

Eucalyptus rubida

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One Universe, One Earth, One Mind

There is a lot of talk about the nature of consciousness and mind these days, and it proves almost impossible to elucidate at all well. However, besides the confusing language, there is a kernel of wisdom that several traditions have tried to extract.

It all seems to hinge on the idea of connectedness. This of course is the essence of ecology which is one of the passions our Centre, and is also of the essence of the environmental movement that marks our age. Basically harming our environment means harming ourselves.

Nevertheless our inherited culture still tells us that we are separate from 'the rest' though our heart of hearts tells us different, and it is our heart of hearts to which we must listen. Gregory Bateson encourages us with the words of Pascal: "The reasons of the heart must inform the reasons of reason."

When we grieve for the victims of the earthquakes, or for abused families, it is really a personal hurt that we feel. In sensitive people, often children, this can be very palpable indeed.

Gregory Bateson, one of the last century's most brilliant minds, spoke and wrote of an *Ecology of Mind*. He intimates that mind surrounds us in myriad ways and not just in human terms of the word. Of course animals have minds and we can relate to them in a similar way to other human minds. But he also extends the connotation of the term to the apparently non-sentient world that surrounds us - trees for example, and forests (by extension) and eventually the whole earth, which by many people is known by the name *Gaia* after the early Greek goddess of creation.

Religious people's devotion to their God is another example of our deep consciousness of connection to a greater whole. We speak (metaphorically of course) of the *Mind of God*. Meister Eckhart's frequent saying speaks of this wholeness:

Just as God created the world hundreds

or even thousands of years ago, so He continues to create it every moment. The immanence of the divine is experienced in the life and existence of every particle and atom ever instant.

Over the centuries mystics from many traditions seem to have had such a realisation of the greater whole of which everything is only a part.

Quantum physics has told us that every particle that exists, all the electrons and atoms have a connection and influence on each other, independent of distance. We might get a glimmer of understanding of



this when we use the internet whereby we can, in an instant, get access to the whole world and all the information that millions of people have contributed to the deposit of knowledge.

This all points to the thinking that has come up with the notion of *One Mind*. This two-word term is just that - two words, and words are always metaphorical for the idea we are trying to express.

Distinguished biologist E O Wilson says "*The properties of the electron cannot be finally announced until their end product, the mind, is understood.*" And so the search continues, but a saying like this implies a deep connection between the two.

In an attempt to give us a path to restore the earth, and thereby ourselves to

wholeness, Gregory Bateson points out that all our best knowledge and knowing about connectedness is stored in the unconscious and is brought to the conscious by the aesthetic. In other words art, poetry, sculpture, ritual, dance, immersion in nature, writing and other aesthetic activities are a pathway to cleanse the self-deceit and ignorance in which our culture finds itself when it comes to an appreciation of our relationship to the divine all around us. Typically enigmatic, he refers the fulfilment of this integration process as the *grace* of reconnection between humanity and the rest of the living Earth..

In an apparent restatement of E O Wilson's comment, Bateson says if we wish to understand nature, we must look at mind and, conversely if we wish to understand mind we must examine the products of biological evolution. *Mind and Nature*, one of Bateson's epic works is devoted to an inseparability of the two. This monism is a major tenet of many Eastern wisdom traditions.

Finally a short look at Bateson's personal assessment of what is 'sacred'. The term is, of course, casually and metaphorically used to describe, for example a tasty dish, but Bateson's use of the term is serious even though still metaphorical, and accords with other religious forms of thought as they attempt to define the term.

For him the living world can be seen as sacred without any need for appeal to the supernatural. Anne Primavesi in her book *Sacred Gaia* puts the point well: "I am saying with Bateson ... that the sacred ... is always related to, unifies and dwells in mysterious fashion within whatever event, experience or knowledge relates us to the whole."

This essay on the terms mind, sacred, grace, and divine is meant to stimulate the ongoing conversation we have about deepening our appreciation of the mystery we call God.

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