

# *Eucalyptus rubida*

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## THE ILLUSION OF SEPARATENESS

Towards the end of his life, the eminent anthropologist and prophet of relationships, Gregory Bateson said he sometimes catches himself 'believing that there is such a thing as something that is separate from something else.' (from *An Ecology of Mind*). It is not difficult in our everyday use of English, and with the ever-present western dualism around us, to also fall into this trap quite routinely. I say trap because our native experience gives the lie to this heresy of separateness. In our best (human) moments we can be one with everything (note the oneness sayings of Jesus). Personally I do try both in speaking and writing to beat this illusion.

And so what is this connectedness that we are beginning to hear so much more about these days. Is it our connectedness because we are all homo sapiens, or Christians, or some other tribal-like group? Not altogether I would suggest, but the answer is partly correct. Is it by reason that we are one species among some million other species? Once again partly correct. Is it because at the quantum level there is a 'seamlessness' between all parts of the universe? I think we are getting warmer here.

Is it because our God has made everyone and everything, and as ground of being sustains life at every instant. This makes good theological sense, and relates to the last question, but suffers from the Western dualist viewpoint mentioned above. Once you have separated God from the 'created order' you immediately have a problem with the seamlessness that the new cosmology suggests.

The downside of traditional dualistic cosmologies (many religions) is that a universal unity of heart and mind we desperately need across the globe is greatly retarded by a refusal to admit the wisdoms of other cosmologies on a fair if not equal basis.

This emergence of a new unitive consciousness is well attested by any number of eminent thinkers besides Gregory Bateson. Note the language of 'monads', 'noosphere' and 'divine milieu' of Teilhard de Chardin, the 'integral consciousness' of Jean Gebser, the 'total presence we have to each other' of Thomas Berry, and the 'supra-consciousness' of the Indian sage Sri Aurobindo. We have yet to reap the wisdom of these giants of the 20th Century.

Some custodians and followers of traditional mythologies - mostly religions, ideologies, and 'tribal' institutions have come to realise that confusion between mythology as fact, and mythology as metaphor, can lead to destructive fundamentalisms, that puts at risk the world order, and its growing desire for a sense of unity.

This unity or newly found connectedness is surely fundamental to the health and future of Earth. I use the 'Earth' deliberately, and not the word 'humanity', in the last sentence because Earth includes us as part of its native condition. To continually distinguish ourselves from Earth, I would suggest is a category error. We are in reality Earthlings. To be Earthling is a wider tribal



and collective noun than 'humanity'.

This has come to me very strongly in the recent past where to speak of Earth or Creation and not to imply the human as a constituent part of both simply reinforces an illusion. We are very Earth — recently arrived baby child.

What has also come clearer has been to accept that my religion contains mythological elements, many of which are shared in common with other ancient mythologies. We have all tried to dress up in words, rites, teachings and story, the archetypes embedded in our own, our collective, and our cosmic nature. These archetypes (typ.

God/the Divine) can only represent themselves to our consciousness through the metaphors and forms of mythology.

The language of all functional mythologies is the language of the heart. The metaphors and different forms of language only ever give an intimation of the metaphysical dimension that transcends them. We ought not to lightly dismiss this language of the heart, but recognise it for what it is, and seek to transcend it. To refuse to do so is an affront to our ancestors who crafted this wisdom over centuries.

Every aspect of our world of perception and experience, how we see every person, animal, tree, fish or rock corresponds to a hidden order from which everything arises. This hidden order is latent in all of the above, and in us this diaphanous dimension is in continual search for its correspondence in our lives.

Our discovery of this in ourselves is experienced in our emotional expression and desire for oneness, in our love, awe, and wonder which are some of the human expressions and evidence for this correspondence.

There is always a universe waiting to be born in human and other forms of beauty, elegance and symmetry. It needs us to pluck it from that hidden order that pervades the universe in its becoming. This hidden and sacred order precedes all forms of language, but is expressed in wide varieties of symbol systems such as mythology, religion, tarot, alchemy, astrology and magic. You might say I have put religion among strange bedfellows, but we need to be alert to the dangers of taking symbolic systems too seriously.

The last three paragraphs are an attempt to tie into this essay the ancient Hermetic law known today as the Law of Correspondence. As individuals we all dip into the same inner realm that waters our becoming - more significance to our deep relatedness. This ancient esoteric law is often put to us as "As without, so within."

See if we can catch ourselves believing we are not separate from anything else. If mastered it would change everything.

Trevor Parton

Yellow Robin photo by Anne Foale