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The Search for Spirituality Amidst the Artificial Realities of Global Materialism

Chapter 4 - Natural Spirituality

“Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better.” Albert Einstein

Natural Spirituality

Natural Spirituality refers to unlearned spiritual laws and forces that effect and govern the biological life and death of individual beings and ecosystems. It includes the areas of natural law and the life force, being the intangible spark of the fifth dimension that ignites and sustains biological life. It is cyclical in nature between life and death and seeks systemic balance through the production of a living surplus that largely neutralizes the dissolution and loss of organization and energy known as entropy. The earth's complex living biosphere operates through interlocking contexts of multiple subsystems.

The materialistic perspective views humanity as the highest moral authority. Hence, collective human thought becomes the source of spirituality. Unknowingly believing that the physical universe is all that there is, materialism enthrones science, the knowledge product of human intellect, on the holy of holies of our society, but even the most humanistic flavor of scientific materialism does not satisfy our deepest spiritual needs and questions. Nature does so beyond presupposition.

Natural spirituality is the awe beyond mere chance that must be experienced first hand. The mystery of Nature answers human yearnings both conscious and subconscious. Nature's multilevel impact supersedes any of the whys and wherefores accumulated in the exegesis of scientific laws and discoveries pertaining to the natural environment. For many, natural spirituality is the consummate ideal of what spirituality is all about - the very awe of existence, of life in the world of life interconnected. Some are honest in recognizing the boundaries of natural spirituality. For others it is a matter of functional behavior betraying the underlying philosophical perspective of the universally absorbed secular materialism that permeates modern global culture.

In simplest terms natural spirituality is a value system in which the quality or nature of life is more important than its continuation. Words being what they are, I need a chapter just to define what that last sentence means. Suffice it to write here, that in natural spirituality the intangibility of life is valued over its material context. In other words, spiritual life is valued more than money or any other materialistic expression of power that can influence or change the natural and sociocultural (both economic and political) worlds we live in. This value concept is currently out of vogue in western civilization. All truly conscious humans sorely feel the effects of its absence.

Many psychosocial commentators believe that we either have already begun a swing back towards spiritual balance or that we soon will do so. These conclusions or predictions are founded on a broad observation of human history and social behavior. A surge in favor of society's spiritual search is seen as a balancing reaction to our present pre-occupation with materialistic values based on a selfish preoccupation with financial wealth and social status. The things and experiences of daily life are now encountered at a pace of change unimaginable a few decades ago. I am certainly not the first or only author to comment on this aspect of modern life at Internet pace.

Spirituality demands and exhibits a significant degree of detachment from the material world. Those in its search may consciously seek to alter the hold of reason upon their hearts through the application of material aids that magnify sensual pleasure as a way of initiating or enhancing this detachment. Consequently, spiritual exercises have almost always included some kind of preparation of conditions favorable to its experience. Examples of such preparations include: fasting, meditation, prayer, locating the event at a sacred place, including rituals of mind-altering drug consumption, music, drumming, dance and/or mind altering foods, herbs or drinks.

Nothing really surprising here. In fact it should be expected given our discussion so far. It is logical to invoke material aids or environmental atmospheric in order to inspire natural spirituality, which at this

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level is defined as a person's or group's encounter with the biological life force. Natural spirituality's core characteristic or mission seeks to preserve a meaningful perpetuity for its adherents through an embracing of natural spirituality's forever of the fleeting present moment – the eternity of the NOW. In truth, the inevitable, but consciously delayed, end of natural spirituality is mortality – death.

If the end of natural spirituality is death, then why is it that most of us come away feeling more alive than ever, renewed and recharged from encounters with the natural world? First, because encounters with nature do impact us spiritually on multiple levels. There is a real spiritual force in nature that imbues every ecosystem uniquely. Our presence in natural environments draws on and contributes to those natural spiritual forces giving us the feeling of being “recharged.”

Secondly, even though we have studied it and come to rational explanations for so much of it, there still remain vast tracts of unexplored natural phenomena and ecological relationships that beckon to the more humble inquiries of a person seeking a purpose beyond self-gratification. Even at the present level of knowing and unknowing, nature delivers up on its platter more than a single person can conquer. So "Mother Nature" can still present us with something bigger than humanity – especially in small groups. In our direct encounters with her vast and powerful uncontrollability we come away exhilarated, or perhaps humbled at our hopelessness in the face of her fury.

The exact biome or activity engaged does not seem to matter much in the final analysis, except to say that each of us have opinions and preferences – some of which are more inspiring than others. Whether we choose scuba diving to encounter the denizens of the deep or sailing the atmosphere in a hot air balloon, the essence of the adventure is the same as we engage chosen, limited technologies to ride the waves of natural power as we explore the boundaries of technical understanding.

The popularity of one ecological encounter over another is but a function of accessibility, intellectual appeal and educated distribution of preference (marketing). Usually our choice of experiences derives from a positive sociocultural context such as continuing family traditions of outdoor activity or going on outings with friends; however, the impact of mass media nature programs drives an increasing amount of ecotourism that grants inexperienced urbanites access to some remarkable experiences with esoteric natural phenomena.

The appeal and satisfaction supplied by natural spirituality lies in its honest stripping of several layers away from the artificial realities we humans create through our cultural adaptation to this world and universe. Rarely in pursuing natural encounters with the borders of the wild do we strip away our entire cultural interface, but many layers are inevitably left behind. For example, even with the advanced safety harness and with the coaching of expert guides, rock climbing can be dangerous - so can white water rafting or spelunking. That potential danger, or management of lost total control over one's circumstances in the wild, will awaken spiritual resources within even the most jaded secularist.

Removing Artificial Reality Naturally

Artificial realities come in all manner of cultural packages and formats. Usually when we think of reality, we realize that each personal perspective differs to some degree from the truth as measured objectively. Each of us has a set of beliefs and experiences which seem real to us within the scope of our own sensations, feelings and thoughts. Rationally, we may recognize or suspect that what we believe or are experiencing internally or personally may in some manner be distorted by our own imagination, that it just might be different from what is really going on, if we only knew better. Even so, we rarely do anything about it. Thus, experiencing an immensity of complex natural simplicity often provides the more objective perspective we need to re-assess our artificial self-constructs of reality.

Autonomous and interactive cultures get a grip on reality by using socially developed ways to confirm and measure it through some accepted form of verification. The elements of objectivity are commonly introduced by accepting a validity determined by an agreement arrived at from many points of reference or observation where others are able to independently repeat or confirm the conclusion or fact in question. In the multitude of witnesses, many aspects of real truth may be established. As long as the witnesses are in some measure objective, spiritual phenomena and principles may be

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established as valid or at least determined to be important and meaningful to those who experienced/observed it.

Although individual departures from "reality" may be what first come to your mind, I am more concerned here with those artificialities that reach societal scope. Their deceitfulness lies in their very pervasiveness in the consciousness of a society's members. When artificiality extends throughout a society, it is very difficult to impossible to obtain the services of objective outside observers acceptable to that society. Within the United States it is more difficult to obtain a perspective of how other nations view our policies, for example. When it comes to spirituality, the issue is that we are all mortal human beings. People might claim spiritual insight or experience, but how does one verify those claims?

Over the course of their development, human social realities may depart from the measurable truths of the natural world through the designed concentration of energy or power exerted upon a small area. "Small" may still be large enough to integrate large numbers of people into a web of economic and psychological interdependence. The basic principle is the same as when great wealth becomes concentrated in one person's pocket or in the construction of artificial real estate developments from retirement communities to shopping malls.

Artificial bubbles of affluence can be created in the midst of wrenching poverty and perpetrate the illusions of wealth or social viability exploited by their builders and owners. Inside the controlled confines of these artificial oases everything looks "right with the world." One's sensory evidence supports the psycho-spiritual lies promoted by the resort's promoters at one level or another. The truth is only evident when you escape to a more detached perspective or temporarily leave the resort to witness how the staff and surrounding populace lives.

Concurrent with the advance of "factual" scientific materialism, "subjective" spiritual values were replaced by the rationalized morals and ethics of the modern, "educated" worldview. As human societies advance technologically and scientifically, they learned to substitute the tangible evidence of hard facts experienced in the "here and now" in the place of the previously believed intangible promises related to some sort of ethereal and unproved afterlife.

Scientific humanism suppresses spirituality as superstition, but it does not supply a universally satisfying substitute for our basic spiritual needs. Indeed, the popular curriculum preaches that as science has advanced, the spiritual world, bounded and defined by superstitious ignorance, has retreated from human consciousness even as the "factual" world of modern science replaced "superstitious ignorance" with knowledge and material fact.

Into this philosophical debate enters the sheer experience of the great outdoors. Any in-person exposure to the wonders of nature and cosmos impacts human consciousness. We sense the presence of something much greater than ourselves. Artificiality collapses in the presence of engaged biology and biomes beyond urban belief. This natural appetizer of ultimate reality challenges us to the core of our being with something from beyond our ego creations of illusory wealth and the artificial reality of golf resorts and verdant indoor-outdoor shopping malls. We sense that hidden in the expanse of the natural world we might find some answers to the spiritual questions that nag at our mental innards.

Materialism's unsatisfactory answers to life's meaning, challenges and problems gives rise to drug abuse. The use of various hallucinogens, intoxicants and depressants to neuron-chemically alter one's conscious perspective is materialism's unspoken substitute for healthy spirituality. Secular humanism officially classifies spirituality into safe and suspect experiences of elevated consciousness. The safe experience participates in the pioneering edge of the scientific frontier where science is precariously engaged in the process of producing knowledge about the unknown natural world. Every other form of spirituality is considered foolishness, suspect, or even dangerous to reputation and life.

Spirituality has increased in popularity as a backlash against the overly materialistic secular culture of the modern west. Human identity and the impact of a single person's choice have been lost in the massive billions of people pressed into our consciousness by multimedia awareness. From sociobiology to consumer market manipulation, people subconsciously sense the futile emptiness of stolen personness, so they rationally and/or instinctively rebel against the secular norms of their materialist

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desert and emotionally enter the dense unknown jungle of spirituality in search of themselves and a life worth living.

The Search Begins

Searchers usually start in what is considered a safe area of spirituality – from a walk in the woods to yoga exercises. However, one's journey may soon begin to touch on what lies just beyond, so the searcher probes into the border areas between what seems truly safe and what suspiciously beckons as possibly dangerous and thus, exciting and appealing. These border areas have become so popular that many universities offer courses on them, and some offer accredited academic degrees in exotic spiritual studies.

One area of spiritual study on the border between the safe and suspect are the various folk religions and myths held by indigenous tribes left along the sideline of our fast-paced raceway we call the modern world. Science portrays these primitive practices to be the sops of mental comfort required by a life bound by superstition or as the blissful ignorance formally tolerated in those who are not yet "modern." The primary exception to this paternalistic putdown lies in the area of healing herbs. Big Pharma is busily interviewing and documenting the few surviving primitive herbalists in order to tap into the thousands of years of acquired experience with various healing herbs.

Some examples of suspect spirituality include these same tribes. Healers with herbs are also shamans who often combine the herbal treatments with spiritual exorcisms of infecting spirits and other unseen forces. Some perform knifeless surgeries. Others become entranced healers channeling diagnostic information about the sick subjects similar to America's famous "sleeping prophet" Edgar Cayce. Beyond these "primitive" tribal practices, any journey into the dark side of magick is considered dangerous and potentially deadly. The meaning here goes beyond any concept of moral collapse or an eternity spent in hell. "Deadly" here means just that – the cessation of mortal life. That means life as we live it every day. Messing with the "other side" was fraught with unknown dangers; therefore, shamans were concurrently feared, sought after and respected by their communities.

Borders between metaphysical classes of experience blur easily. Most suspect spiritual pursuits lie outside the immediate realm of natural spirituality, and I categorize this class of phenomena as pneumagenic spirituality. Pneumagenic spirituality is classified in Digital Spirituality as real encounters with genuine spiritual forces, or entities or beings. I come to mention it here because natural spirituality, as well as theological or philosophical spirituality, may act as a doorway into the uncharted dimensions of the metaphysical reality.

For example, many aspects of natural spirituality are utilized in beneficial or "white" magick. Practitioners of magick differentiate between the safe "white" magick and the dangerous (suspect) "black" magick, and they recognize that the border between them is very hairline and jagged. There are many different systems of black magick. The variations lie primarily in the different names and specific order of rituals invoked, but the basic principles are quite similar. The world of the occult is a confusing, ever-shifting terrain of smoke, mirrors, truth and lies, but more on that in the chapter on pneumagenic spirituality.

Unbalanced Sexuality

Nothing dominates popular media more than amoral sex. Its omnipresence feeds obsessively compulsive economic transactions driven by libidinous addiction. Sexual appeal, advice, issues and images are so pervasive in modern western society that I will not even attempt to prove that our excessive focus on sexuality is out of balance. Instead, I will offer a discussion about why sexuality is out of balance and how that impacts one's search for spirituality.

Throughout the natural world, the sex drive is one of the most powerful biological forces of life. Throughout history, humans have exploited and merchandized sex in a manner that distorts and destroys human lives on a massive scale. Besides an obvious linkage to profit generating popular demand, gender socialization and sexual expression play key roles in the processes of one's identity

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development. Individual choices within cultural expectations in sexual style and substance provide a palette of primary colors to paint one's living self-portrait. Merchandizing sexual choices and expectations mightily contribute to the commodification of life, which is a primary and deceitfully effective way to devalue it.

Because modern materialistic cultures dry out the spiritual waters of the human heart, they create an inner emptiness that drives millions to try almost anything to become someone. Most people alive today struggle with unfulfilled lives of limited hope or happiness. Our modern spiritual wasteland offers spiritually deceptive answers to these inner needs in the form of gender role redefinition or chosen modifications to sexual identity. An individual muddling through life in a state of psycho-emotionally confused consciousness is desperate to design whom he or she really is as a person. Our media profitably panders to these spiritual needs with misdirected advice at a high price.

In other words, a true spiritual vacuum is transformed into, or positioned as, a problem of unfulfilled sexual satisfaction open to universally simplified solutions that may be directly or indirectly purchased. While issues of sexual dissatisfaction are genuine, they do not account for the pervasive imbalance of sexual preoccupation present in western society. Put into historical perspective, I see the media's sexual answers as an updated version of idolatrous fertility worship. To insure environmental fecundity, many ancient religions incorporated human sexual acts and food offerings into their priestly liturgies. In modern society, the search for spirituality is defined by the behavior of millions as the participative and voyeuristic exploration of sexuality.

Today's sexual solutions to our genuine spiritual famine are driven by images implanted by popular media through video and audio devices instead by the statue of a mother goddess placed prominently in a temple. Similarly, today's male and female film and music idols dominate the virtual altar of public attention and receive billions of dollars from millions of fans who place budget priority in the virtual experience of a diverse assortment of sexually oriented entertainment venues – many of which are totally bizarre, demeaning of humanity and violently destructive. Of course, virtual experience eventually leads to attempted actual experience with other persons, whether voluntarily engaged by consenting adults or through forced abduction and murder of adult and child victims. If even only a few of the many incidences reported are accurately verifiable, there is more than enough evidence to support the society wide issues presented here. Unfortunately for the thousands reported and the millions not reported, unbalanced sexuality takes its terrible toll on human lives every second of every day.

Natural spirituality can help us move towards a better balance in sexuality. It cherishes life within the course of a person's life cycle and social context. Sexuality is not denigrated or exploited when it is experienced in the environmental interchanges of real life as working persons of intrinsic value. It is not commodified when engaged in as a natural expression of responsible love and care, and neither do its participants suffer endless event chains of abuse and identity devaluation to empty destruction.

Naturally, our birth gender contributes to who we are as individuals. Because life experience does not satisfy millions, they are open to the allure of sexual solutions to their spiritual identity problems. Sexual desires and activity tap into the life force heavily, mold emotional outlook and provide tangible expression of artificial and real personal identity. Although it is a deceitful substitute for spiritual power, sexual experience and image are readily accessible and may be immediately rewarding sensually. Millions, if not billions, are enslaved to it resulting in a faux spirituality that can only create a material-bound identity.

Natural spirituality's inner peace evades the sexual deviant. Evidence for this conclusion is abundantly encountered in almost every public forum because the abusers of sexual power consistently seek social acceptance for their contrived concepts of sexual normalcy, which are actually excessive distortions of artificial reality. The temporary euphoria enjoyed from self-directed sexuality provides only short-term satisfaction. Its transitory reality of impact calls for reinforcements because it is an artificial reality. Just as a Ponzi scheme needs new investors to pay the promised premiums, so do perpetrators of sexual deviance demand open public acceptance of their behavior, and/or new objects of their desire,

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in order to expand the borders of a social artificiality or lie. The energy focus centers on the arrogant seeker of public approval in an idolatrous exercise of an identity destruction driven by material gain and/or sensory-emotional addiction. It is all the more dangerous because gender supplies one of the most foundational identity components.

Present social expectations do not help. Materialism has perverted western cultures' modern views on sexuality. It's commodification of life cheapens sexuality so that it destroys people through its abuse at the extremes and by its distorted, socially perceived role in life. Natural spirituality helps to restore a balanced approach to sexuality through a reverence for the special sacredness of life's creation ability within the responsible social contexts of healthy family life. If permitted, it reminds us that the problems of life are challenges to one's spiritual growth as a unique person. Those challenges are best met by embracing life through the application of a forgiving love rather than by fleeing the challenges of painful disappointments, betrayal, hurt and/or unwanted consequences of our poor decisions and the circumstances that arose from those decisions.

This approach does not necessarily mean remaining in what seems to be a physically or mentally abusive relationship that is destroying one's physical (bodily) and/or psychospiritual health. It is important to get an objective third party spiritual perspective on our own lives sometimes because we cannot be objective about ourselves. Our materialist values and everyday practice of use and toss, enjoy while it lasts then exchange it for another, applies to more than toys or automobiles. It has overflowed to how we treat ourselves and others spiritually by creating a culture of blaming others for the consequences of our own foolish, wrong and/or impulsive decisions. Mortal life is by nature unfair in order to inspire the spiritual response that will reveal who we are intended to be forever.

Respectful practice of sexual responsibility is impossible without mutually committed love between the participants as well as for any new persons born of their union or affected by it. Ideally, I refer here to unconditional love, but even a balanced conditional love will work psycho-socially. Without disciplined love, sexual activity becomes repetitively boring and empty of lasting gratification. This leads to the pursuit of extremes in abusive sexuality cyclically expressive of and causative to the devaluation of one's self and worth as a person. The commodification of one's own sexuality for the purposes of survival and/or sensory escape from life's empty promises only represses spiritual enlightenment or progress. It is a choice skewed towards death and not life.

The burning issues of American society are not really "homophobia" and a woman's "choice" concerning the legal rights over her body, but rather the personal and social attitudes toward, and the practice of, sexuality now "liberated." Liberated from what? Perhaps an abusive situation, but as a society, we are clueless that the unhealthy relationships causing sexual abuse and dissatisfaction are ultimately rooted in materialism – perhaps even a false spirituality. Nor does escape from one sexual trap justify a materialist response that lands one into another. Responses to problems are not real solutions if their primary feature is simply to relieve us from the need to responsibly face the difficult spiritual challenges that come from entangling personal commitments, failed relationships and the natural fruit of heterosexuality, which is a new person - the ultimate purpose of life by design.

Thus, abortion becomes an issue of sexuality. Sexuality is naturally bound to the generation of life. Sexuality without that possibility is not natural, which observation has implications for those pursuing homosexual preferences. Yes, it is true that one can find examples of asexual reproduction in the natural environment. In most cases asexual or self-fertilization is a specie's emergency survival strategy used in difficult circumstances. On the whole the natural spiritual balance found in biological life is expressed in the female-male yin-yang. It is not yin-yin or yang-yang. This is the digital nature of both the biological and spiritual dimensions of the universe. Of course, we must exclude from this systems design view the exceptions where things sadly go wrong due to the destructive mutations and/or degeneration of human, plant and animal genetic material. Process design always provides for errant defects or statistical outliers.

By natural biological design, sexuality is spiritually sacred because it is the concentration of biological and spiritual life forces. Nature's sacred core is fertile life and not sterile death. Reproductive union produces the creation of new beings when bodies are sexually joined together. Actually, sexual union

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creates several new identities for people, which are manifested biologically, socially and spiritually.

It is not just the baby that is created. Socially a family comes into being, and the life forces are spiritually mingled, too. The relationships thus created in turn form learning situations that force us out of the comfort zones of self-protecting selfishness to consider the care for another adult and then innocent, totally dependant children. Sexuality was purposely designed to biologically force a spiritual confrontation with ourselves. Corrupting sexuality to purposefully avoid or negate biology's spiritual learning opportunity destroys natural spiritual potential to the detriment of all. Spiritual balance provides for family planning but not for family avoidance.

Being sacred, human societies around the world and down through the ages have made more taboos and rules concerning sexual relations than almost any other aspect of human society. These rules defined the applicable responsibilities for sexual relations by each culture's moral consensus. Historically, there has been a universal religious bias towards heterosexuality because of its obvious potential for the children so necessary for the survival of a clan, tribe or nation. I do admit that cultural biases have often been restrictive to oppressive of women's rights and dignity as persons. Also, some ancient cultures did permit homosexuality, but ideally only within prescribed parameters that still recognized the sacred nature of potentially reproductive heterosexuality.

Of course, there is no consensus in modern western society today so there is great confrontation between different subcultures within our society. The source of that confrontation is the growing predominance of the materialistic outlook on life by all participants in the dialogue. They spend their energies on excusing their own failing by pointing to the abuses and failures present in the lives of their opponents.

Rather than admit to personal spiritual emptiness, they compare themselves to others less commendable. Rather than measure their attitudes and behaviors against the higher standard of even natural spirituality, they associate with fellow deviants from the same. None even dares to mention even the true health cost to society of materialist sexuality in both the dollars spent to deal with the consequences of modern sexual practices as well as the suffering and impeded lives that result from sexually transmitted diseases. Condoms are not the universal, across-the-board answer – a reverence for life is, beginning with one's own spiritual potential.

Instead of honoring the sanctity of sexuality in specific and life's sacredness in general, modern western societies' sexual attitudes and behaviors have made an idol out of heightened passions and pleasures as substitutes for real life. Natural vitality has been crushed out of western society by its materialistic value system and rejection of healthy spirituality. Mass culture's headlong crash in the pursuit of evermore bizarre and extreme sexual expression and exhibition testifies of its deathly core of being.

Sexual pre-occupation becomes a form of idolatry whenever the felt passion and self-benefits of its exercise are more valued than its practice as an expression of life intrinsic in successful union. This attitude makes the modern approach to sexuality a material thing to be manipulated for strictly personal advantage out of something meant to be shared in trust that is precious in itself for its wealth of potential and opportunity. Biological sexuality is the fountain of natural life, and the bodily urges and pleasures of its practice are omnipresent in the natural cycles of life throughout the ecosystem at all levels of biological existence.

My point is that natural spirituality contributes a healthy sense of balance to our modern materialistic approach to sexual pleasure and perversion. It points out the necessity to protect life in all of its dimensions – both in mind and body, spiritual and social. In contrast, mass media entertainment promotes the pursuit of sexual pleasure with a distortion that values excessive sexual compulsion to distraction more than the life force it represents. It does so shamelessly in greedy pursuit of prurient profit.

In today's widespread commercial and manipulative exploitation of sex, materialistic societies have abandoned the intrinsic sacredness of life for the ephemeral experience of momentary nervous sensation. In its place they have erected an impotent holographic image of the real thing. The images

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of pleasurable desire are everywhere, the realities are not. The responsibilities and rewards of what comes after or should accompany sexual activity are resoundingly absent.

And the result? The result is a passing passion that does not satisfy but leaves one still searching insatiably for more. The more leads to excess sexual activity, drugs and violence. The bottom line of this destructive process is broken relationships, abandoned children and ego identity-implosion. All of which impede healthy spiritual growth and fulfillment because they break down biological health and constrain creative identity formation.

Love requires intrinsically mutual valuation and balance. It is a submission to the balanced rhythms of the natural forces of life. It is humility before the grandness of a living purpose beyond self. Instead of a manipulation to solely self-centered personal achievement, status, pleasure or desire, sexuality congruent with healthy spirituality is a synergistic system of energized, self-perpetuating biological and social relationships that do not require inordinate intervention and insertion of external power or manipulation in order to be satisfyingly fruitful and survive. The important core of the issue is not how one was born or currently expresses his or her unique identity. Rather, the key consideration needs to become who we are to become. We should seek to maximally conform to life and not to death, to Eternity's unconditional love instead of temporal artificial realities of humanly defined love.

Dualism is the Wrong Approach

In dualistic systems of spirituality, the nature of the body is considered evil, and the nature of the spirit is perceived as purely good. Spiritual pursuits in this genre abuse the flesh or focus on deprivation of the body's biological needs or natural senses in order to enhance the presence and/or contact with the spiritual. Accordingly, any spiritual contact, possession or encounter with the realm of eternity is almost automatically judged to be good because the temporal world of the material, including the fleshly body, is evil or at best a hindering distraction. In some eastern theologies the material is not even real because of its passing, temporal nature.

Digital Spirituality emphasizes the reality of the physical universe, a material reality, along with the balanced roles of both body and spirit in the formation of one's spiritual eternity. Who we are flows from both components of our being. Without the union of a body and a spirit, there is only death. An unbalanced approach to either side of this structure inserts increasing levels of deathness to one's life, which is at its heart spiritual in nature and eternal in potential. As unique persons, we are not completely material or temporal, spiritual or eternal, but an incongruous melding of it all. Thus, extreme bodily asceticism is not called for to deal with an evil body. Nor do we bridge the sensual gaps between the metaphysical and the physical by eliminating the body's role in life as a strategy for removing barriers to spiritual enlightenment.

The importance of one's body to the formation of eternal identity is poorly understood by all philosophies and faiths. Many of them do, however, retain practices that honor the body's natural form, health and functionality. By the end of this section I hope that you will better understand why one should take proper care of his or her body in this life even though we live in it only a short time within the perspective of eternity.

Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha, understood the role that balance plays in dealing with the body spiritually better than most eastern philosophers. His point was balance: neither deprivation nor excess. Drives of self-preservation – lead to much suffering of self and others. The goal is to keep the body under discipline but not abused through beatings or extreme deprivation. The middle way is best.

Your Body Beautiful

Modern western culture may be the most body conscious society that has ever existed. It obsesses about the external image of the body. People spend huge amounts of time, energy and anxious thought about what they can do to modify their external appearance. With the advances in medical technology, more and more of this obsession has focused on the refashioning or a body's flesh, its manipulation and/or adornment with painted tattoos or imbedded jewelry. Most do not think about its

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purpose. Too few even consider its healthy maintenance, growth and development over one's lifetime. And yet all of this energy derives from a universally perceived truth: our bodies are what set us apart from one another. They are what make us unique as individuals.

Much of our body image mentality revolves around our feelings of sexuality and the desire to be wanted or attractive. We have been media conditioned to equate sexual acceptance with the acceptance of ourselves as persons. Sexual intimacy substitutes for psychological depth of knowing one another. Rather than engage in thoughtful, multidimensional activity and conversation, people engage in sexual acts and fantasies. The absence of inner peace, of knowing that one is loved and a part of a familial whole of some kind drives the phenomena of substitute families from gangs to "swinging" clubs and resorts.

The mystique of sexuality has disappeared. Ancient fertility rites were more balanced than today's abandoned, irresponsible, almost frenzied pursuit of personally experiencing sexual excess in the number of partners, positions and a seemingly endless assortment of high-priced, manufactured accessories. Our culture is fixated and too many people's thoughts are fixated on the potentially addictive preoccupation with escapist sexual pleasure. Continued participation in this jaded pursuit of selfish pleasure in the absence of committed relationship context only aggravates the sexploitation of all involved. If the true spiritual hunger of a sexually unbalanced person is neglected, it becomes desperately aggravated. Putting off, denying or suppressing our inner spiritual needs only feeds the continuity of false pursuits of increasing sensual titillation that will never satisfy the soul because it is the commodified and deceptive search for meaning in the rush of feeling the power of the biological life force surging within us. It is ever so fleeting and destructive of personal worth and identity as a uniquely creative being.

However, it is also wrong to conclude that the body and sexual desire are evil. They are not. They are natural and neutral in moral character. It is what we as deciding people do with them that counts. Just as international trade is good for national commerce, so a healthy balanced, sexuality is good for a person's spirituality. But too much of a good thing uncontrolled becomes evil, trending to death and destruction. So it is with frenzied global trade in pursuit of the very last mill of profit. So it is with frenzied indiscriminately excessive sex adventures. Both have commodified good things to a level of explosively destructive consequences.

The Body is Not Evil

Human civilization has suffered from great evil. Although the definition of what is evil may be debated between persons and cultures, that evil exists in the human sphere of experience and nature is universally admitted. The causes of evil are as debated as its definition. Digital Spirituality postulates that evil is caused by spiritual imbalances in the life force. Human civilization does not evidence the same balance of yin and yang as found in the natural environment. It is deficient in balance, which is why immersion in nature revives people. If we decide to accept the impact and consequences of natural reality into our lives, then we can experience a recharging of our spiritual batteries. Our spiritual index moves towards balance.

The source of imbalance in human systems is directly linked to our capacity to create artificial realities. Civilization is an artificial construct not found in nature but created by human societies. That they are essentially artificial is witnessed by all human civilizations' cyclical and transitory qualities. Every "Golden Age" of every people and culture in the history of humanity is bracketed historically by chaos and degradation. The rise of a "Golden Age" is usually due to a strong leader's forced aggregation of resources, power and influence over a collection of populations. Usually one or more subcultures dominate others. Excessive concentrations of power and wealth corrupt spiritual balance, which eventually leads to a decline and fall for the historical cycle to begin again. For thousands of years, the limited advances of human technology kept the excesses manageable so that civilization has continued in spite of some occasionally severe imbalances of evil. Modern technology has expanded the power of humans so greatly that we can create artificial realities with the unintended potential to terminate all life on earth as we know it. Of course, some would intentionally use those powers to destroy parts or all life on earth in order to accomplish their diabolical purposes.

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Spiritual imbalances come about as the result of two primary causes. The first is by human decision to realize excessive desires and power for personal benefit at the unbearable expense of others. The second cause is the interference and agenda of unseen spirit beings that also depend upon the same life force that sustains all of nature and humanity. These beings drain power from natural life support systems as well as from human social systems, which include empires and religions operating under the powers and principles of material spirituality. I will discuss this further in the chapter on pneumagenic spirituality.

Since evil derives from the imbalances of the life force, then neither the human body nor the bodies of animal species are evil, although both possess sensual drives for survival, appetites essential to biological function and regeneration. No one has ever considered animals evil because they often need to kill one another to eat or procreate. Disease may create errant behavior patterns, but healthy animal bodies are not naturally possessed of evil, although demonic or angelic possession and use of animal bodies for unnatural purposes is documented by a number of ancient religions.

The natural environment is a spiritually balanced set of interlocking ecosystems that perpetuate the cycles of a diverse web of biological life. The natural balance of the life force in nature is upset only by gross external influence. Examples of such factors are human urban expansion, asteroid impacts, earthquakes, continental drift and the intervention of spirit beings mentioned in the paragraph above. Thus, evil is generally absent from natural organisms. Under the influence of a mostly balanced life force, animals are not evil; therefore, the flesh of their bodies is not inherently evil.

The difference between an animal's and human's biological bodies and their physiological functions is minimal until one enters the realm of language, symbol manipulation, consciousness and artificially created reality. Animals adapt to their environments and, within the limits of their genetic signature, may change biologically and socially over time and circumstance to improve their survivability. Any evil, sickness, madness, disease or depression is due to an imbalanced life force. Animals cannot manipulate the life force, but humans can do so and have done so repeatedly. People adapt to their environments culturally and not biologically. They change a natural environment in a way that creates an unnatural or artificial environment or reality. Thus, lush gardens and massive buildings may come into being in the midst of deserts or sub-arctic regions, where such life would otherwise be impossible.

Human biology accesses the same breath or life force as animals, and human beings die for essentially the same biological reasons that animals die. Unlike animals, people do manipulate the life force into imbalance and create evil. Both material evil and good are due to structural imbalances of the life force created by the imaginative power of human decision responsible for the formation of artificial realities. In fact, human conscious may be defined as an artificial reality with the power to manifest changes in the material universe through bodily interaction leverage by technology. Thus, human bodies are not inherently evil. How we as persons respond to their urges and needs may create an evil experience or evil consequence for ourselves and/or others, but the empowering source of that evil is the imbalanced life force and not the body itself. Remember, natural death is not an evil but the evidence of a closed system running out of energy. There is a momentum of natural renewal through the creation-destruction cycle, but even the speed of light is slowing, which proves an albeit slow, but total, system wide trend to dissipation or energy loss.

So the human body is not evil, and dualistic religious theories of an evil body and a good spirit are wrong. The body is neutral. The life force is a null set of good and evil, light and dark energies. There is no immortal soul or spirit creature imprisoned within a normal human body. Instead, we are responsible to make the right decisions about life in pursuit a slightly positive spiritual mix of choices that is not so excessive that it negatively impacts the spiritual force of others or the natural environment's carrying capacity. The wonderfully observed tolerance of natural systems to sustain temporary imbalances of biological presence is a reality too often ignored. Just because a good situation is sustainable does not mean that more of the same is also sustainable. There are limits to the flexible adaptation of natural systems.

Some will object to Digital Spirituality's contention that human life is only material and temporal. In truth, many religions and philosophers contend otherwise. I find no evidence for innate human

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immortality, and the evidence often proffered rather attests to the existence of spirit beings that may take and/or are given possession of fleshly bodies for the energy high it gives them. In the end, these spirit parasites kill their hosts with destructive callousness. To better understand the spiritual capacity or goal of humans, or to better integrate the body and all of its fleshly desires into a spiritually balanced life requires some philosophical understanding of how the human being's structure of body, spirit and mortal soul contributes to consciousness, identity development and eternity.

Structure of Human Life and Identity

The material universe possesses the capacity for change. My rationally derived purpose for this built-in characteristic of change is to enable a free will creativity to yield a rich treasure of diversity in individuality. The metaphysical forces do not vary in their universal qualities or nature. With spiritual forces, what matters is the degree of access and use: how much or how little are they at work in a being. The life force flows through the entire system constantly recycling. All living organisms must tap into it at sufficient levels to remain healthy and alive through its normal life cycle. Just as any physical force or energy follows universal laws blindly, so does the life force. It does not discriminate in any way but interacts with a living thing based on exposure, receptivity, capacity for flow and manner of application. It may be used for both good and evil purposes by conscious beings: the former results in a net positive balance of life and the latter in a theft of some measure of life that short circuits or distorts the natural balance of life.

Thus, someone rich in the life force is very much alive, without any lasting sickness, sorrow or depression. Because of the universe's characteristics of constant change, all living things – plant, animal and human – require constant energy replenishment. If energy levels drop low, or the biological system is not balanced in its nourishment and activity, in its inflow and outflow of energy, then the being trends towards weakness, ill health and death. In fact, nature employs competitive survival to eliminate the weak and unhealthy. In any ecosystem, objective reasons contribute to weakness or strength, health or death, and its balancing act works to replace the unfit with the best fit available. How the specific trends manifest themselves depends upon the bodily qualities of the plant, creature or person under consideration.

Consequently, our individuality, our personality or what makes a person the unique identity he or she is, will be rooted in the material differences of each person's body and how those differences manifest themselves in the living of one's life. Some of those differences represent assets, and some provide difficult challenges to overcome. Thus, spirituality focuses on how and what a person chooses to do with his or her life. How do you apply the spiritual forces available with the body you are born with. Writing this statement, I have added a third element to a person's living structure – the intangible consciousness or creative capability for choice in thought and execution.

Just as ultimate reality is divided into two spheres of physical and metaphysical, so biological life reflects this same organizing principle. Two primary elements must be present for life to exist: a working bio-mechanism or body and the power to activate it – the life force in the temporal dimension of reality. Because the rich potential for genetic variety is further diversified in how a person chooses, creates, avoids, rejects, implements and survives the multitudinous options and combinations of life factors available, spiritual reality presents us with tremendous potential for unique identity creation in metaphysical abundance.

The awareness of this potential is consciousness. Unfortunately, most people go through life with little application of conscious choice. They neglect and do not use their freedoms and vast potential for rich living. Most wander through the maze of human existence mindlessly reacting to and directed by blows or shocks administered by others individually and collectively (through social interactions and structures) perceived to be beyond their control. They prefer spiritual sleep, the dull hum of residual consciousness instead of truly seizing life as a whole from beginning to end, one person interacting with a living universe.

If you don't think that "automatic pilot" describes your life, or that it doesn't happen to you, I ask you, "How many times have you driven by your objective, missed an obvious highway exit or talked on you

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cell phone without causing a serious accident?" You were on what I call "automatic pilot" – the brain's capacity to function and keep you alive biophysically despite your lack of attention. While this works often and variously under different biological and social environmental circumstances, it does not work to your benefit in any search for spirituality. In fact, the natural brain is set against the directed effort and thought required for spiritual growth. It is set on self-preservation, which is a steady road towards death all of the time fearing it and avoiding it. Healthy brain activity is not consciousness or mind.

A human being's individual pattern of consciousness or mind is his or her identity. Your mind and being, personality as a unique individual is completely intangible resulting from the activation of a functioning body given access to the life force. The dynamically unique pattern of who you are comes from the union of body and spirit. Separate the two, and we are dead, inactive, unconscious, not present in this point of time and space. The very intangibility of our identity's essential and existential being is what gives us the potential for eternity. Anything else would be bound to the material universe in all of its vastness.

For example, I believe that our identities leave imprints on the life force like spectral signatures in electromagnetic or light energy. The patterns of our existence, creation and interaction with others and all life in the universe travel as intricate patterns imbedded into the life force as it travels to the ends of the universe at the speed of light in the 5th dimension. Thus, the record of our identities – every word, deed and thought at each discreet mini-moment of time - possess a material eternity that may be accessed somewhere in the material dimension of the universe right now. That applies to every person who has ever lived. If and when those patterns reach an appropriate spiritual receiver, they may be played back or restored. That is the reason why bodily resurrection plays such an important part in many religions. Even in Jesus' case, the Bible testifies specifically to a bodily resurrection. His resurrection to a spiritually eternal life included the transformation of his dead fleshly body into a metaphysical one before it had decomposed. It was a purposed object lesson for all humanity.

The Soul Defined

The soul is the interactive and intangible intersect process pattern of a particular or individualistic body and spirit, which includes some animals as well as humans. It is a moving wave pattern created in the dimensional matrix of the life force from the exercise of consciousness that arises from a body-spirit union. Consciousness is the almost timeless point present where the union-intersect forms patterns based on the decision and action of all souls present at that position or place.

Since the Life Force is a changeable and variable composite of good and evil at any one point in time, conscious decision making modulates it in a way similar to how electromagnetic light carries spectrographic signatures of lined frequency markers. The counter action at work is the overall Life Force requirement to be an even balance of good and evil; therefore, any periodic signature mix of good and evil will be pulled and pushed towards the null value.

Consciousness' quality of intelligence and creativity varies greatly not only between but also within species. Humans are differentiated from animals in their innately born ability to create artificial realities. The existence of all natural, mortal souls is bounded by the space-time continuum, which means that they continue to exist in a moving pattern beyond the consciousness where they were created. It also means that they are ephemeral-temporal and not immortal since the existence of all natural souls, being unions of distinct, individual material bodies and the universal life force spirit, will end when the physical universe and time itself ends – including any theoretically potential access or reading-retrieve-ability.

Summing up the structure of a human person, Digital Spirituality proposes that human life is founded on the union of a material body with the breath of life or life force, a spiritual power temporally bounded at the speed of light referred to as the 5th dimension of space-time. The union of the body and spirit creates a third entity, the soul. Human beings are born mortal souls. The souls are mortal because consciousness in space-time requires the living union of a fleshly body and life force. Both composing elements are material and limited by all natural evidence.

The intangible soul created by their union is itself mortal because it depends on the union of two

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material components. The intangibility of the creative identity or consciousness of a person is evidenced in his or her impact on and in the physical universe – both in regards to animate beings as well as inanimate objects. The patterned signatures of each person's consciousness left in the life force are themselves temporal, although possessing long-term material existence. All evidence, imprint and conscious existence experienced as human beings will pass with the end of the physical universe. The rational deduction that the metaphysical universe as it may exist today would pass away at the same time as the physical universe only emphasizes the temporal nature of human life in all of its elements.

Thus, all humans are born mortal souls. By itself, this conclusion does not mean that immortal souls do not exist; rather it means that any search for an eternal spirituality must eventually transcend the present set of material - artificial realities. It must minimally reach outside of the physical universe, which is why so many have engaged in pneumagenic spiritual encounters. I will discuss that in chapter 6. In the next chapter, I will discuss philosophical and theological spirituality because it is especially wise to think thoroughly examining the evidence available and reflect upon it before engaging spiritual powers outside of the natural balance of the life force or one's own conscious use of it.

From this perspective of human structure, the body becomes more significant than the superficial treatment so often given to it by religions and human cultures throughout history and especially now. Firstly, one's genetic heritage becomes more important and relevant. We reflect the genetic success of our ancestors as well as inheriting some cultural and spiritual context. The role of the body in creating unique identities helps to explain why its genetic make-up is so complex. The Human Genome Project is just beginning to discover that the body's genetic structure is much more than just the identification of which gene variants are present. Just think what it would be like if everyone shared identical genetic signatures like identical twins?

Respect for the body is important in respecting the person. Decoration of the body reflects the identity of the person. Cleanliness, grooming, exercise, good diet and other health considerations become important components of healthy spirituality. We have been given the blessings of life, consciousness and the capacity to learn and change. There is not excuse not to apply them in whatever situation we may find ourselves at the present. A balanced but attentive attitude and pattern of bodily care and health maintenance contributes to eternal well-being, too. It frees our minds to search more effectively. If one is presently in poor health, incarcerated or trapped in the rat race of surviving the self-imposed traps of civilization, any small beginning of choosing the options biased towards life instead of death produces immediate spiritual benefit that will eventually materialized in better physical well-being, too. This creates a virtuous cycle of spiritual growth within an enhanced natural life expectancy at a vibrant level of dynamic physical activity and mental consciousness.

Abuse or commodification of a body cheapens the person and is a severe act of violent destruction. The degradation of the body in any way degrades the person. This is true for sexual promiscuity as it is for racial or ethnic discrimination. It degrades the special value of a person destroying the uniquely individual nature of his or her consciousness and violating the spiritual principle of free will. What is done to persons is done to tribes and nations by forms of Globalism that destroy national identification and heritage through policies and practices motivated by greed for wealth and power. I also make similar arguments elsewhere in this book in regards to unregulated immigration policies primarily justified by economic considerations. Valid spiritual principles work at all levels of scope and should be applied accordingly. Both conditional and unconditional love take the consequences of life destruction into account, and based on a policy or practice's degree of inclination towards life, it may be considered moral and spiritually ethical.

The Life-Death Continuum

If life is a kaleidoscope of color in motion, then its moral rendition is the grayscale conversion to the black and white pixelated pictures of each moment. Digital Spirituality is built from the binary analysis of living data across time and space as perceived in the human dimension of life on earth. Every action and thought may be broken down into its elements, its network of decisions and implications, effects of internal and external consequences that composes to some shade of gray when seen from the total composition. The moral judgment of human life is the product of the life force that can produce

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nothing more colorful because it is all a bit picture of black and white (yin and yang) of varying intensities. The structure and composition of those elements can be revealed when any aspect of a person's life, or any social interaction, is magnified to a high resolution of pixelated clarity.

Although the ultimate objective is to get back to color, we cannot get there without analyzing the elemental pixels of that which empowers our living: the fruits of the life force in our lives and those we interact with up close as well as at a distance. This means getting back to my earlier definition of good and evil. Good (light) is that which pertains to life and evil (dark) is that which pertains or trends to death. There is no pure white light in the natural world that is absent of any darkness because everything eventually dies. Just as the material stuff of life is recycled from tealeaves and field mice to redwood trees and populations, the spiritual stuff of life, the breath of life - the chi, ki or prana - constantly cycles between the dark and light, hitting all of the gray points in between. Its best outcome is a balance picture that trends toward the light, a life evidencing more white than black. This is the internal philosophical argument in support of karma: that how we live life now affects our spiritual future in some way. Some kind of score is being kept.

Without reliance on some external or traditional standard, analyzing whether one's thoughts, habits and considered actions trend towards health, happiness and life or sickness, sorrow and death is the most reliable and objective natural standard of morality. It works when balanced psycho-biologically between the life of one with the lives of the many as well as a socio-biologically between the cultural survival of a minority within a majority and humanity as a whole. This approach is not without flaws as objectivity ever remains a challenge, for example, but it is the intrinsically wise standard of natural spirituality. Its primary advantages are the preservation from the overt destruction of the extremes and the stimulation of individual human consciousness as well as cultural health and vitality.

An immediate comparison with cost benefit analysis comes to mind - especially if consideration is given to long-term effects and not just the immediate or near term consequences. Many similarities present themselves as well as common weaknesses. The advantages of being able to break down all thoughts and behavioral patterns or acts into their decision tree or high-resolution pixelated composites is very attractive. The major weaknesses come about when considering the subjective intangibles of life. How do you account for or consider the value of loyalty, the definition of beauty or even what constitutes the minimum quality of life worth living? Despite these very significant systemic weaknesses, such an approach is more rational and less arbitrary than the materialistic values absorbed without conscious evaluation that dominates our modern world's program of moral education. Global values are skewed to a material measure of wealth, of value based on a slippery standard of monetary worth, and they are promulgated inadvertently and/or intentionally by the media and systematically through the rewards and punishments of the economic-political-social systems of human societies.

Many individuals are aware of their culture's moral programming and try to re-make their mental outlook through a redefinition of who they are as persons. The challenges of doing so successfully are significant. It requires a great deal of energy, so conscious self-reformers often borrow or lean on existing alternative answers to modern materialism. Bookstores and media formats explode with alternative ideas, so it is natural to go shopping and select what we like from them. Most subconsciously adopt a homogenous variant of what their peers are doing and espousing. A few go a little deeper than that in a conscientious exercise of internal moral and philosophical consistency. They deeply examine whether or how the individual items bought or considered fit into their existing identity paradigm as well as evaluate the net moral value of their evolving sense of philosophical and moral self as recast in an intentional image of personness. Some of these self-creations venture into the extremes of severe artificial reality. None of us can naturally escape all forms of artificial reality. That is where nature comes to our aid again and one way how environmental issues can give us a dose of reality towards a better-balanced identity formation.

Balancing the Life Force

An absolute balance of the life force creates a null, which is death, so most of the time one must balance a living system on the positive side. I refer to this as a living balance. A living balance to the

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positive is required by material reality's natural entropy or loss of energy. The whole universe is winding down and so is every living system – biological and social. Where as I speculate that perhaps the universe requires additional energy input from the 12th dimension in chapter 8, abundant evidence from the natural environment testifies that a skew towards surplus indeed provides a living balance. Each participant in every ecosystem produces more than is required to simply replace itself. In a functioning biological system that is not overtly stressed from the outside, natural checks and balances even out any temporary extremes of abundance or paucity before they get out of hand and set a trend towards self-destructive implosion or explosion. The tolerances built into the natural environment accommodate moderate surplus as insurance against irregularities of experience.

Another way of expressing this principle is that natural systems provide for plenty but not surfeit or excessive abundance – nor extreme dearth or lack. We apply it in our lives by seeking to create and retain more wealth than is immediately foreseeable – savings against the proverbial rainy day. When a person maintains a living balance of the life force, then he or she is alive, strong and healthy. More energy is available than immediately required to sustain life and do something constructive. Mortal life is in an inevitable descent towards death, but conscious intervention can cause the descent to spiral gently, floating downward as a down feather slowly sinks through the air to the earth, inevitably surrendering to gravity. Some are lazy and do nothing to impede their natural fall. They experience empty lives without meaningful substance and die much earlier than they should. Then there are those who actively choose the rush of addiction. They gamble everything on a fast and intense high. It is like buying their way to becoming a gold rocks that sinks fast. They live fast and die fast burning up their potential in a self-destructive fury of ignorant confusion and spiritual impotence.

Balanced social and economic systems conform to these principles, too. Any lasting and productive social organization must have more willing and active participants involved than it needs or momentum is lost overtime to burn out. Social burdens are like weights. A person can carry a very heavy one a short distance for a short while. If someone helps, the two of them can carry it further and longer. If the weight is divided and shared with many – and with even more in reserve, then the weight can be borne almost indefinitely.

Similarly, businesses must make a profit large enough to sustain proportionate growth appropriate for its market. It needs enough reserves to fund innovation and invest resources in maintaining a positively balanced presence in an ever-changing market or set of markets. Nothing in life is static. A static business strategy dies being the victim of self-imposed (perhaps out of neglect or arrogance) economic entropy. As in chapter 3, I refer again to Eliyahu Goldblatt's Theory of Constraints (TOC). His theory purposes growth that does not exhaust its market. He targets abundant but not excessive or potentially exhaustive profit. The result is a business organization that positively balances the needs of its employees as well as its customers. Such an approach succeeds on multiple fronts in multiple dimensions.

Environmental Themes

Most of our ecological problems exist because we have "tinkered" with nature in order to force matters more to our liking. Awareness of socially and technologically created environmental problems has grown over the last few decades, but the real causes are obfuscated by their natural complexity and the socio-political biases of researchers and journalists. There may be recognition that the lack of spiritual values plays a major role in the justification of environmental abuse, but the solution is usually portrayed as the need to return to natural spirituality, such as practiced by indigenous peoples. The reaction of western democracies typically tries to "tinker" with the environmental factors as we currently understand them in order to restore it to some semblance of sustainable ecological balance. Neither approach will work over the long haul because each ignores some aspect of the systemic nature of environmental problems.

More directly related to natural spirituality are the environmental movements, the goddess fixation and its ultimate transmogrified form as Gaia, Mother Earth. The ecosystematic web of planetary life is naturally complex in its functional interdependence. The scientific establishment is transfixed by the twin headlights of biological genetics (the human genome project) and ecological equations of balance

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and imbalance (weather manipulation and global warming). Even with vast supercomputers and linked mega-nets of individual PCs and minicomputers, science is almost stymied by the vast complexity of our planet's multifarious life systems. The average person may be forgiven to think of it all as an intelligent system of sentient potency – a goddess, the Gaia Mother Earth of Greek myth. This symbolism aligns well with the more radical feminists, which explains its resurgence in public awareness.

Of broader appeal is the environmental movement. Of course, there is nothing wrong headed about taking care of our planet responsibly. It is our home and the material source of all life outside of the sun, which energizes the earth's biological systems. Without the sun's energy, the earth would be a cold rock covered with a lot of ice. Thus, the ultimate yin-yang of Mother Earth and Father Sun has produced all life as we know it. These are the balanced natural forces of the universe at work on our globe, the dark absorbance of earth and the light radiance of the sun.

Science has not demonstrated how yet, but a number of specific sub-theories on how life began have been popularized over the years in order to justify how evolution could take place. Evolutionary theory remains learned speculation not sufficiently supported by empirical data. Science is more helpful and scientific in how we can restore raped environmental features and preserve/enhance the remaining biologically diverse remnants of our planet's natural state. Along these themes a number of organizations have come into existence to save rainforest areas, preserve animal or plant species and otherwise to preserve and restore natural areas whose functional systemic values have become better appreciated.

We should recognize that some of them promote a false spirituality being at their core mere skills for global materialism. Nevertheless, most people involved in these organizations are clueless as to how their sincerely honest motives and hard work are being used by the global elite to distract attention from their actual goals of monopolizing the controlling share of the world's power wealth and status. Beyond deceiving of the masses and relieving us of our positive balanced abundance and freedoms, the elite have probably deluded themselves into thinking that they are doing the rest of us a favor.

And let us not forget the introductory material of this chapter. The natural environment genuinely inspires us spiritually. Nature's vast beauty uplifts psychospiritually even as its health sustains us biologically. Both aspects are vital to human self-preservation. The common denominator of holiness is life. The sanctity of natural life systems is embedded in most indigenous religions. This extension of the holy to the planetary ecosystems has extensively re-entered western consciousness. It is but an acknowledgment of the ancient biblical command to Adam and Eve to "dress and keep" Eden's garden paradise.

Preserving the Environment

At this point I transition into the next chapter on theological or philosophical spirituality. Again the borders are fuzzy and overlap. The environmental movement has adherents who seem to be searching for personal salvation in the preservation of the wilds. A resurgent pantheism attests to a god in all, which is life. That life is biological, but it is also empowered by the natural life force symbolized by the yin-yang, which I believe is the spiritual answer to science's inability to create life even in the presence of all the necessary earthly compounds and solar energy. Biological life is indeed more than mere chemistry or physics. Biological life in all forms also requires a metaphysical force operational within the multidimensional context or space of biochemical processes.

The human species is indeed threatened by a globalized greed that rapes our environment for greater profit through the commercialized technological manipulation of genes whose potentially disastrous consequences go way beyond healing human disease or every day low costs that also produce increased yield bumper crops to feed the world's hungry masses. This threat is real and almost out of control. It is beyond the capability of a few to stop. That will require a universal rejection by the vast majority of the earth's population or divine intervention. The challenge of this set of issues is driven by the facts that individual self-preservation is more locally potent than collective self-preservation, and that the environment can only be managed and protected locally.

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Secular materialism has destroyed vast areas of the earth's richest biomes. Its science threatens the survival of nations and probably even the entire human race. The destruction of the environment has come about due to a perversion of holiness. This is where the religious concept of holy has traditionally come to bear. Holy matters concern collective survival. Life is sacred, holy. Not just human life, but all life is sacred. Consistent congruent thinking demands an ethical system that is both pro-environment and pro-life. Moral social systems are built on the foundation of the holy and embrace both macroeconomics and the social implications of human reproduction.

The organic species provide natural boundaries for genetic drift that may be guided as we have experienced over hundreds of years in the more natural development of domesticated agricultural plants and animals through selective breeding. The manipulation of genes across these genetic barriers is what creates the Frankenstein plants and animals that are not subject to natural environmental controls. This process is potentially even more disastrous than inserting a certain species from one side of the globe into a biome not capable of integrating or controlling it to the loss of native species and ecological balance. We have dozens of examples of these expensive and harmful occurrences from Japanese beetles and kudzu to mussels and mutated virus diseases.

But the answer is not a reversion to pantheism, where humans spiritually and biologically blend into the environment because they are a mere extension of the great apes. Our capacity to create artificial realities and to impose some of those realities upon the earthly environment denies us the easy out of considering ourselves mere animals. Animals function subordinately to their environments. The tools and adaptations they make do not modify the natural state beyond biological balance over a reasonable space of time.

Humans can and do use concentrations of power to modify the environment excessively beyond the rational natural boundaries of biological accommodation creating artificial realities of localized impact that exert may also a global impact. One example of this issue is depleted uranium. Uranium is a natural element. It is mined from the earth and concentrated by human technology to create nuclear weapons and fuel for reactors. As a by-product of atomic power plants, either depleted uranium needs to be artificially stored in remote hi-tech, shielded radioactive waste dumps deep in the earth's mantle for a price, or it must be sold for a quick profit – usually to be manufactured into armaments. It is still highly radioactive being much more concentrated than how it naturally occurs with a half-life of 4.5 billion years. In fact, many tons of it have been "recycled" into US armaments. As a consequence of the Iraqi wars, the Mideast suffers from wind blown dust clouds of the atomized remains of America's "conventional" armaments made out of depleted uranium. Today there are thousands of square miles exposed to this debilitating and deadly radioactive dust that imperils both US forces and local civilians.

Certainly, we must preserve and protect the natural environment. That is almost a no-brainer because we have seen the effects of industrial pollution, urban effluent and other forms of hazardous waste. High concentrations of population require hi-tech solutions to biological and industrial waste, or we suffer high evidence of disease, suffering and death, which are spiritual negatives.

Our spiritual obligations must include and go beyond preserving the natural environment for future generations because materialistic greed is only neutralized by a balanced spirituality. And that is why biological life is spiritually holy. This concept of holiness lays the foundation for rational philosophical or theological exploration and academic study of matters spiritual and divine, which is covered next.