



# Eucalyptus rubida

Newsletter of The Centre for Ecology & Spirituality,  
183 Burns Rd. Glenburn, Victoria, Australia. 3717  
Ph: 03 5797 8532 Email: [centrecology@bigpond.com](mailto:centrecology@bigpond.com)  
[www.edmundrice.org.au/glenburn](http://www.edmundrice.org.au/glenburn)

Newsletter No.33

Winter 2008

This beautiful flower, probably one of the 65 species of mistletoe, was flowering in the desert mallee landscape of Lake Mungo National Park, near the Zanchi ruins this April.

## To be Human is to be Connected

It is late Autumn when I am writing this. This morning I picked a bunch of wild mushrooms from around the house and cooked them for breakfast. I was a hunter gatherer for just a short time today. It felt good. Something about *living in place*.

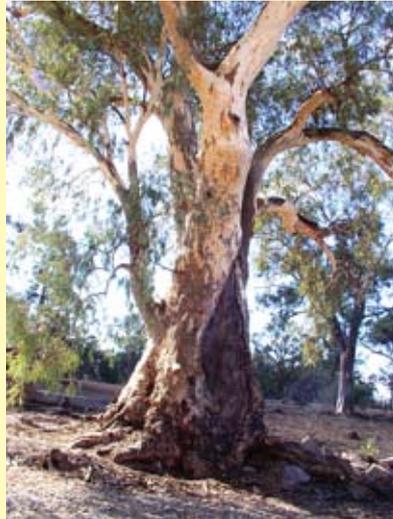
The big question for us cosmologists (and we are all cosmologists these days, or ought to be) is about what it means to be human in the 21st century. I often think about this in connection with a similar question: What does it mean to be spiritual? Then I think that the two questions are really very similar.

When it comes to that intriguing term *spirituality* it seems to me that I am not so happy talking about a Christian spirituality or a Muslim spirituality or an Ignatian spirituality any more than I would talk about a Christian humanity or a Muslim humanity or an Ignatian humanity. In other words our humanity is the touchstone of our 'spirituality', and this in a time when people of nearly all persuasions have a great need to agree on how we should live on our little precious planet, floating in the immensity of the incomprehensible environment of space.

Our identity as humans has a lot to do with the quality of our relationships with what surrounds us. If we were to be locked up in a cellar for 25 years (sigh) or live on the moon surrounded only by plains and craters our internal appreciation of what it means to be human would be hard to imagine, and the shape of our 'spirituality' equally different. What image of God would we evolve? How would we relate to our environment? What would our poetry or art look like?

Yet here we are in the year 2008 surrounded by the inestimable beauty of our planet with its life forms both human and the more than human all speaking to us, calling to us, singing to us about who we are and pleading to us to become who we might be in this deep and immense relationship of human to life, time and space.

The crucial relationship to which we are called is one of mutual enhancement, says Thomas Berry. Some would say this has little to do with spirituality, because we should have our eyes set on eternity and not so much on the temporal.



I cannot agree with this. Being spiritual is not altogether a transcendent quality. Our old metaphysics has taught us that this is the case. But the other thinking is that what we call *matter* has an essential quality, difficult to name, because we might not want to call it spirit, but that we might call *is-ness* to borrow a term from Meister Eckhart or possibly the Hebrew term *ruah* (=breath) *elohim* (=of God). But then, of course, Eckhart was declared a heretic in his day. He is also one of the few western mystic to write about non-duality, and that is what we are talking about now.

In our own times (we seniors) there was Teilhard de Chardin who wrote in his *The Phenomenon of Man*: "*co-extensive with their Without, there is a Within to things.*" (Teilhard's italics and capitals.) Another of his essays is entitled *The Heart of Matter*. I think we are beginning to understand better the language of heart. It used to be the language of Courtly Love as sung by the medieval troubadours. Joseph Campbell in *The Power of*

*Myth* quotes Guiraut de Borneilh (c.1200):  
*So through the eyes love attains the heart;  
For the eyes are the scouts of the heart,  
And the eyes go reconnoitering  
For what it would please the heart to possess.*

The tree in the picture knows what it is like to be connected, to both Earth and Sky. The solar panels on our roofs are modeled on the leaves of the tree that extract energy from the sky by a marvellous chemistry.

So we are connected in lots of ways, not least by our eyes which are or can be the *scouts of the heart*. The mystic is one who knows how to pay attention. We don't just live in *Melbourne* or in *Kew*. We live or ought to live in a *terrain of consciousness* or a *heartland* where we are alone with the God of the sublime mystery which encompasses everything in the universe. It is not a lonely place. It is crowded with galaxies, gum trees, ancestors, soul mates and a host of beings that share this heaven experience with us. I think it is the *kingdom now* that Jesus of Nazareth was speaking about in his poetic Aramaic language.

The 15th Century mystic, Nicholas of Cusa knew all about connection. Quantum physicist David Bohm cites Nicholas as a precursor of the quantum physics notion of universal connection. Nicholas said, "in any creature, all creatures are found."

Nicaraguan revolutionary, priest and poet Ernesto Cardenal, also knew about connection: when he wrote in his *Cosmic Canticle*:

*Inhabitants of this heavenly body, the gigantic cosmic spaces act on our cells. As every molecule of the earth attracts the moon, the sun and the stars. Even in the stones there are imperceptible moontides....coconut palms need the sound of the sea, they say, in order to grow. (Cantiga 5)*

Said Jesus: "I am the vine, you are the branches." and "The Father and I are one." This too, is all about connection. Deep connectivity is embedded in the Gospel.

Trevor Parton