Radical Human Ecology

Intercultural and Indigenous Approaches

This PDF comprises the main contributions of co-editor Alastair McIntosh and is only for use privately if provided by him for study.

1. The volume's cover, content pages and Richard Borden's Foreword.
2. Chapter 2: The Challenge of Radical Human Ecology (p. 8 of the PDF).
3. Chapter12: Teaching Radical Ecology in the Academy (p. 33 of the PDF).
4. Editors' Afterword: A Research Agenda for Human Ecology (p. 54 of PDF).

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Edited by Lewis Williams, Rose Roberts and Alastair McIntosh

Human ecology – the study and practice of relationships between the natural and the social environment – has gained prominence as scholars seek more effectively to engage with pressing global concerns. In the past 70 years most human ecology has skirted the fringes of geography, sociology and biology. This volume pioneers radical new directions. In particular, it explores the power of indigenous and traditional peoples' epistemologies both to critique and to complement insights from modernity and postmodernity.

Aimed at an international readership, its contributors show that an inter-cultural and transdisciplinary approach is required. The demands of our era require a scholarship of ontological depth: an approach that can not just debate issues, but also address questions of practice and meaning.

Organized into three sections – Head, Heart and Hand – this volume covers the following key research areas:

Theories of Human Ecology
Indigenous and Wisdom Traditions
Eco-spiritual Epistemologies and Ontology
Research practice in Human Ecology
The researcher-researched relationship
Research priorities for a holistic world

With the study of human ecology becoming increasingly imperative, this comprehensive volume will be a valuable addition for classroom use.

Below the clamor of a bustling world, this volume imparts the seeds of a radical alternative for human ecology. They lie beneath the surface: amid the whispered voices at the margin, in the praxis of traditional spirituality, along the dusty road of post-modernism, and from the ivy halls of science. This is not the human ecology of a prehistoric fireside or an academic symposium. It is an unconventional and timely pedagogy of hope.
From the Foreword by Richard J. Borden, Rachel Carson Chair in Human Ecology, College of the Atlantic and Past-President/Executive Director, Society for Human Ecology

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Radical Human Ecology
Intercultural and Indigenous Approaches

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Foreword

This book has a clear and compelling aim: *hope!* This underlying message resonates in the voice of every contributor and throughout the entire volume – from beginning to end. Hope is always about the future. But the path we are on points increasingly towards a future of peril. If the world is to reclaim a path of hope – and a future that is hope-*full* – truly fundamental changes are needed. These are the kinds of insights that inspire this book, as well as the opening word of its title. In short, a radical reorientation *can* restore hope – through a deeply reflective and revitalized human ecological perspective.

Human ecology might be an unfamiliar phrase to some individuals. Others may see it as abstract or confusing. But for a growing number of people, it has become an unambiguous and unifying expression for the intersection of the two major realms in the living world. In the words of Paul Shepard – "the central problem of human ecology may be characterized as the relationship of the mind to nature."

The first human ecologists, in my opinion, were not scientists or scholars. They were storytellers. It is unlikely we will ever know how the art of telling stories began. Perhaps the primal roots, as some suggest, lie in imitative dance or rudimentary drawing. But one thing is certain. At some point, our forbearers began to develop an aptitude to symbolically encode remembered and imagined events. These mental representations also became shaped into vocalizations, capable of reproduction and meaningful exchange. Oral communication was a world-changing palette for binding human experience, memory and imagination.

The evolutionary threshold around this "second world," as Loren Eiseley called it, irrevocably transformed social and environmental relations. The mindscape of an interior consciousness liberated our ancestors from the ever-present moment. Time and space could be mentally transcended and endlessly refashioned within the crosscurrents of emotion, desire and buried intention. Those primeval images of the living world – and early human sense of their place in it – are lost forever in the mists of time. Nonetheless, the need to create and recreate life stories still dwells in the depth of our psyche. It may well be the enduring urge and perennial birthmark of the human condition.

In its present-day meaning, human ecology aims at comprehensive approaches to human-environment interactions. The scope of its domain is nearly boundless – from the emergence of humans on earth, across the here and now, and into the furthest reaches of our imaginable future. Its subject matter cannot be subdivided according to academic tradition. Its mandate is unequivocally broad and integrative, and thus demands a multiplicity of perspectives in search of connections among otherwise segregated ways.

Most of my professional life has been at the confluence of these streams of inquiry. The journey began in the late 1970s when I left a large research university to join the faculty of College of the Atlantic, a small private institution committed to the interdisciplinary study of human ecology. For two decades I served as the college's academic dean. In the early 1980s I joined a small group of scholars and practitioners in the creation of an international Society for Human Ecology. These roles have furnished countless occasions to explore and engage with diverse meanings of human ecology. The frame around human and ecological perspectives, as I have come to know them, stretches across rich terrain. A growing and substantial literature of human ecology can be found in libraries, yet at least as much comes directly from people working on this common project and sharing the pleasures of doing it.

My initial connection with this book dates back to the summer of 1984. I had just received a research grant to travel around Europe in search of other human ecology programs. My trip took me to a dozen European academic institutions, including the University of Edinburgh and the original site of the Centre for Human Ecology at 15 Buccleuch Place. I arrived, as I recall, unannounced. Ulrich Loening, the Centre's director, greeted me enthusiastically as a professional colleague; moreover, I was welcomed as his houseguest for several delightful days. My research, if that is the proper term, has been an ongoing *in situ* exploration of the history of these ideas ever since.

If human ecology does anything, it should strive to maintain the human dimensions of its own narrative. So it was a great pleasure when I was invited to read the chapter drafts and write these few lines of foreword. The authors of this volume have allowed themselves to become an unavoidable part of the story. Mixing personal anecdotes and self-reflections with scholarly content can be risky. But also, as anyone experienced with the give-and-take of small-group seminars knows, it is the most effective mode of teaching.

My initial duties as an academic dean were aimed at building a non-departmentalized, interdisciplinary program of human ecology. Longstanding academic traditions had carved reality into compartmentalized approaches to knowledge. The main challenge, at the time, was to figure out ways to arrange affairs so my colleagues might overcome their specialized backgrounds and work together in creative and collaborative ways. We could not divine, back there, what the forthcoming decades of post-modernism would bring to the equation. Between then and now, most academic disciplines have been reduced to baggy shadows of their former outlines. Along the way a new generation of critically minded scholars have repopulated the academy. Their interests and skills often appear discordant with a human ecological vision. A further set of epistemological and ontological challenges would also arise from a growing acknowledgement of traditional and sacred ways of knowing. These widely diverse strands, taken together, might well have further dissolved human ecology. Thankfully, this is not the case – as a careful reading of the chapters that follow will disclose.

Below the clamor of a bustling world, this volume imparts the seeds of a radical alternative for human ecology. They lie beneath the surface: amid the whispered voices at the margin, in the praxis of traditional spirituality, along the dusty road of post-modernism, and from the ivy halls of science. This is not the human ecology of a prehistoric fireside or an academic symposium. It is an unconventional and timely pedagogy of hope. The promise remains, I believe, as much as when Paul Shepard, a half-century ago, counseled that: "human ecology will be healthiest when it is running out in all directions."

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Past-President/Executive Director – Society for Human Ecology

Chapter 2
The Challenge of Radical Human Ecology to the Academy

Alastair McIntosh

> And only he can do this who is in love and at home with his subject – truly in love and fully at home – the love in which high intuition supplements knowledge.
>
> (Patrick Geddes, *Cities in Evolution*, 1915.)[1]

In this volume I make two linked contributions. Here, in my first chapter, I will share from 20 years' experience in teaching Human Ecology at postgraduate university level as a basis from which to explore the place of Human Ecology within the mainstream "Academy." By that I mean western universities in general. I will ask why it is that our discipline often sits uncomfortably alongside both the modernity and postmodernity of the contemporary Academy. My conclusion will be that Human Ecology is, in essence, a premodern approach. As such, it poses an ancient but fundamental challenge to the very structure of knowledge. It requires clarity about what our premises, or starting points in seeking knowledge are. Specifically, it presses us to address the question of whether the basis or our values are derived from a purely physical or materialistic grounding, or whether there is also an underpinning to our being human that might be called metaphysical or "spiritual."

My second chapter will be less theoretical and more applied. I will explore the implications that a psychospiritually aware "radical" Human Ecology can have for the conduct of advanced teaching in our field. Here I will explore some issues that arise with contemporary students as they seek to learn and carry out research that both recognises a metaphysical backdrop to physical reality, and yet, for the good of their own careers and effectiveness in today's largely secular world, can nevertheless stand its own as peer-reviewed published scholarship.

Epistemological Priorities: Terrestrial or Extra-terrestrial?

My demands on my reader in this chapter will be considerable. As befits off-road travel through an emergent field, I shall be shifting, not always smoothly, between personal experience and impersonal theory. To permit those who might not want to take this journey to dismount forthwith, here is a preview of the destination. My conclusion is that when Human Ecology becomes radical it invites us elementally to integrate our perception of Earth, as the *physical exteriority of reality*, with Spirit, as its *metaphysical interiority*. As such, our Human Ecology must be very grounded in the scientific physical basis of reality, but equally grounded in the metaphysics – the "behind," "beyond" or "transformed-from-within" physics of our deep humanity.

I use the word radical here in its etymological sense of *getting to the roots*. To become rooted, or grounded, means that we must consider the epistemology of Human Ecology. Epistemology is the study of what counts and does not count as authentic knowledge and also how that knowledge

1 Geddes 1915: 397.

is structured and represented. For my purposes I am going to look on epistemology as falling under three alternative worldviews or sets of experience and assumptions about reality. These are *the premodern*, which is predicated on the idea that "soul," "Spirit" or some construct of the "divine" is at the root of reality; *the modern*, which is predicated on logic or reason usually applied in ways that reduces the basis of reality down to materialistic formulations; and *the postmodern*, which is predicated on the idea that everything is relative (or relational) in a world where there are no ultimate predicates.

Richard Roberts summarises as follows in describing "the present confrontation" of "problematic interactions" between these three in the Academy (Roberts 2002: 222):

- *modernity* – "the dialectic of Enlightenment, communism, instrumental reason and European integration";
- *postmodernity* – "inaugurated by the progressive triumph of the market, fluidity of identities, the collapse of communism and the 'End of History'";
- and *premodernity* – "Christendom, tradition and the *ancien regime*,"

...to which, I would wish also to add, the spiritually-based worldviews of the ancients (Plato, Lao Tzu, the Hindu Vedas, the Hebrew prophets, and so on) and the majority of today's surviving indigenous peoples. As will become clear later, I also consider that the premodern gave rise to and is capable of containing what is useful within modern and postmodern thinking.

In today's dominant Anglo-American worldview modernity is the main paradigm that shapes intellectual culture and provides the academic backdrop against which Human Ecology must stake its claims. It is not my aim to try to demolish modernity. Nobody can deny the material gains that it has brought. But whether in all its breadth of knowledge it also has the necessary depth to nourish the human condition through the challenges we face is questionable. Modernity's own agenda shapes and arguably distorts the very scope of knowledge that it would purport to represent. Let me demonstrate by offering an example of how one leading international institution structures modern knowledge.

The home page of the website of the British Library proclaims itself to be the place to "Explore the world's knowledge." In universities in the United Kingdom it is standard practice for a thesis for the award of PhD – the highest university degree – to be submitted for public record to this library. That process requires a form to be completed (British Library 2010), the final page of which is a single A4 sheet headed "Subject Categories" by which the thesis is to be catalogued and given a code according to its field of knowledge. The sheet comprises four columns of small print. These list the main groupings of what the Library recognises as human knowledge in some 200 categories which are gathered under 20 major headings. For example, there are major headings for "Biological and medical sciences," for "Chemistry" and for "Physics." That seems fair enough, but there are also major headings (out of the mere 20 available) allocated respectively to "Aeronautics," "Military sciences," "Missile technology," "Navigation, communications, detection and countermeasures," "Ordnance," "Propulsion and fuels" and "Space technology." In other words, more than one third of the headings of what appears to count as significant knowledge relates to aero-space-military matters. In contrast, just one major heading covers the whole of "Humanities, psychology and social sciences," and within this, just one category, code numbered 05H, is afforded to the entire corpus of knowledge that gets lumped together as, "Philosophy; theology; religion."

At least there is humour in the listing. Because the headings are in alphabetical order "Space technology" comes last. Here there are seven categories, at the bottom of which, in the far right hand corner of the A4 sheet, is code 22F for "Extraterrestrial Exploration." Let us be clear of the

impression that this gives. The British Library appears to afford the same weight to "Philosophy; theology; religion" as it does to extraterrestrial affairs! Attention to technological detail has subsumed the space that might have been afforded to human depth. From a radical Human Ecological perspective one can only look at such a sheet and despair as to where our discipline might sit. How about 08D for geography? Or 05R for sociology? Or 06F for ecology? Or given the planetary predicament, the category that immediately follows ecology – 06G for "Escape, rescue, survival." But most of these would leave the radical Human Ecologist languishing in such long-thrashed and outworn debates as to whether Human Ecology is a subset of biology, sociology, or geography (for example, Quinn 1940). Entirely lacking from the British Library's current representation of knowledge is any sense of over-arching metadisciplinary knowledge or, indeed, of metaphysics – a word that does not even appear on its list. The closest fit for such realms might be 05H – "Philosophy; theology; religion" which, as a category, is grossly over-burdened. Into it must be compressed the entire corpus both premodern and postmodern philosophical thought, yet it lacks even the status of having a major heading under which such categories could be spread out. Meanwhile, "Ordnance," for example, gets a heading all to itself complete with nine categories including "Bombs" (19B), "Guns" (19F), "Rockets" (19G) and "Underwater ordnance" (19H).

This is just one example of how the modern utilitarian worldview crushes alternative representations of reality. At least in so doing it helps to focus our task. It suggests that radical Human Ecology has a key philosophical role to play in bringing the condition of the world to bear on the structure of knowledge. Our calling is to face up to the physical problems of the world – to climate change, war, resource depletion, and so on – but to re-ground them in metaphysics, including the values that lie behind technology, economics and politics. This is our task because we claim to practice *Human* Ecology. If mainstream epistemological structures are not user-friendly towards it, then we must think of our mission as being, in part, an epistemological project.

In what follows I do not want to devalue modernity with its emphasis on rationality and evidence-based knowledge. Neither do I wish to devalue the postmodern where its methodologies are used to challenge injustice, especially where it deconstructs oppressive constructions of race, gender and social class. But I do wish to challenge their respective hegemonies, and specifically their oft-shared presumption that they have somehow bettered the soulfulness of those ancient and indigenous worldviews to which I refer under the catch-all "premodern." Neither do I consider the call to soul-full-ness in scholarship to be special pleading. The premodern worldview would treat category 05H, "philosophy, theology and religion," as being the very root from which all other knowledge proceeds. Here we might recall that the highest degree that the Academy offers is the PhD – a "doctor" (from the Latin meaning teacher) in "philosophy" (from the Greek, *philo-Sophia*, a lover of the Goddess of Wisdom). It is those who have pulled the PhD away from such principles who have succeeded in special pleading. And what are we left with, not just in the British Library but across much of academia? We are left with the mechanisms of war privileged over the arts of life.

Human Ecology as an Indigenous Worldview

Before proceeding further I would like to invite consideration that what I am attempting to offer in this chapter comes from somewhere bigger than me as an individual. It is coming from a web of culture – out of a "we" more than an "I" – and later I will quote the Apache philosopher, Viola Cordova, in unpacking the epistemological significance of this "we." The ideas that I will put forward are consistent with what I think of as "the Scottish School of Human Ecology." This I see

as part of an implicit worldwide Indigenous School – one that takes its bearings from the perennial ensoulment of people and place. Some examples of that loosely constellated School are contributed elsewhere in this volume.

The principles of Human Ecology that follow have built up in my mind not just systematically, but just as importantly, impressionistically, poetically. They arise from a grounding that is cultural in the lives of the people in my land who have either been born with, or have come through adoption to acquire, footholds in its bioregionally bounded communities of place. Some of these people are figures of international repute; others are little known firth of their native soil.[2] What melds them into the semi-homogenous compost of a worldview that I would see as Human Ecology of the Scottish School is the essential relationship between people and their place, their ecology: the experience of being and/or becoming what the Isle of Lewis poet Iain Crichton Smith described as "real people in a real place" (Smith 1986).

Here we stand significantly, though not uniquely on a world stage, in the proverbial "metaphysical Scotland" (Davie 1986: i). We stand with a culture that is still capable of handling metaphysics in popular discourse. In the words of Professor J.F. Ferrier, the author of *Institutes of Metaphysic: the Theory of Knowing and Being* who, around 1854, introduced the word "epistemology" into the English language: "My philosophy is Scottish to the very core … a natural growth of old Scotland's soil" (Ferrier 1856: 12–13).

I can feel the wariness of some of my readers. The tack to which I am sailing sounds dangerously like "blood and soil." Actually, it is "soil and soul," which is very different, because soul is inclusive whereas blood is determinative and thereby lays the ground for xenophobia. My sail, however, is undeniably set to the *parochial*. My defence to that is, "Guilty as charged." This is about Human *Ecology*, and ecology must start with the ground on which we stand. The parochial is that which relates to the *parish*, from the Greek, *para-oikos*, "beside the household." *Ecology* shares the same root in *oikos*. As ecologists, we must dig from where we stand, but that does not mean we should remain stuck in a hole. Ultimately, our parish is the cosmos and so, as the pioneering Scottish Human Ecologist Patrick Geddes who greatly influenced Mumford is credited with saying, our place is to "Act local; think global." In a seminal work on town planning Geddes stated:

> "Local character" is thus no mere accidental old-world quaintness, as its mimics think and say. It is attained only in course of adequate grasp and treatment of the whole environment, and in active sympathy with the essential and characteristic life of the place concerned. Each place has a true personality. (Geddes 1915: 397)

2 Prejudiced by my own influences, I have in mind such figures as Calgacus (Pictish king recorded by Tacitus), Robert Burns (national bard and ploughman), Mrs Anne Grant of Laggan (collector of legends), John Stuart Blackie (classicist and land rights campaigner), Alexander Carmichael (collector of the *Carmina Gadelica*), Patrick Geddes (biologist and town planner), John Duncan (artist), Margaret MacDonald Mackintosh (artist), F. Marian McNeill (folklorist), Naomi Mitchison (historical novelist), Nan Shepherd (mountaineer and novelist), Lord Macleod of Fuinary (clergyman), Hugh MacDiarmid (bard and essayist), Frank Fraser Darling (ecologist), Hamish Henderson (songwriter and collector), Iain Crichton Smith (tradition bearer and essayist), Angus 'Ease' Macleod (crofter/farmer), Colin Macleod of the GalGael (urban community organiser) … and pushing through as grass into the era of the living … Masie Steven (political nutritionist), John MacInnes (tradition bearer and scholar), Bashir Maan (Muslim community leader), Donald Macleod (Free Church College principal), Ronald Black (ethnographer), Kenneth White (geopoetician), James Hunter (historian), Michael Northcott (theologian), Camille Dressler (activist/historian) and Margaret Bennett (tradition bearer and singer). These are only a tiny sampling, but to varying degrees embody the Human Ecological triune of soil, soul and society.

We can therefore, without contradiction, be very Scottish (or wherever else we might feel connection to) and very international,[3] because the capacity to be indigenous to a place is universal: it is founded on ecological principles. As such, the indigenous person, and also the deracinated person seeking re-indigenisation, can tread each step with respect and never be a stranger in the world. What doesn't work in either human or ecological terms is to treat the world as a globalised homogeneous market surface. That sees commodities but misses the cosmology. It is incapable of comprehending soul and where this spirit dominates within academia, it is doomed to self-deconstruction up the ivory tower. Radical Human Ecology therefore queries much of contemporary academia. With one eye fixed on the specifics of local people and places and the other, on the wide global context, it challenges the hubris of domineering mores and worldviews. The following case study illustrates.

Case Study: Scotland's Centre for Human Ecology

The history of Human Ecology within academe has mostly been one of small but inspirational centres run by individuals or tiny groups of people, often transiently so. Here is one such account told from a personally embodied perspective.

By 1990 I had reached my mid-thirties and was wondering how best to use the second half of life. I had worked in teaching, NGO management and appropriate technology both in Scotland and, for four years, in Papua New Guinea (PNG). Driving my work was a passion around poverty and human development. I remember asking a friend, "Why does poverty matter?" and being hit by the simplicity of her response: "Because it hurts."[4]

Having been raised in a relatively intact ecosystem on the Isle of Lewis in Scotland's Outer Hebrides I had not previously registered "the environment" as an especially pressing issue. But while working with organisations like the South Pacific Appropriate Technology Foundation and the Solomon Islands Development Trust I had come to see at first hand how the loggers, miners and industrial fishing companies can drive ecocide as they colonise indigenous peoples' territory.

I wanted better to understand these dynamics. I wanted to be able to analyse the global problematique more adequately, but also, to see more clearly where hope might lie for the human condition and our planetary future. Somebody told me about the Centre for Human Ecology (CHE) under the direction of a semi-retired molecular biologist, Dr Ulrich Loening. One afternoon in the summer of 1990 I speculatively walked through its door at 15 Buccleuch Place in Edinburgh University. Two hours later I came back out with a job. There was only a few weeks' part-time pay on the table, but with it came the opportunity to work with Ulrich and his circle in developing the first British MSc degree in Human Ecology.

The CHE had been founded in 1972, initially as The School of the Man-Made Future. It was set up by futures thinkers led by C.H. Waddington, an eminent English geneticist from a Quaker family background who was a founding member of the Club of Rome. Alexander King, the club's co-founder which, in 1972, received the hugely influential *Limits to Growth* report that it had commissioned, also had links to the CHE.[5] Just after I had started working there he advised me: "Human Ecology is like a tangled ball of sting. You pull on one loop, and find it connected to all

3 The exemplar of this is Hamish Henderson's Scots internationalist anthem, *The Freedom Come a' Ye* – http://www.dickgaughan.co.uk/songs/texts/freecaye.html (accessed 29 Apr 2010).

4 Pers. com. Kate O'Brien, Edinburgh, 1980s.

5 King was a guest lecturer at the CHE and his daughter, Jane King and her partner, Professor Malcolm Slesser, were both Honorary Fellows teaching and working in the CHE on a UNESCO-linked project that modelled energy and econometric aspects of ecological carrying capacity.

the rest." His response when I asked what advice he'd give to a fledgling Human Ecologist was: "Always keep a space on your desk clear, ready for whatever's coming up next."

Later I discovered that 15 Buccleuch Place was an auspicious address for heretical thinking. One hundred and twenty years previously a young English suffragist and medical student, Sophia Jex-Blake, had set up home there. She and six others were the first women to gain admittance to Edinburgh University's medical school. However, they were refused access to its "male" teaching facilities. Jex-Blake responded by converting part of 15 Buccleuch Place into a women's study centre and laboratory. After surpassing most of the men in examination grades they fully expected to graduate, but the university's patriarchy closed ranks and barred their progress. A cause celebre developed around the *septem contra Edinam* as they became known – the "seven against Edinburgh." Letters appeared in the *Times* and reports in *The British Medical Journal.* The university's Principal with his cabal of all-male professors stood firm, justifying their misogyny as being for "the maintenance of academical good order" (*BMJ* 1873).[6]

The women lost their case in the courts. Those who could went and graduated from more liberal Irish or continental universities. This allowed Jex-Blake, in 1874, to return to Britain and set up the London School of Medicine for Women. Later, after returning to Edinburgh and consistent with her concern for the poor, she opened a dispensary for women and children. The Bruntsfield Hospital as it was to become remained open until 1989, its fame augmented by the work of another pioneering physician of women's health, the much-loved Elsie Inglis.

Not until 1892 did women become legally empowered to graduate from Scottish universities. My own paternal grandmother, a classicist and historian, was one of the first to pass out of Edinburgh. Both her sons qualified from its medical school. It thrilled me to discover in Jex-Blake's biography that, "The house at 15 Buccleuch Place was a comfortable and cheerful meeting place for the women students" (Roberts 1993: 83). To the premodern mind to which I shall shortly turn, lineage and association somehow transmits blessing and legitimation. That "somehow" is in my view more poetic than genetic. It is an important qualification because it opens the way for connection through the heart and not just bloodline. As I read about Jex-Blake and her dogged determination, to borrow a line from Alice Walker, "to gather blossom under fire," I came to see her as a pioneering Human Ecologist – one of the mothers of our discipline. She lived by that gritty academic maxim, *illegitimi non carborundum.*[7] It was a quality that we too would need to inherit at 15 Buccleuch Place.

Human Ecology's Challenge to the System

What is Human Ecology? If wildflower ecology is the study of communities of wildflowers in relation to their environment, and mouse ecology studies mice, it follows that Human Ecology is the study of our own communities in relation to their environment. We have seen that that word, ecology, like economics, is rooted in the Greek *oikos* meaning household. Human Ecology in its widest sense therefore looks at the cosmologically sustained planet as the "household" in which we live.

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6 I was first alerted to the Jex-Blake connection by one of our students, the late Dr Bernard Kanis. Not all the professors were so boorish. Eliza Blackie, wife of J.S. Blackie, the Professor of Greek and champion of all matters Celtic, wrote to Jex-Blake after a protest dubbed the 'Surgeon's Hall riot' in November 1871, saying of her husband, 'I never saw him so hurt before ... He sat at tea-time shading his eyes, and saying quietly from time to time, "I am ashamed of my sex"' (Wallace 2006: 233).

7 'Don't let the bastards grind you down.'

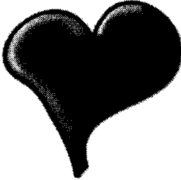
During academic term at the CHE we'd hold weekly guest lectures open to the city. These were followed by a shared meal round a library table that our MSc students and staff had lovingly crafted helped by the artisan skills of Tom Forsyth, a pioneer in rural community regeneration. The pulling power of Ulrich and his wife, Francesca, drew distinguished speakers. These included Edward Goldsmith (whose seminal book, *The Way*, was presaged in his CHE lecture), Norman Meyers, Wes Jackson, Vladimir Kolontai, Nicholas Polunin, Nicholas Guppy, James Lovelock and, before my time, Arne Naess, Hazel Henderson, Lord Carver, Lord Ritchie-Calder, George McRobie and Parkinson (of Parkinson's Law fame). Mischievously if a little clumsily I dubbed many of these the GNOMEs – the GraNd Old Men of human Ecology. But the madness had method. Theirs was generally a "man and the biosphere" narrative. It viewed Human Ecology in terms of *PRED* – a term associated with the United Nations documents for the interactions between *Population, Resources, Environment* and *Development*. It was an approach that was able to sit half-comfortably within the Faculty of Science and Engineering in which we were held by the university.

But more challenging perspectives were also emerging during the early 1990s – those I call radical Human Ecology in contrast to the safer confines of PRED. Other guest lecturers that Ulrich drew in included the "economic iconoclast" Hazel Henderson, Helena Norberg-Hodge with her Buddhist insights from Ladakh, Manfred Max-Neef with his pioneering work on fundamental human needs, Jacqueline Roddick on the human rights implications of environmental geopolitics, Jonathan Porritt as director of Friends of the Earth, and Darrell Posey with his advocacy of the cultural and spiritual values of indigenous peoples. These shifted our emphasis beyond the "hard" edges of PRED and towards "soft" insights from education, ecofeminism, post-colonial studies, ecopsychology, ecotheology and spirituality. Our aim was to offer students a course that integrated the 3-H's as advocated by Patrick Geddes – "head," "heart" and "hand" (Bordman 1978: 224 – and see my Figure 2.1).[8] But it was not to last.

I have elsewhere given my account of the events leading up to our closure (McIntosh 2001: 248–253). Suffice here to say that we lost powerful patronage when a supportive Principal retired and his equally supportive deputy suddenly passed away. The idea of "sustainable development" had been laid firmly on the international table by the Brundtland Commission in 1987. The 1992 Rio summit of the UN consolidated its recognition. Academic research councils then bolted it on to their funding criteria and I have often wondered if part of what happened is that, overnight, sustainability suddenly became too big a fish to leave in the artisan hands of the CHE. Add this to the controversial growing public profile of my own work on land reform, on taking on corporate power and on criticising in the press the UK government's 1993 white paper that mandated science to be more driven by market and military imperatives, and in 1996 we were closed down.

As this happened an international academic campaign rallied to our defence. A *New Scientist* leader of 4 May 1996 castigated the University as "a narrow kirk" and praised the CHE as standing for "a tradition of fearless inquiry." An entry in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature* by a leading sociologist of religion concluded "the role of the CHE as a pioneering organisation is indisputable; many of its original analytical insights and practices have become part of the widely distributed armoury of the informed environmental movement" (Roberts 2005). But what the university had attempted to kill off was a department of activists. Refusing execution, the former students and staff jumped over the wall and re-established the CHE as an independent academic

8 Here Geddes echoes the thought of the Swiss educationalist, Johann Pestalozzi (1746–1827). It might also be worth observing that Geddes undertook some of his most distinguished work in India where yoga – the path towards union with the Ultimate – has three principle strands: Jnana (the way of the mind – which we might see as "head"), Bhakti (the way of devotion – "heart") and Karma (the way of work – "hand").



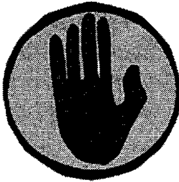


Figure 2.1 The 3 Hs of Patrick Geddes

organisation with its own legal status as a charitable company. The MSc degree was reopened 2000, initially accredited by the Open University and in 2005 we moved into a five-year partnersh with the Department of Geography and Sociology at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow.

At each transition the course was redesigned. In Edinburgh our rationale had been to offer t analytical framework of Human Ecology to people who had already established existing areas professional expertise. This was relatively conventional teaching. At the Open University, carri by the momentum that had saved the organisation, we focused more on activist training a deepening a psychospiritual analysis of the state of the world and how concerned individuals mig best respond. New courses were introduced such as Nonviolence, Ecopsychology and Spiritu Activism. At Strathclyde this shift was further strengthened with a move towards autonomo models of learning and participative enquiry. There was marked emphasis, led by Vérène Nicol and Nick Wilding, on the understanding and practice of what it could mean to be a learni community.

This era saw a rapid rise in concern about climate change during the build-up to the Copenhag 2009 dénouement. A number of our students in their private capacities lead risqué high profi climate change consciousness raising actions – scaling public buildings to drape banners, sit-ir blocking airport runways, and in the case of Dan Glass, sticking himself to Prime Minister Gord Brown's jacket when receiving a national environmental award, with the words, "I have superglu myself to your arm because you can run away from my arm but you can't run from climate chang (BBC 2008). It made for an edgy time with staff usually supportive but not always comfortable.

At the time of writing in late 2011 Strathclyde University has undergone major reorganisation. A number of departments including Geography and Sociology have been dissolved into larger administrative units to cut costs. To have renewed the CHE partnership under a different contract was possible but would have meant paying 70 percent of our students' fees in university overheads. This would have left insufficient to cover our costs and so the CHE has had to lay down the MSc programme and again move out on a limb. A new future is being explored by our former students now serving on the Board. They are asking, "given where it's all at, what next?" Has our institutional engine, forever running on empty over tricky terrain, finally bogged down? Or is it that the blossoms must once again be sought not in safety, close to the trunk, but blowing in the storm out on that limb? It is too early to say. What has happened is that the Board has chosen to relocate the library and our hand-made table – the symbolic hearth and heart of the CHE – to Govan, the former shipbuilding area of Glasgow and one of the most socially deprived urban areas in Europe. We wait to see whether a future role can spring from the taproot in such a place and at a time of severe economic recession.

The CHE has not been alone amongst institutes for Human Ecology in its struggle to honour life. The renowned programme at the Free University of Brussels (Vrije Universiteit Brussel) was unexpectedly closed down in 2009. Its staff were unable to say why except that the university had decided to change its priorities.[9] A long-running undergraduate degree at the University of Hull also hit the dust. There are similar examples worldwide. Everybody says, "Oh, but Human Ecology, it is so relevant to our times ..." But precisely because of that relevance it also stirs discomfort. My observation is that once a way of thinking and being moves beyond the relatively safe confines of PRED – population, resources, environment and development – it runs up against iceberg-like structures of money, power and epistemology which are largely invisible until struck.

Let me unpack these three – money, power and epistemology. First, on the money side, academia in Europe today values research over teaching. In the UK, student: staff ratios have roughly doubled in the past 30 years. I have colleagues who are told to subcontract their teaching work "because you're worth more to the university bringing in research grants than spending time with the students." I myself have been challenged: "Why do you give so much time to students when it's not going to help your career?" Such cynicism sits ill with Human Ecology. We tend to be more interested in people than in making a fetish – something to get over-excited about – of research. What we study is too broad to fit most research council pigeon holes. The very humanness of our ecology trips us up, especially when our construct of humanity goes beyond materialistic paradigms of "rational self-interest."

Second, on the power side, there is an unspoken compact in academia to hold social norms in place. Where these norms have become dysfunctional, and the ecological crisis is a potent indicator of such dysfunctionality, the messenger risks being shot for frightening the horses. Many climate change scientists experienced just this around the time of the UN's failed Copenhagen summit in December 2009. For example, after publishing some 200 peer-reviewed scientific papers Michael Mann in America has had what is widely seen as a politically-motivated lawsuit taken out against him claiming that his research has been a misuse of public funds (Mann 2010).

Human Ecology is generally safe enough when it sticks to PRED and serves as little more than human geography. But when it starts questioning the structures of society and consciousness, when it unpacks the psychospirituality of domination and consumerism, then it ruffles the feathers of power. This was why Patrick Geddes was marginalised in his time and earned the accolade, "a

9 Personal communication with Luc Hens (2009): Manchester: Society for Human Ecology conference.

most unsettling person" (Kitchen 1975). It was why Jex-Blake was seen off for "the maintenance of academical good order." The trouble with a diamond is that it shows up the dung heap.

The Challenge is Onto-Epistemological

Third, there is the epistemological challenge – what Human Ecology does to our framing of what constitutes knowledge. This shapes individual and social consciousness. It also has knock-on effects for ontology – for people's sense of being and what being human means. In my experience these onto-epistemological challenges are to:

- personal and social comfort zones partitioned by mostly unacknowledged privileges of social class, ethnicity and gender;
- the narrowness of disciplinary compartmentalisations of knowledge to the exclusion of generalist contextualisations;
- the fetishisation of research, and specifically, abstruse research when placed above the generosity of good teaching and a concern for useful knowledge;
- the inertia of institutional complicity in not confronting social power structures in order protect status and funding;
- underdevelopment of the "heart" (feeling/Bhakti) and the "hand" (action/Karma), where a scholar's recognition has, perhaps since his or her childhood, been achieved through the one-sided development of the "head" (thinking/Jnana), and hunkering down into the sheltered disciplinary hole of specialisation;
- unresolved personal psychodynamics which can be activated by exposure to the psychopathology of the global problematique – both within the Human Ecologist and, through transference and counter-transference with students and colleagues;
- the outward projection of unresolved "shadow" dynamics onto institutional authority structures and one another. These can find healthy working through in dynamic group interplay that aspires towards psychological honesty. They can also find unhealthy expression as organisational oedipal dynamics playing out as "parent-child" succession issues and "sibling" rivalries that can poison institutional protocols and relationships;
- the shared and balanced holding of being a scholarly community of contested discourses, when some of those discourses disproportionately shape the perception of the whole and thereby affect others in the community because they carry a high socio-political charge. An example would be how my work on land reform skewed perceptions of what CHE was about within Edinburgh University, implicating colleagues who did not share the concern to the same degree;
- and lastly, the challenge of what it means to be a human being – both in those academic contexts that privilege materialistic paradigms of meaning, and in a postmodern world that deconstructs all meaning – both sharing in common an enmity for the soul.

Jung noted, "The upheaval of our world and the upheaval of our consciousness are one and the same" (Jung 2008: 209–210). And as Goodman recognises in her contribution to this volume, "In Human Ecology terms … there is also a growing awareness that the problems and crises are interrelated because they have the same root cause: the almost totalizing dominance of the particular assumptions, worldview and social practices of the modern paradigm." The modern mind finds meaning in reason, progress and materiality. The postmodern deconstructs (or unpicks)

such meaning. We might say *that modernity still professes to believe in itself but postmodernity has lost even that faith.* What both usually have in common is their rationally predicated disregard for soul. In contrast to the post/modern as I will call both the modern and the postmodern together, premodern/indigenous worldviews see soul as central to all existence. The contrast is akin to an "unconformity" in the geological sense where young rocks have been thrust or laid down so as to rest directly on much older ones but with a massive discontinuity between the ages of the two. In our case, the lacuna in question represents a loss of connection and with it, a leakage of soul.

Why does this matter? Why is it an ecological issue? Drawing on Sanskritic scholarship the late Indian-Spanish cross-cultural scholar, Raimon Panikkar, sees it as a disarticulation from reality and therefore, a question of freedom.

> We are free when we are real, when we are in harmony with reality. The Sanskrit word for untruth or a lie implies a division or disorder: *anrta*, something that disturbs *rta*, the cosmic order ... "I am" insofar as I am real, insfar as I am truthful. This reality is more than what is disclosed by my senses and my rational life, it is Being. (Panikkar 2010: 78)

A radical regrounding of humanity must therefore call back Being, the soul, if it is to find harmony with ecology in its full cosmic depth – with the *rta*. The call is to a deeper authenticity. To explore ways forward let us further unpack our three main worldviews – the premodern, the modern and the postmodern.

Premodernity – The Ancient/Indigenous Holistic Worldview

I shall take *premodernity* to be a system in which physical reality is held to be inter-penetrated, or underpinned, by spiritual reality (Wink 1992). By "spiritual" I shall mean here the inner qualities of a person or thing such as comprise its *essence* – from the Latin *esse* – meaning Being.[10] To deny essence is therefore to deny the ultimacy and mystery of Being. Essence is the connection of all things to their grounding in deep reality. That does not need to imply a static understanding of deep reality. For example, in the creation myth of Genesis (1:2), it arises not from tablets of stone but from God's *Ruach* – a feminine noun for "breath of the nostrils," usually translated as "Spirit." For Aristotle, essence could be defined as "the substantial reality" of anything. It is, he said in *The Metaphysics*, what "cannot be reduced to another definition which is fuller in expression" (Aristotle 2001, 988a: 30–35 and 994b: 15–20).

As a spiritual essentialist worldview the premodern position is *metaphysical*. It posits the fullness of reality as extending "beyond" or "behind" the physical realm of sensory experience. To know reality, and to come into a more complete relationship with it, therefore entails a bottom line openness to discern that which gives life. This renders a statement such as "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God"[11] more than just a pious ditty. It is an epistemological proposition about how, and whether, we can glimpse deep reality, the root of essence. It is the

10 Spirituality can also be defined as the interconnection of all things through love made manifest. It is the reality of the divine, both as transcendent unity in eternity and as immanent multiplicity within the constraints of space and time. The spiritual is that which gives life at all levels of the meaning of "life".

These views can be derived in Hinduism from *The Upanishads* and *The Bhagavad Gita* (especially chapters 6–10), from the *Tao Te Ching*, and from parts of the Bible, such as the first chapter of John's gospel, which builds on the first chapter of Genesis.

11 Matthew 5:8.

spiritual equivalent of Heisenberg's principle: namely, the proposition that what can be observed is affected by the position of the observer.

The premodern worldview is mythopoetic. Myth gives rise to reality as poetic upwelling. The Greek *poesis* means "the making." To draw on the living metaphors of Genesis again, "God *said*: Let there be ..." (1:3) – in other words, "let emergence, or *poesis*, take place." In many traditions we therefore see that poetry, in the broad sense that includes myth, story, song and music, is the language of spirituality. It is poetry's divine passion that carries Truth. This may not be apparent in ordinary states of human consciousness. It requires the cultivation of spiritual perception. The consciousness researcher, Charles Tart, accordingly calls for "state specific sciences" and forms of communication that befit differing states of consciousness (Tart 1972). Just as outer worlds have different languages, so too have the mansions of inner space. Ontology cannot therefore be explored from a fixed position in the mind. It must be free to flow. The Human Ecologist cannot afford to treat this as an abstraction. It can be paradigmatic to the interpretation of reality. Shakespeare points to a metaphorical truth when, as nature goes crazy after the murder in *Macbeth* (Act 2.4), he has an old man say: "Thou seest the heavens, as troubled with man's act."

Such posited relationship between the inner and outer life suggests that to view *community* as the subject of Human Ecology requires a much deeper understanding of "community" than simply a synonym for society. Such community, of which ecology is the study, becomes a dance of the inner and the outer, the spiritual and the material, the metaphysical and the physical. Its fullness is the "church" as the Communion of the Saints (Christianity), the Ummah (Islam), or the Noble Sangha (Buddhism) in which all are parts of the whole. We are possessed of both our individuality and the ecology of our collectivity. This takes ontology very deep. As the Trappist monk Thomas Merton described it:

> Contrary to what has been thought in recent centuries in the West, the spiritual or interior life is not an exclusively private affair. In reality, the deepest and most authentic Western traditions are at one with those of the East on this point. The spiritual life of one person is simply the life of all manifesting in him ... [Thus] Gandhi's ... "spiritual life" was simply his participation in the life and *dharma* of his people. (Merton 1965: 6–7, his parentheses)

It is incorrect to think of the premodern as anachronistic. Not least, it continues to be the worldview of most indigenous peoples today. As Darrell Posey put it (just before his premature passing) in his introduction to the major volume that he edited on behalf of UNEP for the Global Biodiversity Assessment:

> Although conservation and management practices are highly pragmatic, indigenous and traditional peoples generally view this knowledge as emanating from a *spiritual* base. All creation is sacred, and the sacred and secular are inseparable. Spirituality is the highest form of consciousness, and spiritual consciousness is the highest form of awareness. In this sense, a dimension of traditional knowledge is not *local* knowledge, but knowledge of the *universal* as expressed in the local ... There is a complimentary relationship ... with the spiritual being more powerful than the material. The community is of the dead as well as the living. And in nature, behind visible objects lie essences, or powers, which constitute the true nature of those objects. (Posey 1999: 4, his emphasis)

Such essentialism is anathema equally to reductionist forms of modernity and to deconstructionist postmodernity. As Richard Twine (2001) puts it in *Ecofeminism Journal*, "It is worth bearing in mind that within academic writing the charge of essentialism is used in a very adversarial way,

as an allegation of the worst crime." Chaone Mallory notes, "the worries over essentialism cause more anxiety for academics living in ivory towers than for citizens living in trees!" (Mallory 2010). To some secular rationalist thinkers spiritual essentialism is the royal road to Nazism (Biehl 1991: 100–101), the logic being that because the Nazis used essentialist notions of German identity this means that all essentialism teeters on the edge of totalitarianism. Such thinking is as sloppy as it would be to blame surgeons for knife crime. The challenge that premodernism poses to post/modernity is therefore grave. It considers some of the most paradigmatic thrusts of post/modern thought – those which, in their arid materialism, deny the spiritual *esse* – to be violations of Being. That is not to suggest that they have not arrived at such positions for justifiable reasons – for example, the abuse of institutional religious power. But it is to side with MacIntyre (1997: 90) that "Religion needs not so much to be refuted as to be decoded."

Modernity – the Worldview of the Dominant Paradigm

In contrast to the foregoing, predicated on a sense of soul or animating Spirit, modernity grew out of the Renaissance and the Age of Reason. But increasingly since the medieval period the "reason" in question has not been that of the divine *Logos* of Greek or Christian scholastic philosophers. Rather, it is pedestrian human rationality, a function of the brain held in the conscious control of the ego and cognitively articulated through logic. This delivers what is seen as being "positive" knowledge because it works with statements that can be positively verified as true or false from the evidence of senses in the material world. "If you can't count it, it doesn't count."

Up to a point such empiricism is very welcome. It helps to fix our bearings in the material world and protects from the wacko ideas of cultic thinking. But militant materialists are not content with the qualification "up to a point." Their concern is to silence the spiritual bottom line of premodern discourse. As Dawkins put it in *The God Delusion*: "I am not attacking any particular version of God or gods. I am attacking God, all gods, anything and everything supernatural, wherever and whenever they have been or will be invented" (Dawkins 2007: 57). Such a statement would be considered hubristic by most ancient or indigenous peoples. They would suggest, "If you don't look, you won't see"; and they would enquire, "Have you looked? Have you *asked* to see?" To the premodern mind, the reductionist worldview is blind to alternative ways of knowing such as aesthetic sensibility, inner vision, intuition and mystical experience (which can be empirically studied). It has canonised reason alone, but a dwarfed reason that rattles around in the vacuum of its own echo chamber, imagining itself to have trumped the divine mystery.

Another example of the attempt to kill off spirituality is A.J. Ayer's seminal work, *Language, Truth and Logic*. The cover of the Pelican/Penguin edition describes this as "the original English manifesto of Logical Positivism ... the classic statement of this form of empiricist philosophy." The opening chapter is brazenly entitled, "The Elimination of Metaphysics." Ayer is perfectly happy to infer the nature of truth from such arid reductionist propositions as, "if p entails *q*, the meaning of *q* is contained in that of *p*" (Ayer 1971: 24). But as he sees it, "the utterances of the metaphysician who is attempting to expound a vision are literally senseless" – literally so, he thinks, "because they go beyond the limits of experience" (Ayer 1971: 61). Here Ayer implies that because his own experience is limited, others must argue from the same low common denominator.

In order to remain within his comfort zone Ayer has had to denigrate contesting worldviews. This is why he presses for the wholesale "elimination of metaphysics"; also why he goes as far as to advise his readers on ways "of attacking a metaphysician who claimed to have knowledge of a reality which transcended the phenomenal world." For Ayer the only valid realm of reality

is "the world of science and common sense" (Ayer 1971: 45). It does not seem to occur to him that the direct experience of, say, God, could be considered to be phenomenologically valid, and that if enough people, such as the mystics, claim to have had similar experiences, they could claim consensual validation of their reality – just like early explorers who, through consensual validation, gained acceptance for the existence of strange and distant lands that most people had never imagined.

The animus expressed by men like Ayer and Dawkins might be dismissed as an intellectual sideshow were it not that positivism, in its various forms, has utterly dominated Anglo-American universities during much of the twentieth century. Economics and specifically, "positive economics" with its claim to be value free is a pressing case in point. It has little to offer indigenous peoples or hard-pressed people in cities where poverty gnaws at joy, grows discoloured, stunted "poverty teeth," prematurely greys the hair, furrows young brows, and kills – I have in mind here where I live in Glasgow. Yet the situation is not without glimmers of hope. In 2009, following the collapse the previous year of the casino economy's virtual reality, the Nobel Prize in economics was awarded to Elinor Ostrom. Her work on the management of common resources attacks what she calls "the intellectual trap in relying entirely on models to provide the foundation for policy analysis ... with the false confidence of presumed omniscience" (Ostrom 1990: 215). Reason is essential in making sense of reality but we must not make of it a Procrustean iron bed.

Postmodernity – the Worldview of Nemesis

Postmodernity can be seen as a movement that developed out of the need to challenge power structures embedded in modernity. These include social constructions of progress, gender, ethnicity and social class that are held in place by little-examined presumptions that dominant groups make about their own rationality, entitlement, value neutrality and objectivity.

Postmodernity's primary tool – the "deconstruction" or unpacking of assumptions – is often attributed to Derrida, but goes back to the ancients. It includes the Socratic questioning method of Plato, and of Abraham and other prophets haggling over God's use, or abuse, of power.[12] It is notable that Derrida was born into a Jewish family where such deconstruction would have been culturally normal.

Postmodernism sees dominant systems of power as constellating themselves through powerful narratives or story lines. Lyotard surmised, "I define *postmodern* as incredulity towards metanarratives" (Lyotard 1986: xxiv). But left as it stands this simply pulls the Lego to bits and leaves it scattered over the nursery floor. Like modernists, some influential postmodernists get trapped in the solipsism – the circular self-referentality – of their own rationality because they cannot accept the possibility of ways of knowing that go beyond their own ego control and require opening up to the *Mythos* within which Logos itself sits (Panikkar 2010: 368–404).

At one intriguing juncture in his writings Derrida toys with the notion that, contrary to all else that he has talked about, justice might be undeconstructible. In a single paragraph that stirs

12 Genesis 18:16–13. Most translations render 18:22 as "... Abraham stood before the Lord" (KJV). But there is also an "ancient tradition," as the HarperCollins NRSV Study Bible calls it, which reads: "while the Lord remained standing before Abraham." In other words, Abraham holds ascendency in taking God to task (over the brutality of the intended destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah). In *Answer to Job* Carl Jung similarly sees Job's role as having been to call God to account. As the Lord's Prayer perhaps similarly says, "And lead us not into temptation" (Matthew 6:13). This begs consideration that humanity influences the moral evolution of the divine through relationship in time, and not just the other way around.

much excitement amongst some contemporary theologians (for example, Caputo 1993, 201–202 in Bruggueman 2000: 19) he speaks of "the undeconstructibility of justice." In his characteristically enigmatic manner he says: "Justice in itself, if such a thing exists, outside or beyond law, is not deconstructible. No more than deconstruction itself, if such a thing exists. Deconstruction is justice" (*La déconstruction est la justice*). But Derrida fails to develop this. He simply goes on to say, "I'm sure this isn't altogether clear; I hope, though I'm not sure of it, that it will become a little clearer in a moment" (Derrida 1989–1990: 945). It doesn't become any clearer. He just changes subject and airily breezes on. Exposed here is the flatulence of Derridean postmodernism.

Baudrillard helpfully shows how postmodern social norms are replacing honest-to-goodness reality with shifting shadow plays of simulation – what he calls "hypersimulation." Here reality is substituted for with an abstracted "hyperreality." Unlike both physical and metaphysical reality, hyperreality makes no claim to be "real." Such is the virtual reality that floods consciousness in much of the contemporary world – TV "reality" shows, computer games, fashions, twitters and tweats, and addictions that include, not least, the blandishments of insatiable consumerism. Accordingly, says Baudrillard (in Poster 1988: 166), "The territory no longer precedes the map, nor survives it. Henceforth, it is the map that precedes the territory ..." It could all seem like fun until one watches video clips of American soldiers in Iraq carrying out a real-life massacre as if it were an amusement arcade shoot-up (Wikileaks 2010).

Charlene Spretnak (1993) considers that postmodern philosophy has over-reached what is useful in deconstruction. The Lego is left scattered on the floor but with no sense of "grace" with which to constellate reconstruction. In a later work, *The Resurgence of the Real*, she attempts rapprochement. She proposes the "ecological postmodern" to try and bridge what is useful in postmodernism with the need also to acknowledge the realness of reality. "Nothing short of a broad and deep engagement with the real will do" she says (1999: 72). But is this yoking of ecology to postmodernism necessary, or even helpful? I would ask: does postmodern thought contain anything fundamental that cannot already be found in premodern thinkers who knew how to ask deconstructive questions?

These questions are not new to our discipline. The late Paul Shepard was a professor of Human Ecology whose research led him to the conclusion that modernity, for all its outer gains, has actually infantilised the capacity of many of us to be fully human and that this finds attenuated expression in postmodernity. Our humanity, Shephard reminds us, was what developed during 99 percent of our evolution (Shepard 1998). Postmodernity is less than skin deep. In critiquing a 1973 essay in *Science* that asked, "What's wrong with plastic trees?" Shepard responds:

> Plastic trees? They are more than a practical simulation. They are the message that the trees which they represent are themselves but surfaces ... acceptable configurations ... The philosophy of disengagement certifies whatever meanings we attach to these treelike forms – and to trees themselves. The vacuum of essential meaning implies that there really is no meaning. A highbrow wrecking crew confirms this from their own observations of reality – that is, of conflicting texts ... What, then, is the final reply to the subjective and aesthetic dandyism of our time? Given our immersion in text, who can claim to know reality?' (Shepard 1995: 18, 24–25)

As if in response to his own question he says:

> Derrida, Lyotard, and other deconstructionists have about them the smell of the coffeehouse, a world of ironic, patronising remoteness in which the search for generality and truth would be an embarrassment ... The loss of contact with nature, a biophilic deprivation, must lead to pathology.

> But other animal species, because they have no words to confuse themselves, are not so deluded. (Shepard 1995: vii)

I share Shepard's irritation. Several times at academic conferences I have been challenged in my atavistic premodernity by scholars who have protested, to quote one, that "nature is just a social construction of people who mostly live in cities." I suggested that if she really thought so, she might perhaps demonstrate her faith by deconstructing the glass in her hand and ceasing to drink such a "social construction" as water. To this she retorted, "But it rains on cities too!" I then proposed that to up the ante she might try, there and then, holding her breath … "because I don't think oxygen is photosynthesised from concrete in cities: it comes from wild nature far out across the land and sea." I added, "The country can survive without the city, but the city cannot survive without its rural hinterland." There was no reply to that one but she did keep breathing.

Such exchanges would be comic were they not so commonplace in ivory-tower academia. In a typology of such positions Demeritt shows that most postmodernists are more nuanced than the example I have just given. For many, an expression like "the social construction of nature" is just a generalised way of saying that humans have an impact on nature. Yet, as Bron Taylor at the University of Florida has remarked, "If so," by which he means, if such extreme examples are only a fringe academic position, "then how does one explain their progeny all over academia?"[13]

How indeed? Even such a respected ecologist as William Cronin (1995: 26) has, under the postmodern onslaught, felt pushed to enquire, "Can our concern for the environment survive our realisation that its authority flows as much from human values as from anything in nature that might ground those values?" And in her book about climate change the influential feminist theologian, Sallie McFague (2008: 123), amidst repeated deference to Derrida, states: "There is no untouched nature, no wilderness – even Antarctica is 'urbanised," that is, socially and historically constructed'.

Demeritt's literature review also offers examples of scholars who argue that the rainforests of the Pacific Northwest "are discursive constructions." He observes: "one of the most remarkable and politically influential examples of social construction-as-refutation is the effort by conservative ideologues in the USA to refute scientific theories of global warming as merely social constructions." Such deconstruction and deliberate reduction of natural realities to simulacra can have serious political impact. An example is Lisa Murkowski's effort to protect the oil companies from spillage liability. Testifying at a hearing on offshore energy production just months before Deepwater Horizon oilwell disaster in the Mexican Gulf, she told her fellow senators: "I had an opportunity to see what Shell is doing with the 4-D seismic technology, and *it's better than Disneyland*, in terms of how you can take technologies and go after a resource that is thousands of years old (*sic*), and do so in an environmentally sound way" (US Senate 2009: 50, my emphasis).

The hubris of such disconnection from reality attains its nemesis in Jean-Paul Sartre's seminal work, *Being and Nothingness*. In common with Shepard, I consider Sartre to be a postmodernist on account of his dismal deconstruction of what it means to be a human being. Sartre offers no quarter to real presence, to essence, Being, substance or soul. There exists, he says, only "the *nothingness* which is at the heart of man." We are but the ripples of "relection-reflecting." With a typical enigmatic twist that starts off appearing affirmative but turns nihilistic, he concludes: "Thus freedom is not a being; it is *the being* of man – that is, his nothingness of being" (Sartre 1969: 440–441).

13 Pers. com. by email with Bron Taylor, 2010.

From Sartre's position – at least in his seminal early writing – there can be no basis for meaningful relationship between human beings. He sees relationship, and specifically the relationship of a man with a woman, as a conceit. We enter into relationships at peril to our being. As he astonishingly puts it: "the obscenity of the feminine sex is that of everything which 'gapes open'" ... because she is "in the form of a hole." We cannot fault Sartre's explicitness. "The amorous act," he states, "is the castration of the man; but this is above all because sex is a hole ... It is with his flesh that the child stops up the hole and the hole ... is an obscene expectation, an appeal to all flesh" (Sartre 1969: 613–614).

Neither does Sartre leave any doubt that his attack is both physical and metaphysical. The book's culmination – the final three lines in the chapter immediately preceding the Conclusion – makes plain that his argument is with the notions of both "God" and "Man." He dismisses appeals to the transcendent as "Bad faith" – *mauvaise foi* – on account of the misplaced (as he sees it) hope in the possibility of having some sort of real relationship. As he sees it, there simply *is nothing* to relate to: "Thus the passion of man is the reverse of that of Christ, for man loses himself as man in order that God may be born. But the idea of God is contradictory and we lose ourselves in vain. *Man is a useless passion*" (Sartre 1969: 615).

I stress, again, that these lines are not peripheral: they are the conclusion of his argument. The preceding argument is no clearer. The aim appears to be to knock God into the moat and leave the individual in the splendid "existential" isolation of their garret. The overwhelming impression is one of negativity – that of the "useless passion" that I have here italicised. One might imagine Sartre aficionados nodding sagely at such a dénouement. One might ponder what their nod is to.

Violence and Cauterised Post/Modernity

I want to press to the core of this detachment of post/modernity from its premodern embedded ensoulment. Let us take Sartre further. To what might we attribute such an abject conclusion as that which I have just cited which, in its misogyny at least, most of his followers (though not all his biographers) conveniently overlook? Wherever I see nihilism I sense the smothering hand of violence. The post-colonial scholar, Robert Young observes, "It is significant that Sartre, Althusser, Derrida and Lyotard, among others, were all either born in Algeria or personally involved with the events of the war" (2004: 1). In addition, this was an entire generation of thinkers whose lives had been shaped by the trauma of one or both world wars. Those of us who might have escaped direct involvement have no cause to be smug in the criticisms we might make, but we do need to name the issues, and seek to understand, and to mend.

Violence is the antithesis of empathy; the violation of that which is sacred. It reduces reality to the mechanistic processing of dead logic. Neither is violence neutral in its effect on the mind or on the wider psyche of entire human eras and cultures. The root of the word, *viol* in French, means rape, and twice I have heard women who have been raped say of their assailant, "He took away my soul." As Human Ecologists we must ask whether violence, both direct and transmitted intergenerationally, has a similar effect on how our minds operate. Ginsberg using a poetic medium suggests that it does, and that it shaped the twentieth century. The opening line of his epic poem, *Howl*, reads: "I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked." He goes on to ask: "What sphinx of cement and aluminum bashed open their skulls and ate up their brains and imagination?" And he answers, invoking the Old Testament fire-filled idol, into which the children were sacrificed to seek economic prosperity: "Moloch! ... Boys sobbing in armies! Old men weeping in the parks!" (Ginsberg 1956: 9, 21).

Yolanda Gampel, an Israeli psychologist working with Holocaust victims and their descendents, suggests that extreme social violence disrupts a person's capacity for "articulation between internal and external worlds." She continues, it "can cause that individual to crumble due to internal and/ or external alienation or even to disappear (metaphorically or realistically)" (Gampel 2000: 48). It is precisely such *disarticulation*, often to the point of becoming inchoate, that characterises the writings of key postmodern scholars of such genre as Lyotard, Derrida and as we have been seeing, Sartre. Like farmyard geese with clipped wings they flap around in circles, able to peck, to deconstruct, but unable to welcome the grace of reconstruction. Like a disengaged gearbox their cognition turns but achieves no traction through to the wheels of reality. And so they honk, like Tonka toys, while the wild geese, the real geese, soar stratospheric overhead in an altogether other universe of discourse – in nature's real world of whispering music.

To play intellectual Sudoku as do key postmodern philosophers is all very well, but as Human Ecologists, engaged with what is biophysically and spiritually real and with very real threats to those realities: must we let ourselves be distracted? Where – we might ask of the deconstructionists – is the space for children in your world? Where, the passions of love in all its meaning? Where, the flowers, and the fishes, and the stars? And the honest-to-goodness lives of those, perhaps economically weaker than us, who labour in fields and factories to make the things we consume?

There is a video on YouTube of Derrida being asked by a woman called Amy to speak about love (Derrida 2007).

"Love or death?" he responds.

"Love, not death," Amy says. "We've heard enough about death."

"I have nothing to say about love," replies a nonplussed Derrida. "No, no, it's not possible. I have an empty head on love in general."

To indigenous peoples faced with the loss of their ecosystems, deconstruction is not an abstraction. To the Hopi, Derrida's uncentredness would be a paragon of *koyaanisquatsi* – "crazy life, life in turmoil, life out of balance, life disintegrating, a state of life that calls for another way of living."[14]

I have suggested that the roots of the modern and postmodern can be found in the immensity of the premodern. In our obsession to believe in progress we have overlooked this. I stress, it is not modern rationality or postmodern deconstruction in themselves that are the problems – they can be very great blessings. It is their deracination from the spiritual grounding, their denigration of root of essence that is the problem because it erodes the meaning of being human. I believe we can glimpse the origin of such hubris in Aristotle. Aristotle was not the mystic that Plato's Socrates was. His systems of logic and categorisation laid the tramlines for what was to become the modern, and out of it, as a reaction, the postmodern. In a revealing passage Aristotle says in the *Metaphysics*:

> When Socrates was occupying himself with the excellences of character … it was natural that [he] should be seeking the essence … "what a thing is" … for there was *as yet* none of the dialectical power which enables people *even without knowledge of the essence* to speculate about … inductive arguments and universal definition, both of which are concerned with the starting-point of science. (Aristotle 2001: 1078-b-25, my emphasis)[15]

14 According to Philip Glass's film by this name. I may be a little hard in my portrayal of Derrida here. He tries to get Amy to refine her question so as not to ask about love "in general". But even when she does, he still flaps about the farmyard and says nothing to touch the heart.

15 I have taken liberties with my ellipsis here in contracting a considerable portion of text, but I think what remains captures the essence of Aristotle's intent.

Here Aristotle does affirm essence; indeed, an alternative translation (Tredennick) has him state that "the starting-point of all logical reasoning is the essence." But he goes on to de-sacralise it. If his words are adequately reflected in the translations he appears here to render redundant the need to have direct "knowledge of the essence." Through "dialectical power" which comprises, we might reasonably assume, his own tools of reasoning, he reduces the essence to something that even those who lack experience are now placed in a position "to speculate about."

Superficially this might seem laudably democratic. But what has happened is that the process of coming to know has just been dumbed-down. The "heart" as the organ of spiritual perception has just been displaced by the "head." No longer need it be "thy will be done … blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God"[16] in a surrender, a lover's orgasmic yielding, to the transcendent. Instead, knowledge becomes a question of "my will be done" – the triumph of ambition (or will) over destiny (or Dharma). To the indigenous psyche this is, indeed, *koyaanisquatsi*. In "Good-bye Twilight" the twentieth century Scottish bard, Hugh MacDiarmid (1985: 1124–1126), testifies that we are witnessing …

> An obsession that does not allow of any very clear
> Spiritual vision or insight into the true inwardness of the thing
> That is the obsession … and promptly becomes
> Doped, drugged, besotted – my countrymen, even as you. …
>
> Because your sub-conscious nature, which, apparently,
> You know nothing about, is manipulating you from the start.
>
> Out of your melancholy moping, your impotence, Gaels,
> (You stir the heart, you think? … but surely
> One of the heart's main functions is to supply the brain!)

We might consider, then, that all Aristotle has achieved in the passage just quoted has been to set in train spurious legitimacy for intellectuals who don't actually get the point sufficiently to see that there is a point worth getting. Prometheus has stolen fire from the gods, which is useful, but it remains a theft of what might, had he or we waited, been given; and theft carries consequences. I think we might say that Plato had anticipated the theft as, indeed, he also anticipated Baudrillard's hypersimulation. He saw that the consequences of short-circuiting the path to knowledge is dilettantism. Near the end of the *Phaedrus* he warns about the downside of moving from an oral to a written culture of learning. Through Socrates he recounts the story of the divine king Thamus of Egypt to whom the idea of writing was proposed. Thamus saw that that this would shift the balance of learning from inner to outer experience. It would mean that students "will make use of various external signs, not of those forms which are within." This would equip them "not with truth, but with an appearance of wisdom." By it "they will seem to know much, but will in most respects be ignorant and unpleasant to live with … for they will have become wise in their own eyes, rather than truly so" (cited and discussed in Carey 2000: 69).

In his recent book, *The Shallows*, Nicholas Carr reviews the neruroscientific literature on Internet use. He highlights concerns that our brains are being "massively remodelled" because, "The cacophony of stimuli short-circuits both conscious and unconscious thought, preventing our minds from thinking either deeply or creatively. Our brains turn into simple signal-processing units,

16 Matthew 6:10; 5:8. Of course, Aristotle preceded Christ, but the principle transcends chronology.

shepherding information into consciousness and then back out again" (Carr 2010). Plato's point is corroborated and the nemesis, or at least, the shadow side of post/modernity is laid increasingly bare. In the absence of remedial measures we become trapped in wheels of colourless cognition. These may flatter the ego but they flatten the soul, reducing it to the farmyard flap. The idolatry in question is that of sidestepping divine Logos and making human reason, in all its limitations, a god. Cubism of the mind results – the intellectual equivalent of pornography – defined as sensation without the heart's engagement. Doubtless this was not Aristotle's intention. But it is his effect, and in the wider context of his arid approach to thought it maybe helps to explain why many Platonists find him important but dull.

Devoid of anchoring in essence beyond ego we move to an era where, as Francis Bacon is credited with saying, "knowledge is [outward] power." As Lewis Carroll showed:

> "When *I* use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less."
>
> "The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things."
>
> "The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master – that's all." (Carroll 1871)

Tradition portrays Humpty as an egg-head – a euphemism for an obsessive intellectual. When he falls off the wall "all the king's horses and all the king's men/couldn't put Humpty together again." For to deconstruct is easy; to reconstruct is quite another matter. To kill (or to be able to speak of death) is easy; to love is quite another matter. These two modes – creating and destroying – are not symmetrical in the depth of humanity that they require, and yet the nihilistic creates its own culture, its own norms and means of propagation and so, in common with many trauma psychologists, Yolanda Gampel stresses that violence propagates not only by direct contact, but indirectly by "radioactive identification." In this:

> … external reality enters the psychic apparatus without the individual having any control over its entry, implantation or effects … These unconscious remnants are internalised so that the individual identifies with them and their dehumanizing aspects. As time goes by, such individuals act out these identifications, which are alien to them, and/or transmit them to their children, who may act them out and even transmit them to the third generation. (Gampel 2000: 59)

These clinical observations increasingly find physiological corroboration from brain scan studies. Early childhood exposure to trauma can physically alter how the brain's wiring develops. Martin Teicher, who directs the Developmental Biopsychiatry Research Program at the McLean Hospital, an affiliate of the Harvard Medical School, surmises:

> Whether it comes in the form of physical, emotional or sexual trauma or through exposure to warfare, famine or pestilence, stress can set off a ripple of hormonal changes that permanently wire a child's brain to cope with a malevolent world … We hypothesize that adequate nurturing and the absence of intense early stress permits our brains to develop in a manner that is less aggressive and more emotionally stable, social, empathic and hemispherically integrated. We believe that this process enhances the ability of social animals to build more complex interpersonal structures and enables humans to better realise their creative potential. (Teicher 2002)

My question at the end of all this is as simple as some might find it offensive. How far is the post/modern condition a stunted epistemology, the seeds of which were set with certain strands of classical thought, but which germinated in the worldwide violence of rapid colonisation and war that has characterised modernity in the West? Civilisation is recent in the history of human evolution but war has always been its shadow side. War has always been the hard undercarriage of Empire. Could there be a problem here at Mission Control in the western psyche? Could we be touching on epistemological problems with which most western thought has not come to terms, but which the ecological crisis now presses on us globally as never before?[17] I consider that radical Human Ecology is an irritation to the Academy precisely because it raises such elephant-in-the-living-room questions, and does so, unlike most academic analysis, in ways that touch the viscerals of us all.

Calling Back the Soul

To many indigenous peoples the European worldview is damaging their way of life. V.F. Cordova, who was the first Native American woman to gain a university degree in philosophy, called it the philosophy of "Euroman." Euroman's problem is placing competitive individuality over the mutuality of relatedness. She offers this example:

> A professor points out to me my use of the term "we." "What do you think ... " she asks in a class on the philosophy of "time," and I reply, "We think ..." I reply that same way for each question: "We ... think ... say ... believe ..." She responds, "Who is this 'we' – there is only one of you sitting in that chair!" I am startled. I am assuming that she and the rest of the class are discussing views from a particular perspective – the Western perspective on space and time. I assume that they know that I am also speaking from a perspective – one that is unlike their own but not uniquely my own ... They, on the other hand, believe that they have no perspective, that their ... thoughts are unique to an individual. I believe, in contrast, that there are no self-made persons. There are only those who cannot (or refuse to) acknowledge their debts. (Cordova 2007: 122)

The difficulty for the post/modern western mind is that such debts can only be acknowledged (and relationship entered into) if they are accepted as having real substance. That would require a confession of being in a state of *koyaanisquatsi*. It would need to try and cultivate empathy, trusting that there is, indeed, an essential basis from which such empathy can proceed. That there is meaning that gives meaning to the meaning of meaning: and meaning that waits, perhaps, to be discovered empirically precisely because it is a function of the flow of what, at the risk of much button-pushing (but we are concerned here with Truth, not pussy-footing around) has been called God. Such a journey of exploration is a truly challenging task, for as the Russian artist, Kandinsky, wrote a century ago: "The nightmare of materialism, which has turned the life of the universe into an evil, useless game, is not yet past; it holds the awakening soul still in its grip" (Kandinsky 1977: 2). To awaken from anaesthesia transiently intensifies the pain.

In redress, the challenge to modernity is to re-ground reason in humility. As John Stuart Blackie said in his inaugural lecture to the chair of Greek at Edinburgh University: "Let us love the moderns, therefore, who are our familiar companions, wisely, but not too well" (1852, 9). The challenge to postmodernity is to bring to its critique the grace of reconstruction. That challenge

17 I explore the links between violence and worldview as a driver of consumerism at the cutting edge of climate change in McIntosh 2008.

is a grave one. It concerns nothing less than the resurgence of life and beauty into the world. These are not comfortable constructs to nihilistic forms of postmodernity. As the critic George Steiner has observed: "All good art and literature begin in immanence. But they do not stop there ... I have, therefore, cited some of those who know best: the poets, the artists. *I have found no deconstructionist among them*" (1989, 227, my emphasis).

Our illness is the loss of soul, and we must find the courage to call it back. Such radical Human Ecology is shamanic. I once heard a story about a Canadian First Nations band that had a terrible problem in their community with a young man riddled with *koyaanisquatsi*. He was causing so much harm and disruption that they'd reached their wits' end. They took him out in a boat, tied a rope round his waist, threw him overboard, and shouted: "Call back your soul ... or we will let go of the rope."

If we do not call back the soul we are as good as dead. Such is the challenge of radical human ecology to the Academy today. Life and death are set before us. Evidence for the reality or otherwise of both is there for us to examine. When all is said and done one question remains. Which do we choose? That is the distinctively human part. What follows on from there is ecology.

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Chapter 12
Teaching Radical Human Ecology in the Academy

Alastair McIntosh

We demand a scholarship with a large human soul and a pregnant social significance.

(J.S. Blackie, The Advancement of Learning in Scotland, 1855)[1]

In my earlier chapter in this volume I explored the challenge of radical Human Ecology to the Academy, by which I mean western universities generally. I distinguished between relatively "safe" Human Ecology as PRED – the study of the interactions between population, resources, environment and development, and "radical" Human Ecology which, in addition to taking on the imperatives of PRED, explores the *essence* of what it can mean to be fully human. This moves us beyond merely rational and materialistic analysis and into the further reaches of both the nature of reality and human nature. In this chapter I want to explore the teaching of such Human Ecology and especially the supervision of student research. The chapter will be descriptive more than theoretical, and will draw heavily from 20 years' personal experience of teaching the subject at postgraduate level in a range of academic institutions, especially as a sometime staff member, former director and a Fellow of Scotland's small and now-independent Centre for Human Ecology (CHE).

Human Ecologists often say that unforeseen twists in their career that have brought them to the discipline. It is as if we need the unexpected to throw us out of what the consciousness research psychologist Charles Tart calls "consensus trance reality." My colleagues and I have observed that our students, likewise, have typically come to us because they are on some journey in life that has thrown them out of the ordinary ambit of their careers. This is only to be expected on a planet that is undergoing ecocide and where war and injustice are rife. Under such circumstances any human being with passion and a conscience will want to use their life not just to get by and to seek pleasure, but also to make a contribution. As an approach to this, Human Ecology in its role of studying the global problematique draws in more than its fair share of stimulating, creative and altruistic students. In the same breath, it must also be acknowledged that it can also draw in more than its fair share of the ill-at-ease, opportunistic and sometimes, downright wacky. Good selection processes are necessary to try and ensure that a prospective student will be ready for the level of what the course offers. Even then, it has been our experience that strong teaching skills are needed with such potentially explosive energies to build a class dynamic that can handle psychological depth in ways that are supportive to both staff and the student group.

While this is true of all university courses it is particularly so in Human Ecology because we hit up against worldviews, which are the very framework of people's reality structures. When working with radical Human Ecology we engage constantly at levels both epistemological and ontological as distinct from the merely factual and analytic. We may operate on the watershed between the premodern worldview and the postmodern; between a spiritually informed take on reality and a purely rational/materialistic one. If we are to define Human Ecology as the study of human *communities* in relation to their ecosystems the question of whether or not the spiritual is "for real"

1 Blackie 1855, 10.

becomes pivotal. We have to ask, what is this idea of "community"? Is it just an expression of the "selfish gene," of disguised self-interest? Or is it something that transports us beyond individuality, beyond ego, and into a transpersonal realm of the greater good, even the greater "God"?[2] If being human actually means to be spiritually interconnected with one another and, as deep ecology suggests, connected at a psychic as well as the material level with the wider natural environment too, then love and its values become more than just an optional extra. As Walt Whitman puts it in his epic poem *Leaves of Grass* (1855), love becomes "a kelson of the creation" – the kelson (or keelson) being the inner keel of a boat that holds the ribs together. From such a vantage point our learning, as my quote above from Blackie suggests, develops a thrilling new perspective. It aspires to be *of large human soul and pregnant social significance.*

Such Human Ecology becomes far removed from any scholarly supposition of value neutrality. It becomes *Human Ecology with attitude.* Human Ecology bestowed of purpose and meaning, a pilgrimage through the groves of academe that open out into the fullness of life itself. But what might this mean for the student and teacher in the Academy's classroom? In this chapter I will share a highly personal view from my own experience. Much of what I say will suffer the weakness of being based on anecdote, albeit anecdote that, in sufficient quantity, tends towards becoming data. Much has been developed with my colleagues mainly at the CHE though I must stress that we are not always in agreement, our emphases vary, and I take personal responsibility for what is shared and represented here.

The Cycle of the CHE MSc Degree

It is not just the teacher of Human Ecology who will carry an implicit and/or explicit set of values with them. Merely to mention the term "Human Ecology" is enough to open up penetrating questions of values, assumptions and identity in many an aspiring student. Why? Because it is hard to get more fundamental than that which is "human," and of "ecology," as the study of the inter-relating life-support systems that comprise our terrestrial home. As such, "Human Ecology" is highly loaded; indeed, it is a depth-charge expression. You drop it in to a situation, it takes a while to sink down, then goes off with a spout that breaks the surface of consciousness.

The vigour of this epistemological depth charge is all the greater when dropped from out of a socially stratified world stuck within its own like-minded bubbles. Some students will not previously have had meaningful contexts from which to explore the bubble of their upbringing and alternate takes on reality. In this respect the framework offered by PRED is a good starting ground, but not one adequate for ongoing discovery. Often PRED-related issues will have triggered a student's initial interest. Equally often students could never quite have envisaged what they were letting themselves in for as the interconnections between seemingly disparate issues become clear. Until a person finds the courage to plunge it is hard to see what's underwater.

In the MSc courses that we have run at the CHE the study year has followed this broad pattern:

- an introductory week, getting to know one another, learning where people are at in their lives, sharing expectations, laying down group norms in anticipation of possible storms, and scoping what will be studied;

2 The Vatican has not missed this propensity within Human Ecology. Both John Paul II and Benedict XVI have mentioned it in encyclicals, for example, *Centesimus Annus* of 1991 which calls for "an authentic Human Ecology" to address the world's environmental problems.

- two semesters of core and option workshops or modules that cover Human Ecology in ways that could broadly be described as (a) *quantitative* – the scientific, factual state of the world, (b) *qualitative* – the philosophical and psychospiritual aspects of the human condition, and (c) *process* – the group dynamics, mutual support, collaboration and methodologies;
- a "field trip" or study tour to a community of place where Human Ecology can be explored in microcosm;
- a Masters thesis on a topic of the student's choice provided that it falls within the limits of staff supervisory and assessment capacity.

I have often observed that when new students embark their energetics, both individually and collectively, follow a sine curve life-cycle. They start off, during the induction period, on a rising wave of excitement. Many say "this is the kind of course I have always looked for." In addition to teaching participative and collaborative forms of inquiry my colleagues, especially Nick Wilding (who makes a chapter contribution to this book) and Vérène Nicolas, have specialised in building up a learning community. This is designed to aid study and to encourage students to reflect, both critically and appreciatively, on their motivations, assumptions, baggage, needs and capacity for service.

Enthusiasm swells during the first few weeks while they are exposed to "state of the world issues." Throughout this time the sharing of meals and holding of parties assumes an importance that

Figure 12.1 A CHE MSc student shared meal

"Work together; eat bread together" – Winstanley

goes beyond the purely social function and becomes pivotal to creating a co-learning community. As the course develops the "task" functions of learning (see Loening's chapter) are increasingly complemented with "process" that deepens reflection, relationship and integration. Participative epistemologies are introduced and strong affective bonds form. However, as this is happening, typically about six weeks into the teaching, two confounding dynamics start to emerge. One is that the realities of assignment deadlines and assessment loom and can subtly alter student-staff conviviality. A power differential, hitherto little noticed or even downplayed, becomes evident, especially to students who might be struggling to fit their studies in to complex lives. The other is that the seriousness of the global problematique provokes deep psychodynamic process in many people.

The latter dynamics can be difficult to field within a conventional university teaching framework. The personal becomes political. It is common to see oedipal transferences onto staff. Here a teacher psychologically becomes "Mum" or "Dad." In counter-transference staff members might respond unwittingly in kind. For example, when a student reacts in a childish manner to something I have found myself making the mistake of responding in a parental mode, thereby unintentionally amplifying the problem. Other psychodynamics are the projection of individual problems – the personal shadow – onto the group and the issues it is studying. These go unnoticed in more mainstream courses where space is not given to explore them. However, in radical Human Ecology their unpacking can be an important part of the learning dynamic because it is what needs to happen for a atudent not just to learn, but to grow.

The combination of pressure from assignments and a deepening sense of being personally troubled by seeing the full depth of the state of the world generally leads to a downward inflection of the sine curve of class energy after the initial honeymoon period. Depending on the students and their mix this may remain depressed for some months. Our teaching group at the CHE has learnt that the support given to students, both when laying the foundations at the start of their course and during its process, is crucial in determining how well they manage to work the challenges through in the long run. I have noticed three trajectories. The ideal is where a student looks over the precipice, can see that "this is going to be tough, but this is also what it means to face reality," and gets down to the task of engagement with the state of the world and their personal lives in the course of their studies. Others will look over the precipice and, in an honest estimate, reckon that the course is just not right for them and self-deselect, usually within the first week. A third category, of which we have been blessed with very few, is when the student sees the challenge, cannot face it but neither chooses to seek help or to withdraw. This can work through as "saboteur" energy in the class. Here an individual consciously or more probably, unconsciously blocks group depth by creating around themselves – perhaps by sarcastic humour, perhaps by moodiness or overt non-participation – an aura that keeps things shallow. One is reminded of the Islamic *Hadith*, an oral saying, that such scholars are "like a rock which has fallen into the mouth of a river: it neither drinks the water nor allows the water to pass to the crops" (Khalidi 2001: 165).

For staff, making time to support students in wrestling with their material can be easier said than done given the conflicting pressures of academic life. They have their own activist concerns to attend to, their own wrestling with the state of the world, and their own psychospiritual angst. Professional decorum places limits on how far they can share equally with students in a learning community that is truly one of equals. At the end of the day it can happen that a staff member has to face a student in an appeals tribunal in which communications may be rendered public under freedom of information provisions. Decorum is therefore forced upon us both for better and worse. Indeed, I suspect that one of the reasons why many courses in Human Ecology in other institutions remain grounded at the PRED level is that staff either lack the depth psychological

skills to be more radical, or they have correctly appraised that it would be more burdensome than they personally could sustain, or their institutions entertain.

In the CHE we have made it clear to students that we are there to support them as deeply as we are able, but we cannot pretend to be their therapists. If issues of a disturbing therapeutic nature come up, the university's official position is that students should be referred, in the first instance, to its student counselling service. In practice everybody knows that this is often a professional fig-leaf. Student counsellors are better equipped at dealing with broken love affairs and poor grades than with grief at the state of the planet, or shock at having pulled up and examined the roots of violence. We therefore urge our students from the outset to consider putting in place external forms of professional support. This in itself is problematic. Not to suggest it would, in the light of experience, be irresponsible. But to suggest it can feel like inviting problems that might otherwise not arise.

The bottom line is that we must teach what the students have come to study – that which is relevant to the global problematique. We teach to empower and there are ample past-student testimonies to the effectiveness of this, but we can never claim it will be a comfortable journey. More and more as time has gone on we have sought students who have already done some inner work on themselves and may therefore be forearmed, though this criterion does not appear amongst official university selection criteria. Sometimes, too, we have taken on students of whom we were very unsure, and who struggled with the course, and were hard work for the staff, but who have blossomed into paragons of insight, strength and effective work for change in the world. Other times we have had to lay down boundaries saying, in effect: "I will wash your feet, but you may not wipe your feet on me." In general, our MSc course has worked resoundingly well, and if my emphasis here is on the problems it is because our consciousness of these is what helps to make the rest a success.

As our CHE student year progresses and the milestones notch up, as assignments are handed in and feedback given, so the student energy cycle usually starts to climb again. Achievement channels energy back outwards. From its nadir point weighed down by the world's woes the sine curve moves back into the positive. Sometimes a student will say, "I've got to go and fix my shit before I can fix the world," but as a staff we try to respond, "Shit happens. Yours, mine and that of the world are of one nature. Fix yourself iteratively as you engage with the world." As the old Slim Whitman hit put it, "Do what you do do well." This is the praxis of action-reflection-action. It requires a head-heart-hand balance and also a balance between being, having, doing and interacting (that is, relating) such as the Chilean thinker, Manfred Max-Neef (1992), has drawn attention to in his seminal work on fundamental human needs.

We have learned that effective communication and cohesion between staff members is imperative. That doesn't mean we have to agree with one another – we often don't – but we do have to be mindful that if we fail to work in solidarity our own psychological debris can slip between the cracks and poison the students' water. The students' imperative of inner work is more easily avoided if the staff are not adequately doing theirs. At times this has been a challenge to us in the CHE because none of us are ever fully sorted. I can think of situations where my own buttons were vulnerable to being pressed by students and colleagues, my own counter-transferences evoked and my own patience worn thin, casting compassion into question. I can but apologise to those who might have felt burnt in consequence, but shit happens; what matters is how you shovel it.[3]

3 That expression is from the late Colin Macleod of Glasgow's GalGael Trust. Hermann Hesse's short story *The Poet* is a deep reflection on intense student-teacher oedipal dynamics. Available at: www.alastairmcintosh.com/general/resources/2008-Hesse-The-Poet.pdf [accessed: 7 June 2010].

Peer-Reviewed Proof of the Pudding

The greatest turning point at which our students typically feel their studies gelling and the sin wave of enthusiasm entering full resurgence is their main "field trip," usually two-thirds of the wa through the course. I have documented the process of one of these study tours elsewhere (McIntosl 1994). In recent years they have been to the Isle of Eigg where it is possible to get everywher on foot without the intervention of vehicles. It is also the island that pioneered community lan ownership through a process with which I was closely involved, bringing to the group dynamic CHE history that is respected within the community.

On Eigg, my colleagues who specialise in participative inquiry developed an approach wher students go out in pairs all over the island and volunteer for whatever might need doing witl local families. Typical work has involved weeding gardens, painting sheds, shearing sheep an sitting in a kitchen all day long drinking whisky. They come back and share from one another' experiences, enabling the group to weave a collaborative picture of the island's Human Ecology. A Iain Mackinnon, a former student/teacher (who contributes a chapter to this volume) has remarkec "When they arrived, they were all talking about the landscape. When they got back from th volunteering, they were all talking about the people."

Figure 12.2 Learning from "Professor" Tom Forsyth on a CHE field trip to Eigg

For many students this marks the point at which they realise they've really learned somethin special about how to "read" and integrate a place and its peoples. Local issues start falling int global context and vice versa. Such competence can be tremendously empowering. It is more tha

just the power of interpretation. It also carries with it the capacity to develop vision, including night vision into what are usually the unconscious psychodynamics that underlie social realities.

After the field trip comes the thesis stage, and when I supervise a student's thesis I like to see them not only follow their passion, but also to make themselves useful in ways that the wider world will value. They have received and now is the time to give. My preference is that they should not only write their thesis, but also publish their findings, usually with me as the second author, in a peer-reviewed scholarly journal. In such ways anything "alternative" about their approach proves itself by passing some sort of conventional muster. This is a good filter against wackiness and self-indulgence. It is an "objective" proof of the student's level of professional attainment that probably counts for more than any exam-board designated "distinction." It also helps me, as an academic with his own pressures to balance up, to maintain a satisfactory publications track record. Some examples of topics that have led or are leading to published output from my students include:

- a historical evaluation of the religious critique of usury;
- women, empowerment and regeneration on the Isle of Eigg;
- biodiversity management on Holy Island as a sacred natural site;
- the geopoetics and Human Ecology of the River Findhorn;
- the spirituality of urban regeneration and addiction recovery in Govan;
- the effects of boarding school on women landowners' psychology;
- the political theology of modern Scottish land reform;
- corporate social responsibility, meaning and transcendent experience;
- socioeconomic resilience on Lewis in the 1966 seamen's strike;
- intergenerational succession of indigenous "lost leaders" on Skye;
- climate change protest marches as contemporary pilgrimage.

The CHE now has some 150 past Masters level students. Their careers have followed a wide variety of paths including becoming community leaders, local authority strategists, rural developers, industry consultants, business executives, civil servants, professors, environmental lawyers, writers, professional musicians, artists, full-time parents, eco-builders, eco-centre managers, back-to-the-landers, allotment makers, a pioneer of organic fish farming and climate change activists facing jail on account of their protests. As stated in my earlier chapter, our MSc course has once again hit the institutional buffers due to a finance-driven reorganisation of the university that had been our host for the past five years.[4] The CHE, with a Board now comprised entirely of past students, has moved to one of the poorest parts of town. The title of first public event there spoke for itself: "Celebrating the spirit in post-industrial communities: An evening of stories, song and poetry exploring Govan's history and cultural legacy." It may be that the CHE will not survive, or it may be that it's time is only now emerging. Either way, by making it to 2012 we have survived for 40 years, which is more than most modern organisations that have had to run consistently on empty.

4 I wish to be clear that our relationship with Strathclyde University has been very positive. My visiting professorship in Human Ecology there has been renewed until 2013. The obstacles in our way were substantially financial against a wider background of severe cuts.

Spirituality in a Teaching Paradigm

Our CHE teaching team has comprised about a dozen people with a wide range of onto-epistemological viewpoints. Some embrace the modern secular worldview. Others have inclined towards the postmodern. My own approach, as explored in my earlier chapter, is premodern. There have been tensions at times between us in how these differences play out in organisational representation. At one painful point there was a major falling-out and split. Yet, we have mostly managed to keep the act together. We have recognised that ecology needs diversity, and it is healthy to view ourselves as what we like to call "a community of contested discourses." A comparison with my colleagues' chapters in this volume will confirm that we are close to one another but not clones.

My work has been more controversial than most because I have become increasingly explicit over the years that I consider spirituality to be central to what it means to be human. I would not be able to do my Human Ecology without honouring this and I use it in my public activism. This includes work on nonviolence with military staff colleges in the UK and abroad (McIntosh 2010), on Scottish land reform (Henneman and McIntosh 2009), and most recently, on sacred natural sites with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (forthcoming).

In order not to thrust spiritual paradigms on students for whom they may not be wanted I have elected, in recent years, to conduct my teaching as an optional module called "Spiritual Activism." Let me share what this means in Human Ecology. Serious activism for social or environmental change can be profoundly challenging to our endurance and values. We may face loss of income, denigration of status, dismissal, breaking-point burdens on intimate relationships and in some cases, imprisonment and the threat of death. In my time teaching we have had students who have faced all of these and even as I write I have been trying, unsuccessfully, to check on the well-being of one of our immensely courageous past students whose human rights activism as a journalist has affronted the generals who oppress her native land. Intense engagement can push an activist beyond normal ego boundaries. Here spiritual practice ceases to be a pastime and can become a survival necessity. Intriguingly, the military find the same, for example, General Sir Richard Dannatt who was, until 2009, head of the British Army has this to say of the spiritual imperative in battle:

> Core values establish a moral baseline, and maybe for many that's sufficient; but people have to ask themselves whether there should be a spiritual baseline as well. I think that's spiritual with a small "s" at this stage … I know when push comes to shove and the chips are down, and people are being taken to the limit, and people are being killed around them, most people are looking for something bigger than themselves. I think you need to have thought what that bigger thing is, so that when you find yourself in those sorts of circumstances, you known what you're turning to. (Handley: 2010)

For me, such experience renders it imperative that radical Human Ecology is grounded in ontology – the study of the nature of *being*. In my teaching I used a simplified model based on the work of C.G. Jung (Figure 12.1 – all figures from McIntosh 2008). It is paradigmatic to my approach to Human Ecology. In this the conscious ego rests, like a lighthouse, on the bedrock of deep Self, the soul. But between ego and Self is the psychological shadow – the repository of all that we have repressed and all that has never yet matured into conscious being. This "shadow" is where we do most of our cutting-edge work. It is the spiritual coal-face, often the place of suffering and conflict, but also the locus of self-realisation. Jungians therefore say that 90 percent of the shadow is gold dust. Failure to ground ego dynamics in the deep Self by recognising, and working on, the

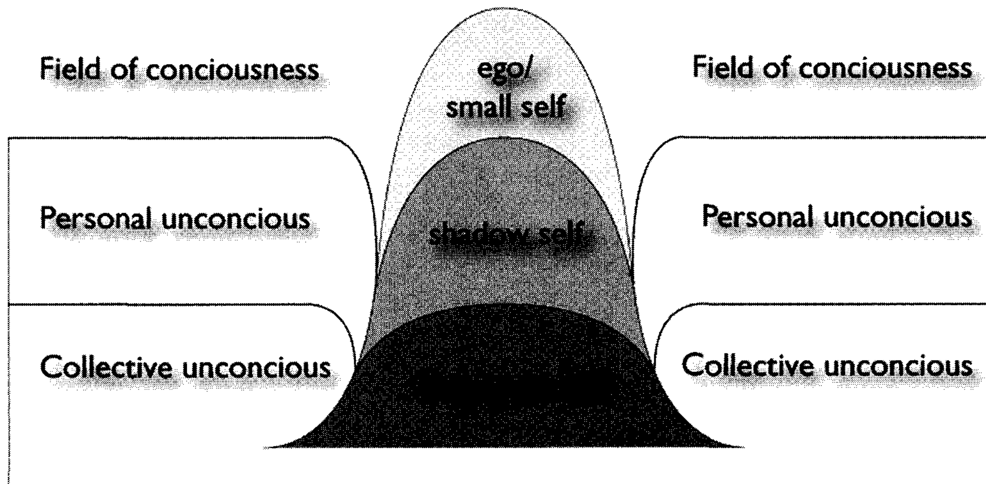

Figure 12.3 Structure of the psyche

shadow, is one of the main reason why right-on organisations are so often riddled with conflict. Spiritually speaking, the name of the game in life is to shift from being self-centred to becoming a more centred Self. This can make for an exciting start to the curriculum in radical Human Ecology. Shifting then from the personal to the transpersonal, the great Self can be imaged as a string of islands (Figure 12.2). Above the sea, at level of the ego or small self, we appear to one another to be separate entities. To compete with one another and even to be at war may, indeed, appear "rational" with such limited vision. But deep down we are joined through the bedrock of what it ultimately means to be community. Here, as England's metaphysical poet John Donne put it, "No man is an island, entire of itself." This is the basis of profound interconnection with one another and all things that is the spiritual basis of radical Human Ecology. It is a basis shared with deep ecology and with the mystical traditions in many of the world's great faiths. In the way that I develop the model, it is also the basis of *community* as the grounding of social and ecological activism. Implicit is the notion that community is not something that we choose to buy into, or to distance ourselves from. Community *is* the deep structure of reality. To work for, with and from the Human Ecological community is a question of alignment with reality. This can offer the activist very profound support because community, wherever it is authentic, is predicated on love.

In teaching this some students will reject my Jungian approach. They might prefer other models, such as those of Ken Wilber, or intellectual forms of Buddhism that treat the very idea of a "Self," capitalised or otherwise, as illusory. That is their prerogative, and in a liberal academic context the posing of any ontological approach is acceptable provided that it is well argued. What matters is not that students should buy into a particular worldview. What matters is that we open up language and territory in the mind by which to talk about ontology – what I call psychospiritual literacy – and in our activism, to engage, as Gandhi put it, with life as a series of "experiments with Truth."

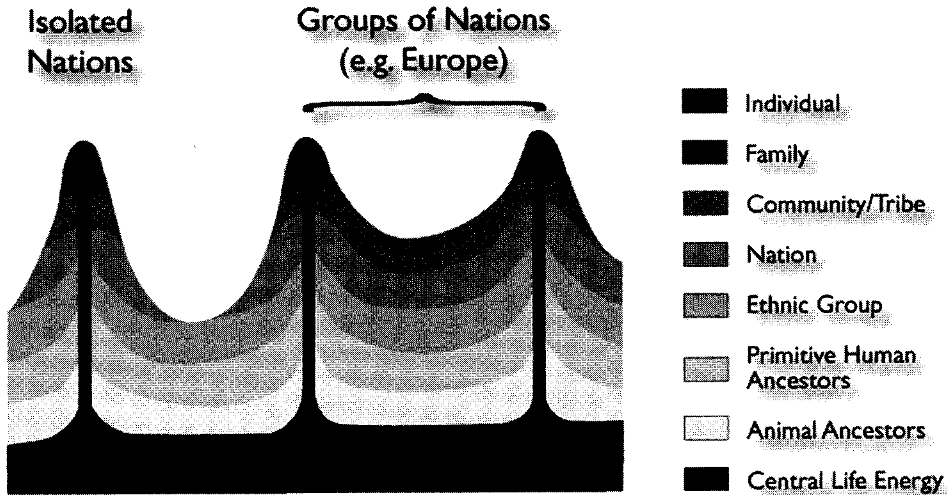

Figure 12.4 The transpersonal self

If we are to work with spirituality as a basis for our activism, and do so in an academic context, it is imperative that the notion of spirituality is subjected to critical discernment. If it were absent we would open ourselves to cultic dynamics as the shadow side of charisma. In my teaching this means two things. It means that we explore cults and charisma asking, for example, "How would you decide whether or not this class is a cult?" It also means looking at what passes as being spiritually valid. In this we draw not just on devotional material, but also on anthropological studies of mysticism and academic parapsychology. For example, a core text is *The Varieties of Anomalous Experience* from the American Psychological Association (Cardena, Lynn and Krippner 2000).

I love to drop surprising but profound sources into my teaching. One that I draw on frequently is the twelvth-century French-based Scottish scholastic theologian, Richard of St Victor. He proposed that our *modi visionum*, or ways of seeing reality, relates to three eyes (Panikkar 2006: 12–13; Zinn 1997: 29–30). By the *Oculus Carnis* – the Eye of the Flesh – we see the physical world. By the *Oculus Rationis* – the Eye of Reason – we see the mental world, and therefore, quite literally "see" (or are blind to) reason. And by the *Oculus Fidei* – the Eye of Faith or of the heart, the soul – we see spiritually. For Richard there was no contradiction between seeing reason and seeing spirituality. On the contrary, reason is a stepping stone to "faith" as the inner, metaphysical life. To me, the power of such material is that it invites consideration that just as a student learns to use reason in a university, so that can lead on to deeper ways of seeing, and this may nourish and help to sustain our activism in the world. Here the tension between the premodern and the post/modern worldviews that my other chapter explores starts to dissolve. Rationality is not anathema to a spiritual worldview. It is on a perceptual continuum with it, but *if we don't look we won't see.* The enemy of spirituality is not reason. It is materialism – the same as what is destroying the Earth

– and as Gerri Smyth valiantly says in her chapter in this volume, "I will no longer give permission for the materialists to marginalise our deepest source of wisdom."

What might be the "vocation" or calling of that wisdom? My touchstone is: "does this serve the poor or the broken in nature?" As the American spiritual teacher Ram Dass (Richard Alpert) puts it, "If in doubt what to do with your life, feed the hungry." The food in question is more than bread alone because the hunger that faces the world is multifaceted. It entails a call to restore community at the levels of belonging, identity, values and motivation. From applied work I have dreived what I call the Cycle of Belonging – a virtuous cycle that connects nature (our sense of place) with our identity (sense of who we are), our inner-life grounding (sense of values) and the motive force of responsibility (what we can do – Figure 12.3). Such responsibility is not something forced on us by others. Rather, it is the "ability to respond" – to be empowered, to be actively engaged in life, to be an "activist" in the deepest meanings of that word.

We might see from this model that the spirit of community can be strengthened by stimulating action at any point in the cycle. Similarly, breaking the links destroys it. This is the kind of conceptual framework that can be drawn from applied Human Ecology and applied to public policy. It leads me to some considerations of research methodology in working with students.

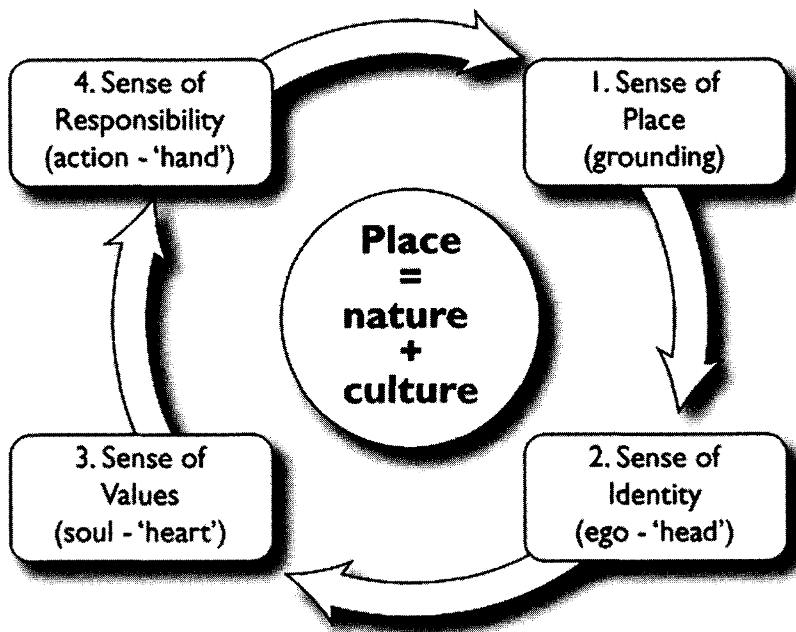

Figure 12.5 Building community responsibility

Research Methodology

As a starting point I expect my students to have a passion for what they want to do. If that enthusiasm is lacking – if they are merely time-servers seeking the kudos of a degree – then I find it hard to view them as authentic students. I expect that passion to have attitude, to be orientated in its values towards service of the poor or the broken in nature. This is not to suggest that other paradigms such as "research for research's sake" or research orientated towards the interests of the privileged is necessarily invalid. I am simply stating my values in what will motivate me to be their supervisor. Most students self-select in ways that welcome this. As an ethos it is consistent with the idea that knowledge is about more than monetary considerations. It values knowledge as something sacred. As Professor Adi Setia, a visiting Muslim scholar from Malaysia put it to me while I was writing this chapter, "To have knowledge is not enough to earn your living. To earn your living you must give service."

With my students I raise this point further by commencing the teaching of research methodology with this passage from T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*:

> And all shall be well
> All manner of thing shall be well
> By the purification of the motive
> In the ground of our beseeching.

Many students start off unclear about what they want to research. The purification of the motive can therefore be an immensely helpful process. What is it that they really seek in life? What is life? What do they see themselves as being about? What kindles their curiosity, and if in doubt, have they tried inwardly *asking*? Have they, to use Eliot's term, engaged in *beseechment*? It is surprising how many students get blocked with their initial choice of research topic because they took on what they thought they ought to do, and not what they really desired to do. I recall one student who set out to do a boring study of biodiversity for his thesis. He was so bored he couldn't get started on it. "What would you really desire to do if you could do anything at all?" I asked him. "Go to Africa and study the biodiversity and culture of the sacred groves," he replied. "Then how about you do that right here in Scotland with so-called faerie hills?" I suggested. His paper was published in an ecological journal and he is now a university teacher of anthropology.

A student's research may be quantitative or qualitative. Often there will be a mixture of both, but when working with human community it tends to be overwhelmingly qualitative. Here I have learned two hard lessons down the years. One concerns gathering the data, and the other, its processing.

Qualitative research usually involves students in getting out and interviewing people. Many of today's younger cohort of students lack confidence in this. They have developed their interpersonal skills in contexts that are much more socially and generationally stratified than was once upon a time the case. As such, they may be unsure how to get an interview flowing fluently and with depth. In hitting up against this problem I am not alone as a supervisor. Three years ago I was on holiday with Vérène in Co. Mayo, Ireland. We met an American academic who annually brings her students across the Atlantic. I cast a fly of a question and asked: "But what is it that they can they learn in Ireland that they wouldn't find back home in America?" She put her finger on it: "They learn how to have a conversation over the garden fence."

More than that, I have been forced to the conclusion that many urbanised modern people do not even know what "community" can really mean. I have found it necessary to teach this in order to

teach Human Ecology. Working from a Scottish perspective I make frequent use of Iain Crichton Smith's essay, *Real People in a Real Place* (Smith 1986), painful though it is in the intensity of its sense of recent loss. Also, the Orcadian writer, George Mackay Brown. For example:

> In a wholesome society the different estates are stitched together in a single garment: the warmth and comfort and well-being of the people, a symbol too of their identity and their ethos. Their language, their work, their customs, all they think and do and say, decide the style and cut of the coat. The simplest bit of social intercourse – a conversation at a cross-roads, the selling of a pig, a kiss in the darkness – puts in another stitch, does its bit in holding the tribe together and ensuring its survival. (Brown 1973:76)

We can see, then, that the depth of "presence" or "bearing" of the interviewer, their manner and even charisma, can be a huge determinant as to how an informant will respond and at what depth. Students need to understand this. Not least, it makes them more aware of where they're coming from. One person conducting an interview might think they've found the village idiot. Another will reveal a sage. The only differences are the bearing, skills and ability to see from within of the interviewer. Many years ago I took a group of students on a field trip to the Isle of Lewis where we met with Angus "Ease" Macleod, the founder of what is now the Scottish Crofting Federation serving the interests of traditional subsistence farmers. Unusually that year we had in the class some "sophisticated" city energy that enjoyed disparaging the rustic. As we sat drinking tea in Angus's home a young woman asked a deliberately silly question. He replied, "I'm sorry dear, you'll have to speak louder, I'm slightly deaf and not quite catching what you're saying."

The student repeated her question. This time the couple of her fellows who had tittered the first time sat po-faced. She was now out on a limb alone. Again Angus replied, "I'm sorry dear, *could you say it a bit louder.*"

The third repeat was embarrassing. "I'm so sorry dear," he smiled pleasantly, "I'm just not catching you at all. Next question please."

Angus had heard perfectly well the first time round but refused to entertain disrespect. It was a clash of cultures. He represented age, authority, patriarchy and the rural. She was youth, fun, feminism and the city. It was a fine demonstration that enquiry is never a neutral act. Indeed, if one tries to come over "value free" with indigenous people one will usually be mistrusted. Most indigenous people expect psychological honesty even if it discloses positions at loggerheads with their own. What the modern person often doesn't realise is that grassroots people are usually more psychologically attuned than they are. I have stood with villagers on my home Isle of Lewis as a new cohort of students have stepped off the minibus, and been treated to a running commentary that psychologically caricatured each one at just a first glance with stunning perspicacity. The modern person may think that fashion, perfumes, deodorants, cosmetics and style can successfully project an image. But the indigenous is alert to the deeper signals of body language, countenance, timbre of voice, gesture and even scent – sometimes, especially, body scent! Their perceptual acuity is the psychological equivalent of X-ray vision. The lesson to the researcher is plain: "Blessed are the pure of heart for they shall collect good data."

I am well aware that my critic may charge me with idealising indigenous peoples. Of course, many indigenous societies are today broken, and many in the past were harsh. But when people relate closely to the land, water and one another for their livelihoods and their spiritual experience it brings out a capacity to be real – to be "down to earth" and a "rough diamond" that can be qualities deficient in the deracinated voyeur. As the great folklore collector and friend of marginalised

peoples, Hamish Henderson of Edinburgh University once said: "The non-genuine person cannot believe that the genuine exists" (Neat 2009, 372).

In research there is no substitute for the purification of the motive of one's beseeching. This is why, if we are to be good researchers in Human Ecology, we might view our research as a spiritual path (Heron 1998). Refining motive, sense of service and authenticity as self-authorship is all. With it barriers of social class, race, gender and all their awkwardness fall away. Without it there is little hope and no point.

If data gathering is one big issue that I have picked up on in my teaching, the other is how students undertake their data processing.[5] Here, at the stage of organising and writing up what has been found, it is important not to let the methodological freedom that Human Ecology can grant trip students up. Slack rope is a danger on deck. Many times I have seen students fail to apply discipline to organising their data and get lost in a largely-autobiographical stream of consciousness passed off as "first person" or "auto-ethnographic" inquiry. This might be good therapy, indeed, it can be good initial learning, but it can be of questionable academic merit unless skilfully executed. Sometimes the acid test boils down to whether or not a piece of student work can pass muster with hard-bitten external examiners.

My own way of tackling what I would see as deficits in being organised is to recommend the methodology of grounded theory. I suggest to students that they briefly dip into Glasser and Strauss (1967) as the original methodological treatise in this field, but not to get stuck for very long there. The masters are of little help with the practicalities! Instead, I suggest that they use Bryman (2001) for a wide framing and a hands-on text such as Charmaz (2006) for the nuts-and-bolts specifics.

Grounded theory is an approach to data collection, organisation and analysis that builds a picture from the "ground" up. Typically, the researcher seeks out key informants, perhaps using initial contacts to "snowball" leads to further ones. Gradually, and mindful that "all is data" and therefore it's about more than just interviewing, a jigsaw-like picture emerges of what is being studied. The researcher seeks out patterns of meaning. Continued interviewing as the sample size widens gives an indication of validity and weighting to different themes. Usually the aim is not to study a statistically valid sample as this would usually require being too large for qualitative research. Instead, the researcher aims to achieve "data saturation." Here the addition of further interviewees yields sharply diminishing returns of new information. At such a juncture the researcher can feel justified in starting to draw tentative conclusions.

Ethnographic software packages can be used for analysis, but at MSc level I encourage a special package known as KISS. KISS can have various meanings but a nice way of putting it is, "Keep It Sweet and Simple." I recommend that they organise their material simply as a coded and sortable table in Word or Excel. This is the laptop equivalent of cutting up field notes and sorting them in piles on the bedsit floor. From here patterns of meaning and relationships between those patterns can be discerned. But there's the rub. How does one decide what counts as meaningful?

5 I am aware that some researchers reject the term "data" as implying a positivistic paradigm. In 2009 I asked Peter Reason about his strong views on this and what he would suggest instead. He suggested using the word "evidence". To me the difference is semantic and what matters most is what we serve in conducting research.

Discernment Methodology

The social science textbooks are singularly unhelpful on this question. For example, what I'm writing at this moment could be coded "research methodology" and sub-coded "data handling." But if we are to claim objectivity, what is to say that one type of utterance, or the utterance of one particular informant, merits more consideration than another? The textbook failure to answer such a question can leave the student thinking they should write up and code absolutely everything, sometimes to the point of micro-coding that can reduce analysis to a word-by-word level. But even at that degree of breaking things down, how is the student supposed to decide significance?

This question intrigues me at more than just the practical level. It raises the theoretical question that underlies all qualitative research. If the academic climate in which we move is "modern," dare anyone posit something that is not empirically quantified in a statistically valid manner such as might satisfy the positivists? And where the academic climate claims to be postmodern, especially in its deconstructive sense, dare anyone posit such an essentialist-predicated construct as *meaning*?

One might wonder whether anything concrete can be said about anything because, under postmodern theory as per Derrida, Lyotard, et al., it is hard to see how it can be. This is why the literary critic George Steiner gives his influential study of the postmodern condition, *Real Presences,* the subtitle, "Is there anything in what we say?" Steiner's answer is that his question forces us to a theological reference point. He says:

> Even within a domestic, secular genre, which is that of the modern novel, the great exemplars continue to ask, aloud or beneath their breath (as in Proust), the one question ineradicable in man: Is there or is there not God? Is there or is there not meaning to being?

To Steiner, the absence of any intimation or felt presence and language of the spiritual implies that "certain dimensions of thought and creativity are no longer attainable" (Steiner 1989, 220, 229). Under such conditions, art dies and nihilism wins. The soul – the very organ of attunement to beauty – withers in the abject (if contradictory) realisation of its own non-existence. As explored in my previous chapter, Sartre (1969, 615) therefore may or may not be right that "Man," like God, "is a useless passion." But if he is right, his own existentialism is equally a contradiction because nothing matters anyway.

Such considerations constantly call the radical Human Ecologist back to the central reference point of the essential; to the spiritual; to Steiner's question: "Is there or is there not…?" It forces us to ask where we stand if we are to seek meaning in what we research. It presses us to ask the backgrounding question, "What is the meaning that gives meaning to meaning?" To ask, too, whether we actually believe, like Sartre seemed to do, that reality is ultimately devoid of meaning? And if Sartre has become too passé, a more contemporary example might be Lady Gaga with such statements as: "It's not that I've been dishonest, it's just that I loathe reality..." (Rainbird, 2011). Is such the sorry nihilism at which we have arrived? Or is there, instead, a quality about knowledge, about the insistence on Truth with a capital T – its coherence, its tender faithfulness to the essence – that runs like fire from the sacred? For if we take the nihilistic view then nothing matters. All is loathsome. But if we can find the humble courage to reach towards the divine, simply to ask of life, then the world, and with it, our lives, become potentially transfigured.

My own prejudice or, as I should prefer to see it, experience, is a bias towards the sacred. As such, spiritual practice offers practical tools with which to draw out meaning. Earlier, in our discussion of what to research, we discussed the purification of the motive in the ground of beseeching. Now

let us explore what we do with the product of research – our data and do so through the paradigm that I propose for seeking meaning: namely, *discernment.*

The word "discern" originates from the Old French *discerner* which is rooted in the Latin, *discernere,* from *dis-* "off, away" and *cernere* "distinguish, separate, sift." To discern in the spiritual sense is therefore to refine or sift, as if seeking gold from gravel. I recommend to students that they start with their raw data – their interview tapes, diaries, observations, references, press clippings, or whatever – not by coding or even writing it all up, but by seeking out and writing up only what I call "indicative statements." These are chunks of material that actually or potentially convey *meaning.* Such a selective approach avoids having to type up whole interviews which can be mostly dross. Usually it is only necessary to write out the interesting components, the juicy bits, (though tapes and field notes should be kept for any subsequent use or verification). Once written out indicative statements can be coded according to what is found in them through discernment of its patterns. From these filaments a narrative can be woven and thus, the thesis comes into being as stories emerge and are told.

I see this process as being essentially poetic. It requires the mingling of fact with the researcher's imagination to arrange the components into a narratorial flow. Great natural scientists work with their imaginations. Why should more social scientists not comfortably acknowledge that they do likewise? Let me uncomfortably press the point. In George Bernard Shaw's play, *Saint Joan,* Joan of Arc is asked whether the instructions she hears from God are not just her imagination. She takes the bull by the horns and tells her interrogator, "Of course. That is how the messages of God come to us" (Shaw 1946: 81). Similarly, Richard of St Victor with his eyes of the flesh, reason and faith (or heart/soul) said: "Reason would never rise to the knowledge of invisible [that is, spiritual] things, unless her handmaid the imagination, were to represent to her the form of visible things ... For the outer sense alone perceives visible things and the eye of the heart alone, sees the invisible. The fleshy sense is wholly outward, the heart's sight is all inward" (in Kirchberger 1957: 83).

I am suggesting that the reason why social research scientists find it difficult to talk about meaning is that they are reluctant to acknowledge this go-between role of imagination. Imagination is not to be confused with the imaginary or delusion. This is not about make-believe or "anything goes." Rather, we are talking about the ability to perceive the *meta* that lies behind the physics. To gather data is a function of the first eye – that of the flesh in its various metaphorical forms. To sort it quantitatively and cognitively is a function of the second eye, of reason. But to select, organise and represent it according to what comes through as *meaning* requires a higher epistemology – the heart's eye – reason raised to the spiritual realm of Logos. In its capacity to discern higher pattern this function is essentially poetic. It refutes Aristotle, as discussed in my previous chapter and sides with Socrates and King Thamus's insistence on knowledge "of those forms which are within." It requires knowledge of the essence and this is what renders knowledge "sacred."

The Real University, the Free University

Here prose has nearly exhausted me as surely as it has, no doubt, my patient reader. Thank you for staying with me in this sharing. I have found it surprisingly difficult in these two chapters in this volume to articulate adequately my take on Human Ecology; indeed, on philosophy in general which is the wider intellectual backdrop to the discussion. In attempting to hold up a mirror to my own understanding I have become only too aware of the shortcomings in intelligence, practice and grasp on my subject. My reader will discern these with their criticism, and if they are sympathetic infill with their imagination.

In acknowledging these failings I think of the Epilogue with which the great Hindu-Christian scholar, Raimon Panikkar, concludes *The Rhythm of Being: The Gifford Lectures*, published just before his passing in 2010. Back in 1990 when I was just beginning my involvement with the CHE, I helped along with Scottish churches and development agencies to organise a conference here in Govan in Glasgow called "No Life Without Roots." Panikkarji was a keynote speaker. He had recently delivered the Gifford Lectures in natural theology at Edinburgh University. What he said that day in Govan's Pearce Institute (to which the CHE has recently moved its base) had a formative influence on my subsequent Human Ecology.

Panikkar's *Epilogue* to his valedictory tome explains why it took him so long to get round to publishing. He confesses, "Led by the enthusiasm aroused by the Gifford Lectures in 1989, I imagined I could tackle a subject that proved to transcend the powers of my intellect" (Panikkar 2010: 405). He describes how he had found himself consistently defeated in his attempts to write what was intended to have been the book's final chapter. Its working title was "The Survival of Being." Eventually, to get the book out, he was forced to omit it. His explanation witnesses to the stature of the man:

> The Tree of Knowledge again and again tempts one at the cost of neglecting the more important tree, the Tree of Life. How can human thinking grasp the destiny of life itself, when we are not its owners? This is my humble conclusion to much presumptuous research. It has taken me 20 years to admit this, and I apologize.

I have felt a similar inadequacy with my contributions in this volume. In this I am not alone amongst either my fellow editors or those who have painstakingly contributed. It is a shortfall that raises the question of the Human Ecologist's relationship to depth of learning through time. Some of our discussions within the CHE over the years have led us to note the short temporal wavelength of most modern learning. For example, degree courses that last a few years at most, and are more and more concerned with tick-the-box training than with stimulating education, especially self-directed education. Against such utilitarian superficiality we might contrast the long temporal wavelength of indigenous ways of learning. Often the mellow pace of this entails what Ivan Illich has called "vernacular" learning because most of it happens in the natural course of real-life contexts, like learning one's vernacular tongue without having to be "schooled" (Illich 1981).

In *The Conquest of Gaul* Julius Caesar (2003: 140–143) says that although the Druids were literate, they refused to write down their lore – an interesting point, not just for its parallels with King Thamus of Egypt, but also, because keeping things oral kept them in the community, thereby militating against holding secrets that could be locked away on paper in a lawyer's safe for elite access only. Caesar also informs us that such a Druidic education required up to 20 years. Similarly, within the Scottish bardic tradition it is said that a piper is seven years in the learning, seven years in the practising, seven years playing … "and then there is the poetry." In both instances we see the notion that real education takes the best part of a generation – about a third of a lifetime. Given the depth of what our world and the human condition faces, could there be a lesson for us here? Should we be directing our efforts not just towards short wave education, but simultaneously – for both are necessary – on the deep learning trajectory of the long wave? Panikkar's close-to-deathbed realisation was that his "curriculum" was too big to fit a lifetime. Aquinas similarly said on the morning of his passing in 1274, "I can do no more. Such secrets have been revealed to me that all I have written now appears of little value." These are great realisations. They set an agenda that is for more than just "lifelong learning." It is also learning for life and with it the need for the "university" to be where courses are offered in living.

Within circles such as the CHE and the GalGael Trust in Govan,[6] similar reflection is deepening our sense of seeking to be "communities of practice" that can cultivate such long wave skills as eldership and mentoring. These look like being more and more necessary if we are to hold fast to working for a transformed world and yet neither sell out nor burn out in the face of multiple discouragements.

In this some of us are drawn to a sense of being implicitly part of the perennial "Free University," the university without walls; indeed, back to the very "idea of a university" (to borrow Newman's phrase). In these turbulent times we find strange company. Just a year ago I was exhilarated when Professor Geoffrey Boulton, vice principal of Edinburgh University (which once evicted the CHE for being too troublesome) sent me a warm personal note with a copy of a paper he had co-authored with the former Vice Chancellor of Oxford University, published by the League of European Research Universities. Entitled "What are universities for?" it opens with a quote from Cardinal Newman about the need to consult the "living voice" in creating a "pure and clear atmosphere of thought" so that "the student also breathes."

The authors condemn the hegemony of market-driven managerialism that is "squeezing out diversity of function and undermining teaching and learning." They endorse the study of "what it means to be human: the stories, the ideas, the words that help us to make sense of our lives and the world we live in." And radically, they advocate "political boldness ... the freedom to enquire, to debate, to criticise and to speak truth to power" because "An easily governed university is no university at all" (Boulton and Lucas: 2008).

Through his Platonic character Phaedrus in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* Robert Pirsig expresses what a university is and is not, as follows (Pirsig 1976: 142–144). Here he writes of "reason" not in its narrow sense, but in a manner more akin to the transcendent qualities of Logos, or Dharma – the unfolding through time of the cosmic patterning of reality.

> The real University, he [Phaedrus] said, has no specific location. It owns no property, pays no salaries and receives no material dues. The real University is a state of mind ... nothing less than the continuing body of reason itself ...
>
> In addition ... there's a legal entity which is unfortunately called by the same name but which is quite another thing. This is the nonprofit corporation, a branch of the state with a specific address. It owns property, is capable of paying salaries, of receiving money and of responding to legislative pressures in the process. But this second university, the legal corporation, cannot teach, does not generate new knowledge or evaluate ideas. It is not the real University at all. It is just a church building, the setting, the location at which conditions have been made favourable for the real church to exist.
>
> Confusion continually occurs in people who fail to see the difference, he said, and think that control of the church buildings implies control of the church. They see professors as employees of the second university who should abandon reason when told to and take orders with no backtalk, the same way employees do in other corporations. They see the second university, but fail to see the first ...

6 www.che.ac.uk and www.galgael.org/ and www.GovanFolkUniversity.org

> A true minister, in such situations, must act as though he'd never heard the threats. His primary goal isn't to serve the members of the community, but always God. The primary goal of the Church of Reason, Phaedrus said, is always Socrates' old goal of truth, in its ever changing forms ...

We stand here on the boundary of reason and its deeper context. That context is, as Panikkar repeatedly shows, and Pirsig's books also explore, the Mythos – the imaginal realm of mythopoesis; the upwelling of deep story as reality made manifest. It is the place of the singing into being of the world that is the realm of the bard or shaman, fulfilling the "essential role in the defence of the psychic integrity of the community (Eliade 1989: 509). 'Here," says Eliot in *Four Quartets* (1959: 51, 55), is the "intersection of the timeless moment/ Is England and nowhere. Never and always/ ... that refining fire/ Where you must move in measure, like a dancer."

My appeal in these two papers (and with my fellow editors, in the Afterword to this volume) is simple. It is not to marginalise reason and its gifts of science; neither to denigrate what is useful in deconstruction. It is simply to ground these approaches in the dance, the essence, the reality which has always been there and comprises, therefore, the premodern bedrock known alike to the ancients and to many present-day indigenous peoples. I believe this to be the imperative of our times and the importance of Human Ecology.

I end with a passage that demonstrates the discernment of pattern and thus, meaning. It is by the contemporary Scottish poet, Kenneth White, founder of the International Institute of Geopoetics who presents his idea of geopoetics as opening new culture-space at the meeting point of poetry and geography (White 2004). These lines are the final section of the long poem "Walking the Coast" in his collection *Open World* (2003: 127). I use them when teaching research and specifically, the basis of discernment methodology. I also use them when hinting at a larger sense of life.

for the question is always
how
out of all the chances and changes
to select
the features of real significance
so as to make
of the welter
a world that will last
and how to order
the signs and symbols
so they will continue
to form new patterns
developing into
new harmonic wholes
so to keep life alive
in complexity
and complicity
with all of being -
there is only poetry

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Editors' Afterword:
A Research Agenda for Human Ecology

Writing in 1934[1], H.G. Wells, one of the greatest science fiction writers and futures thinkers of the twentieth century, noted that if he 'belonged to the now rapidly vanishing class of benevolent multi-millionaires' he would create 'a number of chairs for the teaching of an old subject in a new spirit'. He confesses, 'It took me some years to grasp the magnitude of my own realization', but that, 'sooner or later Human Ecology under some name or other, will win its way to academic recognition and to its proper place in general education'.

Pressing his point as the storm clouds were moving into place for World War II, he said:

> I declare that the greatest present dangers to the human race are these governess-trained brains which apparently monopolize the Foreign Offices of the World, which cannot see human affairs in any other light than as a play between the vast childish abstractions we call nations. There are people who say the causes of war, nowadays at least, are economic. They are nothing so rational. They are hallucinatory. Men like Grey, Curzon and Tyrrell present a fine big appearance to the world, but the bare truth is that they are, by education and by force of uncritical acceptance, infantile defectives, who ought to be either referred back to a study of the elements of Human Ecology or certified and secluded as damaged minds incapable of managing public affairs.

A scan through today's leading Human Ecology journals shows that much of our discipline has yet to make that leap beyond purely rational analysis. Most of the published articles engage with human *circumstance* – with its geography, sociology, anthropology and biology – but few wrestle with the human *condition* – an endeavour that requires engagement not just with reason, but also with the heart as a way of knowing.

At first glance Wells' words may indeed seem 80 years out of date, at least to those who take their bearings from the mores of advanced modernity. But most indigenous and traditional peoples, fixed on reference points more human and ecological, would consider otherwise. The governess may have mostly had her day, but the child-rearing practices and the values embedded of the rich and powerful continue to impact life on Earth in ways consistent with 'infantile defectives' and 'damaged minds'. Today, it is less 'the vast childish abstractions we call nations' wielding power than the simulacra of corporations created to stimulate wants more than to satisfy real needs. As was seen at the UN's summit on climate change in Copenhagen in 2009, even the most powerful national leaders in the world proved powerless, or disempowered, to curb the drivers of climate change.

Infantilism of and damage to the mind is of the essence here. Corporate marketing taps into such primal drivers of behaviour as love, fear, sex, hope, anxiety, guilt, pride and insecurity. Instead of maturing in our relationship to such emotions, a culture forms of wallowing in them. The baited corporate hook dropped into the psyche is then rewarded in a positive feedback cycle – what

1 H.G. Wells (1934). *Experiment in Autobiography*. Online at Project Gutenberg Canada: www.gutenberg.ca/ebooks/wellshg-autobiography/wellshg-autobiography-00-h-dir/wellshg-autobiography-00-h.html accessed 5 November 2010.

J.K. Galbraith more than 50 years ago in *The Affluent Society* saw as the greatest danger of our economic system and called 'the Dependence Effect'. We become a world driven by oil-fuelled consumer addiction. This in turn drives wars and the degradation of the Earth's life support system. As such, the global problematique cannot look only at human circumstances on the planet. It cannot look narrowly at the interactions between the social environment and the natural environment. It must, as well as doing these things, look deeply at the metaphysical context that underpins all else. It must address the fundamental questions of what it means to be a human being, and while rationality is a vital tool in such inquiry it cannot be considered adequate on its own. Such 'head' must be integrated with the 'heart' based insights of the poet, artist and spiritual voyager. It must be grounded with the 'hand' based epistemologies of the artisan, the farmer, the manager and the carer of children. We cannot stop the planet and get off. But we can start to break through Wells's 'hallucinatory' forces that have set it spinning towards nemesis: a nemesis that may still be a little way off for the rich, but is already well known to the poor, and to plant and animal species on the brink of extinction.

Here, then, is the challenge to Human Ecology of our times. As the American poet Audre Lorde puts it in her collection, *Dream of a Common Language*:

> My heart is moved by all I cannot save:
> so much has been destroyed
>
> I have to cast my lot with those
> who age after age, perversely,
>
> with no extraordinary power,
> reconstitute the world.

Our task in Human Ecology research today is to draw up an agenda that can take forward this reconstitution through the twenty-first century. Such research needs to link particular issues with the emerging big picture of what it means to be human beings living with other species. Our values need to be those not so much of globalization's homogenised market surface, but of the One World village. This is about the ongoing emergence of what it means to be the human family on Earth. It concerns how we both mitigate and adapt to environmental change.

In Paulo Freire's sense, our research must have as its objective conscientization as the raising of both consciousness and conscience in a praxis of iterative action and reflection. As such, the Human Ecologist's work is shamanic, concerned with the alchemical transformation of base states of reality into that which can call back and feed the soul.

The realm in which we move must be scientific – in both its natural and social senses – but also mythic. The story of our times is being lived through us. Are we up to the part? Can we, like Joseph Campbell suggested, move from the youthful *departure* stage of life and career where most of what we are is conditioned by our backgrounds, into *initiation* in the bruising rapids of life, and through to the *return* that brings fresh life back into the community? Indeed, is there a sense that our species itself, life on Earth itself, is passing through that initiation phase, and that it matters not whether we succeed or fail; what matters, at the mythic or spiritual level, is that we develop courage, strength of heart, the capacity to love? Of course, it is not fashionable to think of the human condition teleologically. But as another American poet, Alice Walker, reminds us:

While love is unfashionable
Let us live
Unfashionably…
Let us be intimate with
Ancestral ghosts
And music of the undead….
Let us gather blossoms
Under fire

To gather blossoms means that blossom itself must be the object of our research. It is not acceptable for Human Ecology to be an enclave for time-servers and pen-pushers. We must dare to hold out for a vision of a beautiful world. As Aldo Leopold said, beauty must be the touchstone of ecological integrity. To do that will requires standing up to those who trample the blossoms, or steal them from others. That is why we must develop the courage to operate under fire.

Such research and its application cannot be sustained alone. This means that the Human Ecology of the twenty-first century must be more than just the study of human communities. It must also be their practice, and specifically, the development of scholarship in Human Ecology as *communities of practice*; communities that kindle the resilience necessary to help reconstitute the world, come-what-may in the come-to-pass.

We must also shift the temporal horizons within which we undertake research. Funding requirements mean that so much of what currently passes as research is carried out on a very short temporal horizon. We must be part of a movement from short wave to long temporal wavelengths. What we are called to work on – to search, to re-search (to search again, more deeply) the human condition, is work that as Alice Walker's lines suggest, engages the ancestors and those yet to be. Our time spans must be multi-decadal, intergenerational, and even evolutionary in scale. This cannot be done within individualistic paradigms of research. It is only possible as part of a movement of whole peoples. This indigenous peoples understand well. No bard speaks or plays apart from the deep movement of the spirit of his or her peoples. Again, we touch on the mythic. Our tribe is the world. As the Ojibwe elder Walt Bresette once said at an academic conference on ecological resistance and spirituality at the University of Wisconsin in 1995, 'Shut the doors! The doors are closed. That is how the world is now. We are all inside now. We must all learn to be indigenous now'.

Such research can only be undertaken by scholars who have embarked upon the inner journey. We note that in most societies of the world knowledge developed as something sacred. Only in the west has it developed as something copyright, bounded by so-called intellectual property rights and the ubiquitous trademark ™ symbol that we might better interpret as 'That's Mine!'

Many of the contributors to this volume sit on the margins of academia and of academic Human Ecology. As the editors, we appreciate that you, the reader, and Ashgate our publisher, have given them a hearing. We think it would be fair to say that our collective call is to call back the sanctity of knowledge. To re-embed knowledge in the fabric of this world, to heal this world, to make a life worth living. We could list potential research topics – the psychology of consumerism, eldership and mentoring, trauma and calling back the soul – but the topics would be too numerous, and too limited by our own limited perspectives. We leave it to your integration of reason with imagination to discern where best, and how, to contribute towards an emerging research agenda. As H.G. Wells saw, we might start with being 'referred back to a study of the elements of Human Ecology'. But the agenda that we call for does not stop there, for those same elements point towards what Abraham Maslow called "the farther reaches of human nature." That is what makes engaged research into

human ecology such a thrilling response to present times. We are working not just with any old elements, but with the elemental bedrock of reality; seeking not just any old life, but life abundant.

We close by making one last point. This volume has arisen, in part, out of criticisms of mainstream Human Ecology. Drawing mainly on indigenous and traditional insights we have argued that it is time to turn the clod; time to deepen our field to integrate detail in the study of the outer life with a renewed attention to complementary depth from within.

In making such a critique it is easy to appear ungrateful to those who have paved the path to where we now stand. To fall into that trap would violate the very ethos for which we are pressing. We all walk in the shoes of our time. And so, thank you to those who have gone before us. Thank you, also, to those who may not follow in the directions we propose but who, at least, refrain from blocking its way. We are living in a complex world with many positions along a long front. We need diversity, and we need it in Human Ecology. Let us go now. The blossoms await.

Lewis Williams
Rose Roberts
Alastair McIntosh
January 2012.

We dedicate this book to the elders whose indigenous wisdom has so inspired its making. We especially remember elders Ngāroimata Cavill, Betsy McKenzie, and John MacGregor.

He taonga whakamānawa tēnei ki a Ngāroimata Cavill (nee Ngātai), he kuia nō Ngāi Te Rangi. Ahakoa tōna tū rangatira ki tōna Ngāiterangitanga, i reira hoki te ringa kaha o te atua e whakamahana i a ia me ōna tikanga ā-wairua. E Aunty Ngāroimata, te tupuna māreikura, i a koe e hikoi ngātahi ana me ō tūpuna huhua, ka noho tonu ko tō wairua mo ake tonu atu.

In loving memory of Ngaroimata Cavill (nee Ngātai) Ngāi Te Rangi Kuia, who while of her Ngāiterangitanga knew so well that god dwells in all peoples, places and spiritual traditions. Aunty Ngaroimata, beloved tupuna, while you now walk with the ancestors, your wairua stays with us forever.

In memory of elder Betsy McKenzie.

"I guess I'm an Elder, there are people here that are older but they are forgetting the stories." Thus my grandmother and Elder spoke with humbleness when I asked her if she was an Elder. Her stories were rich and full of meaning and often laughter; and her door was always open. She was a traditional healer, a knowledge keeper, an Elder of the church – as her eyesight failed, she continued to read the Bible in Cree syllabics using a magnifying glass. She lived in both worlds – the Woodland Cree and the Western … and now she walks in another world but her wisdom stays with those of us that had the privilege of learning from her. *Ninanaskomoon Nohkom.*

To John MacGregor, crofter, hostel warden and weaver of the great Harris Tweed at Gearrannan (Garenin) on the Isle of Lewis: I always saw you as an elder to us younger folk, a mentor in the ways. You shared Tradition's treasures and respect – indigenous and pilgrim voyager alike. And as you'd say with your great laugh, when pointing out that moorland resting spot, of family friend returning back to soil beneath the grass, long past her steadfast milking days but tethered to appreciation yet: "How now, brown cow?" *Mile taing. Leis gach beannachd.*