



Eucalyptus rubida

Newsletter of The Centre for Ecology & Spirituality,
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Running Postman (Kennedia) made a very colourful re-appearance at Glenburn this year. It is a prostrate member of the pea family.

Ecology and Spirituality

In the 1950's and 1960's Ecology became a popular subject both in senior secondary schools and in universities. Ecology might be defined as a study of the interactions of plants and animals among themselves and also with the wider environment. The environmental era had not properly started, and Rachel Carson did not publish her epic work *Silent Spring* until 1962. This kickstarted or stimulated the emergence of an already incipient environmental movement first in the USA and then more widely.

There was already a flourishing culture of nature writing, poetry and conservation movements around the world for well over a hundred years, but they were not given much of a profile in the halls of academia, and of course there was not the urgency to deal with the problems we have today. Maybe these two aspects are interconnected? In the West our sophisticated culture with its largely transcendent religion and concrete jungles had long lost the intimate connection the human once had with the surrounding world. Only our writers, artists and mystics kept us reminded of our connectivity with the mystery which pervades everything – on Earth and above Earth.

Indigenous cultures were more fortunate. For them the world around them was integral with their religion, health, politics, education, and the arts. Their culture had to sustain them every day of their lives, which incidentally were almost certainly much shorter than ours. Ultimately every culture forms itself out of its deeply held and cherished beliefs about beliefs concerning the origin, destiny and experience of life. Where there are different beliefs, then there also are

the different structures put up to sustain those beliefs.

The extent to which our public culture sustains us, is currently a matter of much concern. The major institutions of society, government, education, economy,



Spore cases of moss at the Murrindindi Cascades

religion are all coming on board the ecological movement at different rates and with different degrees of efficiency. Where an institution has to be dragged kicking and screaming into a mode that is going to be helpful, this is not a good recipe for success. Belief systems are difficult to change, and the transformation of our basic cosmology is not always instantaneous. I use the word cosmology here to mean in general terms, what does it mean to be truly human in the 21st century world, both materially and spiritually. There is not really a difference do you think?

I am not offering a comprehensive

answer to this question. What is more important is to ask the right question. An example of this would be do I ask: "What can be done to find new ways of clean energy production?" or "How can we trim our own energy usage to reduce the harm to the environment?" Both questions are fine in a sense, but the second one implies an attitude not only of balance but also a concern for Earth. This is the spiritual dimension.

In the 21st century the human is called upon to exercise spiritual values in favour of the Earth-Human relationship, more than in any previous time. Hence the title of the essay: Ecology and Spirituality. This is an invitation to regard the relationship between Earth and the human as an integral one. We are not the only half of the relationship that is 'spiritual'. We are of Earth, and it sustains us every breath and every heartbeat of our lives. Everything has a psychic as well as a physical dimension. Every flower, bird or raindrop speaks eloquently of the deep mystery that has given rise to us and from which our bodies and our poetry, art, lives and loves have come. Every religion accepts this in one way or another. Now is the time to crank up the psychic and spiritual energy that will allow us to step forward and do something. Hopefully our religious traditions will assist us in this great work.

Trevor Parton

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