

PERFORMANCE, RELIGIOUS IMAGINATION AND THE PLAY OF
THE LAND IN THE STUDY OF DEEP ECOLOGY AND ITS
PRACTICES

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Craig S. Strobel

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Committee Signatures

Judith Berling, Coordinator

Richard Payne

Joanna Macy

Why The Animals Created Humans

The myth basically goes like this:

Long ago, all the creatures of the earth lived scattered across the earth, much like they do today. The only difference is that there were no humans anywhere. Now, every year, all the animals (or at least their representatives) would travel from all across the world and gather together for a great huge council. At this council they would all learn from each other. You see, each animal possesses its own intelligence and its own wisdom. The only thing is, they didn't all possess each other's wisdom. So they would get together to share and learn from each other how to live and be together, and how to learn from each other. Then they would go home and take some of that wisdom with them. But they could never remember it all nor carry it all. So they would gather again each year.

After a long time, the animals grew weary of always having to travel so far each year for these councils. One year they got together and decided to find a way for all this wisdom and knowledge to be in one place so they could go and consult it. What they needed was something that could serve them as a repository of the wisdom of the creatures. "What we need," said some, "is a creature who can travel across the world in our place and learn from each of us, someone who can carry the knowledge and wisdom of all our ways within it, and who will serve and care for us."

Much discussion went into whether that creature should swim or go upon the land or fly in the air. Finally it was decided that it would go upon the land, but that it would be able to learn to swim and to learn to fly. And so humans were created with two back limbs for locomotion, two front limbs for exploration, and a deep curiosity to know and learn things. Humans spread out all over the earth, and began to learn wisdom from the ways of the rocks and rivers, of the sun and the moon, of stars and clouds, rain and snow. They learned wisdom from the other creatures, from trees and plants, birds and fish, from creepers, leapers and runners.

But as time went on, the humans forgot who they were learning from. They became so enamored with the fact that they could learn and know, that they forgot why they were learning. They forgot that they had been created to serve the creatures of the earth, indeed, to serve the earth itself, to carry and speak its wisdom and defend its ways, in fact, to uphold its ways so that all of creation might know its own wisdom. They began to capture their fellow creatures and put them on display to demonstrate to other humans the wonders of human knowledge. In celebration of the power of their knowledge, they carved up the land, stopped and redirected the rivers, and filled the skies with things the skies were not made to hold. Their knowledge became immense, almost as immense as their pride and arrogance. But what had slowly diminished over this time, what was almost gone, was wisdom: the wisdom of the creation of which they were a part, and for which they had been created to carry.

The creatures of the earth, the animals and plants, rocks and water were near despair. What could they do to shake the arrogance of the humans? What could they do to remind humans of the way of wisdom?

There is not an end to this story yet. The story is still evolving. But surely someone somewhere must remember how to listen deeply, and how to feel from within, and how to seek wisdom...

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Performance, Religious Imagination, and the Play of the Land in the Study of Deep Ecology and Its Practices

By Craig S. Strobel

Abstract

In this dissertation I demonstrate that a Performance Hermeneutic methodology can uncover the role(s) of embodied imagination in the processes of emerging religious phenomena. In order to prove this contention, I study the processes in the Deep Ecology movement which imaginatively structure the Deep Ecology worldview and performatively place the bodies of its adherents within that world through ritual, role playing, performance and social action.

I begin by making the case for a Performance Hermeneutic, which is a process of interpretation and understanding based within the various ways and means in which the human body interacts with its environment. I argue that the body itself thinks - that cognition is an activity of the whole body. The style of investigation is

Through on-site research as a participant-observer, and occasionally as a facilitator-participant-observe in workshops, rituals and training events, I apply a Performance Hermeneutic to the performative practices of certain persons within the Deep Ecology movement. I argue that Deep Ecology is an emerging religious phenomenon that has arisen as an attempt to articulate and embody the core experience of Deep Ecology practitioners of their relationship with the natural world.

From those experiences I draw the following conclusion: A Performance Hermeneutic operates at the level of the engaged and interconnected imagination. Its value lies in its ability to experience simultaneously both the imaginative creation and

externalization of internal worlds and the internalization of how and what the external world impresses upon the human recipient. This suggests that new religions emerge as a descriptive attempt to make sense of *what* a group of people experience of the external world and *how* it is that they experience that world. Religion emerges as an imaginatively constructed world whose formal elaboration occurs as an expression of a world-view. The reciprocal nature of this religious imagination reveals itself in the rituals and performances constructed in order to celebrate this world, as well as to reinforce the authenticity of the world-view which purports to describe it.

Judith Berling, Dissertation Advisor

Introduction

The Genesis and Nature of the Inquiry

On the table before me sits a blue feather, left behind by one of the Bluejays in my parents' backyard. It is a symbol of a being whose presence I can hear, and whom I can see occasionally. The feather was laying amid the dried needles and barkdust underneath one of the pines in the backyard. My parents have taken out the grass in the backyard and landscaped with a variety of plants, small trees, shrubs, flowers and creeping ground cover that has created a microhabitat. Raccoons wander through regularly and wash in the fountain. A bird feeder is visited regularly by house finches, juncos, sparrows, chickadees, bushtits, nuthatches, and an occasional flycatcher. I walk into the garden and sit on a bench. It is calming, even as the sounds of the latest heavy-metal rock group float across the fence from the family next door.

My parents moved here to Beaverton, Oregon, in 1986 from their home in Boise, Idaho. It has never been home to me. Yet here my family now regularly gathers for birthdays, anniversaries, weddings and baby showers. Each time I go and sit in the microforest of the backyard.

Yet, when I return to Boise to visit or for a conference, something stirs deep within me. The light along the horizon, the gentle undulation of the foothills of the Boise Range to the North, the broad expanse of the desert to the south, the cross still lighted on top of Table Rock to the east. There is a feel to the air, an indescribable mix of dryness and the gentle respiration of the trees and Boise River. This speaks home to me, not in words or whispers from without, but from a gentle throbbing like a heartbeat from within, a subtle dancing of my soul.

Another place speaks in a similar manner to me. It is the Bay Area of California - the hills, flatlands, water and sky which have congregated around the mouth of the Sacramento river as it flows into the larger San Francisco Bay. In 1849 several of my paternal ancestors came by boat through the Golden Gate and settled in what would later come to be known as the East Bay. One forebear became a cattle rancher, and also established a meat cutting business. Another set up a brewery. Later arrivals were businessmen and their wives. One owned a mine in the foothills of the Sierras and was killed in it. My great-grandparents, grandparents and father were all born there and walked hills covered with Bay Laurel,

California Live Oak, Poison Oak, and Monterey Bay Pine. My father walked hills now covered with homes and hunted deer. He could walk down to the creek that flowed past the backyard of the home which has been in the family now for 60 years and catch his limit of trout before breakfast. Crickets serenaded them in the evenings and hummingbirds defended their nests zealously.

I visited my grandparents at least once a year while I was growing up. I was greeted with the caress of marine-tempered breezes, fog and the perfume of jasmine and lemon blossoms. When I moved to the Bay Area, first in 1982 and then again in 1992 to do graduate work, I drove into Berkeley and was immediately overwhelmed by a sense of coming home. Yet, my home was in Boise. How had the Bay Area slipped and slid down into the deep inner recesses of my consciousness? What was it that spoke deeply to me, that whispered to the beating of my heart and the tingling of my skin?

This dissertation arises out of those experiences and questions. It is, on one hand, a standard theoretical inquiry into a particular academic problem. On the other hand, it remains embedded and grounded in the lived experiences of my body as I have breathed air, drank water, walked barefoot and tasted snow. The rocks and trees I have climbed retain their stretch and pull within the muscle memory of my arms and back. There is a landscape of smells, aromas and odors within the memory of my sensorium which equal yet are more subtle than the landscape of visual memory.

This dissertation addresses the presence of those memories and embodied ways of knowing as much as it addresses other more academic and scholarly questions. In fact, it is the intention of this dissertation to involve both in the process of inquiry and investigation. I maintain throughout the next several chapters that the body thinks. Indeed, the body has ways of knowing that are coincident with and complementary to the discursive and rational processes of cerebration. A corollary to this is that the body also imagines, or, to refine this a bit more, that as the body interacts with its environment, the imagination functions in such a way as to situate a person within a world. Already situated within the external world of the environment on Earth, the embodied imagination creates within human consciousness a virtual world of memory, felt connections with the landscape, with animals and plants and with other people. This virtual landscape is also populated with meaning, music, aspirations, questions and problems, emotions and feelings, dreams and nightmares, and a whole storehouse of sensations experienced and waiting to be tried.

The imagination also functions bodily to fashion the external world in some ways so that it accords with this internal landscape, or certain aspects of it.

This dissertation, then, focuses upon embodied imagination and its functioning. I look at how embodied imagination functions not only in the creation of worlds within and without, but how it can also be used as a tool for the investigation of religious phenomena. Because religions and religious phenomena involve embodied persons who engage in certain performative acts, such as rituals, performances, pageants, role-playing, public protests, and acts of civil disobedience or political resistance, then it makes sense to presume that the embodiedness of the actors in each of these should be taken seriously. Human embodiedness is as significant in the expression of a religion or religious phenomenon as is the formal articulation of principles, doctrine or beliefs. This assertion leads to another related assertion: that the most perspicacious way to study human embodiedness and performative behavior is through a means of inquiry that is likewise embodied.

I begin by defining performance as embodied imagination, and then proceed to argue for a way of understanding based within human embodiedness called a Performance Hermeneutic. A chapter's foray into the history and theories about the imagination will "flesh out" a description suitable for elucidating the functioning of performance. I then examine how embodied imagination, functioning as performance, engages in the process of creating interior worlds as well as expressing and manifesting those worlds externally.

Having undertaken the more theoretical part of the inquiry, I will then shift focus to a particular religious phenomenon to investigate. Deep Ecology provides just such a focus. Why Deep Ecology, which is thought by many to be a particular form of radical environmentalism? In the late twentieth century, a body of writings has appeared calling for the development of an environmental consciousness or earth-based spirituality.¹ One common thread which winds its way through these writings stresses the interconnectedness of all things within the earth and the rest of the universe. Arne Naess, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at Oslo University, Norway, has coined the term "Deep Ecology" to describe this existential awareness, which goes deeper than scientific descriptions of biozones, energy flows, and feedback loops.

¹ Representative writers include such people as Mary Daly, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Arne Naess, Bill Devall, George Sessions, Dolores LaChapelle, Joanna Macy, John Seed, Wendell Berry, and Thomas Berry.

The work of Deep Ecologists such as Joanna Macy and others provide a fascinating study of the interpolation of theory into practice, especially in posing questions such as, “What is the bodily experience of interconnectedness? What does it feel, taste, smell, look and sound like? How can one know and understand interconnectedness in the realm of the body? How does the bodily experience of interconnectedness lead to social action and world engagement?”

A closer examination of the tenets of Deep Ecology² reveal a sophisticated blending and interweaving of scientific thought, systems theory, Buddhist concepts, role-playing, psychology, social activism, and spiritual practices from various traditions. In fact, Deep Ecology, as one particular expression of the aforementioned environmental consciousness, can be described as an emerging phenomenon which bears many of the characteristics of a religion or religious movement: a coherent worldview or depiction of the nature and order of things; a developing set of practices, rituals and performances which are designed to foster awareness of this worldview within individuals and communities; as well as an ongoing program to affect the social order in a way consonant with that worldview.

After having discussed the place of Deep Ecology within the context of the broader environmental movement, I will then report and reflect upon three specific performative activities associated with the Deep Ecology movement: an Endangered Species Bestiary mourning ritual, a four-day workshop involving dance on the slopes of a mountain, and a weekend-long Council of All Beings.

In the field of Religious Studies, the study of emerging religious phenomena poses a particular problem. Rarely have emerging religious phenomena been studied in the process of their emergence. In addition, there is no established agreement regarding appropriate methodologies for their study. This dissertation proposes such a methodology and utilizes that methodology in its own investigation of an emerging religious phenomenon.

² I take great liberty here to describe as “tenets” the basic principles held in agreement among the various writers, political activists and associated persons who either claim adherence to Deep Ecology or are in sympathy with its aims, methods and/or philosophies.

But perhaps even more significantly, this dissertation utilizes that same methodology to address the questions about body, place and home which started this introduction. These questions are, in fact, deeply ecological questions, and deeply religious. It is to the embodied methodology of a Performance Hermeneutic that we first turn.

Chapter 1

What a Performance Hermeneutic Is and Its Application to the Study of Emerging Religious Phenomena

1. Introduction: Performance Studies, Hermeneutics, and Definitions

This dissertation seeks to demonstrate that a Performance Hermeneutic methodology can uncover the role(s) of embodied imagination in the processes of emerging religious phenomena. In this chapter I will discuss what I mean by a Performance Hermeneutic and how it relates to the fields of Performance Studies and Religious Studies. Essential to this dissertation is my commitment to the idea that performance is a form of embodied imagination, and as such, that the performing body is a *thinking* body. This notion of the thinking body is essential to my use of a Performance Hermeneutic in discussing and analyzing the Deep Ecology practices and workshop experiences I studied. I will examine in this chapter the implications of saying that the body thinks, and develop these implications further in the following chapter on Imagination.

In order to understand how a Performance Hermeneutic can uncover the role of embodied imagination in emerging religious phenomena, it is first necessary to discuss what is meant by performance, hermeneutics, emerging religious phenomena and embodied imagination. In what follows in this section, I will introduce certain terms and then derive working definitions applicable to this dissertation. In the succeeding sections, I will discuss Performance Studies, Performance Hermeneutic and Emerging Religious Phenomena in greater depth.

In the discussion which follows, it will be necessary to make use of what W.B. Gallie calls an *essentially contested concept*.³ For a concept to be essentially contested, there must exist several rival interpretations and elucidations of the concept in question (Gallie utilizes the analogy of championship

³ W.B. Gallie, *Philosophy and the Historical Understanding*, 2nd ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 157-191.

games and play as an analogy to discuss the existence of diverse and often competing theories and discussions of particular topics in academic circles). Appreciation of the common history shared by the rival or competing “factions” in discussion of a concept is a necessary prerequisite in the essential contestation of a concept.

At the very least we must accept that every proper contestant use of such a concept can be traced back to a commonly acknowledged exemplar, and can be justified on the ground that, and to the extent that, people can be found who regard it and can rationally defend it as the best possible development of the original exemplar’s aims.⁴

The very existence of an essentially contested concept is bound up in disagreement about what it is, and that the disagreement over its essence is itself part of that existence. As Gallie explains, “Recognition of a given concept as essentially contested implies recognition of rival uses of it (such as oneself repudiates) as not only logically possible and humanly ‘likely,’ but as of permanent potential critical value to one’s own use or interpretation of the concept in question.”⁵

It is the nature of academic and scholarly discussions to engage in the sort of argumentation and clarification of concepts described by Gallie as being essentially contested. In what follows in this and subsequent chapters, I will make reference to the contestation of concepts, as well as acknowledge some of the historical developments of the concepts in question. I will then formulate my own definition and usage of these concepts for the purposes of this dissertation. But it is important to acknowledge in this process that the definitions I formulate are my own, albeit that I situate myself within a particular (competing) stream of interpretation.

1.1. Performance

In their review of the state of Interpretation and Performance Studies, Mary S. Strine, Beverly Whitaker Long and Mary Frances HopKins (sic) refer to the essential contestation of performance:

Scholars in interpretation and performance studies value performance as process, activity, achievement, and as an object of study. Although they place performance in a valorized category, they recognize and expect disagreement not only about the qualities that make a performance “good” or “bad” in certain contexts, but also about what activities and behaviors appropriately constitute performance and not something else.⁶

⁴ *Ibid.*, 189.

⁵ *Ibid.* 187-188.

⁶ Mary S. Strine, Beverly Whitaker Long, and Mary Frances HopKins, “Research in Interpretation and Performance Studies: Trends, Issues, Priorities,” in Gerald M. Phillips, and Julia T. Wood, eds. *Speech Communication: Essays to Commemorate the 75th Anniversary of The Speech Communication Association* (Carbondale, IL : Southern Illinois University Press, 1990), p. 183.

Strine, Long and HopKins point out that as an essentially contested concept, performance engenders healthy disagreements which energize the scholarly endeavor. Through the contesting of ideas and positions, clearer articulation of positions is possible, leading to a richer understanding of performance.⁷ In order to add to this contestation and articulation, I will derive my own working definition of performance which will serve the purposes of this dissertation.

In deriving a definition of any word, it never hurts to begin with the basics: the dictionary. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*,⁸ gives the following definition of the word “perform:”

perform: *v. - tr.* **1.** To begin and carry through to completion; do: *perform an appendectomy*. **2.** To take action in accordance with the requirements of; fulfill (a promise or duty, for example). **3.a.** To enact (a feat or role) before an audience. **b.** to give a public presentation of. *-intr.* **1.** To carry on; function. **2.** To fulfill an obligation or requirement; accomplish something as promised or expected. **3.** To portray a role or demonstrate some skill before an audience. **4.** To present a dramatic or musical work or other entertainment before an audience. [Middle English *performen*, from Norman French *parfomer*, variant of Old French *parfornir*: *par-* (intensifier), from Latin *per-* + *fornir*, FURNISH.]

A quick check of “furnish” reveals that the Common Romance *fornir* means “to supply.” Thus, the primary meaning of perform has to do with doing or accomplishing something, with taking action, perhaps in front of an audience. The derivation from the Common Romance *fornir* (“to supply”) plus the intensifier *per* suggests that to perform means to supply a thing with what it needs either to be that thing or to be completed. There is a subtle sense here that to perform means to move a thing from inchoate potentiality to expressed actuality (the word “expressed” itself means “to press out or through.”) So, in a sense to perform means to do something which supplies a thing with what it requires in order to be actualized or realized. When this is applied to either a task or a dramatic script, the validity of this definition becomes obvious. A task remains simply an idea or a word on a list until it is acted upon. A playscript remains simply a jumble of words on a page until it is acted out. And each of these requires a human being to do the acting – what is required is human agency. Performance, then, is ultimately about human agency. But it is human agency which is applied to specific tasks or deeds in order to bring them about, to realize them. And, of course, by referring to human agency, it is referring to the engaged presence of the human body. The human body is integral to performance. In this dissertation, then, the word “perform” and its various cognates

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (1969), s.v. “perform.”

(“performance,” “performative”) will refer to *embodied human agency which brings into reality the potentiality of a given thing*.

1.2. Hermeneutics

The word “hermeneutic” is derived from the Greek verb *hermēneuein* and its noun form, *hermēneia*. These words are ultimately traced back to the god Hermes whose job it was to carry messages from the gods to earth. Thus the Greek words arise from the act of mediation and message-bearing, a function which is reflected in their definition. Basically *hermēneuein* can be defined three ways: 1) *to express or to say* aloud in words; 2) *to explain*, as in explaining a situation; and 3) *to translate*, as in translating from one tongue to another.⁹

The English words most often used to translate *hermēneuein* (“to interpret”) and *hermēneia* (“interpretation”) themselves have definitions that parallel the Greek meanings. “Interpret” means: 1) to explain, 2) to translate, 3) to understand or appreciate, and, 4) to apprehend and represent, as in a performance. Thus, hermeneutics is a field of study involved with interpretation, and entails a sense of the mediation and interlocution of meaning.

The science, or some would say art, of interpretation has recently evolved into a diverse discipline. It originally referred almost exclusively to the theory of Biblical exegesis and gradually expanded to include a general philological methodology. It then came to refer to the science of all linguistic understanding as well as the methodological foundation for the study of the Human Sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*), especially historical studies. In our century it has further broadened to embrace a phenomenology of existence and existential understanding as “systems of interpretation, both recollective and iconoclastic, used by man (sic) to reach the meaning behind myths and symbols.”¹⁰ The scope is obviously broad, and these categories are not compartmentalized but, rather, flow organically into one

⁹ Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger and Gadamer* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 13.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 33.

another, borrowing methodologies, sharing insights and occasionally (or frequently) serving as a critique of each other. As Richard Palmer states,

There may be differences among the several forms of hermeneutics, but there are also many underlying similarities. The diverse directions in hermeneutical theory illustrate in themselves a hermeneutical principle: interpretation is shaped by the question with which the interpreter approaches his subject.¹¹

Interpretation, broadly conceived, is a constant occurrence, for we constantly address questions to various subjects as we search for meaning in things mundane and supernal. For our purposes, it will be most helpful to conceive of interpretation as understanding and appreciation. Hermeneutics, then, will refer to the means whereby meaning is mediated and understanding occurs.

1.3. Religion

Religion, like performance, is also a (hotly) contested concept. Much of this contestation traces back to the meaning of the word itself, and thus what properly constitutes the subject of study when speaking about the study of religion or religions. The crux of the problem (pun intended) lies in the fact that the word *religion* arose in the linguistic context of European cultures which practiced a fairly homogeneous form of Christianity for nearly 2000 years, and the word became inextricably linked to the practices and belief structures of Christianity.

Scholars trace the origins of the word religion to the Latin, *religio*, which can refer to a scrupulous, exacting and conscientious quality of persons, especially in regard to what is held to be sacred, (e.g., *tantâ religione obstricta tota provincia est*, Cicero); to the strict observance of religious ritual and ceremony (*religio, id est cultus deourm*, Cicero); or to moral scruples or conscientiousness in general, (*nulla in iudiciis severitas, nulla religio*, Cicero). In addition, *religio* is a quality ascribed to gods and religious objects, or (by transfer of meaning) to objects of worship, (*quae religio aut quae machina belli*, Virgil).¹²

It is common speculation among scholars and the linguists who compile dictionaries that *religio* derives from the Latin, *religare*, which means to tie, or fasten behind. By transfer of meaning, it came to mean to unite, connect or bind together. It is in this sense, then, that the word came to be associated especially with monastic vows during the Middle Ages. In Catholic usage even to this day, there is still

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 66.

¹² *Cassell's Latin Dictionary*, 1968 edition, s.v. "religio."

reference made to “the religious,” which refer to those who have taken monastic vows (i.e., nuns and monks) and who are distinguished from the other main groups of the Catholic church, the laity and the clergy.

These Latin origins and their derivations and history of usage are reflected in modern definitions of the word, religion. From Merriam-Webster, for example:

re*li*gion (noun) [Middle English *religioun*, from Latin *religion-*, *religio* supernatural constraint, sanction, religious practice, perhaps from *religare* to restrain, tie back] First appeared 13th Century.

1. a. the state of a religious <a nun in her 20th year of ~>
 - b (1) the service and worship of God or the supernatural
 - (2) commitment or devotion to religious faith or observance
2. a personal set or institutionalized system of religious attitudes, beliefs, and practices;
3. *archaic*: scrupulous conformity: CONSCIENTIOUSNESS;
4. a cause, principle, or system of beliefs held to with ardor and faith.¹³

From the New Oxford Dictionary of English:

religion: noun The belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or gods: *ideas about the relationship between science and religion*.

1. details of belief as taught or discussed: *children should be taught religion in schools*.
2. a particular system of faith and worship: *the world's great religions*.
3. a pursuit or interest to which someone ascribes supreme importance: *consumerism is the new religion*.

—PHRASES

get religion informal be converted to religious belief and practices.

—ORIGIN Middle English (originally in the sense ‘life under monastic vows’): from Old French, or from Latin *religio(n-)* ‘obligation, bond, reverence’, perhaps based on Latin *religare* ‘to bind’.¹⁴

Later in this chapter I examine in greater detail some of the problems and issues related to defining religion, particularly in reference to the academic study of religion and religious movements. For the purposes of this dissertation, I propose the following working definition of religion, which I discuss in greater depth later:

Religion is an interwoven system of ideas, attitudes and practices which binds a people together in a shared understanding of the way the world is constituted and which governs (to a greater or lesser degree) the values, activities and range of behaviors of that people.

1.4. Religious Phenomena

From the above definition, then, *religious phenomena* shall refer to any aspect of a religion or to any practice or set of ideas, beliefs or commitments which arise out of that interwoven system which make

¹³ Merriam Webster Collegiate Dictionary, 1998 edition, s.v. “religion.”

¹⁴ New Oxford Dictionary of English, 1998 edition (online), s.v. “religion.”

up a religion. It shall also refer to those creative moments when a religion is in flux and change, and in which a new system is in the process of appearing and becoming manifest.

1.5. Emerging vs. Emergent

This process of flux, change, appearing and becoming manifest is what is meant by *emerging*. The gerundive form *emerging* is preferred to the participial form *emergent* to stress the incomplete, processual nature of the phenomena under consideration. This is a particularly important consideration for this dissertation, as many of the phenomena studied have not fully coalesced into a distinctive religion or religious system.

1.6. What Constitutes the Study of Religions

At this point, it is helpful to discuss briefly what is meant by the study of religion, or of religions. Jonathan Z. Smith has spoken about the work of the scholar of religion being a work of the creative imagination:

If we have understood the archeological and textual record correctly, man (sic) has had his entire history in which to imagine deities and modes of interaction with them. But man, more precisely western man, has had only the last few centuries in which to imagine religion. It is this act of second order, reflective imagination which must be the central preoccupation of any student of religion. That is to say, while there is a staggering amount of data, of phenomena, of human experiences and expressions that might be characterized in one culture or another, by one criterion or another, as religious -- *there is no data for religion*. Religion is solely the creation of the scholar's study. It is created for the scholar's analytic purposes by his imaginative acts of comparison and generalization. Religion has no independent existence apart from the academy. For this reason, the student of religion, and most particularly the historian of religion, must be relentlessly self-conscious. Indeed, this self-consciousness constitutes his primary expertise, his foremost object of study.¹⁵

There is great merit in Smith's reminder that "religion" is more an academic creation than a self-existent reality or phenomenon in itself. Sam Gill echoes Smith's caveat when he says, "The term 'religion' must be understood as designating an academically constructed rubric that identifies the arena for common discourse inclusive of all religions as historically and culturally manifest."¹⁶ Actual definitions or descriptions of what constitute religions elude the precision scholars usually strive to achieve. Of course, in academic discourse, definitions usually serve merely as lenses through which to look at certain

¹⁵ Jonathan Z. Smith. *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), xi. Emphasis in original.

¹⁶ Sam Gill, "The Academic Study of Religion," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 62 no. 4 (Winter 1994), 965.

phenomena or as templates to set alongside a set of data in order to make sense of that data.¹⁷ This is the function of Smith's scholarly imagination: the arranging of the data of observation, experience and literary research into a coherent and sensible pattern. By "coherent" I mean that it "hangs together" in a set of relationships which seem to resonate with the structures of human consciousness at one or more levels. By "sensible" I reinforce this last definition by tying it to the physical and cognitive¹⁸ structures of human experience and existence. The goal of the academic study of religion, then, could be said to involve the cognitive and physical engagement of the researcher with the subject or phenomenon under study, and to engage the imagination in reflecting upon what has been observed, felt and uncovered artifactually¹⁹ to the end of creating a description of that phenomenon which not only closely (and faithfully) resembles the characteristics of that phenomenon but which also resonates within the cognitive and physical faculties of those who have not necessarily encountered the phenomenon in question. This is a long-winded way to say that the academic study of religion is a process of translation, digestion, synthesis and representation. The work of synthesis and representation is imaginative and creative. Its goal is to render the phenomenon studied comprehensible to a wide audience.

But in speaking of religion, what exactly is the phenomenon in question? Therein lies the academic rub. The problem begins with the word itself as well as how the usage of the word is tied intimately to a conceptual world shaped by Christianity and the Western intellectual tradition. Take for example, the definition provided by the American Heritage Dictionary referred to earlier:

1. The exression of man's belief in and reverence for a superhuman power recognized as the creator and governor of the universe. 2. Any particular integrated system of this expression: *the Hindu religion*. 3. the spiritual or emotional attitude of one who recognizes the existence of a superhuman power or powers. 4. Any objective attended to or pursued with zeal or conscientious devotion: *A collector might make a religion of his hobby*. 5. *Obsolete*. Sacred rites or practices. [Middle English *religioun*, from Old French *religion*,

¹⁷ Gill, in the article just cited, cautions against setting up categories for the sake of comparison: "In the academic study of religion comparison has invariably meant fit or congruity to pre-existing patterns or criteria. The academic study of religion has tended to restrict comparison primarily to finding similarity among different traditions, but this most often has meant concocting similarities and ignoring differences" (p. 969). This does not preclude, however, the significance and importance of distinguishing what one is discussing or studying from something else. Definitions serve the function of marking a field or area of inquiry, the items within which are generally agreed to be the objects of study and discussion. The definitions in this dissertation serve this purpose.

¹⁸ As will be elaborated later, I place imagination within the cognitive realm.

¹⁹ Here "artifacts" include the results of library research in journals, texts, scriptures, letters, newsletters, on-line materials, and other items of a literary nature, artworks, architectural sites, musical texts, and so on.

from Latin *religiō*, bond between man and the gods, perhaps from *religāre*, to bind back: *re-*, + *ligāre*, to bind, fasten].²⁰

There are several presuppositions involved in this definition: belief in beings that are superhuman, belief in a being supreme over other beings, belief in a being that creates or governs the world or universe. This definition works admirably for studying Christianity, Judaism, Zoroastrianism and Islam, as well as many aspects of the complex referred to as Hinduism. However, the definition becomes more problematic when discussing certain expressions of Buddhism or Jainism, or Taoism. It muddies the investigative waters considerably when studying Australo-aboriginal belief and practices as well as the various Native American and African religions. Nature-based religions might seem entirely outside of the purview of the study of religion in this sense of religion.

In fact, the definition of religion considered obsolete by this dictionary, “Sacred rites and practices,” is receiving increased attention by scholars of religion. Increased emphasis upon the performative aspects of religions, rather than simply formulations of systems of belief and moral and ethical guidance, has shifted research and discussion of religion from what is *said* to what is *done*, or to what is said *and* done. Indeed, even Clifford Geertz’s famous definition of a religion (“A religion is a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men (sic) by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic”),²¹ lags behind this emerging recognition of the performative aspects of religion.

It is one of the central tasks of this dissertation to contribute to this shift in the study of religion towards the performative and constructive nature of religion. This is reflected in part in the working definition of religion proposed earlier in this chapter:

Religion is an interwoven system of ideas, attitudes and practices which binds a people together in a shared understanding of the way the world is constituted and which governs (to a greater or lesser degree) the values, activities and range of behaviors of that people.

To speak of the interweaving of ideas, attitudes and practices in religion acknowledges that religions engage persons and societies in the fullness of human embodiment: intellectually, aesthetically, sensually, and emotionally. As indicated earlier, it is the job of the academic study of religion to “involve the

²⁰ *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 1969, s.v. “religion.”

²¹ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (HarperCollins Basic Books, 1973), 90.

cognitive and physical engagement of the researcher with the subject or phenomenon under study, and to engage the imagination in reflecting upon what has been observed, felt and uncovered artifactual to the end of creating a description of that phenomenon which not only closely (and faithfully) resembles the characteristics of that phenomenon but which also resonates within the cognitive and physical faculties of those who have not necessarily encountered the phenomenon in question.” It is my contention that a Performance Hermeneutic accomplishes this precisely because its methodology corresponds exactly with the fully embodied nature of religion.

2. Performance Studies

Performance Studies has developed out of the collaborative work of people in professional endeavors as diverse as anthropology, dance, acting, indigenous religious practice, theater criticism, cultural criticism, feminist aesthetics, speech communication, and folklore (to name a representative sample), who attempt to study the phenomena of performance.

In drawing upon Gallie’s idea of an *essentially contested concept*, it is possible to view Performance Studies as the field of contest between amiable factions. Or perhaps field of play is a better allusion. As in any contest or game of play, it is possible to focus either upon the players involved individually or upon the field on which they play. When speaking of the players, i.e., the people from varying scholarly disciplines, the description looks more like cross-disciplinary work. That is, Performance Studies looks like people from different academic positions talking to one another, working on a common task or addressing a common problem. If one looks at the field of play itself, that is, the conversations occurring *between* people and the exchange of ideas, knowledge and points of view, then Performance Studies looks more interdisciplinary. In this view, Performance Studies dwells in the *inter* areas, the spaces between persons and disciplines.²²

There are two main streams which characterize the field of play of Performance Studies at the time of this writing: Performance Studies as pedagogy and Performance Studies as an aesthetic and phenomenological study of certain human behaviors. Naturally, such a bipartite categorization is an artificial and academic distinction which is instructive for this dissertation. In actuality, there is vast overlap and interweaving between these two streams.

²² Craig S. Strobel, "Performance Studies: Is it Real?" Unpublished paper, p. 4. Also found online at <http://members.aol.com/StrobelCS/perfreal.htm>

2.1. Performance Studies as Pedagogy: Ronald Pelias as Example

In his book, *Performance Studies: The Interpretation of Aesthetic Texts*, Ronald Pelias defines his understanding of Performance Studies as “the process of dialogic engagement with one’s own and others’ aesthetic communication through the means of performance.”²³ The main thrust of Pelias’ use of Performance Studies is essentially pedagogical and hermeneutical: as a means for studying and learning, and finally as a means for interpreting and understanding.

Performance offers an experience, an encounter with another sensibility. Experience allows for learning, for new knowledge. Accordingly, performance can function as a mode of inquiry, a method for understanding the aesthetic communication of others. Thus, performance becomes an experiential, investigative tool facilitating comprehension. The performer’s primary concern lies with using performance as a way of knowing rather than as an artifact or product. The performer pursues performance work in order to make experience intelligible.²⁴

Being from the stream of Oral Interpretation, Pelias’ focus is upon the interpretation and understanding of texts, in whatever form they may be found.²⁵ This textual bias stems from the development of literate cultures in the West, which led to a split between the written work and the performance of that written work.²⁶ Recent theories in culture, post-structuralism (in literary theory especially), anthropology, and communication studies have muddied the distinctions between text and performance, and the expansion of Oral Interpretation/Speech Communication into the field of Performance Studies represents this muddying. Thus, while focusing upon performance as a means to study and understand the aesthetic utterances (texts) of others, the possibility remains also to study the various performances and performative behaviors of persons and cultures as well. In fact, there is a reciprocity between using performance as a means for understanding and the study of performance itself: as one engages in the act of performance, one becomes aware of one’s shifts in perception and relationships with others. One questions the nature and purpose of performance in this process. This leads to the study of performative behaviors in everyday life and performances in general.

²³ Ronald J. Pelias. *Performance Studies: The Interpretation of Aesthetic Texts* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992), 15.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 20-21.

²⁵ Strine, Long and HopKins (“Research in Interpretation and Performance Studies,” p. 184) cite the post-structuralist work of Roland Barthes as shedding light on the weaving together of many possible meanings and significations in a text (note the relationship of *Text* with *Textile*). Thus, a text may also be oral, or cultural in the sense of ethos or mythos.

²⁶ Pelias, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-30.

2.2. Performance Studies as Aesthetic and Phenomenological Study: Richard Schechner and Colleagues

The other stream of Performance Studies is represented by the work of Richard Schechner and his colleagues at Tisch School of the Arts at NYU in New York City. This approach focuses upon the act of performance itself, and is influenced by the study of theater and anthropology as well as feminist and cultural criticism. Schechner has taught theater at Tulane University and Tisch School of the Arts, and from 1967 to 1980 was the artistic director of The Performance Group in New York City. At the time Schechner published his first edition of *Essays on Performance Theory*,²⁷ he was approached by Victor Turner to participate in the 1977 Burg Wartenstein Symposium No. 76 on “Cultural Frames and Reflections, Ritual, Drama and Spectacle.” This began a series of collaborations between Schechner and people such as Victor and Edith Turner, Barbara Myerhoff, Erving Goffman, and others. In 1981 and 1982 a series of conferences on ritual and theater were held. The conferences were designed to explore the role of performance and ritual in the expression of culture, and how the sharing of performance experiences across cultures might lead to increased respect for and enjoyment of one another’s cultures.²⁸ Schechner’s own research into the phenomena of performance has led him around the world²⁹ to observe the drama, rituals, and other performances of a wide variety of cultures. In addition, his own theoretical essays have referred heavily to anthropological descriptions of rituals, festivals and other activities of cultures world-wide.

Schechner’s methodology features two aspects of the field of play analogy made earlier in this chapter. The first aspect is reflected in the diversity of persons gathered at conferences to explore the nature of performance: scholars, performers, choreographers and directors from across the world.³⁰ The conversations and sharing of performance work in these conferences exhibited a markedly interdisciplinary character. The intellectual goal of the conferences

was to approach the genres of theatre, dance, music, sports, and ritual as a single, coherent group, *as performance*. The underlying question became whether or not the same methodological tools and approaches could be used to understand a noh drama, a football

²⁷ Richard Schechner, *Essays on Performance Theory, 1970-76* (New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1977).

²⁸ Richard Schechner and Willa Appel, *By Means of Performance: Intercultural Studies of Theatre and Ritual* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 1.

²⁹ Richard Schechner, *Performative Circumstances: From the Avant Garde to Ramlila* (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1983); *Between Theatre and Anthropology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985); *The Future of Ritual: Writings on Culture and Performance* (London, New York: Routledge, 1993).

³⁰ Schechner and Appel, *op cit.*, 2-7.

game, a Yaqui deer dance, a Broadway musical, a Roman Catholic Mass, and Umbanda curing ritual, a Yoruba masked dance, and a postmodern experimental performance?³¹

This approach is clearly eclectic in its choice and gathering of individual “players.” Papers were presented at the conferences in addition to witnessing various performances, rituals and worship services. Many of the papers were revised based upon conversations between participants and published in later books. This reflects the *inter* nature of Schechner’s work, the role of the playing field and the development of performance theory out of the conversations between diverse disciplines and trainings.

In a pre-publication copy of a forthcoming textbook on Performance Studies, Schechner expounds in greater detail about the qualities of and reasons for Performance Studies:

The Greek philosopher Heraclitus (535-475 BCE) asserted that “You never step in the same river twice.” Heraclitus believed that the whole material world was in continuous flux, that there was no ultimate reality except change. Werner Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle asserts something similar. Performance studies - as an “approach” or a “discipline” or “field” - is a response to this kind of uncertain, always-in-flux, radically relativistic world. In a world of continuous change and uncertainty, performance studies asserts that examining a broad range of events, behaviors, and phenomena “as performance” offers a way of understanding. Performance studies deals with the broad range or spectrum of performances, from art to popular entertainments, sports to the presentations of self in everyday life, from religious ritual to state ceremony, from staged dramas to social dramas, the highly charged conflicts that mark political and economic life. As I’ve noted, all of these are performances, all of them, and more, can be studied as performances.

Performance studies, like every academic discipline, is founded on principles encoded in key terms such as “restored behavior,” “presentation of self,” “ritual,” “social drama,” “expressive culture,” and others. Working from a very broad definition of what is or can be studied as performance is not a denial or rejection of the aesthetics of theatre, dance, or the other performing arts. Nor is it a simple extension or projection of art aesthetics into social and religious life. It is to argue that there is more to performance than the artistic; that it is important to develop and articulate theories concerning how performances are generated, transmitted, received, and evaluated; that these systems of transformations vary from culture to culture and epoch to epoch. In pursuit of these goals, performance studies is insistently intercultural, inter-generic, and inter-disciplinary.³²

The collaboration of Schechner with anthropologists such as Victor Turner is no accident. Several anthropologists in the second half of the twentieth century had begun to argue for the development of theories which took into account the role and practice of performative acts, rituals and performances in human cultures. Lawrence E. Sullivan summarizes the genesis of performance theory from the standpoint of the anthropological team of players, and from his description, a list of the “usual suspects” emerges:

³¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

³² Richard Schechner, “Chapter 1,” *Performance Studies Textbook* 2nd Draft. Unpublished manuscript. July 1995, found online at <http://www.nyu.edu/classes/bkg/schechner>, March 8, 1997.

Where did this swell of interest first arise? Different theorists reckon their descent in diverse ways. Igor Kopytoff, studying African performances, once attributed the origins to Arnold Van Gennep's "classic formulation that people celebrate their passage from one state of being to another with symbolic performances." Stanley Tambiah, in his analysis of theories of performance for the British Academy in 1979, credited the origins of performance theory to Radcliffe-Brown's acknowledgment of the complexities of dance among the Andaman Islanders. John Miles Foley, specialist in the study of Bulgarian epic, attributes the beginnings of Albert Lord's demonstration in 1958 that performance is the key creative act for the oral poet. Victor Turner, in the account provided in his book *From Ritual to Theatre*, reckoned descent from Dilthey's claim that the data of experience, *Erlebnis*, take on a manifest form of expression in the human act. Adrienne Kaeppler, anthropologist of dance, traces the origins to Franz Boas, who suggested analyzing dance as culture. Jonathan Culler, in *The Pursuit of Signs*, argues that the true origins of analysis of symbolic action, seen correctly as systems of relations, "lie...in the work of Marx," who showed that individual experience is made possible by the symbolic action systems of collectives. John J. MacAloon, historian and interpreter of the Olympic Games, reckons that performance studies got off to a rather promiscuous start, taking their origins from the nearly simultaneous activities of several different individuals: Milton Singer, Erving Goffman, Victor Turner, Gregory Bateson, and the "patron saint" of dramatism, Kenneth Burke. From MacAloon's account, one can infer that the conjunction of these intellectual planets marks the dawning of the age of performance study as practitioners now understand it. Fingers of blame are pointed at these and at a number of other genitors in an effort to discover precisely whose intellectual baby performance theory is. Who would play Solomon the wise in such a matter? Performance theory resides in a series of cross-fertilizing questions posed by scholars in some disciplines to investigators in others: linguistics, cultural anthropology, sociology, performing arts, ethno-medicine, comparative law, social psychology, and ethnomusicology.³³

What was happening in the anthropological world was a search for theories and paradigms with which anthropologists might be able to describe and understand the performative acts of diverse human cultures. The entrance of Schechner into that field of play brought with it the questions, experiences and practices of a performer, or one who experiments with performance itself. With this, the role of performers transformed from being the objects of study, to the role of subjective researchers, participant-investigators, and pragmatic theorists.

2.3. Performance: Object of Study and Means of Study

Both Ronald Pelias and Richard Schechner identify themselves as working in the area of Performance Studies. Pelias is rooted in the tradition of the oral interpretation of literature whereas

³³ Lawrence E. Sullivan, "Sound and Senses: Toward a Hermeneutics of Performance," *History of Religions* 26, no. 1 (Aug 1986): 4-5. References cited within this citation include: Igor Kopytoff, "Revitalization and the Genesis of Cults in Pragmatic Religion," in *Explorations in African Systems of Thought*, ed. Ivan Karp and Charles S. Bird (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1980): 184-85; Jonathan Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1981): 26-27; John M. Foley, ed., *Oral Traditional Literature: A Festschrift for Albert Bates Lord* (Columbus, OH: Slavica Publishers, 1981); Stanley Tambiah, *A Performance Approach to Ritual* (New York: State Mutual Book and Periodical Service, 1981); Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982).

Schechner is rooted in the tradition of Western theatre. Both to a certain extent work performatively with texts, and both expand the definition of what constitutes a text for study. Pelias uses performance in order to come to a deep understanding of a text or aesthetic utterance, whereas Schechner studies various performances and rituals in order to understand performance itself. Both are committed to the central necessity to study performance *by means of performance*. That is to say, in Performance Studies, performance is not only the object of study, but the means for studying it. This may appear tautologous at first, but every methodology is actually theory-laden, and every form of research must be matched in some way to the thing being researched. Since performance events engage persons in their totality, Performance Studies claims a methodology based upon the total engagement of the researcher. And since performances occur within communal settings and spaces, Performance Studies claims a methodology which draws upon the gathered insights, knowledge and expertise of a community of scholars and practitioners.

Researchers such as Ronald Grimes have argued for the subjective experiences of the researcher to be part of the data³⁴ and Victor and Edith Turner have used re-enacted rituals as a pedagogical process.³⁵ Dwight Conquergood argues for the moral responsibility of ethnographers and performers of ethnographic research to become familiar with rather than removed from the people they study.

[E]thnographers work with expressivity, which is inextricable from its human creators. They must work with real people, humankind alive, instead of printed texts. Opening and interpreting lives is very different from opening and closing books. Perhaps that is why ethnographers worry more about acquiring experiential insight than maintaining aesthetic distance. Indeed they are calling for empathic performance as a way of intensifying the participative nature of fieldwork, and as a corrective to foreshorten the textual distance that results from writing monographs about the people with whom one lives and studies. When one keeps intellectual, aesthetic, or any other kind of distance from the other, ethnographers worry that other people will be held at an ethical and moral remove as well.³⁶

The entry of performers as participant-investigators into Performance Studies described above paralleled a sea change in the way ethnography and anthropological and sociological research was being conducted. This change was reflected in challenges to the positivist presumptions of objectivity and personal distance of researchers from the cultural objects of study.³⁷ “Postmodern ethnographers reject the

³⁴ Ronald Grimes, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1982).

³⁵ Victor Turner and Edith Turner, “Performing Ethnography,” in *The Drama Review* 26, no. 2 [94] (Summer 1982): 33-50.

³⁶ Dwight Conquergood, “Performing as a Moral Act: Ethical Dimensions of the Ethnography of Performance,” *Literature in Performance* 5 no. 2 (April 1985): 2.

³⁷ See the discussion of this in George E. Marcus and Dick Cushman, “Ethnographies as Texts,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 11 (1982): 25-69.

concept of ‘objective truth’ and remind us that writing ethnography is cultural construction, not cultural reporting.”³⁸ Postmodern thought influenced especially by Michel Foucault has come to recognize the power of intellectual discourse to construct culture, or, more to the point, to construct what is presumed to be the culture under consideration.³⁹ Postmodern criticism has pointed to the power dynamics involved in such an endeavor, and has called for a self-conscious recognition of the nature of the politics involved in any form of discourse about an “other.”⁴⁰ “Hermeneutic philosophy in its varying styles, from Wilhelm Dilthey and Paul Ricoeur to Heidegger, reminds us that the simplest cultural accounts are intentional creations, that interpreters constantly construct themselves through the others they study.”⁴¹ Thus ethnographic writing is “always a construction of the self as well as of the other.”⁴² As ethnographers have experimented with authorial voice,⁴³ narrative structure and play,⁴⁴ writing strategies and genres, and examined the dynamics and politics of the text itself,⁴⁵ some feminist writers have voiced cautions about the postmodern turns in these scholarly endeavors.⁴⁶ Among these are a call to recognize that the Western researcher still speaks from the place of the dominant observer, the role of the subjective experiences of the

³⁸ Tanice G. Foltz and Wendy Griffin, “She Changes Everything She Touches: Ethnographic Journeys of Self Discovery ” in *Composing Ethnography: Alternative Forms of Qualitative Writing*, Carolyn Ellis and Arthur P. Bochner, eds., (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1996), 301.

³⁹ Michele Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, (New York: Pantheon Press, 1972).

⁴⁰ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1979). See James Clifford’s review and critique of Said, “Review of *Orientalism* by E.W. Said,” *Historical Theory* 19 (1980): 204-13.

⁴¹ James Clifford, “Introduction: Partial Truths,” *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, J. Clifford and G. Marcus, eds., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 10.

⁴² J. Stacey, “Can there be a Feminist Ethnography?”” in *Women's Words*, Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai, eds., (New York: Routledge, 1991), 115, cited in Foltz and Griffin, “She Changes Everything She Touches,” *op.cit.*

⁴³ See Clifford and Marcus, *Writing Culture*, *op.cit.*, Carolyn Ellis and Arthur P. Bochner, eds., *Composing Ethnography: Alternative Forms of Qualitative Writing* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1996); Susan Krieger, *Social Science and the Self: Personal Essays on an Art Form* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991); R. Linden, *Making Stories, Making Selves: Feminist Reflections on the Holocaust*, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1993).

⁴⁴ For examples, see Laurel Richardson, “Narrative and Sociology,” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 19 (1990):116-135; “Writing as a Method of Inquiry,” in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, N.K. Denzin and Y. Lincoln, eds. (Thousand Oaks: Sage. 1994), 516-529; David R. Maines, “Narrative’s Moment and Sociology’s Phenomena: Toward a Narrative Sociology,” *Sociological Quarterly*, 34 (1993): 17-38; N. K. Denzin, “Representing Lived Experiences in Ethnographic Texts,” in *Studies in Symbolic Interaction*, vol. 12, N. K. Denzin, ed., (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1991), 59-70; Carolyn Ellis, *Final Negotiations: A Story of Love, Loss, and Chronic Illness* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995).

⁴⁵ Clifford and Marcus, *Writing Culture*, *op. cit.*; George E. Marcus and Michael M.J. Fischer, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences*, 2nd edition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999); George E. Marcus, and D. Cushman, “Ethnographies as Texts,” *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 11 (1982): 25-69.

⁴⁶ Frances E. Mascia-Lees, Patricia Sharpe, and Colleen Ballerino Cohen, “The Post-Modernist Turn in Anthropology: Cautions from a Feminist Perspective,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 15 (1989): 7-33.

researcher remain problematic, and a reminder that Feminist theory has dealt with the same issues raised in postmodernism for fifty years (since the publication of *the Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir).⁴⁷

All of these players have contributed to the field of play and contestation of which Performance Studies has been a part, and out of which it has arisen. A Performance Hermeneutic is a particular application of these developments in Performance Studies, hermeneutics and Feminism which grounds itself in the givenness of the researcher as an embodied being whose subjective experiences and full sensorium serve as part of the data as well as the means of its interpretation.

3. A Performance Hermeneutic Approach

A Performance Hermeneutic approach to the study of religious phenomena is derived from the central insight of Performance Studies regarding the study of performance by means of performance. At its core, a Performance Hermeneutic is interdisciplinary. Of course, interdisciplinary scholarship is receiving greater attention and emphasis in academic circles these days. However, at academic conferences, interdisciplinary work is usually considered only between *academic* disciplines. The project of a Performance Hermeneutic stresses what I would argue is a true interdisciplinarity: a movement between academic and performing disciplines. What a Performance Hermeneutic offers is a way for persons to be *interdisciplined* - to act out of their integrity as persons who move and think within an embodied milieu rather than in a strictly intellectual or rationally intellectual milieu.

To speak of an embodied milieu means that all aspects of bodily existence impinge upon human experience, and thus upon human knowing and understanding—which, of course, is the task of hermeneutics. Much of hermeneutical theory since Friedrich Schleiermacher has granted significance to the interaction between a text and its author and/or its reader. Whether stated in the psychologicistic terminology of Schleiermacher, and his predecessors, Friedrich Ast and Friedrich August Wolf, or in terms of the spokenness of language (*Sprache*) by Hans Georg Gadamer, the fundamental requirement for interpretation is the presence of a person as a somatic entity. In other words, interpretation requires bodies.

Our *initial*, immediate experience of all phenomena is physical. That is to say, all knowledge, every event which occurs, is mediated physically. Hearing, speaking, seeing, tasting, touching, thinking all occur as physical acts. Events which do not directly involve human beings are perceived by them

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*; Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1949 in French; in English, New York: Alfred Knopf, 1953).

through physical means (thus, in some sense, involving them physically, if indirectly). John W. Dixon, Jr. has phrased the matter succinctly:

The least we can grant . . . is the remorseless corporeality of the human enterprise. All thought is bodily thought. All metaphor is the body's metaphor. We think not *in* but with our bodies and the psychic life is a whole *with* the body.⁴⁸

3.1. The Body Thinks

However, a Performance Hermeneutic is not only based upon the existential givenness of human embodiment, it is also based upon the physiological commitment that the body *thinks*. When I speak here of the body thinking, I am not separating the brain out from the rest of the body, as James B. Ashbrook and Carol Rausch Albright do in their recent book, *The Humanizing Brain*. In their book, Ashbrook and Albright “propose that the concept of ‘mind’ bridges the complexities of the physical universe and the complexities of the human world... the brain of *Homo sapiens* reflects something basic to the setting in which it finds itself. It seems that, in an important sense, the humanizing brain mirrors the world that births it.”⁴⁹ They make the claim that the human brain evolved through the normal evolutionary process of interaction with our world, and that human responsiveness to the world, including the search for meaning, the perception of the world’s “tangibleness, its wondrous order, its emotionality and directionality, even its unpredictability,”⁵⁰ is a reflection of those realities within the structure of physical existence itself. There is not space here to develop any of their ideas further, except to indicate what I find to be problematic, and that is their insistence on situating *mind*, particularly its rational and imaginal aspects, within the physical confines of the brain alone. My contention, and there are neurophysiological reasons for this, is that *the whole body thinks*.

For instance, if you were to remove everything from a human body leaving behind only the intact nervous system, you would have a nearly identical human form. Nerves make contact with every organ, tissue system and living cell in our body. Neurotransmitters found in the brain are also found in our fingertips, viscera, skin and glands. There is evidence that the body remembers particular events somatically, and that emotional memories reside not only within the brain, but also within certain regions

⁴⁸ John W. Dixon, Jr., “Prolegomena to a Christian Erotics: Reflections on Norman O. Brown's *Love's Body*,” in *Christian Scholar*, 50, no. 1 (Spring, 1967): 61. Emphasis in the original.

⁴⁹ James B. Ashbrook and Carol Rausch Albright, *The Humanizing Brain: Where Religion and Neuroscience Meet*, (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 1997), xxxii.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

of the body. In fact, it may be that the brain's process of remembering functions in such a way as to bring into consciousness those memories that may be stored elsewhere in the body.

Howard Gardner, in his influential book, *Frames of Mind*, discusses what he calls bodily-kinesthetic intelligence. Referring to the alleged disjunction between the activities of reasoning and the activities of "the manifestly physical," Gardner states that "this divorce between the 'mental' and the 'physical' has not infrequently been coupled with a notion that what we do with our bodies is somehow less privileged, less special, than those problem-solving routines carried out chiefly through the use of language, logic, or some other relatively abstract symbolic system."⁵¹

Yet, as Roger Sperry, the doyen of American neuropsychologists, has shrewdly pointed out, a strong case can be made for considering higher brain functions in terms of how they situate the organism in their environment in relation to survival and the attainment of distant goals:

Instead of regarding motor activity as being subsidiary, that is, something to carry out, serve and satisfy the demands of the higher centers, we reverse this tendency and look upon mental activity as only a means to an end, where the end is better regulation of overt response. Cerebration essentially serves to bring into motor behavior additional refinement, increased direction toward distant, future goals and greater overall adaptiveness and survival value. The evolutionary increase in man's [sic] capacity for perception, feeling, ideation, imagination and the like may be regarded not so much as an end in itself as something that has enabled us to behave, to act, more wisely and efficiently.⁵²

It is possible to depict a continuum existing between the physical perception of a problem (such as through one of the senses), the abstract processing of the problem (including "naming" the problem, making value judgments, construction of a context of any sort for it, etc.), decision-making and the physical execution of the decision. According to current research, the postulated neurophysiological process involved is actually very similar to the continuum described. Impulses received from the sensory system travel to the brain wherein a series of electrochemical signals are distributed across a network of regions in the brain finally resulting in signals being sent back to the neurons embedded in muscle tissue which stimulate movement.

Within the nervous system, large portions of the cerebral cortex, as well as the thalamus, the basal ganglia, and the cerebellum, all feed information to the spinal cord, the way station *en route* to the execution of action.⁵³

⁵¹ Howard Gardner, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1983), 207-208.

⁵² Roger Sperry is quoted in E. Evarts, "Brain Mechanisms in Movement," *Scientific American* 229, no. 1 (July 1973):103.

⁵³ Gardner, *Frames of Mind*, 210.

Furthermore, Gardner adds this tantalizing observation:

Paradoxically, whereas the cortex serves as the “highest” center in most forms of human activity, it is the relatively lowly basal ganglia and the cerebellum that contain the most abstract and complex forms of “representation of movements;” the motor complex is more directly tied to the spinal cord and the actual execution of specific muscular movements.⁵⁴

All of this simply serves to illustrate what I mean by saying “the body thinks.” What a Performance Hermeneutic does is to think with the fullness of the body, of which the brain is an integral part.

3.2. A Performance Hermeneutic and the Performing Arts

A Performance Hermeneutic is derived from the work of performing artists, more specifically, of theater and acting. Of particular relevance to a Performance Hermeneutic are the problem-solving tactics employed in rehearsals by theater performers and stage actors, particularly as they come out of the European and North American theater tradition. There is nothing magical, mystical, esoteric or earth-shatteringly novel about these tactics. What is useful about them is the manner in which they take the embodiedness of the performer seriously and the way in which the subjectivity of the performer is central to the interpretive process. In addition, the collaborative process which is characteristic of rehearsal and performance is essential to a Performance Hermeneutic.

One of the central questions which governs the exploratory phase of a play rehearsal is “What if...?” In improvisationally-based rehearsals, the actors are given a scenario, which is a bare outline of characters and situation. The actors then create a scene and story on the spot, *de novo*, as it were. Then a director or “outside eye” may then ask them a series of “what if...” questions, such as “What if you were to play it this way,” or “What if you were to use this intention,” or “What if this were your past relationship,” etc. The scene is then played and replayed and replayed again until the various possible or relevant “What if” questions are exhausted. Asking “What if” questions sets up a situation in which a scene or problem or phenomenon is scrutinized from several vantage points, much like viewing a precious gem from the standpoint of all its various facets.

The “What if” question is ontogenetically related to the young child’s “Let’s pretend” in that it involves an imaginative leap into playing with possibilities, and then bringing those possibilities into some

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

form of actualization. The imagination constructs a virtual world, and the act of pretending or improvising in rehearsal serves to place the body of the performer in that virtual world, causing that which is virtual to become actual, or nearly actual, or at least actual during the timeframe of the improvisation. This, of course, is how any performance, theatrical and otherwise, functions: by creating a virtual world or landscape, placing the bodies of performers and audience members within that world, and then returning performers and audience to the world from which they came. Always, however, the landscape to which one returns is not entirely the same, because the memory of the landscape or world visited in performance impinges upon consciousness, and reminds one of the ease with which the imagination slips between worlds.

In rehearsals and performance, the performer works with the imagination in its fully embodied form. Performance can be thus thought of as embodied imagination, and the body itself is the vehicle of movement between worlds, virtual and actual. A Performance Hermeneutic helps to develop the imagination's capacities and employs these capacities as part of the learning and research process. The student or researcher moves constantly between participation in a performance, ritual or other event and analysis and reflection upon that participation. The whole organism of the student or researcher — the senses, feelings, emotions, thoughts, body movement and kinesthetic perceptions — is involved in the collection of information and its processing, as well as the analysis and synthesis of ideas, conclusions (however tentative), and theories.

3.3. A Performance Hermeneutic and Feminist Criticism

In their essay, “She Changes Everything She Touches: Ethnographic Journeys of Self Discovery (1),” Tanice Foltz and Wendy Griffin make this statement concerning their ethnographic methodology: “We inject our voices into the experimental movement in ethnography that seeks to heal the artificial separation of subject and object, modulate the ‘authorial voice,’ and acknowledge our subjective involvement in the creation of social knowledge.”⁵⁵ Their description of the experimental movement in ethnography reveals not only its post-modern influences, but also the influences of Feminist thought upon academic scholarship as well.

⁵⁵ Tanice G. Foltz and Wendy Griffin, “She Changes Everything She Touches: Ethnographic Journeys of Self Discovery (1)” in Carolyn Ellis and Arthur P. Bochner, eds., *Composing Ethnography: Alternative Forms of Qualitative Writing*, (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1996), 301-330.

Feminist scholarship has raised pertinent critiques concerning the production of knowledge and epistemological claims concerning access to universal truth. Feminist theory, for example, begins with an examination of the gender and power-based constructions of knowledge and epistemology. One of the strongest critiques is leveled at the Cartesian dichotomy between subjectivity and objectivity, with objectivity being prized (and supposedly exhibited to a greater extent by men) over subjectivity (supposedly exhibited, of course, by women). Dale Spender discusses the Feminist critique of objectivity: “As a legitimating device, objectivity has served the dominant group well. Faced with the objective evidence that women are inferior, women have been discouraged from promoting change for the very definition of objective is ‘exhibiting actual facts uncoloured by exhibitor’s feelings or opinions’ (*Oxford English Dictionary*).”⁵⁶

The rationality of the Enlightenment and the development of the Empiricism of Bacon and others was premised upon the singularity and universality of truth, which was said to exist as an object outside of the individual and thus is untainted by the subjective feelings and impressions of the individual. In order to have access to this realm of universal truth, the individual must learn to think in an objective and detached manner. Such activities and theories of knowledge were circulated and affirmed in circles of men, of course, with various theories and ideas advanced concerning the “objectivity” of men and the “subjectivity” of women. Feminists have challenged both the gender division of objectivity and subjectivity as well as the claims of any group to have privileged access to universal truth. This has resulted in a different style of speaking about what is known and discovered through research, reflection and communal processing. “With this fundamental challenge to the objectivity of objectivity there has been a shift in feminist development. With it has come the acknowledgement that subjectivity plays a crucial role in the construction of knowledge and that rather than construct knowledge about women which ‘out-objectifies’ the knowledge constructed by men, new criteria for credibility are called for.”⁵⁷

Part of the critique of supposed objectivity revolves around the role played by the “objective” observer as a spectator. Much of the earliest Feminist theorizing focused upon what men said about women. Spender describes it this way:

⁵⁶ Dale Spender, “Introduction,” in Dale Spender, ed., *Men’s Studies Modified: The Impact of Feminism on the Academic Disciplines* (Elmsford, NY: Pergamon Press, 1981), 4-5.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

Women came to realize that the knowledge which men constructed about women...was frequently rated as “objective” while the knowledge women began to construct about women (which has its origins in the role of a participant rather than a spectator) was frequently rated as “subjective.” When men checked with men, their pronouncements were usually seen as credible, but when women checked with women, their explanations were frequently seen as illogical, emotional and liable to be dismissed by men. The hypothesis arose that legitimacy might be associated with gender rather than with the adequacy of an explanation, and this has led Adrienne Rich to comment that in a patriarchal society, objectivity is the name we give to male subjectivity.⁵⁸

Moving from a gender-based critique of objectivity, Feminist thinkers turned to a critique of the notions of objectivity and universal truth. “. . .[T]here is a significant difference between the way men have checked with men and often presented their explanations as the complete and only truth, and the way women are checking with women and offering their explanations as partial and temporary ‘truths’.”⁵⁹ Feminist thought focuses upon the idea of a multiplicity of truths, which are grounded in the particularities of one’s material existence: particularities such as gender, race, sexual orientation, nationality and cultural identity, class background, etc. Truth is bound up with subjectivity. But it is not to be abandoned or disregarded because of this. Rather, the task becomes one of sharing our particularities and listening for expressions of truths in the experiences of others. Sociologist Ellen Stone argues for a combination of Feminist “disbelief” (suspicion of traditional systems of knowledge and research, “heretical” viewpoints, etc.) and Feminist “belief.”

We need a different stance in relation to the voices of subordinated cultures - one I call, for the moment, “feminist belief.” Feminist belief means putting aside our conditioned responses and allowing ourselves to experience total receptivity to “the other.” It means before subjecting previously silenced voices to our critical faculties, we need to take them in to find out how they resonate and what their truth might mean for us.⁶⁰

What this means for research and teaching is still being determined. In fact, it is better to not say “determined” because Feminist theory tends to be processual rather than static, and there is really no terminus to arrive at or discover.

Because this new style is still being formed . . . it is not possible to categorically define it. What can be said is that it is personal and political, and this constitutes a significant difference. Rather than separate the personal and political from the production of knowledge, feminists are attempting to bring them together and in this synthesis they are striving to construct more accurate, adequate and comprehensive explanations. . .than those which emerged under the reign of objectivity, and male supremacy. Feminists have focused on

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 5. See Adrienne Rich, *On Lies, Secrets and Silences*, (New York: Norton, 1979).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁶⁰ Ellen Stone, “Claiming the Third Story: The Challenge to White Feminists of Black Feminist Theory,” unpublished manuscript, Brandeis University, 1990. Quoted in Shulamit Reinharz, *Feminist Methods in Social Research* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 242.

‘research on research’ and have been extremely critical of the way in which knowledge has for so long been presented as a *fait accompli* with little or no acknowledgement of the part played by the personal in the process of producing such knowledge. Instead of trying to be ‘detached’, feminists are blatantly ‘involved’ in the knowledge which they are producing and unlike the traditional model in which the researcher is presumed to be ‘outside’ the subject matter being researched, feminist contributions frequently testify to the way in which women are changed by the research process. This is a concrete example of the way women are trying to bring politics and knowledge together.⁶¹

Elizabeth Gross offers the following as a sketch of what Feminist theory can involve:⁶²

- a. Intellectual commitments, not to truth, objectivity and neutrality, but to theoretical positions openly acknowledged as observer and context-specific. (p. 365)
- b. It is neither subjective nor objective, neither absolute nor relative. Rather, its norms of judgment are developed from intersubjective, shared effects and functions. (p. 365)
- c. Instead of presuming a space or gulf between the rational, knowing subject and the object known, feminist theory acknowledges the contiguity between them. Feminist theory seems openly prepared to accept the constitutive interrelations of the subject, its social position and its mediated relation to the object. (p. 365)
- d. Feminist theory is an interweaving of strands that are simultaneously theoretical and practical. It is a threshold for the intervention of theories within concrete practices, and the restructuring of theory by the imperatives of experience and practice, a kind of hinge or doorway between the two domains. (pp. 366-367)
- e. Feminist theory seeks to transform and extend the concept of reason so that instead of excluding concepts like experience, the body, history, etc., these are included within it or acknowledged as necessary for reason to function. It seeks a rationality not divided from experience, from oppression, from particularity or specificity; a reason, on the contrary, that includes them is a rationality not beyond or above experience but based upon it. (p. 367)
- f. Feminist theory openly acknowledges its own materiality as the materiality of language, of desire and of power. (p. 368)
- g. In rejecting leading models of intellectual inquiry (among them, the requirements of formal logic, the structuring of concepts according to binary oppositional structures, the use of grammar and syntax for creating singular, clear, unambiguous, precise modes of articulation and many other assumed textual values), and its acceptance of the idea of its materiality as theory, feminist theory is involved in continuing explorations of and experimentation with new forms of writing, new methods of analysis, new positions of enunciation, new kinds of discourse. (p. 368)

From these examples, the parallels and commonalities between Feminism and a Performance Hermeneutic are obvious. A Performance Hermeneutic is influenced by Feminism in recognizing the role of subjectivity and the spuriousness of claims to pure objectivity, the multiplicity of centers of knowledge and experience, the multiplicity of truths, the suspicion of universalizing, and the role of the personal in the production of knowledge. A Performance Hermeneutic can offer back to Feminist thought a pedagogical process which engages the researcher/student bodily, sensually, emotionally, personally, subjectively, and experientially.

3.4. A Performance Hermeneutic In Practice

⁶¹ Spender, *op cit.*, 7.

⁶² Elizabeth Gross, “What is Feminist Theory?” in Helen Crowley and Susan Himmelweit, eds. *Knowing Women: Feminism and Knowledge* (Cambridge, UK: The Open University, 1992), 355-369.

As has been argued, a Performance Hermeneutic engages the researcher holistically in an integrated and internally interdisciplinary manner. It stresses work in the field, wherein the full embodied “research apparatus” of the researcher can be engaged with the persons and situations being studied. One of the best ways to develop this Performance Hermeneutical “research apparatus” or methodology is through performance training itself, particularly in the area of improvisation. A Performance Hermeneutic then takes this improvisational training and adds the dimensions of personal and group reflection, critical theory and analysis, dialogue, and open-ended conversation. These added dimensions move the process of interpretation away from an individualistic endeavor to a community-oriented project. An outstanding example of one particular style of Performance Hermeneutic is what I call Performance Midrash.

3.4.1. Performance Midrash: An Example from Germany

So, how does a Performance Hermeneutic operate, how does it utilize performance and rehearsal techniques, and how does it make explicit the connection between the performed world and the lived world? The best way to answer these questions is to give a concrete example of a Performance Hermeneutic seminar I led at the Evangelisches Studienwerk at Villigst, Germany in the summer of 1996. (At the time, I had not yet begun to refer to the process as Performance Midrash, but still as a Performance Hermeneutic). This example is pertinent to this dissertation in that it demonstrates how I have applied performance and rehearsal practices to the work of interpretation. In this example, the Performance Hermeneutic is applied to a particular biblical text. However it can be applied to many forms of texts, written or not.

The seminar consisted of seven participants and myself. Of the participants, one was North American, the others German. Two were pastors serving churches, and the others were theological students at various points in their programs. Of the seven one was male and the rest were female. The design of the class was to explore a particular biblical passage using a Performance Hermeneutic over a period of several days, in two daily three-hour sessions, one in the morning and one in the afternoon.

The morning sessions each began with a period of body warm-up and movement exercises derived from the Integral Transformative Practice Kata designed by George Leonard and Michael Murphy in their

book, *The Life We Are Given*.⁶³ This served to awaken their bodies and to sink their consciousness fully in their bodies. We then turned our attention to the particular biblical text we had chosen to investigate, exegete and interpret. The text was Genesis 16:1-6, the story of Hagar and Sarai, the birth of Ishmael, and Hagar's flight into the desert.

The passage was read in German and English, since we had a bilingual class, with varying language proficiencies being represented. Then the story was retold by the group, and there was some discussion about the various translations. The next step was to list all the various feelings that members of the group perceived and detected in the story. We then proceeded with improvisatory work aimed at playing out those feelings along with the story line. The story was broken into "french scenes," or scenes involving a certain set of characters. When a character exits or a new character enters the scene, it is a different "french scene." For each scene, we listed the various feelings perceived, and then asked the question, "What do these feelings look like?" People then moved about the space making sounds, vocalizing pertinent lines, making bodily gestures and displaying various bodily attitudes and representations of emotions. Then the group made sculptures of the feelings by standing in relationship with other members of the group. I then went around and asked each person what feeling they were portraying and then had them interact with other members of the group, all the while still acting as the feeling they had chosen to portray. They could use lines from the text or whatever they felt arise for them out of their portrayal. We then discussed whatever insights people had concerning the text. This process was repeated for each scene of the biblical story.

The story of Hagar and Sarai is problematic on many levels, and has been the source of probing analysis by various Feminist scholars. Our group found it no less problematic after working at this first level of improvisation with the feeling level of the story. When faced with enacting the story and probing the emotions, feelings, motivations and intentions of the characters, as any actor does in the theater, it became clear to the group that the story of Hagar and Sarai left much out. For instance, Hagar is portrayed as being relatively passive in the face of the abuse she receives from Sarai, and again as she is told by the angel in the desert to return to Sarai. Several participants expressed objections concerning the angel telling Hagar to return and submit to Sarai.

⁶³ George Leonard and Michael Murphy, *The Life We Are Given: A Long-Term Program for Realizing the Potential of Body, Mind, Heart and Soul* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam Books, 1995).

In order to delve even deeper, we continued our improvisational work again, looking at different angles of the conversation between the angel and Hagar. For example, at one point, the group was split in two, with three people playing Hagar (together) and four people playing the angel. The groups were each given the task to decide what feelings they would play from within their character, and how they would relate to the other group, say, as individuals or as a group. In addition, the angel group was given the task of physically moving the Hagar group from one location to another. Interesting things arose out of this improvisation. The Hagar group sat huddled together with arms interlinked. The angel group came over with arms gently outstretched, but then had to sit down at the same level as Hagar. A long negotiation ensued. What happened in these improvisations was that Hagar was given a voice — the voice which is denied her or is hidden in the text.

The next phase of the work was to retell the story from a variety of vantage points. In the first retelling exercise, the group was split three ways. Three people replayed the story very close to the Biblical text. Two were allowed to interrupt the story at any point, make comments, play the scene differently, or whatever, utilizing insights from the preceding improvisations. Two people sat outside the performance space and observed, in order to offer a final retelling. In the discussion following this exercise, the two people who followed the biblical story closely expressed dissatisfaction with their task, and the observers offered some additional alternatives to the scenes portrayed by the other two groups.

The final session of the class devoted to Hagar and Sarai was spent retelling the story from the viewpoints of each of the characters, as well as a final grand retelling. Two people portrayed Sarai, one person portrayed Abram, two portrayed Hagar and two portrayed the angel. Each group was allowed to present the story in any way they wished. For example, the two people portraying Sarai sat back to back and each gave voice to different internal conversations within Sarai. The person portraying Abram showed his emotion and anger. The Hagar pair traded roles, one being the storyteller while the other pantomimed the story being told. The angel group broke up into an angel in charge and a junior angel, who was given the task of talking with Hagar. It brought a humorous element to the story. What emerged most clearly in these sessions was the element of performed midrash. The collections of midrash and legends of the Jews begin in the biblical story and proceed to spin out humorous and serious stories and elaborations, often

providing dialogue where none exists in the biblical text. Precisely the same thing occurred through the act of performance in this workshop.

The final retelling returned the group to the presumed oral character of the stories, told supposedly around campfires, or at feasts and celebrations. We all sat in a circle, a story-telling circle. I began to retell the story as if we were at a campfire and someone asked me, “Tell us again the story about Hagar and Sarai.” As I told the story, I would ask questions of people, or ask them to fill in the details, or they would interrupt and jump in the middle of the story and retell a section, enact it and return to the circle. If others in the group disagreed with the telling, or had more to tell, they would jump in and do their enactment. A variety of interpretations and perspectives were given voice, and new ideas and understandings arose even in this session.

In the discussion following the final retelling, it was agreed that most of our work in the preceding sessions had been brought together successfully in the storytelling circle, and that even new insights were achieved. Everything we had done had found a place within our bodies’ memories. Some indicated that it was okay with them that they were still dissatisfied with this story, and that it was good to leave this story unresolved. We had probed its injustices, its themes of abuse, its problems and untold stories. We had given voice to the voiceless, and had enacted, in essence, a hermeneutics of suspicion, as well as a feminist and liberationist analysis. Yet, these were never a part of the specific agenda of the class. Rather, they arose in the process of performing the text.

4. Concluding Observations

In this chapter, I have defined certain terms to be used in the remainder of the dissertation. In addition, I have discussed at length the development of the field of Performance Studies and have situated a Performance Hermeneutic within it. I have argued for the place of a Performance Hermeneutic in returning subjectivity to the body in the process of interpretation. I have argued that a Performance Hermeneutic is interdisciplinary not only because it moves between academic and aesthetic disciplines, but because it requires for its practitioners to be interdisciplined themselves: to act out of their integrity as embodied persons. This interdisciplining is reflected in the fact that the body in its entirety thinks. In interpreting a text, a Performance Hermeneutic works with this integrity by placing the bodies of performer-interpreters

within the imaginal landscape of the text being interpreted and allowing them to “play” with the text in order to examine the text from various vantage points.

I then gave a particular example of a Performance Hermeneutic in action, relating how it was used with a group of people in Germany as the group interpreted the story in Genesis 16:1-16 of Sarai and Hagar. The Performance Hermeneutic process used by the group resulted in a form of midrash in which the story was retold in such a way that agency and subjectivity were returned to those dispossessed in the text (such as Hagar).

From this, I offer the following additional conclusions concerning a Performance Hermeneutic. The process of embodying a text changes the nature of our relationship with that text, and the act of embodying the text in the collaboration of improvisatory performance removes any single experience from the center of interpretation. Interpretation becomes the province of the community, and hegemonies of interpretation can be challenged. A Performance Hermeneutic can be used in a variety of settings with a variety of adaptations, and it does not require sophistication in hermeneutical theory, biblical or literary criticism, nor does it even require performance experience. Rather, it takes advantage of the human propensity to pretend, to imagine and to play. At the same time, while playing, the embodied person gains powerful insights -- insights which are powerfully experienced, and powerfully stored within the body’s reservoir of memory. From that reservoir transformation of self and society is possible.

It is precisely the possibility of the transformation of society through embodied imagination that motivates and underlies the work of the Deep Ecology practitioners I studied. Through performative practices such as role-playing, rituals such as the Council of All Beings, despair and empowerment workshops, dance workshops on the slopes of Mt. Tamalpais in Marin County, California, and meditation-visualization exercises, the Deep Ecology practitioners I studied create powerful embodied experiences which are stored within the body’s reservoir of memory. These create, in essence, an experience of the world in Deep Ecological terms. This experience is created proleptically, as it were, offering a foretaste of a way of living in the natural world as a harmonious part of that world. It is to this proleptic functioning of the imagination that we now turn.

Chapter 2

Imagination, Performance and the Creation of Worlds

1. Overview and recapitulation of the thesis

Central to the thesis of this dissertation is the idea that performance is a form of embodied imagination, and that the performative act places the body of the performer within the context of a particular world—a world constructed by the imagination. In this chapter I will examine how the imagination in its image-making capacity constructs worlds and how performance extends this world-creating function by bringing inward phenomena which heretofore exist only within the imagination out into the sensory and physical world through the medium of the body. I will briefly examine the possibilities of a politics of performance, and then examine specifically how Joanna Macy directly engages the imagination in her workshop experiences. I will claim that these workshop experiences are specific forms of a politics of performance in that they endeavor to exteriorize and actualize a Deep Ecology worldview in the social and political realm. Interviews and material written by Macy will serve as the primary data concerning Deep Ecology practitioners for this chapter. In succeeding chapters a Performance Hermeneutic as described in the previous chapter will be applied to several actual workshop experiences in which a Deep Ecology world was constructed experientially through performative practices.

1.1. A Disclaimer

This dissertation is not a philosophical treatise on the nature of imagination. To a performer, the imagination is presumed. It is no more *necessary* to a performer to be able to elucidate the nature and function of the imagination than it is to be able to elucidate the nature and function of breathing—or of the cardio-pulmonary system. The fact notwithstanding that biomedical science has succeeded in dissecting

and describing the mechanism of the exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide across the moistened membrane of the lungs, the act of breathing is not predicated upon knowing the mechanism of breathing.

To carry the analogy further, and to give an example from religious practice, in Vipassana meditation, attention is paid to the act of breathing and even to the counting of breaths. (This form of meditation is very old, and is traced back in the Pali Canon of Buddhist sutras to Shakyamuni Buddha.) Knowledge of the mechanism of oxygen and carbon dioxide exchange is not necessary for the efficacy of the practice. Analogously, then, to the performer, imagining is like breathing.

2. Performance and the Creation of Worlds

Nonetheless, it is central to the thesis of this dissertation that performance is a form of embodied imagination, and that through the use of embodied imaginative practices Deep Ecological worlds are constructed by certain Deep Ecology practitioners.⁶⁴ That is to say, the presumption behind the thesis of this dissertation is that the imagination constructs worlds. This naturally gives rise to two discussions, one a discussion of worldviews, and the other a discussion of how the imagination creates worlds, which is related to traditional philosophical discussions concerning the image-making function of the imagination.

2.1. Worldviews and Paradigms

Deep Ecologists frequently speak about challenging the prevailing worldview or social paradigm in order to affect real lasting environmental change. George Sessions and Bill Devall define a worldview as “the collection of values, beliefs, habits, and norms which forms the frame of reference for a collectivity of people, such as a nation.”⁶⁵ Dennis Pirages and Paul Ehrlich define a dominant social paradigm as “a mental image of social reality that guides expectations in a society.”⁶⁶ Borrowing from the work of

⁶⁴ A note on terminology is in order at this point. I will use the term “Deep Ecology practitioners” in reference to the persons studied in the field who ascribe to the tenets of Deep Ecology and who put on Deep Ecology workshops and trainings or attend these trainings and workshops. Many of these people are associated with the Institute for Deep Ecology, either as Board Members, Instructors, employees, or “conspirators.” “Deep Ecological world or worldview” will refer to a particular way of understanding the nature of the world and reality as informed by Deep Ecology ideas and tenets, and acting in accordance with that understanding.

⁶⁵ Bill Devall and George Sessions, *Deep Ecology* (Salt Lake City, UT: Gibbs M. Smith, Inc., Peregrine Smith Books, 1985), 42.

⁶⁶ Dennis Pirages and Paul R. Ehrlich, *Ark II: Social Response to Environmental Imperatives* (San Francisco: Freeman, 1974), 43, cited in *ibid.*, 42.

Thomas Kuhn in his discussion of the nature of change in scientific thought and philosophy,⁶⁷ Devall and Sessions describe the constitutive elements of a worldview according to Kuhn's notions of a paradigm:

1. There are general assumptions about reality, including man's (*sic*) place in Nature.
2. There are general "rules of the game" for approaching problems which are generally agreed upon.
3. Those who subscribe to a given worldview share a definition of the assumptions and goals of their society.
4. There is a definite, underlying confidence among believers in the worldview that solutions to problems exist within the assumptions of the worldview.
5. Practitioners within the worldview present arguments based on the validity of data as rationally explained by experts—be they scientific experts or experts in the philosophy and religious assumptions of the worldview.⁶⁸

A worldview provides a way of looking at phenomena and events in life as well as a vantage point from which to look. A comparison with the German equivalents for "worldview" helps to illustrate this.

For instance, "worldview" can be translated either as *Weltanschauung* or as *Weltbild*.⁶⁹ *Welt* means "world." *Anschauung* means view or opinion or even experience, as one's personal experience. It is from the verb, *anschauen* which is a variant of *ansehen* which means "to look at (something)." Thus, embedded in this word is the notion of a way of looking at the world, an outlook based in subjective or collective experience. *Weltbild* literally means "world picture," and carries the connotation of a particular way of framing reality or one's perception of reality. This nuancing of "worldview" suggests that a way of looking can become much more structured and concretized, particularly as it becomes more influential in a society and adopted by the majority of its members.

What a worldview does, then, is provide a particular cognitive landscape, a picture-place, which is believed to describe the world as it is, and which provides a way for understanding and living in that world. A worldview is self-reinforcing in that it not only determines what sorts of questions about reality are legitimate to ask, it also determines how one goes about investigating reality and deriving answers.

⁶⁷ Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

⁶⁸ Devall and Sessions, *op. cit.*, 42.

⁶⁹ *Weltbild* is similar to Eugen Fink's idea of *Bildwelt*, or "image world." To Fink, who followed in the phenomenological footsteps of Edmund Husserl, the *Bildwelt* is the capacity of mind "to which imagining as intuitive presentification [*vergegenwärtigung*] furnishes access." (Edward S. Casey, *Imagining: A Phenomenological Study* [Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1976], p. 2.) The similarity between the terms *Weltbild* and *Bildwelt* points to the world-constructing properties of the imagination.

Answers and solutions which fit into the conceptual landscape are deemed correct and suitable, and those which challenge that landscape or suggest other possible landscapes are rejected.⁷⁰

Thus we can say that a worldview makes ontological, metaphysical, epistemological, cosmological and ultimate-value claims. A worldview begins by claiming, or perhaps it is more accurate to say it begins by *assuming*, to describe the world or reality *as it is*. The ontological claim or assumption to describe reality *as it is in itself* grants a worldview authority and power. A worldview describes the world, cosmos or universe in its interworkings and how everything fits together, or describes things in their places and their proper workings and relationships. A worldview also describes how it is possible to know reality, or even how knowing itself is possible at all. It also describes the nature of action in the world, and the consequences and ramifications of various actions in the world, whether these actions are committed by humans or by other beings.

At the same time, a worldview is conspicuously unimposing. There are no portentous manuals on the prevailing worldview, no tests are given, no protectors of the worldview exist *per se*. Rather, everything in a society or culture is derived in one way or other from the prevailing worldview.

As a cognitive landscape or picture-place, a worldview functions to establish the parameters within which its constituents live, move and have their being. It is directly analogous to a terrain in that its constituents must learn to navigate, pilot and maneuver within the topography of assumptions, acceptable behaviors, possibilities, as well as explore that which remains undiscovered, possible but untried, potential but unknown. In addition, certain territories of behavior or thought remain dangerous, forbidden or taboo. To venture into those realms is to risk expulsion from the established worldview, or may introduce perilous elements into the worldview, or may even chance falling off the edge of the world as it is known!

⁷⁰ This definition of worldview parallels Thomas Kuhn's well-known discussion of scientific paradigms in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Not all scholars, however, are comfortable applying Kuhn's notions of paradigms to discussions outside the context of scientific revolutions, which is the central concern in Kuhn's book. For purposes of discussion in this dissertation, the idea of worlds and worldviews is more instructive. For discussions concerning the use of Kuhn's notion of paradigms to explain the shifts in academic discourse outside of the physical sciences, which is Kuhn's focus, see Robert F. Schedinger, "Kuhnian Paradigms and biblical Scholarship: Is Biblical Studies a Science?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 119, no. 3 (Fall 2000):453-471; Gary Gattung, ed., *Paradigms and Revolutions: Appraisals and Applications of Thomas Kuhn's Philosophy of Science* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980); Bruce G. Trigger, *A History of Archaeological thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 5-7; Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982) and the recent assessment of Kuhn by Steve Fuller, *Thomas Kuhn: A Philosophical History for Our Times* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

In summary, a worldview establishes a cognitive place which places limits and boundaries on behaviors, activities, conceptualization, and attempts to alter those limits. A worldview is not only a way of seeing the world, it fixes that way of seeing as a place which can be seen, and grants it ontological status. “We look at things this way because that is the way they are.”

3. Philosophy and the Imagination

In an overview of the philosophical development of theories of imagination, Mark Johnson makes the following observation:

Until the Enlightenment we find nothing that could be called a fully worked out theory of imagination. Before that period we must piece together brief passages and even random remarks where the concept comes into play. As Harold Osborne has noted, there was no classical theory of what we today call “imagination,” that is, of the capacity to mold experience, to bring something new out of the old, or to sympathetically project oneself into the position of another.⁷¹

In spite of the fact that no full theory of the imagination was articulated until the Enlightenment, nonetheless, philosophers have at least addressed the nature and function of the imagination since the beginnings of philosophy. The concerns and discussions usually center around how the imagination functions as a process of cognition, although since the Romantic period, and especially due to the work of Coleridge, attention has also been directed to how the imagination functions aesthetically and creatively. In the discussion which follows, I will first address some etymological issues surrounding the word imagination. I will then sketch a very brief history of the concept, beginning with its scattered usage in Plato and Aristotle. I will make a brief reference to its usage in the Medieval period, and then to a consideration (á la Mark Johnson and Richard Kearney) of Kant as an elaborator of what Kearney considers a Modernist turn in philosophy.⁷² After looking briefly at Kearney’s discussion of three paradigms of imagination, I will focus on Mark Johnson’s call for a theory of embodied imagination. This will then set the stage for discussion of a politics of performance advocated by Randy Martin and consideration of the work of Joanna Macy, one of the prime persons within the Deep Ecology movement to actively engage the imagination performatively.

⁷¹ Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 141. See also Harold Osborne, *Aesthetics and Art Theory* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1970), 208-224.

⁷² See the discussion in section 3.1.6. below.

“Imagination” is formed on the word “image,” which is from the Latin *imaginem*, which is the accusative of *imago*, which means “imitation, copy or likeness.” The imagination in common usage, as well as certain philosophical positions, refers to the faculty for having or producing images, especially in the mind.⁷³ *Imaginem* actually came late into Latin use, perhaps as late as Augustine’s writing in the 5th century.

The Greek conceptual antecedent to *imaginem* is *phantasia*, from which we derive our word “fantasy.” However, *phantasia* is usually translated into the Latin *visum* (thing seen) or *visio* (sight). Hence, the analogical reference is to seeing. “What the Greeks call ‘phantasies’ we rightly term ‘sights,’ through which the images of absent things are so represented in the mind that we seem to discern and have them present,” says Quintilian (*Institutio Oratoria VI 2*).⁷⁴

Phantasia is a verbal noun that is ultimately derived from the verb *phainesthai*, which means “to bring to light,” “to make shine out,” “to appear,” especially “to make appear before the soul”; and more immediately from *phantazesthai* (whence “phantasm”), a verb used specifically for the having of memories, dreams, and hallucinations. It is fairly synonymous with *phainomenon*, “appearance,” and is eventually used for the faculty of entertaining appearances.

Thus *phantasia* supplies the original notion to which the Latin characterization of the imagination as an imitative power is the complement. Phantasia-imagination is a capacity for inner appearances, that is to say, for internal sense presentations, which resemble external perceptions.⁷⁵

3.1. History

Eva T. H. Brann summarizes the place of imagination in “ancient” philosophical writings as follows:

Plato gives the name *eikasia*, literally “image-agency,” to a distinctive power of the soul for recognizing images as images. Aristotle, in a first thematic treatment of *phantasia*, argues that it is not a power but a process by which sensation presents itself to the intellect as inner appearance. The Stoics understand the same terms as an affection or a “presentation,” which comes into the soul from the external object and provides the only available access to it; when properly “affirmed” it is incorrigible. The Epicureans regard mental images as material films. The Neoplatonists extend the scope of the sources feeding the imagination from sensation upward, so that its images may also reflect objects proper to the higher parts of the soul. Augustine introduces the will into the process of imaginative cognition.⁷⁶

⁷³ Eva T.H. Brann, *The World of the Imagination: Sum and Substance* (Savage, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, Publishers, Inc., 1991), 18; Mary Warnock, *Imagination* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976); cf. *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (1967), s.v. “Imagination.”

⁷⁴ Brann, *The World of the Imagination*, 21.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 35. This discussion of the imagination owes much to Brann’s elaborations and synthesis of philosophical, phenomenological and poetic writings concerning imagination.

3.1.1. Plato

Whereas Plato discoursed at length concerning the nature of images (*eikon*), it was primarily in regards to their place as being a lesser order of truth. In the *Republic*, Book VI, 510 is found the famous simile of the line, which is to be understood as being arranged vertically (see Diagram 1 below). The line is divided in half, with each half being divided in half again. The top half represents the intelligible realm and the bottom half represents the visible realm. The bottom half of the visible realm is the realm of shadows, reflections and images and the property or power (*dynamis*) of the soul (*psychē*) which accesses that realm is *eikasia*, or the power of image-recognition. *Eikasia* involves the power to recognize images as images, and thus to distinguish between originals and their copies or representations. The elements of this lower realm correspond mimetically to their physical counterparts in the upper part of the visible realm. The power of the soul which accesses this realm is *pistis*, or “trust.” The lower part of the intelligible realm is the province of hypotheses and deductions and is accessed by discursive thought, *dianoia*. The highest realm is the realm of the originals, the ideas or invisible forms, the sources and principles of all that which is below. In this realm the soul encounters true knowledge, or *epistêmê*, through the power of dialectic. Hypotheses and logical deductions serve as intellectual images of the epistemic forms and ideals, and dianoetic intellect operates as intellectual imagination.

MODES OF COGNITION	OBJECT OF COGNITION	
INTELLIGIBLE REALM (Realm of Knowledge)		
Knowing -- WHY (first principles)	Intellection (<i>noesis</i>)	Form or Idea (<i>eidos</i> or <i>idea</i>)
Knowing – WHAT (Hypothetical method)	Discursive thinking (<i>dianoia</i>)	Mathematical Objects (<i>mathemata</i>)
VISIBLE REALM (Realm of Opinion)		
Knowing – HOW Useful correct opinions without reasons	Belief (<i>pistis</i>)	Living Things (<i>zoa/pheteuton/skeuaston</i>)
Conjecture/Guess	Imagining (<i>eikasia</i>)	Images, Shadows, Reflections (<i>eikones</i>)

DIAGRAM 1: Plato's Simile of the line ⁷⁷

Plato's concern in the Socratic dialogues, particularly in the *Republic*, is with the governing and structuring of society in accordance with the ideal or the Good, as found in the highest realm of first principles (*archē*) and ideas. Thus, his concern is not so much with the imagination in itself, but rather how it is possible to attain knowledge of the Good, with which then to govern and order society. But as in every politically-constituted society, the appearance of the Good is not necessarily the true Good. Discrimination is required to determine whether that which presents itself in the visible world as being the Good really is the Good, or merely a false illusion. *Phantasia* is the faculty for discerning appearances as appearances (*phanē*). Thus, the focus of Plato's discussions of *eikasia* and *phantasia* is upon how these intellectual powers are utilized in pursuit of the Good and Ideal.

Of significance to our discussion, however, is the nascent idea that the faculty of image recognition and appearance recognition is vital to the proper and most felicitous ordering of social relations. For indeed, the Deep Ecology practitioners studied rely upon the imagination to call forth from its own inner resources a deeper knowledge of interconnection between all beings, an interconnectedness which is claimed to be the true nature of reality. Thus, while Deep Ecology is a recent articulation, the methodologies and concerns of its practitioners are rooted in concerns and questions many centuries old.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Diagram from Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind*, 142.

⁷⁸ It is important to note at this point that many Deep Ecology practitioners do not subscribe to the Platonic (or Aristotelian, for that matter) view of the world. Many actually are drawn more to the Pre-Socratic Heraclitus who viewed reality in terms of change and flow, rather than in terms of objects and entities. The

In addition, this also explains the power of a worldview (as discussed earlier): the claim is made in a worldview to describe reality *as it is*, the implication being that the worldview's description of things is in accordance with the constitutive principles and forms. This is the epistemological claim of a worldview.

3.1.2. Aristotle

Aristotle, on the other hand (and in respect to Plato, much of Aristotle is on the other hand), held that *phantasia* is not an independent power but rather a process of sensation. Since Aristotle bases much of his philosophical argumentation around the argument from motion, *phantasia* is seen as being the (kinetic) function which presents images and appearances to the intellect:

[*Phantasia*] seems to be a kind of movement (*kinesis*) and not to come about without sensation and only in those who are sensing and only of those things that are sensible. And since movement comes about by the activity of sensation, it is necessarily similar to sensation.⁷⁹

John Herman Russell explains that in this, Aristotle connects the imagination (*phantasia*) with the physical act of sensing through *kinesis*:

For Aristotle there can be no knowledge of the what or the why of things without sensing them, without at least having sensed them, without images, *phantasmata*, persisting in the *phantasia*: that is, there can be no knowledge without sense observation. This *phantasia* or imagination is a kind of motion generated by actual sensing: it is a physical occurrence. And sense images, *phantasmata*, are corporeal, not "mental."⁸⁰

However, it is not identical with sensing, for the imagination, as the image-producing faculty, also functions in dreaming, in the absence of any direct sensation.

Imagination thus seems to be a power to form images from present or prior sense perceptions, though it is not identical with mere sense perception, since it can form images in the absence of sensation (e.g., as in dreams). Discursive thought leading to knowledge, moreover, requires the prior operation of imagination to supply the empirical content.⁸¹

The idea of imagination existing as movement or motion within the act of sensing is significant to the operation of a Performance Hermeneutic in the idea that the act of performing is a kinetic act, and one which involves the embodied sensorium of the performer.

point of the preceding discussion was to situate *imagination* within its philosophical (and etymological) context, not argue that Deep Ecology is Platonic or Aristotelian.

⁷⁹ Aristotle, *On the Soul*, 428 b. Quoted in Brann, *The World of the Imagination*, 41-42. See also Michael Wedin, *Mind and Imagination in Aristotle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

⁸⁰ John Herman Randall, *Aristotle* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 95; cited in Johnson, *The Body in the Mind*, 144.

⁸¹ Johnson, *The Body in the Mind*, 144.

3.1.3. Medieval Theories of Imagination

Many of the terms, conditions and discussions concerning imagination were set by Plato and Aristotle, and those who followed in their footsteps. The Neoplatonists, following Plotinus' lead, expanded Plato's simile of the line into an entire ladder or hierarchy of being (although Aristotle had done something similar in his classification of natural objects). Aristotle's works were lost to Western philosophers and theologians (particularly after the burning of the library in Alexandria) but were kept in circulation by Muslim philosophers (an intellectual debt too seldom acknowledged). Contact with Muslim and Jewish philosophers led to the "rediscovery" of Aristotle by theologians such as Thomas Aquinas. Plato was also "rediscovered" during the Renaissance, leading to a renascence of Platonic thought. Thus, the philosophical assumptions and arguments in the West have tended to move between the parameters established by Plato and Aristotle centuries earlier.

Alistair J. Minnis summarizes late-medieval theories of imagination in terms of the role the imaginative faculty plays in the process of thinking. The pre-eminence given to thought as the construction and organization of visual pictures within the mind (or soul, depending on how Platonic or Neo-Platonic one gets) is evident:

Most late-medieval thinkers accepted the basic triad of *imaginatio*, *ratio* and *memoria*, although it was much elaborated and amplified. Objects perceived by the five exterior senses were believed to cause separate sensations, these sensations met in the *sensus communis*, and the imagination, stimulated by these sensations, formed the mental pictures (*imagines* or *phantasmata*) necessary for thought. Images thus produced were handed over to the reason, which employed them in the formation of ideas. These ideas were in turn handed over to the memory, the store of ideas of past things. . . .⁸²

The influence of Augustine upon medieval thinking is evident in the fact that "the cogitative power (*vis cogitativa*) then takes images and combines or divides them, an activity which involves the will."⁸³ New images of things not perceived by the five external senses can be created by this cogitative power. To Plato, this synthetic activity was problematic, and of a lesser order of thought, being the province of poets and painters, two groups he disparages with barely veiled contempt. Medieval thinkers, influenced as they were after the Islamic philosophical recovery of Aristotle, were less deprecating about the synthetic properties of the imagination.

⁸² Alistair J. Minnis, "Langland's Ymaginatif and Late-Medieval Theories of Imagination," in *Comparative Criticism: A Yearbook*, vol. 3 (Cambridge University Press, 1981), 72.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 73.

Thomas Aquinas, arguably the culmination and pinnacle of medieval philosophers, affirmed the basic philosophical consensus that gave the imagination a mediating role between sense impressions and intellectual apprehension of the universal essences. “As always, the imagination, or rather its images, have a middle status between the being proper to a form in matter and the being proper to a form that has come into the intellect through abstraction from matter.”⁸⁴ Human intellect is able to do this precisely because human beings occupy a place (ontologically and therefore epistemologically) midway between the divine (“angelic”) and the fully material.

Now there are three grades of the cognitive powers. For one cognitive power, namely, the sense, is the act of a corporeal organ. And therefore the object of every sensitive power is a form as existing in corporeal matter. And since such matter is the principle of individuality, therefore every power of the sensitive part can only have knowledge of the individual. There is another grade of cognitive power which is neither the act of a corporeal organ, nor in any way connected with corporeal matter; such is the angelic intellect, the object of whose cognitive power is therefore a form existing apart from matter: for though angels know material things, yet they do not know them save in something immaterial, namely, either in themselves or in God. But the human intellect holds a middle place: for it is not the act of an organ; yet it is a power of the soul which is the form of the body, as is clear from what we have said above (76, 1). And therefore it is proper to it to know a form existing individually in corporeal matter, but not as existing in this individual matter. But to know what is in individual matter, not as existing in such matter, is to abstract the form from individual matter which is represented by the phantasms. Therefore we must needs say that our intellect understands material things by abstracting from the phantasms; and through material things thus considered we acquire some knowledge of immaterial things, just as, on the contrary, angels know material things through the immaterial.⁸⁵

“The ultimate answer, then, to the question why we need images in order to know is: because we are human beings, and, as such, beings composed of body and soul.”⁸⁶ Aquinas maintained that we cannot know a thing as *it is in itself*, that is, *essentially*: “Now it seems that Plato strayed from the truth because, having observed that all knowledge takes place through some kind of similitude, he thought that the form of the thing known must of necessity be in the knower in the same manner as in the thing known.”⁸⁷ Since images are themselves *likenesses*, retaining a spatial form of the original, “the intellect can simultaneously extract the intelligible nature of things while it yet has them sensorily present on its own, non-material terms – for ‘it understands these natures in phantasms.’ ... However the intellect may operate, the human

⁸⁴ Eva T.H. Brann, *The World of the Imagination*, 62.

⁸⁵ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, First Part, Question 85, article 1.

⁸⁶ Eva T. H. Brann, *The World of the Imagination*, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

⁸⁷ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, First Part, Question 84, Article 1.

soul as a whole knows by harboring likenesses of — that is to say, becoming like – the things it is intent upon.”⁸⁸

3.1.4. Enlightenment and Romantic

If Thomas Hobbes can be considered to be representative of Enlightenment discussions of imagination, then it can be said that for Enlightenment philosophers that imagination was understood as a wide-ranging activity, which not only preserves unified images in memory but also presents those images to the Fancy (which “begets the ornaments of a poem”) and to Judgment (which “begets the strength and structure”).⁸⁹

Building upon the work of his philosophical predecessors, Immanuel Kant actually addressed the nature of the imagination itself, primarily in his three *Critiques* (of *Pure Reason*, *Practical Reason*, and *Judgment*).

... all knowledge involves judgments in which mental representations (sense percepts, images, or even concepts) are unified and ordered under more general representations. For Kant, imagination is *the* faculty for achieving this synthesis, defined as “the act of putting different representations together, and of grasping what is manifold in them in one act of knowledge” (A77, B103). To understand imagination is to understand the nature of its synthesizing or unifying activity.

Kant accepted the Empiricist assumption that whatever is given to our sense in perception cannot have its own principle of organization within itself. That is, he assumed that each of our mental representations, in itself, occurs singly and atomistically, so that any unity we experience in sense perception must be the result of the synthesizing work of the imagination.⁹⁰

This, of course, was simply the standard Empiricist view during the Enlightenment of “*imagination as a power to form unified images, and to recall in memory past images, so as to constitute a unified and coherent experience.*”⁹¹ The imagination functions both *productively*, i.e., through an objective structuring, and *reproductively*, i.e., through the power to present and arrange images. In addition, imagination exerted a *schematizing* as well as a *creative* function:

... Above all, Kant showed *why* and *how* it is that there could be *no* meaningful experience without the operation of imagination in its many functions. Kant understood imagination as a capacity for organizing mental representations (especially images and percepts) into

⁸⁸ Eva T. H. Brann, *The World of the Imagination*, 64.

⁸⁹ Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind*, 146. See Thomas Hobbes, *Answer to D'Avenant* (1650).

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 148-149.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 149, emphasis in original.

meaningful unities that we can comprehend. *Imagination generates much of the connecting structure by which we have coherent, significant experience, cognition, and language.*

There were four related functions of imagination. As *reproductive*, it gives us unified representations (such as mental images and percepts) in time, and unified, coherent experiences over time, so that our experience is not random and chaotic. It allows us to grasp a series of perceptual inputs as connected, so that we experience objects that persist through time. As *productive* it constitutes the unity of our consciousness through time. My consciousness has a structure that it imposes on all experiences that I can be aware (conscious) of. For something to be an object of my experience, it must satisfy certain conditions established by the nature of my consciousness. These conditions of organization are structures of imagination. As a *schematizing* function, imagination mediates between abstract concepts and the contents of sensation, making it possible for us to conceptualize what we receive through sense perception. Imagination can make this connection because it is both formal and embodied (i.e., tied to sensation). It is a more abstract organizing structure than rich images (it generates their structure), yet it is not an abstract concept or a proposition. Finally, as *creative*, imagination is a free, non-rule-governed activity by which we achieve new structure in our experience and can remodel existing patterns to generate novel meaning. This creative structuring occurs as symbolic presentation and as metaphorical projection. It operates throughout our entire system of meaning, understanding, and language. Moreover, creative imagination is nonalgorithmic and nonpropositional, insofar as it is not a process determined by concepts or rules.⁹²

3.1.5. Contemporary Directions

It is possible to see some contemporary discussions of the imagination as movements away from the nominative form to an adjectival or gerundive form of the word. Gilbert Ryle, for example, argues against there being any separate faculty such as the imagination. Rather, things are “imaginative” or are done “imaginatively.” Part of Ryle’s argument is against there being a particular faculty which forms mental images, and his argument can be interpreted as an argument against the hegemony enjoyed by the visual sense, at least in Western Philosophy.

As visual observation has pre-eminence over observation by the other senses, so with most people visual imagination is stronger than auditory, tactial, kinaesthetic, olfactory and gustatory imagination, and consequently the language in which we discuss these matters is largely drawn from the language of seeing. People speak, for example, of ‘picturing’ or ‘visualizing’ things, but they have no corresponding generic verbs for imagery of other sorts.⁹³

The visual comparison of seen things with the seen likenesses of those things is familiar and easy. With sounds we are not so well placed, but there are heard noises and heard echoes of noises, songs sung and recordings of songs played, voices and mimicries of them. So it is easy and tempting to describe visual imaging as if it were a case of looking at a likeness instead of looking at its original, and it may pass muster to describe auditory imagining as if were a case of hearing a sort of echo or recording, instead of hearing the voice itself. But we have no such analogies for smelling, tasting or feeling. So when I say that I ‘smell’ the singed hoof, I have no way of paraphrasing my statement into a form of words which says

⁹² *Ibid.*, 165-166.

⁹³ Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc.: 1949), 247.

instead ‘I smell a copy of a singed hoof.’ The language of originals and copies does not apply to smells.⁹⁴

The problem for Ryle is in the assumption that the imagination consists of producing mental pictures in a process distinct from thinking, rather than considering that the imagination is actually a process of thinking.⁹⁵

Phenomenologists, following the lead of Edmund Husserl, have tried to focus upon the experience of *imagining* (as a gerund) itself. Sartre proclaimed imagination to suffer from a nothingness of being, an essential emptiness.⁹⁶ Claiming that Sartre goes perhaps a bit too far in pronouncing the death of imagination, Edward S. Casey argues to retain the gerund *imagining*.

Imagination as a fixed faculty is indeed dead, eviscerated in the “objective” accounts of many modern thinkers. But *imagining* is very much alive, its potency as an act manifesting itself in daily feats of fancy as well as in the productions of poets. What this means is that although imagination is no longer the only genius – regarded as a reified psychical process, it may even be distinctly moribund – the ongoing activity of imagining survives splendidly.... Artists or not, we are irrepressible imaginers in everyday life, where we indulge in imaginative activity persistently and not merely as an occasional *divertissement*. Despite its airy indeterminateness, imagining arises constantly in the midst of concrete actions and events.⁹⁷

Certainly, to a performer, it is of no consequence whatsoever whether his or her work arises as the result of an innate faculty of the mind or soul, or as a separate faculty mediating between an exterior world and an interior world, or as an inferior process in shadowy imitation of an ideal form. Imagining is an act, or, if you will, *imagining is acting*, just as *acting is imagining*. That is, it is a process, a verb, a gerund. Perhaps Aristotle’s insight correctly frames the answer, that imagination is *kinesis*, a form of movement, rather than a movement of form.

At this juncture it is instructive to turn to the recent work of two theorists who work with imagination: Mark Johnson who returns to Kant in order to develop out of Kant’s *Critiques* a description of imagination which reconnects the sensing body with the rationalizing mind through the act of embodiment, and Richard Kearney, who looks to the visual arts as a means for understanding three paradigm shifts in the operation of imagination.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 253.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 257-258.

⁹⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre, *L’Imaginaire*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1940).

⁹⁷ Edward S. Casey, *Imagining*, 3-4.

3.1.6. Embodied Imagination

Mark Johnson in his book, *The Body in the Mind*, develops an extended argument for the place of the body, or more to the point, for the place of the embodied experience of the human subject in regards to functioning of the imagination. To this end he outlines what is necessary for a complete philosophical understanding of the nature of the imagination:

... As I see it, a fully adequate theory of imagination would include *at least* the following components:

1. *Categorization.* I speak here not of classical, set-theoretical views of categorization (which never probe the workings of imagination) but of a view that does justice to the way human beings really do break up their experience into comprehensible *kinds*. I have in mind here a theory of prototypical categorization and not one that seeks sets of necessary and sufficient conditions.
2. *Schemata.* We need a comprehensive theory of schemata, both in the sense I am using that term (image schemata) and as it is used in much of cognitive science, that is, as general knowledge or event structures. We need to survey the basic kinds of schemata, to see how they can be developed metaphorically, to investigate their complex interrelations, and to explore their connections with propositional structures.
3. *Metaphorical projections.* Metaphor is perhaps the central means by which we project structure across categories to establish new connections and organizations of meaning and to extend and develop image schemata. We need to know more about what kinds of source-domains there are, about what kinds of projections are possible, and about constraints on them (which keep them from being arbitrary).
4. *Metonymy.* Another basic form of projection crucial to the development of meaning is the general category that includes both synecdoche (part-for-whole) and metonymy proper (salient or related attribute-for-whole). The same kinds of questions raised by metaphor will be relevant here, too.
5. *Narrative structure.* When it comes to explaining how it is that humans experience their world in ways that they can make sense of, there must be a central place for the notion of "narrative unity." Not only are we born into complex communal narratives, we also experience, understand, and order our lives as stories that we are living out. Whatever human rationality consists in, it is certainly tied up with narrative structure and the quest for narrative unity.⁹⁸

Arguing against an Objectivist, strictly propositional conception of understanding, Johnson maintains that the embodied basis and origins of understanding and knowing must be taken into account. As human beings we live, move and have our being in bodily form, and our interaction with our environment continually provides us with the imaginative stuff of knowledge and understanding. This embodied way of moving interactively through and in our environment gives rise to at least two imaginative structures: image schemata and metaphorical projection (as indicated in the list above). "An image schema is a recurring, dynamic pattern of our perceptual interactions and motor programs that gives

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 171-172.

coherence and structure to our experience.”⁹⁹ Metaphor, here understood to be more than simply a linguistic device, is “conceived as a pervasive mode of understanding by which we project patterns from one domain of experience in order to structure another domain of a different kind...through metaphor, we make use of patterns that obtain in our physical experience to organize our more abstract understanding.”¹⁰⁰

This line of reasoning parallels my contention in the previous chapter that the body thinks.¹⁰¹ Our image schemata arise as structures within human thinking and are a result of our structured interactions with a structured environment. “They are gestalt structures, consisting of parts standing in relations and organized into unified wholes, by means of which our experience manifests discernible order.”¹⁰² Imagination is this process of structuring our experience and projecting our experience meaningfully, whether in rational thought or in artistic creativity. Johnson’s dependence upon Kant is evident here, for he is arguing for the centrality of imagination both in reason and in aesthetic activity. In addition, the fact that we share the givenness of our embodiment with other human beings make it possible for communal understanding and aesthetic appreciation.

Imagination is central to human meaning and rationality for the simple reason that what we can experience and cognize as meaningful, and how we can reason about it, are both dependent upon structures of imagination that make our experience what it is. On this view, meaning is not situated solely in propositions; instead, it permeates our embodied, spatial, temporal, culturally formed, and value-laden understanding. The structures of imagination are part of what is shared when we understand one another and are able to communicate within a community.¹⁰³

In this dissertation, then, the imagination will be understood to operate in such an embodied and structuring fashion. Not only does it structure experience in a unified fashion, but it also projects that experientially derived image schemata onto other experiences in order to derive meaning or create new experiences. Knowledge also arises metonymically and synecdochically as insights arise by inference and association of partial experiences or circumscribed events with their greater wholes and contexts. And, of course, these structures are described in terms of their narrative unity, which is both individual and communal. All of these imaginative processes are seen to operate in the work of the Deep Ecology practitioners and workshop leaders studied.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, xiv.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, xiv-xv.

¹⁰¹ Chapter 1, section 3.1.

¹⁰² Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind*, xix.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 172.

3.1.7. Three Paradigms

In his book, *The Wake of Imagination*,¹⁰⁴ Richard Kearney traces three paradigm shifts regarding the imagination in relationship to visual representation in the arts. Acknowledging the Western intellectual tradition's rather narcissistic obsession with Modernity, he refers to the paradigmatic expressions as Premodern, Modern and Postmodern.¹⁰⁵ Using visual representation as a particular expression of the imagination, and thus as an indicator of the general tenor of a particular paradigm, he discusses general characteristics of how the imagination is understood and manifested in each of the paradigms.

In the Premodern paradigm (visually represented in Byzantine iconography), the imagination functions *theocentrically*, directing the perceptions beyond that which is perceptible to the One (the Ideal, the First Cause, etc.) who is the source and pattern of all things. Here visual representation functions as *resemblance* or *mimesis*. In the Modern paradigm, the stress shifts to the imagination as a means for human expression, particularly self-expression, and it functions *anthropocentrically*. Visual art from the Renaissance through, at least, Impressionism is an example of the visual representation of the Modern paradigm. Concern focuses upon the subject of expression, the individual self behind the imagination or expression of imagination. In the Postmodern paradigm, the imagination functions *ex-centrally* (to borrow from Jacques Lacan and followers) as parody or fragmentation in which the subject functions outside of itself and not as “a controlling origin of self-expression.”¹⁰⁶

These paradigms are useful to our discussion in that they describe modes of imaginative expression. Indeed, the performative practices surveyed display features of all three paradigms (which some would argue is a demonstration of a decidedly Postmodern turn. *C'est la vie et c'est la via du l'Intellectualisme.*)

3.2. Construction of Mental Images

¹⁰⁴ Richard Kearney, *The Wake of Imagination: Toward a Postmodern Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 6-14.

¹⁰⁵ The capitalization is mine. While his terminology is far from original, his categorizations as paradigms are helpful to look at family resemblances, à la Wittgenstein, within each paradigm. It is also important to point out, as Kearney does, that although these paradigms correspond roughly to particular historical periods, they should not be viewed with any strict historicism. They are tendencies, approaches, inclinations, attitudes that govern how the imagination is understood and used. Indeed, there are people who lived long ago who might exhibit what we would call Modern tendencies, and there are people living now who exhibit Premodern tendencies. The purpose for schematizing them as paradigms is to allow for discussion of how the imagination is understood and manifested.

¹⁰⁶ Richard Kearney, *The Wake of Imagination*, 11.

The preceding discussion highlights the arguments around the existence of the imagination as a separate faculty, whether mental images are formed or not, as well as the presumed role of the imagination in the perception and production of images, whether within the mind or in the visible and physical realm. Not all contemporary philosophers are willing, however, to surrender the dominance of the visual sense in regards to what the imagination is or how it functions. This is reflected in Eva Brann's definition of the imagination, which she derives well into her discussion:

My conclusion is just this: *there is a distinct psychic power, analogously described as a mind's eye, that "sees" representations immanent in an inner psychic space. These are rightly called images. For, as memory-images, they actually copy their perceptual originals, and again, as imaginative images, they seem to image certain fictive archetypes. Consequently they have both the general feel and the defining features of pictures. In sum, it is the nature of the imagination to be a dual faculty that simultaneously forms and sees picture-like resemblances.*¹⁰⁷

In this definition, she is in agreement with Mary Warnock, who presumes imagination to be “*that which creates mental images.*”¹⁰⁸ It shall be the presumption of this dissertation that the semantic distinctions between imagination as a mental faculty and imagining as an activity (after Ryle and Sartre and to a certain extent the phenomenology of Edward Casey) are not significant to our inquiry. In fact, at times I will refer to “the imagination” or simply “imagination” as a useful shorthand for whatever complex of physiological, psychological or epistemological powers that enable persons to perceive, manipulate and create images, intellectual constructs, aesthetic displays or expressions, and I will at other times simply refer to “imagining” as the activity that accomplishes these ends.

However, it is also important for this dissertation that we not rest here simply with the construction of mental images. Rather, as the discussion above in section 2.1. illustrates, we are concerned with the formulation of worldviews and ways of seeing and living in the world. A worldview can be construed as a cognitive map which is experienced perceptually and imaginatively as a *world*. By world, I mean that systematic ordering of perceptions, sensations, internal and external states, values, intellectual

¹⁰⁷ Eva T.H. Brann, *The World of the Imagination*, 193-94, emphasis in original.

¹⁰⁸ Mary Warnock, *Imagination* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976), 10, emphasis in original. See the various defenses regarding the existence of mental images in Alastair Hannay, *Mental Images: A Defense* (New York: The Humanities Press, 1971); E. J. Furlong, “Uses of the Term ‘Imagination’,” Chapter 2 in E. J. Furlong, *Imagination* (New York: Macmillan Co. 1961); Ilham Dilman, “Imagination,” in *The Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volume 41 (London: Harrison and Sons, 1967); Hidé Ishiguru, “Imagination,” in *The Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volume 41 (London: Harrison and Sons, 1967); Ann Garry, “Mental Images,” *Personalist* 58 (1977): 28-38; Ilham Dilman, “Imagination,” *Analysis* 28 (1968): 90-97; and Arthur Danto, “Conceiving Mental Pictures,” *Journal of Philosophy* 55 (1958): 2-20.

and cultural artifacts, and social and personal history in which a person participates intentionally or otherwise. This definition switches the emphasis to the manner in which a person participates in what was earlier described as a worldview.

4. Functions of Performance

The foregoing definition of world is derived from the insight that *the function of performance is to create a world*, albeit temporarily. Performance extends the work of the imagination in its function of creating worlds. Performance brings what begins as an inward phenomenon within the imagination out into the sensory and physical world through the medium of the body, and thus affects the activity of placing the body into the imaginary world. By placing the body into a world which had hitherto existed only in the imagination, that which was imagined becomes real, in the sense of existing in an external physical realm which can in turn be experienced by numbers of people who will validate the reality of the experience. Ordinary reality always contains this communally verifiable aspect. Whether it is described in terms of a paradigm or as a worldview, there is a level to human experience that all humans share by virtue of their common sensory apparatus (albeit there are differences from individual to individual in perceptual acuity and differences due to sensory loss or impairment). A worldview as worldview *per se* exists on a *meta* level. That is, a worldview *qua* worldview is the construction of a particular community of people as that community's description of the nature of experienced reality. Obviously, a worldview encompasses much more than experienced reality, but it always remains rooted in the reality that can be experienced communally and physically by all of its members. Performance functions, then, at this interface between the imaginative realm and the communally experienced physical realm.

Adopting for a moment the language of a reified faculty, then, the fact that all humans are also equipped with imaginations as well as external sensory apparatus argues for the existence of a communal imagination as well, a shared inner life or inner realm in addition to a shared external realm, as Mark Johnson suggests in an earlier citation. Performance moves within the interfaces of these inner and outer realms. By placing the bodies of performers (and by extension, or by vicarious participation, the bodies of audience members) into the realm constructed by those same bodies from out of the imaginal realm, that imaginal realm becomes real, or better yet, *realized* or *actualized*. Repeated performances serve to reinforce the reality of that which is performed. Each of these contentions bears further examination.

4.1. Externalization of Inward States and Interior Imaginal Phenomena

Performance operates as a particularly kinesthetic expression of imagination, or, if you will, as kinetic imagining. It is, of course, usually auditory as well, and can also involve the visual and tactile senses as well. Susanne Langer has argued that music and dance (as performed arts) have the form of human feeling.¹⁰⁹ The process of artistic expression in these performed arts involves giving external form to particular internal (by definition) psychological and emotional states. Note the repeated use of the modifier in the words above: *expression*, *external*. Performance is a *bringing out*. This aligns with the Greek verb *phainesthai*, discussed above, which refers to bringing to light, or out into the open.

4.2. Placement of Bodies Within the Imagined World

But performance accomplishes this externalization, this bringing out through the engaged medium of human bodies. Indeed, whereas the visual arts retain the recorded presence of the human body through the brush stroke which remains, or the poetic arts retain the echo of the human voice on the printed page, these arts remain effective (often more effectively) in the *absence* of the human body. The performing arts, however, require the presence of the human body (laying aside for the moment the fact that performances can be and are recorded by mechanical and electronic means).

In order for any performance to function or be perceived as a performance, space and time need to be specially delineated and circumscribed in some way. Victor Turner describes a process of separation, liminality and reaggregation which a community of people goes through when engaging in ritual, theatre and social dramas.

I sometimes talk about the liminal phase being dominantly in the “subjunctive mood” of culture, the mood of maybe, might-be, as-if, hypothesis, fantasy, conjecture, desire, depending on which of the trinity, cognition, affect, and conation (thought, feeling or intention) is situationally dominant. . . . “Ordinary” day-to-day life is in the indicative mood, where we expect the invariant operation of cause-and-effect, or rationality and common sense. Liminality can perhaps be thought of as a fructile chaos, a fertile nothingness, a storehouse of possibilities, not by any means a random assemblage but a striving after new forms and structure, a gestation process, a fetation of modes appropriate to and anticipating

¹⁰⁹ See Susanne K. Langer, *Feeling And Form: A Theory Of Art Developed From Philosophy In A New Key* (London : Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953); *Philosophy In A New Key: A Study In The Symbolism Of Reason, Rite And Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1942); and *Mind; An Essay On Human Feeling*, 3 Vols. (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1967-1982).

postliminal existence. It is what goes on in nature in the fertilized egg, in the chrysalis, and even more richly in their cultural homologues.¹¹⁰

Performance is liminal space and time in which spectators and performers leave behind ordinary space and time, ordinary reality and enter a performance reality. Space can be delineated by a simple line drawn in the sand, or by an elaborate building and performance chamber, complete with lighting and sound effects. There is usually a point in time in which things are said to begin, and a point at which things end, and socially prescribed ways of marking these points.

Within this liminal time and space, there is an internal consistency and coherence to what occurs. Certain visuals will describe a fictitious place, as in a theatre set, or will organize musicians in an arrangement so as to maximize a certain sound quality, or space will be nearly empty in order to allow for the movement of dancers. Makeup, costuming, heightened gestures, emotive expressions, stylized and athletically expressive movements, singing, the production of musical sounds and rhythms, all are possible elements found as part of performances that serve to point out the specialness of performed time and space.

The liminal character of performed time and space contributes to the possibility of transformation. In Turner's schema of separation, liminality and reaggregation, performers and spectators separate from the normal patterns of social constraints and interaction and enter into a period in which new relationships and activities pertain. This demonstrates in an experiential and visceral sense that the apparent givenness of particular social arrangements and relationships is in the end arbitrary, and that other arrangements are possible. As individual performers undergo changes in appearance, voice, physicality or do things they would not "ordinarily" do, other individuals observing them gain the knowledge that who one is and what one does is likewise arbitrary. In fact, performers themselves also gain this same knowledge. The process of reaggregation returns the community to its established and pre-existing state of affairs and relationships. However, it must be pointed out that after a performance, both spectators and performers carry within themselves a sensory and somatic memory of the liminal experience, the seeds for transformation. Indeed, in many rituals, the liminality of performance is utilized specifically for the purpose of transformation, whether of healing, of conversion to a particular religious group, of acquiring supernormal powers or

¹¹⁰ Victor Turner, "Are There Universals of Performance?" in Richard Schechner and Willa Appel, *By Means of Performance: Intercultural Studies of Theatre and Ritual* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 11-12.

visions, or simply marking the end of a course of study or apprenticeship. So, performance, in its liminal aspect, carries the potential for, and, often, realization of, transformation.

4.3. Involvement of the Full Sensory Apparatus

Performance operates synaesthetically. That is, all of the human sensorium is engaged in such a way that the senses blend and overlap. Indeed, as Maurice Merleau-Ponty points out, this is the normal manner of human perception:

. . . Synaesthetic perception is the rule, and we are unaware of it only because scientific knowledge shifts the center of gravity of experience, so that we have unlearned how to see, hear, and generally speaking, feel, in order to deduce, from our bodily organization and the world as the *physicist* conceives it, what we are to see, hear, and feel.¹¹¹

The world as the performer conceives it, is one in which *how* a thing is said or done is as significant as *what* is said or done. That is to say, patterns of tonality, pauses, rhythms, euphony and the clashing of tone and timbre, the interplay of colors or their muting, the swishing of textile as it moves across the floor, the jolt of flesh and bone leaping and landing, the sound of the breath, the spontaneous communal laughter or the coaxing of tears -- all the various facets of a performance are part of the performance, and engage the full sensorium of both performer and spectator. Whereas the conceptions of the physicist in Merleau-Ponty's example may work to separate out the senses into discrete categories, the conception of the performer is to bring out all the senses to jostle and juggle them in novel and exciting ways. And while there is a tremendous spirit of play in all of this, there resides also a deeply serious concern as well - for the performer marshals all the embodied modes of being in the world precisely because these are the *very* modes of being human in the world.

The experiencing body . . . is not a self-enclosed object, but an open, incomplete entity. This openness is evident in the arrangement of the senses: I have these multiple ways of encountering and exploring the world – listening with my ears, touching with my skin, seeing with my eyes, tasting with my tongue, smelling with my nose – and all of these various powers or pathways continually open outward from the perceiving body, like different paths diverging from a forest. Yet my experience of the world is not fragmented; I do not commonly experience the visible appearance of the world as in any way separable from its audible aspect, or from the myriad textures that offer themselves to my touch. When the local tomcat comes to visit, I do not have distinctive experiences of a visible cat, an audible cat, and an olfactory cat; rather the tomcat is precisely the place where these separate sense modalities join and dissolve into one another, blending as well with a certain furry tactility. Thus, my divergent senses meet up with each other in the surrounding world, converging and commingling in the things I perceive. We may think of the sensing body as a kind of open

¹¹¹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), 227, quoted in David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 60.

circuit that completes itself only in things, and in the world. The differentiation of my senses, as well as their spontaneous convergence in the world at large, ensures that I am being destined for relationship: it is primarily through my engagement with what is *not* me that I effect the integration of my senses, and thereby experience my own unity and coherence.¹¹²

The openness of the sensorium to the world around it is a reflection of the fact that the senses develop in direct interaction with the world around them. The very design and structure of the senses is predicated upon interaction, and thus, sensing organisms, such as humans, can be said to be designed for relationship.

The diversity of my sensory systems, and their spontaneous convergence in the things I encounter, ensures this interpenetration or interweaving between my body and other bodies – this magical participation that permits me, at times, to feel what others feel. The gestures of another being, the rhythm of its voice, and the stiffness or bounce in its spine all gradually draw my senses into a unique relation with one another, into a coherent, if shifting, organization. And the more I linger with this other entity, the more coherent the relation becomes, and hence the more completely I find myself face-to-face with another intelligence, another center of experience.¹¹³

It is precisely the embodied sensorium of performer and spectator that make the imaginative externalization of internal states possible, but it also makes possible the internalization of what has been expressed, so that the experiences, internal and external, of one person (or entity, as this connection is possible with non-human beings as well) are shared and appropriated, taken in by another person or entity. Thus, there is a continual flow of experience between beings. The performance event is an accentuation and intensification of this normal process of perception. And this normal process of perception makes possible the participation in community.

4.4. Communal and Participation: Transcendent Relationality

It is the participatory nature of performance that brings persons into an engaged involvement and relationship with one another. This is more than simply an exercise in entertainment or pleasure. It is, in fact, an experience of transcendence, but of a kind of transcendence that is rooted in relationality.

Transcendence is central to religious experience. But it is also central to being a person. To be a person means to be in relation. Personality is the potential to be in relation as well as the particular qualities of relating that an individual manifests. Martin Buber describes this when he says, “Individuality makes its

¹¹² David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 125.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 127.

appearance by being differentiated from other individualities. A person makes his (sic) appearance by entering into relation with other persons.”¹¹⁴

Relationship and relationality are a necessary part of transcendence. It is not enough to describe transcendence simply in terms of going beyond one’s limits and boundaries, but also to understand that one is going beyond those limits to make contact with an other, with that which lies beyond oneself. To be in relationship, in fact, requires transcendence. In order to make contact with an other, whether it be a person, a thing or God, I must go beyond the narrow confines of myself in order to approach and make contact with the other. But in order to be truly in relation I must also open myself up, let down my own boundaries or “guard,” as it were, in order to allow the other to make contact with me. Relationship, then, is not only an extending beyond myself, but it is also an inviting and letting in.

Performance as embodied imagination is precisely that place-time in which perceptions, psychological states, knowledge and understanding are shared communally and where persons can enter into states in which the transformation of relationships within and between persons or persons and other entities is made possible.

5. Possibility of a Politics of Performance

Performance as embodied imagination can play an important role in the transformation of society. The liminality of performance creates the conditions wherein the possibilities for transformation obtain. The perceptual and sensory apparatus of the human body make it possible for persons to step outside of their received and accustomed experience of the world in order to consider other possible arrangement and relationships within and beyond human society. From the discussion of imagination, then, we now move on to a consideration of the possibility of a politics of performance.

5.1. Randy Martin

In rehearsals and performance, the performer works with the imagination in its fully embodied form. Performance can be thus thought of as embodied imagination, and the body itself is the vehicle of movement between worlds, virtual and actual. It is this very process of moving between virtual and actual worlds that provides for the possibility of transformative and revolutionary change personally and socially. Once a person experiences in their body another way of being or another world, that memory lingers

¹¹⁴ Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, 2nd ed., trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), 62.

somatically and can provide the impetus to bring into being and into actuality a world different from the one presently inhabited. Randy Martin, in his book, *Performance as Political Act: The Embodied Self*, makes connections between the performative body and the politically engaged body:

I contend that consciousness, while undeniably critical, is not enough to move people into the political arena. There is a political heart, more than that, a political body, that must be conjoined with mind to turn social arrest to unrest and move people to the center stage of history. It has been the neglect of this body that has made worldly drama so frightening and kept people in the role of spectator rather than political actor.¹¹⁵

It is this aspect of performance that Martin, himself a dancer, finds problematic: that society has become dichotomized between performers/actors and spectators. He draws the parallel with the split between mind and body, and suggests the political consequences of such a division:

Spectator and actor are parts played by some more familiar characters, mind and body. The division between the former two as roles is the split between the latter two as a social organization of our being. This schism between mind and body is social in its origins. The body fails to become the key to political activity, not because it is inherently more suited to oppose domination but because that domination is, above all, a control of mind.... Within our society, the mind is the thing that watches but also that which is watched. The body neither sees nor is seen. It has become the action itself. As with the actor on the stage, the body, as a site of resistance, exists only in performance.¹¹⁶

The process of performing moves a person from the role of spectator into the role of actor, speaking aesthetically as well as politically. The experience of finding one's body in a different set of relationships and in a different imaginative and cognitive landscape provides a powerful impetus for acting politically as well as aesthetically.

The medium of the performing arts is the human body itself. This body is not poised to receive meanings, as is the reader, but to produce physical expressions. It does not lie passive as an object but has the capacity to act. . . . The study of dance and theater is the study of how a particular group of people overcome stage fright, how the distance between spectator and actor is traversed, and, ultimately, how a world of meanings becomes a world of desire.¹¹⁷

What is being described is a politics of performance, a politics that takes seriously the corporeal constitution of human beings. Performance Hermeneutics operates with this understanding of the power of the embodied imagination to engage people fully in such a way as to affect changes personally and socially. But because as a society we are not used to this function of hermeneutics, it is necessary to make this link explicit.

¹¹⁵ Randy Martin, *Performance as Political Act: The Embodied Self* (New York: Bergin and Garvey, 1990), 1.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

A different style of a politics of performance is found in the despair and empowerment work of Joanna Macy.

5.2. Joanna Macy

Joanna Macy is arguably the pre-eminent pioneer in the use of performance as embodied imagination in personal and social transformation. In the preceding sentence, it is important to keep “personal and social” together as a unity. Macy’s work in the Nuclear Disarmament campaigns and Nuclear Guardianship project as well as her more recent work in Deep Ecology circles has focused upon how to move people from collective inaction to collective action and change.

Macy spent several years in India with her husband Fran who was the deputy director of the India program of the Peace Corps. Through working with Tibetan refugees, she became acquainted with Tibetan Buddhist monks and was formally introduced to Buddhist thought and practice. After returning to the United States, she pursued and completed a doctoral degree in which she explored the relationship between Buddhist notions of interdependence and mutual causality and systems thought.¹¹⁸ She spent several years in Sri Lanka with the Sarvodaya movement, where she worked with Theravadan Buddhists who were engaged in efforts to help rural villagers to become communally and ecologically self-sustaining. Having become a Buddhist as a result of these contacts, Buddhist insights and practices are found throughout her work. In her Preface to the book she recently co-authored with Molly Brown, Macy offers these words of gratitude for the various streams which have contributed to her present work:

In the Great Turning, on which our future depends, many traditions and fields of inquiry have riches to offer. Strong currents in my own life nourished and shaped the Work that Reconnects. Thanks to my Protestant preacher grandfather, Judeo-Christian teachings – especially those of Isaiah and Jesus – infused my early years with the notion that we’re here for something bigger than our private pursuits. My doctoral studies in general living systems theory have provided valuable insights and conceptual tools. And so has Buddhism, which has deeply informed and illuminated the last thirty-five years of my life. The Buddha Dharma prompts me to think of the work this book describes as bodhisattva training. The bodhisattva is the Buddhist embodiment of compassion, who acts simply and boldly for the sake of all beings, and who lets herself be vitalized - indeed liberated – by her [*sic*] interconnections with them.¹¹⁹

5.2.1. Despair and Empowerment Work

¹¹⁸ See her book, *Mutual Causality in Buddhism and General Systems Theory: The Dharma of Natural Systems* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991).

¹¹⁹ Joanna Macy, “Preface,” in Joanna Macy and Molly Young Brown, *Coming Back to Life: Practices to Reconnect Our Lives, Our World* (Gabriola Island, BC, Canada: New Society Publishers, 1998), 6-7.

Macy began to do what she came to call Despair and Empowerment work as a result of her involvement with the Nuclear Freeze and Disarmament campaigns of the 1960s through 80s.¹²⁰ As the dangers attendant upon the manufacture and deployment of nuclear weapons, as well as the extreme threat to life posed by the mining and refining of weapons-grade trans-uranic minerals and the disposal of the resultant wastes and radioisotopes became increasingly evident and public knowledge, Macy became concerned at the apparent lack of widespread public outcry or political action. In her conversations with people, she discovered that this was not due to a lack of information or education. Rather, the problem had to do with psychological numbing.

As people became aware of the enormity of the threat and crisis posed by nuclear weapons, the grief and fear it aroused within them frequently became too great to face. Many people felt cut off from other concerned individuals (and the problem in part stemmed from the perception of being isolated individuals) and thus believed they were alone in their despair. Macy then began to develop group exercises and role-playing scenarios which were designed to enable people to acknowledge and express their pain, grief and despair for the world and then to harvest that passion and compassion to bring about the changes necessary to diminish or rid the world of those things which threatened it. Her book, *Despair and Power in the Nuclear Age*,¹²¹ grew out of this work and contained a collection of these exercises and role-playing scenarios, as well as an explanation of some of the principles behind Despair and Empowerment work.

5.2.2. *Coming Back to Life*

Macy's work springs out of central Buddhist insight regarding the interconnectedness of all things. This insight is not unique to Buddhism, of course, but its particular articulation in Buddhist thought and teaching as well as the practices Buddhism has engendered over the centuries has exerted great influence in Macy's work.

Of the Asian traditions now breaking upon the Western mind, Buddhism especially helps us understand the new ecological paradigm, and work with it in the healing of the world. The core doctrine of the Buddha Dharma, basic to its psychology and ethics, is the "dependent co-arising" of all phenomena -- arguably the clearest conceptualization of mutual causality prior to general systems theory. It comes not only from empirical observation and subtle

¹²⁰ The information in this section is derived from my participation in several workshops and one graduate school class taught by Joanna Macy, as well as personal conversations. See also her memoir, *Widening Circles* (Gabriola Island, BC, Canada: New Society Publishers, 2000).

¹²¹ Joanna Macy, *Despair and Power in the Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia, PA: New Society Publishers, 1983).

nonlinear logic, but also from a resolve to relieve suffering. It is meant to free us from the prison cell of egocentricity and possessiveness, and usher us into the gladness of harmonious, responsible relationship with all that is.

In the Buddha Dharma we find practices and imageries to help us realize our profound interexistence. Mental disciplines based on a sophisticated understanding of the mind help us relate to reality in terms of process, or impermanence, rather than in terms of solid, self-existing objects to grasp or reject. They school us to confront in our own psyches the fears, greeds, hatreds at the root of human suffering; to experience how these “fetters” or “poisons” arise from fictive notions of a permanent, separate self; and to progressively let them go. Meditations -- such as loving kindness, compassion, and joy in the joy of others -- further decondition old patterns of fears and competitiveness and serve as ground and compass in a fluidly interdependent world.¹²²

This central insight of the interconnectedness of all things and the interdependence of all processes has received a new articulation in general living systems theory. Researchers in physics, biology, environmental science and cybernetics (a science actually spawned as a result of early work in systems theory) began to identify the ways in which living systems, especially, but also non-living systems achieved and maintained levels of activity and regeneration which were self-sustaining and stable over time. This work was found to apply equally well to the self-regulation of steam engines as well as to the homeostatic processes of mammalian metabolism as well as to the behaviors of corporations and societies.¹²³

There are four properties shared by open systems which allow for self-organization to occur. Macy and Brown summarize them thus:

1. Each system, from atom to galaxy is a whole, and not reducible to its components. . . .
2. Despite continual flow-through of matter-energy and information, and indeed thanks to that flow-through, open systems are able to maintain their balance; they self-stabilize. . . .
3. Open systems not only maintain their balance amidst the flux, but also evolve in complexity. When challenges from their environment persist, they can fall apart or adapt by reorganizing themselves around new, more responsive norms. . . .
4. Every system is a “holon” – that is, it is both a whole in its own right, comprised of subsystems, and simultaneously an integral part of a larger system. . . .¹²⁴

Her description of the pain and grief many people feel for the world in her recent book (with Molly Brown), *Coming Back to Life*, a reworking of her earlier book, *Despair and Power in the Nuclear Age*, expresses how the notion of interconnectedness is what enables us to feel pain for the world and one another, and is also the source of strength for addressing the crises facing the world. Her words bear a strong resemblance to my earlier description of the functioning of the sensorium in performance:

¹²² Joanna Macy and Molly Young Brown, *Coming Back to Life*, 51.

¹²³ Fritjof Capra provides an excellent overview of the history and development of systems thought and its relationship to Deep Ecology in his book, *The Web of Life* (New York: Anchor Books, 1996).

¹²⁴ Joanna Macy and Molly Young Brown, *Coming Back to Life*, 43.

What we are dealing with here is akin to the original meaning of compassion: “suffering with.” It is the distress we feel on behalf of the larger whole of which we are a part. It is the pain of the world itself, experienced in each of us.

No one is exempt from that pain, any more than one could exist alone and self-sufficient in empty space. It is as natural to us as the food and air we draw upon to fashion who we are. It is inseparable from the currents of matter, energy, and information that flow through us and sustain us as interconnected systems. We are not closed off from the world, but integral components of it, like cells in a larger body. When that body is traumatized, we sense that trauma, too. When it falters and sickens, we feel its pain, whether we pay attention to it or not.

That pain is the price of our consciousness in a threatened and suffering world. It is not only natural, it is an absolute necessary component of our collective healing. As in all organisms, pain has a purpose: it is a warning signal, designed to trigger remedial action.¹²⁵

5.2.3. The Work that Reconnects

Macy and Brown in their book, *Coming Back to Life*, refer to their work as the Work that Reconnects, an allusion to their commitment to the interconnectedness of all things, and what they consider to be the malaise of contemporary (Post-Industrial) culture: the sense of disconnectedness and isolation among people from each other and from the natural environment.

The central purpose of the Work that Reconnects is to help people uncover and experience their innate connections with each other and with the systemic, self-healing powers of the web of life, so that they may be enlivened and motivated to play their part in creating a sustainable civilization.¹²⁶

They list a set of principles which guide their work:

1. This world, in which we are born and take our being, is *alive*.
2. Our true nature is far more ancient and encompassing than the separate self defined by habit and society.
3. Our experience of pain for the world springs from our interconnectedness with all beings, from which also arises our powers to act on their behalf.
4. Unblocking occurs when our pain for the world is not only intellectually validated but experienced.
5. When we reconnect with life, by willingly enduring our pain for it, the mind retrieves its natural clarity.
6. The experience of reconnection with the Earth community arouses desire to act on its behalf.¹²⁷

Two exercises provide examples of the influence of general systems theory and Buddhist practice in Macy’s work, both of which I encountered in workshops, class and trainings I attended. The first is called “the Systems Game,” and is derived from a game shared by Alice Pitty at Schumacher College in

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 58.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 59-60.

1994.¹²⁸ In this exercise, participants stand in a large open space, with plenty of room to move about. They are then instructed to mentally choose two other people in the room without indicating whom they have chosen. Then when everyone has chosen two people, they are given the simple instruction to move so as to keep at all times an equal distance between themselves and each of the other two people. This does not mean being at the midpoint between the two, simply to maintain the same distance from person A as from person B. Then people are allowed to move about the space. After some time (about five minutes) of continuous circulation, adjusting and readjusting positions, the leader brings the activity to a close and invites comments and questions. Macy and Brown provide the following commentary:

- Participants' reflections usually bring out some key features of self-regulating systems, such as the interdependence of all parts, and their continual activity in seeking and maintaining balance.
- People may realize that they thought the point of the game was to achieve stasis; the guide can bring out and challenge that assumption. The self-regulation of open systems requires constant internal activity.
- People may articulate perceptual and psychological shifts they experienced in the game. These can include a radically widened sense of context, and a larger, more porous sense of self. A temporary eclipse of self-consciousness may be noted, as one's perceptions focused not on one's own actions so much as on other's -- that is, not on separate entities so much as on relations among them.
- "*Is this a closed system or an open system?*" the guide may ask. If people think it is a closed system because no one entered from outside, it should be pointed out that an influx of energy, originating from the sun, empowered all participants. We couldn't last long without food or drink from outside the system we just created. Individually and collectively we are open systems dependent on inputs of matter-energy and information. Closed systems do not exist in nature.
- "*What feedback enabled us to fulfill our function (that is, of staying equidistant from two others)?*" If there is no answer, the guide may ask, "*could we have done it with our eyes closed?*" The ensuing discussion can feature how not only visual perceptions, but also feedback of all kinds, guide us in our daily lives in the systems we co-create at home and at work.
- "*Would anyone volunteer to organize this process?*" the guide may ask. It is obvious that no party or person on the outside could direct the movements necessary to keep this system in balance.¹²⁹

In all of the workshops, classes and trainings I attended with Macy, she always included time for sitting in silence and meditation. In addition, she would lead guided meditations. In her class sessions at Starr King School for the Ministry in Berkeley, California, every class began with an extended time spent in silent meditation, a practice central to Buddhism. The style of meditation she presented us with was derived from Vipassana meditation, which is a mindfulness meditation which cultivates keen awareness of

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 119.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 120.

the immediate experiencing of mind and body by being mindful of whatever arises into consciousness, but then releasing those things to pass out of consciousness. The simple practice of mindfulness meditation trains the practitioner in extending their awareness beyond their own concerns and mental and psychological states. By experiencing how thoughts arise and pass away and the impermanence of emotions and psychological states, the insight can arise that a person is not their thoughts or emotions. Further meditation upon the body and its changes can lead to the insight that one is not their body, since the body as it is now is not the body it was ten years ago, and is not the body it will be in ten or twenty years. These can lead into insights about non-attachment to our bodies and lives as things. Rather, our lives are processes, just as breathing is a process, just as thoughts and psychological states are processes. Mindfulness walks, as an extension of silent sitting meditation, can extend these insights to the natural world, which is continually dying, returning to the earth, and arising again. All of these practices, which are used in varying forms in Macy's classes or workshops, are based in Buddhist practice.

5.2.4. Interview

I had the opportunity to attend a training entitled "Our Life as Earth," sponsored by the Institute for Deep Ecology, which was held July 9-12, 1998, at the Chinook Institute, on Whidbey Island, Washington. Joanna Macy was one of the workshop leaders and keynote speakers. Following the training, I was able to interview her concerning her use of the imagination in her workshops. For Macy, imagination is critical to her work, in fact, it is a source of salvation and healing for the world.

My work is to help people imagine the world they are in. Imagining is captured by Martin Buber and Robert Jay Lifton when they each speak about "imagining the real." My work with imagination is designed to internalize and come to terms with what is actually going on. It helps us to come into contact with what is going on. It is to wake up to the actual conditions of our world. Then my use of the imagination enhances what other deep ecology people say. We use the imagination to get inside the skin of an earthworm or people making atomic bombs.¹³⁰

Imagination functions as a way for people to experience that which is beyond their immediate perceptions, as well as a way to imagine or experience imaginatively that which is more conceptual and theoretical. For example, it is hard to see relationships, particularly the relationships articulated in general living systems theory or ecology. Macy uses the imagination in its embodied form to make those relationships more palpable. But she also engages the moral imagination as well, in order to look closely at the actual

¹³⁰ Joanna Macy, interview by author, handwritten notes, July 12, 1998, and phone conversation December 6, 2000.

conditions of the world. This use of the imagination is a way to move people beyond mental numbness to experience the reality of the global environmental situation.

Even, perhaps, the ancients needed imagination -- grandmother spider weaving invisible strands. I find people readier to use imagination in a workshop. In a talk, people aren't necessarily changed -- enacting something changes you. You are altered. Maybe rituals of the ancients did that -- made palpable relationships that can't be seen with the eyes. It makes me think of the game where people toss a ball of yarn around, making visible the web which is invisible. I find in my work that people are ready to go with the role-plays -- in a dramatic way to use their imaginations. Especially when they give form to or embody their experience -- when it makes their experience and intentions understandable, (there is) willingness and intelligence going into the improvisation.¹³¹

Macy stresses that her use of the imagination is not a form of "channeling," but is "using the moral imagination for the purpose of participating in the healing of the world."¹³² Macy understands, out of her Buddhist commitments, that this healing work is the work of the bodhisattva. "The bodhisattva by definition is aware of the interdependence of all beings, and this interdependence, which is relational, requires acts of imagination in order to apprehend the interdependence."¹³³ She freely refers to the people who come to such workshops, who have demonstrated a desire to address environmental and social problems, as "bodhisattvas."

At the bodhisattva level we can talk about choosing. Always imagining the real. We are in *this* time. This allows us to begin to understand the circumstances that we now face, as well as the actions that serve the healing of the world.

Always in service to imagining what is -- the Bodhisattva exercise is to imagine there is a purpose to being here. It originated in work I did in Assisi, Italy. It is tremendously affirming of people.¹³⁴

To affirm people as bodhisattvas puts the stress upon the positive, upon the resources people already have to be about the work of healing the planet, in Macy's words. While many environmental speakers and writers will focus upon human destructiveness and the devastation wreaked by humans, Macy focuses upon the inherent creativity of the human imagination as the place to begin reversing environmental damage.

Imagination also detaches -- it is a way to practice non-attachment from our role -- using imagination helps loosen your total identification with the single role you play all the time. It helps get you out of role freeze.¹³⁵

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Phone conversation, December 6, 2000.

¹³⁴ Interview, July 12, 1998, and phone conversation, December 6, 2000.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

The bodhisattva exercise, developed first at Assisi, assists with breaking out of role freeze by having people imagine their choice to be alive now in their present life circumstances. This exercise emphasizes the conscious capacity of people to choose their involvement and engagement with the world.

Macy describes the exercise in *Coming Back to Life* under the exercise labeled “My Choices for This Life”:

Two introductory stages precede the main body of the exercise. First, the group is invited to contemplate the long panoramic journey of life on Earth. Along with words from the guide, a tape of tonal sound helps open the mind to that journey's vast expanses of time. The guide asks participants to imagine that they can remember how they chose to be alive as a human in this moment of history. (Joanna tells of bodhisattvas and their vow to keep returning to the world to relieve suffering.) Participants imagine they are all together in that time out of time which preceded their birth. They learn of the crisis facing life on Earth at the end of the second millennium.

The challenges take many forms -- the making and using of nuclear weapons, industrial technologies that poison and waste whole ecosystems, billions of people sinking into poverty -- but one thing is clear. A quantum leap in consciousness is required if life is to prevail on Earth. Hearing this, we decide to renew our commitment to life (our bodhisattva vow) and reenter the fray -- to birth as humans in the twentieth century, bringing everything we've ever learned about courage and community. This is a major decision. We make it together and feel each other's support, but it's like going over a cliff; we know we probably won't even recognize each other once we've assumed different bodies and identities.

Each person reflects on their readiness to take birth in so challenging a planet-time. When each has decided that they are ready to do this, they stand up, one by one. Let a drum or gong be sounded when all have stood. If a drum is used, it can keep on beating into the next brief stage, as people start circulating around the room.

Now you have taken birth in this planet-time, and you're walking around this room, just as you've walked through your lives right up to this moment. Here, however, something unusual is about to happen. As you move about, glancing into each other's faces, there will be one that you imagine you recognize. Perhaps it's something in the eyes, or expression or bearing, that lets you suddenly recognize one of your old buddies from that company (of bodhisattvas) with whom you made the decision to come back. When that happens, just stop and connect without words. And then sit down together in silence.

These wordless encounters can be very moving, like a homecoming. Soon everyone is seated; if the number is uneven, the guide takes a partner also.

Now the main part of the exercise begins. The partners in each pair take turns telling each other about the particular life they assumed -- the selves and situations they chose to inhabit for the world-healing work they have come to do.¹³⁶

The participants then describe to their partners the set of circumstances of their lives such as when they were born, where they have lived, their social conditions, religion, gender, parents and siblings, any disabilities they chose to accept at this time as well as their appetites and mission in life. These are guided and prompted by the leader of the exercise. The purpose of the exercise is emphasize the power of conscious choice, and to see how each person can be a part of the healing of the world.

It is very powerful to stand -- it is a recommitment to act for the healing of the earth. This (exercise) allows us to understand the circumstances that have gone together to help with the healing of the world.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Macy and Brown, *Coming Back to Life*, 130-131.

In many of her workshops, Macy also plays with what she calls Deep Time. In Deep Time experiences, workshop participants are taken, via the imagination, forwards or backwards in time. Going forwards in time allows Macy to describe a world in which certain of today's environmental problems have been addressed, and then to assist workshop participants in experiencing how they can be a part of the solution.

What I have done is to take a group and divide them. 4-6 people go into another room. They are told that they on an intergalactic research mission sent by the US government. They have been sent to another planet that went through an Industrial Growth Society -- and now has a sustainable culture -- the researchers have been sent to go and interview them as to how they did it. So the people in the other room return and interview the people in the room how they did it.

This exercise stays in the imagination. It is easy to get into arguments and intellectual debate. Imagination loosens role freeze -- it also frees the mind -- (it releases and sparks) creativity.¹³⁸

In terms of the thesis of this dissertation, Macy's work clearly is concerned with the creation of worlds by means of embodied imagination. Macy's worlds are embedded in a hope-filled trust in the ability of people to change their situation, once they are empowered to make that change. Role-playing, Deep Time exercises, and bodhisattva exercises are all examples of how she capitalizes (to borrow an economic term) on the ability of human imagination to construct worlds and experience as well as reconfigure relationships. The activity of the imagination described earlier in this chapter to receive sense impressions and then present them in a form for the reason to arrange in a coherent pattern suggests that "the world as it is" is really "the world as it seems to be." That is, an imaginative reconfiguring of the way things are experienced at the present moment reveals that alternative relationships are possible. By experiencing these alternative relationships imaginatively in an embodied fashion, workshop participants can discover the resources they have within themselves to construct in the physical world what they have experienced in the imaginal world. In this way, then, Macy's workshops enact a politics of performance in which the participants are the performers rehearsing their roles in changing the world.

6. Summary and Recapitulation of Thesis

I have argued that performance is a form of embodied imagination. In this chapter I have traced some of the history of the term "imagination" and its related terms in Greek thought and European

¹³⁷ Macy, interview July 12, 1998.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

philosophy. I have argued that one of the functions of the imagination is to construct cognitive and experiential worlds in which individuals situate themselves. These worlds are the product or manifestation of a systematic ordering of perceptions, sensations, internal and external states, values, intellectual and cultural artifacts, and social and personal history in which persons participate intentionally or otherwise. These worlds are most often congruent with the worldviews constructed by the society or culture in which they find themselves. Thus, there exists also a social imagination which places limits and boundaries on behavior, perception, and conceptualization.

I then discussed how performance creates these worlds in a manner which makes the virtual become the real, or at least the perceptual. Performance functions at the interface between the individual imaginative realm and the communally experienced physical realm. The imaginal realm becomes real or actual in the act of performance when embodied persons act out that which is imagined. Repeated performances serve to reinforce the reality, or possible or nascent reality of that which is performed. The liminal character of performances serves to break down the existing categories and relationships in a society or group, which opens up the possibility for communal and individual transformation.

I then argued that this possibility of communal transformation gives rise to a politics of performance, discussed by Randy Martin and demonstrated by Joanna Macy in her Deep Ecology workshops. Describing her own work as “The Work that Reconnects,” Macy’s own words demonstrated her deliberate use of performance and embodied imagination in role-playing and experiential exercises as a means to empower people to actively engage themselves in working for social and environmental change.

In Chapter 4, I will examine in detail several Deep Ecology workshops I attended, some with Joanna Macy and some with other Deep Ecology practitioners and leaders. But first, it is necessary to pause and situate Deep Ecology within its own context of time and place.

Chapter 3

The Sources, Contours and Practices of Deep Ecology

1. Situating Deep Ecology

In this chapter I situate Deep Ecology within the broader environmental movement. To this end I trace the development of the environmental movement from its origins in the conservation movement of the late 1800s to mid 1900s through its present constellation of reform, conservation, “Third Wave” and radical expressions. I pay special attention to the dialectical relationship between Deep Ecology and Ecofeminism and Social Ecology. While those particular radical ecologies are not the subject of this dissertation, it is important to understand that Deep Ecology does not exist in a vacuum, but has developed in the broader context of these radical environmental movements. This particularly characterizes the work of the Institute for Deep Ecology, sponsor of the workshops and training events which are the focus of research for this dissertation. After tracing this dialogue within the radical environmental movement, I focus upon the key players in Deep Ecology and then focus more specifically upon the work of the Institute for Deep Ecology itself. The history and work of the Institute provide a window into the emerging and incipient religious qualities within the Deep Ecology movement.

1.1. Brief History of the Environmental Movement

Many environmental historians and journalists writing about the environmental movement divide the history of environmentalism into three or four periods. For example, in a 1986 article in the *Wall Street Journal*, Fred Krupp, executive director of the Environmental Defense Fund, traced three stages in the development of the environmental movement in the United States. Since that article, many writers have picked up on his tripartite scheme. The first stage was the development of a conservation movement characterized by those who wished to manage lands and wildlife for their utility to humans, and those who wished to preserve certain areas as wild places, for their own sake. The time period for this first wave stretches from the early 1800s to the early 1960s. The table below illustrates the founding dates and recent

membership statistics of many of the prominent national conservation organizations that were established as part of this first wave.

Table 1: Early National Conservation Organizations¹³⁹

Many of today's groups had their beginnings long before Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring* in 1962.

Organization	Founded	Recent Membership
American Forestry Society	1875	35,000
Sierra Club	1892	450,000
Wildlife Conservation International	1895	34,000
National Audubon Society	1905	550,000
National Parks and Conservation Society	1919	70,000
Izaac Walton League of America	1922	50,000
The Wilderness Society	1935	220,000
National Wildlife Federation	1936	5,800,000
Ducks Unlimited	1937	610,000
Defenders of Wildlife	1947	80,000
The Nature Conservancy	1951	343,000
Friends of Animals	1957	120,000
Trout Unlimited	1959	58,000
World Wildlife Fund - U.S.	1961	500,000

Source: *Conservation Director*

The second wave is dated from the early 1960s, often beginning with the publication of Rachel Carson's book, *Silent Spring*. This period developed largely in response to the rapid increase of air, water and soil pollution, as well as the ripening of the science of ecology and the development of environmental science. The first Earth Day was celebrated in 1970 as a focal and defining moment of this wave, which witnessed a virtual "explosion of pollution control laws and regulation."¹⁴⁰ The third wave developed as an attempt to apply economic incentives to encourage businesses to curb pollution and protect the environment. The fourth wave developed as a reaction against what many saw as the third wave's coziness with business and a lack of social or philosophical critique of the factors contributing to the environmental crisis.

In the section to follow, I will briefly trace the developments of these four waves in order to properly situate the Deep Ecology movement historically and philosophically as a particular expression of the fourth wave of environmentalism in North America.

1.1.1. The First Wave: the Conservation Movement

¹³⁹ Taken from Robert E. Taylor, *Ahead of the Curve: Shaping New Solutions to Environmental Problems* (New York: Environmental Defense Fund, 1990), 16.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

The first wave was influenced by such people as Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman and George Perkins Marsh who wrote in the early and mid-19th century and provided an intellectual and aesthetic foundation for conservation and preservation movements which came later in the century. As white settlers, miners, trappers, ranchers, farmers and business people migrated to the Western region of the North American continent, they began to impact the land almost immediately. Gifford Pinchot, the first director of the U.S. Forest Service, describes the situation in his memoir *Breaking New Ground*.

The American Colossus was fiercely intent on appropriating and exploiting the riches of all continents—grasping with both hands, reaping where he had not sown, wasting what he thought would last forever. New railroads were opening new territory. The exploiters were pushing farther and farther into the wilderness. The man who could get his hands on the biggest slice of natural resources was the best citizen. Wealth and virtue were supposed to trot in double harness.¹⁴¹

In part as a result of seeing despoliation of the forests and woodlands of the Eastern United States, and seeing the same starting to occur to the forests and mountains of the West, many persons started to articulate and advocate for conservation of natural resources.¹⁴² John Muir campaigned on behalf of setting aside large areas of land away from the hands of mining and timber interests. He succeeded in the preservation of much of what is now Yosemite National Park. Gifford Pinchot helped transform “the little old Forestry Division” of the Department of Agriculture, as it was known in 1898, first into the Bureau of Forestry in 1901 and then finally in 1905 into the U.S.D.A. Forest Service.¹⁴³ Pinchot’s conservation ethic and practice was to manage natural resources for the greatest good for the greatest number of people.¹⁴⁴ He frequently declared, “For whose benefit shall [natural resources] be conserved—for the benefit of the many or for the use and profit of the few?”¹⁴⁵ Although Muir and Pinchot disagreed on the purposes and public policy practices of conservationism, both advocated for the role of the federal government in carrying out conservation and preservation efforts. This was entirely amenable to the Progressive Era conservationism of Theodore Roosevelt, who utilized Pinchot heavily to craft both policy and speeches.

¹⁴¹ Gifford Pinchot, *Breaking New Ground* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1998), 23.

¹⁴² The terminology was deliberate. While Thoreau and Whitman could wax poetic concerning life at the edge of a pond or ponder life in nature, the concerns during the latter half of the century focused more upon how the nation could best make use of all that the West had to offer. The land and everything upon it were almost universally considered "resources" available for human consumption and use. The question and disagreement pivoted around how best these resources were to be managed or utilized.

¹⁴³ Char Miller and V. Alaric Sample, “Gifford Pinchot: A Life in Progress,” *Journal of Forestry* 97, no. 1 (January 1999): 27-28.

¹⁴⁴ Robert E. Taylor, *Ahead of the Curve*, 13.

¹⁴⁵ Miller and Sample, “Gifford Pinchot,” 28.

Not all conservationists in the late 1800s had as much faith in the federal government's abilities as did Pinchot, or to a lesser extent, Muir. John Wesley Powell led expeditions into the arid West and Southwest, in the 1860s and 70s, and later assumed the position of Director of the U.S. Geological Survey in 1881. Powell felt that the West should not be settled in the same manner as the East and Midwest, and that the best role of federal government would be to orderly classify and "equitably distribute arable land and water and to protect and use the forests, grasslands, and mineral deposits."¹⁴⁶ Actual management and oversight of the lands and resources was to be lodged in local governments, or watershed districts. "Powell believed that communities of local resource users, aided and supported by government institutions, would always be better equipped to manage their land than any federal bureaucrats."¹⁴⁷

An early graduate (1909) of the Yale School of Forestry, which had been set up by Gifford Pinchot with a large grant from his family's estate, was Aldo Leopold. Leopold worked in the early years of the Forest Service in the Southwest region, in the arid regions surveyed earlier by Powell. There he managed wildlife resources in New Mexico and Arizona. An early disciple of Pinchot's utilitarian approach to conservation ("The purpose of Forestry, then, is to make the forest produce the largest possible amount of whatever crop or service will be most useful, and keep on producing it for generation after generation of men and trees . . ."),¹⁴⁸ Leopold gradually moved away from that position to argue for the intrinsic value of nature and the environment.

Aldo Leopold's most lasting effect on American thought stems from his book, *A Sand County Almanac*. Published in 1949, a year after his death, Leopold's classic called for people to adopt a "land ethic" in which we perceive ourselves as integral parts of nature; a viewpoint that values nature intrinsically from a biocentric orientation, much like the values typified by Johnathan Alder. Leopold's land ethic widened the sphere of elements to which we grant rights. Where before we granted rights primarily to people, Leopold proposed that rights be extended to include nature. That extension and stewardship obligations it implies are central to the environmental debate today and mark this century's most notable milestones in the movement of our landscape values.¹⁴⁹

In *A Sand County Almanac*, Leopold articulated through a series of essays what was later called a biocentric ethic in contrast to an anthropocentric ethic. A biocentric ethic argues for the inherent value and worth of every living thing, plant and animal, as well as entire landscapes, watersheds, and ecosystems.

¹⁴⁶ Sally Fairfax, Lynn Huntsinger, and Carmel Adelburg, "Lessons from the Past," found online at *Forum*, <http://forum.ra.utk.edu/>.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ Pinchot, *Breaking New Ground*, 32.

¹⁴⁹ John W. Simpson, class notes, "Chapter 12: Widening the Circle," found on the Internet September 7, 1999 at <http://www.arch.ohio-state.edu/larch/Courses/597/Leopold.html>.

This inherent value is not contingent upon its utility to humans, as anthropocentric ethicists argue. Rather every living thing should be valued in itself and for itself.

Leopold was influenced in his thinking by the work of Albert Schweitzer, the famous New Testament scholar and medical missionary to Africa.

In 1915 the Alsace-German theologian, who had become a medical missionary, was on the deck of a small streamer slowly moving up the Ogowe River in French Equatorial Africa when it passed quietly through a herd of hippos, leaving them undisturbed in the river behind. The boat's peaceful passing triggered a revelation: "There flashed upon my mind, unforeseen and unsought, the phrase, 'Reverence for life.'"¹⁵⁰ From this he constructed a philosophy in which every living thing possessed an equal will-to-live; hence human conduct must be governed by giving "to every will-to-live the same reverence for life that he gives to his own."¹⁵¹

From his experiences and reflections upon the ethical treatment of animals, Schweitzer concluded,

Ethics thus consists in this, that I experience the necessity of practicing the same reverence for life toward all will-to-live, as toward my own. Therein I have already the needed fundamental principle of morality. It is *good* to maintain and cherish life; it is *evil* to destroy and check life.¹⁵²

Schweitzer's experience with the hippos in the Ogowe River mirrored an experience Leopold had with a wolf early in his career, although the seeds from that experience took several years to fully germinate:

My own convictions on this score dates from the day I saw a wolf die. We were eating lunch on a high rimrock, at the foot of which a turbulent river elbowed its way. We saw what we thought was a doe fording the torrent, her breast awash in white water. When she climbed the bank toward us and shook out her tail, we realized our error: it was a wolf. A half-dozen others, evidently grown pups, sprang from the willows and all joined in a welcoming mêlée of wagging tails and playful maulings. What was literally a pile of wolves writhed and tumbled in the center of an open flat at the root of our rimrock.

In those days we had never heard of passing up a chance to kill a wolf. In a second we were pumping lead into the pack, but with more excitement than accuracy: how to aim a steep downhill shot is always confusing. When our rifles were empty, the old wolf was down, and a pup was dragging a leg into impassable slide-rocks.

We reached the old wolf in time to watch a fierce green fire dying in her eyes. I realized then, and have known ever since, that there was something new to me in those eyes – something known only to her and to the mountain. I was young then and full of trigger-itch; I thought that because fewer wolves meant more deer, that no wolves would mean hunters' paradise. But after seeing the fierce green fire die, I sensed that neither the wolf nor the mountain agreed with such a view.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ Roderick Nash, *The Rights of Nature: A History of Environmental Ethics* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 60, cited in Simpson, *class notes*.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² Albert Schweitzer, *Civilization and Ethics* (London: A. & C. Black, 1923), part II: *The Philosophy of Civilization*, trans. John Naish, p. 254, cited in Holmes Rolston, III, *Environmental Ethics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 65.

¹⁵³ Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac: with Other Essays on Conservation from Round River* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 129-30.

Although Leopold belongs chronologically to the first wave of environmentalism, many of the things he articulated in his land ethic and in his reflection in *A Sand County Almanac* were to be highly influential to the fourth wave of environmentalism, which includes the Deep Ecology movement. Bron Taylor points out that within the Earth First! community of radical environmentalists, this story has become “a mythic moral fable in which the wolf communicates with human beings, stressing inter-species kinship.”¹⁵⁴ Indeed, this story has become a sort of conversion story, not unlike the story within Christian tradition of the conversion of Saul in the New Testament book of Acts (chapter 9:1-30).

The wolf’s “green fire” has become a symbol of life in the wild, incorporated into the ritual of the [Earth First!] tradition. Soon after its founding, several Earth First! activists went on “green fire” road shows, essentially biocentric revival meetings. “Dakota” Sid Clifford, a balladeer in these road shows, referred to them as “ecovangelism.” In these shows, the personified wolf calls humans to repent from their destructive ways and to revere Earth and her creatures. Some of the shows ended with converts howling in symbolic identification with the wild and wolves.¹⁵⁵

In fact, the section heading in *A Sand County Almanac* in which the story about the dying wolf just cited appears is entitled “Thinking Like a Mountain.” Walkin Jim Stoltz, at many of his ecovangelism concerts, sings a song encouraging people to “think like a mountain,” that is, ecocentrically.¹⁵⁶ It is in direct reference to this chapter in *the Sand County Almanac* that John Seed, Joanna Macy, Pat Fleming and Arne Naess entitled their book of Deep Ecology poetry, meditations, essays, rituals and role-plays *Thinking Like a Mountain: Towards a Council of All Beings*.¹⁵⁷

1. 1. 2. The Second Wave: Environmental Concerns Go Mainstream

Between these two “Thinking like a Mountains” lie the second and third waves of environmentalism. As indicated earlier, most writers choose the publication of Rachel Carson’s book, *Silent Spring*, as the inaugural event for the second wave. Much of this wave focused upon the effects of pollution and skyrocketing human population upon the earth’s environment. This wave is characterized by widespread public awareness and increased attention paid in the news media to what became termed “the environmental crisis.” In addition, this time period saw the rise of a counter-culture, which included back-

¹⁵⁴ Bron Taylor, “Earth First!’s Religious Radicalism,” in Christopher K. Chapple, ed., *Ecological Prospects: Scientific, Religious, and Aesthetic Perspectives* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994), 192.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ Bron Taylor, “Evoking the Ecological Self,” in *Peace Review* 5, no. 2 (1993): 227.

¹⁵⁷ John Seed, Joanna Macy, Pat Fleming and Arne Naess, *Thinking Like a Mountain: Towards a Council of All Beings* (Philadelphia, PA and Santa Cruz, CA: New Society Publishers, 1988).

to-the-land adherents, criticism of consumerism and capitalism's exploitation and destruction of the environment, and the emergence of what some have called "eco-mysticism" and nature religions such as neo-paganism and wicca.¹⁵⁸ This created a social milieu in which environmental concerns became disseminated throughout society as well as localized in the activities of certain organized groups. This increased social attention also found expression in a number of legislative actions. For example, during the period of time from 1960 to the late 1990s, the following occurred:

- ◆ The health risks of air pollution (and smoking) were identified. In response, in 1963, the United States Government enacted the Clean Air Act.
- ◆ Developments of wind power, solar power, and organic gardening occurred.
- ◆ Development of the United States Environmental Protection Agency in 1970 out of several existing public health regulatory boards and later in Canada, in 1971, the Ministry of the Environment likewise developed.
- ◆ Research into water pollution on the Great Lakes and Saint Lawrence Rivers verified the process of eutrophication (dissolved oxygen depletion). Phosphates were identified as the major cause. The Canada-U.S. International Joint Commission produced a Great Lakes clean-up agreement.
- ◆ Discovery of the mechanism of Smog (air pollution in cities).
- ◆ The Club of Rome, a group of intellectuals and scientists, published *The Limits to Growth*, predicting ecological problems by the end of the century. The study included an extensive discussion on the impact of industrial activity on the Great Lakes ecosystem.
- ◆ Publication of *The Population Bomb* by Paul Ehrlich in 1968. This book addressed the environmental consequences of overpopulation.
- ◆ The Cuyahoga River in Cleveland caught on fire.

¹⁵⁸ See Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and its Youthful Opposition* (Garden City, N.Y. : Doubleday, 1969) and Charles A. Reich, *The Greening of America How the Youth Revolution is Trying to Make America Livable* (New York: Random House, 1970). Regarding the rise of neopaganism and wicca, especially in terms of their connection with the environmental movement, see Margot Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Pagans, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers and other Pagans in America Today* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979, Revised and expanded 1986) and Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess* (NY: Harper & Row, 1979), and *Dreaming the Dark: Magic, Sex & Politics* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1982).

- ◆ In Vancouver, British Columbia Greenpeace was founded. The first voyage of the Rainbow Warrior was an attempt to prevent an American Nuclear test on Amchitca Island off Alaska.
- ◆ The first Earth Day occurred April 22, 1970 in San Francisco and was marked by massive demonstrations across North America. It has since become an annual event.
- ◆ The Green Revolution spread worldwide. The revolution was characterized by the introduction of pesticides, chemical fertilizer, herbicides, and expanded irrigation. World Food production increased greatly but pollution and soil deterioration also increased. Desertification accelerated.
- ◆ Overfishing exhausted many fish stocks in European and Northeastern Atlantic waters. Europeans began fishing off Canadian and American waters.
- ◆ Discovery of Acid Rain: air pollution on a continental scale affecting lakes and trees.
- ◆ Friends of the Earth was founded by David Brower, formerly of the Sierra Club.
- ◆ E.F. Schumacher published *Small is Beautiful*, which articulated the concept of “Appropriate Technology,” technology that is small scale, environmentally safe, and culturally sensitive.
- ◆ Two major Nuclear Disasters at Chernobyl and Three Mile Island directed public attention to the safety risks of nuclear power.
- ◆ Discovery of ozone-eating CFC's in the early 1980s was accompanied and verified by the discovery of Ozone Holes later in the decade.
- ◆ James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis developed the “Gaia Hypothesis” on the nature of the biosphere and its evolution, in which the biosphere is said to be a self-regulating, complex organism and the biota (i.e., all life forms, plant and animal) have played a role in the evolution of the atmosphere. Due to overwhelming scientific evidence confirming its basic tenets, the Hypothesis was later reclassified by scientists as the Gaia Theory.
- ◆ Greenhouse Effect Hypothesis was developed by atmospheric scientists and climatologists. Theory of Global Warming was developed as computer simulations predicted environmental collapse world-wide by mid-21st century.

- ◆ “Nuclear Winter” predicted by computer simulations characterized by a total collapse of the global ecosystem following a nuclear war.
- ◆ The Canada-U.S. Acid Rain Agreement was finalized in 1991.
- ◆ Leaded Gas was banned. California was one of the first states to enact Laws on Auto Emissions.
- ◆ Recycling Programs were established in most cities.
- ◆ Health Risks of Carcinogenic food additives, pesticides & herbicides, were established.
- ◆ The Brundtland Commission (United Nations), headed by Gro Harlem Brundtland (the first Environment Minister to become a Head of State: Prime Minister of Norway), articulated the concept of “Sustainable Development,” which suggests that continued economic growth and prosperity is possible without further ecological damage.
- ◆ The Rio Conference was held in the Spring of 1992, in which the Rio Declaration was made in which the major industrial powers promised to reduce Carbon Dioxide emissions. (However, few of the commitments were actually kept.)
- ◆ 1998 warmest year on record, and, according to scientists, a preview of Global Warming effects. For southern Ontario, Canada, for example, this meant dry summers (drought) and ice storms (arctic storm moving south meets warm air mass moving north).
- ◆ Discovery of the slowing of Atlantic Gulf Stream due to Global warming. This implies a major climate change for the British Isles.

What this litany reveals is that environmental problems were frequently in the news, and were increasingly the subject of scientific studies. Legislation was passed addressing many of the issues, but the effectiveness of such legislation and regulation has been and continues to be the subject of wide-ranging debate. What this also reveals is that awareness of environmental concerns and problems was diffused among the general North American population during this time period. Environmental activism ranged from rallies such as Earth Day in 1970, to community recycling programs to legislation spearheaded by groups such as the Sierra Club to more direct action and confrontation by groups such as Greenpeace.

1.1.3. The Third Wave: Economic Incentives

The third wave arose out of this time period as a way to affect environmental change through economic incentives. Groups such as Earth Defense Fund and Natural Resources Defense Council typify this approach. Philip Shabecoff, describes some of the tactics adopted by this third wave:

One of the more interesting trends within the movement in the late 1980s and early 1990s was the advocacy by some of the groups of market incentives to achieve environmental goals. Under Fred Krupp, for example, the Environmental Defense Fund devised a system that would give “credits” to power plants that reduced the pollution that caused acid rain. Under the plan, those utilities that did more than was required by law to cut pollution could sell their credits to other power plants who might find paying additional cash less expensive than cutting down their own emissions. President Bush incorporated the plan in the acid rain legislation he sent to Congress in 1989 and it eventually became part of the law. The Environmental Defense Fund also helped craft “Project 88,” a broad program based on market incentives that was proposed by Senators Tim Wirth of Colorado and the late John Heinz of Pennsylvania for tackling many of the world’s critical environmental problems. This was a marked change of tactics within the environmental community. In the past the strategy was to get strong laws passed that commanded polluters to behave, and if they did not and the government refused to enforce the laws, then to sue the malefactors. Now some mainstream environmentalists openly embraced a market approach to addressing environmental ills.

Another Third Wave innovation tried by some of the environmentalists during and after the Reagan era was to negotiate with industry, often with the help of mediators, to work out pollution problems. Gail Bingham of the Conservation Foundation was among the trailblazers of this approach, helping bring about a tripartite environmentalist-industry-government agreement on the export of hazardous substances. The National Wildlife Federation formed a “corporate council,” entering, Jay Hair said, an era of “corporate détente” in which industry and environmentalists could sit down and discuss “the tough environmental issues together.”¹⁵⁹

Robert E. Taylor, a journalist who reports on the environment, describes how some of the ideas set forth by Fred Krupp of the Environmental Defense Fund in an article in the *Wall Street Journal* developed into what became known as the Third Wave of environmentalism.

(Fred) Krupp wrote that in the third stage, environmentalists should “recognize that behind the waste dumps and dams and power plants and pesticides that threaten major environmental harm, there are nearly always legitimate social needs—and that long-term solutions lie in finding alternative ways to meet those underlying needs. Otherwise, we are treating only symptoms; the problems will surface again and again. Answer the underlying needs, and you have a lasting cure.”

As other environmentalists picked up on the theme, it became known as the Third Wave theory, after futurist Alvin Toffler’s best seller. Different Third Wave concepts emerged, but the unifying theme was that the new wave should be solution-oriented. “We have won the struggle for acceptance with Main Street America, and now people are looking to us for solutions,” says Lucy Blake, chairman of the League of Conservation Voters, in a 1986 interview with *The Los Angeles Times*. “It’s not enough anymore to stand on the outside and take potshots.”

...Third Wave enthusiasts believe that unconventional approaches can dispel tension between economic growth and environmental protection. As Krupp wrote in *The Wall Street Journal*, “The American public does not want conflict between improving our

¹⁵⁹ Philip Shabecoff, *A Fierce Green Fire: The American Environmental Movement* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), pp. 25-59.

economic well-being and preserving our health and natural resources. The early experience suggests it can have both.”¹⁶⁰

1.1.4. The Fourth Wave: Critique and Radicalism

Mark Dowie, another journalist and former contributing editor of *Mother Jones* magazine, critiques the first three stages and argues that “at the grassroots is a new swell of environmental passion, democratic in origin, populist in style, untrammeled by bureaucracy, and inspired by a host of new ideologies.”¹⁶¹

Fourth wave leaders, in contrast to the well-bred, properly educated apparatchiks of mainstream environmentalism, are angry and impolite. They are blue-collar suburbanites like Lois Gibbs, the mad mother of Love Canal who has inspired thousands more to fight against the poisoning of their homes and neighborhoods.

The new wave includes small-town residents like Esperanza Maya, who defied the arrogance of the nation’s largest waste processor and intransigence of the EPA to defeat the construction of a massive hazardous waste incinerator in Kettleman City, Calif. And the fourth wave includes people like Andy Mahler, who founded Heartwood, a small Indiana-based forest preservation group, and who is organizing a nationwide campaign to save the remaining 5 percent of the nation’s ancient forests.

Most fourth wave activists feel that the three previous waves of environmentalism are now irrelevant. They advocate a new nonviolent militancy to remind politicians at every level that the majority of their constituents consider environmental protection a government responsibility.¹⁶²

Also included in this fourth wave are Deep Ecology, Social Ecology, Feminist ecology (often referred to as Ecofeminism), bioregionalism, spiritual ecology, and native ecology, with room for input from radical groups like Earth First!. As Jodi Allison-Bunnell in her review of Dowie’s book, *Losing Ground*, states it,

[This Fourth Wave] must be a multiracial, multiclass, multicultural effort with input from many corners. It will include a roster of new players like the Greens, true Democrats, human rights advocates, ecological economists, and madeover mainstreamers. Dowie is optimistic—and presents predictions based on some well-known current trends.¹⁶³

1.2. Deep and Shallow: Deep Ecology as a Fourth Wave Critique of Earlier Environmental Movements

The Norwegian philosopher and mountaineer Arne Naess first used the term “Deep Ecology” in a 1973 essay relating to the global environmental movement in which he sought to describe the differences

¹⁶⁰ Robert E. Taylor, *Ahead of the Curve*, 20, 22.

¹⁶¹ Mark Dowie, "The Fourth Wave," found online September 14, 1999, at: http://www.mojones.com/MOTHER_JONES/MA95/dowie.html.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ Jodi Allison-Bunnell, review of Mark Dowie, *Losing Ground*, H-ASEH (September 1997), found online September 14, 1999, at: <http://h-net2.msu.edu/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=5623877110056>.

between a “shallow ecology movement” and a “deep ecology movement.” His summary of the characteristics of the two is as follows:

1. *The Shallow Ecology movement:*

Fight against pollution and resource depletion. Central objective: the health and affluence of people in the developed countries. . . .

2. *The Deep Ecology Movement:*

a. Rejection of the man [sic]-in-environment image in favor of *the relational, total-field image*. Organisms as knots in the field of intrinsic relations. An intrinsic relation between two things A and B is such that the relation belongs to the definitions or basic constitutions of A and B, so that without the relation, A and B are no longer the same things. The total field model dissolves not only the man-in-environment concept, but every compact thing-in-milieu concept -- except when talking at a superficial or preliminary level of communication.

b. *Biospherical egalitarianism -- in principle.* The “in principle” clause is inserted because any realistic praxis necessitates some killing, exploitation, and suppression. The ecological field worker acquires a deep-seated respect, even veneration, for ways and forms of life. He reaches an understanding from within, a kind of understanding that others reserve for fellow men and for a narrow section of ways and forms of life. To the ecological field worker, *the equal right to live and blossom* is an intuitively clear and obvious value axiom. Its restriction to humans is an anthropocentrism with detrimental effects upon the life quality of humans themselves. This quality depends in part upon the deep pleasure and satisfaction we receive from close partnership with other forms of life. The attempt to ignore our dependence and to establish a master-slave role has contributed to the alienation of man [sic] from himself.¹⁶⁴

The environmental movement has always been characterized by efforts to preserve wild spaces around the world as well as efforts to slow down, stop and /or reverse environmental degradation. The arena for action of these efforts has been primarily political: enacting legislation, establishing regulatory agencies, levying fines, restricting access to land areas, etc. In Naess’s definition, the shallow ecological movement restricts its activities to fighting pollution and the depletion of “resources.” There is an implicit social critique involved with this definition. Shallow ecological work seeks to preserve the affluence and health of people in developed countries, so the non-human, natural world consists of “resources” whose existence can be used by humans to increase human well-being or pleasure.¹⁶⁵ In addition, environmental work in this view is directed solely at increasing the well-being of those who can afford it, or who possess the economic and political means for affecting change upon their local environment. Shallow ecology, for example, will work to see that a hazardous waste dump is not built in the communities of those with time

¹⁶⁴ Arne Naess, “The Shallow and the Deep, Long-range Ecology Movements,” in *Inquiry* 16 (1973): 95-100. Quoted in Arne Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*, trans. David Rothenberg (Cambridge, UK: The Cambridge University Press, 1989), 28.

¹⁶⁵ For example, see Garrett Hardin’s “lifeboat ethic” wherein he argues that the wealthier, more resourceful nations (i.e. “First World” countries) should work for their own survival in the midst of environmental catastrophe with no consideration for poorer or less technologically advanced nations and peoples. Garrett Hardin, “Living on a Lifeboat,” *Bioscience* 24 (1974): 561-68.

and ability to lobby for its placement elsewhere. A shallow ecological approach may also seek to find technological solutions for environmental threats, but never engage in a direct challenge to technological assumptions, processes and philosophies. In essence then, shallow ecology seeks to maintain a certain quality and style of life devoid of the negative effects engendered by that same lifestyle.

This approach is often referred to as “reform environmentalism.” Bill Devall and George Sessions describe this as when

(e)nvironmentalism is frequently seen as the attempt to work only within the confines of conventional political processes of industrialized nations to alleviate or mitigate some of the worst forms of air and water pollution, destruction of indigenous wildlife, and some of the most short-sighted development schemes.¹⁶⁶

While Sessions and Devall acknowledge the value of this work, they also point out the liabilities of working within the confines of a political-economic system and accepting the rubrics and presuppositions of that system. Peter Berg presents an apt analogy for understanding the limits of this approach:

Classic environmentalism has bred a peculiar negative political malaise among its adherents. Alerted to fresh horrors almost daily, they research the extent of each new life-threatening situation, rush to protest it, and campaign exhaustively to prevent a future occurrence. It's a valuable service, of course, but imagine a hospital that consists only of an emergency room. No maternity care, no pediatric clinic, no promising therapy: just mangled trauma cases. Many of them are lost or drag on in wilting protraction, and if a few are saved there are always more than can be handled jamming through the door. Rescuing the environment has become like running a battlefield aid station in a war against a killing machine that operates just beyond reach, and that shifts its ground after each seeming defeat. . . .¹⁶⁷

In contrast to this approach, the deep ecology movement seeks to look at the deeper structures of philosophical and religious thought which inform action at the political, economic and social or cultural levels. Alan Drengson characterizes the contrast between “deep” and “shallow” as follows:

The word “deep” in part referred to the level of questioning of our purposes and values, when arguing in environmental conflicts. The “deep” movement involves deep questioning, right down to fundamentals. The shallow stops before THIS ultimate level.¹⁶⁸

Deep Ecologists seek to affect environmental change by changing the assumptions humans have made about their relationship with the natural world in which they live, and of which they are an intrinsic part. This is the critique of “man-in-environment” of which Naess speaks. Whereas in the shallow ecological approach, humans still separate themselves apart from the environment in order to be able to

¹⁶⁶ Bill Devall and George Sessions, *Deep Ecology* (Layton, UT: Peregrine Smith Books, Utah, 1985), 2.

¹⁶⁷ Peter Berg, editorial, *Raise the Stakes* (Fall 1983). Quoted in Devall and Sessions, *ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁶⁸ Alan Drengson, “Introduction and Background to *The Trumpeter: Journal Of Ecosophy*,” in *The Trumpeter* (1999), found online at <http://trumpeter.athabascau.ca/hist.html>.

exploit its resources, in the Deep Ecological approach it becomes impossible to speak of resources as being things extrinsic to humans, or in fact to speak of humans as being extrinsic from the environment they seek to exploit and use. Deep Ecology endeavors to adopt an ecological point of view and way of seeing that sees things in their network of interrelationships and interdependencies. In a manner reminiscent of John Donne, Deep Ecologists remind humans that humankind is not a species “intire unto itself.” We are all “a part of the Maine,” and when other species become extinct or areas of the earth are irreversibly damaged, polluted or degraded in any way, we “send not for whom the bell tolls,” it tolls for us.

1.3. Ecofeminism

Deep Ecology exists in a dialogical and dialectical relationship with other radical environmentalisms. By using the modifier “radical,” I am referring to the fact that these environmentalisms engage in analyses and practices which aim to get at the deep roots of the problematic relationships between humans and their environment. By using the plural, “environmentalisms,” I am intentionally shifting my discourse to highlight the fact that there are a variety of voices, and practices which speak and act on behalf of the earth, nature and/or the environment. In fact, to even use the phrase “on behalf of” betrays linguistically a problematic which Ecofeminism, one of the radical environmentalisms alluded to, critiques and seeks to transform. Ariel Salleh, in an article examining the contentions and misunderstandings which have transpired in the dialogue between Deep Ecology writers and Ecofeminism writers,¹⁶⁹ explains this structural and linguistic critique:

Ecofeminism confronts not only social institutions and practices, but the language and logics by which Western patriarchy constructs its relation to nature.... Instead of perpetuating the

¹⁶⁹ For representative articles in this dialogue, the best journal is *Environmental Ethics*. For instance, see Jim Cheney, “Ecofeminism and Deep Ecology” *Environmental Ethics* 9 (Summer 1987): 115-45; C. Crittenden, “Subordinate and Oppressive Conceptual Frameworks: A Defense of Ecofeminist Perspectives” *Environmental Ethics* 20, no. 3 (Fall 1998): 247-263; Ariel Salleh, “Deeper Than Deep Ecology: The Eco-Feminist Connection” *Environmental Ethics* 6 (1984): 335-341; “The Ecofeminism/Deep Ecology Debate: A Reply to Patriarchal Reason” *Environmental Ethics* 14 (1992): 195-216; “Class, Race and Gender Discourse in the Ecofeminism/Deep Ecology Debate” *Environmental Ethics* 15, no. 3 (1993): 225-244; Deborah Slicer, “Is There an Ecofeminism-Deep Ecology Debate?” *Environmental Ethics* 17, no. 2 (1995): 151-169; Janet Biehl, “It’s Deep But Is It Broad?” *Kick It Over*, (Winter 1987): 2A-4A; Ynestra King, “What is Eco-Feminism?” *The Nation*, 12 December 1987: 702, 730-731; Sharon Doubiago, “Mama Coyote Talks to the Boys,” in J. Plant, ed., *Healing the Wounds* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1989); Marti Kheel, “Ecofeminism and Deep Ecology: Reflections on Identity and Difference,” *The Trumpeter* 8, no. 2, (Spring 1991): 62-72; Alan Wittbecker, “Deep Anthropology, Ecology, and Human Order,” *Environmental Ethics* 8 (1986): 268-70; Donald Davis, “The Seduction of Sophia,” *Environmental Ethics* 8 (1986): 151-62; Michael Zimmerman, “Feminism, Deep Ecology, and Environmental Ethics,” *Environmental Ethics* 9 (1987): 21-44; and Warwick Fox, “The Deep Ecology-Ecofeminism Debate and its Parallels,” *Environmental Ethics* 11 (1989): 5-25.

polarized mindset of “man” versus “nature,” a social versus a biocentric emphasis, ecofeminism demands to know how and why the cultural dichotomy has become established at all.... Ecofeminists are acutely aware that the discursive and institutional medium through which our political debates are being hammered out is not itself neutral or transparent. Ecofeminism takes on a critical examination and deconstruction of that “reason” by which the anthropocentric man-nature split is always regenerated. Instead of thinking man vis-à-vis woman or man vis-à-vis nature, we invite deep ecologists to reorient their static, dualistic thought patterns around, in, and through a several-dimensioned formula, “woman-nature-man.” Woman, or rather the social fabrication of feminine identity under patriarchal domination, serves as a prism through which radical ecologists can come to see how and why they themselves have been constituted as men against nature.¹⁷⁰

Ecofeminism engages in an ongoing critique of the social and cultural structures of power and domination that oppress women, non-white minorities and nature in parallel and interconnected fashions.

[P]atriarchy (is) a system of power relations. *Patriarchy* does not simply exist as an idea; rather, the term stands for a solid set of oppressive facts.... Under patriarchal culture, the program of repression that has treated women and colored peoples as resources, from the beginning of recorded history, has also been the ideology that plunders nature.¹⁷¹

Ecofeminism is not simply feminism extended into the ecological sphere. To suggest that would be to ignore the historical developments within feminism. Indeed, it is more appropriate to say *feminisms*. Feminist scholars trace at least four main articulations of feminist thought and praxis: liberal, Marxist, radical, post-structuralist and, now, Ecofeminism. In fact, Ecofeminism embodies a certain critique of the more urban-based feminisms whose concerns do not always reflect an awareness of the ecological effects of participating in existing consumerist economies.

Ecofeminism has a specific history of its own, shaped by the day-to-day efforts of ordinary women to survive with their families. In highlighting the ecological dimension and drawing on the grass-roots experiences of women in developed and so-called developing countries, ecofeminism opens up the feminist movement itself to a new cluster of problems and challenges urban-based theoretical paradigms -- liberal, Marxist, radical, post-structuralist – that have dominated feminist politics over the last two decades. By pitting new empirical concerns against established feminist analyses, ecofeminism is encouraging a new synthesis in feminist political thought. In seeking a review of “man’s relation to nature,” ecofeminism certainly addresses the same project as environmental ethics. As a feminism, however, ecofeminism takes on its project in a compound sense, since it simultaneously calls for a review of “man’s relationship to woman” as it goes along. Unlike environmental ethics in general, and deep ecology in particular, ecofeminism does not go after its object with a simple linear critique. It is obliged to engage in a zig-zag dialectical course between (a) its feminist task of establishing the right of women to a political voice; (b) its ecofeminist task of undermining the patriarchal basis of that political validation by dismantling the patriarchal relation of man to nature; and (c) its ecological task of demonstrating how women have been able to live differently in relation to nature.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Salleh, “The Ecofeminism/Deep Ecology Debate,” p. 215

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 204-205.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 197-98.

There is ongoing discussion within Ecofeminist circles as to what the nature of this difference in relation to nature involves. For instance, Salleh maintains that it is the structuring of the patriarchal system which associates the feminine with nature and the natural world more closely than the masculine, which seeks to establish its difference from and superiority over the natural world through the exercise of culture.

[I]t is patriarchal domination that puts women close to nature, while men are seen to be active in the sphere of culture. This process causes women's experiences and identities to be linguistically mediated by references to nature. Not only is the feminine psyche constructed differently by this means, but the work roles that women are assigned also revolve around nature, "putting the dirt back where it should be." These roles, in turn, reinforce women's hands-on knowledge of natural processes.¹⁷³

Salleh is careful not to argue for some form of essentialism which would equate feminine nature with an inherent sensitivity to and/or identification with the natural environment. Rather, the gender roles created and structured by the hierarchical system of domination in patriarchy recapitulate the relationship between humans and the natural world:

Under patriarchal culture, the program of repression that has treated women and colored peoples as resources, from the beginning of recorded history, has also been the ideology that plunders nature. This association of women and minorities with nature means that if there is to be any chance of political change in attitudes toward the environment, there will have to be a shift in gendered and racial attitudes at the same time.... All levels of oppression on the "Great Chain of Being" – speciesism, racism, sexism, classism – are interlinked and must be attended to. At this point in history, women, a global majority, both dominated and empowered, are well equipped to take up the case for "other" beings. Nevertheless, it is not a matter of "speaking for": men have always spoken for women and it has not helped much. Rather, it is a matter of unraveling the conceptual roots of an exploitative white male dominant multinational corporate system that continues to take the integrity of other life forms away.¹⁷⁴

Other Ecofeminists have argued that an Ecofeminist ethic must involve what has been termed by some feminist ethicists as a *care ethic*. For example, Karen J. Warren argues for eight boundary conditions of any Ecofeminist ethic, among which one condition is that "ecofeminism makes a central place for values of care, love, friendship, trust, and appropriate reciprocity - values that presuppose our relationships to others and are central to our understanding of who we are."¹⁷⁵ Christine J. Cuomo critiques reliance upon a care ethic, however, pointing out that care and nurture in themselves are not of value without discussing who is doing the caring and who is being cared for:

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 203.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 204-205.

¹⁷⁵ Karen J. Warren, "The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism," *Environmental Ethics* 12 (1990): 1246, cited in Christine J. Cuomo, "Unraveling the Problems in Ecofeminism," *Environmental Ethics* 14 (1992): 352, note 5.

To talk of caring and compassion in the abstract, without naming the object of the caring and the context in which the caring occurs, is ethically uninformative. In constructing an environmental ethic, feminists must ask if caring for other particular beings or objects is a good activity to engage in when one is trying to free oneself from a subordinate social position. “Caring” cannot be evaluated unless the object and purpose of care are made clear. In fact, female caring and compassion for oppressors are cornerstones of patriarchal systems. Women have forgiven oppressors, stayed with abusive husbands and partners, and sacrificed their own desires because of their great ability to care for others.¹⁷⁶

It is precisely this critique and examination of who is being called upon by whom to give up what that characterizes Ecofeminist critiques of Deep Ecology. For instance, much of Deep Ecological thought centers around a shift from anthropocentrism to biocentrism in which the sense of self is expanded to include identification with the natural world, if not the entire earth, of which one is a part.¹⁷⁷ However, the development of a sense of self is already problematic in feminist and Ecofeminist thought. Patriarchy is said to structure gender roles such that women and girls are socialized to put the needs of others before their own, leading to a sense of self that is permeable and less defined than that of men and boys.¹⁷⁸ If this sacrificing or diminution of the sense of self is part and parcel of the patriarchal domination of women, then any talk which seems to expand the self’s boundaries any further away from any strong center of identity can be seen as being simply an extension of the patterns of patriarchy into the environmental realm.¹⁷⁹ Ariel Salleh, for instance, in her critique of articles written by Michael Zimmerman and Alan Wittbecker, points out the predominance of dualistic categories in their arguments, which she argues reflect a continuing patriarchal schema of dividing the world into opposites: “self-other, male-female, white-black, rational-irrational, valued-non-valued.”¹⁸⁰ Whereas Deep Ecology tends to argue in favor of expanding the Self to include the Other or others, Salleh argues that from an Ecofeminist standpoint it is this very

¹⁷⁶ Christine J. Cuomo, “Unraveling the Problems in Ecofeminism,” *Environmental Ethics* 14 (1992): 354-55.

¹⁷⁷ Devall and Sessions, *Deep Ecology*, 225-228; Arne Naess, “Self-Realization: An Ecological Approach to Being in the World” in Alan Drengson and Yuichi Inoue, *The Deep Ecology Movement* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Press, 1995), 14.

¹⁷⁸ Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 110. See also Dorothy Dinnerstein, *The Mermaid and the Mionotaur: Sexual Arrangements and Human Malaise* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977); Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982); and Carol Gilligan, J.V. Ward, J. McLean Taylor, and B. Badige, eds., *Mapping the Moral Domain: A Contribution of Women’s Thinking to Psychological Theory and Education* (Cambridge: Center for the Study of Gender Education and Human Development, 1988).

¹⁷⁹ See Ariel Salleh, “The Ecofeminism/Deep Ecology Debate,” 209-214.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 210.

presumption of a monodimensional Other and a monodimensional Self that is problematic, in addition to the problem inherent in any analysis that ignores the social constructions of the sense of self.

1.4. Social Ecology

Social Ecology finds its strongest exposition in the work of Murray Bookchin, a major figure in anarchist and utopian political theory, as well as in theory of technology, urbanism and the philosophy of nature since the 1960s. He is the cofounder and director emeritus of the Institute for Social Ecology in Vermont. He offers the following descriptions of Social Ecology:

What literally defines social ecology as “social” is its recognition of the often overlooked fact that nearly all our present ecological problems arise from deep-seated social problems. Conversely, present ecological problems cannot be clearly understood, much less resolved, without resolutely dealing with problems within society. To make this point more concrete: economic, ethnic, cultural, and gender conflicts, among many others, lie at the core of the most serious ecological dislocations we face today—apart, to be sure, from those that are produced by natural catastrophes.¹⁸¹

Social Ecology concentrates its focus upon the human social dimension and causes of the environmental crisis. “The way human beings deal with each other as social beings is crucial to addressing the ecological crisis.”¹⁸² Human domination of the natural world is seen as arising directly from hierarchical and class relationships. These relationships of domination are also expressed in the present market society, with its emphasis upon “trade for profit, industrial expansion and the identification of ‘progress’ with corporate self-interest.”¹⁸³

Social Ecology does not hold to the biocentric perspective put forth by various Deep Ecology theorists, but instead maintains that human society has arisen out of nature as an evolutionary development of the human species.

Humans are highly intelligent, indeed, very self-conscious primates, which is to say that they have emerged “not diverged” from a long evolution of vertebrate life-forms into mammalian, and finally, primate life-forms. They are a product of a significant evolutionary trend toward intellectuality, self-awareness, will, intentionality, and expressiveness, be it in oral or body language.¹⁸⁴

This evolutionary emergence has manifested itself in the elaboration of human family units, societies, civilizations and technological culture. In contrast to many environmental writers, Social

¹⁸¹ Murray Bookchin, “What is Social Ecology?” in M.E. Zimmerman, ed., *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993), 354.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 355.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 357

Ecology does not view human culture in itself as an aberration or freakish development. Rather, it has arisen as a second level of nature.

Human beings always remain rooted in their biological evolutionary history, which we may call “first nature,” but they produce a characteristically human social nature of their own which we may call “second nature.” And far from being “unnatural,” human second nature is eminently a creation of organic evolution’s first nature.¹⁸⁵

In fact, it is the rootedness of this “second nature” in “first nature” which makes social change possible. This is because “first nature” is evolutionary, processual, dynamic, and ever giving rise to new forms and ways of being. At the human level, then, an ecological way of thinking should be “processual, organic, and dialectical.”¹⁸⁶

But if we regard nature as the history of nature, as an evolutionary process that is going on to one degree or another under our very eyes, we dishonor this process by thinking of it in anything but a processual way. That is to say, we require a way of thinking that recognizes that “what-is” as it seems to lie before our eyes is always developing into “what-it-is-not,” that it is engaged in a continual self-organizing process in which past and present, seen as a richly differentiated but shared continuum, give rise to a new potentiality for a future, ever richer degree of wholeness. Accordingly, the human and the nonhuman can be seen as aspects of an evolutionary continuum, and the emergence of the human can be located in the evolution of the nonhuman, without advancing naive claims that one is either “superior to” or “made for” the other.¹⁸⁷

For it is first nature “as a participatory realm of interactive life-forms whose most outstanding attributes are fecundity, creativity, and directiveness, marked by a complementarity that renders the natural world the grounding for an ethics of freedom rather than domination.”¹⁸⁸ Domination is seen by Social Ecology as being the root cause of the environmental crisis.¹⁸⁹

Social Ecology, as articulated and argued by Bookchin, has differed sharply with particular articulations of Deep Ecology over the years, especially since a gathering of the U.S. green Party at Amherst College in 1987. At this gathering, Bookchin expressed his disagreement with Deep Ecology:

The greatest differences that are emerging within the so-called “ecology movement” of our day are between a vague, formless, often self-contradictory and invertebrate thing called “deep ecology”, and a long-developing, coherent, and socially oriented body of ideas that can best be called “social ecology.” “Deep ecology” has parachuted into our midst quite recently from the Sunbelt’s bizarre mix of Hollywood and Disneyland, spiced with homilies from Taoism, buddhism, spiritualism, reborn Christianity, and, in some cases, eco-Fascism, while ‘social ecology’ draws its inspiration from such outstanding radical decentralist thinkers as Peter Kropotkin, William Morris, and Paul Goodman among many others who have

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 358.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 359.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ Murray Bookchin, *The Murray Bookchin Reader*, ed. Janet Biehl (London: Cassell, 1997), 40.

¹⁸⁹ Alan Carter, “Deep Ecology or Social Ecology?” *The Heythrop Journal* 36 no. 3 (July 1995), 342-343.

advanced a serious challenge to the present society with its vast hierarchical, sexist, class-ruled, statist apparatus and militaristic history.

Let us face these differences bluntly. ‘Deep ecology’, despite all its social rhetoric, has virtually no real sense that our ecological problems have their ultimate roots in society and in social problems.¹⁹⁰

Bookchin’s main concern seems to revolve around what he considers to be fuzzy thinking among Deep Ecologists regarding the nature of human society as an evolutionary development out of nature itself. His disagreement with Deep Ecology stemmed at first from a comment made by Dave Foreman of Earth First! during an interview with Bill Devall in which Foreman suggested that people starving in Ethiopia should not be given aid, but should just be left to the processes of natural selection.¹⁹¹ That Devall did not reprove Foreman for his opinion or his cavalier use (Bookchin’s phrasing) of Darwinian natural selection in regards to complex social issues demonstrated to Bookchin that Deep Ecology lacked a true social analysis, and that it demonstrated a line of thinking that was dangerously authoritarian and potentially Fascist.¹⁹²

It is important to point out at this juncture that many Deep Ecologists, especially those I studied and worked with, do not subscribe to the line of thinking imputed to them by Bookchin, and that he has painted the whole canvas of Deep Ecology with brush strokes that belong to a few isolated conversations and individuals. Indeed, in the programs I attended sponsored by the Institute for Deep Ecology, which are discussed later in this chapter, I found that these very social and political dimensions of the environmental crisis were discussed seriously and widely. The two movements are not as divergent as Bookchin paints them.

Bookchin calls for a dialectical naturalism which derives its style of reasoning from the processual and participatory character of first nature. This is to the end of a human society that is mutual, participatory and democratic, non-dominating, and which exists for the mutual benefit of all members of human society and the natural world.

Social ecology seems to stand alone, at present, in calling for the use of organic, developmental, and derivative ways of thinking out problems that are basically organic and developmental in character. The very definition of the natural world as a development indicates the need for an organic way of thinking, as does the derivation of human from nonhuman nature-a derivation that has the most far-reaching consequences for an ecological

¹⁹⁰ Murray Bookchin, “Social Ecology versus ‘Deep Ecology’: A Challenge for the Ecology Movement,” *The Raven* 3 (1987): 239, quoted in Alan Carter, “Deep Ecology or Social Ecology?” 340.

¹⁹¹ Alan Carter, “Deep Ecology or Social Ecology?” 345.

¹⁹² See Murray Bookchin, *The Murray Bookchin Reader*, 53-57, 65-74; *Remaking Society: Pathways to a Green Society* (Boston: South End Press, 1990), 7-18; *The Philosophy of Social Ecology: Essays on Dialectical Naturalism* (Montreal: Black Rose books, 1990), 7-20.

ethics that can offer serious guidelines for the solution of our ecological problems.¹⁹³

It is not the purpose of this dissertation to expound in great detail the debates between the various radical environmentalisms. Rather, the foregoing discussion has served primarily to situate the Deep Ecology movement within the ongoing and evolving context of the wider environmental movement. Indeed, as a result of these arguments and disputes between various radical environmental positions, new positions have emerged and the environmental movement itself can best be represented as being characterized by an overlapping of environmental ideologies and articulations.

¹⁹³ Murray Bookchin, “What is Social Ecology?” 359-60.

1.5. Deep Ecology Platform

Arne Naess articulated his distinction between the Shallow and Deep, Long-Range Ecology movements in 1972 in the essay cited earlier. This essay was picked up and given wider circulation in the United States by Bill Devall and George Session. In that article, Naess was describing a grassroots movement. In further conversations in the early 1980s with George Sessions and others, a set of eight platform principles was developed to characterize a deep, long-range ecology movement. These are as follows:

1. The well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman Life on Earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent value). These values are independent of the usefulness of the nonhuman world for human purposes.
2. Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realizations of these values and are also values in themselves.
3. Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs.
4. The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of human population. The flourishing of nonhuman life requires such a decrease.
5. Present human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening.
6. Policies must therefore be changed. These policies affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present.
7. The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between big and great.
8. Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation to directly or indirectly try to implement the necessary changes.¹⁹⁴

Alan Drengson is careful to point out, in his commentary upon this platform, that these are meant to be guidelines whereby any person can formulate their own ecological philosophy, or ecosophy, as it is often called,¹⁹⁵ out of which their environmental action can emerge.

These principles can be endorsed by people from a diversity of backgrounds who share common concerns for the planet, its many beings and ecological communities. In many Western nations, supporters of the platform principles stated below come from different religious and philosophical backgrounds, their political affiliations differ considerably. What unites them is a long-range vision of what is necessary to protect the integrity of the Earth's ecological communities and ecocentric values. Supporters of the principles have a diversity of ultimate beliefs. "Ultimate beliefs" here refers to their own basic metaphysical and religious grounds for their values, actions and support for the deep ecology movement.

¹⁹⁴ Alan Drengson and Yuichi Inoue, *The Deep Ecology Movement: An Introductory Anthology* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 1995), 49-50.

¹⁹⁵ Here is Arne Naess's definition of ecosophy: "By an ECOSOPHY I mean a philosophy of ecological harmony or equilibrium. A philosophy as a kind of SOFIA (or) wisdom, is openly normative, it contains BOTH norms, rules, postulates, value priority announcements AND hypotheses concerning the state of affairs in our universe. Wisdom is policy wisdom, prescription, not only scientific description and prediction. The details of an ecosophy will show many variations due to significant differences concerning not only the 'facts' of pollution, resources, population, etc. but also value priorities." Cited in Alan Drengson and Yuichi Inoue, *The Deep Ecology Movement*, p.8.

Different people and cultures have different mythologies and stories. Nonetheless, they can support the platform and work for solutions to the environmental crisis. A diversity of practices is emerging, but the overlapping is considerable as can be seen in hundreds of environmental conflicts all over the world.¹⁹⁶

Naess and others recognize that a global environmental movement will develop from a wide variety of ultimate commitments, including a variety of religions and spiritualities. The elaboration of a set of platform principles allows people to begin at their own set of initial religious or ultimate-value commitments and to move towards collective and collaborative environmental work. Naess himself developed the “apron diagram” on the following page to illustrate how one can proceed from ultimate values to concrete political action:

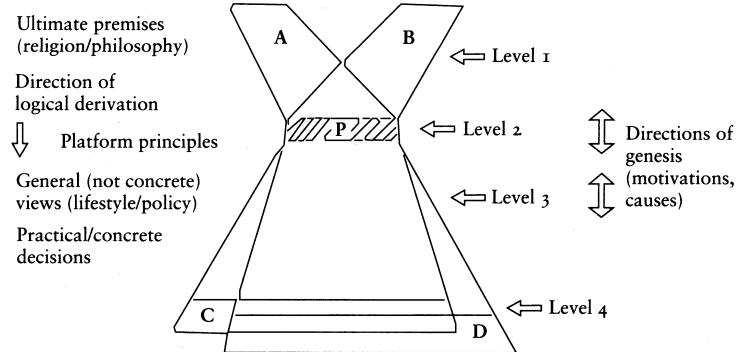


Diagram 2: The Apron¹⁹⁷

The diagram, formulated by Naess himself, is unfortunate in one way: Naess is trying to depict a grass-roots movement in which action arises from the ground-up, rather than a top-down fashion. So, if one inverts the imagery so that Level 1 is at the bottom, it conforms more closely to Naess’ intent. Indeed, Alan Drengson offers this commentary on the diagram:

The aim of ecophilosophy is a total or comprehensive view of our human and individual situation. Comprehensiveness includes the whole global context with us in it, sharing a world with diverse cultures and beings. We move toward a total view via deep questioning to ultimate norms and premises, and via articulation (or application) to policies and practices. Much cross-cultural work is done at the level of PLATFORM PRINCIPLES, and we can have a high level of agreement at this level that Naess calls Level II. From Level II we can engage in deep questioning and pursue articulating our own ecosophy, which might be grounded in some major worldview or religion, such as Pantheism or Christianity. This level of ultimate philosophies is called Level I. There is considerable diversity at this level. From

¹⁹⁶ Alan Drengson, “Introduction and Background to *The Trumpeter*,” *op. cit.*

¹⁹⁷ Diagram taken from Drengson and Inoue, *The Deep Ecology Movement*, 10.

Level II principles, we can develop specific policy recommendations and formulations, or Level III. Level III application leads us to practical actions, Level IV. There is considerable diversity at the level of policies, but even more at the level of practical actions.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁸ Drengson, “Introduction and Background. . .”

Deep Ecology as a Search for Place

In the previous chapter I spoke about the power of a worldview to provide a cognitive landscape in which a community of people or a whole society can live. The terminology of landscape is deliberately chosen, because the Deep Ecology movement itself can be described as a search for place. This place exists at the level of the imagination as well as at the level of physical situatedness.

The Deep Ecological critique of the prevailing worldview of post-industrial, technologically-based, consumerist cultures¹⁹⁹ is that the cognitive landscapes they set up are in conflict with the natural landscape itself. What Deep Ecology seeks to do is to articulate a worldview which is in concert with the natural world itself and whose principles, terms, boundaries, definitions, and modes of operation are derived from the natural world (always keeping in mind that humans and human diversity are a part of the natural world as well). Such a worldview is often articulated in terms of the particularities of place, or more to the point, of places. That is to say, a worldview derived from the natural world needs to recognize that the natural world itself consists of vast collections and systems of terrains, animal and plant populations, climates and human communities.

The Deep Ecologists I studied endeavor to remain grounded (a term I use deliberately) in the constituencies and conditions of particular places. That is, when thinking and speaking deep-ecologically, it does not do to speak of the environment in general, removed from specific places, with particular species of plants and animals, a unique topography, specific climate, a particular human inhabitation, certain

¹⁹⁹ The following examples of the critique of technological and post-industrial culture do not always bear the name “Deep Ecology,” but are often cited by Deep Ecology writers, and can be considered to be within the circle of Deep Ecology thought: Morris Berman, *the Reenchantment of the World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981); C.A. Bowers, *Critical Essays on Education, Modernity, and the Recovery of the Ecological Imperative* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1993); Fritjof Capra, *The Turning Point: Science, Society and the Rising Culture* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982); Bill Devall, *Living Richly in an Age of Limits* (Salt Lake City, UT: Gibbs Smith, 1988); Alan Drengson, *Shifting Paradigms: From Technocrat to Planetary Person* (Victoria, BC, Canada: Lightstar, 1983); Alan Drengson, *The Practice of Technology* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1995); Leopold Kohr, *The Overdeveloped Nations: the Diseconomies of Scale* (New York: Schocken Books, 1978); Jerry Mander, *In the Absence of the Sacred: the Failure of Technology and the Survival of the Indian Nations* (San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club books, 1991); Andre McLaughlin, *Regarding Nature: Industrialism and Deep Ecology* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1993); Donella H. Meadows, et al, *The Limits to Growth: A Report for the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind* (New York: Universe Books, 1972); Clive Ponting, *A Green History of the World: The environment and the Collapse of Great Civilizations* (New York: Penguin books, 1991); Daniel Quinn, *Ishmael* (New York: Bantam Books, 1993); Theodore Roszak, *Person/Planet: The Creative Disintegration of Industrial Society*, (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/ Doubleday, 1978); Vandana Shiva, *Monocultures of the Mind* (Penang, Malaysia: Third World Network, 1993); Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Michael Zimmerman, *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana Press, 1990).

smells, sights, sounds, etc. While certain Deep Ecological ideas and principles are framed in the abstract, which is the function of theory, there is a strong impulse among many who espouse Deep Ecology to apply those principles directly to specific places, particular environments.

One form which this has taken is environmental activism. One example of a group who has sought to translate Deep Ecological principles and insights into direct action is Earth First! A brief discussion concerning Earth First! follows later in this chapter.

Another arena in which deep ecological principles are applied to particular places and local environments is in connection with the Bioregional movement. Two of the earliest articulators of the Bioregionalist perspective, Peter Berg and Raymond Dasmann, describe Bioregionalism by first defining what a bioregion is:

Bioregions are geographic areas having common characteristics of soil, watershed, climate, native plants and animals that exist within the whole planetary biosphere as unique and contributive parts.

A bioregion refers both to geographical terrain and a terrain of consciousness—to a place and the ideas that have developed about how to live in that place.

A bioregion can be determined initially by use of climatology, physiography, animal and plant geography, natural history and other descriptive resonance among living things and the factors that influence them which occurs specifically within each separate part of the planet.

Discovering and describing that resonance is a way to describe a bioregion.²⁰⁰

Bioregionalism seeks to help the human species “re-inhabit” bioregions as active constituents of a bioregion, as member species of the bioregion. The Columbia River Bioregional Education Project defines its task in these terms:

A bioregion (bio = life) is a geographic area whose boundaries are set by nature, distinguishable from other areas by characteristics such as plants, animals, watersheds, climate, landforms, soils, and the human settlements and cultures shaped by these characteristics. It is not only a physical region, but also a deep psychological identification with a dwelling place.

Cut off from ancestral roots deep within the natural world upon which the human species evolved, urban techno-logical culture unquestionably needs to chart it's [sic] future course upon the ground of true reality, the Earth itself.

In order for the humans to dwell indefinitely and successfully on Planet Earth, they will have to correct their course; realigning their patterns of living until the relationship between humans and Earth is restored to a mutually respectful, appropriate and therefore, sustainable interaction.

The bioregional concept is a tool which enables us to discover the ecological laws and principles which must form the basis for the design of all long term human systems; economic, technological, agricultural, spiritual and political.

²⁰⁰ Peter Berg and Raymond Dasmann, *Reinhabiting a Separate County* (San Francisco, CA: Planet Drum Foundation, 1978), cited on the Internet at the Columbiana Website, “What Is A Bioregion?” at <http://www.columbiana.org/bioregions.htm#Vision>, found online June 15, 1999.

The unqualified reunification of humans with nature; and the moral and political order which will result from this harmony is the imperative and the work of our time.²⁰¹

Cascadia Planet, another Bioregional organization centered in the Pacific Northwest (which in Bioregionalist circles is sometimes referred to as “Cascadia”), speaks of Bioregionalism this way:

Bioregionalism seeks to mend the shredded fabric of life, re-weaving the web of relationships between people and place. The core of the human experience, historically and in the bioregional vision, is the relationship of human communities with their matrix of local and regional nature. Bioregions re-unite nature and society within the context of specific places. The bioregional approach returns to a sense that formed much of the human experience, and was obscured only recently in the industrial era.²⁰²

Many Bioregionalist and Deep Ecological authors equate bioregionalism with a recovery of the spiritual connections which exist between particular places and the inhabitants of that place. For example, in his book about Deep Ecology, Bill Devall comments about Bioregionalism:

A fuller discussion of the biocentric norm as it unfolds itself in practice begins with realization that we, as individual humans, and as communities of humans, have vital needs which go beyond such basics as food, water, and shelter to include love, play, creative expression, intimate relationships with a particular landscape (or Nature taken in its entirety) as well as intimate relationships with other humans, and the vital need for spiritual growth, for becoming a mature human being.

Our vital material needs are probably more simple than many realize. In technocratic-industrial societies there is overwhelming propaganda and advertising which encourages false needs and destructive desires designed to foster increased production and consumption of goods. Most of this actually diverts us from facing reality in an objective way and from beginning the “real work” of spiritual growth and maturity.²⁰³

Jim Dodge, a sheep rancher living in western Sonoma County, California, describes the importance given to natural systems “both as the source of physical nutrition and as the body of metaphors from which our spirits draw sustenance. To understand natural systems is to begin an understanding of the self.”²⁰⁴ A second element of Bioregionalism involves self-regulation (which involves greater decision-making by the inhabitants of a particular region and place), and “a third element composing the bioregional notion is spirit,” Dodge explains. Bill Devall comments upon the element of spirit by clarifying that “there

²⁰¹ Columbia River Bioregional Education Project, "Who We Are," found at the Columbian Website, June 15, 1999: http://www.columbian.org/who_we_are.htm

²⁰² Cascadia Planet, “What are Bioregions?” found on the web June 15, 1999 at: <http://www.tnews.com/terms/bioregion.def.html>.

²⁰³ Bill Devall, “Bioregionalism” in Bill Devall and George Sessions, *Deep Ecology* (Salt Lake City, UT: Peregrine Smith Books, Utah, 1985), 21.

²⁰⁴ Jim Dodge, “Living By Life,” *CoEvolution Quarterly* 32 (Winter 1981): 6-12, quoted in *ibid*.

is no single religious practice for this sense of bioregional spirit. It can be Christian, Buddhist, Native American or others; based on deep ecological insights, it can be expressed in numerous ways.”²⁰⁵

What is significant in all discussions of bioregionalism is the idea and practice of re-connecting deeply with a particular *place*. David McCloskey, founder of the Cascadia Institute and co-chair of the New Ecological Studies Program at Seattle University, speaks in terms of re-inhabiting our places:

Reinhabitation as Living-in-Place -- More than ever today we need to develop an ethic of place. No amount of governmental rules and regulations will ever suffice if people do not know the land, love and care for it in their hearts as their home. . . .

Mobile beyond our wildest dreams, ready to leap off-world into outer space or descend into the uncharted realms of electronic “cyberspace,” we need to learn how to “live-in-place.” As Peter Berg and Raymond Dasmann suggest: “Living in place means following the necessities and pleasures of life as they are uniquely presented by a particular site, and evolving ways to endure long-term occupancy of that site. A society which practices living-in-place keeps a balance with its region of support through links with human lives, other living creatures, and the processes of the planet—seasons, weather, water cycles, as revealed by the place itself. It is the opposite of a society which makes a living through short-term destructive exploitation of land and life. . . .”

Now, it does little good to speak to people primarily in the arcane language of ecosystem analysis, for this kind of distracting language is often part of the old story. We need the poetics of place as much as the ecologics. For as Aldo Leopold reminded us, “We can be ethical only in relation to something we can see, feel, understand or love; something, in short, we feel a strong attachment to. . . .”

We don’t love “ecosystems” in general, rather we love specific places and regions. An ecosystem remains a concept, not a percept; while outlining a system of exchanges in an abstract space, an ecosystem is no place in particular. An ecosystem remains a bodiless abstraction unless it is incarnated in specific places; otherwise, it floats without “a name or local habitation,” thus remaining, as the poet reminds us, “an airy nothing. . . .”

The first task, then, of “knowing home” -- reclaiming a natural address and discovering a placed identity -- is what bioregionalists refer to as “reinhabitation.” As Raymond Dasmann and Peter Berg observe: “Reinhabitation means learning to live-in-place in an area that has been disrupted and injured through past exploitation. It means becoming native to a place through being aware of the particular ecological relationships that operate within and around it. It means understanding activities and evolving social behavior that will enrich the life of that place, restore its life-supporting systems, and establishing an ecologically and socially sustainable

²⁰⁵ Bill Devall, *Deep Ecology*, 21.

pattern of existence within it. . . . Simply stated, it involves becoming fully alive in and with a place.”²⁰⁶

In a talk given at the “Re-inhabitation Conference” at North San Juan School in August of 1976, poet, Buddhist and Deep Ecology activist Gary Snyder articulated early on the spiritual ramifications of living in place:

Is not the purpose of all this living and studying the achievement of self-knowledge, self-realization? How does knowledge of place help us know the Self? The answer, simply put, is that we are all composite beings, not only physically but intellectually, whose sole individual identifying feature is a particular form or structure changing constantly in time. There is no “self” to be found in that, and yet oddly enough, there is. Part of you is out there waiting to come into you, and another part of you is behind you, and the “just this” of the ever-present moment holds all the transitory little selves in its mirror. The Avatamsaka (“Flower Wreath”) jeweled-net-interpenetration-ecological-systems-emptiness-consciousness tells us, no self-realization without the Whole Self, and the whole self is the whole thing.

Thus, knowing who and where are intimately linked. There are no limits to the possibilities of the study of who and where, if you want to go “beyond limits” -- and so, even in a world of biological limits, there is plenty of open mind-space to go out into.²⁰⁷

The idea of “re-inhabiting” a place flows directly from the sense that the technologically-based, urban-centered societies of the (over-)developed countries of the world have lost what many indigenous cultures and “first peoples” are thought to possess: a deep knowledge of and rootedness in their place of origin. Alan Thein Durning describes in poignant terms his own dawning realization of his own disconnection from place:

... I was in the Philippines interviewing members of remote hill tribes about their land and livelihood. On a sweltering day in the forested terrain of the Banwa’on people, a gap-toothed chief showed me the trees, streams, and farm plots that his tribe had tended for centuries. It was territory, he insisted, they would defend with their lives. As the sun finally slid lower in the sky, he introduced me to a frail old woman who was revered by the others as a traditional priestess. We sat under a sacred tree near her farm and looked out over the Ma’asam River. She asked through an interpreter, “What is your homeland like?”

She looked at me with an expectant smile, but I was speechless. My eyes dropped. Should I tell her about my neighborhood on the edge of Washington, D.C., the one where I then lived with my wife, Amy, and our son, Gary? The one where we could not let Gary play outside our apartment because of the traffic?

She repeated the question, thinking I had not heard. “Tell me about your place.” Again, I could not answer. Should I tell her about the neighborhood we had previously fled, the one where the dead bodies of young men kept turning up in the alleys? The one where police helicopters were always shining their spotlights through our windows? The one that had since erupted in riots and suffered the psychotic nonchalance of a serial killer? I said nothing.

²⁰⁶ David McCloskey, “Ecology and Community: The Bioregional Vision,” found June 15, 1999 on the Internet at <http://www.tnews.com/text/mccloskey2.html>.

²⁰⁷ Gary Snyder, ““Re-inhabitation,” in *The Old Ways* (San Francisco, CA: City Lights Books, 1977), 57-66. Found in Drengson, and Inoue, *The Deep Ecology Movement*, 71-72.

The truth was I lacked any connection to my base in Washington, D.C., and for some reason, for the first time, it shamed me. I had breakfasted with senators and shaken hands with presidents, but I was tongue-tied before this barefoot old woman.

“In America,” I finally admitted, “we have careers, not places.” Looking up, I recognized pity in her eyes.²⁰⁸

What Bioregionalism has provided for the Deep Ecology movement, then, is a particular way of situating people in their place, and raising awareness of the exigencies and particularities of that specific, concrete place. Many Bioregionalists have developed practices designed to enable this process of re-inhabiting and re-identification with particular places. For example, Beatrice Briggs offers the following practical suggestions about “how to be a bioregionalist:”

1. Revise your address. Bioregionalists tend to answer the question, “Where do you live?” in terms of the boundaries of the local ecosystem, rather than those of the nation-state.
2. Track the energy flows. Water and food and fuel are essential for human life. Find out where your drinking water comes from and where local waste water goes. Become knowledgeable about watershed issues.(Hint: a watershed is an area drained by a body of water, such as a lake or a river. Everyone lives in one.) Know how far your food traveled to get to your plate and the conditions under which it was grown. Make an effort to eat locally grown, seasonal, and organic produce.
3. Become passionate about maps and mapping. The minute you start looking for maps of your bioregion, you will discover the frustrating inadequacies of most existing ones. Street maps obscure the geographical features. Topographical maps ignore the vegetation. Vegetation maps leave out the historical sites. Watershed maps stop abruptly at county, state, or national borders, even though the water flows on. Consult *Boundaries of Home*, edited by Doug Aberley, for a useful introduction to bio-cartography. (New Society Publishers, PO Box 189, Gabriola Island, BC, V0R 1X0, Canada.)
4. Discover the “real” name and totem of your place. Too often current place names reflect only the relatively recent human history of the area. Go beyond the names of dead royalty and foreign colonizers, to learn the ancient names, which are usually more evocative of the original character of the landscape. If the area still retains its indigenous name, find out what it means.
5. Make a calendar. Name the Moons. Collect information about the seasonal cycles in your area. Find out when the native plants bloom, when the birds migrate, the animals mate, the young are born. Identify the times of greatest danger (of heat, cold, drought, flood, smog, traffic, gang warfare, etc.), as well as the times of opportunity. Ask knowledgeable residents, “How do you know when spring/summer/fall/winter (or the applicable seasons where you live) arrives?” Based on this data, give a bioregionally appropriate name to each of the thirteen “moons.” Avoid the tendency to identify everything from the human perspective.
6. Take a walk. Document your discoveries. Get out and discover the sacred places in your bioregion. Go on foot or other non-motorized conveyance. Invite family members, friends and young people to accompany you. Bring field guides, history books, maps, and, if possible, a local expert to show you around. If a group is doing interesting work in a particular area, arrange for a special tour. Better yet, ask if you can help out for a day or an afternoon. Whatever you do, take a camera, notebook and/or sketch book to record your impressions and experiences. This documentation will help you remember what you saw and will enable you to more easily share your discoveries with others.
7. Tell a story. Sing a song. Learn the natural and human history of your area and try to tell it in a way that captures the attention of both children and adults. Learn -- or invent -- a song about your bioregion. Sing it at feasts, festivals, and while washing the dishes.

²⁰⁸ Alan Thein Durning, *This Place on Earth: Home and the Practice of Permanence* (Seattle, WA: Sasquatch Books, 1996), 3-4.

8. Throw a party. Celebrate the distinctive characteristics of your bioregion with rituals and celebrations. Bring people together to honor the full moon, solstice, equinox, first snowfall, melting of the ice at winter's end, harvest, beginning of the rainy season, time of the annual grass fires, or whatever makes sense in ecosystem terms. Keep it simple. Involve both the artists and the scientists. Share food. Dance with the spirits of the land.
9. Get a project. Find some aspect of the bioregion which needs help: a polluted waterway, endangered species, deteriorating neighborhood, city council, school, park, wild place, and get involved. Form a team of folks who share your concern. Make decisions by consensus. Put out a newsletter. Rock the boat. Have fun!
10. Grow roots. Building strong local communities requires people who sink deep roots into the soil. Deal with the neighbors, elected officials, and ecosystems at hand, rather than constantly seeking utopia elsewhere. When you live where you want to be buried, you know you are home.²⁰⁹

This endeavor to reinhabit places, to re-situate oneself deeply within particular locations is seen by many Deep Ecologists as a means for realizing the two central ultimate norms of Deep Ecology, that of *ecocentric identification* and of *biocentrism* (sometimes referred to as *ecocentrism*).

Humans are one of myriad self-realizing beings, and human maturity and self-realization come from broader and wider self-identification. Out of identification with forests, rivers, deserts, or mountains comes a kind of solidarity: “I am the rainforest” or “I am speaking for this mountain because it is a part of me.”²¹⁰

Biocentrism emphasizes the idea that humans are part of a web of life, rather than the pinnacle of a pyramid of life. Biocentrism is usually contrasted with anthropocentrism, which emphasizes the superiority of humans over the rest of nature. A biocentric worldview encourages respect for natural biodiversity and evolution, and such a worldview encourages concern for the future generations of all living species, including rivers.²¹¹ As Bill Devall explains it, “Realizing the goal of an ecocentric-based society requires *ecosophy* of wisdom. Ecosophy literally means wisdom of the household, or the place in which we dwell.”²¹² Alan Drengson describes ecosophy as an ecological wisdom which is more than discursive knowing but a “state of harmonious relationship with earth. . . . Ecosophy is the wisdom of dwelling in a place and it is also the wisdom to dwell in a place harmoniously.”²¹³

2. Key Players

This section is headed “Key Players” intentionally, because there are several people within the Deep Ecology movement who bring a spirit of play and embodied playfulness to the movement. These

²⁰⁹ Beatrice Briggs, “How to Be a Bioregionalist: Part Two: Practical Suggestions,” copyright 1996, *Cascadia Planet*, found on the Internet June 15, 1999 at http://www.tnews.com:80/text/how_to_be.html.

²¹⁰ Bill Devall, “Deep Ecology and Radical Environmentalism,” *Society and Natural Resources* 4 (1991): 248.

²¹¹ Arne Naess, “The Shallow and the Deep, Long-range Environmental Movement,” and Bill Devall, *op. cit.*, 249.

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ Alan Drengson, “In Praise of Ecosophy,” *Trumpeter* 7 (Spring 1990):101-102, cited in *ibid.*, p. 249.

people have been instrumental in developing rituals, role-playing and performative actions in regard to Deep Ecology. In the previous chapter, I focussed upon Joanna Macy's work with imagination and "The Work that Reconnects."

2.1. Dolores LaChapelle

Dolores LaChapelle was one of the early voices in the Deep Ecology movement, and as she points out, one of the very first women to embrace the idea of Deep Ecology to express what she already knew of the world. She is a mountaineer, avid powder snow skier, T'ai Chi practitioner and leader/teacher of rituals in the natural world. She has been the Director of Way of the Mountain Learning Center in Silverton, Colorado since 1977. She leads experiential ecology workshops regularly in wilderness settings throughout North America.

LaChapelle is one of the foremost advocates for the use of ritual in cultivating and reinvigorating the innate sense of connection that people have with the Earth, but have forgotten or mitigated in contemporary Industrial Growth Society.

If we want to build a sustainable culture, it is not enough to "go back to the land." That's exactly where our pioneering ancestors lived and, as the famous Western painter Charles Russell said, "A pioneer is a man who comes to virgin country, traps off all the fur, kills off the wild meat, plows the roots up. . . A pioneer destroys things and calls it civilization." If we are to truly re-connect with the land, we need to change our perceptions and approach more than our location. As long as we limit ourselves to rationality and its limited sense of "practicality," we will be disconnected from the "deep ecology" of our place. As Heidegger explains: "Dwelling is not primarily inhabiting but taking care of and creating that space within which something comes into its own and flourishes." It takes both time and ritual for real dwelling.²¹⁴

Three of her publications relate to this sense of ritual and embodied reconnection with the earth: *Earth Festivals*, *Earth Wisdom*, and *Sacred Land, Sacred Sex: Rapture of the Deep*.²¹⁵

Ritual is essential because it is truly the pattern that connects. It provides communication at all levels -- communication among all the systems within the individual human organism; between people within groups; between one group and another in a city and throughout all these levels between the human and the non-human in the natural environment. Ritual provides us with a tool for learning to think logically, analogically and ecologically as we move toward a sustainable culture. Most important of all, perhaps, during rituals we have the experience, unique in our culture, of neither opposing nature or trying to be in communion with nature; but of finding ourselves within nature, and that is the key to sustainable culture.²¹⁶

²¹⁴ Dolores LaChapelle, "Ritual is Essential," IN CONTEXT #5 (Spring 1984): 41.

²¹⁵ Dolores LaChapelle, *Earth Festivals* (Silverton, CO: Finn Hill Arts, 1976); *Earth Wisdom* (Silverton, CO: Finn Hill Arts, 1978); *Sacred Land, Sacred Sex, Rapture of the Deep: Concerning Deep Ecology and Celebrating Life* (Silverton, CO: Finn Hill Arts, 1988).

²¹⁶ Dolores LaChapelle, "Ritual is Essential," 41.

2.2. John Seed

John Seed is an Australian who has been one of the world's foremost rainforest activists since 1979. In a published interview with Seed, Samantha Trenoweth says this about him:

His Rainforest Roadshows (in which he traveled the globe, singing, speaking, showing slides and videos about the state of the environment) inspired the formation of the Rainforest Action Network, which organised the groundbreaking Burger King boycotts in the USA. Today, he lobbies governments and corporations around the world, implements sustainable forestry practices in Pacific island nations, raises funds to support campaigns from Siberia to Ecuador and is among the most influential and creative thinkers in the new environmental religious philosophy called Deep Ecology.²¹⁷

His life has been eclectic. He graduated in psychology from the University of Sydney, but went on to become an artist and worked as a sculptor for some years, with exhibitions in London, Sydney and around Australia. After that, he lived in London for 5 years and worked as a systems engineer for IBM. A "chance encounter" with LSD in the early 70's changed his direction, and he traveled in 1972 to Southeast Asia and India to do several meditation retreats in Bodhgaya, India with S.N. Goenka, and with Tibetan Lama Yeshe. He then returned to Australia to establish with several other people a meditation center near Lismore in New South Wales, and began organizing retreats. In 1975, they organized Bodhi Farm, a meditation community. From 1972 until 1979 regular retreats were held at Bodhi Farm. Then, in 1979, he became involved almost by accident in the first direct action in Australia to save a section of Rainforest called The Scrub about five miles away from Bodhi Farm. He was transformed by the experience. He describes the transformation and how it has effected his life and action:

I grew vegetables for a few seasons -- the experience of placing a seed in the ground and growing a tomato and taking a seed from the tomato and putting it in the ground and growing another tomato. Then, I helped to conceive a child and birthed that child with my partner. Finally, ecology swept me away. I had a very powerful spiritual experience of the environment through Terrania Creek, the Franklin River, the Daintree and all those direct actions.

Each of those things gradually transformed my life, until I finally surrendered to the earth. Now, I find myself asking for guidance and direction and energy and wisdom from the earth, knowing that I am part of the earth, knowing that I'm a cell in the body of the earth. I just go back to the forest, lie down on the forest floor, cover myself in leaves, imagine an umbilical chord going from my belly deep down into the earth and pray for nourishment,

²¹⁷ Samantha Trenoweth, "John Seed: A Voice From The Wilderness," found online at http://www.reachingout.org/programs_7_main.html. Various interviews with John Seed can be found online. See "James Bennett-Levy Interviews John Seed," found online at <http://forests.org/ric/deep-eco/levy.htm>; "Spirit Of The Earth," found online at <http://forests.org/ric/deep-eco/spiritof.htm>; "Ram Dass Interviews John Seed," found online at <http://forests.org/ric/deep-eco/ramdass.htm>; "The Rainforest As Teacher: An Interview with John Seed," found online at <http://forests.org/ric/deep-eco/inqmind.htm>; and "Transcripts Of John Seed's Introductions to The Council Of All Beings," found online at <http://forests.org/ric/deep-eco/cabtrans.htm>.

wisdom and guidance. There I find energy and an ability to act, to inspire other people, to think, write, dream, make films and do all of these things.²¹⁸

These experiences helped Seed to recognize that there was an underlying spiritual problem in the contemporary Industrial Growth Society that needed to be addressed if rainforests were to be saved.

Indeed, the destruction of the rainforests were simply a symptom of a far-deeper debility of attitude, thinking and spirituality.

To protect the Earth, to protect ourselves, we had to change the way we saw both the Earth and ourselves. We had to change our consciousness. Unless we could address our underlying spiritual disease, no forests would be saved for long. But how, I wondered, are we to identify and understand the spiritual malaise that leaves modern humans so lonely and isolated and no longer able to hear the glad tidings of the Earth which is our home? How are we to heal the great loneliness of spirit that finds us unable to feel loyalty and gratitude to the soil, which has fed and nourished and supported us without pause for 4,000 million years?²¹⁹

Searching for an answer to this question led Seed to observe how indigenous peoples reconnect with the earth through ceremonies and rituals. What Seed discovered was that even though it appeared that indigenous peoples from various cultures around the world appeared to be already connected and “in tune” with their environment, the rituals suggested to him that these peoples realized their own need to restore their balance and relationship with the natural world in which they lived. Even indigenous peoples could fall out of harmony with the earth. Rituals and ceremonies help restore that balance.

I believe that loss of the ceremonies and rituals that acknowledge and nurture our interconnectedness with nature is a large part of the problem. We modern humans are the only culture as far as I’ve been able to find out who have ever attempted to live without these ceremonies and rituals as an integral part of our societies. The people who place great importance upon such rituals and ceremonies are people who live in very, very close connection with nature, hunter-gatherer societies for instance, where people are immersed, imbedded in nature all of the time. If we consider that they find it necessary to guarantee that connectedness by performing such ceremonies, how much more we, living such denatured lives, must need to do this. And so, since those things have been given up, and perhaps not willingly, perhaps we’re forced to give them up by inquisitions and other things, we have now pushed “the environment” somewhere “out there.” Even though we may know intellectually that this isn’t the case, all we have to do is hold our breath for about a minute to prove that the environment isn’t really “out there,” but that there’s a constant exchange not just of air, of course, but of moisture and of soil into our bodies, we don’t feel it, we don’t experience ourselves in this way. Our experience of ourselves is still mediated by thousands of years of Judeo-Christian brainwashing, which makes us feel that the real reality is somewhere else, it’s in heaven, it’s anywhere but here on this Earth.²²⁰

In 1985, Seed worked with Joanna Macy and Pat Fleming and others to develop the Council of All Beings. Growing in part out of Macy’s Despair and Empowerment work, the early Councils of All Beings

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

²¹⁹ John Seed, “Spirit of the Earth,” *Yoga Journal*, 138 (February 1998), found online at <http://forests.org/ric/deep-eco/spiritof.htm>.

²²⁰ “Ram Dass Interviews John Seed,” found online at <http://forests.org/ric/deep-eco/ramdass.htm>

led participants through a process of mourning and the expression of anger and outrage for the environmental destruction they knew about or had personally experienced. Then using guided visualization, movement, and dance, participants re-experienced their entire evolutionary journey. Being based in part in the new cosmologies articulated by persons such as Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry,²²¹ the evolutionary remembering is a guided visualization that leads participants through the entire story of the emergence of life on earth from the primordial stardust of the Big Bang. This remembering is intended to bring to the participants consciousness the innate wisdom they each possess as a result of several billion years of development and evolution. As Macy has often said, “Act your age: 4 billion years old.” Participants were then led through rituals designed to bring them in contact with an “animal ally” who would speak through the participants during the Council session. Masks were then made to represent these animal allies and give voice to the “voiceless ones.” During the Council session, these animal allies spoke through the voices of their human interlocutors offering words of challenge and guidance to empower the work of the participants in behalf of the earth.²²²

I help organize and lead gatherings called the Council of All Beings, and the exercises we do at these gatherings give us a sense that we are not so much a personality as an intersection of these great cycles. We begin to break the illusion of being separate from the rest of creation. I can lay on the ground and feel the vibration of this earth which gave rise to me and which has sustained my ancestors and everything else for four thousand million years in incredible intelligent harmony.²²³

2.3. Earth First!

One example of a group who has sought to translate deep ecological principles and insights into direct action is Earth First! Although the focus of my discussion here is not upon the EarthFirst!

²²¹ See Thomas Berry, *Befriending the Earth: A Theology of Reconciliation Between Humans and the Earth* (Mystic Conn.: Twenty-Third Publications, 1991); *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988); *The New Story* [Teilhard Studies, no. 1] (Chambersburg, PA: Published for the American Teilhard Association for the Future of man by ANIMA Books, 1978); *Technology and the Healing of the Earth* [Teilhard Studies, no. 14] (Chambersburg, PA: Published for the American Teilhard Association for the Future of man by ANIMA Books, 1985); Brian Swimme, *The Earth is a Green Dragon* (Santa Fe, NM: Bear & Company, 1986); Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, *The Universe Story* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1992).

²²² John Seed, “Spirit of the Earth,” “Introduction: ‘To Hear Within Ourselves the Sound of the Earth Crying,’” in *Thinking Like a Mountain*, 5-17.

²²³ Wes Nisker, “The Rainforest As Teacher: An Interview with John Seed,” *Inquiring Mind*, Volume 8 no. 2 (Spring, 1992), found online at <http://forests.org/ric/deep-eco/inqmind.htm>.

movement, and there are other studies of the movement available,²²⁴ it is important to make reference to Earth First! at this juncture precisely because the people in that movement are committed to the idea of biocentrism, and engaged in direct actions at particular environmentally-sensitive and endangered sites. Deep Ecology has provided a philosophical and ethical framework for the activism of Earth First! wherein the needs and claims for protection made by all species are considered to be equal to the claims of the human species.²²⁵ Since the human species wields greater power and potential for harming or destroying conditions necessary for the well-being of other species, Earth First! members claim to act in defense of less powerful and defenseless species. By placing their bodies “on the line,” as it were, whether on platforms in trees, chained to logging equipment, in political rallies and demonstrations, or in acts of “ecotage,”²²⁶ the environmental activism of members of Earth First! serve as another example of how performative actions within the Deep Ecology movement serve to place the bodies of its adherents into the Deep Ecological worldview.

However, as indicated above, a closer examination of the performative aspects of the Earth First! movement falls outside the purview of this current research. Bron Taylor has done extensive research within the Earth First! movement detailing and analyzing the nascent earth-based spirituality, religion and politics espoused and practiced by its members. He has found that although there is discomfort among some Earth First!ers concerning religion as being either the source of the problem or too much “woo-woo,” there are others who deliberately cultivate this “woo” in order to experience connection with nature or to

²²⁴ Emic writings include John Davis, ed., *The Earth First! Reader: Ten Years of Radical Environmentalism* (Salt Lake City, UT: Peregrine Smith Books, 1991); Dave Foreman, *Confessions of an Eco-Warrior* (Crown Books, 1991). Primary source material for Earth First! can be found in the *Earth First! Journal*, which began publication in Winter, 1981-82. Etic articles are found in Carolyn Merchant, *Radical Ecology: The Search For A Livable World* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Carolyn Merchant, *Major Problems in American Environmental History* (Lexington, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1993); Christopher Manes, *Green Rage: Radical Environmentalism and the Unmaking of Civilization* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1990). For an interesting look at the relationship between the radical environmentalism of Dave Foreman and Evangelical Protestantism, see Mark R. Stoll, *Protestantism, Capitalism, and Nature in America* (University of New Mexico Press, 1997).

²²⁵ See Bill Devall's discussion, “Deep Ecology and Radical Environmentalism,” in *Society and Natural Resources* 4 (1991): 247-258.

²²⁶ “Ecotage” is a neologism describing acts of sabotage to machinery, billboards, buildings or other physical property done in the interest preserving the environment. Ecotage is never directed at human and other living species, only to human-made objects whose usage poses a threat to the well-being of the environment. It is often a tactic used to thwart the progress of projects that pose a risk to environmental quality. See Dave Foreman, ed. *Ecodefense: A Field Guide To Monkeywrenching* (Tucson, AZ.: Earth First Books, 1985), 2nd ed. (Tucson, AZ: N. Ludd, 1987), 3rd ed. edited by Dave Foreman and Bill Haywood (Chico, Calif.: Abbzug Press, 1993). See also Davis, ed., *The Earth First! Reader*.

receive strength from the natural world in order to engage in actions to defend natural areas.²²⁷ My own research for this dissertation took me in different directions from direct involvement with Earth First!, although people such as Joanna Macy, John Seed and Bill Devall have worked closely with members of Earth First! and other campaigns to save the environment and environmentally-sensitive areas.

3. Institute for Deep Ecology

Several of the workshops and trainings I attended as part of the research for this dissertation were sponsored by the Institute for Deep Ecology, whose office is located in Occidental, California. Every year, the Institute for Deep Ecology sponsors a number of workshops and training sessions, as well as serves as a resource center for groups who would like to learn more about Deep Ecology. In these workshops and training sessions the imagination is deliberately engaged in order to experience what a Deep Ecological world feels like. I will sketch very briefly the origins of the Institute, and then proceed with an overview of certain developments in the Institute which argue for an increasing commitment to articulating the spirituality (or spiritualities) inherent within Deep Ecology.

3.1. Origins and Development

In 1992, Fran and Joanna Macy, along with Bill Devall, Stephanie Kaza, Elias Amidon and Elizabeth Roberts and others, co-founded the Institute for Deep Ecology Education. Amidon and Roberts served as its co-directors the first years, operating out of Boulder, Colorado. It then moved its offices to Occidental. In a 1993 brochure advertising its first Summer School, the following description of the Institute is given:

The Institute for Deep Ecology Education (IDEE) is a non-profit project of the Tides Foundation. The Institute sponsors regional and national trainings, consults on deep ecology curriculum and programs, and works to build coalitions among educators, activists, and others involved in this work. Its goal is to bring the deep ecology perspective to the environmental debates of our time.²²⁸

²²⁷ Bron Taylor, "The Religion and Politics of Earth First!," *The Ecologist*, 21, no. 6, (November/December, 1991): 259-8-266; "Earth and Nature-Based Spirituality: From Deep Ecology to Scientific Paganism (a study in two parts)," *forthcoming*; "Evoking the Ecological Self: Art as Resistance to the War on Nature," in *Peace Review: The International Quarterly of World Peace*, 5 no. 2 (June 1993): 225-230; "Earth First!'s Religious Radicalism," in *Ecological Prospects: Scientific, Religious, and Aesthetic Perspectives*, ed. C. Chapple (State University of New York Press, 1994), 185-209; "Earth First!: from Primal Spirituality to Ecological Resistance," in *This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, Environment*, ed. Roger Gottlieb (Routledge, 1996), 545-557; "Ecological Resistance Movements; Not Always Deep but if Deep, Religious: Reply to Devall," *The Trumpeter*, 13 no. 2 (Spring 1996): 98-103.

²²⁸ The Institute for Deep Ecology Education, "A 2-week Summer School in Applied Deep Ecology," brochure (Boulder, CO: The Institute for Deep Ecology Education, 1993).

By 1996, the move to Occidental had been completed, and the name had been shortened to Institute for Deep Ecology. In a 1996 brochure describing the work of the Institute, the following is offered:

IDE brings the deep ecology perspective to the environmental debates of our time. It provides action-oriented, personally empowering environmental trainings and publications. The trainings help participants reawaken their connection with the natural world and become catalysts for social change. All IDE materials and trainings advance a worldview founded on the interdependence of all life and the inherent value of all beings. They promote a fundamental shift in the way we see ourselves, experience the world, and respond to the environmental crisis.²²⁹

From these two descriptions, a change can be seen in how the Institute for Deep Ecology perceived its mission and focus. The focus moved from an emphasis upon education to an emphasis upon action and personal experience (“reawaken their connection with the natural world”). In the Spring 1998 newsletter, the description of the Institute for Deep Ecology reads as follows:

What is IDE? The Institute for Deep Ecology (IDE) advances a world view based upon humanity’s fundamental interdependence with all life forms – a philosophy commonly known as deep ecology. IDE seeks to heal the contemporary alienation from self, community, and the earth by encouraging a fundamental shift in the way we experience nature and respond to the environmental crisis.

The Institute provides transformative, action-oriented educational resources to a diverse constituency. In particular, IDE hosts trainings that bring community organizers, educators, psychotherapists, clergy, and others together with a large, multifaceted faculty of prominent environmentalists.

In this description, although the educational goal of the Institute has not been lost, the emphasis upon experiential work is made explicit. In addition, certain therapeutic claims are made concerning the work of the Institute (“to heal the contemporary alienation from self, community, and the earth...”). In these shifts, it is possible to detect a more explicit articulation of the spirituality endemic to a Deep Ecological understanding and apprehension of the world.

3.2. Developments Reflected in IDE Brochures

Every year, the Institute for Deep Ecology sponsors a number of workshops and trainings in Deep Ecology. The brochure sent out each year describes these workshops as well as gives a brief overview of the philosophy and purpose behind the trainings. It is instructive to read how the language of the overview has changed over time. For

²²⁹ The Institute for Deep Ecology, “Institute for Deep Ecology,” brochure (Occidental, CA: The Institute for Deep Ecology, 1996).

example, on the first page of the 1998 brochure, they ask the question, “What is Deep Ecology?” The sidebar contains four short statements: “A Philosophy Based on the Inherent Value of All Life,” “An International Movement for Social Change,” “A Path for Personal Growth,” and “A Compass for Daily Action.” The following explanation of the trainings is given:

The deep ecology trainings guide us in transforming our way of life. We gather to uncover the root causes of our society’s degradation of nature and peoples. As we seek to heal contemporary alienation from self, community, and the Earth, the deep ecology perspective encourages us to undertake a fundamental shift in the way we experience nature and how we respond to the environmental crisis.

All IDE trainings are grounded in a belief in the essential value and interdependence of all forms of being. We learn tools for minimizing humanity’s destructive interference with the natural world and for restoring the diversity and complexity of ecosystems and human communities. We engage in practices to help change old patterns of thinking and acting, while nourishing the human spirit. And we explore new ways to bring ecological perspectives into personal, professional, and community life.

Please join us in 1998 to develop a community of support and action to face the political and ethical challenges of our time.²³⁰

In the 1999 brochure the sidebar is broken into two columns, “Deep Ecology is...” and “Deep Ecology supports....” Under “Deep Ecology is...” appears the following: “a philosophy based on our sacred relationships with all beings,” “an international movement for a viable future,” “a path for self realization,” “a compass for daily action.” Under the heading “Deep Ecology supports...” the following are listed: “continuing inquiry into the appropriate human role on our planet,” “root cause analysis of unsustainable practices,” “reduction of human consumption,” “conservation and restoration of ecosystems,” and “a life of committed action for Earth.”²³¹

A comparison of the 1998 sidebar for the page entitled “What is Deep Ecology?” with the 1999 sidebar just described reveals a subtle yet significant shift of language:

“What is Deep Ecology?” (1998 brochure)	“Deep Ecology is...” (1999 brochure)
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²³⁰ The Institute for Deep Ecology, *Action for Earth: Applied Deep Ecology, 1998 Programs*, brochure (Occidental, CA: Institute for Deep Ecology, 1998).

²³¹ Institute for Deep Ecology, *Loving Our Place: Experiential Trainings for Taking Bold Action • Identifying root causes • Honoring spirit • Restoring community*, brochure (Occidental, CA: Institute for Deep Ecology, 1999), Inside, opening page.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Philosophy Based on the Inherent Value of All Life • An International Movement for Social Change • A Path for Personal Growth • A Compass for Daily Action. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a philosophy based on our sacred relationship with all beings • an international movement for a viable future • a path for self realization • a compass for daily action
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Table 2: Comparison of 1998 and 1999 IDE Brochures

Deep Ecological philosophy shifts from being based on the inherent value of all life, an ethical premise, to being based on “our sacred relationship with all beings,” a presupposition that arguably makes religious claims. Of significance is also the shift from the more objective reading of “the inherent value of all life” to the more personal and subjective “our sacred relationship with all beings,” which is signalled by the inclusion of the pronoun *our*. In addition, 1998’s “a path for personal growth” becomes “a path for self realization” in 1999. The language of self-realization has resonances with religions and religious writings such as Advaita Vedanta and the *Upanishads* and the cluster of movements, books, workshops and retreats associated with the New Age movement.

3.3. Spiritual Aspects of Deep Ecology

However, such concerns for self-realization and the spiritual dimensions of environmental work have always been a part of the Deep Ecology mix. In an article written to elucidate further his thoughts concerning Deep Ecology, Arne Naess, himself a scholar of Mahatma Gandhi,²³² explicitly connects self-realization with Deep Ecology. In this article, Naess disentangles the notion of self from the narrow ego, instead stressing that inherent in human nature is the potential to identify with other living beings beyond the narrow confines of the individual self. This potentiality for identification is what I have termed

²³² Naess's study of Gandhi helped provide links for Naess between the realization of the greater or universal self (in Hindu thought, the *atman*), with the selfless action of social activism. Gandhi's concerns centered around realization of the *atman* in everyone, showing that his political activities were ultimately and centrally religious. This connection is not lost on Naess. See the following citation. Cf. Diagram 1: Apron diagram, section 1.5 of this chapter.

“Transcendent Relationality” in section 4.4. of the preceding chapter. Naess argues for an *ecological self* which broadens and deepens the individual sense of self.

Joy of life and meaning of life is increased through increased self-realization. That is, through the fulfillment of potentials each has, but which never are exactly the same for any pair of living beings. Whatever the differences, increased self-realization implies broadening and deepening of self.

Because of an inescapable process of identification with others, with growing maturity, the self is widened and deepened. We “see ourselves in others.” Self-realization is hindered if the self-realization of others is hindered. Love of our self will fight this obstacle by assisting in the self-realization of others according to the formula “live and let live!”²³³

Included in this expanded sense of self is a sense of connection and identification with place, with the particular place in which one lives, and has, perhaps, lived as part of a community for years or generations. Making reference to the forced relocation of the Eskimos and Lapps, Naess comments:

If people are relocated or, rather, transplanted, from a steep mountainous place to a plain, they also realize, but too late, that their home-place has been a part of themselves, they have identified with features of the place. And the way of life in the tiny locality, the density of social relations has formed their persons. Again, “they are not the same as they were.”²³⁴

Following the lead of Erich Fromm concerning self-love and self-realization, Naess adopts Fromm’s formulation “realizing inherent potentialities” as a helpful clarification of “self-realization.”²³⁵ As a philosopher, Naess then formulates a diagram of norms and hypotheses concerning self-realization and ecology. With N referring to norms and H referring to hypotheses, the first level is as follows:

N₁: Self-realization!

H₁: The higher the Self-realization attained by anyone, the broader and deeper the identification with others.

H₂: The higher the level of Self-realization attained by anyone, the more its further increase depends upon the Self-realization of others.

H₃: Complete Self-realization of anyone depends on that of all.

N₂: Self-realization for all living beings!²³⁶

Norms and hypotheses which originate in ecology are diagrammed in this manner:

H₄: Diversity of life increases Self-realization potentials.

N₃: Diversity of life!

H₅: Complexity of life increases Self-realization potentials.

N₄: Complexity!

H₆: Life resources of the Earth are limited.

H₇: Symbiosis maximizes Self-realization potentials under conditions of limited resources.

²³³ Arne Naess, “Self-Realization: An Ecological Approach to Being in the World” in Alan Drengson and Yuichi Inoue, *The Deep Ecology Movement* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 1995), 14. Originally published in *The Trumpeter* 4 (1987): 3, 35-42.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

²³⁶ Arne Naess, “Systematization of Logically Ultimate Norms & Hypotheses of Ecosophy T,” in Drengson and Inoue, *The Deep Ecology Movement*, 33.

N₅: Symbiosis!²³⁷

Dolores LaChapelle devotes a long discussion concerning the relationship between the sacred and Deep Ecology. In fact, her preferred definition of the sacred is that it *is* relationship.

The essence of “the sacred” is relationship. It has to do with conforming to the patterns (Chinese, *Li*) in nature because the patterns in nature are both within us (evolved through millenia) and without – in nature outside of us. . .

It’s very difficult to pin “the sacred” down in a few words to make a definition which has meaning for us in this fragmented, unholy culture. But I will try here. The most succinct definition I can give you now, at this time is: First, we humans cannot put it together. It’s all together all the time. Secondly, when we manage to still the rational hemisphere or conscious mind long enough to recognize that – that is when we feel “the sacred.” “The sacred” is the word we use to label that experience. Or, to put it another way, the word we give, the label we give to our recognition of what is always going on, or on-going, always, is “the sacred.”²³⁸

Here LaChapelle argues for the sacred as being that which one is always aware of, or capable of being aware. This state of awareness is an awareness of one’s connections with everything that is. The sacred occurs when one becomes explicitly aware of those connections, and the sacred is the way that reality is structured in order for that awareness to be experienced. Thus, once again, the experiential aspect of Deep Ecology and spirituality is stressed. LaChapelle’s work with nature rituals is derived from this understanding of the sacred, and are devised in order to cultivate this sense of the sacred in everyday consciousness.

Many people in the Deep Ecology movement approach it from within the structures of their own religious tradition. Joanna Macy, Stephanie Kaza, Bill Devall are steeped in Buddhist teaching and practice. John Seed’s religious practice is rooted in both Buddhist meditation and work with gurus in India. Dolores LaChapelle is influenced by Taoist thought and practice. Some of the early faculty at IDE summer trainings, such as Fritz and Vivienne Hull come from the Christian tradition. Many adherents consider themselves to be practitioners of Wicca or are Neo-pagan. Some have simply had numinous experiences in nature and are seeking to respond to and protect the natural world out of those experiences. Many of the people in the Earth First! movement fit into this latter category.

3.4. Trainings

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 35.

²³⁸ Dolores LaChapelle, *Sacred Land, Sacred Sex, Rapture of the Deep*, 127-128.

So it is that many of the trainings sponsored by the Institute for Deep Ecology are experiential in nature. For Deep Ecology, the central problem is that human beings consider themselves to be privileged above or apart from the rest of the natural world. This view is reinforced by a sense of separation or disconnectedness from the natural world. In order to correct this sense of separation and attend to the environmental destruction it inevitably leads to, the sense of connectedness between humans and the natural world needs to be cultivated or restored. And here the word “sense” is the crux of the problem and its solution. Connectedness is something which must be sensed in the body, it must be experienced literally “first-hand,” indeed, “first-body.”

4. Sphere of Present Inquiry

The focus of this chapter has been to situate the Deep Ecology movement within the broader environmental movement and roughly to sketch its debates and dialogues with other radical environmentalisms. I have proposed to direct attention to the work of the Institute for Deep Ecology as it seeks to inculcate a greater understanding of and appreciation for Deep Ecology experientially and educationally both within and without the environmental movement. I have also argued that the experiential aspect of the workshops and trainings sponsored by the Institute for Deep Ecology are part and parcel of one of the central aims of Deep Ecology: to facilitate the reconnection of human beings and the natural world, and that this reconnection occurs on the experiential level.

The fieldwork for this dissertation has been confined to several of the trainings and workshops sponsored by the Institute for Deep Ecology or some of its board members and associated faculty. There are other Deep Ecology practitioners who do experiential work, notably John Seed and Dolores LaChapelle, among others. Constraints of time and finances precluded extensive travel, so I focussed upon the work of persons such as Joanna Macy and others associated with the Institute which she helped to co-found.

I attended a class taught by Joanna Macy at Starr King School for the Ministry in Berkeley, California during the fall semester of 1996, as well as several workshops and trainings sponsored by the Institute for Deep Ecology. The latter included the 1997 and 1998 trainings (“Action for Earth”) at the Chinook Learning Center on Whidbey Island, Washington, “Embodying Nature: An Experience in Deep Ecology,” in April 1998, and a Council of All Beings held in August of 2000.

In the following chapter I will describe in detail three of these experiences.

I will first describe and discuss a ritual I co-led with a fellow student which grew out of the class with Macy at Starr King School for the Ministry. Then I will discuss a four-day workshop with Anna Halprin and Ken Otter, "Embodying Nature," which took place in a dance studio and on the slopes of Mt. Tamalpais in Marin County, California. My final in-depth analysis will be upon the Council of All Beings sponsored by the Institute for Deep Ecology and held at Tilden Park in the hills above Berkeley, California one weekend in August, 2000.

The discussion and description of these workshops will demonstrate how a Performance Hermeneutic as described in the first chapter of this dissertation can identify and name the core experience of an event and then proceed to assist with critical reflection, analysis and synthetic reflection upon that event. It is to these workshops and events that we now turn.

Chapter 4

A Performance Hermeneutical Study of Deep Ecology

1. Introduction

In this chapter I will demonstrate how a Performance Hermeneutic functions in regard to being a participant-observer in a series of Deep Ecology workshops and training experiences, as well as a ritual I co-facilitated with another student. The thesis of this dissertation is that a Performance Hermeneutic methodology can uncover the role(s) of embodied imagination in the processes of emerging religious phenomena. To that end, this dissertation focuses upon the processes utilized by certain persons within the Deep Ecology movement imaginatively and performatively to structure certain experiences (“worlds”) according to a Deep Ecology worldview, and which performatively place the bodies of the participants in these experiences within that world through ritual, role-playing and performance.

In this chapter, then, I will look at two separate workshop or training experiences sponsored by the Institute for Deep Ecology and one ritual which grew out of a class led by Joanna Macy at Starr King School for the Ministry entitled “Spiritual Ground for World Engagement,” held fall semester, 1996. The first workshop to be considered will be one the Institute for Deep Ecology co-sponsored with the Tamalpa Institute in Marin County, California entitled “Embodying Nature: An Experience in Deep Ecology,” which was held April 8-12, 1998 at Anna Halprin’s Mountain Home Studio in Kentfield, California. The second workshop experience will be a Council of All Beings, held August 5-6, 2000, at Gillespie Group Camp in Tilden Park, one of the Regional Parks above Berkeley, California.

In each of the discussions which follow, I will describe how the workshops were advertised through brochures sent out by the Institute for Deep Ecology or by e-mail. This will serve to begin discussion concerning the self-presentation and intentions of the workshop facilitators and organizers. Where appropriate, I will discuss the faculty as well as the format of the workshops and scheduling of events. During the discussion of the various workshop experiences, I will at times speak in a somewhat

detached voice as I recite what was done and said, and what the participants were led through. At other times I will speak more personally and subjectively about what I experienced emotionally, physically and psychologically. From the juxtaposition of these voices, I will demonstrate how a Performance Hermeneutic functions in order to derive insights into the meaning contained in the structured activities of the workshops and communicated through their performative practices.

2. Performance of *The Bestiary* Ritual, Berkeley, California

During the fall semester of 1996, I participated in a class taught by Joanna Macy at Starr King School for the Ministry, part of the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California. In this class, Macy led us through many of the processes and role-playing scenarios she had developed over the years through her despair and empowerment work. Our final project in the class was to be some practical way of engaging the world in order to affect some positive change. The projects could take any form. The only requirement was that we do something practical in the world outside of class, and to report back to the class.

Another student, to whom I shall refer only by first name, Karen, and I decided to work together and perform an Endangered Species Bestiary, a ritual designed to call threatened and endangered species into the consciousness of whoever assembled with us. Our ritual was based on the “Bestiary” found in *Thinking Like a Mountain and World as Lover, World as Self*.²³⁹ The Bestiary was written and published by Macy separately before it was included as part of the mourning process in the Council of All Beings. The Bestiary we used consisted of a recitation of the names of several endangered species, with poetic reflections on some of the species interspersed periodically.

I did research on the Internet and World Wide Web to find information relating to endangered species. I found a good deal of information at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Website on their Web-page specifically dealing with endangered species. The listings which were most helpful included a state-by-state listing of animal and plant species, as well as a listing of Foreign (i.e. non-U.S.) listed species.

The “Bestiary” found in *Thinking Like a Mountain and World as Lover, World as Self* is based upon an earlier Endangered Species List. In the “Bestiary” is found this line:

²³⁹ John Seed, *et al.*, *Thinking Like a Mountain*, and Joanna Macy, *World as Lover, World as Self* (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1991).

In Geneva, the international tally of endangered species, kept up-to-date in looseleaf volumes, is becoming too heavy to lift. Where do we now record the passing of life? What funerals or farewells are appropriate?²⁴⁰

The lists I downloaded from the Web were just as overwhelming in their detail, comprehensiveness and sheer length. Species after species was listed with common name and scientific name.

We chose to follow the basic outline of the “Bestiary” as it is found in both volumes. We did not have time to alter or update the list in the “Bestiary.” Instead, we placed it within a more ritualized setting, and made copies of the larger lists available to all the participants. Our publicity consisted of flyers which we passed out a few days before the ritual as well as an invitation which I posted on the GTU-list on the Internet. At least one person joined us for the ritual based upon the GTU-list invitation. We also announced it in the “Spiritual Ground for World Engagement” class, and several of those people joined us, especially since it was scheduled at 11:30 following our class.

2.1. Description of the Ritual

We held the ritual on December 5, 1996, on the sidewalk in front of the chapel of Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley on a day which was still wet from rain the day before, but which promised some sun. Colorful crepe paper streamers were tied to the branches of the trees nearby. We established a ritual space by first drawing a chalk circle in multiple colors on the ground. In reality, it was a very subtle spiral. I drew a small white spiral to mark the center. I then determined where the four cardinal directions were, and measured out equal distances in each of those directions from the center. I drew a larger continuation of the spiral at that same radius. At each of the cardinal directions we had a person stand holding a pole with colored paper streamers attached. Two of the poles were Redwood branches I had collected from downed Redwood trees, one was a Eucalyptus branch and one was Bamboo.

People stood on the chalk circle/spiral. Karen and I took our place in the center of the circle, seated on the ground. Karen had a drum, I had a gourd rattle and a Tibetan singing bowl, which I used to signal the beginning and end of the ritual. I welcomed everyone to the ritual, and explained briefly what it was about. I also called their attention to the photocopies of the foreign and domestic Endangered Species Lists we had made. We then began reading from the “Bestiary.” Karen read each species name slowly with a pause between names. I shook the rattle with increasing volume, and then struck it percussively against my open palm at the same instant Karen struck the drum. This continued for each name. I then

²⁴⁰ *Thinking Like a Mountain*, 74.

read the poetic sections which punctuate the “Bestiary” at various points. After we had finished reading, we then invited people to name aloud any species or communities which arose into their consciousness. One woman made an invocation out of the Wiccan tradition for unnamed and endangered creatures. Other people included threatened human communities, particularly various indigenous peoples. Other species or concerns were shared. After each person offered something, we repeated the gourd rattling and drum beat.

After everyone had taken the opportunity to speak, I then indicated that this circle would not be broken upon our leaving, that it in fact was a spiral, and sent each person out as parts of this ever-widening spiral -- to take the intentions and consciousness of this ritual with them into the larger world. The singing bowl was struck again, and the ritual was over. Many people remained behind to talk.

2.2. Reflections upon the Ritual

The ritual was not overwhelmingly attended, and this was due in large part to our scheduling it during the final week of classes, right after the Thanksgiving holiday. Another large factor was our lack of advance publicity and sparse advertising. However, by placing the ritual outside in a public place, many people did wander by and observe what we were doing. This suggested to me the possibilities inherent in doing a public performance/ritual. For instance, if we had more publicity, more people might have come out of curiosity if not commitment to what we were doing. In addition, if we had more people working with us, some people could stand outside of the circle to answer questions, explain what was happening and distribute information.

I recall during the protests and civil disobedience actions against the Vietnam War that Dan and Phil Berrigan used to say: “Don’t just do something, stand there.” That is, don’t only engage in acts of civil disobedience, but make it understood that this is your witness. Therefore, put your body and presence on the line for what you believe. Thus, for a ritual such as the Endangered Species Bestiary, although it is not an act of civil disobedience, nonetheless, it needs consciously to be an act of witness: “Why are we doing this ritual? Why are we reading these names? Because we are deeply in love with our fellow creatures. Because we are a part of them and they are a part of us. Because our hearts have moved deeply within us.”

The Summer 1996 issue of *EarthLight*, a “Magazine of Spirituality and Ecology” published by the Unity with Nature Committee of Pacific Yearly Meeting, Religious Society of Friends

(Quakers), is devoted to “Earth Literacy: Educating for a Future.” In one article, Bruce Babbitt, the U.S. Secretary of the Interior states that:

“ . . . religious values must remain at the heart of the Endangered Species Act, to make themselves manifest through the green eyes of the grey wolf, through the call of the whooping crane, through the splash of the Pacific salmon, through the voices of children. We are living between the flood and rainbow; between the threats to creation on the one side and God’s covenant to protect life on the other. Why save endangered species? Let us answer with the voice of one child at the (Eco-)expo: “because we can.”²⁴¹

Marshall Massey is a Quaker who is very active in bringing an environmental consciousness to Quaker spirituality and practice. In the same issue of *EarthLight*, Paul Burks quotes from Massey:

“Bearing witness” is a technique that has been used by prophets and saints throughout the world; and it is designed precisely for getting through to people in denial, in situations where time to act is limited. Putting yourself on the line speaks louder than words! You set a particular kind of example in the way you do it, a compassionate, loving, unpretentious, and above all *vulnerable* example. . . .

Witness is to action what Quaker ministry is to words: a spontaneous, selfless, loving, utterly God-conscious form of being and doing. Having entered that state, whenever the opportunity of actual witness arises, we recognize it and respond. We do what needs to be done without hesitation, without self-consciousness or self-advancement or self-doubt, simply because it is the right thing to do.²⁴²

What Massey and the Berrigans understand is that there is a religious depth to bearing witness that requires the presence of people *in their bodies*, not just their words nor just their ideas, but their flesh, blood and bones. It is the work of ritual and performance to place human persons in the center of action, to connect consciousness and will with deed and exertion.

All of these authors and activists are concerned with how to move people from inactivity to activity -- with overcoming denial and despair. It is this understanding which lies behind the power of doing public ritual performances. Ritual becomes a political act when it is done in public spaces. Religion and spirituality are thus transported from the realm of the private and personal to the realm of the public and communal.

3. Embodying the Earth

In this section I will focus upon one of the workshops I attended, which was put on by Anna Halprin and Ken Otter. The workshop, entitled “Embodying Nature: An Experience in Deep Ecology,” took place April 8-12, 1998, at Mountain Home Studio in Kentfield, California, located at the home of

²⁴¹ Bruce Babbitt, “Between the Flood and the Rainbow,” *EarthLight*, Summer, 1996, p. 24. Emphasis in original.

²⁴² Paul Burks, “Response to Denial and Despair: ‘Bearing Witness’” *EarthLight: A Magazine of Spirituality and Ecology* (Summer, 1996): 24.

Anna and Lawrence Halprin on the slopes of Mt. Tamalpais in Marin County, California. The workshop represented the first collaboration between Anna Halprin, who is one of the pioneers in Modern Dance as well as a leading figure among those who integrate the expressive and healing arts, and the Institute for Deep Ecology.

3.1. Description of the Brochure

Every year, the Institute for Deep Ecology sponsors a number of workshops and trainings in Deep Ecology. The brochure sent out each year describes these workshops as well as gives a brief overview of the philosophy and purpose behind the trainings. On the first page of the 1998 brochure, they ask the question, “What is Deep Ecology?” The sidebar contains four short statements: “A Philosophy Based on the Inherent Value of All Life,” “An International Movement for Social Change,” “A Path for Personal Growth,” and “A Compass for Daily Action.” The following explanation of the trainings is given:

The deep ecology trainings guide us in transforming our way of life. We gather to uncover the root causes of our society’s degradation of nature and peoples. As we seek to heal contemporary alienation from self, community, and the Earth, the deep ecology perspective encourages us to undertake a fundamental shift in the way we experience nature and how we respond to the environmental crisis.

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All IDE trainings are grounded in a belief in the essential value and interdependence of all forms of being. We learn tools for minimizing humanity’s destructive interference with the natural world and for restoring the diversity and complexity of ecosystems and human communities. We engage in practices to help change old patterns of thinking and acting, while nourishing the human spirit. And we explore new ways to bring ecological perspectives into personal, professional, and community life.

Please join us in 1998 to develop a community of support and action to face the political and ethical challenges of our time.²⁴³

3.1.1. The Faculty

The two faculty for this workshop were Anna Halprin and Ken Otter. Anna Halprin has been a major figure in the world of modern dance for much of the second half of the twentieth century. Ken Otter is one of her students-turned-instructors at the Tamalpa Institute.

3.1.2. Ken Otter

²⁴³ The Institute for Deep Ecology, *Action for Earth: Applied Deep Ecology, 1998 Programs*, brochure (Occidental, CA: Institute for Deep Ecology, 1998).

Ken Otter embodies the collaboration of The Institute for Deep Ecology and Tamalpa Institute within himself. According to the short description of him in the section on faculty in the 1998 Brochure, *Action for Earth*, he is “an educator and group facilitator in participatory and transformative approaches to learning and change toward a world rich in biological and cultural diversity. Ken is on the faculty of the California Institute for Integral Studies, John F. Kennedy University, and the Tamalpa Institute.”²⁴⁴ Ken is a graduate of the Tamalpa Institute, which was co-founded by Anna Halprin and others to offer “training programs, workshops and classes in the Halprin/Life Process, an integrative approach to movement, the expressive arts and therapeutic models supporting personal, interpersonal and social transformation.”²⁴⁵ In addition he teaches classes in Deep Ecology, Systems theory and Group Facilitation.

3.1.3. Anna Halprin

Anna Halprin has developed over the course of several decades a movement-based process whereby a person is enabled to “experience their personal embodiment of the natural world.”²⁴⁶ Having trained with many of the leading innovators in modern dance, such as Margaret D’Houbler, Hanya Holm, Martha Graham and having danced in the company of Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman, she moved in the mid-1940s to establish with Welland Lathrop the Halprin-Lathrop Foundation, Inc., which became the acknowledged dance center of the western United States at that time.²⁴⁷ In 1956 she left the Foundation and gathered a small group of dancers at her home studio on Mt. Tamalpais to explore as the “Dancer’s Workshop” the unique movement vocabulary within each individual. Halprin has continued to be an innovator and experimenter, expanding the place of dance into city streets, mountain slopes and beaches, and in the last twenty years has established the Tamalpa Institute.

Influenced by the work of her friend Fritz Perls, Halprin has explored at the Tamalpa Institute the relationship between mind and body and movement and feeling. Her early work in improvisational dance, wherein the dancer responds to spontaneous psychological and emotional sensations within the body, has been combined with the therapeutic orientation of Gestalt therapy, which embraces mind and body in a manner similar to Halprin’s work. Movement is used along with other expressive art forms (visual arts,

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Faculty listing (p. 8).

²⁴⁵ Tamalpa Institute, brochure, Summer Workshops, 1998 (Kentfield, CA: Tamalpa Institute, 1998).

²⁴⁶ Institute for Deep Ecology, *Ibid.*, Faculty listing (p. 7).

²⁴⁷ Susan Reisch, “Chapter One: Anna Halprin,” in *Simone Forti and the Emergence of Performance Art*, (8 Susan Reisch, 1991), found online at <http://www.best.com/~ehodges/simone/annah.html> as of February 2, 1999.

poetry, vocalizing, etc.) to unlock emotions and experiences which are hidden in the body's muscle memory.

Many of Halprin's earliest work was done in collaboration with her husband, Lawrence Halprin, an internationally-recognized environmental designer. The Mountain Home Studio itself is built on one of the slopes of Mt. Tamalpais, and much of the work is done either out on the open deck, or on the trails of the mountain, in the backyard, or in the woods and beaches of the Marin coastline. Halprin's work with dancers as well as with the Tamalpa Institute has combined improvisations with nature, within the self, and with a group. She has often collaborated with other artists such as painter Jo Landor, actor John Graham, and musicians La Monte Young, Terry Reily, and John Cage.²⁴⁸ These collaborations have often resulted in large environmentally-based happenings, often involving chance events and spontaneous improvisation. Some of these experimentations have evolved into dance rituals involving large groups of people who are not trained dancers, blurring lines between performer and audience. Many of these rituals have become annual events at various places around the world, and make explicit the connections between human health (e.g. AIDS, breast cancer, etc.) and the health of the earth. These events have included *Circle the Mountain*, *Circle the Earth*, *Dancing with Life on the Line* (for persons with AIDS, HIV and ARC), *Going to the Mountain* (for those with breast cancer and their care givers), and *Planetary Dance*, which was the event which concluded the Embodying Nature workshop.

3.2. Description of the Workshop

3.2.1. Day One: Orientations

Each day began at Mountain Home Studio with warm-ups and movement rituals designed to bring the participants into a deeper awareness and ease with our own movement vocabulary and inner dialogue. The afternoon session involved movement work out on some of the trails on the slopes of Mt. Tamalpais, a short walk from Mountain Home Studio.

3.2.1.1. Morning

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6 of 12.

On the first day, we began by gathering outside on the dance deck, which overlooks a small wooded area filled with California Live Oaks, chaparral, and redwoods. Anna Halprin oriented us to the four directions: to the North were two fruit trees planted on the upward sloping landscape as a memorial to one of her students killed in a car accident; to the East was San Francisco Bay and the lower slopes of Mt. Tamalpais; to the South were the Sun and the Sky; and to the West was Mt. Tamalpais itself. She then retold briefly the legend of the mountain which is that it is a reclining Indian woman, who will arise only when there is peace on Earth.

We then moved in to the dance floor inside the studio. Anna led us through another orientation to that space, inviting us to explore the floor, walls, ceiling and windows by asking “what is the experience of the space?” Then she finally led us through a series of body orientations involving forward, sideways and backward movements. At the finish of that exercise we had been oriented to our geographical, dance studio and body movement environments. What was next was an orientation to our internal environment.

Having moved to the outside deck again, we were given pieces of newsprint and crayons or pastels and were told to draw a visual representation of what we felt like, of “where we were at” at that point in time of the week and of the workshop. We wrote down the feeling, the image and the movement suggested by the picture of our current experience. We then shared our pictures and words and performed our movements in groups of four persons. Each person in our group shared and performed their own “pieces” and the group then performed back those movements and words for the person, mirroring back to them what we had seen.²⁴⁹ We then posted the pictures on the walls of the studio. Every time we engaged in an exercise which involved drawing a picture, we then posted that picture on the walls, so the walls of the studio became a gallery of our experiences during the workshop.

After sharing our pieces within our groups of four, we returned to the inside studio space. Anna led us through a movement ritual which began with a focus upon the breath, how it moves the rib cage and the spine. We then allowed this breath movement to move down the spine and bring us to the floor. We kept our connection to the earth and moved about slowly -- crawling, slithering, rolling -- always maintaining our connection with the ground. Anna encouraged us to make what she called “earth sounds”

²⁴⁹ At that point in time, I was experiencing a great deal of pain in the side of my left heel due to an unknown cause. This made it difficult for me to move on my feet, whether walking, running or dancing. My three words were “bound” (feeling), “chains” (image), and “tied to the earth” (movement).

if any suggested themselves to us. The description of such sounds was left deliberately vague so as to encourage individual exploration. Still on the ground, we then began to move around the space with our eyes closed, occasionally connecting with others. Our eyes were kept closed in order to allow our other senses and awarenesses to come into play. At some point we began to move into more upright positions and orientations, all the while maintaining this strong sense of connection to the earth. At the end of the exercise we were encouraged to reflect individually upon our experience, and to write down our reactions, especially in a few poetic phrases.²⁵⁰

3.2.1.2. Afternoon

In the afternoon we made our first hike on a trail a short distance from Mountain Home Studio. Ken Otter led us along the trail instructing us to experience the trail with all of our senses. Along a more level portion of the trail we stopped and engaged in a Deep Ecological exercise originally developed by Joanna Macy as a variation on a blind trust walk. We paired up, with one person being blindfolded and the other person being the leader. We were instructed to lead our blindfolded partners along the trail and to engage our partner's non-visual senses in experiencing the trail. People smelled leaves, rotting trees, and moss-covered rocks; felt proprioceptically and kinesthetically the changes in elevation and rocks, tree roots and dirt of the trail; tasted leaves, raindrops on flower petals, bark and rock; listened to the rush of the rain-swollen creek become louder or diminish as we drew near and then moved away, heard the cries of hawks, flickers, jays and ravens. After a specific period of time, Ken rang a bell and the leading partner directed the attention of the blindfolded partner to a specific spot along the trail and then took off the blindfold with the words "Behold yourself." We then switched roles and continued down the trail.

At one point the trail crossed over the creek by means of a bridge. We gathered in a small clearing next to the bridge. Ken invited us to go off and find a spot to go and simply be in. He suggested that we simply allow the place to be, and to allow ourselves simply to be, without making demands upon ourselves or upon the spot. After about thirty minutes we regathered at the clearing and shared a few impressions, and then returned to Mountain Home Studio.

3.2.1.2.1. Discussion of the Exercise

²⁵⁰ My own reflections include these lines: "Tangled root appears from below / Grabs my foot, / Lets go -- I walk on."

While appearing to be a blind trust walk, the exercise is actually designed to increase identification with the non-human world. The sense of sight tends to accentuate differences and distinctions between objects, focusing upon separateness and individuality. By removing dependence upon the “tyranny of sight,” other sensual connections are made with the environment which are more fluid and less easy to delineate out as distinct or separate. Sight functions analytically by distinguishing the characteristics of objects generally perceived as being separate from the perceiving body. The sense of touch, on the other hand, functions only when coming *in contact* with the perceived object. The same is true for the sense of taste, which is closely allied with the sense of smell. The sense of smell functions more three dimensionally, creating or articulating a strong sense of space and place, while taste is strongly localized with specific objects. By removing sight, the other senses which function more connectively are brought to the fore. This serves to emphasize identification with the perceived object rather than separateness from it. When the blindfold is removed with the words “Behold yourself,” and the first thing to enter the visual field is a flower or a tree or rock, the body undergoes a slight cognitive shift. What is normally interpreted cognitively as a separate object is reinterpreted as a connected object. The natural world in this exercise functions as a mirror wherein the usual notions of self and other become blurred and less distinct. To see oneself in a blade of grass or a grain of sand²⁵¹ involves an exercise in *not seeing*. This sort of blind walk functions, then, as an enacted paradox or riddle wherein the accustomed way of perceiving reality is challenged aesthetically and logically. The imagination is engaged in a way that forces a reconfiguring of relationships between things perceived and the constructed sense of self. This exercise serves as a way to expand the self from the isolated individual to the larger self, the ecological self described by Arne Naess:

Traditionally the *maturity of self* has been considered to develop through three stages, from ego to social self, comprising the ego, and from there the metaphysical self, comprising the social self. But Nature is then largely left out in the conception of this process. Our home, our immediate environment, where we belong as children, and the identification with human living beings, are largely ignored. I therefore tentatively introduce, perhaps for the first time ever, a concept of *ecological self*. We may be said to be in, of and for Nature from our very beginning. Society and human relations are important, but our self is richer in its constitutive relations. These relations are not only relations we have to other humans and the human community.²⁵²

3.2.2. Day Two: Blurring the Boundaries

²⁵¹ “To see a world in a grain of sand/ And a heaven in a wild flower, / Hold infinity in the palm of your hand / And eternity in an hour.” William Blake, *Auguries of Innocence*.

²⁵² Arne Naess, “Self-Realization: An Ecological Approach to Being in the World” in Drengson and Inoue, *The Deep Ecology Movement*, 14.

The second day of the workshop moved more deeply into bridging the work done in the studio with the work done on the mountainside. Anna Halprin explained that the work we were doing was designed to break down the artificial boundaries between ourselves -- our bodies-- and the natural environment.

3.2.2.1. Morning

The morning began with a circle gathering and check-in where people were allowed to briefly state how they were feeling at that point in time. Anna then led us through a movement dance exploring the dynamics of lightness and heaviness. We began by generating movement directed toward the sky. We explored the kinetic difference between moving our arms toward the sky as if it were very heavy and then as if it were very light. We then explored that same dynamic with other parts of our body. This moved into choosing a very specific image which arose out of that movement that would assist with the movement. We then broke into groups of five or six people and shared it with one another. The group then mirrored the movement back to the person sharing. We then created a group dance by having all the movements flow into one another. This was then presented to the rest of the workshop participants.

From this exercise we then were invited to go outside. It was at this point that Anna explained that the purpose of our work was to break down the boundaries between ourselves and the natural environment. Anna invited us to get to know a part of the natural world (outside of the studio) with boundaries blurred. We could go “in the buff” if we wanted. So, most of us did. We took off some or all of our clothes, stood in the sun, got wet, smeared mud and leaves on our skin, laid on the wet earth, laid on moss-covered tree trunks, and allowed parts of our bodies that rarely feel the earth to do so.

3.2.2.2. Afternoon

After lunch we gathered out on the dance deck where one of the participants who is a naturalist, Annie Prutzman, introduced us to a few of the trees we would meet along the way: Coastal Redwoods, California Live Oaks, Tan Oaks, Madrones, Black Oaks, among others. The purpose of the introductions was to serve like introductions at a party or gathering where all the guests do not know each other.

We then hiked along the same trail from the day before and stopped at the small clearing next to the bridge. Ken Otter then gave us the instructions for the afternoon exercise. We were to go off in different directions no more than a three to five minutes' distance away and let the land - a particular spot

of the land - impress itself upon us. Ken chose this expression deliberately. We often impress ourselves upon the land, altering it, leaving footprints, perhaps noticing how we change it. But the land changes us as well, often in ways we don't recognize. This was an exercise in recognizing how the land impresses itself upon us.

Ken suggested some ways to facilitate this process of impressing:

1. To feel how the land in that spot carried our weight in different ways (recalling the experimentation with weight in the studio that morning);
2. To experience and/or explore the spot with our eyes closed;
3. To be aware of and attentive to the relationship between the earth and sky, which is particularly dramatic on the slopes of a mountain.

People went off in all directions and spent the next hour finding ways to let the land impress itself upon us. After an hour we re-gathered in the clearing and returned to Mountain Home Studio.

3.2.2.1. Personal Reflections

In an earlier footnote, I indicated that I started out the week with an intense pain in my left foot near the heel, which made it very difficult to walk, let alone dance. Nonetheless, I participated to the fullest of my abilities. A curious thing began to happen. On the first day's walk along the mountain trail, I allowed my body to conform to the terrain of the trail, rather than try to fight it. This is a practice I have used for many years. I visualize I am a mountain goat and my feet are hooves. I loosen my knees so they can absorb the uneven jolting of the trail, and allow my feet to rock slightly from side to side, bending and flexing just enough to respond to the slope and variations of the trail. I began to notice that when my foot was allowed to engage in that more natural free range of motion, the pain subsided. When I resumed walking on concrete and asphalt the pain returned, although not as severe as before. At one point I even began not to wear socks in my boots so that my feet could feel more closely the ground upon which I walked.

Conversations with my chiropractor revealed that there are a number of proprioceptors in the feet - neural sense receptors in the joints and tendons and muscles that "monitor" the internal state of the body. It is these proprioceptors that Anna Halprin has focused much of her technique work around, for it is in connection with these proprioceptors that the body is said to store feelings and experiences. One of the prices we have paid for not going around barefoot is that we have stunted the development of a network of neural communication between the sense receptors on the surface of our feet and the proprioceptors within the feet. Important information (to utilize a term from systems theory) concerning the movement of the body in the environment is therefore lost. By taking off my socks while walking the trail, that communication began to be restored. In addition, by allowing my body to develop a rhythm of walking which conformed to the landscape rather than fight against it, my body began to move in a manner more in concert with the way it had evolved over thousands of years. Dolores LaChapelle tells a similar story about how one day of mountain climbing helped her body to heal from therapy related to an earlier hip dislocation.

After we were off the rock, we raced down the trail to the car and were back into town well before sundown. Only after that did I realize there was no pain in the groin and hadn't been

for most of the day. I don't even know when it left me. But it was gone for good from that time on. So I puzzled over this. How come a vertical rock climb could accomplish in one day, what was supposed to take nine more months? It didn't take long to figure it out. The only thing that we adults do in our modern life that exactly mimics what we did in the trees for at least 100,000 years is rock climbing. So that's why all the parts of the body for once can feel totally "at home" when climbing steep rock. For once in this modern life everything in the body is doing what it was designed to do by millennia of evolution. No wonder there's bliss. And because of the total relaxation of doing just what every part really wants to do my back was able to pull the pelvis up and thus no more pain. I realized that I could no longer ignore ethology because that's who we are -- animals.²⁵³

I realized on the trail that my body was shifting in its normal relationship to itself as well as in its normal relationship with its environment, which usually was an environment altered to certain human conceptions of comfort and ease. Along the mountain trail, with the exception of clearing a path for walking, the mountain terrain and topography ruled. As I moved in conformity with the natural environment, my body responded according to its design, and facilitated the healing of whatever was causing the pain in my foot.

During the morning session of the second day, I was one of those who removed all their clothing and rolled on moss-covered tree trunks and felt the mud, rocks and dried Live Oak leaves against my bare skin. My bare feet slowly relaxed into the new tactile sensations and the connection being reestablished between my proprioceptors and my surface sensory receptors. This experience helped prepare me for the afternoon experience.

In the afternoon, after we had been sent in all directions, I headed straight up a rather steep slope, allowing myself to move fully like a primate, grabbing branches and tree trunks to help pull myself up the hill. All four limbs were clearly needed and used in ascending the hill. Having located the spot that seemed to call to me, I set about taking off my clothes and exploring fully the feel and lay of the land. I crawled up trees and felt the roughness of Oaks and smoothness of Madrones. I slithered along the ground through leaves and dirt. A dance began to emerge in which I mimicked the slow growth movements of the branches of the trees around me. I realized that the twisting and shaping of the branches around me was actually a sort of dance by the trees, just drawn out over a period of years, rather than the narrow time frame of a few minutes to which humans are accustomed. But indeed, the shapes of branches are nothing but a record of the trees' interactions with their environment, a movement pattern nearly frozen in time, at

²⁵³ Dolores LaChapelle, *Sacred Land, Sacred Sex, Rapture of the Deep*, 56.

least from the standpoint of human perception. Thus by shaping my body in analogous ways to those of the trees around me, I was truly dancing with the trees.

3.2.3. Day Three: Reconnecting With the State of Pure Awareness

The major intention of the third day was to alter our consciousness into a state of pure awareness for its own sake. It was explained that our experiences of being in nature, being with nature rather than against it, involved reconnecting with the state of pure awareness.

3.2.3.1. Morning

We began with a brief check-in in a circle. Then Anna started the morning with what she called the water experience. We began by lying on our backs, directing our attention to our breath and our body. We rubbed our hands briskly together to raise the *chi* and placed them over our eyes. We breathed in through our noses and out through our mouths. Occasionally we vocalized a sigh. Then we placed our hands on our chests to feel the breath come in and out. This went on for several minutes. Then we moved our hands down to our bellies, to feel the breath there. After several minutes we began to vocalize deep, low tones, allowing whatever sound came from the deep belly breathing. People began toning, chanting, some made swishing sounds, harmonies, and overtones. After some minutes Anna encouraged us to allow movement to arise out of the breathing and toning. Some people moved imperceptibly, others moved freely about the space. This continued for many more minutes. The total time for this exercise was about one hour.

At the close of the water experience, Anna told us to find one other person whom we trusted or felt close to, a special person, and make some sort of physical contact or connection with them. She allowed 10-15 minutes for this. Some people started sobbing, some sobbed and laughed, some were silent and still, many embraced or laid next to each other. This was an important transition, and served as a physical grounding after the trance-like experience induced by the breathing/toning/movement exercise.

Anna then suggested we spend ten minutes outside connecting with a tree, any tree. After we did that, we re-gathered in the studio. Anna then invited us to imaginatively enter the life cycle of a tree. Anna invited us to picture the tree we wanted to be, and then embody it, beginning in a curled up position as a seed. We worked next on rootedness, then establishing a trunk, and so on through the whole life cycle. At some point we might die, or be uprooted, or struck by lightning or attacked by a disease. We were given

about thirty minutes to embody this process. Afterward, we took paper and crayons or chalks or pastels and drew a picture of our experience, depicting the cycle from seed to death that we had bodily imagined and performed. Then we spent a few minutes imagining what one thing this tree might tell us.

3.2.3.2. Afternoon

In the afternoon, Ken led us once again on the mountain trail to the clearing next to the bridge from the previous two days. We gathered in small groups according to where we had gone the day before. We met with people whose spot in the woods was nearest to the place we had chosen, or had chosen us. We each took turns taking the group to our spot and in whatever performative way we chose, shared the spot, and told its story to the rest of the group. Some people narrated their experience from the day before, others spoke and moved/danced, others simply moved. This process took the rest of the afternoon.

3.2.4. Day Four: Summing Up

The final day of the workshop took place entirely at Mountain Home Studio. There was no afternoon session on the mountain. The focus of the morning work was to provide a structure wherein people could incorporate and integrate the experience of the workshop with their lives and work outside of the workshop. During the afternoon we were shown the score for the Planetary Dance, which was to take place the next day on Mt. Tamalpais.

3.2.4.1. Morning

Leadership was shared between Ken Otter and Anna Halprin. The first exercise recapitulated the experience of learning to walk. We began on the floor, feeling gravity and the support of the floor. We experienced how the floor carried us. We lifted up our chin, and took notice of how that affected the body and the sensations in the body. We lifted up our legs, and likewise took notice of how that affected the body and the sensations in the body. We then did both chin and legs, all the time taking notice of the sensations within the body. We opened and closed, curling and uncurling, like a flower opening and closing. We were to be aware of how the spine moved and how its flexibility facilitated this movement. We slowly came to our hands and knees, and began to move like cats and dogs, stretching and flexing the spine, bending, all the while on all fours. Then we rolled from side to side, eventually rolling on to our knees, and then slowly came to a standing position.

The purpose of the walking recapitulation was to help us experience how we carry within our bodies the memory of our development and the our experiences, and that it is accessible though movement. Based on this idea, the next exercise was specifically designed to allow us to symbolically express through movement our experience of being in our place in the forest. We were to develop a movement phrase based on that experience. We refined the movement into a short, repeatable pattern. We then shared our phrases with others in small groups, and mirrored the phrase for one another. We then combined the various phrases into a short dance piece which we then performed for the rest of the workshop participants.

After a break, we then regathered in the studio for the wrap-up of the workshop. We took paper and crayons, chalk or pastels and drew pictures depicting “where we are now” as a result of having been through the workshop. We then reflected upon all the pictures we had posted throughout the four days of the workshop. We then wrote poems, stories or narratives expressing whatever arose for us during our reflections. We then shared our pictures and poems or stories with another person.

3.2.4.1.1 Personal Reflection – “The Story from my Four Pictures”

Beginning in chains, bound to the earth --

Not necessarily negative.

By the end -- chains are broken—

A River of light is flowing through

A River of life meanders through

Energy splits the bounded seams --

Stitching undone, sutures dissolved,

Forces unleashed -----

In between the beginning and the end

is sinking into the decaying verdant earth

seed bursting soil

trunk tearing sky

Death nursing abundance

Life inexorable life

“It is important to be family” comes the message

of sprouting burls, intertwined roots -- “the forest is one tree”

Being root-upped tree dance

naked on moss-covered Bay body

Boundaries broken

Seams unstitched

Flags unfurled
Leaves uncurled
Rooted in life - the river running through --
Family is found. (4-11-98)

3.2.4.2. Day Four -- Afternoon

The afternoon was spent outside on the dance deck. At various points during the week, people had brought back items from along the trail or in the studio land which had "presented themselves" to the participants. These items were collected in one central location, a temporary altar, on the eastern side of the deck. We then made one last offering at the altar, and shared one thing which was significant to us from the workshop.

3.2.4.2.1. History and Etiology of the Planetary Dance

After a short break, Anna related some of the history of the Planetary Dance. The dance has its origins in 1981 when Anna and Lawrence Halprin started together with a group of people a project they called "A Search for Living Myths and Rituals Through Dance and the Environment." This project occurred at the time that a murderer was stalking the trails of Mt. Tamalpais. They found that the myth which was engaging their community most deeply at that time concerned the feelings of fear, anger and betrayal concerning the presence of the killer on the mountain. Anna described the work in a 1984 article:

The project involved the participation of some hundreds of people in seven workshops spanning a period of eight months, as well as the rehearsals of a company of dancers from Tamalpa Institute. These activities climaxed in a two-day community performance ritual in April of 1981.

Most rituals take their meaning from a myth, a story that tells something important to and about the community performing the ritual.²⁵⁴ The myth we discovered emerged when we confronted a major community issue -- reclaiming Mt. Tamalpais from the grip of a murderer stalking the mountain's trails.

The mountain has always exemplified a mythic relationship between the inhabitants of the county and the natural forces at work in the environment. This relationship stretches far back to Miwok times and continues to this day. Now these murders were terrifying the people in Marin and destroying their relationship to the mountain. The need to restore peace to the mountain was strongly felt by people throughout the community.²⁵⁵

²⁵⁴ This notion of the relationship between myth and ritual has been discounted by many recent scholars of religion. However, the idea of the connection between myth and ritual has been highly influential to people in the performing arts, particularly those within alternative and avant garde movements. Thus, regardless of its scholarly and academic standing, the relationship between myth and ritual has become an important creative principle in dance, theater and performance art.

²⁵⁵ Anna Halprin, Healing the Mountain in *IN CONTEXT 5* (Spring 1984): 57, copyright (c)1984, 1997 by Context Institute. Taken from the InContext website, URL: <http://www.context.org/ICLIB/IC05/Halprin.htm>. Accessed Feb. 22, 1999.

The culmination consisted of an indoor performance ritual in a theater space at the College of Marin, at the base of Mt. Tamalpais, and an outdoor performance ritual the next day on the slopes and trails of Mt. Tamalpais. Anna describes the event in her article:

Our two-part community ritual took place one evening (“In the Mountain”) and then during the next day (“On the Mountain”). “In the Mountain” was a dance performance in a traditional theater located at the foot of Mt. Tamalpais on the College of Marin Campus. The Tamalpa dancers performed dance offerings in honor of the waters, the winds, the earth, and fire. In the fire dance they enacted the violence of the victim and the killer, reversing roles until everyone embodied victim-killer. The evening’s portion of the ritual ended with a plea for restoration and peace.

After the dance, the audience and performers continued the ritual aspect of the evening by creating, in smaller groups, a “passage” to the next day’s event. The main ingredients of this passage consisted of a feast, a dream wheel, and a sunrise ceremony. (The dream wheel is a community ritual in which members of the group sleep together in a circle with their heads towards the center. The intention is to form a group vision, which is constructed collectively in the morning as members share their night’s dreams.) This passage gave people a chance to digest the theatrical experience and, for those who had not participated as performers, to become their own actors or dancers by drawing upon the performance as a source of inspiration to create their own theater the next day.

“On the Mountain” completed the ritual, with the dancers and other participants challenging the killer directly by openly walking down the mountain. The ritualized walk up to the peak, and the procession down the entire mountain to the College of Marin, with music, poetry, and bamboo poles invested with the energy of the evening’s performance, symbolized the reinvestment of hope and the rebirth of Spring. It exemplified what the whole project was about: bringing together all kinds of people to participate in the creating of myths and rituals that deeply reflected their personal and collective life issues.²⁵⁶

Significantly, a few days later the police received an anonymous tip which led to the apprehension of the alleged killer. The killings stopped from that time on. However, upon the advice of don Jose, a Huichol shaman who was visiting the Tamalpa Institute, the dance ritual was continued for another five years. From that initial project, they decided to hold a community dance ritual focusing upon various global concerns. One year they gathered to engage in a dance ritual to pray for an end to nuclear arms proliferation. Shortly after that particular ritual, the leaders of the United States and the U.S.S.R. signed their historic treaties halting the arms build-up. The power of a group of like-minded people who gather and ritually enact or pray for something is immeasurable, in Anna Halprin’s eyes, and has been demonstrated to her through these gatherings and their aftermaths.

The focus for the Planetary Dance for 1998 was upon breast cancer. Anna and her Tamalpa colleagues and protégés had conducted several other workshops concerning breast cancer, and many of those participants would also be at the Planetary Dance as well. Anna shared with us the score for the Planetary Dance the following day. Over the years, the ritual has been simplified to the point that it

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

consists primarily of a sunrise walk to the top of Mt. Tamalpais and then a gathering for the dance/run at a clearing somewhere on the slopes. This year, the dance/run was located just a short distance away from the Mountain Theater.

3.2.4.2.2. Planetary Dance Score

Diagram 3 below is the score as reconstructed from my notes and participation. The dance space was essentially a large circular space. As the score indicates, the dance consisted of three concentric circles with the drummers located in the center. There were four points around the circle, corresponding to the four cardinal directions, from which people entered the circle. As they entered the circle, they declared their intentions by shouting out for whom they were running, and then proceeded to run widdershins, or counterclockwise. At some point, they could move into the next circle, which moved slower and clockwise. The inner circle moved counter-clockwise again and the pace was a walk. At some point, people could move out of the inner circle and stand facing the drummers. If a person wanted to leave the circle, they needed to move up through the concentric circles, in the appropriate direction and at the appropriate speed, and then stand around the space, or at its peripheries.

During the afternoon of the last day of the workshop, we practiced the dance in order to be key resource people during the dance the next day, which was Easter Sunday. Following our practice, the workshop disbanded and people scattered again to their various residences. Several participants had arranged to camp out at a campsite on Mt. Tamalpais, so as to be close to the spot where the sunrise gathering would occur, as well as for the dance/run which was scheduled for late-morning/ noontime.

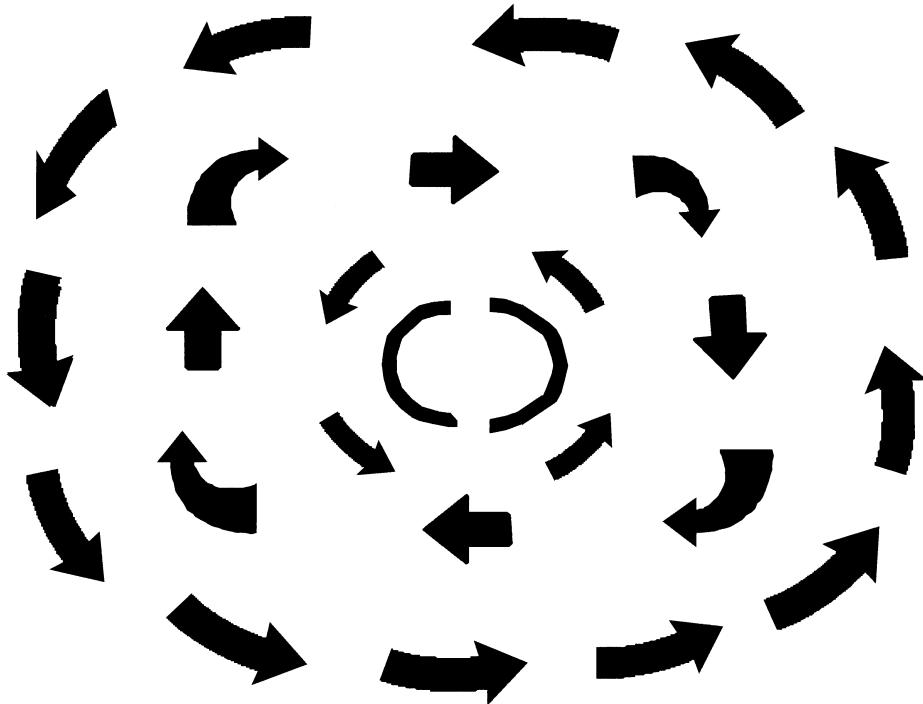


Diagram 3. Planetary Dance Score

3.3. The Planetary Dance: April 12, 1998

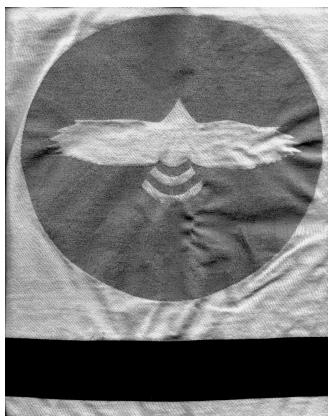
The brochure entitled “Going to the Mountain: A Creative Response to the Breast Cancer Crisis” describes the 1998 Planetary Dance as follows:

Anna Halprin and the Planetary Dance community invite you to take part in the 1998 Planetary dance, a dance to invoke the spirit of the earth & ourselves in a spring ritual of healing, renewal of community and affirmation of life. This annual community event has grown into a worldwide gathering. The Planetary Dance is free & open to the public, & dedicated this year to the breast cancer crisis and environmental concerns.²⁵⁷

I was joined for this event by my wife and our 4-month-old daughter. We had camped out with the group at the campsite located about halfway up the mountain. We chose not to rise before dawn in order to see the sunrise at the top of the mountain. Instead we fixed breakfast, broke camp and made it to the dance site near the beginning of the ritual. The site was located in a large opening in the midst of several old Madrone trees. A large outer circle denoting the dance perimeter was laid out using white flour. In the center of the circle several percussionists stood with drums, rattles, gourd shakers, etc. Colorful strips of cloth hung from branches and poles. One person on stilts was costumed in a large red and black

²⁵⁷ Going to the Mountain, “Going to the Mountain: A Creative Response to the Breast Cancer Crisis,” brochure (Kentfield, CA: 1998).

raven suit, and walked around the perimeter of the area, dancing and moving in sympathy with the dancers in the circle. At one point later in the morning, he was brought into the circle and danced a solo.



**Illustration 1. 1999
Planetary Dance T-shirt
Logo**

The T-shirt design scanned to the left was worn by the leaders of the Planetary Dance and those of us who attended the workshop, "Embodying Nature," and who had learned the score the previous day. The hawk image in the center of the circle represents the soaring of the prayers of the people gathered. The circle, which is yellow in the original silk-screen, represents variously the original roundhouse dance circle, the sphere of the earth, the sun, and the wholeness of creation. The two parallel black lines at the bottom represent the surface of the earth, the land upon which all creatures have their habitation, including the water creatures.

People stood around the circle in various levels of participation. Those who remained observers and supporters stood back from the circle, sat on the ground, leaned against trees, etc. Those who were ready to dance/run stood along the white flour circle. Anna explained the purpose of the dance and the score described above in Diagram 3. People came into the dance/run by entering at one of the four cardinal points of the circle, announcing loudly for whom they were running, and then began to run in the counter-clockwise direction. As they began to tire, they would move into the next circle and jog at a slower pace, or enter the inner circle and walk. People even rested in the center by standing next to the musicians.

There were a series of about four runs. At one point Anna invited all those persons who were desiring healing, especially from breast cancer to gather in the center. The rest of the participants were then invited to walk around these persons and direct our intentions and prayers for healing to those in the middle. This lasted for several minutes. At another point, all the children were invited to come into the circle and run. Several children did, and I entered carrying our 4-month-old daughter. This run was simplified in that all the children ran in a counter-clockwise direction rather than in the concentric circle score.

At the end of the dance/run, Anna came into the center of the circle and spoke. She began by thanking several people who had assisted in various ways with site arrangements, decorations, bringing

and/or playing instruments. One of the participants she recognized was a man who for almost every year of the Planetary Dance has run from Mt. Diablo in Contra Costa County to the Richmond-San Rafael bridge, taken a bus across the bridge and then resumed his run through Marin County to Mt. Tamalpais in time for the annual Planetary Dance. He runs in the same spirit of prayer, with each footfall acting as a prayer. Due to advancing age he indicated that this might be his last year to make that long distance run.

She then related the history and etiology of the planetary dance, much of which is described in section 3.2.4.2.1 above. The vision for the original ritual performance arose out of an extended period of meditation centered around the mountain and the terror which staked its hillsides in the early 80s. In one such meditation session, Anna received a detailed vision what the ritual performance should look like. Based upon that vision she called together a group of concerned people, and the performance grew and developed.

Having described the origins of the Planetary Dance, Anna then briefly related several subsequent dances and the developments in the world she has seen in what she believes to be a direct result of the danced prayers there on the mountain and around the world. Anna stated that she is a strong believer in the power of prayers that are offered by people in an embodied fashion such as the planetary dance. In her article cited earlier, she quotes from James Hurd:

Dance is the most important language the people know. It is a magical language of power. It is the language of the spirits. It is the language nature understands. It is the language in which are told the myths and stories that provide the people with the correct way to make sense out of their experience. To celebrate birth and marriage, to initiate the young into adulthood, to initiate the adults into the sacred mysteries, to prepare for war, to celebrate victory or lament defeat, to heal the sick, to help the dying on their journey into the land of the dead, to maintain the life of the community on the proper path, traditional peoples sing their songs and dance their dances.

The re-discovery of the lost language of dance offers to us the very vehicle which people have traditionally used to form their cultures and face their crises, yet with an important addition. Strange to say, the dance we recover has been purified and renewed during its long burial in the West, for in a sense the ancient dances held their people captive. The tradition has to be preserved for traditional societies to survive. In a traditional society, it is probably almost as true to say that the dances create their people as it is to say that the people create their dances.

One of the great gifts of Western culture has been the development of

personal creativity and the freedom to explore. Great artists, scientists, and many others have lived, discovered and taught much about the process of creation. In re-discovering the language of dance, we have the opportunity to combine the aliveness of this diverse creativity with the power and depth of ritual.²⁵⁸

It is this process of rediscovering the mythical and sacred aspects of dance and community that Anna understands her work to be about. She also understands human community to be a part of the natural or ecological community, and so all dances for healing of the human community are also dances for healing of the greater natural community of which the human species is a part.

Following this speech, the dance space was dissolved, and the potluck portion of the event began. Tables were pulled together and food was placed on the tables. People lined up with plates and utensils and shared food. Although a much more informal part of the ritual, it was nonetheless a significant aspect of the event, as people stood and sat around in one of the oldest expressions of human community: the sharing of food.

The ritual space was formally dissolved with the dispersal of the tables, the removal of the banners and ribbons, and the sweeping of the flour (i.e., that which remained after the dance/run) into the dirt. People walked along the trail, returned to their cars, and drove home. The time at that point was mid-afternoon.

4. Council of All Beings

During the summer of 2000, the Institute for Deep Ecology sponsored a Council of All Beings at Gillespie Group Camp in Tilden Park, one of the Regional Parks of the Bay Area in California. The two facilitators for this event were Lisa Faithorn and David Graves. In what follows, after a brief background description of each of the facilitators, I will describe the physical setting and the schedule of the weekend. I will then engage in an in-depth description and reflection upon my experiences at this workshop.

4.1. Facilitators

Lisa Faithorn, Ph.D., is a research anthropologist, organizational consultant and environmental activist. She serves on the Board of Directors of the Earth Island Institute and has taught for many years at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco. At the time of the Council, Lisa had recently resigned her position at CIIS and was in the process of evaluating where her life would take her in the next

²⁵⁸ James Hurd, *Philosophy of City Dance*, quoted in Anna Halprin, “Healing the Mountain.”

stage of things. As a teacher at CIIS, Lisa incorporated the Council of All Beings into her classroom curricula as a field trip experience. I had met Lisa before at the 1997 Training sponsored by the Institute for Deep Ecology at Whidbey, Island.

David Graves is a deep ecology teacher in the Human Consciousness Department of John F. Kennedy University, Orinda, California. When not teaching at the university level, David does restoration work in natural areas found in San Francisco urban parks. He also writes natural history essays for publications committed to preserving local biodiversity.

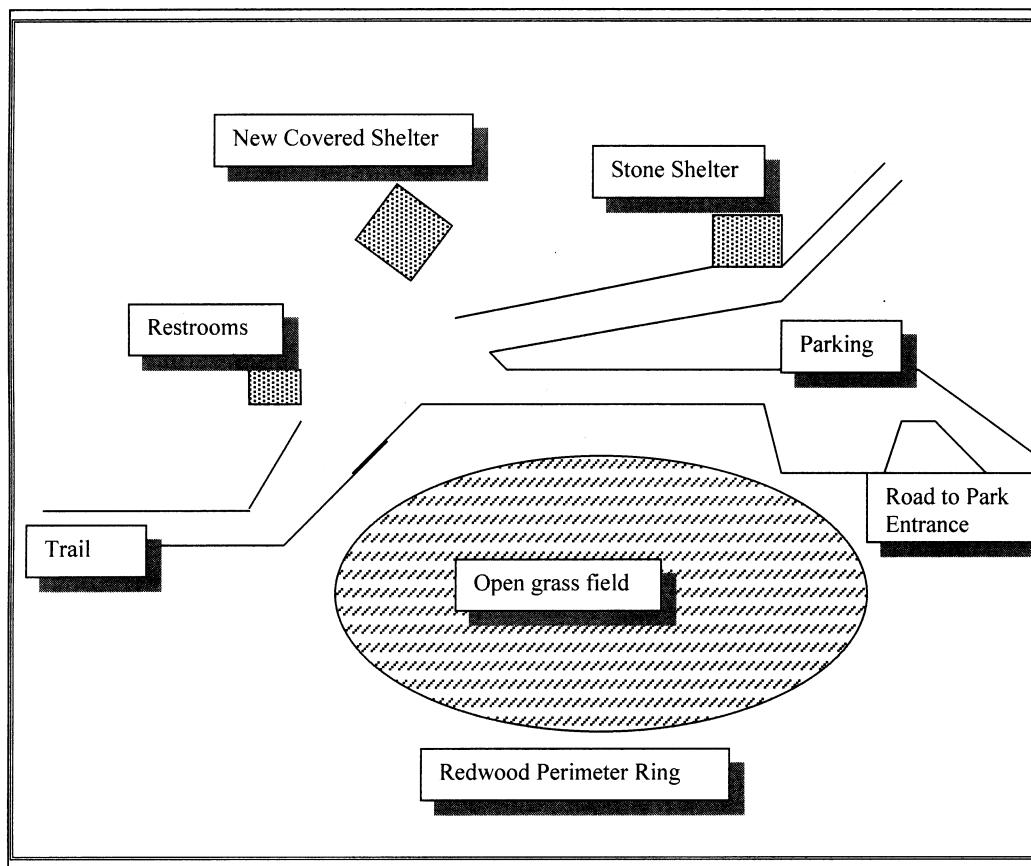
4.2. Description of Place

Tilden Park is located in the hills above Berkeley, California, and ranges from areas developed for human use, such as playing fields, a carousel, a small-scale railroad, to undeveloped, “wild” or more “natural” areas. Gillespie Group Camp (see diagram 4, below) is located at the southern end of Tilden Park on a relatively level space on a ridge between two creeks. The area around the camp is primarily Bay Laurel and California Live Oak forest. Centrally located in Gillespie is a large level open field, which is surrounded by a perimeter of ring of Redwood trees. The oval field is primarily grass turf, complete with an installed sprinkler system which comes on at night. The redwood perimeter is also artificial, having been planted by humans a number of years prior. The Redwoods have achieved a sizable canopy, and the floor beneath them is blanketed with Redwood needles, but little else.

Located next to the Redwood-ringed field were a number of picnic-style tables, as well as a recently-completed covered shelter. Down a path to a lower level was another covered shelter, complete with fireplace. This covered shelter was bounded on three sides by stone walls, with a roof that sloped downward to the fourth side, which was completely open. The group activities for the weekend moved between these three areas: the open field, the picnic area and the stone shelter. Individual or dyadic activities encompassed the surrounding terrain and trails.

Diagram 4: Gillespie Group Camp

4.3. Description of the Workshop



“Workshop” is somewhat of a misnomer in regard to a Council of All Beings. “Council” is how it was referred to at the weekend I attended, although the Council of All Beings proper is actually just one part of the entire experience. For the purposes of this dissertation, I shall refer to the entire experience as a workshop and reserve the word “council” for the actual Council of All Beings itself.

The workshop took place during a 24-hour period. Participants arrived at Gillespie at 3:00 p.m., Saturday, August 5, 2000. The workshop concluded at about 3:00 p.m., Sunday, August 6. Participants and facilitators all slept in tents in the Redwood perimeter, and all meals were eaten together in the picnic area. Everyone brought their own food, so while meals were eaten together, food was not communal, although some people did share some of the food they had brought.

The basic outline of the workshop was as follows:

1. Arrival and set-up of tents.
2. Opening circle in the open field. Introductions and description of the schedule for the weekend.
3. Grounding to place.
 - a) Individual time spent wandering around the immediate area. Locating a special spot.
 - b) Return to circle. Sharing of experiences.
 - c) In dyads, sharing of special spots with one another in a blind trust walk.
 - d) Return to circle. Sharing of experiences.
4. Dinner.
5. Gather at stone shelter for sharing of eco-stories.
6. Chakra work at stone shelter to open up to power animal visitation.
7. Free-time/Bedtime.

On the next day the schedule was:

1. Wake-up and optional meditation in the stone shelter.
2. Breakfast.
3. Prayer stick exercise in the stone shelter.
4. Solo time in surrounding area.
5. Return and lunch/mask-making in the picnic area.
6. Council of All Beings in the open field.
7. Breakdown of tents and campsites.
8. Closing circle in the open field.
9. Departure.

In the sections that follow, I will describe what transpired during each of these periods, particularly in terms of my own experience. Interspersed with these descriptions will be personal reflections and commentary on the activities. Following this, I will discuss some personal reflections on the weekend.

4.3.1. Arrival and Set-up of Tents

As people arrived, we were greeted informally by one of the facilitators, David Graves or Lisa Faithorn. We were invited to set up our tents anywhere in the Redwood perimeter. As I arrived, people were in various stages of arrival and tent set-up. I picked out a location not too far from the others, set up my tent and settled in.

David Graves had brought a large hanging gong that he carried around. The gong produced a low, mellow-sounding ring which did not carry very far, and was almost indistinguishable from other background sounds of human activity in the distance, and the sound of the wind in the trees. As we grew more accustomed to its tone, however, we were more able to distinguish its ringing, which called us together for group time. At the sound of gong, we gathered in a circle at one end of the open field.

4.3.2. Opening Circle in the Open Field: Introductions and Description of the Schedule for the Weekend

In the circle, we went around and introduced ourselves. We each gave our names (we confined it to first names only) and shared a bit about what had drawn us to the weekend. The group consisted of the two facilitators and nine participants. Of the participants, four were men and five were women. During the sharing and introductions, a range of familiarity with Deep Ecology and the Council of All Beings format emerged. Two or three of the participants had heard about the weekend at a talk given by Julia Butterfly Hill and Joanna Macy in San Francisco June 29 at Fort Mason Center in San Francisco.²⁵⁹ One or two more had received information in mailings from the Institute for Deep Ecology. Several others did not reveal how they had heard about the workshop, sharing instead why they were there. Two persons specifically shared that they were in the midst of a career shift, and were interested in shifting from their work in the corporate world to work that supported their growing environmental consciousness and concern for greater sustainability.²⁶⁰ Two persons had come at the invitation of another participant, and were not familiar with Deep Ecology, although they indicated that they remained open to the design and activities of the workshop. Two persons were therapists, one of whom had done work at the Tamalpa Institute in Marin County, which I have described earlier. One person had also participated in the Embodying Nature workshop with Anna Halprin and Ken Otter that I have detailed previously. None of the participants had ever attended a Council of All Beings before.

After we had introduced ourselves and identified our particular interest in the workshop, Lisa gave an introduction and very brief overview of some of the basic tenets of Deep Ecology, with an emphasis upon the shift from anthropocentrism to biocentrism. She explained that the Council of All Beings is

²⁵⁹ A RealAudio recording of the discussion was available from New Dimensions Radio on the Internet at <http://www.newdimensions.org/html/earthwisdom.html> as of August 7, 2000.

²⁶⁰ Lester Brown of the Worldwatch Institute defines a sustainable society as “one that satisfies its needs without jeopardizing the prospects of future generations.” Macy and Brown, *Coming Back to Life*, 16.

designed to be an experience in this shift of consciousness. David then gave an overview of the schedule for the rest of the workshop, and certain logistical details were discussed.

4.3.3. Grounding in Place

The grounding in place exercise consisted of four parts. The first part involved individually wandering around the area and locating a special spot. In the second part we returned to the circle and shared our experience. In the third part we went out in dyads, and shared our special spots with one another in a blind trust walk. For the final part we returned to the circle and shared our experiences again.

We were invited²⁶¹ to wander around the area contiguous to the camp for about an hour, not wandering too far from the open field. We were instructed to see what presented itself to us, what struck us in particular – a feature of the landscape, an animal or plant, a sound, whatever -- and then bring back something tangible but not living from that place to share with the group in circle. We then dispersed for the next hour.

4.3.3.1. Personal Experience

As I wandered at first through the Redwood perimeter ring, I began to focus upon the auditory environment. I heard the sound of insects, perhaps cicadas, and cry of a hawk, the grocking of ravens and the wind through the trees. I also heard the sound of what I often call “humanization”²⁶² – an occasional automobile, the whistle of the reduced-scale railroad in Tilden park, the whine of jets passing overhead. I became aware of light streaming through the Redwood needles in the Redwood perimeter ring, the indescribable aroma of Redwood, and how the boundary of the Redwoods made a sudden transition as I came suddenly into the open grass. I noticed the intensity of sunlight in the open grass, and became aware of a strange sense of the artificiality of the irrigated grassy field. I noticed also how the new growth candles on one of the Redwoods were brown and dying, but the other trees did not seem affected.

I discovered trash left next to the Bay Laurel scrub along the path leading from the parking lot to the picnic area. Walking along a ridge that went down a steep slope down to the creek, I discovered a wildly dancing tangle of branches of California Live Oak catching the light. The light of the sun was

²⁶¹ The whole tone of the workshop was that of invitation. We were told specifically that if we did not feel comfortable with any particular activity that we were not required to participate. We could simply observe, pass, or even remove ourselves from the circle. No one exercised these options.

²⁶² “Humanization” is my substitute term for “civilization,” which, in certain cynical moments I have asserted is rarely civil.

moving down in the sky, so the branches caught the late afternoon sun at just the right angle to be illuminated and highlighted underneath the overarching canopy of trees.

I noticed how they reached down and touched the earth. Some of the branches even thrusted down into the earth. I remained at this spot for the remainder of the time, taking in the feeling of movement of the Live Oak as its branches undulated and twisted outward from the trunk parallel to the ground, and then down to the ground. I refer to the movement of the Live Oaks very intentionally. Looking at the branches I realized that what I was looking at was the very slow pattern of growth of limbs and branches of the trees. As I looked, I was aware of a feeling of movement in myself. My arms reached out and undulated in a rhythmic pattern mimicking the shape of the limbs. What I was experiencing was a form of kinesthetic identification normally experienced between animals. As I perceived a particular feeling of movement in the tree, albeit a movement “frozen” in the structure of the tree, I then recapitulated that movement feeling in my own moving body. In essence, I was dancing with the trees in an experience essentially identical to my experience on Mt. Tamalpais during the “Embodying Nature” workshop described earlier. Whereas my dances lasted only a few minutes, the dance of the trees lasted for several decades, and continues long after I left the area. Finally the gong sounded, and I returned to the circle.

4.3.3.2. Group Sharing

The group returned to the circle in the Open Field. Some had brought artifacts from their wanderings, but others of us brought back only descriptions. We shared these one by one. Not having brought back a particular artifact, I instead danced mimetically the movement I had experienced in the Live Oaks. Others shared feathers or leaves.

4.3.3.3. In Dyads, Sharing of Special Spots with One Another in a Blind Trust Walk

We then went off in groups of two utilizing the blind trust walk exercise described above in section 3.2.1.2 of this chapter. I was led by my partner up a narrow and uneven path to a particular spot. I took off my blindfold to behold a massive Bay Laurel whose several trunks arched in various directions out of the hillside and high above the path. After several minutes of marveling at this sight, I then blindfolded my partner and led him to the spot I had discovered.

4.3.3.4. Return to Circle and Group Sharing

The sound of David's gong bade us to return to the circle, where we once again shared our experiences of being led to these different spots.

4.3.4. Dinner

We then broke for dinner. We actually had dinner all together, seated on one of the picnic tables. We engaged in casual human community building – talking together, even sharing food. During dinner I talked with Lisa Faithorn, who has conducted approximately 25 Councils of All Beings in the 15 years since John Seed and Joanna Macy designed the basic ritual. We spoke about the Council of All Beings as being an experience in biocentrism, or more to the point, as a process of experiencing biocentrism in the body. As indicated earlier, biocentrism is one of the basic ideas or points of Deep Ecology. The idea of a Council of All Beings is to experientially shift the frame of reference for the participant from an anthropocentric way of being and perceiving the world to a mode of perceiving and being in which the rest of the natural world is considered to be as significant and valuable as the human world. Indeed, the shift of viewpoint is away from a hierarchy of being, with humans at the apex of the hierarchy, to a circular web of interconnected relationships in which the needs, concerns, gifts and benefits of each being connects with and affects every other being.

The Council of All Beings often facilitates this shift in frame by placing participants in direct contact with the natural world, and then creating the ritual structure in which participants allow another being to speak through them. I say “often,” because there have been some Councils of All Beings which have been done in motel rooms with profound results.²⁶³ What is central to the Council, then, is the engagement of the imagination. This process involves the use of the imagination in which the participants try to “see through the eyes” of another being, as it were, and to imagine what the needs and concerns, gifts and benefits of that being might be. If that being could speak in human language to the human community, what would it say?

4.3.5. Gathering at Stone Shelter for Sharing of Eco-stories

We then broke from dinner and clean-up and went down to the stone shelter with a fireplace in it. Lisa began the time by talking about the significance of stories in the environmental movement. Trained herself as an anthropologist, she has noticed in her environmental work that people have stories and that

²⁶³ Personal conversation with Joanna Macy.

they want to share these stories. She described four categories of eco-stories – and as she described the four categories she invited us to think about how we might have a story. The four categories she has identified are:

1. Stories from our early life as children, deeply imprinted experiences.
2. Stories of other people as a guide or gateway to a larger sense of connectedness.
3. Terrifying encounters with the natural world – or stories in which the natural world served as messengers.
4. Stories of loss and grief, especially in terms of the loss of natural places.

The first category of stories we shared in pairs with one another, the second and third categories we shared out loud, and the fourth category we shared in pairs again. I was paired with Lisa Faithorn, and for the first category, stories from our life as children, I recalled experiences as a Boy Scout in Boise, Idaho. These experiences formed part of the background for what I have come to refer to in recent years as an ecological epistemology. In talking with Lisa, I related a story which I also described in a paper I delivered at a recent panel at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion.²⁶⁴ I quote the relevant section here:

I experience this ecological epistemology in a particular forest in the foothills of the Boise range, a small spur of mountains mediating the rise of landscape from the broad, high desert flatness of the Snake river plateau in southern Idaho to the Sawtooth mountains in Central Eastern Idaho. I am lying on my back, temporarily alone while on a weekend campout with my Boy Scout troop. There is grass, pine needles, and myriads of unnamed plants cushioning my back from the sandy and rocky soil beneath me. A breeze is blowing through the mixture of fir and pine trees around me. It is a sound like no other in the world. The trees actually whisper a long sustained sotto voce moan. There is a soft, gentle interplay between wind and conifer needles which flows in long drawn-out arias which is quite different from the brook-like sound of the wind slapping, clapping and tripping over the leaves of aspens or maples. As I lay there, I listen for these subtleties, and I become aware of how I am an accidental bystander witnessing an ancient interchange between other citizens of this earthly realm. I don't yet know such terms as anthropomorphism and so on. Rather, what I am aware of is the desire for the reverse: to pattern myself after this wild and intricately natural world around me. Increasingly I come to feel the wild of nature to be kin. I go into the wild not so much for solitude as for companionship and familiarity. This is an ecological epistemology at work. It is an epistemology which insists that there is no knowledge out there, separate and distinct from myself, or from a Self which I can designate as "mine", which is disconnectable from the world around me. It is an epistemology that insists that all knowledge is connected knowledge, or better yet, interconnected knowledge.²⁶⁵

²⁶⁴ Craig S. Strobel, "Body Contact: An Ecological Epistemology." Paper/performance delivered at the 1999 Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion/ Society of Biblical Literature, Boston, Massachusetts. The text of the paper is found as an appendix in this dissertation.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

I related this story to Lisa as one of the deep imprinting experiences from my childhood. Indeed, it was formative to my own understanding of biocentrism and Deep Ecology. In part, it is experiences such as that described in this story that have compelled me to pursue the work I have undertaken in this dissertation. And so, in this storytelling time, I experienced the power of telling stories as a means for enabling persons to reconnect with their sense of purpose in life.

4.3.6. Chakra Work at Stone Shelter to Open up to Power Animal Visitation

We then took a short break during which I drank in the chorus of crickets around us. When we returned to the stone shelter, David Graves proceeded to instruct us in how we would utilize four of the body's seven chakras in order to encourage contact with another creature.

Work with chakras is not necessarily part of Deep Ecology nor is it necessarily part of a Council of All Beings. Rather, it is a particular interest of Graves which he brings to Council work. This is a hallmark of Council of All Beings work -- each facilitator is free to modify the format somewhat.

David's work with chakras is based upon traditional Hindu and yoga teachings. "Chakra" literally means "wheel," and refers to seven centers in the body which are considered to be nodes of energy, and points in which particular psychosomatic²⁶⁶ functions are affected. Work with chakras is found throughout the literature and yogic practices of the religious and philosophical systems of India. It has passed into the North American cultural mix primarily through the work of the Theosophical Society, the contact of British and North Americans with gurus and yogis in and from India, and the more recent New Age movement. David did not offer any detailed explanation of the history or philosophy behind the chakras. Rather he acted upon the presumption that most of us were conversant with the idea. As the majority of the participants were from the Bay Area, his presumption was not unfounded.

We paired up, with one person as the facilitator/recorder and the other person as the subject. The subject was to lay on their back with their eyes closed. The facilitator rubbed their hands together and then placed one hand over each of the four chakras emphasized in this work (stomach, heart, throat and head). Whatever image arose or creature presented itself to the subject was recorded on a piece of paper by the facilitator. David described the process as follows:

²⁶⁶ I use the term "psychosomatic" in the sense of referring to a continuity between the physical and mental and spiritual processes of the body.

When you place your hand down, feel the energy... we're going to place a hand over the chakra and then ask the question of the person, "What is the creature that presents itself to you?" and then ask that creature, "What is it you want to tell me?" Then whatever occurs to you, say it, and the person who is assisting writes it down. The chakras we will focus on are the stomach, the heart, the throat and the head.... At the end I want you to give the paper to the person, and they can take it and put under their pillow as they sleep tonight. . . And we'll see if any creature presents itself to us in our dreams tonight.²⁶⁷

I had no particular image for the stomach chakra, but for the heart chakra I received the impression of a daisy-like flower or sunflower. For the neck I experienced the sound of the wind outside, and the message which came to me was "the wind carries the song of the crickets." For the head I received the impression of a chameleon, and the message had to do with remaining hidden, blending in, adjusting to the environment.

4.3.7. Free-time/Bedtime

We then broke from this activity. As the time was 10:00, people either headed off to bed or gathered in small groups and continued their conversations from before.

4.4. Second Day: Wake-up and Optional Meditation in the Stone Shelter

Around 7:00 the next morning, David walked through camp again, sounding the walking gong. Some persons exercised the option of gathering for silent sitting and walking meditation in the stone shelter.

4.4.1. Breakfast

Breakfast was eaten at a picnic table outside the stone shelter or taken into the shelter. As soon as everyone had finished eating, we all gathered again in the shelter.

4.4.2. Prayer Stick Exercise in the Stone Shelter

The morning experience began with everyone getting in a circle. We took a stick Lisa had found when she came into camp. It and several pieces of yarn were laying in the middle of the circle on a tarp. We were all invited when we were moved -- Quaker style -- to speak aloud a concern, or a fear or a stress or whatever and wrap some yarn around the stick as a prayer. The stick would then be placed somewhere to rot, to decay. Each person came up one by one, as they were moved, and spoke their concerns or prayers. Lisa had brought several rattles and gourd shakers for us to use if we wished. After each person shared, we shook our rattles as a symbol of our witnessing and recognition of what had been said.

²⁶⁷ David Graves, transcribed field notes, August 5, 2000.

One of the things that occurred to me as one person was sharing about breast cancer in her sister was the view that diseases such as cancer are an example of our interconnectedness. That is, they are produced as a result of our pumping things into the atmosphere and also as a result of the society we have created in which everyone has certain lifestyles which affect their physical health directly or indirectly through environmental pollution. Therefore, one can say from an interconnected point of view that it is not this person or that person who gets cancer but rather *we all* get cancer *in* this or that person. It is a localization of something that we have all caused and we all experience in some way.

This prayer stick experience was Lisa's form of expressing grief. In the format designed by Joanna Macy and John Seed, there is a ritual designated for grieving and mourning. Macy and Seed explain the purpose of the mourning thus:

Deep Ecology remains a concept without power to transform our awareness; and behavior unless we allow ourselves to feel -- which means feeling the pain within us over what is happening to our world. The workshop serves as safe place where this pain can be acknowledged, plumbed, released. Often it arises as a deep sense of loss over what is slipping away -- ancient forests and clean river, birdsong and breathable [sic] air. *It is appropriate then to mourn -- for once, at least -- to speak our sorrow and, when appropriate, to say goodbye to what is disappearing from our lives.* As participants let this happen in the whole group or in small clusters, anger and fear and hopelessness arise, too -- and something more, a passionate caring.

Caring, and the interconnectedness from which it springs, emerge as the ground of this anger and grief. It is an important part of the workshop leaders' role to point that out. Why else do we weep for other beings and for those not yet born? Deep ecology serves as explanatory principle both for the pain we experience on behalf of our planet and its beings and for the sense of belonging that arises when we stop repressing that pain and let it reconnect us with our world.

This stage is very similar to the Despairwork [of Joanna Macy], and it is preliminary to the other stages for several reasons. It erodes the culturally conditioned defenses of the separate ego, the fictions that "I" am or should be in control. That I can hold aloof from what befalls others. Secondly, mourning lends authority to notions of our interconnectedness or deep ecology. And, thirdly, it deepens trust between members of the group for all the work that follows.²⁶⁸

4.4.3. Solo Time in Surrounding Area

Following the prayer stick ritual, we had about an hour and a half of solo time to go and experience the natural world in the area around the camp and be open to what might come to us. I moved through the camp and found myself at the entrance to camp. Sitting at the entrance, I heard a squealing caw-cry – almost like a seagull's cry. I determined that it was the red-shouldered hawk that David had talked about earlier. (Subsequent conversations with my wife, who is an avid birder and former crew

²⁶⁸ John Seed, *et al.*, *Thinking Like a Mountain*, 101-102.

member of the Golden Gate Raptor Observatory, confirmed my identification.) So I looked and sure enough, there was a hawk. I couldn't positively identify it visually one way or the other – but it did not make a red-tail cry. It made its caw-cry as it circled above a hill nearby. It called out several times as it circled. I also saw dragonflies circling. The wind carried the song of the hawk just as it carried the dragonflies.

Further on down the trail I found an old Bay Laurel tree with several branches about 20 inches in diameter spreading out across this stretch of creek. I left the trail and crawled naked out upon several of the branches suspended there above the ground. I spent about thirty minutes there at that spot, listening, feeling the cool roughness of the dried-moss-covered bark against my skin and felt the wind move in warm and cool breaths up and down the creek gully. At the end of this time, I started to pick up several leaves to use in the mask-making. I asked the ground if it was all right for me to take these leaves, and as I asked the question, I heard once again the call of the hawk which I had not heard the entire time of being on the trail. I took that cry as a reply – a call -- a cry to me as if to say “yes.” The time on the trail had been bracketed by the cry of the red-shouldered hawk.

As I picked up the leaves, I reflected upon what it meant to consider that the hawk's cry might be some sort of reply to me concerning the picking up of leaves. I spoke those reflections into a hand-held tape recorder:

So is this red-shouldered hawk really answering me, talking to me – this solitary human being – as if all these things exist to answer my questions? What difference is there from then saying that the red-shouldered hawk was crying as it spies something, in reply to the ground – and to the animals in it -- that the aroma from the ground of Bay and decaying leaves has risen on the warmth of the rising air to its nostrils and it cries out and it sings its song as I move in through these Bay leaves, and pick up these leaves, and the leaves have heard my question and are lifting it up through the smells wafting on the breeze? But it has stopped its cry now. So I will stop picking up the leaves. And I hear now the soft sound of the gong being carried also on the wind to me.²⁶⁹

The sound of the gong passing along the path signaled a call to return to the camp and begin the mask-making and have lunch. Leaves in hand, I returned up the path. But the time on the trail and on the Bay Laurel branches had been fruitful: I realized that the wind wished to speak through me.

4.4.4. Return and Lunch/Mask-making in the Picnic Area

²⁶⁹ Transcribed field notes, August 6, 2000.

People returned one-by-one to the picnic area, and in a more pensive frame of mind, began to eat lunch and make their masks. Conversation was subdued. Following this period, we all gathered back out in the open field for the Council of All Beings proper.

4.4.5. Council of All Beings in the Open Field

The Council proceeded with explanation. The instructions were simple and straightforward. When we put on the masks, we were not to consider ourselves as humans, but would speak as the creatures our masks represented. When each creature had spoken, the other Council members would respond with “We hear you.” Then the creature who had spoken would put off the mask, and resume their identity as a human in the center of the circle. As humans sitting in the center of the circle, our role was strictly to listen, and then respond with “We hear you.”

John Seed and Eshana (Elizabeth Bragg) explain that people might experience different things at a Council of All Beings:

Try not to create unrealistic expectations for people. While allowing the possibility of amazing shamanic experiences to occur (feeling the human self disappear and the spirit of the ally speaking through them), also allow people to see it as a ‘role play’, an ‘exercise in moral imagination,’ simply practising [*sic*] what it would feel like to see the world from another creature’s perspective. Assure people that it’s okay if they feel themselves coming in and out of their human selves during the council. It’s important that participants are not distracted by anxiety that they’re “not doing it right!”²⁷⁰

This Council proceeded much more in the vein of role-playing. We put on the masks. And each person spoke. There were two persons as dragonflies, one person as a butterfly, I was the wind, and so on. It is more proper to say that the wind spoke through me, and a buck spoke through another person. Indeed, perhaps the more correct expression would be “Buck came to Council.” In that case, two dragonflies came to Council, Hawk came to Council, Falling Leaves came to Council, wind came to Council, skunk came to Council, Bay Meadow came to Council, and people spoke whatever they were moved to speak. Then each was to put down their mask and sit in the middle of the circle as humans, not responding or talking back other than replying, “We hear you.”

The first being to speak was Falling Leaves. After Falling Leaves spoke, the mask was put to the outside of the circle, and the mask-bearer came in to the center. The next being to speak was Wind.

²⁷⁰ John Seed and Eshana, “Introduction to the Council of All Beings and Finding Our Allies,” found online at <http://forests.org/ric/deep-eco/cabcab.htm>.

I am Wind. I carry the song of the crickets. I lift hawk high above the hills and gently caress dragonfly as she chases insects. I have come because I have a bone to pick with humans. It's about a phrase, a saying you have. How does it go? Oh yes, "to break wind," meaning to fart. I used to take offense at this phrase, until I started to smell what you are pumping into the air. You are right. The wind does smell foul now. What are you doing to me? Stop it now.

Then Wind offered its gifts to humans to help them change.

I offer you joy. Maybe if humans had more joy in life and enjoyment of the world they wouldn't want to hurt it. So, I offer you joy. The joy of blowing high and low, of running your airy fingers through everyone's hair, the joy of picking up Falling Leaves and tossing them about, the joy flowing underneath the feathers of hawk as you lift him up and up, the joy of rolling warm and cool down gullies and canyons. Joy. Yes, I offer you my joy. The joy of being Wind.

After Wind spoke, the mask was removed, set to the outside of the circle, and the mask-bearer (in this instance, me) came in to the center of the circle. Hummingbird with his long stick-for-a-beak spoke next.

At first he hummed and hovered and flitted around the circle, as if going from flower to flower.

I am Hummingbird. Hmmmmmmmmmm. I bring messages. Hmmmmmm. I take messages from flower to flower. Hmmmm mmmmmmm. I bring you messages from the flowers. Hmmm mmm hmmm. Take care of the land they say. Keep the land healthy so we can grow. Hmmmm hmmm. Like Wind, I offer you joy, too. Hmmm mmmm.

Then Hummingbird's mask was laid aside and the mask-bearer entered the circle. Dragonfly (one of two who came) then spoke and was glad to see brother dragonfly also at the circle.

I came today because I heard about this council and I wanted to see if there was any hope for humans. But I am glad to be here. Maybe there is hope.

Buck spoke.

I am tired of being shot by humans. Please let me live.

Skunk spoke.

I am Skunk. I move around at night in the dark. You may see me and may be surprised. I have come to tell you to face your fears. Do not be afraid. Many of you act afraid of me. But I will not harm you. So you must face those things that are in your darkness, that make you afraid to act. Face your fears. Do not be afraid.

The other Dragonfly spoke. Bay Meadow spoke. Forest of Trees spoke. Hawk spoke. Each time, when the being had finished speaking, the mask was laid aside outside of the circle, and the mask-bearer came in to the center and sat. After each being spoke, the humans in the center of the circle acknowledge their speaking with "We hear you."

The Council ended with everyone sitting in the center of the circle as humans, facing outward.

After a brief silence, the Council was dismissed. People were invited either to burn their masks as a way of

releasing the energy of the experience back into the environment or to take the masks home as a reminder of the event and what each had learned. People then went to their tents, packed their gear and broke camp.

4.4.6. Closing Circle in the Open Field

We regathered at the site of the Council in the open field. The prayer stick we had earlier was passed around, and each person was invited to reflect very briefly upon what the weekend had meant to them, or what they would take away with them. At the end of this sharing, we all stood and closed out time off with a group hug. The prayer stick went home with one of the participants. The time was 3:00 in the afternoon.

4.4.7. Departure

I was surprised at how quickly people dispersed following the group hug. My family did not arrive for another 45 minutes to pick me up, so I had time to move around the campsite and reflect upon things. I recorded the following comments:

After the closing circle and group hug, everybody quickly disbanded and left – gone! Making it a somewhat curious reflection of what we learned about place, when we humans come into a place and then so quickly leave it. Somewhat ceremoniously, somewhat unceremoniously. So what's the value of these experiences, these rituals, these events for tying us into place? Reconnecting us? The basic point of Bioregionalism, the basic point of a lot of Deep Ecology work is coming to know our place and loving our place. What does it mean for these events to take us out of our places and then send us back to them? So here is the question: How does an experience like this remain with people and enable them to connect deeper with the place in which they find themselves or in which they live? Does an experience like this change their bodily perception and relationship with a landscape, with a place, a *topos*? So these are the questions. And how could experiences like this be utilized by ongoing communities to deepen their commitment and to listen to what the other citizens, the other beings in their place might also be saying?

As the ravens grock behind me, I am also reflecting upon the fact that I came farthest of anyone to this event, so I am not returning immediately to home. So at the moment this is my place as I am, as much as any other place. So I am having a strong feeling of not needing to hurry off. So some of my preceding reflections are colored by the fact that I have traveled a distance to get here. But this place is also a significant place for me. I have left my current place of residence to return to a previous place of residence, a place that has been significant at some very important changing points in my life. But it is also a place in which my family roots run deep here in the Bay Area. Several generations in fact. It is a place in which, when I breathe the air, I am breathing in some ways ancestry. And when I walk these hills, I am walking places where, perhaps, my ancestors at one time walked or have been. And so it is a returning home for me. So I am not in a hurry to leave this particular place, because the whole area is in some ways my particular place.

4.5. Reflections Upon the Council of All Beings Weekend

Each Council of All Beings bears the imprint of its facilitator. John Seed and Joanna Macy identify three basic stages to a Council of All Beings in their work: mourning, remembering and speaking from the standpoint of other beings.²⁷¹ *The Council of All Beings Workshop Manual* found on John Seed and Eshana's website describes the workshop format as consisting of the following parts: Introductory Processes, Milling, Mourning, Council of All Beings, Grounding.²⁷²

This particular Council was the first time David Graves and Lisa Faithorn had worked together in a Council setting. Leadership was shared evenly, with each facilitating whatever part reflected their own specialty or creative input. I pointed out in conversation with Lisa that I noticed that specific time had not been set aside for mourning. She explained that the mourning was an important part of Joanna Macy's facilitation of a Council and came out of her earlier despair and empowerment work. Lisa, on the other hand, stated that her own stress is upon encouraging people to approach a Council from within their "heart space," to get in touch with their heart connection with the natural world. The telling of stories and the use of the prayer stick is the way she has devised to bring people into contact with that heart dimension of their awareness.

It was curious to me that neither Lisa nor David gave much history of the history of the Council of All Beings. There is great value in placing oneself within an historical lineage. This was all the more curious, considering Lisa's interest in the telling of stories. Establishing the historical lineage of one's ritual practice reflects the building of tradition, and connects participants with the fact that the sort of things they experienced is being done other places, and that these rituals arose out of specific experiences, as creative responses to situations. One of the points of the Council of All Beings is to evoke creative responses in people, to utilize their connectedness, the resources of their connectedness to other beings and their four billion year-old history. The retelling of an historical lineage can bring that to people's attention – that they come to a Council of All Beings not just because it is an interesting thing to do on a Saturday afternoon, but because there is a developing community of people who are engaged in interacting with the

²⁷¹ John Seed, *et al*, *Thinking Like a Mountain*, 101.

²⁷² John Seed and Eshana, "The Council of All Beings Workshop Manual: A Step by Step Guide," found online at <http://forests.org/ric/deep-eco/cabcont.htm>.

natural world in a non-dominating way and who are seeking to change their relationship with one another and with the rest of creation. The Council of All Beings is one means by which they come together.²⁷³

The fields of liturgical studies and the practice and study of Christian ritual pose interesting questions to juxtapose with the Council of All Beings experience. One is a question that frequently arises in the discussion of liturgy and ritual: how does the weekly worship service qualitatively change or transform people? How does that one to two hour experience once a week affect who they are, how they live, and how they perceive things? What are the effects? What are the results? Does it make a difference? What is the relationship between what happens in that experience and what happens after they walk out the door? That same question applies here. And it also applies to people who go away on weekend retreats and experience deep intentional community of some sort that has a spiritual and life-transformative component to it: how do they integrate that back into their life, particularly in a culture such as ours that does not have a lot of ritual and ceremonies for reincorporating people back in and acknowledging and recognizing when they leave. It is those liminal experiences of the leaving and the return, the things Victor Turner and van Gennep talk about – liminal moments – that we basically ignore. My recorded notes reflect my own ponderings as I awaited the arrival of my family:

And so here I am right now, sitting here, talking into this tape recorder in one such liminal moment as everyone else has left, awaiting the arrival of my family. How am I to be reintegrated and reincorporated into the life of my family? How do we do that? So these people who have left, gotten in their cars and have left the park (some have gone down to Lake Anza, are maintaining their connection to this larger space) others will be instantly back into traffic, on the freeways, jockeying for position, battling cars, revving their bodies up to 60 mph. No real transition.

I wait here. I am feeling almost torn between wanting to go back in and walk back through the area, and yet am hesitant to do so. At the same time I want to show the area to my family and let them walk around with me. So perhaps that is part of the leave-taking, transitional experience.

My family soon arrived, and got out of the car. I indeed allowed them to wander around the camp, and we sat around on the grass or ran in the open field together. My wife rested on the grass while my daughters and I ate some snacks at a picnic table. One of my daughters ran around the camp pretending to be a cougar or acting like a talking signpost at the entrance to the restrooms. Another daughter sat in the shade and read a book, while my youngest daughter took me by the hand and explored the Redwood

²⁷³ These comments are a reworking of comments made in the field.

perimeter. So it was that I was reincorporated back into my family, and I shared with them a small taste of what I had just experienced in the preceding 24 hours.

5. Comments and Conclusions

In the following chapter I will discuss in greater detail my conclusions about how a Performance Hermeneutic functions in interpreting the role of embodied imagination in the processes of emerging religious phenomena. At this point I wish to call attention to a few things which arose for me during the three experiences I have just described.

Each of the events created a world in which emotional and inwardly felt connections between humans and the rest of the natural world were allowed to be expressed. In the Endangered Species Bestiary, the construction of a ritual space and the slow, rhythmic naming of species accompanied by rattle and drum facilitated a state in which people moved out of their intellectual and rational distinctions between *Homo Sapiens Sapiens* and other species. Emotions and feelings reside at a deeper and evolutionarily earlier (i.e., more “primitive”) portion of the brain. It is this portion of the brain that we share with many other animal species. And it is this level of consciousness, the level of feeling and emotion, which developed in our evolution as a result of our interaction with our environment. John Seed poignantly describes how his own work on behalf of the rainforest catalyzed a deeper understanding of his own evolutionary history.

In Australia in the mid ‘70’s, the rainforest was referred to, rather disparagingly, as “the scrub,” and viewed as if it was slightly un-Australian. It was thought to be a recent intruder, probably came across a land bridge from Asia during the last ice age or something. It wasn’t like eucalyptus or the REAL Aussie bush. Anyway, in 1979 I and other members of our community were invited by our neighbors to help protect this rainforest at Terania Creek.

They had been struggling for five years to prevent the logging of that little piece of remaining rainforest. I think it was about 1/10 of 1 percent of The Big Scrub remaining, and the Forestry Commission of New South Wales wanted to log it. There was a non-violent direct action in defence [*sic*] of that forest and somehow I found myself a part of it. We stood in front of the trees, laid down in front of bulldozers, and did what we had to do, and I have never been the same since. All that meditation must have made me ripe, and I think the rainforest decided “I’ll have him” and She did!

At the time it was totally bewildering to me. Within the conceptual framework that I was living in, it didn’t really make any sense to me, how was it that I could hear the forest screaming? How was it that I could feel something so strongly as this? The whole of my Buddhist training was to remain cool and somewhat aloof and just to watch things come and go, to rise and pass away, not to become embroiled this way in passions. But, it was undeniable.

In later years as I studied the rainforest it emerged that, far from being a recent invader, this rainforest was the original flora of Australia. 130,000,000 years ago Australia was part of the mighty super-continent Gondwanaland, joined to South America and Antarctica. Gondwanaland was covered in rainforest. As the continents drifted apart and

Australia moved thru [sic] drier times, the rainforests retreated to the east and the north of Australia, and threw out the eucalyptus, acacia, grevillea and all the flora that we think about to-day as being uniquely Australian. I also learnt that I as a human being had evolved within these very same rainforests during nearly all of that time, and that it is only during the last few million years that I have sought my fortunes outside the forests. So it became less surprising that some kind of psychological or spiritual contact with the rainforest was possible, and it became rather more surprising that many other people didn't seem to be experiencing it.²⁷⁴

This feeling level is utilized by Anna Halprin in her work at Tamalpa Institute, and in her choreography and group dance ritual work. In the Embodying Nature workshop, a kinesthetic world was created in the dance studio space in which these deep reservoirs of feeling and emotional connectivity were brought to the surface and were laid out upon the proprioceptor and sense receptor network. This kinesthetic world was recapitulated as we moved out along the mountainslope of Mt. Tamalpais and we experienced our contact with the mountain in terms of this deep emotionally connected reservoir of feeling. Drawing pictures and writing poetry about the experience afterward in the dance studio served as a means for graphically interpreting what we had kinesthetically and tactilely experienced on the mountain.

It is this process of graphic interpretation and representation that is evidence of a human propensity to analyze and codify in some manner what it is that has been experienced. The Council of All Beings draws upon this propensity through the creation of masks and the telling of stories. Language is used in a certain codified and specifically structured (i.e., ritual) manner. But it arises out of the felt experience, as a means to come to terms with what has been experienced through direct contact with the natural world in a heightened emotionally connective state.

What a Performance Hermeneutic suggests is that the Deep Ecology workshops and rituals I attended were the nascent stages of the process of giving expression to and codification of experiences of deeply felt connections by participants and facilitators with the natural world. For many people in the environmental movement and others in contemporary society, these deeply felt connections are no longer being suppressed by a worldview that asserts the primacy of the human species and the divine right of an intellectual process which exercises a hegemony over other forms of consciousness. Predominantly, the people I came in contact with at these rituals and workshops were beginning to make cognitive and paradigmatic shifts in their way of thinking about the world around them and the way in which they

²⁷⁴ John Seed, “Transcripts of John Seed's Introductions to The Council Of All Beings,” found online at <http://forests.org/ric/deep-eco/cabtrans.htm>.

engaged and interacted with that world. But this paradigmatic world-shifting occurred as a response to earlier contacts and connections with the natural world. What the workshops provided was a container, a new worldview, a new world-picture and way of seeing, a new way of being that validated these feelings of connection.

And so there is a process of reciprocity at work in which a group of people has a certain experience of the natural world. Their culturally-constructed view of reality does not validate or reinforce their felt experience. So they begin to seek out a new view of reality that will validate their experience. This new view of reality codifies experience in specific ways, and certain practices are developed which recapitulate and facilitate these felt connections with the natural world. Further reflection upon these experiences, which are repeated and recurring, gives rise to more intellectually and rationally articulated codification, as well as poetic and artistic expressions. The basic pattern is one in which felt experience precedes codification, and in which codification serves to reinforce and validate felt experience. Rituals and performative practices are developed out of the codification process and serve to reinforce the codification, as well as to create the conditions in which the originary experiences are recapitulated.

It is this claim that I unravel and restitch in the concluding chapter.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Observations

During the three years I have lived in Eastern Oregon while serving a church and writing on my dissertation, I have traveled frequently alongside the Columbia river while traveling to and from Portland. Usually I traveled by car, but occasionally I packed my clothes and files and books and computer disks and caught the bus. When I ride the bus I have the grace-filled privilege to look out and ponder the landscape.

Columns of basalt line the crests of hills like so many battalions of foot soldiers forever awaiting the sound of the trumpet. Deep gullies and canyons have carved their way into these witnesses to an earlier era of geological activity. Each canyon and valley has its own creek or stream, swelling with the spring runoff and dwindling during the hot, dry summers. Deep gorges split the rock in two, while a forest of oaks and sumac spring up out of the cleavage. Sagebrush and an occasional juniper gradually make way for Douglas Fir, Ponderosa Pine, Sumac, Ash and Poplar. It is a sculptor and painter's paradise.

There is a starkness to the stone. Ravens fly in and out among the basalt palisades. The wind froths the water into whitecaps, and bows the trees into obeisance at its bidding. But the stone stands silent -- chiseled and molded, the crystalline product of cooling lava and centuries of winter ice followed by summer baking. The only thing that matches the cracked cragginess of the land is the dried apple faces of the long-time ranchers and cowpokes who range their cattle amid the cheat grass and sagebrush that cover the hills like a thin velvet cover. The sensuous undulation of the velveteen hills is punctuated periodically by an eruption of crumbling basalt -- ridges of earth-bone breaking the blanket-soft skin of the earth's surface.

As I travel through this landscape, I struggle to find words to describe it. The land rolls and heaves and thrusts, the water roars and dances in the wind, trees bend and flex, sunlight burnishes the leaves with gold -- and my own body is painted, blown, caressed and tossed about. I drink the landscape in

as if it were a liquid presence. Nonetheless, with all the wonders of language at my disposal, I am still at a loss to articulate fully the effects of the land upon my being and consciousness.

This is precisely the quandary of those who would try to marshal the meager resources of religious terminology to describe experiences which lie beyond the confines and comprehension of rational terminology. Poetry approaches it, but only when it juxtaposes a jumble of images and sensations like a child playing pick-up sticks.

I sit and watch the sun set red and vermillion upon the river's dimpled surface. I simply sit in order to see -- to watch, but more than simply observe. It is seeing as being. It is beyond philosophy and before philosophy. Philosophy and religion emerge as an attempt to *describe* -- to formulate into words and concepts -- experiences of being. Experiences which are the property of *being* a being. To be and to ponder that state of being -- that is the question of philosophy and religion.

The dictionary tells us that *to describe* means:

- 1) to represent or give an account of in words; 2) to represent by a figure, model or picture: delineate; 3) to trace or traverse the outline of.²⁷⁵

The definition of *description* is also instructive:

- 1) an act of describing; *specif*: discourse intended to give a mental image of something experienced (as a scene, person or sensation); 2) a descriptive statement or account.²⁷⁶

If indeed the discursive work of *description* is the representation of something experienced by means of a mental image, and the work of the imagination is the presentation of mental images,²⁷⁷ then the work of describing any experience, whether it is termed "religious" or otherwise, is clearly work of the imagination.

Description and the act of describing call to mind the involvement of the scribe, the one who takes chisel to rock or quill to paper. Within its metaphorical universe of definition and meaning, the act of describing remains attached to the act of drawing marks, of sketching boundaries and limits, of capturing events, meanings and explanations within the corral of language and line.

It is in this scriptive process where at least two problems lie. One problem is epistemological: the act of forcing entire catalogs of experience into the narrow confines of scratches in the sand, grooves in the rock, marks on a page. The other problem is related: the nature of our relationship as human beings with

²⁷⁵ Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 1977, s.v. "describe."

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, s.v. "description."

²⁷⁷ See Chapter 2, Section 3.2.

our environment. We have struggled to inscribe ourselves -- our lives, our culture, our values -- upon the land. Describing, so understood, reveals the problematic aspect of the imagination, if imagination is conceived primarily as being a process of mental representation and depiction of visual images or graphically rendered expressions of mental events.

However, if the imagination is understood to function in an embodied fashion, as performance and performative acts, then the participatory nature of the imagination is discerned. Instead of an act of inscription upon other beings and self-existent things, the imagination in performance participates in the ongoing play and interplay between human and more-than-human beings²⁷⁸ and other self-existent things.

A Performance Hermeneutical investigation of Deep Ecology suggests that Deep Ecology has emerged as an expression of specific experiences of the various relationships which exist between humans and their environment. The culturally dominant expression and delineation of this set of relationships has been found to be lacking by many persons, who have attempted a different description of things more in accord with their experience.

But mere description is not enough. What the Deep Ecology practitioners and apologists I studied and worked with have attempted to do is to create a new world -- or perhaps it is more accurate to say that they have attempted to uncover and reveal a world that has been hidden. It is a world that must be participated in because it is beyond and before description. It is a world whose *a priori* is experience -- experience which is based and rooted within the fact of being an embodied being whose very embodiedness arises as a biological fact out of a vast interweaving of biochemical and sensory interactions with the physical givenness of their environment. Performative acts such as rituals, role-playing, protests, tree-sitting, plays and pageants all stress the active engagement of sentient human bodies with the time and space of the world in which they live. The performative practices of persons within the Deep Ecology movement are so constructed as to involve the participation not only of human agents in the construction of this Deep Ecological world, but also invites the participation of the myriad of more-than-human agents who share in the weal and woe of life on Earth.

²⁷⁸ I adopt the phrase “more-than-human” from David Abram and others who use this phrase to refer to any being beyond the human species. “Non-human” connotes a pejorative relationship in distinction from the valorized human standard. “More-than-human” attempts to communicate that there are many more species beyond the human species, and their sheer number suggests that, in the estimation of the universe, they might be just as important.

But in order to create this Deep Ecology world together, communication between human and more-than-human beings must occur at a level beyond and before description -- at the level of physical and felt experience. The dance work of Anna Halprin and Ken Otter, as well as the Councils of All Beings crafted by Joanna Macy and John Seed and re-crafted by people such as Lisa Faithorn and David Graves and many others is directed precisely at this level of physical and felt experience. It is designed to bring the human species into direct pre-cognitive contact with the legions upon legions of fellow species inhabiting the same time and space on planet Earth.

The work of this dissertation, therefore, has been twofold. The first task was to go out and experience directly the performative acts (rituals, workshops and role-playing situations) of persons who are weaving a Deep Ecological world. Indeed, one such experience actually involved my own active participation as the facilitator of one such ritual in order to feel from the inside, as it were, what it means to act performatively within a Deep Ecology world or worldview.

The second task has been to attempt to describe what I experienced in those workshops and rituals. Attendant with this second task has been all the promise and pitfalls of the act of description alluded to earlier. Nonetheless, a dissertation is a scriptive and descriptive act, and so marks have been made on paper -- a lot of marks, in fact, on a lot of paper.

But the task has been not only to graphically represent and interpret those experiences through the medium of the printed word, it has also been to describe how the performative body is an investigative body as well. That is, how the enfleshed tools and trade of the performer can also serve to probe and explore emerging religious phenomena. In order to address this question, I have had first to tease apart the strands of the question.

In the first chapter I made the case for a Performance Hermeneutic, which is a process of interpretation and understanding based within the various ways and means in which the human body interacts with its environment. I argued that the body itself thinks -- that cognition is an activity of the whole body. A Performance Hermeneutic functions by studying performances and performative behaviors by means of performance. That is, the investigator physically engages the phenomenon under investigation with the wholeness of human embodiment -- sensually, intellectually, aesthetically, emotionally and spiritually. The style of investigation is as a participant-observer, and occasionally as a facilitator-

participant-observer (hence my role at one point as co-leader of the Endangered Species Bestiary). The hermeneutical movement toward understanding occurs as a process of reflection and intellection upon the physically experienced event. But it is a process which still draws upon the full embodiment of the researcher. Indeed, this process of reflection may occur simultaneously with the physical engagement such that it is as if there is one vast orchestration of physical sensations, emotional responses, deeply felt connections and disconnections, intellectual analysis, creative synthesis, internal critique and inner discourse, external expression and somatic responses, inward recall of associated memories and outward manifestations of these internal processes. Earlier in this chapter I have argued that this process just described is a work of the imagination in its embodied aspects.

In addition, in Chapter 1 I proposed a definition of religion which took into consideration the fullness of human embodiment intellectually, sensually, aesthetically and emotionally:

Religion is an interwoven system of ideas, attitudes and practices which binds a people together in a shared understanding of the way the world is constituted and which governs (to a greater or lesser degree) the values, activities and range of behaviors of that people.

I further argued that the job of the academic study of religion is to involve the cognitive and physical engagement of the researcher with the subject or phenomenon under study, and to engage the imagination in reflecting upon what has been observed, felt and uncovered artifactually to the end of creating a description of that phenomenon which not only closely (and faithfully) resembles the characteristics of that phenomenon but which also resonates within the cognitive and physical faculties of those who have not necessarily encountered the phenomenon in question. It was, and still is, my contention that a Performance Hermeneutic accomplishes this precisely because its methodology corresponds exactly with the fully embodied nature of religion.

In order to follow through with this contention, it was necessary to apply it to the investigation of a religion or religious phenomenon. I chose to investigate the performative practices of certain persons within the Deep Ecology movement because they demonstrated characteristics of an emerging religious phenomenon. Taking into consideration the definition of religion just given, and that an emerging religious phenomenon would exhibit these characteristics in a processual, evolutionary, and formative manner, the characteristics of the Deep Ecology movement as an emerging religious phenomenon would include the following:

1. *Interwoven system of ideas, attitudes and practices* -- notions of interdependence, interconnection and biocentrism give rise to rituals such as the Council of All Beings, mourning rituals designed to express grief over the loss of species and habitat, despair and empowerment work, *The Work that Reconnects* of Joanna Macy and Molly Young Brown;
2. *Which binds a people together* -- periodic and regular gatherings of like-minded and sympathetic people for engaging in ritual, training and social action, “eco-vangelical” roadshows, conferences and coalition efforts;
3. *Shared understanding of the way the world is constituted* -- development of the Deep Ecology platform, widespread discussion of ideas in journals such as *Environmental Ethics*, *The Trumpeter*, *Earth First! Journal*, and other books and publications, Internet discussions and webpages;
4. *Which governs (to a greater or lesser degree) the values, activities and range of behaviors of that people* -- protests and civil disobedience aimed at industries threatening habitat, tree-sitting to prevent logging, habitat restoration, simple living, organic gardening and food production, experiments in communal ecosystemic living.

All of these characteristics indicate that the Deep Ecology movement bears the marks of a religious phenomenon. This coupled with the fact that many of its proponents openly and overtly make reference to spirituality and the spiritual nature of their environmental work argues for consideration of the Deep Ecology movement as an emerging religious phenomenon. The fact that it is a dispersed rather than localized phenomenon attests to its emergent quality. Thus, its study takes on a more scattered attribute. Unlike study of the Amish or the transgressive and redressive rituals of the Ndembu, there is no Deep Ecology tribe to visit or Deep Ecology county in Pennsylvania to dwell in.

On the other hand, while there is an ever-growing Deep Ecology literature, it is not enough simply to do a literature review in order to understand Deep Ecology as a movement of people - particularly as a movement which deeply *moves* people. To understand the passion and compassion underlying Deep Ecology, one must go as an embodied researcher with the potential for passion and compassion oneself.

Through on-site research and participation in workshops, rituals and training events (including a nine-day training event, “Action for Earth,” held July 12-20, 1997 at the Chinook Learning Center, on

Whidbey Island, Washington and a three-day training event, "Our Life as Earth," held July 9-12, 1998, also at the Chinook Learning Center which were not discussed in Chapter 4), I investigated and experienced the interweaving of ideas, attitudes and practices of people attracted and committed to Deep Ecology. As I walked the trails of Mt. Tamalpais and experienced the healing of my feet or crawled naked out on the branches of trees or slithered through the dried leaves and moist earth, I experienced within myself a renewed connection and passion for the earth and all of its creatures.

It is precisely at this level of felt, embodied, and lived experience that a Performance Hermeneutic operates. As a participant-observer at each of the events described, I engaged in a constant process of sense perception and reflection upon what I perceived. Each experience consisted of this interplay between inner and outer worlds: sensory stimuli arising from my external engagement with the natural world and its human and more-than-human residents and the internal working of the imagination to create an inner world congruent not only with the external world which had sensually impressed itself upon me, but also congruent with my own inward world of memory, personal history, and intellectual and aesthetic categorization and description.

Again, the problematic of description arises. Does the imagination work as a stylus upon a blank vellum? What I experienced sensually was a matter of my own capacity for sentience, the capacity for conscious feeling and sensation. And yet my own sentience is a limited sentience. I cannot perceive the ultraviolet or infrared ends of the electromagnetic spectrum, although there are other sentient beings who can. My own imaginative process is limited to a large extent by my perceptive apparatus. Yet, this perceptive apparatus has developed, so scientists tell us, over millenia as a complex biochemical interaction between the physical properties of the earth and the emergent properties of living systems whose constituent elements were derived from that same earth. The studies of neurobiology and related sciences indicate that there is a strong correlation between human thought and perception and the activity of neuronal clusters and pathways within the brain and nervous system. Thought and perception are inextricably connected to the physical processes of the body, and those physical processes are derived from interactions with the surrounding physical world. The inner and outer worlds are linked and are part and parcel of one another.

Yet, the imagination in its construction of an inner world is not limited to a slavish imitation or recreation of the external world. The entire phenomenon of consciousness involves not only perception and imagination, but also reflection, critical analysis, synthetic evaluation and the derivation of original conclusions. Novelty abounds within conscious processes. And yet, at the same time, this same novelty is also found within the natural world. Species reproduce by means of genetic material encoded within strands of DNA. Yet, even as that DNA is copied and recopied time beyond measure, sequences of base pairs are altered and mutations spontaneously arise. Sometimes one section of one parent's chromosome is passed on and the next section of the other parent's is passed on. Occasionally mistakes are made and the novelty is not viable. But other times the changes remain and are likewise passed on. Those changes express themselves in the physical constitution of the organism and impress themselves upon the landscape and environment in direct proportion to how the changes have affected the capabilities of the organism.

Human sentience and activity on the earth is the result of millenia of such genetic changes and evolution. The work of imagination in representing the external world internally, and likewise acting upon the external world according to novel ideas, schemes, dreams and images derived from an internally constructed landscape reflects its emergence within the very structures and milieu of creative construction and destruction inherent in the natural world. Imagination in both its representative and creative/constructive aspects echoes the structured spontaneity and chaotic orderliness of other physical and biochemical processes on earth.

A Performance Hermeneutic operates at this level of the engaged and interconnected imagination. Its value lies in its ability to experience simultaneously both the imaginative creation and externalization of internal worlds and the internalization of how and what the external world impresses upon the human recipient. This suggests something very important concerning the study of emerging religions and religious phenomena. It suggests that new religions emerge as a descriptive attempt to make sense of *what* a group of people experience of the external world and *how* it is that they experience that world. Religion emerges as an imaginatively constructed world whose formal elaboration occurs as an expression of a world-view, with its attendant doctrines, descriptions, sets of questions and answers, problems and solutions, and boundaries and borders. The reciprocal nature of this religious imagination reveals itself in the rituals and

performances constructed in order to celebrate this world, as well as to reinforce the authenticity of the world-view which purports to describe it.

Deep Ecology is one such emerging religious phenomenon in that it has arisen as a result of the direct unmediated encounter of a great many people with the natural world. These people have experienced the natural world in which they live in a way that the prevailing world-view of their cultural milieu is inadequate or unable to describe. Deep Ecology is emerging as an attempt to articulate and embody their core experience of interconnection with and interdependence upon the natural world. This experience of interdependence and interconnection is the *a priori* of Deep Ecology. It begins as the encounter of breathing, sweating, hungering, sensually vital beings with other breathing, sweating, hungering, sensually vital beings as well as with pools of clear azure water or frothing rapids, with towering granite monoliths or forest floors dappled and dimpled by sunlight slipping through quaking and shuddering leaves. It begins in as simple an exercise as John Seed's challenge to hold one's breath for three minutes. To attempt that is to realize at the level of the body one's interdependence with other beings and with the whole of the earth. It begins at the level of bodily experience.

The articulation of the philosophy and ideas called Deep Ecology emerges and evolves out of this core experience. The performative practices – role-playing, workshops, rituals, demonstrations, direct actions and other performances – all arise out of this core experience as an attempt to describe that experience as well as a desire to construct a world – a human community – which is consonant and consistent with that core experience and the commitments it engenders.

There is another thing a Performance Hermeneutic offers the study of religion. That is the acknowledgement of the ephemerality of experience. No event, no happening, no performance or ritual can ever be completely and adequately described and transcribed. The event happens and then it is over. It cannot be completely and fully repeated. It may be imitated, the performance itself may be done again, but the delivery of lines will never be the same, the audience or participants will never be the same, the emotions experienced and the feelings felt will never be exactly the same from time to time. Performers know this, and a Performance Hermeneutic stresses the need to continually participate in various performances and rituals in order to understand them. A Performance Hermeneutic also highlights and foregrounds this ephemerality, not as a casualty of academic research, but rather as a necessary part of both

the researched phenomenon and the process of research. This is what it means to study performance by means of performance. Not everything can be codified into language. Much remains within the somatic memory of the participants, which is the subtle aspect of creating a world through performance. The essence of experience lies beyond and before description.

Epilogue

As I have returned home to the parsonage in Heppner, Oregon, I have maintained an organic garden in the backyard. (The church waters the yard for too much for my taste, but I recognize the limits to my personal witness.) In my garden I leave wild spots for a variety of plants to take hold and animals (especially insects and spiders) to make their home. The compost pile not only provides nutrients to the soil and improves its composition, it also provides habitat to a vast community of microorganisms, fungi, insects and a garter snake or two. We remove spiders and wasps from within our home by using a glass and piece of paper and relocating them outside because we wish to coexist peacefully. My sermons and worship liturgies have begun to introduce notions of interconnectedness, and I frequently draw attention to the spiritual nature of our embodiedness as creatures of the earth. In short, by placing my body within the Deep Ecology world created in the performative acts and training events studied and discussed in this dissertation, I have begun to live with a Deep Ecology view of the world. I have begun to be a part of the Deep Ecological reweaving of human society.

As I write these final thoughts and words for this dissertation, it is the late afternoon of a Heppner autumn. The sun's ecliptic has passed below its halfway point as it moves towards the winter solstice. Shadows are beginning to lengthen this afternoon, and the sunlight kisses the hillsides and treetops with ochre. I step outside the small room which suffices for my office in this Victorian-era church building, a building which is one of the few remaining buildings in town which survived a devastating flood of Willow Creek in 1903.

I decide to walk down to a small park situated at the confluence of Willow and Hinton Creeks which commemorates that flood. I sit alongside the small triangle of land marking where Hinton Creek flows into Willow creek. The willows growing alongside the creek are gilded by the late afternoon sun. A moth flutters and drunkenly zigzags along, swerving unexpectedly downward to ricochet off the surface of

the water. Nearly invisible insects flit busily among the waist-high grasses growing at the water's edge, and stray occasionally to alight upon the water as well. Perchance somewhere a fish spies them and feasts. A kingfisher flies the length of the creek with its staccato call ratcheting the air. Perchance it spies a fish and feasts as well.

Water, grass, bird and fish are all bounded by the human community – roads, bridge, picnic tables and a pile of yard and construction waste. I know many of the people whose automobiles speed them past the jubilant laziness of this spot. I stand to return to my office and the waiting computer at my desk in order to inscribe these last few black squiggles upon the bounded white flatness of this page. I step out toward what looks like a small tuft of grassy earth hoping to jump across the creek. Placing my foot on what should be solid earth, my boot sinks instead into the creek bottom and the rest of my body follows suit. Pants, shirt, boots and socks have suddenly become one with the creek.

Scrambling back to dry land, I remove my drenched boots and socks. I start to laugh at my situation. Here I am, writing about Deep Ecology and the experience of connection with the natural world, posturing presumptuously with philosophical treatises concerning the imagination, biocentric identification, performance and hermeneutics, ecology and epistemology – and I have just been embraced by this creek with all the gleeful mischief of my two and a half year-old daughter during one of our teasing games. There is wonderful humor in my position, and it is a humor that the creek and I have improvised together on the spot. Spontaneously. Chaotically. And with aplomb.

But as I return to home, and the sunset fades from vermillion to sapphire, I pause to watch the chimney swifts spin and spiral around the church across the street, preparing to make their spectacularly choreographed descent into the tall brick chimney which has been their night's abode for the last several weeks. How I wish I could fully describe this moment and this experience, that I could depict it in its fullness in brush strokes of pigment and paint upon paper and the effulgence of poetry upon the printed page. But all attempts fail and fall short of the glory of the moment. For it is, like all things, beyond and before description.

Appendix

Body Contact:
An Ecological Epistemology
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This is a story of weaving. It is a story of how the stuff of life is eaten and digested and then spun spiderlike into a lacework of being. It begins here as the earth and water are infused with fire and air, and life begins, and bodies emerge into time and space, marking and beating time, and are cradled in -- bounded by space. Time and space are not just limitations: rather they are the conditions and possibilities for experience and existence.

This story begins at the point of departure. It begins with the rather tautological question, "Where is it that I begin?" The answer returns like a Zen koan: "Where are your feet?" "Where are my feet?" "It is a Zen koan!"

I realize that the place to begin, as always, is exactly right where I am, right where I am standing. But as I reflect further upon the koan, I also realize that the question is indeed not only about starting *where* I am standing, but about the fact *that* I am standing -- and standing on my feet. That is, there is a body involved in this inquiry -- this journey I am embarking upon.

So, in a very real sense, I don't begin by locating myself upon a map, cartographically. As the title of John Kabatt-Zinn's book suggests, "Wherever I go, there I am." Because of this, I also cannot locate myself Descartes-ographically, that is, by separating myself into a subject-self and an object-self. Wherever I go, I carry this body with me, and I experience everything through this body-subject-self. So, I begin with this body. And beginning with this body requires that I begin in time and space.

In my beginning my body moves in time and in space. My every sense explores this time-space cradle, taking in, touching, smelling, tasting, seeing, feeling, moving, balancing, stopping, starting again, stopping, listening, feeling temperatures, the brush of the breeze and the perfume of mother's milk, the rumbling and explosions of my body... My body begins to make connections, to weave understanding and a place in this time and space. My hand moves from the dirt to my mouth, my eyes follow it, my hands pause in mid air -- these hands which move, shape, caress, fold into fists and float delicately as a milkweed seed born on the breeze.

Thus begins one instance of my body's way of knowing -- a knowledge born of being in the body. Like a spider, I receive the stuff of life, digest it, and spin out connections and

significations. Nothing is known or understood in isolation.. Everything is connected to something else.

My hand traces an arc as it raises the spoon to my mouth. My mouth is connected to this bowl, to this cereal and milk, through this path, this motion, this movement of this flexible and prehensile appendage. Space exists to allow this movement and this connection. My eyes see this cereal, and my tongue savors its flavors, and feels its textures, its wetness and dryness. Its crunch and popping echoes within the bones of my skull, and my ears connect with the movement of my jaw. A symphony of percussion and tones erupts into my sensorium and my hand beats out the rhythm, keeping time and tempo, orchestrating breakfast. Breakfast is not a concept, an idea residing as a form in an ethereal realm, it is an epistemological experience demonstrating the linkages between bowl and body, between sense and knowing, between perception and aesthetics.

From the earliest, every body is a place of knowing. But at an early point in public education, knowledge is demonstrated to come to us externally, from without. Knowledge is shown to reside in books, or in a figure of authority, and can be measured, quantified, and abstracted. Knowledge is said to be objective. But this body-subject-self which is standing before you, sweating nervously, speaking these words, which is always beginning right where I am, which knows that wherever I go, there I am -- this body-subject-self perceives nothing out there to go to. That is, not as something which is apart from the body-subject-self which goes to, but as something which is always a part of anywhere it has gone to. This is a deeply ecological way of knowing, which is based deeply within the body's own ecology of knowing. If breakfast can be an epistemological experience, it is precisely because the food cycle is a part of ecology, my own and that of the *oikos* of which I am a part. Thus, a bodily knowing is an ecological epistemology.

I experience this ecological epistemology in a particular forest in the foothills of the Boise range, a small spur of mountains mediating the rise of landscape from the broad, high desert flatness of the Snake river plateau in southern Idaho to the Sawtooth mountains in Central Eastern Idaho. I am lying on my back, temporarily alone while on a weekend campout with my Boy Scout troop. There is grass, pine needles, and myriads of unnamed plants cushioning my back from the sandy and rocky soil beneath me. A breeze is blowing through the mixture of fir and pine trees around me. It is a sound like no other in the world. The trees actually whisper a long sustained sotto voce moan. There is a soft, gentle interplay between wind and conifer needles which flows in long drawn-out arias which is quite different from the brook-like sound of the wind slapping, clapping and tripping over the leaves of aspens or maples. As I lay there, I listen for these subtleties, and I become aware of how I am an accidental bystander witnessing an ancient interchange between other citizens of this earthly realm. I don't yet know such terms as anthropomorphism and so on. Rather, what I am aware of is the desire for the reverse: to pattern myself after this wild and intricately natural world around me. Increasingly I come to feel the wild of nature to be kin. I go into the wild not so much for solitude as for companionship and familiality. This is an ecological epistemology at work. It is an epistemology which insists that there is no knowledge out there, separate and distinct from myself, or from a Self which I can designate as "mine", which is disconnectable

from the world around me. It is an epistemology which insists that all knowledge is connected knowledge, or better yet, interconnected knowledge.

At another time, in college, I am meditating alone in the wild section of a public park in Salem, Oregon. It is Spring, and the rains are easing up, as I near the end of a Semester. I have recently added a Biology major to my Theater major, and we have been studying the basic biochemical cycles of life: photosynthesis and Glycolysis with the marvelous Krebs cycle. Photosynthesis: where the energy of the sun is captured within the bonds forged between molecules of water and carbon dioxide: $6\text{H}_2\text{O} + 6\text{CO}_2 \rightarrow \text{C}_6\text{H}_{12}\text{O}_6 + 6\text{O}_2$. And glycolysis wherein this process is reversed, transferring the energy through the breakdown of glucose into water and carbon dioxide into the highly energetic molecules of Adenosine Triphosphate: $\text{C}_6\text{H}_{12}\text{O}_6 + 6\text{O}_2 \rightarrow 6\text{H}_2\text{O} + 6\text{CO}_2 \text{ AMP} \rightarrow \text{ATP}$. Glycolysis and the Krebs cycle. I had marveled at the exquisite symmetry of the process. And in the Krebs cycle, it was a process which could be diagrammed as a cycle, a continuous biochemical wheel forever spinning as long as life endures.

And so sitting there in meditation, I become aware of the sun peering around the drifting clouds and through the nascent and budding leaves of the tall Oregon white oaks and broadleaf maples of the park. The sunlight falls onto the leaves of the blackberry brambles and other bushes next to me. Suddenly I realize that not only are the leaves of these plants manufacturing food for themselves, and perhaps for me, but they are also breaking down that food through the same Krebs cycle at operation within my own cells. This plant and I are no longer strange, different, other, but we become kin, or more to the point, I realize that we are kin. The biochemical wheel of life in my cells and the cells of the plants next to me are busily cycling life, nutrients, energy, water, oxygen and carbon dioxide in the same way, at the same time. Life, energy, chemistry, meditation, prayer: all become a dance to me, intricately choreographed, lavishly orchestrated. My body, sitting there cross-legged, feeling the damp of the ground and the warmth of the sun, perceiving the play of light upon the gently swaying leaves next to me becomes a place of knowing and understanding.

In college, that same body went to rallies and marches, and painted banners. It became naked in sweatlodges and cried out *O Mitacu Oyasin* -- "All My relations" upon entering the lodge and ending prayers. All my relations. Who were those relations? Surely not just my parents and seven brothers and grandparents and aunts and uncles and cousins and more distant relatives who regularly gathered for picnics and Christmas. My mind turned to St. Francis and my shoes came off. I wanted to feel the earth carry me as the dust crept up into my toes and the rocks dug into my tenderfooted soles. Was I not part of this earth? Was I not raised out of the same dust as the trees standing in the forests in which I had laid down as a Boy Scout? Was I not breathing the same air as the dragonfly and blue whale? How could I say where they really began and I really ended? The strands of experience which stretched out from me joined with the strands stretching out from others -- from all my relations -- in a vast intermeshing of experience, such that boundaries and divisions were arbitrary at best and downright wrong-headed at worst.

There is another strand in this weaving. It occurred just a few years ago, in the midst of my graduate school career. I am standing in my dorm room brushing my hair. I brush

my hair in long strokes, massaging my scalp. It feels good. My scalp has been itching for several weeks. As I look on the ground, I see that the carpet is covered with large white flakes, looking as if a light snow had dusted my room. My shoulders are whitened by the flaking of my scalp. I am shedding.

I am in the midst of a divorce. Part of my life is ending. Part of who I knew myself to be is no longer going to be. I am in the midst of change, of transition of a deeply profound, existential nature. I am seized by spells of intense itching. At the base of my head, directly behind my mouth line, my skin erupts into long sores. The skin also cracks around my earlobes.

What is happening to me? Suddenly, one day I realize what is going on. If I were a snake, I would be shedding my skin, leaving an old self, an old life behind. Something new was emerging. In order to become whole again, as part of my healing, my body was automatically doing what my grief-numbed mind could not understand: it was symbolically expressing and ritually enacting the shedding of my old self. Because I had decided not to speak ill of my wife, who had asked for the divorce, I had not allowed myself to give voice to the anger and feelings of betrayal I felt. Not allowed to come through the normal channels of human communication, those feelings emerged through an opening of their own construction -- directly behind my mouth.

I've come to know my body as an exquisite symbolizer. It moves through time and space, joining time and space through the articulation of experience and shape, movement and sensation. I have come to realize that knowledge is not really a noun, it is verb -- it is really knowing: it moves and changes and progresses and disappears from sight. It is not eternal, ethereal and unchanging, but always arising into sight and slipping behind the horizon. It is being on the path, the journeying, the setting of one foot before the other. It is traveling through the landscape and realizing that the landscape travels within as well. Knowing is connecting, flinging out my awareness like a spider spinning a web. And knowing realizes that other awarenesses are being spun out to me, and joining me.

Knowing is interconnected. Epistemology is ecological. That which is joined together, let no one put asunder.

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