



Eucalyptus rubida

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November and December see the arrival of the several mint bush (Prostanthera) species, this one on the higher levels of Mt. St. Leonard near Healsville. At Glenburn a white variety flowers at Christmas time. Also appearing is the Hyacinth Orchid and the flowering Kunzea. (Burgun).

“In Wildness is the Preservation of the World”

When Henry David Thoreau made this statement in 1851 many thought he had meant to say wilderness rather than wildness. However wildness was correct. It is a quality rather than a place, and it is a quality that we share with all other species - more or less. The creation story of Genesis implies that we were not of 'wild' origin but came from the hand of God already domesticated and separate from the rest of creation. This is fine, and many still hold to this belief, but it is certainly not what Thoreau was talking about. This was only a few years before Darwin published his Origin of Species (1859).

Evolutionary thinking implies that we were in fact derived from wild species, in fact if you go far enough back you could say that we are descended from the stars and supernovas - stardust in fact - and ultimately from that ultimate mystery that is the ground of all being!

We often refer to some people as being wild. This may or may not be a complimentary description depending on the usage. Mostly the term is used in a pejorative sense. But on closer looking we might detect that some of the people we describe as being wild are in fact highly creative folk who refuse to fit into conventional patterns, and who are responsible for innovative thinking and projects. Sometimes they are our artists; sometimes they worry us by exhibiting alternative lifestyles; sometimes we privately yearn we were as wild as they!

So why am I pushing the quality of wildness? Thomas Berry says that wildness is “its (our) deepest reality, its most profound mystery.” (The Great Work p.48) It seems as if we need as a culture to re-discover this wildness if we are to re-inhabit our niche with respect to the rest of the World Community. By this phrase I mean all the relationships that are open to us in the natural world,

whether they be animate or inanimate in our sense of these terms.

These relationships might be physical, as in breathing and eating, or psychic/spiritual, as in what we love about life and its various components. Once you mention the “L” word - love - you exit the world of the head and enter the territory of the heart. The metaphors of head and heart are well established, and are often used e.g. as in the document *Gaudium et Spes* (Joy and Hope) of Vatican II which stated “God dwells in the innermost depths of the human heart and awaits our discovery of him there”



And so for theology the place to meet the “most profound mystery” is in the heart. In this territory there is not dogma or words - that belongs to the head - there is only mystic reality which is not mediated by words. I would suggest that we call this territory

The wild territory of the heart.

A spirituality of the heart might be characterised by listening rather than speaking, compassion rather than charity, being rather than doing, participating rather than observing. It (the heart) is in the words of Henri Nouwen the place where we are “one with God and with all our brothers and sisters.” Maybe Nouwen might be prepared to accept the World Community as brothers and sisters also.

Going by the above logic, the place where we meet the God of theology is a wild place; no words; the language of the place is love and we attend to our experiences of joy and sorrow with equal compassion for ourselves and for others.

Our world is in the words of physicist and cosmologist Brian Swimme, a “balanced turbulence.” In contrast Jupiter is consumed by constant apocalyptic storms. Similarly we humans are also a balanced turbulence which needs constant nurturing and healing. It is truly a miracle that our bodies mimic the natural world by being healthy most of the time. Our immune system is a complex but efficient one that matches Earth living systems. Occasionally we lose it to an imbalance and sickness occurs.

Both Earth and ourselves are wild places that balance on a knife edge of chaos. Both (as if there was a real difference) need mutual care and compassion. In the case of Earth, this care for us is hard-wired into its ecosystems. In the case of humans our reciprocal care for Earth has become a conscious response.

This conscious response is nearer to heart stuff than head stuff. Techno-fixes might delay the deterioration of Earth, but I suggest that only a recovery of a mystique for Earth will be effective in the long run.

Mary Oliver in her beautiful poem *Spring* about the bear emerging from hibernation puts to herself the following:

“There is only one question:
how to love this world.....
....all day I think of her -
her white teeth,
her worldlessness,
her perfect love.”

Have you ever felt this sentiment. I think we all have. Welcome to the wild territory of the heart.

Trevor Parton