society and beyond. Along the individuation path, more of the person’s innate attributes and qualities, including those which have been suppressed due to family and cultural pressures, become available, and are increasingly expressed and practised until eventually they evolve enough for the whole personality to expand and live out more of its potential. The sacrifice involved is of the smaller but all-consuming concerns of earlier

levels of ego-consciousness which believes its own proposition that it (the conscious “I”) is the only thing of value in the psyche and appropriates to itself all credit for everything worthwhile that happens in a person’s mind. This is where Jung’s propositions become even more important and relevant to our time. His vision was that the collective and the individual psyche together comprise something essentially unknowable, unified and with a larger wisdom than that available to the ego alone. It contains the ego alongside all we have suppressed and repressed and is also something more than all that. This “something more” is the matrix for each person’s evolution and, equally, the evolutionary potential of our species. It contains both our history and our future. In this sense, the Janus head also provides an image for his first sentence above: “Just as a man still is what he always was, so he already is what he will become” and this relates equally to the species and to the individual.

For me, this “larger vision of what it means to be human” is the crux. In pursuing the dangerous road that has brought us to the brink we are, at least, fast approaching, there is much we have allowed to fall by the wayside. Greatest among what we have called ‘the necessary costs of progress’ has been far earlier understandings that we are intrinsically part of life on Earth. Now, in an echo of those ancient perspectives, Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess has coined the phrase “the ecological self” to describe human beings’ potential for a heightened sensibility towards and love for the whole Earth community of life in which we are immersed. He challenges the modern paradigm with: “To identify self realisation with the ego indicates a vast underestimation of the human self”. The ecological self is motivated by identification with other species in addition to human beings and the resulting empathy facilitates our desire to take care of them and their habitats, which, we forget, also are ours. In this way, our sense of ourselves is enlarged and nourished, not reduced and deprived, by relating with and nurturing the diversity of life around us. British ecological educator, counsellor and psychotherapist Paul Maiteny pushes this further, proposing that we, like every other species, have our niche in the eco-system. For us it is a matter of discovering what it is, because of our uniquely human attributes of choice and self-awareness. He highlights Sir Julian Huxley’s proposition that, as these are the product of the evolutionary processes of

Earth and, therefore, of the universe, these human faculties enable the universe to know itself, through “bearing witness to its wonder, beauty and interest.” We could say that, for Huxley, humanity is to the universe what the apple was to Adam and Eve ... a necessary step into self-consciousness. Huxley was careful to acknowledge that such attributes might also be present elsewhere in the universe and I think that we are too quick to assume that some elements of them could not be present in some way in other species here. Nevertheless, if such a vision of humanity’s niche, firmly rooted in frames of reference familiar to modern generations, were to catch fire in our collective imagination, then we might consider it essential to the larger scheme of things that we do not destroy the abundance and complexity of life on our planet, jewel in the cosmos that it is. Just as with the apple, we have to choose to embrace it and, if we do, new paths and choices open up by which humanity can simultaneously participate in its own, the Earth’s and the universe’s progress. For Naess and Maiteny, an expanded sense of self which includes all of evolution in feelings of awe, respect and loving responsibility effectively eclipses the matter of sacrifice. From this perspective, our contemporary, real and valid struggles with making the necessary material sacrifices for sustainability reveal how relatively small our concerns and motivations have become. Isn’t this the opposite of the greatness that our myths of progress have promised us? How has this happened?

UNWITTINGLY CULTIVATING IMPOVERISHMENT

To offer my piece of that puzzle, I think that one factor is a remarkable contradiction in our contemporary stories of what it means to be human. On the one hand we tell ourselves that we are the superior species on the planet because we have the gift of being able to make conscious choices and, on the other, we invest hugely in influencing those conscious choices with incessant marketing aimed at seducing the most basic aspects of our instinctual drives. Because they are constantly called out, the need to gratify them becomes more and more powerful. We do this because the economic system we have created requires us to make an increasingly large volume of purchasing choices to keep it growing. We have, effectively, turned our most consciously prized asset – choice – into a commodity to serve little more than the economic machine ... little wonder that this is, too, what we have done with the Earth.

It seems to me that our economic system is functioning like a gigantic tree, sucking into itself all the nutrients, everything of value, from the surrounding ecology to benefit mainly the minority who inhabit its top branches. Although it does drop its leaves and fruit to provide replenishment, we have not constructed the system well enough to ensure that this dynamic of taking and reciprocating is balanced and so the surrounding ecology is degrading. In not realising the relationship between the only two named trees in the Garden, we have created the antithesis of the tree of life – indeed, its nemesis. This is what environmentalists have been showing us for decades and, increasingly, the deterioration can also be seen in the high levels of physical and mental illness among human populations.

It is striking that there is such a high level of compliance with this situation, such a willingness to tolerate its costs. It is as if not enough of us are alive to them, and British management consultant Nicolas Ceasar has explored some of the reasons for this in Volume 1 of this series, including the theory of “rational ignorance” which enables us to cut ourselves off from what we feel we can do little about.

The roots of our need to cut ourselves off go back a long way and are, I suggest, intrinsic to the path we have taken towards rationalism. Today, scientists increasingly acknowledge that the inspiration for their guiding theories arise first from the imagination. Very often, when I listen to them being interviewed, this acknowledgement seems almost to be offered and received as a kind of confession. Our contemporary view of what it means to be ‘scientific’ has bred an endemic suspicion of imagination outside of the realm of art and commercial design and I hope that this is beginning to change. It is true that the irrational aspects of our minds function in radically different ways from the rational, yet too often an assumption is made that the irrational holds nothing of value for everyday life. This is a huge mistake, in my view. When time is taken to study the irrational aspects of mind, a paradoxical quality which one might call ‘its own order’ can be detected. Were this not the case, the workings of the unconscious could never have been interpreted and, whilst such interpretation is always an extremely tentative and delicate endeavour, psychoanalysis and the talking therapies have shown that enough can be understood to enable healing and greater wholeness of personality.

One significant consequence of our mistake is the difficulty we have now in trusting in the 'both-and', a primary characteristic of the imagination where completely contradictory elements happily co-exist. As practised as we are in 'either/or' thinking, too often we castigate 'both-and' thinking for hypocrisy, rather than appreciating the capacity to bear contradiction and hold paradox. It may be that an unintended consequence of our ambitions towards pure rationality and its apparent certainties is the hindering of a more subtle and expansive condition which facilitates inclusion. In broad terms, behaving rationally requires us first to separate ourselves from the matter at hand so that we can make an objective, dispassionate decision. Once we have made what we believe to be the right or best choice, we then identify with its superiority to carry it forward. Constant repetition of this process inculcates in us a sense of separateness and superiority (the same characteristics which have come to define our cultural sense of humanity's place in the natural world). This not only renders humility more difficult when mistakes are made, this systematic practice of severing our links also fuels our more ruthless abilities to exploit and disregard non-financial costs to ourselves and the rest of life.

For centuries, such ambitions for rationality and objectivity have led us to denigrate those human attributes which we think risk undermining the scientific and reasoned endeavours of our age, namely embodied sensations, instincts, intuition and emotions, alongside imagination – the very attributes that our marketing agencies work to seduce. Perhaps it is because they remind us so powerfully of what we might think of as our 'creatureness' that we tolerate this exploitation; out of our desire to see ourselves as superior to the animal kingdom, we treat as inferior anything that associates us to it. Were we rather to prize our animal nature, to respect and develop the assortment of experiences we are endowed with when born and which link us with the rest of life on Earth, we would be attuned differently to the needs of both ourselves and other species. As David Bohm described, "we are able to perceive an actual fact through our senses ... whether it be our eyes or ears or sense of touch and ... in this way we get information that thought cannot possibly supply". He went on to elaborate how our over-privileging of thought while not accurately understanding its nature contributes to our global problems. In over-valuing rationality, we deny how our other human powers serve us: Through the combination of

imagination and the sensations in our bodies we feel love and empathy; our bodily systems let us know when we are sated or when we are out of balance; instincts ensure that our survival needs are met and also underpin our evolutionary drives towards consciousness; and instinct, intuition and emotion engage our connectedness with others and, thereby, our conscience. This is to identify only a few of the faculties we need at work as greatly as at home. They become more available through the interplay between body, imagination and, of course, reason which also plays its necessary part. It is dialogue between these various qualities which facilitates inner checks and balances, mediation and then decisions upon how to act. For such self-regulating dialogue to yield the best outcomes, all participating elements must be equal in strength. As far back as the 13th century, Persian philosopher, poet and founder of the Whirling Dervishes Rumi captured the essence of the matter: "Love opens my chest, and thought returns to its confines". Those wider aspects of being human often remain unconscious and immature because we undervalue and, for the purposes of economics, often override them. It is this immaturity that allows them to be exploited by marketing and undermines our ability to deal appropriately with the complicated state of affairs we have created in the world which exacerbates inequalities. Were we to foster their maturity, different desires and other, inclusive means of achieving them would emerge.

For by undermining our birthright of innate inner diversity, by not valuing it unless we can exploit it, we are impoverishing ourselves to such an extent that, collectively, we are no longer able to desire the inexpressable beauty and diversity of the rest of life on Earth to flourish in its own right. African American civil rights campaigner and author Alice Walker draws our attention to the role of the imagination as she also asserts those rights: "We must begin to develop the idea that everything has equal rights because existence itself is equal. In other words, we are all here: trees, people, snakes, alike".

Remembering a teeming rainforest scene, American nature writer and conservationist John Hay asserts that living with a sense of connection between our inner being and outer nature is our heritage from more elemental times, a heritage which relies upon the innate inner diversity I am highlighting, and he elaborates how it could serve us well:

"The quetzal is a shining facet of the great civilization of nature, where the spirit of human life was once inextricable from birds and flowers and tall trees rising from buttressed trunks with branches smothered in bromeliads and epiphytes, a context of growth and sacrifice reaching through intricate shadows toward the sun. In an open clearing at the edge of the forest where the quetzal and his less extravagantly adorned mate were nesting, a wattled bell bird called with a loud, single "bong", which sounded less like a bell than a metal pipe being hit by a hammer. Inside the forest, nightingale thrushes hauntingly sang, like fine instruments being tuned to some ineffable scale; and the last I saw of the quetzal was a shimmering waterfall of color plunging down off a branch to disappear in the darkness made by endless leaves.

To think of the dark and tenacious rainforests in terms of the diversity we say is necessary to natural systems is useful to the conservationist, but it is not enough. We who spend our lives guided only by terms and categories, endless facts and numbers, have not yet recognized the depths that would, if they could, help us out of our simplicity, the lack of diversity in ourselves. The great tropical message is inclusion. The forests, with their endlessly varied functions and differences in form, are statements as to the total involvement of life. They are the original grounds of life's inventions, a great drawing in of all kinds of possibilities, over endless time. Without them, we lose not only their incomparable species but the foundation of shared existence."

This is much more than romanticism: What the new knowledge about the self-regulatory nature of Earth reveals is that allowing the rest of life to live in its own diverse ways for its own sake is what will feed and safeguard the larger interconnected systems which support our lives. There is ultimately no 'either/or' here, it is completely about 'both-and': both 'them' and 'us' ... both altruistic idealism and self-interested pragmatism. As we were building our modern civilisation founded on logic and competitiveness, we did not realise that the corresponding diminution of our inner diversity would leave us with perceptions that are too shallow and rigid and also insensitive to our surroundings and, indeed, to our own deepest

needs. As a result, we seem genuinely not to know that, in a finite system, the sustained flourishing of the individual requires the sustained flourishing of the whole. Perhaps this is why the tree of the tree of life is named alongside the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the bible. Self-consciousness is the aspect of the human condition which seems to make it most difficult to retain our understanding of our embeddedness in a greater whole. By naming the two trees together, it seems to me that our creation story offers us a reminder that immortality – the future of life – depends upon us always remembering our interconnectedness and weighing our actions in its light. Alas, our modern, short-term perspectives allow us to fool ourselves that, because material standards of living have risen relatively quickly in industrialised countries, this is the flourishing that matters because it is the fruit of humanity's labour over centuries, through the evolution of our technical prowess. Of course this is valid. The difficulty we have is that our models are built on partiality, not wholeness, and so our quick flourishing is at the expense of the rest. The results of this systemic flaw are increasingly being felt. Thus we face the immense challenges ahead poorly equipped in some vital ways – and, in a certain sense, are right to hold ourselves in ersatz Eden until we can enrich ourselves with other essential ingredients.

CONSCIOUSLY CULTIVATING EXPANSION, SACRIFICE, TRANSFORMATION AND RENEWAL

It may well be that to invite in qualities which we have long feared as the enemies of our civilisation feels unreliable and hazardous. As unreliable and hazardous as our climate is becoming? Were we to cultivate those qualities, the following three extracts offer visions of what may become available:

Lebanese poet, artist and mystic of the late 19th century, Kahlil Gibran expressed a perspective on the magnitude of life radically divergent from our mundane thinking:

"Everything in creation exists within you, and everything in you exists in creation. You are in borderless touch with the closest things, and, what is more, distance is not sufficient to separate you from things far away. All things from the lowest to the loftiest, from the smallest to the greatest, exist within

you as equal things. In one atom are found all the elements of the earth. One drop of water contains all the secrets of the oceans. In one motion of the mind are found all the laws of existence."

Following the Australian rainforests' campaigner John Seed's moment of epiphany described below, he went on to found and develop the Rainforest Information Centre which has radically augmented our global understanding of the role played by these primordial habitats:

"Our planet is in danger. ... [The facts and figures] are so real as to test all our capacities of denial, almost impossible to integrate into the reality of the humdrum of our daily lives. They took on reality for me when I first participated in actions to protect some of the remaining rainforests near my home in New South Wales, Australia. Then I was able to embody, to bring to life, my intellectual knowings in interaction with other beings – protesters, loggers, police and with the trees and other inhabitants of these forests. There and then I was gripped with an intense, profound realization of the depth of the bonds that connect us to the Earth, how deep are our feelings for these connections. I knew then that I was no longer acting on behalf of myself or my human ideas, but on behalf of the Earth . . . on behalf of my larger self, that I was literally part of the rainforest defending herself."

Jung, too, had moments of similar expansion which underpinned and nourished the unfolding of his ideas:

"At Bollingen I am in the midst of my true life, I am most deeply myself. ... At times I feel as if I am spread out over the landscape and inside things, and am myself living in every tree, in the splashing of the waves, in the clouds and the animals that come and go, in the procession of the seasons."

Such expansive depictions, rooted in imagination and perhaps extraordinary experience, may be hard for many, probably most of us to comprehend. Yet they paint the kinds of perspectives we vitally need at

this critical juncture in order to play our part in the progression of all life on Earth. Unless we invest in creating the conditions which will call out more from us than the desire for technological fixes, we will continue to cut ourselves off from ourselves and, thereby, continue to place all of life as we know it in extreme jeopardy. Then, American poet Stanley Kunitz rightly asks: "How shall the heart be reconciled to its feast of losses?" If instead, as I believe, we are capable of matching the butterfly's evolutionary strength, we can bend the valuable aspects of rationality and the technologies it has spawned in a different direction, guided by our awareness of connectedness and interconnectedness rather than our impressions of separateness, as Bohm discusses them. That which is to be sacrificed as we reach towards the ecological self is the home we have made of our belief in partiality which has brought us thus far but which now is proving to be a house of cards.

Must we also destroy our longing for Eden? No, actually. For me, the archetype of Eden expresses our struggle to move from innocence into paradoxical awareness of our separateness and interconnectedness in a way which enables us to uphold rather than devour the whole of life, while still feeding from it to maintain our individual lives. Seeds' and Jung's descriptions articulate conscious and powerful experiences of the aspect which seems most difficult for us to access – interconnection, of being "linked in" – and I think that this is what we long for, evidenced by our creating myriad virtual methods of achieving it because we have so little access to embodied ways. Now is not the moment in history to destroy it. Maiteny proposes that we are trying to meet immaterial needs through material consumption and that this mismatch is what renders our desires insatiable. I, with colleagues, have also explored how the addictive aspects of consumerism may be rooted in attempts to compensate for "our culture's loss of contact with the unified whole". All these ideas suggest that our economic system is unconsciously based on matters to which we have not been giving our attention for centuries and I propose that we must now give our attention to reversing that trend. I see this as central to enabling us to review and redesign the conduct of our affairs throughout the globe on the basis of wider perceptions.

"Where there is the greatest risk is the greatest potential." So said Anglican priest and Jungian analyst Michael Anderton when discussing the ecological crisis at a lecture in 2004. Another Jungian analyst has a piece of slate on her mantelpiece bearing the Latin words "Festine Lente". How is it possible to "Hurry Slowly"? Why would we want to? For Stubbings, the capacity to "integrate paradoxical notions" is a critical aspect of the first of her five characteristics of an "ecological mindset". Like her, I suggest that this potential lies within us waiting to be rediscovered. Potential holds both the unused and the unknown. If we can take Anderton seriously, it may come to us that tweaking what we know and building towering new machines cannot be our only answer. Alongside developing some technical responses, now may be the time to work together to create new, loving and threshold-honouring conditions, safe spaces which will act like chrysalises where some of us can choose to take time and turn to inner landscapes and embark on genuine voyages of discovery that may help to lead us out of our state of crisis

towards genuinely new visions. If enough of us embark on this search inside, cultivating vital and latent human qualities, sensibilities and perspectives, listening and responding more attentively to underlying needs and desires, and visiting the natural world more frequently and in new ways, the inspiration might emerge to conduct our material affairs differently enough to make the difference we need. By expanding our perspectives of who we are and what it means to be human, and by bringing into consciousness our hidden desires to remain in the Garden in a state of innocence and freely fed by eternal abundance, we may transform our relationships with ourselves, with the Earth and with the teeming life around us from destructiveness to love. If all this comes to pass and we find our place in Berry's "one great Earth community", I think we will be amazed at what kind of renewal becomes possible for human civilisation and the ecological systems within which we are embedded.

I end with the dedication with which *The Great Work* begins:

*"To the children
To all the children
To the children who swim beneath
The waves of the sea, to those who live in
The soils of the Earth, to the children of the flowers
In the meadows and the trees in the forest, to
All those children who roam over the land
And the winged ones who fly with the winds,
To the human children too, that all the children
May go together into the future in the full
Diversity of their regional communities."*

Sandra White works as an ecopsychologist and has a background in cultural change within government and business. She also prepares and conducts bespoke rituals as a ceremony maker and offers bereavement counselling. Contact: sandra.white@makingessentialconnections.co.uk

References

- Berry, T. (1999). *The Great Work*. New York: Bell Tower.
- Bohm, D. and Edwards, M. (1989) *Changing Consciousness: Exploring the Hidden Source of the Social, Political and Environmental Crises Facing our World*. San Francisco: Harper.
- Ceasar, N. (2009). 'The Art of Happiness in the Pursuit of Sustainability,' in: Faruk, A. (ed.) *Thoughts on Sustainability*. Berkhamsted: Ashridge Business School.
- Crompton, T. and Kasser, T. (2009). *Meeting Environmental Challenges: The Role of Human Identity*. WWF-UK report. Dartington: Green Books.
- Cummings, E. E. (2009) 'One's not half two. It's two are halves of one,' in Kirschbaum, A. (ed.) *My Life in Verse*. London: Penguin.
- Eliade, M. (1961). *Images and Symbols*, trans. by Mairet, P. New York: Sheed and Ward.
- Gibran, K. (2001). Extract from *Spiritual Sayings*, in Bushrui, S. (ed.), *Kahlil Gibran: A Spiritual Treasury*. London: One World.
- Hay, J. (1998). Extract from 'The Immortal Wilderness,' in Gardner, J. (ed.) *The Sacred Earth, Writers on Nature and Spirit*. Novato, CA: New World Library.
- Jung, C. G. (1954). *Psychology and Religion: West and East*. Oxford: Routledge.
- Jung, C. G. (1993). *Memories, Dreams and Reflections*. Fontana Press; also Sabini, M. (2005). *The Earth has a Soul, the Nature Writings of C G Jung*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books.
- Kunitz, S. (2007) poem in Spring, C., and Manousos, A, (eds.) *Earth Light, Spiritual Wisdom for an Ecological Age*. Oakland, CA: Earthlight.
- Lehner, E. and J. (2003). *Folklore and Symbolism of Flowers, Plants and Trees*. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications Inc.
- Maiteny, P. (2009). 'Finding Meaning Without Consuming,' in Stibbe, A. (ed) *The Handbook of Sustainability Literacy*. Dartington: Green Books.
- Naess, A. (1988) 'Self Realization: An Ecological Approach to Being in the World,' in Seed, J., Macy, J., Fleming, P., and Naess, A. (eds.) *Thinking Like a Mountain*. Gabriola Island, Canada: New Society Publishers.
- O'Donohue, J. (1999). *Anam Cara, Spiritual Wisdom from the Celtic World*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Oxford English Dictionary: www.oed.com.
- Rumi, (1995). Extract from *Granite and Wineglass*. *Rumi Selected Poems*. London: Penguin.
- Seed, J. (1988). 'To hear Within Ourselves the Sound of the Earth Crying,' in Seed, J., Macy, J., Fleming, P., and Naess, A. (eds.) *Thinking Like a Mountain*. Gabriola Island, Canada: New Society Publishers.
- Stubbings, A. (2009). 'An Ecological Mindset: Developing a New Level of Consciousness,' in Faruk, A. (ed.) *Thoughts on Sustainability*. Berkhamsted: Ashridge Business School.
- Tarnas, R. (1996). *Cosmos and Psyche*. London: Penguin Books.
- Walker, A. (1988). 'Everything Is A Human Being.' *Living By the Word: Selected Writings 1973-87*. Boston: Harcourt.
- White, S. (2010). 'Denial, Stories and Visions.' *Greenpeace Business*, Issue 8.
- White, S., Clarke, C., and Hills, D. (2010). 'Ecopsychology,' in Van Eyk McCain, M. (ed.) *GreenSpirit: Path to a New Consciousness*. Berkley, CA: O Books.

Ashridge
Berkhamsted
Hertfordshire HP4 1NS
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0)1442 841178
Fax: +44 (0)1442 8411181
Email: eileen.mullins@ashridge.org.uk
www.ashridge.org.uk

Registered as Ashridge (Bonar Law Memorial) Trust.
Charity number 311096.

*Printed on paper from well managed
forests and other sustainable sources*



ASHRIDGE