

FIVE ESSAYS IN TEFISTRY

Vern Crawford

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by Vern Crawford

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I assume readers of these essays are familiar with the concepts and jargon of both Tef Theory and Tefistry, as presented elsewhere in my writings.

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Essay I: DISCONTENT IN OREGON

Orientation of a Malcontent

I am a citizen of the United States. This country is one of the best places to live on Earth. So why am I not happy?

I am happy. But not in all ways and not all the time. I am discontented by violence in the world. I was born in 1944, and I've never known the world at peace. I've rarely known the United States at peace. During my lifetime, many wars have been fought around the world. Some have been big wars involving the United States, but dozens of other wars, big and small, have torn at the soul of humanity. Moreover, I have always lived in the Atomic Age, under the threat of nuclear holocaust. Given this history, how could I be truly and fully happy?

Nevertheless, my life has been better than that of many people in the world, and for that personal good fortune I am glad. Food, clothing, community, entertainment, education, health care—these have always been available to me, and I have never suffered much crime, social decay, or oppressive government. I have enjoyed good health and good family life. Moreover, natural landscapes have usually been located nearby, accessible for my enjoyment and enlightenment. So why am I not happy?

I am happy. But not in all ways and not all the time. I am discontented because we are still killing each other and we are killing Earth's ecosphere as well. I am part of that ecosphere. My body and my soul feed from it as an infant feeds from its mother. No infant can be happy about the death of its mother!

Thus, despite all the good things of my life, the bad things do leave room for improvement. I am motivated to write about the the bad things. Though my gripes and fears and longings may not coincide exactly with those of everyone else, surely most of my discontents are not mine alone. In fact, I think they are shared by many. In view of this, I wish to air some of them here.

A bit more about myself. I was born and raised in the state of Oregon. This doesn't tell you much because Oregon is large and diverse. This state has been spared a New York City or a Los Angeles, although Portland is trying. Typical are its dozens of small cities and towns; I have grown up and

lived in or near six of them. Except for a few years of study and work in the Northeast, I have always lived in Oregon. My homes in this state have nestled in locations both semi-arid and rainy, both mountainous and low-elevation, both urban/residential and rural. I grew up in this state with two parents, two brothers, and a number of dogs, cats, cattle, and chickens. My wife and I raised our children here, and we still live here. I am middle-class, with more than average education. I drive just one car and own an old upright piano.

By profession, before retirement, I was a naturalist and science teacher-writer. Which is to say that sharing knowledge and appreciation of the natural world was my occupation for many years. I have additional longterm interests: philosophy, spirituality, art, and music, especially as these relate to the natural world. Thus, I am a “nature person”, with a nature person’s perspective. It is from this vantage point that I view the world—sometimes as a malcontent, as this essay shows. But I have to say I am a reluctant malcontent: I do not really want to complain.

So, what are the sources of my unhappiness? What angers, annoys, disturbs, or worries me here in Oregon? As might be expected, most of the irritations in my life are commonplace ones: having to prepare income tax returns, enduring discourteous drivers, finding an office closed when I arrive there, suffering loudmouths who hog group discussions, resenting inept political leaders.

But there are other things that fuel my engines of malcontent, in a deeper and more chronic way. Among these are the world's many inconsistencies, hypocrisies, and nonsense. These are often linked to questions that youth would assume must have been answered long ago, but that adults continue to grapple with in frustration and confusion. Such as: What is the purpose of life? What is reality, and how can we best live in it? How should we relate to deity and to nature and to other people? How can we live happier lives? In short, the fundamentals—all the age-old questions concerning life: who, what, when, where, how, and especially, why.

For me, these questions—or rather, their inadequate answers—have been a source of deep discontent and life-long challenge. In wrestling with them, I have joined in a game where everyone seems to be playing by different rules and for different stakes. The stakes are high, however, for what we believe and what we do impinge directly on our own lives and on the lives of others. Pain is quite real, and each of us can both cause it and suffer it. Philosophy and religion are supposed to assist us in playing this strange game. Unfortunately, they often do not. When they do not, I get incensed and have been known to shout at my dog.

Of course, the usual command to malcontents like me is: “Don’t just sit there, do something!” Malcontents are challenged to propose and implement solutions, not just complain about burs under their saddles. This is a reasonable challenge, and I accept it. But where and how to begin?

In such a situation, my intuition nudges me to return to essentials: to seek understanding of both myself and my world, and to forge a better relationship between myself and my world. This means I must first clarify my values. In other words, a malcontent should state what he is for, even while grouching about what he is against. Then he (or she or they) can work toward a new and better world, toward greater contentment.

Beauty and Sentiment

So, what am I for? What are my values? Assuredly, I stand for beauty, especially for the beauty of nature. And I stand for feeling, for sentiment. My emphasis on beauty and sentiment brands me, I suppose, as a Romantic.

Yes, I stand for beauty: for color and scent and pattern, and for gracefulness and for eccentricity. I stand for Harmony, the ultimate positive Value, all the goodness in the world. May gladiolus blossoms, shaggy bison, purple fluorite crystals, and springtime showers bless this world, always! May the people never lack for sappiness of soul!

Nothing satisfies the way a fresh apple satisfies. Nothing stimulates like mountain air seeping over snowbanks, redolent with resinous firs. Nothing thrills like storm-driven breakers exploding in spume against rockbound shores. Nothing is so full of sweet emptiness as desert moonlight.

Yes, I stand for beauty. Indeed, if I do not stand for the world's beauty and joy and naturalness, who will? Too often, the world is bleakly cerebral. Intellection meddles too much. I do not mean that life entails too much reason or too much thinking, but rather, too little color and scent and sentiment. We are too shy! We wince if berry juice should stain our business suits. We fear that a tender thought might rot our mental timbers. We plunge our ears into rank and turbid waters: pop music, TV sitcoms, city streets, and the daily news.

No, my discontent comes not from too much thinking, but from too little sensing and emotion—a condition that happens when we are deprived of nature—both the Outer Natural World, and our own Inner Naturalness—when we are immersed in ersatz experience: the internet and movies and novels and shopping malls and nightclubs. The dry, hard-bitten cultural world is too much with us, indeed.

People in our time lack real, animal emotion, real, primitive response. Yet I hear rebukes of my kind of emotionalism. For instance, in the midst of intense or controversial arguments, someone may call for cool heads to prevail, asking that we avoid being so “emotional”. But I think this is the wrong admonition. Instead, we should encourage those with strong or unrestrained emotion to integrate their emotion with their reason. Likewise, those who are cool-headed should be asked to open their hearts wider and deeper than they have ever done before, and then to orchestrate heart and mind. A thirsty world needs

shallowness in neither me nor you. Rather, it yearns for deep, pure waters, a Crater Lake of Value in every one of us!

What, then, would I include in the good life, for me? Assuredly: velvet pansy blossoms and dewy primrose petals; quiet, leafy pathways in golden autumn woods; sparkling stars overarching the earth on wintry steppes; soil that smells of fungus and aromatic roots; the tireless lip-lipping of wavelets kissing logs in subalpine lakes; dust and heat and rattling grasshoppers along the flanks of sunburnt lava flows; jays hammering at acorns and echo-shrieking through old oak woods.

Is this sentimentalism? I hope so! For without sentiment, we're dead.

Blossoms of the spring

Soft and tender

Sweetly tinted tones

Vernal tonics for brittle souls

You have fed me

As food cannot feed

Here

My gift to you

A piece of my heart

Soft and tender

Tinted sweet tones

Blossoms of the spring

Value Added

Many say “beauty is in the eye of the beholder”—which is to say that our esthetic responses cannot yet be expressed in formal laws, like those of physics. I agree. However, I can say this: In addition to having an “eye” for beauty, we must also have objects that afford (permit, enable) our perception of beauty. That is, not only must the eye be capable of beauty, but the object must also be such that beauty can be experienced about it. Every esthetic response thus entails a sensitive person and an affording object.

A sensitive person + An affording object => The perception of beauty, an esthetic experience.

Beauty, then, is not inherent in things. It is not waiting there to be discovered or acquired. Instead, beauty is a value

that we add to things. (What is true of beauty is also true of ecstasy, awe, and wonder. I refer here to a host of lofty emotions.) In short, seeing beauty confirms that we have “improved” the object with Value. We have done it. The beauty is actually in us, not in the object.

Objects that afford beauty are often specific to each person, however. For some persons, beautiful objects may be individual things, such as snowflakes, richly colored birds, craggy peaks, or thundering waterfalls. For others these may be settings, such as green forests, purple-rimmed deserts, starry night skies, or turquoise undersea gardens. For still others, these may be events or processes, such as storms, seasons, erosion, death, growth, evolution.

Indeed, beauty can be added to places, not just to individual things. And, as with things, we recognize the Value of those places through our powers of Evaluation. When we come upon particularly powerful places—power points, or places of genius—a shudder of delight runs through our being. Here, we know instinctively that we have found deep nurture for the soul. Here we have found everything we could ever need. As John Muir said of Yosemite Park, in his journal (1895): “Its natural beauty cleanses and warms like fire, and you will be willing to stay forever in one place like a tree”. Immersed in joy and beauty, we merge—we commune—with the deep mystery of a place.

Ah, I can hear it now, *sotto voce*, from the back of the room: “This Crawford guy is a mystic! He's fallen off his

roof. He talks about things that ordinary people don't really feel—or if they do, wouldn't admit to anyone but their shrink!”

But no. Everyone, I think, enjoys moments of beauty, ecstasy, awe, and wonder. Sometimes we may not recall that we have had them. Our society does not reward them. Nonetheless, they are real experiences, natural to us, and we can have more of them if we allow ourselves to do so.

“If the day and the night are such that you greet them with joy, and life emits a fragrance like flowers and sweet-scented herbs, is more elastic, more starry, more immortal—that is your success. All nature is your congratulation, and you have cause momentarily to bless yourself. The greatest gains and values are farthest from being appreciated. We easily come to doubt if they exist. We soon forget them.

They are the highest reality. Perhaps the facts most astounding and most real are never communicated by man to man. The true harvest of my daily life is somewhat as intangible and indescribable as the tints of morning or evening. It is a little stardust caught, a segment of the rainbow which I have clutched.”

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, 1854

Yes, I value beauty and sentiment. These are some of the Values I am for. So, now let us return to my discontents. What am I against ? What in my life needs improvement Allow me to focus on three specific galls: Conflict, Cognitive Insanity, and Loss of Nature.

Conflict

To begin, I wish to offer a brash opinion: Our entire American culture is sick. Its literature is sick. Its theatre is sick. Its television is sick. I mean that our culture has lost its capacity to worship and to love. Caring has lost out to sick thrills. We have embraced a cult of violence and conflict, a nearly universal neurosis. We employ conflict in nearly everything we do.

My own neurosis may be the opposite: to avoid conflict, to cling to light and love and joy. I confess my revulsion to negatives. For, in my view, enjoyment of violence, war, fear, and suffering is warped, masochistic, or sadistic. In my view, conflict is simply incomprehensible as a path toward Harmony, and when I see it I am forever left wondering: “What is wrong with these people?!”

Look around us. Everywhere we turn, life’s themes are not about Harmony. Rather, they are about conflict and tension: Disharmony. Indeed, our literati insist that one cannot write a novel, much less sell it to readers, unless it is built on conflict. This is the successful model for drama:

introduce the characters; build conflict between them; then resolve the conflict. Our TV and videos are full of conflict, even in children's programs. After four hundred years, we still admire how Shakespeare wove deceit and selfishness into tapestries of art. And seemingly innocent old ladies spend hour upon hour reading murder mysteries!

The underlying attitude seems to be that ordinary existence—which, to me, means a life of joy and love and beauty—is inherently dull. From my viewpoint, however, people are no longer able to judge this matter clearly, for they have been looking the opposite way for far too long. We hardly know anymore what joy and love and beauty are.

Ethologists tell us that wild animals have two main responses to conflict: fight or flight. That is, animals most often respond to fear by either attacking the source of threat or by fleeing from it. People do this, too, hurling epithets at one another—“hawk”, “dove”, “warmonger”, “deserter”—deriding their respective tendencies toward fight or flight.

This description of fight or flight among animals seems correct. But it takes as a given that animals have an aversion to threat. Fight or flight are different ways of dealing with that aversion. Whereas the description seems to fail with humans, because it ignores the attraction that many of us show toward threat. We humans go looking for conflict. Especially today. We seek it in movies and magazines, in newspapers and television, in novels and non-fiction, in video games and sports events. (Perhaps even this essay will

attract certain readers, simply because it explores dissatisfaction and malcontent: the conflict between ideality and reality.)

Want to sell a book on dinosaurs? Better make those reptiles look threatening. Want to incite environmentalists to action? Better paint corporations as environmental rapists and thieves. Want to sell newspapers? Better headline murder and corruption and catastrophe. Want to market clothing? Better entice the buyer to defend his or her status by out-dressing the competition: a certain color, a subtle width of lapel, a button or chain or emblem, all to assist in fighting common social threats—dressed “fit to kill” they say!

Some will insist that I am ignoring or resisting human nature, including my own. They will insist that the attraction of conflict—be it challenge, suspense, or adventure—is innate in people, young and old. Well, perhaps. But I don't really believe it. I don't believe it is inevitable. Not if people have ever lived healthy lives. Persistent attraction to the negative does not seem innate to me; it looks more like a symptom of culture gone wrong. We are immersed in an ailing culture. We cannot see ourselves for what we have become. Only if we can refocus and redirect our attention, I believe, will we regain some much-needed perspective. Only if we return to a worshipful, caring approach to life will we see the warped self-centeredness we have been pursuing: as individuals, as societies, as a species. I believe our culture, if it tries, may someday be willing to seek the positive as

readily as it now seeks the negative. May our health return, and soon!

Cognitive Insanity

Speaking of health, I notice that most men are insane. So are women, but I think they are less insane than men. My definition of insanity, here, is our taking of simulations to be more real than the referents they simulate. It is even the outright acceptance of simulations in place of those referents, a process Tef Theory calls surrogation. We have no difficulty recognizing insanity when people hallucinate and then insist that their visions are more real than the world around them. We know their minds have a problem. But what about grown men—“pillars of their communities”—who pursue wealth instead of clean air, or ideology instead of food and love? What about men who fail to see that their deepest beliefs are really nothing more than stories or theories? And what about those who insist that unseen/nonmanifest things are just as real as the seen/manifest? All these men have accepted surrogates of referents—simulations of them—in place of the referents themselves.

These are all examples of cognitive insanity, and we find their origin to the process of Mimesis. By Mimesis I mean the faculty by which (among other things) we create pictures, images, symbols, words, ideas, thoughts—each one of which is a secondhand construct that mimics a firsthand

original referent. In surrogation, a Mimic—a simulation—supplants its referent.

This kind of insanity is not new. The Greek philosopher Plato, living more than 2,000 years ago, opined that transcendent Forms, a higher reality, are more or less reflected by ordinary, mundane things. But he had his cart before his horse. In my view, Plato's Forms were instead generalizations that he had abstracted from his perceptions of individual things. His Forms reflected the mundane, not the other way round. Thus, I see Plato's Forms as conclusions drawn from This World experience, not as preexisting ideals that This World more or less mimics. That is, in my view, the referent always precedes its simulation; the thing itself always precedes its mimic; the real always precedes the ideal. So I say that Plato suffered from cognitive insanity. For, to him, the ideal precedes the real. And he gave to the ideal a higher priority than to the real. He preferred mental mimics over their sensible referents—a great cognitive error.

This tendency—correlated, perhaps, with left-brain dominance—is common in men, somewhat less so in women, if my observations are correct. It is a strange malady, and one not fully explained. Yet it is a dangerous malady, for our survival on this planet requires that we be grounded and clear-minded—not insane! Our simulations and abstractions should serve us as tools, not as ends in themselves. The processes and products of our Mimesis should not be more highly honored than the referents of that Mimesis. Rather, after having made use of mimics, we should—we must—

always return to the original experience, to the preceding experience that is its referent. Not to so return is to remain insane.

Loss of Nature

The world grows thick with people. The old, natural order recedes, replaced more and more by the new, cultural order. The wild chaos of nature falls before steel blades and clever chemistry. Deluded by Faustian dreams of certainty, security, and material affluence, we modern humans are plunging headlong, I fear, into the jaws of suffering and regret.

Here in Oregon I bend and warp with the pressure of people, pollution, and noise. I feel my tolerance stretched, and then stretched still more. Finally, taut with insult, I run for the door. But what lies outside my door? More people! More pollution! More noise! The Divine Garden is overrun.

I hazard to say that I share a universal need: to keep myself in relationship with an infinite, or at least indefinitely vast, Other. In order not to feel threatened or stunted or claustrophobic, I need to believe that my life has a vast and inexhaustible resource or refuge—an Other—upon which to draw.

“At the same time that we are earnest to explore and learn all things, we require that all things be mysterious and unexplorable, that land and sea be infinitely wild, unsurveyed and unfathomed by us because unfathomable. We can never have enough of Nature. We must be refreshed by the sight of inexhaustible vigor, vast and Titanic features, the seacoast with its living and its decaying trees, the thundercloud, and the rain which lasts three weeks and produces freshets. We need to witness our own limits transgressed, and some life pasturing freely where we never wander.”

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, 1854

The unfathomable infinity for me may be an “endless” forest, or a huge, overarching sky, or a broad reach of Central Oregon’s shrub steppe, or a vast horizon of Pacific shore and open waves. Whatever it is, it must effectively be infinite—undefined, what I have elsewhere called an “indefinity”. For some, this need is met by belief in a Great Spirit and the otherworld, or by journeys into fictional, visionary realms, or by travels in virtual reality. For others it is met by savoring membership in our several-billion-strong human species or by identification with a nation or cultural group or some compelling cause. But for me the unfathomable “indefinity” has always been the natural world.

Unfortunately, everywhere I turn today I see nature's death, destruction, decay, and defacement, even in designated natural areas, even in the "wilderness". No place on earth is free of air pollution, climate change, biotic depletion, satellites and aircraft. Most parts of the planet, at least most of its nicer, more inhabitable parts, have already been "improved". These have been "fixed up" and thereby converted into a state of decadence through urbanization, ruinous agriculture, deforestation, roading, groundwater depletion: violations of land, sky, and sea. The Other has been compromised.

Like a rat in a frustration test, I keep running into bad alternatives. Fight or flight? My tendency toward flight is now largely thwarted: no place left to go. And the option of fighting is, for a non-warrior like me, unsavory. In the long run fighting is probably self-defeating anyway. All these bad alternatives lead to my discontent.

Yet I have not always been a malcontent. My childhood years were lived in the moist forests of Western Oregon and in the semi-arid steppes of Central Oregon. There, in rural and semi-rural environments, myths of the infinite Other could still be sustained. I believed that the forest—deep and vast and nurturing—still existed, if not "here" where I resided, then somewhere "out there". The sky was pristine, blue or gray, heaped with clouds, and rich with rain or snow—a benign, reliable, sunny/cloudy roof over my world. Each year birds migrated, as they had forever, and insects emerged on buzzing, flickering wings. And I could

still drink directly from wild waters: cool, refreshing, invigorating water flowing in creeks and springs—no pollution, no Giardia (none that I knew about, anyway). In short, nature could be counted on, because nature was vast, fertile, and (so I thought) mostly undamaged by human beings. That was the myth of my childhood.

But the old verities and the old sureties crumble now before my eyes. The world has been degraded by radiation, air pollution, acid rain, mass extinction, ozone depletion, depleted and poisoned aquifers, overgrazing, desertification, deforestation, marine exploitation, genetic engineering, noise, light pollution, and, yes, global warming. The list itself grows oppressively long!

Moreover, the old freedoms to gather and hunt in nature, already a fading myth in my own childhood, have now been nearly snuffed out. There are too many people, too many fences, too many regulations. We have grown soft and grub-like, incapable of foraging in the wild. Like patients in an ICU, we are tethered now to the IV's and tubes and monitors of our culture: to oil and gas pipelines, electric power grids, highways and vehicles, TVs and cell phones, computers and satellites, synthetic medicines, industrial chemicals, insurance policies, credit cards, lifelong schooling, surveillance cameras, and myriad governmental institutions. We have encased ourselves within houses and cars, offices and shopping malls. And having harnessed energy sources far greater than those of our human muscle, we have become precariously dependent on power external to

our own bodies—enslaved to an energy addiction. Now parasitic on the entire planet, we have lost our wild ecological niche, abandoned our native animal adaptations, and seemingly struck a deal with the Devil!

Calling it freedom and plenty, we relish this bondage and gluttony. Pale, larval denizens of air-conditioned cells, committed to an ultimately lethal life way, we abandon our native strength. Many people even seek to take over the reins of wild nature and become its mind and manager. They say we will “co-evolve” with Gaia. What hubris! What arrogance! The grandest of imperialistic aggressions!

And the spirit of some of us—those who need the vast silence and the old certainties—what will become of us? We nature persons suffer from poisoned spirits. We do not want to control the planet. For us, the idea of “co-evolution” with Gaia is an abomination. We do not want to live in an artificial, human-designed world—if only because we shun the wrenching responsibility this entails. We want to live freely, suspended from the sun, enveloped in mystery, reliant on nature and ourselves, living in a poetic relation with reality. We prefer to live in nature, not in culture; in beauty and bliss, not in pollution and kitsch.

Henry Beston, having spent a year alone, communing with nature on the shores of Cape Cod, Massachusetts, spoke of our need to remain in poetic relation to nature:

“Whatever attitude to human existence you fashion for yourself, know that it is valid only if it be the shadow of an attitude to Nature. A human life, so often likened to a spectacle upon a stage, is more justly a ritual. The ancient values of dignity, beauty, and poetry which sustain it are of Nature's inspiration; they are born of the mystery and beauty of the world. Do no dishonour to the earth lest you dishonour the spirit of man. Hold your hands out over the earth as over a flame. To all who love her, who open to her the doors of their veins, she gives of her strength, sustaining them with her own measureless tremor of dark life. Touch the earth, love the earth, honour the earth, her plains, her valleys, her hills, her seas; rest your spirit in her solitary places. For the gifts of life are the earth's and they are given to all, and they are the songs of birds at daybreak, Orion and the Bear, and dawn seen over ocean from the beach.”

Henry Beston, *The Outermost House*, 1928

What, then, is happening to the nature-reliant spirit? To the human spirit that is losing its context, its matrix, its “mother”? To the spirit that has no happy future in sight? What is happening to the human spirit whose very essence is sensation and emotion—in a world that has poisoned and perverted and limited both? How are we nature persons to

stay optimistic? How to stay enthusiastic about life? How to avoid both despair and denial, both depression and selfishness?

Mortal Signs

When nature and people are no longer one...sacred groves appear.

When nature is badly fragmented...parks and nature preserves appear.

When nature is no longer accessible...nature videos appear.

When nature is critically endangered...biotechnologists appear.

When nature is dealt its mortal blow...people try to colonize Mars—and then they disappear.

Nature has been hurt. It appears to be dying. Humanity is out of control, far out of ecological equilibrium, failing now in its basic tasks. Our outer life may be fat (for some of us, at least), but the inner is weakening. When we have killed the unfathomable, how free, how alive will we be? The anguish of Indigenous Peoples is not theirs alone.

The Possibility of True Contentment

The mystery of *It!* The mystery of experience! The bald, blunt reality of our lives: That which is!

How to describe what pain is? How to tell someone else what joy is? We can describe what pain and joy do to us in our lives, how we can have more or less of them, who seems to have them and when, and even speculate on where they come from. But we can never say what they are! We can only have them in our personal Solitude. Surely, this is the most astonishing of facts!

“Talk of mysteries! Think of our life in nature--daily to be shown matter, to come in contact with it--rocks, trees, wind on our cheeks! the solid earth! the actual world! the common sense! Contact! Contact! Who are we? where are we?”

Henry David Thoreau, *The Maine Woods*, 1864

Here we have reached the limits of Mimesis and messaging. Beyond this we must return to pure experience of the most original kind. We must return to our senses and to our sentiments—to Quality and Value, to Body and Heart. In doing this, we return to the possibility of true contentment.

II. VALUE AND ETHICS

As to value, I can speak expertly only for myself, for never do I actually experience the values of others. That is, although I may project or extrapolate my values into or onto or beyond the other parts of Tef, I must nonetheless admit that these projected values are my own values. Though I can visualize these values as being “inside” other objects or other persons, still I do so only through my own powers of projection. I directly experience my own values only, for my values are the only Actual values. When I empathize, I only imagine the values of others, so these values are Inactual, only. Stated more generally: The “unseen” does not exist.

I am a model-maker, however. Day in and day out, I think up theories about the world, including ideas about things I do not directly experience. Thus, in the theory about values that I shall present here, I shall treat others’ values as as if I actually do experience them, as if I did not know any better! My model seems pragmatically justified, however, for I find that imputing values to others does assist my quest for greater Harmoniousness. I find that I benefit from such modeling—even though the values of others do not Actually exist for me as firsthand experience. A strange and interesting irony. But a fruitful irony!

Value

Thus, I know of no way to tell you what value is. It is one of the basic realities, something I can talk about, but cannot capture and deliver in words. Value does not, cannot, consist of words because words are something I think, whereas value is something I feel. Thinking and feeling are separate realms. Nevertheless, although I cannot define value, I do “know it when I see it”, or, rather, I know it when I feel it. And I can name examples of it. Thus, for me, the positive, harmonious values include: goodness, bliss, beauty, truthfulness, peace, security, pleasure, and the presence of bodily necessities such as air, water, food, warmth. In short, Harmony is happiness and contentment.

Values are not all positive, of course. In fact, values can be arrayed along a gradient, ranging from the extremely positive to the extremely negative, from the very good to the very bad. The two opposite poles of this gradient define a dyad of value. I have come to believe these poles are best named “Harmony” and “Disharmony”. Harmony is my positive, preferred value; Disharmony is its opposite. Although my life will probably never attain complete Harmony, my experiences range widely along the gradient from Disharmoniousness to Harmoniousness.

In themselves, prior to our Evaluation of them, our original microscale Qualities are neither harmonious nor

disharmonious. For instance, prior to Evaluation, hot is neither better nor worse than cold, the Inner and the Outer are neither good nor bad, Self and Not-self are simply regions of Tef. In themselves, all these lack positive and negative values. But through our microscale Evaluation, Value is added to Quality. Through such Evaluation arises the Vector of Value, an arrow of preference affirming that Harmoniousness is better than Disharmoniousness. Harmony is the preferred pole; it creates a vectorial flow, a specific trend, a one-way street of priority, a sole direction of “choice”. The Harmony/Disharmony Dyad is clearly not value-neutral. Thus, Evaluation and its associated Action are never really a choosing between two options, but rather an automatic movement toward the only option: the harmonious option, the preferred value.

Ethics

There is a reason why the field of ethics, although usually regarded as a branch of philosophy, does not rest there as comfortably as do epistemology and metaphysics and logic. The reason is simple. Epistemology and metaphysics arise mostly from Mentation—hence, they deal mostly with fact and with form—whereas ethics is a hybrid of both Mentation and Evaluation, dealing with both fact and value, with both form and feeling. During ethical considerations, Evaluation provides values and evokes the Will we need for ethical Action, while Mentation provides

the structure and evokes the regulating Wisdom needed for implementing ethical choices. This hybrid nature of ethics—Will and Wisdom—accounts for much of the wooliness and confusion in ethical discourse. In ethics, more than thinking is required, and, because philosophy’s primary mode of communication is through words, in ethics we are attempting the impossible: direct expression of feelings using words.

“You can't get blood from a turnip”, as the old biblical saying goes. Microscale Mentation lacks values, and megascale Intellection (L.3) is weak in values. Therefore, Intellection’s manipulation of ideas about values—in a word, the field of Ethics—is no better than the store of values given to it by microscale Evaluation and megascale Intuition (L.2). Thus, even if I do the best ethical thinking possible, still the touchstone of ethics remains, “How do I feel?” How I feel is my Evaluation’s response to my lived experience, and those feelings are not a product of my cognitive reflection and reasoning.

My values are my values, not those of others. Consequently, my ethics is singular: It is my ethics. Strictly speaking, because I do not actually experience the values of others, I should never presume to know their ethical values. Yet, the truth is, I do extrapolate and project my values and my ethics on others, all the time. For I seek to “love my neighbor as I love myself”. I do this even though I have incomplete rational, philosophical justification for doing so. So, why do I keep doing it? The old philosophical problem of other minds (that is: Do other minds exist, and if so, how

do we know what is going on within them?) is swept away by one of Tef Theory's basic tenets: "No experience, no existence." That is, other minds—like all other unexperienced things—do not exist in Actuality. We have little basis on which to claim that they do. Nevertheless, I continue to act as if I know with certainty that other minds exist! How strange! So, again, why do I keep doing it?

My reason for doing ethics is essentially pragmatic: I have learned from living that imagining and assuming the existence of other minds is advantageous to me. I benefit from it. For example, life has taught me that using the Golden Rule—"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you"—generally ends up making my life better, too, sooner or later. Life is more harmonious for me when I treat others as evaluational equals. And my belief or faith that greater Harmoniousness will result gives me a deeper sense of personal security, well-being, and contentment.

This illogical granting of Willful Being—spirit/soul/psyche—to others comes from natural, intuitional empathy. Ethical behavior is largely founded on it. Thus, part of finding soul in others is our natural presupposition that such Beings exist. We are Animists, "finding" some degree of soul in every thing and every Person.

But, also, part of finding soul is a deduction from analogy. First, we perceive similarities between ourselves and others—physically, behaviorally. And we also communicate with others. Then we "fill in the blanks",

imputing values to others, even though we cannot actually “see” those values in them. Finding soul is thus a fusion of animistic empathy and intellectual deduction.

Values are not projected solely onto other humans, but are also applied to anything for which we can imagine an inner life, such as warm-blooded animals. For instance, suppose I look out my window and see a bird. Instantly I note likenesses between me and the bird (that is, we are both alive and moving, we are both higher animals, and we both get agitated by snarling dogs). I then extend a part of my value system onto (or into) the bird—i.e., I imagine the bird feels a fear of dogs that is similar to mine. As a consequence, I respond toward the bird as the Golden Rule prescribes—for instance, I chase away the dog in order to restore calm in the bird, which is just what I would want someone to do for me. Thus, I have seen that the bird is like me outwardly, and I have imagined it is like me inwardly. Therefore, I act to increase its Harmoniousness. Opening free the gates of love, I treat the bird as if it were me.

Acting this way makes me feel good. I have, in a sense, assuaged my own fears. Thus, my empathetic actions bring many benefits into my life—physically, financially, psychically, and otherwise. Doing good deeds makes me feel good, and I have found that good deeds are necessary if society is to function at all. Moreover, positive feedback works here: Good deeds inspire others to do good deeds in return. This reciprocity of love and Good Will builds

community. In short, ethical behavior increases Harmoniousness throughout Tef.

How revolutionary is our empathy of other Beings! How presumptuous is the Golden Rule! Though based on the self-deception that I actually know other minds, ethical behavior does work! Exactly why it works, I cannot fully say. But note: The effectiveness of ethics does not disprove the “No experience, no existence” tenet of Tef Theory. Hypothetical things—such as Other Beings—do not exist if they cannot be shown to exist. They are illatent, not existent, regardless of how useful they are.

Essay III: WILL AND ACTION

We might ask: If empathy actually works, and we therefore know that others suffer, why is everyone not a saint? If we acknowledge the soul—the Being that attends every human Body—why does evil still exist in the world. On the other hand, if we never really know and share the Inner life of others, how can anyone be accused of moral failure or apathy? With questions such as these we reach the high divide separating, on the one side, values and ethics, and

on the other side, Will and Action. So, even when we know better, why do we sometimes fail to act ethically?

I have always taken the stance—I have always preferred to believe—that people are basically good. I believe people are always well-intentioned, even though they are not always well behaved. In terms of values and ethics, I would say that all people seek and pursue Harmony, but that they sometimes do this in ways that are disharmonious to the world and even to themselves. For, in pursuing their egocentric quest for Harmony, people can do a lot of Disharmony to others. Yet, it is also the case that people sometimes achieve good ends by evil means.

In saying that we are basically good, I mean that our Evaluations cannot be faulted, for microscale Evaluation is never wrong. Harmony is Harmony. Furthermore, our grand ethical formulas—based as they are on empathy—although not perfect, are nonetheless generally effective. In summary, in our ethics, Harmony is the goal, and empathy is a key means for achieving it. We must, however, get feedback from past Actions in order to moderate our present Actions, if we are to avoid error. We must learn from life.

This view begs another question: Are Evaluation, empathy, and feedback everything we need to assure good behavior? Are they adequate tools to keep us living harmoniously with each other and with the world? The answer is, of course, no. Another key factor is still missing here: the motivation to act, otherwise known as willpower.

Will is the threshold or gateway that connects our values to our Actions. If we are to transform our simple, innate preference for Harmony into truly ethical behavior, we need to have sufficient Will—willpower that actually evokes Good Works, aka harmonious Actions.

What is Will?

What is Will? Where does it come from? How do we summon it? My answers to these questions involve the following observations.

* Our ethics is expressed via Actions. Most Actions result from an Inner motivating force. We call this force Will.

* Harmony (Harmoniousness) is our direction of preference, as revealed through each and every microscale Evaluation. Tef Theory's name for this arrow of preference is the Vector of Value.

* Our response to Harmoniousness is, initially, Gladness. Gladness can grow, becoming Gratitude (if Beings are involved), and Gladness and Gratitude can intensify into Good Will (aka love, if Beings are involved).

* Thus, our effective Good Will is the net direction and force (motivation) resulting from many, many Evaluations, both positive and negative. Good Will intensifies into Desire and Compassion.

* Action results when Good Will overflows and is implemented or expressed via the Body. Good Will thus becomes motivation for Good Works (aka loving, when Beings are involved). Good Works are Harmonious Actions.

The following is a chain of motivation, when Beings are not involved:

Evaluation (Harmoniousness) —> Gladness —> Good Will
=> Action (Good Works). [=> more Harmoniousness in the world].

The following is a chain of motivation, when Beings are involved:

Evaluation (Harmoniousness) —> Gladness —> Gratitude
—> Good Will (aka love) => Action (Good Works, aka loving). [=> more Harmoniousness in the world].

These are chains of motivation that successfully yield Good Works, and, we hope, a more harmonious world. Unfortunately, the chain can fail at one point or another. For instance, we may fail to heed certain Evaluations, as when we fail to listen to the “still, small voice”, or fail to obey our conscience, or fail to keep in tune with our true self. Or, competing values in us may cancel each other, resulting in a lack of net Good Will. Or, our Will may waver in strength and influence, becoming weak when needed or excessive when not needed. Moreover, the Action itself may be blocked or diverted by forces beyond our control (in life we

certainly do not exercise completely free Will!). Finally, we may sometimes simply make errors in our thinking or acting, errors analogous to mutations in genetic transmission. Errors tend to be disharmonious.

How important are values, ethics, and Will in our daily lives? I think the answer is this: Over time, we humans have become the single greatest influence on the future of natural and cultural systems on Earth. No longer can God, or Satan, or Nature, or Fate be used as scapegoats for the consequences of our Actions. Now the primary “root of all evil” is us. Therefore, what motivates us has to be of serious concern.

As a naturalist, I am especially concerned about environmental deterioration, about physical and psychic suffering due to our impact on the natural world. At the same time, I am concerned whether we have enough Will to acknowledge and confront ourselves as the leading cause of these problems. How to summon sufficient Willpower, when needed, is therefore a crucial topic.

Where can we find Willpower strong enough to turn back the flood of Disharmony caused by fear, hunger, greed, pain, ignorance, malice, and error? How can we motivate ourselves to honor and care for our world? What will make us save the planet—and ourselves? Many agree that “something ought to be done”, but when it comes to actually doing something, our culture tends toward apathy. Our collective Will falls short of the world's need.

We cannot merely shame one another for inaction due to lack of spine. Anger, pity, indignation, idealism—none of these seems to be quite enough. We need something greater, a level of Willpower commensurate with the massive tasks before us. Yet we seem to lack even enough Willpower to save our own lives!

In the past, our Will—our motivation to Action—was generated by hunger, lust, fear, discomfort, hedonic pleasure, and caring. But in our own times, these motivations have been blunted, or pacified, or played off against each other. Many people are near satiation in these areas, or they have learned to trim their need. Other people have been beaten back or blocked from acting on their basic instincts. In any event, these earlier motivations may not be sufficient for saving a planet.

Perhaps the root question here is this: Why care at all? Why should we humans care about animals, plants, ecosystems, and natural beauty? Why should we care about family and friends? Or even about oneself? Why, in sum, should we do anything at all?

Care—the loving Willfulness to act—comes only from within. Ethical behavior cannot be mandated from outside the self. Most of us no longer grant final moral authority to kings and popes, so we must therefore assume personal responsibility. But how is this to be generated within us?

The final answer is, we really do not know! Will is evoked by value and emotion, we know, but just how this process works is a mystery, just as the value born of Evaluation is a mystery.

True, some have tried to explain it. There are those who claim that Will springs from the unconscious mind. But belief in the unconscious mind collides with my rule, “No experience, no existence”. The notion of the unconscious mind seems strained and artificial to me—not very useful.

Nor are the views of natural science much help. Evolutionists say that values and Will have evolved in nature because they have helped perpetuate our species, presumably through facilitating successful reproduction. That is, our values and Will can be thought of as expressions of our genetics, of our DNA, giving us adaptive advantages. And in the really big picture, values and Will might be viewed as a consequence of the grand flow of cosmic energy through us, beginning with the Big Bang and ending, who-knows-where, in the future.

We must note, however, that science consists only of Scenarios: intellectual “stories” that are built up from ideas, ideas representing observed events in nature. Science is a function of the mind (that is, of the L.3 Intellection Sector). By contrast, Will is a product of the heart (that is, of the L.2 Intuition Sector), which is a different realm (a different Other World) from the mind. Will is what the heart feels, regardless of what the mind thinks or says. Thus, our real

task is to summon Will from the heart, regardless of whether we can explain it using the mind.

So, why care? Perhaps we care when we really want to care. Why, then, should we really want to care? Because we know we will suffer Disharmony if we do not? Disharmony can indeed be a powerful motivator. But what if we become so lacking in Will that we cannot even act to avoid our own suffering? (This possibility is not far-fetched. For instance, the United States has been building huge economic debts that many of those presently living will inherit. Has that expectation been powerful enough to motivate a change in our economic ways?)

Assuming that neither the fictitious unconscious mind nor the theories of evolutionary biology can help us to summon enough Will, I suggest that we explore two other topics that might help us gain enough strength of Will: utopian visions and the complex nature of motivation.

Utopian Visions

Perhaps one answer to “Why care?” is provided by utopian visions: our dreams and ideals. Perhaps motivated people are idealistic and visionary people who have been captured by their dreams. Might it be that our lives are more closely bound to such ideals and utopian visions than we realize—that we build our lives around such visions, and that without them we flounder, even in the face of impending

catastrophe? Tef Theory defines myth as a system of beliefs that infuses value into our life, thus guiding life. Part of myth's function, therefore, is to show us where we are going—where we must go, as our values require. Myths help us focus and coordinate our Will. Therefore, maybe we need new, powerful myths to live by. Perhaps the sighting of, and infatuation with, utopian visions is the only way to ensure that we will act, that we will survive ourselves.

“Why care?” may therefore simply demand that we find a strong myth and follow it—utopia-bound or bust!

Complexity of Motivation

Another answer to “Why care?” lies in understanding the complexity of motivation. After all, life is like a turbulent river at flood stage. Within it we can discern the direction and speed of individual currents (each with its own value), the flow of groups of currents (each group with its net value), and trends of the whole flood (with its overall value). Thus, if most of a person's body and soul desires to move in one direction, then that particular set of values constitutes one's Will. In this view, Will is the net direction in which the current of our values is trending at any one time.

Problems arise in our complex of Will, however. Currents of value come into competition with one another. Conflicting values cause us to vacillate. Our need to make decisions can occur only when competing currents of value

resolve into a single current. For instance, if complacency becomes more harmonious than active engagement, then our net value—our Will—will be to continue in our complacency. We will remain apathetic and inactive.

Failure to resolve competing currents results in indecision and thus in no Action. But note, such lack of motivation does not mean one is lacking in a strong sense of primal Harmony—which is the most fundamental Evaluation of value. It means only that certain harmonious currents are overpowering other harmonious currents in our stream of motivation. Thus, “Why care?” may be answered and implemented, at least in part, by clarifying our values, by resolving conflicting values, and thereby marshaling our forces of Will toward focused Action.

From the above discussion, it appears that our best antidotes to apathy are (1) finding utopian motivating visions and (2) simplifying and orchestrating our competing motivations. In this way our lives can become focused, such that our Evaluations of Harmoniousness generate Gladness and Gratitude, which can expand into Good Will (love). This Will then motivates our loving Good Works, our harmonious Actions.

Essay IV: LEAVERS AND STAYERS

We all differ. The little differences are obvious. So, too, are the big differences, the ones that distinguish major social groups: the young, the old, males, females, the affluent, the poor, liberals, conservatives, and so on. To create Harmony in Tef, we need to be aware of the differences among groups of people, and we need to know to which groups we ourselves belong.

Here I wish to focus our attention on two important human groups: the Leavers and the Stayers. To which of these groups do you belong? Leavers are people who want to transcend the old order, whereas Stayers are people who want to sustain the old order. And what is the old order? In the past, we have often called it nature. Today we sometimes call it Gaia. By whatever name, it is the natural ecosystems of planet Earth, the original, ancestral home of our species.

Leavers and Stayers differ in how they feel and relate to that original home.

Thus, one human group—the Leavers—seeks to transform, destroy, or escape from Gaia. They want to improve upon their ancestral home or even to abandon it altogether. The other human group—the Stayers—seeks to return, more or less, to the original state of nature and to safeguard it from excessive human meddling. They want to be at home in Gaia.

The Leavers are civilization builders, engineers, real estate developers, and space colonizers. They seem to be motivated by an underlying fear and distrust of Gaia, and they also possess an idealistic, even romantic, confidence in the power of human creativity. This drive appears to be an escapist kind of liberalism, a claustrophobia of sorts.

The Stayers, by contrast, are protective denizens of the old order. They are environmentalists and earth religionists and the keepers of sustainable lifestyles. For them, the norm, the ideal, the preferable, is Gaia itself. Cherishing nature with religious depth and zeal, Stayers feel themselves morally and spiritually compelled to adapt to nature and to protect it. Theirs is an almost childlike dependency on nature, a bedrock conservatism. Perhaps for them nature is a womb-surrogate.

Thus, I think we can perceive two big groups of humans: Leavers and Stayers. Leavers would genetically

engineer the biosphere, envelop the planet in cyberspace, and colonize the Solar System. Stayers, by contrast, would defend the primacy of Gaia, often revealing a neo-Luddite technophobia. They would restore the planet to something closer to prehistoric conditions and establish enduring, “sustainable” relationships with it. Of course, any one person can feel drawn to both life ways, to both Leaving and Staying.

I, for one, tend to be a Stayer, reflecting, no doubt, some deep psychological traits. My tendency is to adapt to Gaia, to remain lovingly dependent upon it, to transform it in only small ways. Moreover, I think most humans through most of prehistory have been Stayers—though perhaps as much from necessity as from inclination. That is, our Paleolithic ancestors were Stayers by default. They lacked the know-how, the massive energy sources, and the technological infrastructure needed to change the world in any major way. They could not have genetically engineered food crops, explored space, or built nuclear power plants, even had they wanted to. Thus, for 99 percent of human prehistory, our species has lived close to earth’s ecosystems, unable to change them in the ways we do now.

Yet humans have always shown the counter-tendency—Leaving. That is, by harsh necessity, or by strong curiosity, or simply by chance or error, we have sought to alter and mold both our world and ourselves—increasingly so in the last few centuries. One transformative revolution was our taming of fire. Another has been our increasing reliance on

agriculture. Yet another was the Industrial Revolution. Were these revolutions brought about by intellectual daring and heroism? Or by the spur of wonder and curiosity? Or in response to hunger and harsh need? Probably all of these played a part. Whatever the reasons, the Leaver force has increasingly propelled us out of the purely Stayer mode. Today's high technology—whose emblem is the computer—empowers the Leaver force exponentially, so that Leaving now overshadows Staying.

It is true, of course, that individual persons belong to neither camp exclusively. In fact, many of us would very much like to “have our cake and eat it, too”. We would like to explore Mars, yet keep Earth green and clean. We would like to bioengineer delicious, abundant new foods and effective new medicines, yet live and work in “natural” surroundings. We would like to march confidently into an adventure-packed, technology-rich future, yet honor our primate pedigree, our Paleolithic ancestry, and our obvious physical and psychic dependence on Earth's daily provender. We want it all.

Good luck! What most people do not realize is just how opposed these desires really are. For, to my eye at least, an individual person can no longer fully reconcile such diverse desires. Trying to do both—fully—would surely run any one person ragged, in fact, tear him or her apart. We have reached the point, technologically, spiritually, and socially, where a choice is being forced upon each one of us. This choice is between emphasizing Leaving or emphasizing

Staying. Each person cannot respond fully to both motivations simultaneously. Of course, each person can embrace each mode from time to time—though at the price over time of inconsistency and hypocrisy. (Note, however, that inconsistency and hypocrisy are as human as are our bipedal gait and a big brain!) In short, I see two contrasting, at least partly mutually exclusive, options open to us as individuals: mostly Leaving or mostly Staying.

This choice seems a pathetic, even tragic state of affairs. Perhaps there is no simple resolution for it, as it may be the result of both hard wiring in our brains and a fated historical trajectory. Yet, I suggest all is not gloom. We have one other option open to us! And that option is: As a species—not as individuals—we may indeed be able to have our cake and eat it, too. Collectively we may be able to resolve and harmonize our Leaver and Stayer tendencies.

If so, I think we need to do two, fairly simple, things. First, as members of society, we need to accept the reality of both modes, both the Leaver ideal and the Stayer ideal, for manifestly the species does contain both ideals. And second, we need politically to assure respect for both groups. As individual persons and as a society we need to understand and accommodate both. In short, we need a politics of inclusion for both Leavers and Stayers.

On the one hand, Leavers need the toleration of society at large. They need adequate time, place, money, and moral support in their quest to transcend Gaia. We need to concede

that the Leaver bent is to some degree shared by us all, even if latent in confirmed Stayers. Some funds should always be allocated for Leaver projects, such as space research, computer development, biotechnology, medical research, subatomic particle physics, and worldwide communications. Stayers must come to realize (and accept) the fact that Leavers have no intention of becoming Stayers, and perhaps are unable to do so. And Stayers also need to concede that some of the changes that Leavers bring about are good.

On the other hand, Stayers likewise need to be assured of society's caring and acceptance. Stayers need ecologically healthy habitats, political rights, funding, and moral support in their quest to sustain Gaia and their own lives in it. Their role is to preserve and perpetuate the human/Gaia relationship, a goal shared in part by Leavers—for Leavers, too, need air and water. Stayers must be respected. They are not atavistic, and must not be seen as psychologically or genetically deficient. They preserve both our innate wildness and the wildness and health of the Gaian ecosystem. Stayers must never go extinct at the hand of Leavers, even though the latter group have become more powerful.

Most important of all, Leavers and Stayers must keep open the channels of dialog with each other. Though the goals of each group are sometimes antithetical, yet, as members of one species, their goals are shared. The Leavers have become more powerful than the Stayers, it is true. Yet in recent years the Stayers have begun to assert themselves, compelled by climate change, loss of biodiversity, loss of

psychological wildness, and so on. Together, Leavers and Stayers dance together in agony and joy, sometimes ignorant and disrespectful of the needs and rights of each other. Yet if ignorance or lack of respect are allowed to persist, we risk failure for both groups. Failure need not, and must not, happen.

In the future, as we spiral out from Planet Earth to explore the universe around us and as we manipulate the Gaian ecosystem to feed many billions of human bodies, the leaders of both Leavers and Stayers will serve as priesthoods of “their” people. With such differing agendas, they will have to strive for understanding and tolerance for each other.

Thus, it is certain, to me at least, that Leavers and Stayers should, and must, co-exist. Both are sincere, and humanity as a whole needs them both. Unless an asteroid flattens us all, both groups will still be around decades and centuries hence. One priesthood—the adventuresome and creative Leavers—will look outward, seeking to transcend the status quo. The other priesthood—the caring and cautious Stayers—will look to the here and now, seeking to live in concord and contentment within the ancient Gaian matrix.

So, I think we humans will always be Leavers and Stayers. One group yearns for the stars. The other embraces the earth. Like Yang and Yin, masculine and feminine, Outer and Inner, these groups are opposite—yet they are capable of

being complementary. May Leavers and Stayers both flourish. May Harmony Prevail!

Essay V: DECLARATION OF THE NEEDS OF STAYERS

For Stayers, the natural world is essential and central. As Henry Beston would have said, Stayers seek to live in “poetic relation” to nature, drawing deep vitality from their association with it. Stayers, I observe, do not cleave so much to visions and ideologies as they do to primal wants and needs. They attend as much to sensation and emotion as they do to imagination and inference.

One need of Stayers is foremost: to live in a world that is more natural than cultural, a world where humans are not the overwhelming influence. (No doubt psychologists will step forward to analyze the Stayers’ clasp on Mother Nature’s apron strings: the tendency toward pacifism, adaptation, avoidance of culture, and delight in hedonic sense and sentiment. I will leave that analysis to the psychologists.)

I am more of a Stayer than a Leaver. The following wish list reveals my vision of the world as I wish it could be, my vision of a Stayer-oriented World. I would suppose this personal list has much in common with the visions of other Stayers. It is the sort of utopian vision that may help us generate the Will to avoid the worst effects of Leaver-generated changes in Gaia. So, as a Stayer, were I to stand before a canvas, paintbrush in hand, the artwork I would attempt would contain the following wants and needs. (But note: The following was written by a well-fed, healthy, financially-solvent Stayer, sitting inside a snug house. Were he suffering a bit more, he might express more of his Leaver side!)

1. I would paint the world quiet. Roaring traffic, canned music, industrial noise, annoying aircraft—these would all need to more heavily muffle their sonic excesses. In their place I would prefer to hear the rush of wind, sweet birdsong, water music, chirps of insects, and the patter of rain on my roof.
2. I would cleanse the air of bad smells: vehicle exhaust, smoldering incense, beer-bars, and in-your-face detergent perfumes. Why must I endure the stench of city streets, gift shops, tavern doorways, and overly-perfumed human bodies?
3. I would paint the atmosphere free of unnatural particulates and gases, that is, free of pollution. I do not want to see the air I breathe, unless it be natural fog or coastal haze or a whiff of wildfire smoke.

4. My world would prohibit most aircraft, for these mar the sky—for both eye and ear. I want my heavens free of human trespass: only a minimum of flying machines, no contrails, no visible satellites. And I would dim the dome of light that hovers over our cities, so that once again the people might thrill to the sparkling stars. I would have skies for which “blue” and “starry” are the normal, ordinary modifiers. A natural sky is our Gaian birthright!

5. I would paint a world of easy, direct access to nature. I need abundant parks and pastoral lands near my dwelling and neighborhood. I need abundant wild lands and large untouched wildernesses located within, say, one hundred kilometers, preferably nearer. And these places must be public, accessible not just to me, but to the masses, for communion and contemplation and recreation.

6. My Stayer paintbrush would cleanse the water of contamination and excessive microbes. My test of water quality would be simple: Can I, with reasonable safety, drink the water from springs, streams, and mountain lakes, without first purifying it? I want no Giardia or other pathogens in it. I want no chemical pollution in it. And without exception, our domestic water supplies should be clean and safe to drink.

7. I need landscapes free of garish or obnoxious artifacts, such as microwave towers, power lines, billboards, and harsh architecture. Let us have homes and other buildings designed

and built with organic lines and colors. Let our architecture blend with, or at least complement, its natural setting.

8. I would paint a world where unnecessary travel is discouraged, yet where necessary travel is easy. This includes public trails across private lands, public transit systems that are efficient and pleasant, and public bicycle lanes and other alternatives to the automobile.

9. Frequent contact with animals is another important need. I would have frequent firsthand contact with pets, but also with domestic livestock, with humanely nurtured zoo animals, and especially with wild animals in wild habitats. If I choose to continue eating meat, I should help slaughter the animals, preferably ones that I have personally grown or hunted.

10. I need a simple lifestyle, with simple technologies and freedom from mindless consumerism. My material wants should remain modest, so that my environmental impact can also remain modest.

11. My newly-painted world would reassure me that our natural systems are intact and healthy. Climate would not be changing due to anthropogenic global warming. Ultraviolet light would not be increasing due to ozone depletion. Wildlife would flourish in normal populations, free to migrate. Forests and other habitats would flourish without excessive human intervention: minimal logging, no blanket fire suppression, no pollution of streams and groundwater.

12. I do need security, health care, adequate nutrition, shelter, education, communication, public order, and recreation. But these and other needs and wants should be scaled back, so that an equilibrium can be achieved between nature and culture. My new world would have far fewer people, much gentler technologies, and quite different priorities. Communion and contemplation of nature, plus a modest lifestyle, would be its hallmarks (though the communion could be adventuresome and thrilling, the contemplation could be pragmatic and self-serving, and the lifestyle could still have some luxuries).

13. I would paint my world free of the tyranny of the computer and all other high technology. Leavers who wish to develop and use this technology must not force it wholesale into my life. My ancient ancestors lived, often well enough, without these grafts upon their flesh and psyche. Why not I, too? (Yes, I say this even as I type on my computer!)

14. My brush would paint a world free of genetic engineering—free of the smearing, subverting, distorting disruption that genetic engineering is bound to bring to the natural order. Selection, hybridization, and husbandry were the extremes of our ancestors' lives. How can we tolerate technologies that exceed those extremes?

15. I would brush a world no longer dependent on exotic energy sources. My new world would run largely on people power—on actual human muscle—augmented with modest non-human sources such as solar and wind power. Animals

would not be enslaved. Rivers would not be dammed. Nuclear energy would be abandoned (or, at least, re-engineered). Limited in energy, in technology, and in ambition, Stayers would seek to find and maintain humanity's proper place in Gaia, thereby to continue their communion and contemplation and enjoyment of the natural order.

16. Finally, my brush would assure Stayers of their essential political rights: a guarantee that “natural”, sustainable lifestyles will be permitted and tolerated—even welcomed and cherished—by the larger society. This guarantee would include freedom from social and religious harassment, freedom from coercive government practices, freedom to live low-technology lives. I am implying that society's interests lie in sheltering and fostering diverse lifestyles, including those of the Stayers, though these be markedly different from today's “average”, Leaver-dominated lifestyle. The Stayers must always have the opportunity to live in Henry Beston's poetic relation to, as well as in ecological balance with, the natural world.

Perhaps this wish list seems “off the wall”, hopelessly romantic, definitely impractical, even incredible. And I confess that I myself still have big transitions to make in order to avoid hypocrisy and inconsistency. But one has only to go directly to nature, and spend some time there, to begin to recognize the fundamental rightness of my vision.

Through firsthand contact with the natural world we discover much that is forgotten or unknown or unimagined in the cultural world. For, going to nature—abetted by Solitude—we come to know who we are, what we ought to do, and why we might want to do so. In nature we humans—the Stayers, at least—can embrace many of our true wants and needs.
