Living the Religion of Wilderness Adventure:
The Wilderness Recreation Experience and Everyday Life

by

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H.B.O.R., B.A., Lakehead University 1995

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of Geography

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ABSTRACT

Wilderness adventure recreation (hiking, mountain climbing, paddling, etcetera in natural settings) produces "optimal" or "spiritual" experiences with the potential to profoundly influence the adventurer's everyday life in civilization. Personal experience of wilderness inspiration raises the question of "what to do about it," - that is, how to live everyday life in accord with the truths intuited in the experience. Wilderness adventure experiences imply the imperative to transform life, but how? The purpose of this study is to interpret the meaning or "moral" of the wilderness adventure experience in a way that provides resolution to this "problem," which can be understood as a religious one. The problem is the need to come to terms with an everyday life that feels incomplete when a higher form of life has been encountered in wilderness. An interpretive method based on hermeneutic phenomenology is used to describe the meaning of the wilderness experience as it presents itself in three sources: wilderness literature; depth interviews with wilderness adventurers; and introspection based on the researcher's own experience. The findings reveal that the optimal wilderness experience is essentially one of total engagement with an all-encompassing reality. The moral imperative of the experience is a lesson of priorities, and also a way of being: primarily, to maintain the ultimate importance of the reality encountered; and furthermore, to carry through life a way of relating to the world that maintains connection with this reality. The result is a non-dualistic worldview in which the distinction between civilization and wilderness dissolves, the "problem" of wilderness adventure is resolved, success is defined in non-materialistic terms, and life goals emphasize process. The maintenance of this perspective is practicing the religion of wilderness adventure. Wilderness adventure experience remains the core practice in this way of living.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND DEDICATION

First I would like to thank friends, particularly roommates, who make living worthwhile. To everyone who gave me a place to live, I am grateful for the gift of home, which is the foundation of well-being and everything that follows.

I would like to thank fellow students and staff at the University of Victoria for creating a wonderful learning environment. I would like to thank the University of Victoria for financial support which has been invaluable in terms of the opportunities it presented. In particular, I am grateful to Drs. Peter Keller and Antoinette Oberg for their contributions as members of my thesis committee.

Gratitude goes to my interview participants for all the hours they donated, for making the entire thesis problem vanish over coffee and conversation, and thus for being a wilderness unto themselves.

Acting as my Supervisor, Dr. Doug Porteous provided me with the advice, the wisdom, and the seemingly limitless patience and encouragement that brought me through to completion. I could not have been given greater freedom to follow a research path that was authentically mine, but I also know that anything I accomplished would have been impossible without his influence. For that I wish to express a special thanks.

This entire endeavor is dedicated to my parents. It is an understatement to say that they have given me a lifetime of unlimited love, support, and independence.

There's more than one answer to these questions pointing me in a crooked line
And the less I seek my source for some definitive, closer I am to fine.

Indigo Girls

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The land gets inside us; and we must decide one way or another what this means, what we will do about it. (Lopez, 1986:411)

Interpretive research does not typically begin with a problem or seek a solution, but rather, aims to achieve an understanding; however, as far as an understanding goes in the resolution of confusion, or uncertainty, or disunity, it leads to a "resolution" - a kind of solution to a kind of problem. The relevance of what follows rests largely upon one's ability to imagine that such a problem might indeed exist, awaiting resolution. Van Manen writes, "Every project of phenomenological inquiry is driven by a commitment of turning to an abiding concern" (1990:31). Underpinning this research project is an "abiding concern" about what the inspiration of wilderness means for everyday life, a confusion, uncertainty, and feeling of disunity that presents itself as a "problem" that will only go away, as Barry Lopez observes, when there is sufficient understanding of what the experience of the wilderness landscape means, and we can "do about it."

This "problem" is based in the "wilderness experience" - being in "wild," natural places, unmodified by humans, through recreational adventure activities like mountain climbing, backpacking, and kayaking or canoeing. The experience results in compelling "optimal experiences" which can be interpreted as "religious," with profound significance for life. Optimal experiences are the land "getting inside of us." If wilderness experiences are internalized in this manner, the "problem" arises when returning from the extraordinary experience to everyday life in civilization. The city challenges the wilderness adventurer to make sense of the wilderness experience in a way that allows its transformative power to be channelled into a way of living day to day. Religion is based upon just such a practice of making knowledge of the ultimate relevant to ordinary human experience; in this sense wilderness adventure is a form of religion.

Interpretive research is "turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world" (Van Manen, 1990:31). The only reason that I know the "problem," as I have described it, also appears in the literature, is because I first

experienced it myself, as a motivation to study Outdoor Recreation as an undergraduate, as the impetus for this research. The problem presents itself to me as the need to understand what my experiences in wilderness mean for how I should live my life. What understanding will enable me to be true to those experiences, to not forsake them while participating in the modern world? Wilderness and civilization appear in contradiction. Coming to terms with this paradox is a reconciliation of opposites demanding a religious solution. Stated as a question, this thesis aims to investigate, "what does it mean for one's life to have a belief system rooted in the recreational experience of landscape?"

This study is an interpretation of the wilderness experience that aims to address this question or "problem." Guided by a passion to seek any source that suggests what the wilderness experience means, its implications for living, this study describes the wilderness experience, and also how it has been explained and interpreted by others.

Three types of sources were consulted: literature; interviews; and personal experience. The literature reviewed includes academic literature as well as the works of significant wilderness writers. Depth interviews were conducted with eight people for whom wilderness adventure is central to life. An introspective examination of my experiences as a wilderness adventurer introduces my own perspective through which all the other information has been inevitably filtered. This first-person presentation dispels any illusions of objectivity and makes explicit the influence of my own perspective.

Grounded so explicitly in subjectivity and, later, in intersubjectivity, the personal nature of this research enhances its readability and ultimate relevance, more than undermining it in any way. The "significance" of the study is personal; I can now give up the single-minded inquiry and get on with life. The ultimate significance is to help others by offering a description that adequately responds to their own experiences. The youth leader working in wilderness wonders whether the experience has any lasting value, beyond a psychometric peak in self-esteem that later declines and leads to depression (Greenway, 1990, 1995a,b). "So what?", then, of the wilderness experience? Is it significant beyond another way of exploiting a disappearing resource? Beyond "ecotourism" being just a business that brings economic wealth to a depressed

community, beyond wilderness adventure being the publicized experience of reaching arbitrary points, there is a spiritual meaning that I communicate here. Business faces the contradiction of sustaining itself on a resource which exists in opposition to the principle of commodification, the wilderness parks movement struggles with its paradox of "use and preservation," and environmentally-minded adventurers ponder, "How can our being adventurous be advanced into a relational and ecological context of being?" (Henderson, 1996:86); therefore, I enter here the dialogue about the relationship of humanity to nature, the search for a morality which Lopez calls "a common dignity" that includes the land and its creatures. Environmental thinkers agree that overcoming modern problems requires this understanding of spiritual meaning, "the software of sustainability" to inform a transformation of individual character and lifestyle, and a fundamental shift in consciousness (Berry, 1977; Orr, 1992:181; Porteous, 1993).

This thesis is structured as follows: Three discussions, Chapters 4, 5, and 6, complement the initial findings from the literature review in Chapter 3. Chapter 3 is divided into four parts. Part 1 interprets the wilderness experience as a religious experience, and describes the research "problem." Part 2 is an historical background of the wilderness concept. Part 3 conveys the wilderness experience as presented by nature writers. Part 4 describes "explanations" of the wilderness experience.

The three discussion chapters respond to the research question. Chapter 4 is a discussion of the eight sets of interviews, compiled to highlight major themes. Chapter 5 is a discussion of the imperatives and implications suggested by the literature. Chapter 6 is a discussion of my findings from introspection. This Chapter is a return to the introspective focus of the "Personal Introduction" in Chapter 2. A brief conclusion is presented in Chapter 7.

First, Chapter 2 lays a research foundation in two parts. Part 1 presents methodology and the method used for this study. Part 2, "A Personal Introduction", begins the "introspection," combining the first person "confession" that commonly appears at this point in human science research, with a discussion of how I came to know the "problem" of wilderness adventure in my own experience.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH FOUNDATION

To truly question something is to interrogate something from the heart of our existence, from the centre of our being. (Van Manen, 1990:43)

Part 1: Methodology and Method

"A Methodology of Engagement"

This study employs a "human science" approach versus one of "natural science." In this distinction made by Wilhelm Dilthey between *Geisteswissenschaften* and *Naturwissenschaften*, the subject matter of the former is "*Geist*" - "mind, thoughts, consciousness, values, feelings, emotions, actions, and purposes" (Van Manen, 1990:3). Methodological orientations in geography can also be generally divided into positivism, humanism, and structuralism, the respective aims of which are predictive explanation (*erklaren*), empathetic understanding (*verstehen*), and social change (*praxis*) (Bird, 1993). Positivism, which became the dominant method for geographical research in the mid-1960s, is the natural science method characterized by: "objectivity (via a value free methodology); hypothetico-deductive method (via theory-laden observation); testability; replicability; and, predictive ability" (Bird, 1993:46). The subjects of natural science are typically "'objects of nature,' 'things,' 'natural events,' and 'the way that objects behave'" (Van Manen, 1990). Opponents of positivism contend that "value-free" and purely objective research is impossible, and that theory-laden observation divorces data from the context that gives it meaning.

Humanism was presented in geography in the 1970s, in works by geographers including Tuan and Relph, as a more appropriate method for the study of human experience. This human science method enables the study of subjective phenomena inaccessible to positivism - "'persons,' or beings that have 'consciousness' and that 'act purposefully' in and on the world by creating objects of 'meaning' that are 'expressions'

of how human beings exist in the world" (Van Manen, 1990:3-4). An antecedent to this humanistic strain in geography is John K. Wright's concept of *geosophy*, introduced in 1947 to describe the study of the geographical ideas of ordinary people, "farmers and fishermen...Bedouins and Hottentots" (Johnston, 1991:162).

Humanistic geographers contend that human behaviour must be understood through *verstehen* - from the actor's viewpoint - and in the context in which it occurs (Bird, 1993). This is also referred to as a hermeneutic or interpretive approach. The emphasis on *subjective experience* and *context* are the two prominent features of humanistic geography, which is thus characterized by *anthropocentrism* and *holism* (Ley and Samuels, 1978). Humanism is *idiographic* in its approach, rather than *nomothetic*; it aims to understand phenomena by revealing meaning (Ley and Samuels, 1978).

To understand the "problem" that I perceived in the experience of wilderness adventure, I recognized that to find what I was looking for - *meaning* - I would require a "methodology of engagement" (Ley, 1988:126). I sought guidance from the existential phenomenological tradition, which appeared to address this need better than others. Pickles (1988), Relph (1976), and Samuels (1978) agree that existential phenomenology is an appropriate base for geographical research. Bird observes that "the tension between alienation and spatial relationships is at the heart of an existential geography in the search for a higher quality of life" (1993:73). He writes, "Having set space apart - 'the primal setting at a distance'...in order to confirm his own existence man must then enter into relations with space, the 'oppositeness' of which has helped to defined his own essence..." (Bird, 1993:73). The aim of geographers like Relph and Buttimer who adopted an existential foundation was to produce a methodology leading to a way of life that resists estrangement - a "truly human existence" characterized by an "openness to being" (Johnston, Gregory, and Smith,1994). Wilderness adventure shows itself to be, in precisely these terms, a relationship with space that seeks a similar engagement with life.

Phenomenology is a philosophy developed by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) and adapted to social science by Alfred Schutz. Husserl observed that although everyday human life and the natural sciences are conducted within the "natural attitude" which

presupposes an objective reality, there is in fact no certainty that there is any reality beyond sense experience. The empirical foundation of all human knowledge is the subjective experience of the world, and Husserl observed that by parenthesizing or "bracketing" the natural attitude, this most basic experience of the world can be apprehended in the experience of phenomenological *epoche* (Husserl, 1960; Spiegelberg, 1976). Pure phenomenological research aims to identify the universal and general structure of the world as it reveals itself in *epoche* (Pickles, 1988). Geographical research following this tradition does no such thing, but aims in the phenomenological spirit to capture the everyday experience of the world as it is lived (Pickles, 1988). Phenomenology provides an inspiration for geographers like Tuan, Buttimer and Relph to "return to the things themselves" and focus on the meanings to be found in subjective experience (Pickles, 1988; Unwin,1992). Phenomenology overcomes dualism to allow the researcher to acknowledge that subject and object "co-constitute" one another (Osborne, 1990; Vale and King, 1978). Phenomenology is therefore a useful ontological foundation even though it has been criticized for its inability to produce a distinctive and useful methodology for geographical inquiry (Bird, 1993; Unwin, 1992). Two exemplary phenomenological works also sharing much in common with existentialism are Tuan's *Topophilia* (1974) and Relph's *Place and Placelessness* (1976) (Unwin, 1992).

Generally speaking, humanistic research represents an implicit critique of positivism, a concern for subjectivity, and a quest for understanding (Unwin, 1992). In the search for meaning, humanistic research proceeds as an interpretation of "texts" which may include landscape, human experience, as well as media (Johnston, 1991). Humanistic research is *interpretive* research, rendering a reconstruction of social reality in a way that produces a new understanding (Eyles, 1988). Its practice is hermeneutical even while operating within the "phenomenological paradigm" (Fetterman,1989), which gives rise to the term "hermeneutic phenomenology" - implying that the research proceeds inductively from subjective experience (Van Manen, 1990). Simply stated, phenomenology deals with the world directly experienced and hermeneutics deals with its interpretation, or as Van Manen observes, "phenomenology describes how one orients to

lived experience, hermeneutics describes how one interprets the 'texts' of life..." (1990:4). This research is phenomenological and hermeneutical in the sense that it aims to be based on subjective, lived experience, but it actually proceeds around the hermeneutic circle to yield an "interpretation of interpretations." This hermeneutic method, as it was conceived by Dilthey, is explained by Barnes as follows (in Johnston, Gregory, and Smith, 1994:245).

> Tacking back and forth between our presuppositions and the text itself, as well as between individual parts of the text and its whole, we eventually gain meaning and understanding. Known as the 'hermeneutic circle', this same procedure can be used to clarify meanings within the sphere of the non-textual. More generally, this approach to interpretation is a creative, progressive, and open ended process in which there is no final truth.

The research objective is to collect data from a variety of sources and not merely to chronicle the details in a "thin description," but to proceed inductively through "refinement, abstraction, typification, and categorization" (Eyles, 1988:4) in order to produce what Geertz (1973) terms "thick description." Thick description includes the information about subjectivity and context required to reveal the hidden meaning of details; for example, to differentiate a wink from an accidental twitch of the eye (Geertz, 1973). As Ley explains, interpretive research aims

> ...to make sense of the actions and intentions of people as knowledgeable agents; indeed, more properly it attempts to make sense of their making sense of the events and opportunities confronting them in everyday life. (1988:121)

Thick description creates new knowledge, provides a unique perspective on social reality, and communicates that perspective to an outside audience (Ley, 1988). The aim of this research is to form a description of wilderness adventure that "makes sense" of the adventurers' "making sense" of their experiences as a "religion" with meaning for everyday life. The interpretation is built upon the "structure" or regularity which emerges from accounts of the experience as they are processed through the hermeneutic circle.

Research Method

A "multiple research strategy" is typical in interpretive research (Eyles, 1988). "The geographer's charge to interpret the complex relations of people and place requires a methodology of engagement not detachment, of informal dialogue as well as formal documentation" (Ley, 1988:126). In a sense the truest account would emphasize only one method, which is the process of writing by which the interpretation was formed (Van Manen, 1990). But my coming to an understanding of the wilderness adventure experience required three methods for collecting information. First, there was an extensive review of literature. Two other methods followed the "methodology of engagement" seeking the *emic,* or insider's perspective of the experience: depth interviews with wilderness adventurers; and introspection based on personal experience. The three key "texts" in the hermeneutic process of analysis were, therefore, 1) the published literature, 2) the interview data, and 3) my own journals.

Viewed in toto, this tripartite method bears much similarity to ethnographic fieldwork or "participant observation," except that in this case the "field" was and continues to be my own life. Many of the typical concerns of "fieldwork" did not apply because the only people I approached in the role of researcher were the subjects of my depth interviews. There are various styles of participant observation which lie on a continuum from pure participation to pure observation (Evans, 1988). Pure participation represents absolute subjectivity - a hypothetical state in which the researcher "goes native" and cannot develop the perspective required to conduct research (Geertz, 1973). I was closer to this end of the continuum, and the challenge was not going into "the field" to conduct research, but rather stepping out of it to form conclusions. The research process is a "tacking back and forth" between the insider's experience and outsider's interpretation (Fetterman, 1989; Ley, 1988). As research instrument, I found myself straddling the emic and etic in this manner, and often would "employ theories and hypotheses in the very act of research; an experimentalist attitude [was] adopted in the sense of 'trying things out'" (Eyles, 1988:200).

Review of literature

In a positivistic study, a review of literature would provide a point of departure, pinpointing where the fact-finding mission embarked from the territory claimed by previous research. It would justify the researcher's claim to be seeking some "new" or "valuable" information. To some extent I was able to identify in the literature the same need for answers that was in my own experience. But my literature review also serves a different purpose. Much of the wilderness literature already interprets the meaning of the experience and contains answers to my question. Reviewing the literature was not so much a preparation for research as it was a search for answers. The literature was as important to building an understanding of the wilderness experience as depth interviews and introspection, and it was an unavoidable influence on the interpretation of both. Both academic and non-academic literature was reviewed until, as with the interviews, a point of "saturation" was reached at which more reading revealed no new insights.

The literature review includes theories in the social sciences which "explain" the wilderness experience. Although the aim of this humanistic study is not fundamentally to "explain," I found that describing the meaning of the wilderness experience in a way that suggests a moral imperative tends to presuppose a theory of what the experience "is."

A comprehensive literature review is presented in Chapter 3, which includes a section on wilderness writers Thoreau, Jeffers, Abbey, and others. A discussion of the literature that more directly addresses the research question is presented in Chapter 5.

Depth interviews

Seidman explains that "the method of in-depth, phenomenological interviewing applied to a sample of participants who all experience similar structural and social conditions gives enormous power to the stories of relatively few participants" (1991:45). The aim of the interviews was to determine how wilderness adventurers interpret their experience in a way that influences their day to day lives. I examined the experiences of eight participants in detail through the collection of approximately four hours of interview data for each.

"Sampling"

Qualitative research selects participants *purposefully*, seeking *information-rich* cases to yield maximum insight from a small group (Patton, 1990). My main criterion for selection of participants was that their exposure to the influence of wilderness should be of sufficiently impressive intensity, frequency, and duration to have a central influence on their lives. It could be said of them that they are "religious" about their wilderness participation. I did not seek to specifically define what I sought in a "wilderness adventurer," preferring to explain my research to prospective participants and allow them to determine if my objectives resonated with their own experiences of "wilderness adventure" as a key theme in their lives. Although the positivist notion of "sampling" can be eschewed in the case of interpretive research, Patton (1990) describes the method I used as *extreme case* or *intensity sampling*.

Because of the difficulty of clearly defining the criteria for participation in my study and locating a cluster of outstanding cases through available lists, I employed a strategy of "*snowball or chain sampling*" whereby initial contacts in the field were asked to provide third-party references to appropriate participants (Patton, 1990:176). Prospective participants were given the information enclosed in Appendices A, B, and C.

My sample was geographically limited to people residing in and around Victoria, but the "sampling" technique proved to be effective in locating a diversity of appropriate candidates. Eight participants were interviewed. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that seven of the eight participants are male. A more complete description of the participants is provided along with the interview results in Chapter 4. Eleven participants were initially interviewed, but three were dropped: one was deemed not to fit the purpose of this study; two others did not have time to complete the interviews. Interviewing new participants continued until "sufficiency" and also "saturation" were achieved (Seidman, 1991). Sufficiency refers to a number that is adequate to allow the audience of the study to understand or to "connect" with the experience in question. Saturation, or "redundancy" refers to the point at which further interviews yield no new insights (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990).

Interview structure and technique

Seidman's (1991) guidelines for phenomenological interviewing were adapted for this study. Seidman recommends three 90 minute interviews with each subject, arranged three days to one week apart. The first interview was designed to be a "focussed life history" of past wilderness involvement, addressing the general question, "how did you come to be participating in wilderness activities, beginning as far back as you can recall?" I focussed on early, optimal, outstanding or archetypal experiences of wilderness.

The second interview was intended to elicit a reconstruction of the concrete details of participants' present experience with wilderness, addressing a question such as, "What are wilderness activities like for you, as you are currently involved in them?" Interview techniques included seeking stories about particularly memorable experiences. Again, outstanding experiences were emphasized.

The third interview was planned to elicit interpretations and reflections on the meaning of spiritual wilderness experience to everyday work and life, addressing the question, "given what wilderness has meant to you, what influence do you see it having on your life?" Participants were encouraged to discuss their philosophies of life and relate these back to wilderness experiences.

The interviews were designed to proceed as a "friendly conversation" (Seidman, 1991). Open ended questions were asked which built on participants' responses to previous questions. Each participant was provided with an introduction to the purpose of the study and a guideline of interview questions prior to the interviews (in Appendix C), and these questions were used as prompts and as a flexible structure for the interview conversation. Participants were encouraged to give some thought to the questions beforehand and, if desired, bring notes, journals, clippings and photographs to the interviews to prompt discussion. Such "projective techniques" were found to be useful in some cases (Fetterman, 1989). Other techniques which I found useful were encouraging thoughtfulness and elaboration on points raised in the interviews, taking notes to structure listening and identify salient points, asking clarifying questions, avoiding leading questions that encourage a particular response, using "grand tour" questions like "can you

lead me through a typical experience," and encouraging subjective responses by asking questions such as "how did that feel for you?", asking participants to tell a story, asking for concrete details rather than generalized attitudes, sharing relevant aspects of my own experience, and paying attention to non-verbal cues such as laughter (Seidman, 1991).

The aim of the interviews was to enable the construction of a description which answered the following questions, which are noteworthy because they were formulated at the outset of the study and reveal much about how the "problem" was originally conceived. A number of these questions have turned out to be irrelevant to the participants' experiences and worldviews for reasons that are central to the conclusions of this study.

- What is the overarching philosophical or religious worldview which influences the wilderness adventurer's way of life and ethical attitudes, and how does this relate to the wilderness experience?

- Does the wilderness adventurer have transcendental experiences in wilderness which would be the basis for a religion?

- What moral is perceived in these experiences? What conflicts and contradictions arise between this moral, everyday life, and participation in wilderness adventure? For example, is there a conflict perceived between the moral of wilderness experience and the materialistic values upon which wilderness escape depends? How are such contradictions resolved?

- What is the relationship of the wilderness experience to the adventurer's conception of life's ideal? What is the place of wilderness involvement in the ideal lifestyle, the ideal culture? What are the adventurer's goals and aspirations for their everyday life and for wilderness involvement?

- What are the adventurer's opinions on the ethics of "purism" and "authenticity" in their wilderness activity and the contradictions involved in the commodification of wilderness?

The interview process

The interview guideline (Appendix C) was useful for prompting discussion. Wilderness adventure was such an important aspect of the participants' lives that the

interviews went smoothly and there was no difficultly eliciting responses or meaningful conclusions. The difficulty was in coming up with anything more detailed and concrete than the participants' interpretations of their own experiences, because they had almost invariably already developed their own theories. They were generally intellectually-inclined and welcomed the opportunity to ponder the meaning of their experiences, and as interviewer I sometimes found it hard to put them to "work" digging up the raw details. Much of the results represents the outcomes of the participants' theorizing about their own experiences. Though not strictly "phenomenological," this information was nonetheless valuable because the way in which the participants sought to interpret their experiences inevitably revealed much about their values and worldviews.

The only significant departure from the interview structure as it was originally planned was the decision to interview some of the participants twice rather than three times. After completing half of the interviews, I discovered that dead batteries in my tape recorder had destroyed the results of one third interview session. Working from my memory and my notes, I found that the moral conclusions that had been revealed in the third interview were already evident in the first two interviews. I decided it would be more convenient for my interview participants to complete the interviews in two sessions. I scheduled the interviews so that the total time would be similar - approximately four hours as opposed to four and a half - and redesigned my interview guideline (Appendix C). I found that the two-interview approach was as effective as the original.

Interview analysis

I followed a procedure of analysis adapted from Seidman (1991) and Colaizzi (1978).

- Initially, interviews were recorded and transcribed word-for-word, including non-verbal material such as laughter, pauses, and interruptions.
- Noteworthy passages were highlighted on the transcripts, proceeding as a process of interpretation that is based largely upon "instinct" (Janesick, 1994; Seidman, 1991).
- Themes were associated with each highlighted passage.
- Themes were listed separately for each interview, and also compiled in a master

list.

- Themes were sub-grouped and grouped as the dominant themes of the interviews emerged.
- An interpretation was written for each participant which incorporated salient themes and included quotes in the participants' own words.
- An interpretation of results was written for Chapter 4, incorporating quotations from all participants, aiming to present the "common story" with major themes described, pertaining to the purpose of the study.

The points above list a simplified procedure which was in fact much more complex and cyclical. Delineating the tortuous path of the actual analysis would be impossible. Initially, the interviews were slightly condensed to exclude material that seemed superfluous. The interviews were condensed at least once more. I identified an order in which the information in the interviews was best presented as a narrative. I reorganized the words in the interviews to reflect this order, and grouped together quotations which were repeating similar ideas. With this order in mind, I wrote a narrative in my own words, trying to paraphrase the participants without leaving out any important elements. Working from the paraphrased and condensed versions of the interviews, I made lists of themes to sum up all the meanings that I had found. I simplified my lists by grouping differently-labelled themes that all referred to the same meanings, so that I was interpreting all the interviews according to a common language. From the individual lists, I compiled a list of all the themes from all the interviews. Again I grouped the themes in various ways until I had an order that could be presented as a narrative. I sought ways to present the information in a coherent, ordered, and complete manner. The listed themes themselves, however, were not particularly informative or useful, so I decided to summarize the participants' experiences using a combination of my words and theirs, writing narratives that included paraphrases and direct quotations to cover all of the main themes. I produced eight interpretations that were each approximately fifteen to thirty pages in length. Some of these interpretations were rewritten many times. The relevant main points of each were essentially similar, so I grouped all the interpretations into one summary, emphasizing themes relevant to the purpose of the study. This final interpretation appears in Chapter 4.

Research integrity

There is no way to imagine that any of the material collected in the interviews received "objective" treatment. Much of the way that I drew meaning from interviews was influenced by my own experience and thoughts in my journals, by what I had read in the literature, and what I had learned from other interviews. The interviews "spoke" to one another in a sense, and conversed with the literature and my own ideas, and it also became difficult to interpret the final interviews outside of the context of the first. The analysis began immediately as I would come home from each interview and write in my journal the insights that were particularly meaningful to me. There was a tendency with the later interviews to want to explore interesting themes raised by earlier participants, and to want to ignore information that did not fit into the emerging interpretation of the experience. I tended to want to avoid contradictory information and merge elements that were subtly distinct. My bias was towards conclusions arising from anything common, and away from any insights that might have come from looking at differences.

Because the intentions of interpretive research are to provide insightful understanding of phenomena through *verstehen* the issues of validity and reliability are not the same as for positivistic science. Seidman writes that "...surface considerations of representativeness and generalizability are replaced by a compelling evocation of an individual's experience" (1991:42). Contextual richness and depth of description enable the readers to make connections, judging validity by how the findings resonate with their own experience.

The central influence on the outcome of interpretive research is "the research instrument" - the researcher himself who defines the research goals, selects and interprets the literature, collects the data in the field, develops an analysis and presents the conclusions. To ensure that the conclusions emerge from the data, rather than having the data fit pre-set conclusions, the phenomenological researcher is sometimes said to "bracket" preconceptions when attending to the research. Seidman (1991) observes that the meanings found in the interviews are likely to belong to the participant rather than the researcher if the resulting interpretations make sense to the participant. For this reason,

and out of respect for the participants' contributions, I checked back with participants and gave them an opportunity to comment on the conclusions of this study. This was accomplished by mailing a letter to each participant (Appendix D) along with my fifteen to thirty-page interpretation of their own set of interviews.

Interpretive research inevitably bears a personal stamp. The resulting description is context-bound, with limited scope; it is "microscopic" (Geertz, 1973:21). To commit to the interpretive approach, Geertz writes, is to commit to something "essentially contestable" (1973:29). Since "bracketing" a phenomenon so central to my own experience seems impractical and counterproductive, and I cannot claim to fully understand and reveal the ways in which my own biases have influenced this study, I have sought to achieve the goal of integrity by being explicit about my personal stake in the research, what compulsions brought me into it, and what conclusions I am taking away. In this way I hope to achieve the "trustworthiness" that lends interpretive research its validity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). I think it is important to recognize my perspective as adding insight, enriching the conclusions in a way that enhances "trustworthiness" rather than undermining the "validity" of the interpretation. The researcher's passion for the subject is indeed an appropriate foundation for research, because it sustains the commitment required for knowing. Because it requires "the intentional act of attaching ourselves to the world, to become more fully a part of it, or better, to *become* the world," Van Manen (1990) observes that human science research is a "caring act" - "love" is the foundation for the understanding that is sought. An honest statement of this "love" - the relevant background and biases of "the research instrument" - can be found in Part 2 of this chapter, where I introduce the "introspective" component of this study.

Introspection

As one of the three methods of inquiry, introspection was a valuable part of this research process firstly because it has provided me with direct access to an insider's perspective and, secondly, because it has allowed me a medium to address my personal motivations and biases as an insider and their influence on the research process. This bias

was inescapable because the research "problem" was initially conceived entirely out of personal experience, and the results were similarly judged subjectively by how well they "answered" to this personal experience. I came into this study unsatisfied with my understanding of wilderness experience and left feeling "satisfied" that I had pursued the question as far as I needed to, and this thesis cannot possibly be more than an account of what happened in between.

All the literature, the interviews, the personal experiences of wilderness, the analysis, thoughts, interpretations were filtered through hundreds of pages of journal entries, juxtaposed, aligned, compared, and "tested" by the "research instrument" to determine what view of the wilderness experience ultimately made sense, shedding light on the research problem. During this colossal episode of "tacking back and forth," my own comings and goings into wilderness during the study were particularly valuable "tests," as I eventually felt I could reasonably interpret what I experienced and what it meant. In addition to the process of journal writing, I followed a more formal process of writing my own experience similar to what I was doing for each of the interviews, including an examination of my own religious background and inclinations. Results of both these processes are presented here. What follows as a personal introduction to the research and, somewhat, a statement of my "biases," are some recollections from childhood and past wilderness experiences, and a discussion of my religious background that I believe is relevant to my perspective on wilderness. Chapter 6, "An Introspective Conclusion," includes discussion of wilderness experiences before and during this research project, the experience of doing the research, and my final conclusions.

Part 2: A Personal Introduction

First, it is valuable to examine my religious background, and explain that I was raised in Christian Science, a Christian religion that emphasizes spiritual healing based on a unique view of humans and the universe as a perfect creation of God. *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* explains this belief:

> Christian Science shares with E. religions a belief that ignorance is at the root of human unease - and thus of dis-ease: 'All reality is in God and his creation, harmonious and eternal. That which he creates is good, and he makes all that is made. Therefore the only reality of sin, sickness or death is the awful fact that unrealities seem real to human, erring belief, until God strips off their disguise.' Health, happiness and holiness are restored, not by going to doctors or psychiatrists, but by adopting and applying to the whole of life those practices and attitudes which are in accord with the already existent divine harmony: 'Both sin and sickness are error, and Truth is their remedy.' (Bowker, 1997:218)

Christian Science was founded in the late 1800s in New England by Mary Baker Eddy. Near that time and place, the Transcendentalism of Emerson was a popular doctrine, which also influenced the wilderness writer Thoreau. Eddy and Thoreau departed from the same *zeitgeist* of early to mid-eighteenth century New England, but went in slightly different directions. I followed Thoreau.

While conducting this study, I found that I could best understand the relevance of my religious background when I perceived Christian Science as a response to the inadequacies of the Transcendentalism that also influenced the wilderness movement. Transcendentalism sought an "unbounded good" in the world to match the divinity that was felt to be latent within the human soul (Peel, 1958). Beyond the human perception of matter and fact Transcendentalism saw a spiritual realm, "broader relations, higher laws, unimagined potentialities" (Peel, 1958:7). The physical world was but a small part of the whole, the "visible promontory" of spirit (Oelschlaeger, 1991:135). Matter was to the Transcendentalists "the outermost rim of divine manifestation" (Peel, 1956:47) just as the world of nature was to Annie Dillard "the hem of the robe" or the "back parts of God" (1990:198). Emerson's writings introduced the belief that humans could apply, by "mind-over-matter," the power of this spiritual realm to the transformation of the material world. In his 1936 essay "Nature," Emerson suggested that a "revolution in things will attend the influx of the spirit"; the "sordor and filths of nature" disappear, "as fast as you conform your life to the pure idea of your mind" (in Peel, 1958:19-20).

The Transcendentalists' belief was in the *ideality* of matter, which consequently required the denial of evil. Problematically, such a vision implies, as Dillard observes,

the conclusion that "it is our emotions that are amiss. We are freaks, the world is fine, and let us all go have lobotomies to restore us to a natural state" (174). Mary Baker Eddy came to a different conclusion. To resolve this incompatibility of a material imperfect world with a perfect spiritual realm intuited in human emotions, she rejected the notion of the *ideality* of matter and posited the *unreality* of matter - the only conclusion logically compatible with the premised existence of a God who was omnipotent and benevolent. Christian Science does not even concede that the world is an illusion, arising like the Hindu *Maya* as a product of the ultimate reality. Matter and evil are not only a misconception; the misconception itself is a misconception, an "illegitimate fraud," an "enigma" (Peel, 1958:92,102). The affirmation of this truth is seen to result in spiritual healing. Subtly distinct from the "mind-over-matter" approach, Christian Science practice involves

> the dissection of individual consciousness to discover whether the thoughts presenting themselves for acceptance proceed.. from the divine Mind or its suppositious opposite...[This is] a constant process of separating between one's true identity and the false characteristics and limitations that would try to attach themselves to this identity. (Peel, 1958:122)

In one sense this study can be seen as the product of the desire to negotiate for myself a "wilderness-based" alterative to Christian Science's way of coming to terms with the paradox upon which Transcendental idealism ran aground.

The closest I could ever get to what I perceived to be religious inspiration was what I experienced in wilderness. Growing up in Christian Science meant going to Sunday School each week, learning from the *Holy Bible* and Eddy's *Science and Health*, striving to realize the unreality of matter and of "mortal mind", and to apply this realization to healing. I had asthma but I did not go to doctors or try to understand how my body worked or take drugs, because sickness was perceived not to exist.

I grew up in Toronto with a low opinion of the city and of school. Wilderness seemed a panacea, offering escape from both and, quite often it seemed, relief from asthma. In the city I spent a lot of time immersed in books, dreaming about the wilderness and wishing I could live in the woods and survive by pounding acorns into

flour, eating lichen, or living in a tree like the main character, Sam Gribley, in my favourite book, *My Side of the Mountain*. He runs away to live on family property in the Catskill Mountains. When his parents find him after a year or so, they decide to stay and build a house. To me it seemed ideal that Sam never has to move back to New York City. All of my ambitions entailed getting as far away from the city as possible. Those dreams associated with the wilderness contained a promise that I am still driven to realize; only the path has become harder to define.

I was lucky to have a lot of wilderness experiences with Boy Scouts, at summer camp, and on family camping trips. On one winter skiing trip, heading out across the frozen ice of Georgian Bay was like breaking through a wall. The wind was blowing cold and hard as we pushed into Friday night darkness, towards a distant island campground, my chest wheezing and head pounding. We soon crossed a small island onto the long, exposed crossing. The weather cleared and the wind died, and as we came out of the trees beneath open stars, my asthma was gone. We skied late into the night with the ice booming beneath our skis. That to me was a real experience of healing.

I did not wonder about *why* I went into wilderness. Back then it was just obviously the only thing in life worth doing, and I did not question why most other people did not feel this way. I must have figured, since everybody else was missing wilderness as the main point of life, that it was all the better for me that I was not. My parents bought me a lot of nature magazines and field guides and I assumed as they did that my love of the outdoors meant a scientific interest in nature, and I pretended to be genuinely interested in bird watching and animal dissection and determined that I would have a career as a "naturalist". The naturalists I knew through provincial park interpretive hikes and National Geographic television shows generally all appeared to be happy bearded men who got to spend their lives outside.

But what I loved was the *experience* of the wild landscape, which was not about identifying the names of plants and birds or reading about animals in a magazine. The wilderness experience was being out in the midst of wilderness, or approaching the outdoor experience through the medium of adventure sport. At summer camp I did as

many adventure and wilderness programs as I could - primarily whitewater kayaking and rock climbing. I was so extremely frightened, to the point of tears in each case, that I wished to go home and never return. But after every adventure I would feel that I had broken free of myself and all previous limitations and would loathe to return home, back to my old life before the frontier of the new experience.

I vowed that I would go whitewater paddling and climbing for the rest of my life, at as difficult a level as possible; but when I spent two summers during high school on long river canoe trips, I discovered the magic of extending the adventure experience over days and weeks in a remote wilderness environment. Whitewater paddling mixed with rugged portaging and days of repetitive flatwater paddling enmeshed the adventure experience within the rhythm of day to day life in a wholly natural environment. The wilderness canoe trip, and the works of its champions - most notably the late Bill Mason - , became my model for the way life ought to be lived, and so I set out to better understand what this experience meant.

I have been inspired by experiences of "extreme" adventure, like my first time whitewater kayaking or rock climbing at summer camp, which was marked by intense psychological stress followed by a strong feeling of transcendence and abundant joy. I also remember a feeling of deep satisfaction that comes over me when I am *in* wilderness, feeling totally at peace with myself and the wilderness environment. This is the most complete, direct experience of the unbounded goodness, the "Life, Truth and Love" so central to religion, that I have ever felt. Sometimes it comes in the midst of the hardship of many days in the wilderness, wet weather, long portages, group conflict, as a revelation of the beauty and abiding peace of nature that is utterly redeeming. Sometimes it comes within or following the "extreme" adventure experience that focuses the mind. Always it comes when a psychological "barrier" has been crossed into total immediacy of the "here and now". This is an experience that I have begun to call "deep appreciation," because I associate it with profound gratitude. I feel in these moments as if I am receiving far more satisfaction from simply being alive than I ever could have dreamed I would achieve through any worldly sacrifice, and so in this context life's hardships and

regrets are forgiven and forgotten.

I am thinking of the example of being out on a long canoe trip in the midst of summer and watching the sun set with a savage, heartbreaking beauty on a cold, rainy day. On the hardest day of a month-long canoe trip, we paddled with the wind driving misting rain straight through raingear until our clothes hung heavy against our skin. Late in the day we came to a deserted logging road at one of the four bridges that crosses the Missinaibi River along its 500 kilometre length and made a desperate campsite to beat back hypothermia with fire and food. After dinner, by the time we were warm and sated, wrapped in dry clothes, the north wind had blown away our seventh day of rain. Pushing chill and dry down the river, it brought in sharp hints of fall in mid-July. We danced out on the bridge and leaned against the air. The rolling earth was carving a blade of sun under the day's clouds and flooding the forest with light as thick as syrup. The leaves of the trembling aspen fluttered madly in the sun with colours of copper and gold. That was "one of those moments" when I felt that there is such incredible beauty here, it forgives whatever hell may come before and after - "Life is worth living for this alone."

I am thinking also of turning to face the wind in such moments at countless times and places, as it comes in out of the horizon and rises up off the water. I am thinking of sitting in the tops of big pine trees far off in the woods and feeling them sway, or paddling all day without fatigue, feeling pure freedom and immune to time; after dinner, sitting in the radiant heat of the water-worn rock beside a waterfall, watching the water flow past, happy without understanding why. At such times I feel can move wherever I want, say whatever I want, be whoever I am, without thinking about it first; and life flows on like the waterfall without resistance, without any tax on peace of mind. There is a feeling of completeness to life, and none of the "quiet desperation" of city existence; no feelings of inadequacy or pressure or limitation. Life is suddenly such an absurdly simple problem, it is not a problem at all! I remember that it seems stunning and barely conceivable at such times to think of the innumerable souls toiling back and forth to work each day with no vision of why, towards no appreciable end, in all of the world's great cities, and all of the misery contained therein, in what suddenly seems to occupy such an

insignificant piece of the globe, and to contain so little of its beauty.

There is an important social element as well. It is difficult to separate the psychology of the adventure experience, the power of the natural environment, and the influences of other people within the wilderness experience. My personality is certainly a powerful influence on the way I experience wilderness and thus how I approach research about wilderness. It could be that introversion drove me into wilderness to find the intensity of relationship and the freedom of self expression that a different personality could find anywhere. Maybe if I had social bonds in civilization that equalled the social experience in wilderness, I would never want to go into wilderness at all. What I do know is that through the intensity of the wilderness experience I have found a sense of community that is rare elsewhere.

In wilderness I have the feeling of being my true self, and of relating to the people around me in an authentic way. The reality of day to day experience in wilderness is inextricable from the physical environment. The contents of the landscape through which one moves become a large proportion of the contents of the one's mind, which in wilderness tends to be fixed in the present moment and place. People who share the land thus come as close to sharing a consciousness, sharing a reality, as is likely possible. Conversations which inevitably build upon subjects of identically shared, direct experience are almost telepathic. To experience the conversation between people who have shared time in wilderness is to realize what is real conversation, and to sadly wonder how we have come to settle for such abstract, half-awake discourse in our everyday lives, where we speak nothing but words. Humour also grows in the medium of unbroken, mutual experience, and so laughter flows easily. In wilderness I have had the feeling of communicating with myself for the first time, and of truly knowing and being known by others. Returning from wilderness has meant leaving a context in which I felt like I always had something to say, while at the same time being equally comfortable to say nothing at all.

I think the civilized life seemed absurd to me from the very beginning, and it was only as I grew older that I started to accept it, but when I went to the wilderness I would

remember the doubt, and recommit myself to the wilderness dream. The wilderness dream - the idealization of the experience from the vantage of city life - is another kind of wilderness experience, important because most of my ideas about wilderness and all the memories I recount of it are impressions that have been formed in this way. Thinking about the wilderness always made me wonder, if life could come so close to perfection, how people could have any patience for the stultifying routine of city life, the irredeeming hell of wage slavery and the office job, the indoor life which Ed Abbey called "the next best thing to premature burial".

Coming home from a trip was always a feeling of joyful ebullience, boundless energy, inspiration for life, but it was also a return to a way of life that seemed incommensurable with wilderness revelations, and to people for whom nothing had changed during that period which for me had felt like a lifetime, who despite their efforts could never quite share in the enthusiasm, or understand the meaning of what I felt.

The deep happiness of the wilderness experience became a restlessness. I felt that I was a better person than I had been before, that I had glimpsed a profound truth, and return brought with it the fear that I would regress, and forget the vision. I was always determined to make changes in my life, to retain the memory and the lessons of my wilderness experience, and have the same feeling of being alive in the city, that I had experienced in the wilderness. This goal, however, proved never to be possible. For that I blamed the civilized way of life, the entire cultural apparatus - modern social structures, modern technology, and the modern worldview. And I retained wilderness experience as the foundation for this conviction, my only indication that a better life was possible, and of what such a life might be like.

Coming back from wilderness to civilization was returning from a world of direct experience, vivid shared realities, authentic dialogue, to a world many steps removed from natural reality, where words are abstracted from the roots of their meaning just as money is abstracted from the consequences of the power it wields. It always hurt to trade the real for the unreal. I began to believe more strongly during high school that everything I valued flourished in the medium of nature, and civilization was implicated in

everything I sought to banish from my life.

Religion was but a product of that civilization and yet another stiff abstraction from wonderful, vital reality. It made sense for me to see religion as irrelevant when I could get at paradise directly. Furthermore, I did not differentiate the Christian Science of my experience from the Transcendentalist's idealism which seemed to demand "lobotomy," or else a disciplined rejection of reality that was blasphemous to my own sense of truth. I resented the book-bound metaphysical exercises of church and lesson-reading while the real world went on outside. I was exasperated by its contradictions. I wondered to what lengths should I go in combatting material sense? What exactly was our relationship to reality, and what was the material world if not real? The illusion had to come from *somewhere*. And how were we to act practically in the world if all praxis was a mental exercise, since all evil is a product of misperception. This was no different to me than the Transcendentalists' rationalization of evil. Why change *anything*, if reality was perfect? Why leave the city? Why leave the house? Why get out of bed? If it was wrong to drink beer, was it also wrong to drink coffee? Did we not empower matter by the strength of our efforts to deny it? Was not the struggle against material sense a parody of the faith that saw this as a struggle against *nothing*? If pain was an illusion, was happiness? If we did not take medicine to cure disease, then why did it make sense to eat well for health? And if it was wrong to accept the symptoms of sickness as being real, was it not equally wrong to celebrate health as a sign of successful prayer? It was frustrating to wonder, furthermore, if being sick was not a fault of one's own inability to manifest perfection and think pure thoughts, and thus to fall into the trap of perfectionism.

In turning to wilderness I was rejecting this confusion, the metaphysical nonsense of religion, and the immoral abstraction of civilization, in exchange for the brutal and wondrous world of glorious, cold-hard-factual reality. This breakthrough was an expression of loyalty to the feeling of light and freedom walking out on the last day of school into summer. Better to be merely mortal, yet alive! Like Abbey, merciless in his defence of mortality against the disembodying threat of transcendentalism, "here I must

confess that I know nothing whatever about true underlying reality, having never met any."

> For my own part I am pleased enough with surfaces - in fact they alone seem to me to be of much importance. Such things for example as the grasp of a child's hand in your own, the flavor of an apple, the embrace of a friend or lover, the silk of a girl's thigh, the sunlight on rock and leaves, the feel of music, the bark of a tree, the abrasion of granite and sand, the plunge of clear water into a pool, the face of the wind - what else is there? What else do we need? (1968:xi)

The wilderness experience was *real*, and I turned to it and for a long time did not look back to find any connections between that reality and the religion I left behind. The wilderness experience is beyond metaphysics, beyond concepts and words. The wilderness experience itself is a bracketing; Oelschlaeger (1991) says it is an *epoche*, as in the phenomenological reduction. So why would it have occurred to me to bind this experience to the world of human thought until now, when I seek to cut a trail back to civilization? Now I find myself wondering what this means, to abandon church and the "oracle within" and look to fact for inspiration. *"To bind fast"* that experience to my everyday life is *religare* - what religion do I thus imply?

Conclusion

The nature of the problem as well as my personal stake in this study is now clear. What should be the practical consequence of replacing more traditional forms of religion with wilderness adventure as life's central inspiration and source of guidance? I sought a methodology that would enable me to interpret the wilderness adventure experience in a way that would provide an answer to this question. And I looked wherever I could for answers, turning to my own experience and the experiences of other adventurers who shared a similar commitment. First, however, I turned to the literature for insight. Chapter 3, the literature review, represents the initial findings from the literature.

CHAPTER 3
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Outline

The review of literature is divided into four parts. Part 1 presents the optimal wilderness experience, interprets it as a religious experience, and describes the "problem" as it appears in the literature. In Part 2 wilderness is defined and a historical background of the wilderness idea from prehistory to Romanticism is discussed. Part 3 is a detailed presentation of the meaning of wilderness experience in the works of major nature writers including Thoreau, Jeffers, Abbey, and others. Part 4 presents academic explanations of the wilderness experience which are useful for interpreting its meaning. Csikszentmihalyi's concept of "flow" and Turner's "communitas" are emphasized. The literature yields much understanding of the wilderness experience, but also suggests the need to take a closer look at the experience itself and its practical effect in everyday life.

Part 1: The Wilderness Experience as Religious Experience

Optimal experience

The salient characteristic of wilderness experience is optimal experience. "Optimal experience" has also been termed transcendental experience, flow, dreamtime, phenomenological *epoche*, cosmic consciousness, self-realization, and peak experience (Beck, 1987; Bucke, 1969; Duerr, 1985; Oelschlaeger, 1991; Porteous, 1991). All optimal experiences have the characteristics of non-dualistic consciousness, in which the world is perceived as pure sensory experience free from the categories and concepts of dualistic thought. Non-dualistic perception dissolves dichotomies such as "self-other," "wilderness-civilization," and is thus responsible for the feeling of connection with all things - typically a unity with true self, with other people, and with environment. Many academic studies have described this optimal experience in wilderness adventure recreation and produced concurrent findings, which are summarized in Table 1, below.

Table 1: Common Elements of the Optimal Wilderness Experience

Harmony	Openness of attitude
Oneness, At-one-ness	Childlike acceptance
Harmony	Environmental humility
Unity	Passivity
Self-world harmony	Receptivity
Understanding	Physical exhaustion
Oneness with all people	Intense focus
Connection to environment	Relaxed
Wholeness	Still
Zen-like	Alone
	"Being with" not "against"
	Silent
Aliveness	Self-discovery
Awake	Personal insignificance/ unimportance
Sharpened sense of living	Sense of true self
Being	Loss of ego
Ecstasy	Heightened self-awareness
Joy	Self-esteem
Fun	Self-realization
Alive	Personal Growth
Heightened sensory awareness	
Timelessness	Spirituality
Eternity	Sense of purpose
Loss of a sense of time	Rightness
	Satisfaction
	A greater truth
	Higher purpose
	A governing energy beyond self
	A field of force
	Heightened spiritual awareness
	Sense of meaning
	Sense of purposeful identity within an ordered cosmos
	Reality

Sources: Beck, 1987; Henderson, 1995; Mitchell, 1983; M'Gonigle, 1988; Porteous, 1991, 1996; Segal, 1988.

The optimal wilderness experience arises in situations where an attitude of receptivity or "openness" has been cultivated, by intense focus on a particular activity or by simply "being alone, or with a trusted companion; being passive and receptive, as in late at night after an exhausting day; and being silent in the presence of a vast and

powerful landscape" (Porteous, 1996:146). The resulting experience is one of complete wholeness, an absence of disunities, conflicts and contradictions in oneself and the world. Henderson calls this an experience of harmony between one's "inner and outer world" (1995:34). The resulting perception is of an awe-inspiring reality which dwarfs the individual, inspires humility, and results in a joyful ecstasy that is literally the sense of being "taken out of oneself" (Henderson, 1995; Porteous, 1991, 1996). The diminishment of ego is paradoxically a simultaneous self-discovery (Robinson, 1992; Vogl and Vogl, 1990; Williams, Haggard and Shreyer, 1989). It is an increased self-awareness but also a discovery of self-in-world, a larger identity that includes all things. This is the transpersonal concept of "Self-realization" (with the extended, transpersonal "Self" typically capitalized to distinguish it from the "self" of the individual ego) referred to by deep ecologists and most notably Arne Naess as the foundation for an ecological way of being (Fox, 1990; Henderson, 1995; Reed and Rothenberg, 1993). Faarlund defines Self-realization as "strong identification with the whole of nature in its diversity and interdependence of parts;" it is a "sense of place" culminating in an extension of love beyond ourselves to our world (in Reed and Rothenberg, 1993:155). Henderson concludes that self-discovery rewards all wilderness travellers, who are united, whether they be adventure-seeking "pursuitist types" or more ecologically-minded students of nature, by the common existential quest for the spiritual mystery that inspires and informs such questions as "Who am I, and How am I linked to all of this?" (Henderson, 1987:89). The Self-realization includes the intuition of an all-encompassing reality or power that Porteous compares to Wordsworth's "sense sublime/Of something far more deeply infused" (1996:146). This apprehension of an abiding order to things coincides with a sense of meaning and purpose in life as a whole. The practical implications of this inspiration, however, are not evident or discussed in the literature.

Wilderness adventure as a form of wilderness experience is a way of getting into relationship with landscape, and cultivating the receptivity that wilderness research shows is requisite for the optimal experience. The adventure experience and the environmental experience are consequently inseparable. "Wilderness experience" necessarily implies

adventure, when "adventure" in wilderness is understood, as Henderson (1995;1996) and others are careful to explain, not as the triumph of individual against nature, but rather as a way of "being with" the landscape, in ecological relationship. Henderson's words describe the idea of "wilderness adventure" as it is used in this study, and respond to criticisms based on popular (mis)representations of adventure that suggest it is not a wilderness experience at all.

> As the sense of self is enlarged by the excitement of nature as the challenge arena, the self more and more seeks "to know" the rock, rapid, landscape in a subjective depth of identity....This qualitatively enlarged Self seeks beyond itself and ultimately, out of this advance a third stage of adventure maturity which is to be "with" rock, rapid, landscape. The self, so important and focused in the beginning, is finally liberated, so to transcend cultural assumptions and practices for a new found identity "with" context, not in context as "against" context. Here, "lower case" self evolves toward a being-in-becoming that is an ecologically conscious Self. (Henderson, 1995:36)

Drengson (1996) similarly posits a multi-stage evolution of adventure towards an ecological consciousness. The distinction made by Henderson and Drengson demonstrates the subtle re-orientation towards reality that distinguishes a desirable way of being from an undesirable one. They both, along with LaChapelle (1988), cite the "favourite deep ecology aphorism by Zen master, Dogen" (Henderson, 1995:37),

> That the self advances and confirms the myriad of things is delusion. That the myriad of things advance and confirm the self is enlightenment.

Henderson describes the frustration of going into the wilderness to seek "withness", only to have the experience portrayed by the media as "against nature".

> I was shocked that the "against nature" phenomenon, so annoyingly common to adventure travel journalism, could so easily sabotage my own markedly different orientation. Despite my best efforts to communicate a spiritual adventure quest, I had been silenced, marginalized, rendered voiceless to a view pervasive in our culture and, I fear, outdoor recreation as an expression of our culture. (39)

The wilderness philosopher's disdain for the media, exemplified by Thoreau, is understandable given the difficulty of expressing the intrinsic value of "a way of being" through a medium that is inherently focussed on extrinsic "things" and "accomplishments." Unless one learns to read "between the lines", adventure is likely to

be misinterpreted in heroic terms.

The sense of unity with environment arising from the adventure experience is evident in descriptions of mountain climbing - a sport which is often interpreted as "against nature." For two climbers interviewed on CBC Radio (Blanchard and Twight, in Cardinal, 1996), climbing was initially a rebellious expression of disillusionment and cynicism against a civilization in which climbing was "the only thing that made sense." The search for a sense of self and meaning in life is satisfied by a state of mind - the optimal experience already described, as achieved through the focus on risk sport. Twight describes the non-dualistic state of mind, in which the catalyst of intense focus yields the typical "Zen-like" subjective experience of harmony and timelessness:

> We spent one night on the face sleeping, and to chop a ledge to sleep on...in the most efficient way possible. You have to concentrate on every swing of the ice axe, every dig of the shovel, every kick of the foot, and this is the mindful situation which demands a hundred percent concentration - keeping your feet warm, trying to...move as efficiently as possible so that you have energy to climb again the next day.... My tools, I swing them naturally. I don't look at the place on the ice and draw a little X on it in my eye and then hit it, consciously. I release it from the ice and I reach up and I just put it in the ice again. And the ice accepts it. I'm not fighting to get it in. In this state there is no exhaustion. In this state when I am acting perfectly in accord with the situation, there is no risk. I think there's an almost drug-like attraction to achieving that state, to experience this sense of perfection or of belonging to the situation, the environment, to try and make it last longer, to be able to achieve it like turning on a light switch - of course this is the ultimate goal, I think. To be able to go to this place at will any time.

Krakauer describes the same compelling state of being, explaining the attraction of mountain climbing (1996:142-143):

> By and by your attention becomes so intensely focused that you no longer notice the raw knuckles, the cramping thighs, the strain of maintaining nonstop concentration. A trancelike state settles over your efforts; the climb becomes a clear-eyed dream. Hours slide by like minutes. The accumulated clutter of day-to-day existence - the lapses of consciousness, the unpaid bills, the bungled opportunities, the dust under the couch, the inescapable prison of your genes - all of it is temporarily forgotten, crowded from your thoughts by an overpowering clarity of purpose and by the seriousness of the task at hand.

Wilderness researchers like LaChapelle (1988) and Greenway (1995a,b) describe

being inspired in their work by similarly provocative outdoor adventure experiences of abundant joy, relaxation, and an aesthetically-rich sense of interaction with the natural world - "a seething, changing, balanced community that was doing just fine without my awareness of it" (Greenway, 1995b:189).

Descriptions of the wilderness adventure experience like those cited above coincide with findings from academic studies of such "transcendental" or optimal experiences to reveal an essential theme of connection or engagement with the world. This is the "root" of wilderness experience that suggests a "moral imperative," as the deep ecologists have observed. In the discussion that follows, I explain how this root experience presents a "problem" and how the "solution" can be conceived of as a "religion of wilderness adventure."

The transformative effect

The mystique of the optimal wilderness experience is apparent, but what are the outcomes of this experience? The profoundly meaningful experience suggests a transformative power that is well-documented since the earliest structured programs of "wilderness therapy" (Nash, 1982). The spiritual experience is a form of "personal growth" that extends the boundaries of the self into relationships with others and with environment. James (1981) characterizes the wilderness trip as a religious quest from which the individual returns to civilization transformed. Others agree that the wilderness supports a rite of passage. Andrews, for example, asks of wilderness experiential education expeditions, "what do the students learn from the experience?" "what do they come to know?" and concludes,

> Beneath all the explicit lessons in outdoor skills, natural history, leadership, and teamwork, participants also come to know an intense experience of communitas - a sense of self, a sense of community, and a sense of place - from which they return to society empowered by renewed creative energy, an expanded worldview, and a greater sense of hope, or as one participant put it, with their *'heads higher, hearts fuller, and minds open to new ideas.'* (1996:46)

Most conclusions about the enduring influence of wilderness experiences extend

in similarly optimistic fashion from the finding that the essence of the wilderness experience is enhanced relationship. A study by Potter (1993) of weekend-length wilderness trips found themes categorized in three broad clusters: valuing nature; self-discovery; and self-with-others. These findings inspired a "wilderness personal growth model" which includes the development of "awareness, respect and love" for self, others, and the natural environment. Duenkel (1994) similarly found that wilderness travel experiences deepen and fortify participants' relationships to the natural world. Identification of self with the natural world results in a "reality transition" from an anthropocentric to an ecocentric worldview.

The "connected" experience of wilderness promotes outcomes of health and well-being and positive changes to self (Beck, 1987; Hendee, Stankey, & Lucas, 1990; Kaplan & Talbot, 1983; Kaplan, 1984; Kimball & Bacon, 1993; McDonald, Guldin, & Wetherhill, 1989; Talbot & Kaplan, 1986). Wilderness outcomes are most often determined psychometrically in terms such as self-concept, self-esteem, and self-efficacy. Wilderness adventure is seen as a context allowing individuals to confront challenges appropriately matched to their abilities (Mitchell, 1983). This opportunity to exercise competence and meaningful self-expression enhances self-definition, self-perception, identity, resulting in feelings of competence, control, and self-worth (Miles, 1993; Vogl and Vogl, 1990; Williams, Haggard and Shreyer, 1989;).

Kaplan and Talbot (1983) completed ten years of psychological research on a wilderness program and found lasting increases in self-esteem. The participants' relationship to the natural world was the most central and profound outcome found in analysis of the on-trip experience - suggesting a link between the experience of nature and the benefits to self-concept, also confirming Beck's (1987) conclusion that the natural environment is a more important influence on optimal experience than the activity performed there. Kaplan (1984) concludes that the key theme of the experience is simplicity in nature, which appears to be related for participants to a sense of wholeness, oneness, self-discovery, and a positive outlook on life and situation. The natural environment is responsible for the "sense of wholeness" and "simplicity". Both the

Kaplans and Scherl (1989) confirm that the wilderness experience includes enhanced sensitivity to nature but also to self, and is thus experienced as a "self discovery," consistent with the "vision quest" tradition.

The positive outlook and self-discovery that occur in wilderness are concomitant with an experience of personal growth. Robinson notes that ultimate personal growth results in "transformation and redirection of one's life" (1992:91). The experience in which one finds optimal self-expression becomes "central to lifestyle" and thus influences attitudes and values. Wilderness experience is expected to transfer to everyday life as a metaphor for healthy self-other relationships (Bacon, 1983; Gass, 1993; Raffan, 1988).

Psychologist Greenway (1990) confirms that the wilderness experience produces positive self-transformation, but that this transformation is short-lived. Among 600 respondents from wilderness programs 7-28 days in length, 90% experienced increased "aliveness" and "well-being", 81% experienced an increased sense of empowerment, 80% returned joyful, but experienced within 2 days a depression which could be severe; 77% showed major life changes upon return. Greenway concludes (1995a:128),

> It appears to be an experience of exquisite beauty and clear impact for most people, and one that either dissolves upon return to the urban culture or places the individual in more or less severe conflict with that culture.

More powerful "ego-dissolving" wilderness experiences result in greater levels of depression and disruptive, dysfunctional behaviour upon sudden re-entry to civilization (Greenway, 1995a). Greenway (1995b) describes watching young clients return renewed from the wilderness, standing out amidst their peers in school, eventually fading back into a mundane, lustreless, routinized state.

The encounter with an alternative "wilderness reality" produces conflicting tensions with the everyday reality of the civilized world (Duenkel and Scott, 1994). The problem is made worse by the tendency to idealize the optimal experience in hindsight. When one believes they have experienced perfection and harmony, the conflicts and paradoxes of the everyday can appear intolerable, and return from the wholeness of the wilderness experience can be perceived as a separation worse than death (Raffan, 1996).

Canadian academic James notes that "crossing of the return threshold" is an extremely difficult part of the wilderness "religious quest".

> The adventurer has gone through a death and self-annihilation which is prerequisite to rebirth in the realization of truth - that is, a religious transformation has been effected in the other world. The problem frequently arises of applying those insights to the ordinary world. Thus the crossing of the return threshhold is supremely difficult. (1981:158-159)

The wilderness is essentially experienced as "connection", and the return to civilization becomes a negative disconnection, from which the "problem" of wilderness adventure can be formulated. The problem of translating the transcendent experience into something significant and meaningful for everyday life is that the dualism of this life appears incommensurable with the wholesome reality of the experience charged with vitality and significance.

The literature documents that the wilderness experience is a profound, spiritual experience with a transformative effect that is powerful, but only vaguely meaningful. Talbot and Kaplan conclude, for example, that the richness of the experience" often leads individuals to deeper levels of personal understanding, and to convictions that the ways in which they conduct their lives in their ordinary surroundings should also be different" (1986: 197). The study does not specify what such a life change might entail. Before continuing in search of a solution to the question that is implied, the "problem" of wilderness experience may be best summarized as the search for a "religion."

Leisure

The wilderness adventure experience is a leisure activity, taking place during free time and done for its own sake. Aristotle conceived of leisure as "a state of being, in which activity performed for its own sake provided the fundamental basis for a person's whole life, along with the possibility of creating a better society" (Fain, 1991:7). The ultimate purpose of leisure in Athenian culture was to arrive at wholeness, and express the "Art" or "Supervocation" to which one would aspire in all activities (Wilcox, 1991). The Greek term for leisure, *schole* - the root of the modern word *school* - implies that the

freedom of leisure was perceived as a ground for learning life skills (Arnold, 1991). This Greek ideal was the original impetus for the classical Liberal Arts education (Vogl and Vogl, 1990). A modern account of this classical formulation of leisure can be found in the notion that the optimal experience inspires the desire to see the conditions of the experience perpetuated; one tends to seek ways to introduce the transcendent profundity that is experienced fleetingly, spontaneously, into the structure of day to day life (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Turner, 1968;1974).

It is in this manner, reminiscent of the classic conception of leisure, that the optimal experience of wilderness operates for the "transformation and redirection of life." LaChapelle (1988) explains that the experience of becoming wholly "alive" "ruins the lives" of her clients, because they too are forced to make major life changes when their old ways turn out to be incompatible with newly discovered values. This transformative effect of non-dualistic experience takes the form of a "moral imperative" of leisure activity. The influence of the experience of wilderness, which wants to becomes normative as we wonder what to "do about it," is the problem of the experience that must be solved one way or another through the act of living. In the case of wilderness or adventure therapy, transfer of values or attitudes from the adventure experience to everyday life is called "non-specific" or "metaphorical transfer" (Gass, 1993). In order for this type of transfer to occur, the experience must be perceived as a *metaphor* for everyday life, with a relevant "moral" which can be applied outside of wilderness (Bacon, 1983; Gass, 1993; Raffan, 1988).

Part of the motivation to identify the moral, or metaphorical significance of wilderness is the desire to affirm the meaning of a profoundly significant experience which is in danger of being trivialized in the eyes of culture into an ironic game of conquering summits while wearing the right clothes and driving the right brand of sport-utility truck - the style of leisure that has been accused of being a self-indulgent distraction, decadent narcissism, a symptom of alienation in society, and a means to dull awareness of real social conditions (Haggard and Williams, 1991). Hemingway believes that "...recreation, as immersion in amusement and as a diversion from work and social

ills,....'leads us away from any true confrontation with ourselves, our lives, and our society'" (as cited in Haggard and Williams, 1991, p. 113). This form of recreation, according to Roszak (1979, p.221), may be "marketing the vicarious glamour and escapist pleasures whose one use is to relieve the tedium and frustration of workaday life...[including] the pricey toys and accoutrements of 'creative leisure'" (1978, p.221).

Critiques of leisure are based on this desire to identify what is a truly genuine expression of the experience in question. They insist on a distinction between authentic forms of regenerative, morally inspiring, metaphorically-significant, self-affirming and life-affirming *leisure* in the classical sense and lower forms of "escapist" or "diversionary" *recreation*, products of what Abbey calls "slave culture" - typically, mass entertainment, spectator sports, television - which have a palliative effect and diffuse any impulse to positively transform culture. Aristotle made a similar distinction between virtuous leisure which had ethical import, and "mere recreative pastime" (Goodale, 1985). The leisure critics suggest that if we do not properly understand the moral significance of the leisure experience - what it can teach us about how to live our everyday lives - we may miss the point entirely in the effort to recreate ourselves (Faarlund in Reed and Rothenberg, 1993; Roszak, 1979). They agree that what we experience in our leisure should be a metaphor for what we are trying to achieve in our work (Berry, 1977, 1990; Reed and Rothenberg, 1995; Roszak, 1979; Stormann, 1989). Virtually all suggest that the wilderness experience should not be perceived as an escape from civilization, but rather as a step that carries our lives in a new direction, introducing the meaning that we find in the optimal experience into what we do every day.

Norwegian outdoor educator Nils Faarlund uses the term *friluftsliv,* meaning "open-air life," to distinguish wilderness activity which has the moral aim of "making itself unnecessary" (in Reed and Rothenberg, 1993). When adventure ceases to be an inspiration to change society, it loses its soul. Faarlund suggests that wilderness adventure should not be a form of escape (174) -

> tourism is an evil - it gives people a taste of what they're missing, while letting them continue in their usual, nature-alienated lifestyles. Why not stop tourism,

don't let people breathe for a while, force people to see what they're missing! *Friluftsliv* represents the extension to the contemporary wilderness experience of the classical leisure ideal - moral and virtuous activity conducted for the express purpose of experiencing transcendent good (Kestenbaum, 1991). Faarlund echoes the conclusion of critics like Roszak (1979), Henderson (1995) and Greenway (1995a,b) that wilderness experience must do more than empower individuals to succeed within the existing social structure, if it is to achieve its moral imperative. Faarlund argues that the wilderness experience that is true to its moral imperative must transcend the selfish and competitive motivations of *sport*, the impatient, alienating and consumptive detachment of tourism, the unemotional and objective distance of exploration in the name of *science*, the *"trade show"* mentality of corporate-sponsored, grand-scale Himalayan-style expeditions, and all escapist outdoor activity that only fills the void of an "antinatural" modern lifestyle. True wilderness experience

> is a step towards replacing the barriers keeping us from our true home by a lifestyle in which there is no need to seek this home. In this sense, the goal of *friluftsliv* is to make itself unnecessary. (Reed and Rothenberg, 1993:169)

Greenway (1995a,b) agrees that we should strive to overcome the need to go into wilderness; evidence of humanity's "recovery" is that wilderness can be left alone, "that we do not demand that it heal us" (1995a:134). There is a paradox here, similar to the paradox inherent in the notion that wilderness should be both *protected* as well as *used* for recreation (Greenway, 1995b; Hendee, Stankey and Lucas, 1990). This problem of paradox and hypocrisy in wilderness recreation is not unlike that of the classical Athenians, whose ideal of free-time was supported by legions of toiling slaves (Arnold, 1991). The "wilderness therapy" industry is merely another way that modern culture exploits a diminishing resource. Is the goal then to eliminate the paradoxes of wilderness travel, the way in which "one tends to live in parasitic relationship with Western culture" in the process of escaping from it (Greenway, 1995b, 187)? One is forced to wonder whether the wilderness adventurer should progress away from going into wilderness at all! The ideal might be a kind of ecological monastic lifestyle, where everyday activities

such as farming become a way to connect with the natural world and perpetuate a spiritual experience (Drengson, 1993; Reed and Rothenberg, 1993; Roszak, 1979; Stormann, 1989).

Since many of the leisure and wilderness writers already make moral distinctions between various forms of activity with something of a religious zeal, it is not hard to proceed from viewing wilderness activity as leisure to viewing it as religious inspiration. The literature has already characterized the wilderness experience as "spiritual." For the classical Greeks, all leisure provided the revelation of the divine in humanity, the "transcendent soul" (Goodale, 1985). Wilcox (1991) explains that leisure has a moral imperative because it is "a prolepsis" - the breaking of God into our lives. Prolepsis is a foretaste of the Good Life on this earth, or the perfection of an afterlife in the supernatural. Serving God thus requires following the moral imperative of the leisure experience. Wilcox (1991) borrows the term "moral supervocation" from Frankena to describe how the leisure inspiration relates to everyday life as its overriding purpose. The moral supervocation informs the individual of his/her "calling" which imbues ordinary work with meaning. The moral supervocational, transcendent meaning must be life's first priority, before other considerations, or else life loses value. Berry and Roszak make the same argument for "work-as-calling" - what Roszak (1979) calls "authentic vocation." As Wilcox explains, (1991:110):

> When work is sundered from one's moral supervocation, when job and career impel one toward expressive individualism, when the person exists for work and not the reverse, there is no sense of calling nor the challenge of community building because the presuppositional worldview excludes the transcendent goal of the moral supervocation.

Religion

Understanding what is meant by the term "religion" clarifies how wilderness adventure is a religious experience - not in terms of religious institutions or even ideologies, but as religion in its most basic or essential form, arising as the response to "spiritual" experience.

What is religion if it is not an institution? Griffin (1989) explains that the starting point for a society is a "sense of importance," and when this sense becomes defined and institutionalized, a religion is formed, which encapsulates a worldview. So "religion" and "spirituality" also bespeak a worldview. What is common to all cultures is "our feeling that some things are more important than others," but what differs between societies and religions is the particular "story of the universe" that they accept, as Griffin explains,

> A *worldview* indicates which factors in our experience are the most important factors in reality as a whole.... Our worldview shows us what is of ultimate importance in the very nature of things.
>
> *Ultimate concern* was Paul Tillich's term for religion and its object. Whatever is of ultimate concern or importance to you is in effect your deity. The beliefs, emotions, attitudes and practices oriented around this ultimate concern constitute your real religious life - regardless of the religious institution to which you may or may not belong.
>
> The ultimate basis for every religion is a worldview, and every worldview suggests a religion.... Because it is important to us to be in step with the universe, it is important to us to orient our lives around that which is truly important in the ultimate nature of things.... The basic desire is the same in all: the desire to be in harmony with that which is most powerful. (1989: 14)

Similarly, Griffin uses a broad definition of "spirituality" that is applicable here. It is

> the ultimate values and meanings in terms of which we live, whether they be otherworldly or very worldly ones, and whether or not we consciously try to increase our commitment to those values and meanings. The term does have religious connotations, in that one's ultimate values and meanings reflect some presupposition as to what is *holy*, that is, of ultimate importance.... Everyone embodies a spirituality.... (Griffin, 1988b:1)

Griffin explains one of the assumptions of this study, which is that the act of living consciously or unconsciously presupposes a spirituality/religion. The wilderness literature confirms that "a sense of importance" is a key fact of the optimal experience in wilderness. The life of a wilderness adventurer can be called a religion even if he/she does not claim a religious belief, when wilderness adventure is a way of connecting to what is "ultimately important".

The conception of religion in this study is a universal or generic form of religion, such as that described by William James (1985), who believed that there is "a certain

uniform deliverance" common to all religions. The spiritual experience for James can be described as the realization of transpersonality - feeling a part of something larger, surrendering control to this larger power, feeling elation and freedom and an emotional shift towards love and compassion. The general structure of religion as James saw it, Smith explains, entails the realization in the individual that there is something "wrong" about mundane existence and there is the possibility of "more":

> ...there is a better part in the self, a part with which the person comes to identify himself when the final stage of deliverance is attained.... The individual...becomes conscious that the higher part of the self is "*continuous with a* more *of the same quality, which is operative in the universe outside of him.*" To keep in active commerce with this power is the saving factor.... (in James, 1985:xlvii)

The experience, frequently described in reference to wilderness, of feeling a union with the better part of oneself that is at once the force abiding in the natural world, is what James identified as generic to all religion. A religious sentiment in relation to the wilderness can be expressed in terms of *longing*, yearning for the "more" represented by wildness, the dream of a better life closer to nature.

As Griffin (1989) observes, a fundamental characteristic of religion is to seek harmony with the larger reality or pattern intuited within the religious experience. This pattern is what the Chinese called the *Tao*, and is roughly equivalent to the Christian *Logos* (Smith, in James, 1985). Smith writes (in James, 1985:xxvi),

> Religion in the broadest terms involves the belief that there is an unseen order and that our supreme good is found in harmoniously adjusting ourselves to it.

Religion is the system that relates or *binds* the individual's life with holiness, with the sacred within and beyond humanity. This may be the meaning of "religion," rooted in the latin *religare*, meaning "to bind fast" (Reese, 1996). Religion is typically associated with an institution, regular meetings, and a common doctrine, but the religious doctrine nonetheless serves the fundamental purpose of "relating the individual to what is taken to be the *ultimate nature of reality*" (Reese, 1996:647). This is similar to Tolstoy's description of religion as a way of relating to the Ultimate - "True religion is that relationship, in accordance with reason and knowledge, which man establishes with the

infinite world around him, and which binds his life to that infinity and guides his actions" (1987:89). Drengson summarizes how the wilderness journey is religious:

> The root meaning of the word religion is to bind back to the source. In this sense to go on a religious or sacred journey is to seek the source of our being, the past and present root power of our lives. It is to seek ultimate transformation or salvation from alienation or incompleteness. In Buddhism binding back to the source is called enlightenment. It is to realize our Buddha nature that all beings have. It is experienced as Nirvana - which is perfection. In Christianity it is salvation or unity with God through Christ as saviour; this kingdom of heaven is unqualified perfection. (1996:183)

As the direct experience of "importance" that is equivalent to God, wilderness experience has much in common with religious mysticism, which refers to the strain in various religious traditions that deals with the direct religious or spiritual *experience* (Reese, 1996). The key element of mysticism is the notion of preparation or process through which an experience of union is achieved, "whereby the consciousness of mundane existence is overcome and the person is brought to the point where some new insight or unifying vision of reality may be attained" (Smith, in James, 1985:xliv). Mysticism is replaced by religion as the memory of the direct experience of spirituality is translated into norms by which to live. As religion is the relationship that relates human life to ultimate reality, Tolstoy observes, "morality is the permanent guide to life that follows from this relationship" (1987:150). Morality is inseparable from religion. The optimal experience suggests the possibility that life has an ultimate purpose and meaning. Answering with one's life the question of this meaning results in a morality.

"Religion," referring to a worldview with moral implications for living, becomes a useful metaphor as soon as the wilderness adventurer attempts to return to civilization from the optimal experience and make sense of the mystical experience in the context of everyday life. The contrast is between a non-dualism in which all doubt and confusion disappear, and the dualism of everyday life which is comparatively dissonant. The adventurer returns with the memory of perfect order, to an experience of disorder and a prevailing condition of alienation. This is the problem of being a logically thinking subject, a "spiritual being" in a world of apparent contradiction and chaos - a problem that

religion attempts to reconcile by accounting for such contradictions, by coming to terms with the human feeling of chronic homelessness. In recognizing this, Gregory Bateson defines religion as a solution to the "mind-body problem" (Bateson, 1991).

The literature typically blames Modernism with its worldview of dualism for the alienation that is experienced upon return from wilderness. As a solution, an alternative is sought to Modernism's essentially anti-religious, anti-spiritual worldview. Finding this solution is essentially a religious exercise, because it entails a loyalty to a reality that transcends dualities. Fox (1990), Porteous, (1993; 1996), Grumbine (1995), Oelschlaeger (1991) and many of the other writers and researchers discussed here make this argument for a what Porteous (1993) calls a "new environmental religion" that transcends dualism.

There is optimism particularly among deep ecological writers that the wilderness experience provides this much-needed religious inspiration, that wilderness is in fact the *best* place for a re-discovery of value to inspire fresh thinking and commitment to a better way of life. Each wilderness traveller and thinker is attempting to reconcile the natural and the cultural, to reconcile the insights of wilderness with lifestyle - essentially a metaphor for the reconciliation of mind and body which is the foundation of religion.

Conclusion

A preliminary review of the literature confirms the inspirational and transformative significance of the wilderness experience, the existence of the "problem" of coming to terms with the experience in everyday life, and the logic of interpreting wilderness adventure, like the leisure of the Greeks, as a religious inspiration.

The root of wilderness-as-religion is the optimal experience, which is a spiritual experience - "an awareness of and fusion with a power or principle greater than the self...which gives meaning and purpose to life" (Stringer and McAvoy: 1992:13). Missing from the current academic research is a practicable definition of this "meaning and purpose." Writings in deep ecology suggest that moral growth will follow from the optimal "Self-realization" experience of "sudden or gradual awareness of self-other interrelationships" (McDonald, Guldin and Wetherhill, 1989:194). To discover if this

should really be the case requires a leap from documenting the spiritual experience to understanding its religious significance, which has not yet been performed. There is little to suggest specifically how lives are changed by the wilderness experience - how the wilderness inspiration is interpreted and put into action, how a life shaped by the wilderness experience might be unique. Significantly, this means that there is nothing in the literature addressed straightforwardly to a person inspired by wilderness who wishes to make sense of the experience and direct its transformative power in a constructive manner, and it is from here that I begin my search for the meaning of the experience. Understanding the wilderness experience more fully requires first defining it historically.

Part 2: Historical Background

Wilderness defined

Nash (1982) defines wilderness as the wild extreme of the environmental modification spectrum "primeval to paved." This suggests a definition of *legal wilderness* - wilderness as a defined landscape, "objective" but arbitrarily so - as opposed to *sociological wilderness*, which is subjective (Hendee et al., 1990). As Nash observes, "one man's wilderness may be another's roadside picnic ground" (1982:1). A commonly cited legal definition is found in Section 2(c) of the 1964 American Wilderness Act:

> A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man [sic] and his works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. (Hendee et al., 1990:4)

In the spirit of the standard definition, the term "wilderness" in this study refers to landscapes, officially designated or not, which are relatively free from permanent human settlement and modification. "Wilderness experience," however, may refer to psychological states which do not necessarily occur in wilderness - encounters with wild nature or with the essence *wildness* itself. Wildness can also imply freedom from rational, conceptual thought, social conventions and restraints; it is a quality more than a place (Light, 1995; Nash, 1982; Oelschlaeger, 1991). Wildness is "'the process and

essence of nature'...the *source* of resources and of human existence...the force behind places, 'the overarching reality that transcends all our plans and creations'" (Grumbine, 1995:6). It appears to be neither good nor evil, but amoral, pure potentiality. Rothenberg (1995) calls wildness the "soul force" behind creativity. Wildness is the rule-breaking passion in the heart of the romantic.

Wilderness is an historical, cultural construct, which reflects attitudes about wildness (Grumbine, 1995). A pure wilderness is a place where wildness is encountered uninhibited. For as long as there has been civilization, wilderness has existed as its antithesis. For better or for worse, then, it is home to what humans label as "nature" and what they value as "freedom.". It has been refuge to persecuted religious minorities, political dissident groups, counter-cultural movements, guerilla bands, and other hinterland characters from Abraham to Kaszinsky (Nash, 1982). How to reconcile our civilized "insideness" with their wild outsideness, but also with that wildness which we suppress in ourselves, is one of the problems raised by the discussion of wilderness - how to come to terms with what is the source of our dreams but also of nightmares.

Prehistoric wilderness

How wilderness and wildness have been perceived differs among cultures and over time. Some cultures have so thoroughly modified their landscape as to eliminate anything westerners would call "wilderness." Others, like traditional Native North Americans, tend not to distinguish between wild landscapes and human ones (Henberg, 1995). Virtually all of the wilderness literature cited herein is predicated upon the Western, European/North American concept of wilderness. Oelschlaeger's (1991) *The Idea of Wilderness* and Nash's (1982) *Wilderness and the American Mind* are the two major exegeses of the western wilderness idea, both emphasising wilderness as a product of historical consciousness. Nash (1982) observes that "civilization created wilderness." It follows that the history of Western wilderness parallels the history of our civilization.

Oelschlaeger (1991) describes the origin of the wilderness idea from its prehistoric roots. The concept of wilderness evolves with the origin of the human-nature

dichotomy that probably began with the development of language. A symbolic representation of the world did not however prefigure the concept of wilderness as it is understood in western culture. Until historic times, the original and predominant form of human culture was a way of life enframed by ritual, embedded within nature. The Paleolithic hunting-foraging culture was dominant from c. 200 000 BCE until the end of the Ice Age, c. 10 000 BCE This was a culture whose "idea of wilderness" was of nature as home and as wholly sacred. Paleolithic religion likely "celebrated the miracle of life" without positing transcendent deities. Human life was not conceived as separate from the natural world, and yet there was an awareness of the mystery of life that is characteristic of human consciousness. Oelschlaeger explains that Paleolithic humanity was *Homo religiosus* inhabiting a sacred cosmos, sustained by ritual acts. Time-consciousness was like that of the optimal experience - a cyclical, "eternal mythical present" - different from linear, modern time.

The concept of "sacredness" suggests a vision of wholeness in the world and human connection to that whole (Snyder, 1990). A life which continually reaffirms connection is one which is firmly embedded in the "sacred." The history of increasing human-nature dualism is a progression from the sacred to the profane. Paleolithic humanity was indeed *Homo religiosus*, one who "had few wants yet lived an affluent and satisfying life in harmony with nature," whereas modern humans are "*Homo oeconomicus*, and therefore naturally endowed with infinite wants and limited means" (Oelschlaeger, 1991:25). After the Ice Age, the Neolithic agricultural revolution produced a "fall" from this purportedly Edenic state of Paleolithic life, precipitating ancient Mediterranean civilization and a philosophy and theology that worked the conceptual separation of humanity from nature. Thus began the process by which "civilization created wilderness" as its opposite (Nash, 1982:xiii). The very idea of wilderness in Western thought is a product of the historical outlook which replaced the mythical at the onset of civilization. Oelschlaeger cites Paul Shepard's words that "the idea of history is itself a Western invention whose central theme is a rejection of habitat" (1991:21). This new direction in human thought found expression in Hellenism and

Judeo-Christianity, influencing subsequent Western thought to view humans as dependent upon but separate from a natural world which was ordered and purposeful, existing for human use, valueless until improved by humans, and subject to a linear rather than cyclical conception of time (Oelschlaeger, 1991).

Biblical and classical wilderness

The Old Testament idea of wilderness is characterized by the metaphysical innovation that nature is the creation of a single, transcendent God (Oelschlaeger, 1991). Belief in the supernatural and transcendent is a significant departure from Paleolithic religion which saw nature as sacred. Eastern traditions such as Taoism deify nature as a manifestation through which the unity and rhythm of the cosmic Tao can be experienced directly (Nash, 1982). Western culture, however, perceived nature as profane from the advent of Christianity until Romanticism. Wilderness was not perceived as Edenic paradise, but was rather analogous to sinful, fallen man (Nash, 1982). Like humanity, it had the potential to be good or evil, tending towards evil unless "subdued" by the moral efforts of humanity working in accord with God's divine plan as revealed in the Bible.

White's thesis that the Judeo-Christian conception of nature is responsible for the modern ecological crisis is part of the canon of modern environmentalism (Oelschlaeger, 1991). Others place the blame for the crisis on Platonism and the Greek advent of a purely abstract language, decontextualized from inherently poetic roots in the natural world of human experience (LaChapelle, 1988). Although the common assumption remains that the resulting dualism is at the root of modern social and ecological woes, this disintegration likely resulted from a combination of influences which arose in response to a new form of social organization marking the "fall" of the Paleolithic and the rise of civilization. Hellenistic and Judeo-Christian traditions were just two products of this larger turn of events. In this light, the Bible is seen as a documentation of the transition to a modern consciousness, providing an elaborate justification of the new relationship to nature in which humanity found itself at this time (Oelschlaeger, 1991).

In the Bible, wilderness is ambiguously portrayed as a place of moral license

which leads one astray from the good, but also as a place of purification by hardship, in which pilgrims draw closer to God. Wilderness could provide refuge to rebels for both "good" and "evil" causes. Old Testament Hebrews rebelled against Egyptian and Babylonian culture, fleeing the corruption and slavery of the ungodly cities to the freedom of the wilderness (Oelschlaeger, 1991). Wilderness was a refuge from tyranny but also the stage of a forty year trial (Nash, 1982). Oelschlaeger (1991) describes the wilderness they found as "spiritual oasis" symbolic of a temporary return to Edenic existence, but Nash (1982) emphasises that wilderness was viewed unfavourably, not as paradise but rather a place of "evil and hardship where spiritual catharsis occurred" (17). In Nash's conception, it is not the experience of a sacred nature, but a harsh confrontation with the profane in nature that brings the traveller closer to God, inspiring a humble rededication of faith. In contrast, civilization is a place of excessive luxury and distraction making humanity deaf to the word of God (*The Interpreter's Bible*). The desert wilderness was thus a context for supernatural revelation. Elijah and Moses found guidance from God there, and "Jesus emerged from the wilderness prepared to speak for God" (Nash, 1982:17).

In this sense, the Biblical account is of a profane wilderness put to good use. Wilderness is not sacred, but turns the mind to God. The classical definition of wilderness, however, widespread in Medieval Europe, is as a profane landscape allied with evil. Hebraic tradition supplanted immanently sacred nature with a sacredness that was wholly supernatural and transcendent. Then Greek rationalism similarly elevated human consciousness to a "transcendent and immaterial domain beyond space and time" (Oelschlaeger, 1991:57). Socrates and later Plato theorized about a realm of universal definitions or forms that was the invisible, unchanging foundation of knowledge. The Greeks supplanted myth with reason and worked to "turn attention inward" (56) from nature to the human soul, and laid the philosophical groundwork for the alliance of this human psyche with the transcendent and immaterial divine in the Christian theological doctrine of the soul (Oelschlaeger, 1991). The combined traditions gave Medieval Christianity an outlook of deeply entrenched anthropocentrism and dualism that was

profoundly hostile to nature and religious traditions rooted in wilderness experience.

The result, argue the ecologists, was that Christianity was the culmination of a total reorientation of the Paleolithic religion to offer a sort of solution to the problem of "The Fall", rationalizing humanity's new identity as a "natural alien" (Evernden, 1993). Christianity replaced the present with the future, and nature with transcendent God, Heaven and the human soul, as the ultimate concerns of humankind. Instead of living as a part of nature within an "eternal mythical present", humankind found itself the ruler of a fallen creation in an earthly "vale of tears", entrapped in the linear march of time through the unfolding of God's ultimate plan, its sights set with hope upon a home in Heaven (Oelschlaeger, 1991). Oelschlaeger cites Ortega, explaining how Christianity entailed a radical redefinition of the *real* (1991:66):

> ...what had seemed real - nature and ourselves as a part of it - now turns out to be unreal, pure phantasmagoria; and that which had seemed unreal - our concern with the absolute or God - that is the true reality.
>
> This paradox, this complete inversion of perspective, is the basis of Christianity. The problems of natural man have no solution: to live, to be in the world, is perdition, constitutional and unchangeable. Man must be saved by the supernatural.

In this Christian tradition wilderness came to be abhorred as a symbol of a sinful, mortal, fallen state (Nash, 1982). Wilderness allowed Medieval Christian monks to practice meditation, seek spiritual insight, and strive for moral perfection away from the distraction and vices of civilization. Wilderness was good as a cultural vacuum to free the monks from earthly concerns and turn their attention inward to the soul, but it was evil if it drew their attentions earthwards. This Christian attitude towards nature was inherited by the fourteenth century poet Petrarch, whose 1336 ascent of Mount Ventoux ended in shame when an impromptu consultation of Augustine's *Confessions* caused him to cease admiring the view and turn his thoughts inward to the subject of his own salvation: "I was abashed...angry with myself that I should still be admiring earthly things who might long ago have learned...that nothing is wonderful but the soul" (Nash, 1982:20; Porteous, 1996). Inspiration and moral improvement was to proceed from the inside out, from spiritual to material, so even as Medieval monastic society sought solace

in the wilderness, the quest for moral perfection unleashed itself upon the woodlands surrounding the cloisters. Discouraging heathenism by razing pagan sacred groves, and at the same time fulfilling God's plan by improving upon wild nature, "axe-wielding monks" may be the largest single cause of environmental change during the Middle Ages (Oelschlaeger, 1991). During this time of crusades against local cultures in the name of God, "attachment to place was made a heresy" (LaChapelle, 1988:40).

This classical idea of wilderness survived in the early American experience. The Puritans in the New World relived the Biblical and Medieval themes of wilderness as simultaneous refuge and foe (Nash, 1982). Wilderness provided religious freedom from a corrupt civilization, but it was again not the promised land, but a hardship to be endured and ultimately transcended in the creation of a new, moral civilization. Wilderness contained irresistible temptations and was ultimately a source of evil, as expressed in Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (Nash, 1982). Like the Israelites, the Puritans viewed the trials of the wilderness as a challenge to be overcome, raising their esteem by God.

This "classical" view of wild land as evil stands in contrast to the "Romantic" alternative which began to view nature in a positive light, whereas in fact wilderness is neither inherently evil nor good. According to Light (1995), the classical view assumes a wilderness that is separate from civilization, inferior to civilization, and savage. It is a place of savage passion, opposite to the rationality of civilization, and in the sense of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, it represents the dark side of the human psyche. As an "other" landscape of unfamiliarity, it has aroused suspicion and fear, and like the "underneath the bed" of civilization, was seen as the habitat of all the monstrosities that nightmares contained. This classical conception is revealed in the etymological roots of the world wilderness - from the Old English "deor" meaning animal, wild-deor-ness was "place of wild beasts"; it is also a place of "bewilderment" - disorientation, confusion, disorder (Nash, 1982).

The Renaissance and Reformation replaced the religious worldview of the Middle Ages with an economic one; nature came to be seen more as an economic resource than a challenge to the spirit. The scientific revolution resulted in the "Baconian-Cartesian

dream" that humanity's fallen state could be transcended through scientific rather than merely spiritual progress (Oelschlaeger, 1991:89). Science interpreted nature mechanically rather than organically, as matter-in-motion that could ultimately be understood and controlled to serve human (or divine) ends. The Enlightenment and the industrial revolution were the final major influences on the Modern worldview, completing the separation of humanity from nature (Oelschlaeger, 1991). Humans lived outside of nature and nature was wholly profane. If wild nature had any value, it was only that value allotted to it by the market, measured in economic terms. The human purpose was the transformation of natural resources into wealth, the transformation of the world to match human ideals.

Today's wilderness traveller reports a "circular 'being' out of time," (Henderson, 1995:118) similar to what must have been prehistoric humanity's experience. Since the human mind has not evolved significantly in the intervening millennia, the modern wilderness experience is likely a return to the "Paleolithic mind" (Oelschlaeger, 1991), or what Henderson terms "native intelligence." Writers who view this prehistoric experience in a positive light suggest that there might be something to learn from this evolutionary heritage which incorporates the non-dualism of our "wilderness experience" into a total way of being (LaChapelle, 1988; Oelschlaeger, 1991).

Oelschlaeger (1991) hopes that by changing our own idea of wilderness, we might return to a more satisfying way of life, more amenable to our psychology which has been with us since before civilization began. His is an optimistic conclusion, which rejects that alternative view that the human brain is an evolutionary misfit facing an irresolvable existential predicament. Oelschlaeger (1991) cites Arthur Koestler, Konrad Lorenz, and Kurt Vonnegut among these pessimistic ranks. The deep ecology tradition of Norway was preceded by a finer example in the tragicomic philosophy of Peter Wessel Zapffe, whose fictional "Last Messiah" proclaimed, "there is one victory and one crown, and one salvation and one answer: Know thyselves; be unfruitful and let there be peace on Earth after thy passing" (in Reed & Rothenberg, 1993:52). But such despairing visions are themselves good-humoured revelations of the futility of the religion of

economic growth and material progress; they too advocate an alternative way of being (or dying) consistent with thoughtful questioning of what it means to be human, given that "man has lost his citizenship in the universe" (41). To Zapffe, all striving is diversion; the fully-conscious face despair: "The conclusion is inescapable: As long as humankind blunders along under the dire misconception that we are biologically preordained to conquer the earth, no alleviation of our angst for life is possible" (51).

Optimistic or despairing, the ecological vision produces a common conclusion that is against modernism and the ideal represented by the city, which modern architect Le Corbusier called the "subjugation of nature by man" (Porteous, 1996:88). The only answer to the question of human purpose provided by Modernism is material progress. Evernden terms the resultant attitude towards nature "resourcism" - "a kind of modern religion which casts all of creation into categories of utility" (1993:23). Wilderness-inspired visions seek to pattern human life after a higher authority represented by nature, what imbues things with intrinsic value independent of human values and needs. This attitude is a contemporary "primitivism" which argues that humanity must rediscover its relationship with that wild aspect of reality which is the source of both good and evil. The first Modern primitivists, and precursors to this ecological view which attempts to construct a worldview based on wilderness, were the Romantics (Evernden, 1993).

Romantic wilderness

Historically, the alternative to the classical conception of wilderness, and the one to which the wilderness preservation movement is heir, is the Romantic (Light, 1995; Nash, 1982). Romanticism coincided with a change in landscape tastes that occurred in the late eighteenth century. Under Christian influences before this time, wild landscapes were not only perceived as a distraction from spiritual matters, as demonstrated by Petrarch. They were also a theological problem. Valued landscapes through the Renaissance fell into the category of "the beautiful" - the Arcadian ideal of tamed agricultural and the pastoral (Porteous, 1996). Such landscapes were clearly the creation of a benevolent God, but how could rugged, hostile, disorderly landscapes be considered

the work of an omnipotent creator? This problem was resolved at the end of the seventeenth century by Thomas Burnet in his *Sacred Theory of the Earth* (Oelschlaeger, 1991). Burnet explained that the great flood following humankind's banishment from the Garden of Eden caused the earth's former perfection to be marred. The earth, which in its original form displayed "smoothness, regularity, uniformity, proportion, roundness, and symmetry in full measure" became "rough, irregular, craggy, asymmetrical, diverse, and various" (Porteous, 1996:75). The most terrible landscapes were the works of God's wrath, a concrete result of human sin. Such landscapes fell into the category of "the sublime". It then became appropriate in the context of this insight to revel in the mixed terror and exultation that came from contemplating sublime landscapes, as this was considered to have the edifying effect of turning the observer's thoughts towards the fearsome God Himself. The secular influence of science further legitimated the experience of wild nature. Sublime scenes - wilderness, mountains, storms, waterfalls, precipices, even violent or darkly ugly human creations - became popular by the end of the eighteenth century. The direct appreciation of nature outside the category of the beautiful also found more reserved expression in "picturesque" landscape tastes, which became popular in Britain where the sublime was not believed to exist as it did in the European Alps (Porteous, 1996). Picturesque landscapes were judged for their scenic value - form rather than function - according to specified aesthetic criteria exemplified by the Renaissance landscape painters Claude Lorrain and Salvator Rosa (Porteous, 1996).

The Romantic movement embraced the sublime, the picturesque, the naturalism of science, and concomitantly, the idea of wilderness. Beginning in the cities amongst urban literati, Romanticism developed in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Europe and found expression in the poetry of Byron, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Coleridge, and the painting of Constable, and Turner (Porteous, 1996). The movement is significantly understood as a reaction to the intellectual strictures of the eighteenth century Age of Reason (Porteous, 1996). Central to this strain of Romanticism was Rousseau's (1712-1778) primitivism, with his concept of the "noble savage" (Oelschlaeger, 1991; Russell, 1972). Russell describes Rousseau as a "tramp",

archetypally Romantic in his contempt for social convention. Oelschlaeger observes that Byron's heroes were in this spirit "melancholy cynics," disenchanted with civilization. Primitivism was a faith in the inherent goodness of natural humanity; it blamed social structure for corruption. Rousseau interpreted original sin as the turn to agriculture and the concept of private property. He encapsulated the spirit of primitivism - "the thesis that culture and happiness are inversely related" - in his famous phrase that humans are born free but live everywhere in chains (Oelschlaeger, 1991:111). Living freely in nature was believed to bring out the best in people, including happiness, strength, innocence, innate nobility, and enhanced sexual prowess (Nash, 1982).

It is logical that the Romantics celebrated primitivism in their reaction to the oppressive, scientific rationalism that then prevailed. The wilderness had formerly been conceived as dangerous because it was home to the passions suppressed by civilization (Light, 1995). But the Romantics perceived truth in the passionate way of being that the French termed *la sensibilite*, and it was consequently to the wilderness that they turned to find this truth revealed (Oelschlaeger, 1991). Wilderness and Romanticism both were seen as good so long as passion was interpreted as a source of value rather than as a threat to a social order hard-won against the threat of anarchy. Environmentalists who perceive the affective relationship with nature as a source of values argue that the Romantic movement was not merely reactionary, but rather a project in its own right - a brave epistemological alternative to Modernism that might be loosely termed phenomenological (Evernden, 1993; Oelschlaeger, 1991).

In the eighteenth century, Modern scientism was busily driving wedges between science and art, ethics, and religion, as well as between nature and humanity, mind and matter. Romanticism appears to be the only cultural movement with lasting influence to explore the relationships between the fragments of this dissected reality, taking issue with the Modernism's separation of value from fact, which banishes the affective domain of human experience from what is socially construed as *real*. This is a dualism that has resulted in the absurd situation of inhabiting a social structure which denies the value if not the existence of that which gives meaning to human life. Contemporary "Romantics"

agree that E.F. Schumacher expresses this paradox particularly well:

> All through school and university I had been given maps of life and knowledge on which there was hardly a trace of many of the things that I most cared about and that seemed to me to be of the greatest possible importance to the conduct of my life. (Evernden, 1993:26; Henderson, 1995:24)

Modernism is an insidious threat because by denying the reality of the things we hold most dear, it renders us powerless to protect these things against the appetites of a system dedicated to the endless production of inferior, inherently meaningless things.

It was evident to the "sensibility" of the Romantics that humans are capable of directly experiencing more than can be rationally explained. Rather than discount their experience, this gave the Romantics cause to rebel against the dominant worldview which they were inclined to see, in the same vein as today's postmodernists, as nothing more than *assumption* about reality, and not truth (Evernden, 1993). The Romantic challenged the dominant ontological assumption with the authority of personal experience.

Russell (1972) criticizes Romanticism as a faddish attempt to base morals on the whims of irrational passion and ego, which preferred violent actions justified on the most visceral level, with a minimum of thought as to consequences. As the revolt of solitary instincts against social bonds, Romanticism violated its own self-interest, because it could not sustain stable social relations. It was bound to lead to anarchy or despotism, its "ecstasy of independence" the privilege of madmen and dictators. In these terms, Romanticism seems irresponsible, not suggesting any viable alternative to Modernism. Evernden (1993) claims, however, that such "shallow" Romanticism is too easily dismissed as emotional and "irrational" in the negative sense, when at its core Romanticism had good reason to protest against the exaltation of the intellect - conceptual abstraction from direct experience - as the primary way of knowing. The Romantics realized that by restricting their perception to the scientific mode, they were not fully apprehending reality; they were diminishing what they saw, who they were, and the capacity of human understanding (Evernden, 1993). The actual foundation of Romanticism was a way of perceiving reality by direct experience and affective bonding. This was a marriage of art and science (Porteous, 1996), a reconnection of the objective,

scientific way of knowing which enabled control of reality, with the subjective, poetic/aesthetic way of knowing which informed the *appreciation* of that reality and put scientific power within an ethical context. The Romantics sought an "unmediated (prelinguistic, precultural) mode of awareness...a faint but lingering reflection of the Paleolithic mind" (Oelschlaeger, 1991:116).

A Romantic was one who refused to follow the social "map" when it did not take him where he wanted to go; in other words, refusing the paradox of believing in the reality of the abstraction when it contradicted direct experience (Evernden, 1993). A Romantic would, in the words of Whitman, reject whatever convention insulted his own soul. Evernden observes that Romanticism was "a protest on behalf of value."

> Remembering the poetic rendering of our concrete experience, we see at once that the element of value, of being valuable, of having value, of being an end in itself, of being something which is for its own sake, must not be omitted in any account of an event as the most concrete actual something. "Value" is the word I use for the intrinsic reality of an event. Value is an element which permeates through and through the poetic vision of nature. (Whitehead, in Evernden, 1993:33-34)

On these grounds Romanticism was not rebellion for the sake of rebellion, but rather a justifiable opposition to Modernity which threatened to strip life of value, and meaning.

Evernden (1993) describes the method of Romanticism as a "bearing witness" to the revelations of personal experience in defiance of the conventions of rationalism which would deny the validity of that experience. The Romantics valued experience above the interpretation, and thus set about "trying to express that personal experience without translating it into the abstractions of the dominant social paradigm" (Evernden, 1993:31),

> It means becoming a perpetual outsider. The gain for the individual is the experience itself and the continual surprise of existence. But for the rest of us it is the exposure of our own beliefs. In describing what simply *is*, the Romantic simultaneously reveals by contrast what we *suppose* it to be. The Romantic is a constant beginner in life, always learning, never content to be instructed by others. He "embraces the perversity of truth instead of the complicity of agreement."

Concerned with the inherent value of things the Romantics revolted against the utilitarian view of nature as "a nuisance, a resource, or a picture" (Porteous, 1996). Inherent value was experienced affectively, and was most closely allied with aesthetics.

The Romantics understood that the appreciation of beauty was the key to seeing the inherent rather than the instrumental value of things. They sought out in the exotic, dangerous, strange, remote, solitary, mysterious, violent, destructive, grand, and terrifying aspects of the human as well as the natural. There was beauty in such things that had not been previously heralded, and their choice was likely reactionary in part, against established tastes, but also an understandable turning towards the most fruitful sources of experience. The sublime evoked a much richer affective response than the beautiful. In this renegade, experimental spirit, Romanticism produced a taste for the gothic. Some of Turner's paintings were of industrial themes. But the logical subject of the Romantic passion was nature.

The choice of nature was not an accident. Nature was the ultimate source of what really inspired the Romantics - *wildness*. As Evernden explains (1993:32),

> ...it is probably fair to say that for most the choice of nature as a central theme was largely pragmatic. When you wish to pursue experience unsullied by social convention, it makes sense to look where those conventions are least plentiful. All of the world is "translated" for us, in some degree, by the explanatory structure which is our social reality. Within society it is difficult to transcend that structure - it is all around us, constantly reinforced by the speech and behaviour of others. But wilderness is almost definable as the *absence* of social structure; it is the realm of reality that humans have *not* fully interpreted. It is the unknown, and as such it constituted the best choice for the Romantic experiment. The Romantics were not so much nature poets as reality-experimenters working in the environment least hostile to their project.

As in Biblical accounts of wilderness, the Romantics also believed that spiritual truths were more readily apparent in nature, away from the works of humanity (Nash, 1982).

It was in the *appreciation of beauty* that the cognitive structure of Modernism was transcended and its dualisms dissolved. An observer *seeing* and experiencing nature for himself could intuit in its details a wholeness - a "sum" that was lost in a scientific description of its parts. This intuition, which might be described as a correspondence of the inner and the outer landscapes of mind and nature, is an optimal or "peak experience" (Porteous, 1996). The interpretation of this intuition in Christian terms was a theological aspect of the Romantic project, hoping to introduce an experiential basis for faith to a

society facing the irreconcilable opposition of "blind" religious faith versus spiritually empty scientific empiricism; for example, Coleridge was one poet who used Romanticism as a theosophical justification for religion, while Wordsworth turned more openly to communion with nature, inspired by the idea of an infinite Logos inhering in the flux of nature - "a natural way that might inform the philosophic mind" (Oelschlaeger, 1991:119). Contemporary writings of Barry Lopez and Annie Dillard reveal the same attitude (1986; 1990). Here was a turn towards the deism which was typical in Eastern ideas of nature (Nash, 1982).

The Romantics valued the exotic, but also held the moral perfection of the everyday as an ideal, striving for an awareness of and emotional attachment to the mundane details of nature by which the divine could be known directly (Porteous, 1996). They believed that the wholeness they intuited within nature was God, manifest through his creation. They maintained the transcendentalist distinction between the natural and the supernatural - the aesthetic sensibility was used to reaffirm faith in a realm unseen - but through their belief the Romantics found a relationship between humanity and nature, as God was felt to be present in both (Oelschlaeger, 1991). Their emphasis on the direct experience of wholeness was "post-Kantian, an attempt to transcend aesthetically the bifurcation of knowing subject and known object, the theoretical and the practical, even the phenomenal and the noumenal. In Romantic poetry...the denouement is realization of the unity of mind and nature" (Oelschlaeger, 1991:121)

The Romantics are generally characterized as seeing nature and wilderness as moral, in contrast to the classical view of nature as evil (Light, 1995). Darwin's theories and later scientific developments made the hypothesis of a morally ordered universe untenable to most (Porteous, 1996). But the amorality of nature does not rule out the possibility that it could inform morality. There remain many contemporary arguments in the Romantic tradition that the ecological perspective is the source of an ethical perspective; the principle of interconnection is fundamental to morality (Berry, 1977; Orr, 1992). Perhaps this is what the Romantics were getting at all along. They were on a quest to perceive humanity as having a *place* within the natural order, rather than

standing apart and above nature - a place which would imply moral limits to human actions. According to historian Worster, the core of the Romantic belief was what would later be called an "ecological" worldview, with an emphasis on interconnectedness (Evernden, 1993). Now the environmental movement has taken over the case:

> Instead of accepting beliefs that trivialize the experience of living and assert the reality of a valueless world, the environmentalist is urged to attest to his own experience of a meaningful, valuable, colourful world. Environmentalism, like Romanticism before it, is essentially "a protest on behalf of value." (Evernden, 1993:33)

After the century or so that it took for Romantic sublime and picturesque landscape tastes to percolate down to the lay classes from elite origins, these tastes remained in the form of the "cult of wilderness" and scenic tourism (Porteous, 1996). This is particularly true of the North American experience of wilderness, upon which this study is focussed. North American wilderness ideas, including my own, have not stepped away from the tradition of Romanticism, even where the arguments have become more sophisticated, presenting the Romantic worldview under banners such as "organismic," "postmodern," "evolutionary," seeking justification both scientific and philosophical, from Darwin, Heisenberg and quantum physics, ecology, Spinoza, Nietzche, and Heidegger, among others (Devall, 1988; Evernden, 1991; LaChapelle, 1988; Oelschlaeger, 1991). The Romantics were similarly eclectic: fond, particularly in the case of Shelley, of aligning themselves with science, in spite of their objections to rationalism, because the close observation of nature suited their project, as they sought interpretations of reality to affirm their intuition (Oelschlaeger, 1991).

Emerson brought Romanticism to America in the early nineteenth century, and New England Transcendentalism took over the investigation of the relationship between mind and nature. While the pioneers laboured on at the frontier converting a hostile wilderness to fruitful pasture, the hardship and danger of wilderness came to be valued as novel by the urban literati of the east, who had turned to Rousseau. By the 1840s, when European Romanticism had given rise to the heyday of Emersonian Transcendentalism, the upper classes were going to wilderness for spiritual inspiration and mental/physical

rejuvenation, and also immersing children in nature as a way of cultivating taste - wilderness appreciation was associated with gentility (Porteous, 1996). Romantic ideas gradually spread westwards. America's wilderness wealth came to be seen as the remedy for the cultural inferiority of a new nation. What natural heritage Europe had destroyed, America had in abundance, and if wildness had a positive effect on the mind, body, and spirit, then it would make Americans more creative, stronger, and more virtuous than Europeans, despite the comparative richness of Europe's cultural heritage (Nash, 1982; Porteous, 1996). Wilderness as justification for American nationalism fed a cultural myth which in turn provided a justification for the creation of wilderness parks. Wilderness preservationism essentially drew upon this legacy of Romanticism, perhaps exclusively upon it until very recent times when ecological principles became, theoretically, the primary motivation for wilderness protection.

Conclusion

The concept of wilderness arose as Paleolithic human experience yielded to the historic, and humans increasingly identified nature as separate and subordinate to themselves and the things about which they cared. Civilization's historic "progress" can be seen as the intensification of this dualism culminating in scientific rationalism. Romanticism is the significantly opposing cultural tradition, and its beliefs represent what the wilderness environment has come to symbolize as a spiritual and moral inspiration and alternative to the dualism of Modern culture. Contemporary environmental writing stands firmly in this Romantic tradition, and has arguably not proceeded significantly farther than this affective, aesthetic way of being and affirming value. The works of nature writers reveal how the experience of nature is interpreted in this fashion as inspiration and guidance for life.

Part 3: Wilderness Writers

Fulfilling the Romantic imperative to "protest on behalf of value," artists serve an important role in affirming what the wilderness experience is about. Their work has the power to evoke the feelings of wilderness experience itself, having a grounding effect, whereas academic writing obfuscates and distances the reader from the experience being described. Abbey (1991) makes this observation about the power of landscape painting to transport the viewer into a different experience of reality, and Berry (1970) observes that nature poetry can have the religious effect of inspiring harmony and awe. Seeking this grounding inspiration, and to see what the nature writers suggest about the moral of the wilderness experience, I read and pondered (from primary and/or secondary sources) Thoreau, Jeffers, Abbey, Dillard, Lopez, and others whose writings seemed to be inspired directly from the kind of experience of wilderness that motivated me in this research.

Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)

Thoreau clearly perceived social reality as an abstract construction, from which we must assert our *freedom* if we are to relate our lives to the truth. The aim of his works is to critically separate the representation of reality from the real thing, thus to set human priorities straight, preaching freedom and a regrounding in direct experience of nature.

Thoreau lived during the intellectual "flowering of New England" which produced Whitman, Melville, Hawthorne, and, principally, the Transcendentalist Emerson with whom Thoreau became well-acquainted (Krutch, in Thoreau, 1981). In terms of religion, Thoreau was "both a Puritan and a pagan and the conflict is not always resolved" (Krutch, 1981:12). He did not attend church, nor believe Christianity was in sole possession of the truth. The Bible was to him an "old book." But he was more pantheist than atheist, seeing God suffused through the universe and in nature. He wrote, "Blessed are they who never read a newspaper, for they shall see nature and, through her, God" (18).

Seeking God in nature, Thoreau was an amateur naturalist, concerned with *facts* as the basis for an experience of "spirit". Practising his philosophy, he conducted the 26-

month "experiment" of living at Walden Pond. Also, he walked for hours each day to connect with the "source" of life, and became increasingly obsessed with recording minute environmental details in his journals. He carried a notebook and a spyglass "to see what I have caught in my traps which I set for facts" (1981:12). His "bedrock" was natural *epoche*. He was rooted in the pure sense experience that the Transcendentalists sought to interpret, while it was their logic, philosophy, religious doctrine and other mental artifacts that he distrusted and sought to shake off in a process of "awakening."

The world of sense experience was an ally in the quest for a better life, in which the distinction between matter and spirit dissolves. The correct way to apprehend reality was by a direct engagement that transcended the limitations of conceptual thought - reality could not be contained by human philosophy, but could be *perceived* in the experience of the world. Concepts of "morning," "awakening" and disorientation were important metaphors representing the revelation of a pure, unprejudiced awareness similar to what comes in a few unselfconscious moments at dawn when the world is apprehended, not interpreted.

> We fancy that this din of religion, literature, and philosophy, which is heard in pulpits, lyceums, parlors, vibrates through the universe, and is heard as catholic a sound as the creaking of the earth's axle; but if a man sleep soundly, he will forget it all between sunset and dawn. (Thoreau, in Oelschlaeger, 1991:139)

Thoreau's prescription is for direct experience and joyful engagement with the world, a lighthearted approach to life, a therapeutic forgetting of "religion, literature, and philosophy" and indeed all human concepts, as the foundation for authentic morality.

Thoreau was a moralist, but his morality defied convention; it was according to his intuited "higher laws." Withdrawal from society was thus an important element of his individualistic lifestyle. Resisting institutions, withdrawing from the church and refusing to pay government taxes were practical demonstrations of an individualism that turned out not to be morally disengaging; instead, it made political activism inevitable. Practising freedom as a cardinal value, Thoreau ran up against slavery as an arch-evil. His "wild" religion motivated his "reluctant crusade" against opposition to an unjust government and society. Contrary to the stereotype of a nature mystic sequestered from

society, Thoreau became, in Krutch's terms, an "active propagandist" for the radical antislavery movement. He preached nonviolent resistance, and his essay "Civil Disobedience" inspired Tolstoy and Gandhi. While he became politically active, Thoreau maintained his foundation in the source of his moral inspiration, continuing to experience and write about wild nature (Krutch, in Thoreau,1981) .

The core of Thoreau's argument appears in *Walden* - not so much a classic volume of "nature writing" as a nineteenth century self-help book addressing the malaise of modern times, the drudgery of work and the emptiness of wealth and power. His target audience was, and is, "the mass of men who are discontented," and "the most terribly impoverished class of all," those who have accepted a definition of wealth based on the ownership of things, "and thus have forged their own golden or silver fetters" (1981:117).

"I love my fate to the very core and rind," writes Thoreau, in defiance of his reputation as a curmudgeon. He was a very happy man, and so felt compelled to share his philosophy of happiness through writing. Happiness was to him a gift of nature, and so simple a goal that it puzzled him that the mass of men appeared to lead lives of "quiet desperation". How inexcusably miserable is humankind, when it has acquired such wealth! With regard to dwellings, for example, Thoreau observes that the animals and primitive peoples own their homes, while civilized humans, "rich" by comparison, are equally likely to be renters. They, by paying rent, acquire something that is a "palace" by savage standards, yet are labelled "poor".

> If it is asserted that civilization is a real advance in the condition of man, - *and I think that it is*, though only the wise improve their advantages, - it must be shown that it has produced better dwellings without making them more costly; and the cost of a thing is the amount of what I will call life which is required to be exchanged for it, immediately or in the long run. (1981:128, emphasis added)

Thoreau's wilderness experience taught him that happiness requires *nothing* beyond basic needs. With wealth several times in excess of necessity, why sacrifice well-being to procure an infinity of non-essentials? Where is the advantage of modernization? We live in palaces but we are not noblemen, Thoreau writes. Where we have improved our situation materially, there has been no progress spiritually. And on the whole, "We are

all poor in respect to a thousand savage comforts" (1981:129).

> The very simplicity and nakedness of man's life in the primitive ages imply this advantage at least, that they left him still but a sojourner in nature. When he was refreshed with food and sleep he contemplated his journey again. He dwelt, as it were, in a tent in this world, and was either threading the valleys, or crossing the plains, or climbing the mountain tops. But lo! men have become the tools of their tools. The man who independently plucked the fruits when he was hungry is become a farmer; and he who stood under the tree for shelter, a housekeeper. We now no longer camp as for a night, but have settled down on earth and forgotten heaven. (1981:132-133)

With what wisdom can the potential of civilization's wealth be realized in happiness, Thoreau wondered, without suffering its disadvantages? In the rugged simplicity of the primitive Thoreau saw inspiration: "Is it possible to combine the hardiness of these savages with the intellectualness of the civilized man?" (1981:114). Thoreau is not in favour of a return to the primitive, but wishes to use an old wisdom to fulfill civilization's potential.

> ...it certainly is better to accept the advantages, though so dearly bought, which the invention and industry of mankind offer. In such a neighbourhood as this, boards and shingles, lime and bricks, are cheaper and more easily obtained than suitable caves, or whole logs, or bark in sufficient quantities, or even well-tempered clay or flat stones....With a little more wit we might use these materials so as to become richer than the richest now are, and make our civilization a blessing. The civilized man is a more experienced and wiser savage. (1981:135)

Thoreau is optimistic. "I do not propose to write an ode to dejection," he explains, "but to brag as lustily as chanticleer in the morning, standing on his roost, if only to wake my neighbors up" (1981:168). His optimism stems from his opinion that happiness is a normal state of being, once the illusions responsible for rampant consumerism and commercialism, among other ills, are dispelled. People must "wake up" from these illusions by which they are needlessly enslaved. Enslavement is the source of their misery. The good life is the *free* life - a life of "freedom and wildness, as contrasted with a freedom and culture merely civil" (1975:592). People who are free choose their own path in life, a path for followed for its own sake, rather than in response to external pressures. An individual working for his or her own ends experiences

meaning, which is the source of true happiness. True wealth then, is the freedom to follow one's heart. The barrier to this wealth is the illusion that we are not free, claiming only "freedom to be slaves" - slaves to the idea of freedom - rather than "freedom to be free" (1975:369). Most people in Thoreau's time were not slaves to human masters. Somehow they had unconsciously become slaves to themselves. They were enslaved by their possessions, but only because they had first become enslaved by their ideas. And here was the root of the whole problem, best summarized as a problem of *mistaken priorities*. Something had been wrongly deemed more important than the freedom to do things for their own sake, and life had thus lost meaning. For want of wisdom, perspective had been inverted, people began chasing their own tails; they had put "the cart before the horse", and in so doing, being no longer "sojourners in nature," continually recontemplating the *journey* of life, they had lost sight of its purpose. "Through want of enterprise and faith men are what they are, buying and selling, and spending their lives like serfs" (1981:259).

By the same mendacious Lie that is reinforced by civilization's media - the primacy of surface appearances, things, events, accomplishments - Thoreau feared that his message might be misinterpreted. Thoreau therefore stresses early on in *Walden* that his life is exemplary not in surface *form* but in *attitude*.

> I would not have any one adopt *my* mode of living on any account; for, beside that before he has fairly learned it I may have found out another for myself, I desire that there may be as many different persons in the world as possible; but I would have each one be very careful to find out and pursue *his own* way, and not his father's or his mother's or his neighbor's instead. The youth may build or plant or sail, only let him not be hindered from doing that which he tells me he would like to do. It is by a mathematical point only that we are wise, as the sailor or the fugitive slave keeps the polestar in his eye; but that is sufficient guidance for all our life. (1981:158)

It is the *way* of proceeding that is important, and not the destination. The emphasis on means rather than ends is accomplished by focussing on a "mathematical point," like a "polestar" - a transcendent purpose inspired by freedom, or a broader vision of the *process* in which all *things* are contained. With such a vision, Thoreau listens to gossip

and reads the news "in homeopathic doses," but walks down civilization's mainstreet like "running the gantlet," avoiding distraction by "proceeding at once boldly and without deliberation to the goal...or by keeping my thoughts on high things" (1981:228,230). The only "true course" is that which has inherent value - the path that the individual freely chooses without the "*de-liberation*" and coercion civilization implies. Life's true meaning must be so inspired, and to copy such a life in appearance would not necessarily reproduce it in essence.

The pitfall of misplaced priorities is materialism. Thoreau sees happiness as a *process*, freedom as a state of mind - spiritual insofar as they are not *things*. To describe a goal so intangible, Thoreau realigns priorities and corrects perspective by debunking all that modern civilization prizes, revealing the "polestar" by eliminating all of the illusions through which it is obscured. In *Walden* Thoreau attacks first "Economy" - the illusions of money and material wealth - before proceeding to expose the "unreality" of the surface appearance of clothing, architecture, education, and philanthropy.

Thoreau's method is to "Simplify" - a stripping down of all things secondary, incidental to truth, to return to foundations.

> *The cart before the horse is neither beautiful nor useful.* Before we can adorn our houses with beautiful objects the walls must be stripped, and our lives must be stripped, and beautiful housekeeping and beautiful living be laid for a foundation: now, a taste for the beautiful is most cultivated out of doors, where there is no house and no housekeeper. (1981:133, emphasis added)

The place to escape from the Lie, because nature assigns no primary value to *things*, is wilderness. Here was inspiration to debunk materialism and shift attention to the importance of intrinsic value, to "strip down" to foundations, to argue the emptiness of all material possessions beyond the fundamentals to maintain "vital heat" (1981:153,347):

> With respect to luxuries and comforts, the wisest have ever lived a more simple and meagre life than the poor.... We are often reminded that if there were bestowed on us the wealth of Croesus, our aims must still be the same, and our means essentially the same. Moreover, if you are restricted in your range by poverty....You are defended from being a trifler....Superfluous wealth can buy superfluities only. Money is not required to buy one necessary of the soul.
>
> Nature taught Thoreau a system of value that applied when humans were

nomadic, and that still applies to the traveller in wilderness. Regarding furniture, housewares, by this standard, "the more you have of such things the poorer you are," because they restrict freedom (1981:154). By mistakenly valuing such things, we have lost life's true meaning. With sufficient simplicity in lifestyle, or more accurately, perception of where life's true meaning lies, one should be able to "lay his hands on himself in the dark," or, "if an enemy take the town...walk out the gate empty-handed without anxiety" (1981:123). Thoreau advises, "beware of all enterprises that require new clothes, and not rather a new wearer of clothes.... All men want, not something to *do with*, but something to *do*, or rather something to *be*" (1981:122). Clothing is symbolic of the externalities or abstractions that tend to be confused for reality. We should not be concerned only, or primarily, with the surface of things, but rather with what lies beneath, or between them.

Exposing myths about wealth, Thoreau exposes the danger of the common belief that freedom must be earned, by working unhappily to accumulate "enough" wealth.

> This spending of the best part of one's life earning money in order to enjoy a questionable liberty during the least valuable part of it, reminds me of the Englishman who went to India to make a fortune first, in order that he might return to England and live the life of a poet. He should have gone up the garret at once. (1981:145)

Here is the logic behind Thoreau's basic optimism: what is truly desirable need never be postponed. Attending to life's priority begins instantaneously, with a reorientation of perspective that reveals the immediate abundance of all that happiness requires - *being*.

Thoreau's solution to the problem of materialism is the revaluation that reemphasizes "spiritual" or intrinsic values and sees material benefits as a spinoffs from spiritual endeavour. "All great enterprises are self-supporting," writes Thoreau - "You must get your living by loving" (1975:359). The poet who had "gone up the garret at once" would find a way to make his poetry pay the bills, or at least have bill-paying work consume the least significant chunk of his life. Since what the rich often choose for spiritual development is what the poor must do for subsistence, the two activities can certainly be integrated (1981:158):

> In short, I am convinced, both by faith and experience, that to maintain one's self on this earth is not a hardship but a pastime, if we will live simply and wisely; as the pursuits of the simplest nations are still the sports of the more artificial.

"Let not to get a living be thy trade, but thy sport," he writes (1981:259). Fishing provides a good example for how subsistence can be coincidental to the freely chosen path. In the worst cases, a "savage" would fish merely to eat, and not appreciate the activity. The civilized person would fish to get money, but would also derive no value from the activity. The ideal would be one who was content to catch enough to eat, but also fished for "higher" purposes at the same time that he fished for food. Fishing for spirit, the fisher-poet or fisher-philosopher is Thoreau's ideal, like the farmer-philosopher Thoreau became by growing beans at Walden Pond, or like farmer-poet Wendell Berry on his Kentucky farm. The labourer-"poesopher" cultivates virtue, rediscovering the value of work as a sacred activity, one which puts him in relationship with things in the world, producing *meaning*. The primary product would then surely feed the poet's creative soul as the secondary product fed his body. He succeeds because he recognizes that his primary product is not a material one - he sees beyond the illusion of economics.

"The ways in which you may get money almost without exception lead downward," he writes, "To have done anything by which you earned money *merely* is to have been truly idle or worse" (1975:357). Money is not inherently evil, but inherently meaningless; it is a poor indicator of value and stands for nothing on its own. Thoreau warns the reader of the danger implicit in the fact that what is rewarded by high pay within the community is not necessarily of authentic value. "If a man walk in the woods for the love of them half of each day," as Thoreau did,

> he is in danger of being regarded as a loafer; but if he spends his whole day...shearing off those woods and making the earth bald before her time, he is esteemed an industrious and enterprising citizen. As if the town had no interest in its forests but to cut them down! (1975:356)

Thoreau suggests that when people are "well employed," money and fame cannot be temptation enough to "buy them off from their present pursuit..." (1975:358). With wisdom, we would be immediately busy doing that which is most important to us. Thus,

"The community has no bribe that will tempt a wise man....you cannot raise money enough to hire a man who is minding *his own* business..." (1975:358). For Thoreau, the key to satisfaction in work was to live so simply that material needs and wants never required him to work more than was pleasurable. He was happy to give up "rich carpets or other fine furniture, or delicate cookery, or a house in the Grecian or Gothic style," in exchange for true success - this balance in which his time, his freedom, remained his own. Practically speaking, living by simple means afforded him the time for walking, unfettered by acquisitiveness to attend to the unprejudiced experience of the world. Thoreau found that he could live for a year on six weeks of work as a surveyor - a "day labourer" -, and he feared that any extra time invested in a career would yield diminishing returns as his lifestyle conformed to the job rather than what he most valued. He explains, "If I should sell both my forenoons and afternoons to society, as most appear to do, I am sure that for me there would be nothing left worth living for.... There is no more fatal blunderer than he who consumes the greater part of his life getting his living" (1975:359) - doing, that is, anything other than what he, in his freedom, most wants to do.

Much of Thoreau's ethic of simplicity relates from the realization that "getting ahead" is an illusion. Trying harder produces less. All material possessions require *work*. Thoreau had three pieces of limestone on his desk, but "threw them out the window in disgust" because he did not want to give up the time to dust them. Thoreau was offered a doormat but turned it down, realizing he would be required to make room for it, and find the time in which to shake it out, concluding, "it is best to avoid the beginnings of evil" (1981:155). Getting possessions means becoming their slave. Building railroads means going faster to places not worth visiting, though the increased speed is an illusion, because the time saved travelling is spent working to pay for the railroad - the result is a duller experience. Thoreau cleverly concludes: in the end it is faster and much more enjoyable to walk. In respect to all these endeavours, Thoreau writes, "How vain, then, have been all your labours, citizens, for me!" (1975:613).

Thoreau's goes on in *Walden* to apply his ideas about beauty and the intrinsic value of things, his admonition not to put "the cart before the horse," to architecture and

education. Beauty, to parrot Keats, has truth; it is what arises as a consequence of authentic living. So Thoreau observes that modern architecture rarely has "a core of truth" - "a necessity, and hence a beauty." When a place is built by the process of dwelling within it, "the ornaments take care of themselves" (1981:139-140):

> What of architectural beauty I now see, I know has gradually grown from within outward, out of the necessities and character of the indweller, who is the only builder, - out of some unconscious truthfulness, and nobleness, without ever a thought for the appearance; and whatever additional beauty of this kind is destined to be produced will be preceded by a like unconscious beauty of life.

The relationship between the character of a person and the clothes he wears, the occupant of a house and the ornaments of its architecture - in Thoreau's vision of reality they are not disconnected, and this relationship must taken into account in the process of creating change in any one of the parts, even in how to change a life. Too much emphasis on the externalities, on the parts separate from the whole, reform that proceeds only from the outside, further the problem by misperceiving its cause. Truth, however, comes out in the act of living. In this context Thoreau discusses his concept of authentic politics, and criticizes the misapplication of philanthropic efforts at reform. Politics, like architecture, would ideally become secondary to the process of living a good life. It would be an organic politics, "unconsciously performed, like the corresponding functions of the physical body," and its institutions and structures would have no permanence beyond the truth which they feign to represent (1975:372). Likewise of philanthropy, Thoreau argues, "If I knew for certain that a man was coming to my house with the conscious design of doing me good, I should run for my life...I would rather suffer evil the natural way" (1981:160). Good deeds in the world can too often run afoul by the misunderstanding of the relationship of symptoms to underlying causes. Indeed,.

> There are a thousand hacking at the branches of evil to one who is striking at the root, and it may be that he who bestows the largest amount of money on the needy is doing the most by his mode of life to produce that misery which he strives in vain to relieve. (1981:161)

Moral improvement must arise like beauty, in concordance with the process of living, effected by attending to that process, and the relationship of the inner and the

outer. Thoreau writes, "I never dreamed of any enormity greater than I have committed. I never knew, and never shall know, a worse man than myself" (1981:163). He thus implies that because we are limited by our perceptions, the first step in reform should be, as Snyder (1990) observes, the reformer's resolution to "be whole." How else to know that the evil we set out to dispel from the world is not in fact a problem in our own minds, projected outwards by our perceptions? In this spirit, Thoreau wrote to an abolitionist friend that to *ignore* evil is "just the most fatal, and indeed, the only fatal weapon you can direct against evil, ever" (1981:17). So, "...let us first be as simple and well as nature ourselves, dispel the clouds which hang over our brows, and take up a little life into our pores" (1981:164). For his part, Thoreau is quite content, and baffled by human urgency to see the world transformed: "There is nowhere recorded a simple and irrepressible satisfaction with the gift of life, any memorable praise of God" (163). He would likely agree with the Norwegian deep ecologists that "the way is the goal" - a society cannot arrive at a desirable condition by focussing its efforts on the elimination of what is undesirable. It will be impossible to arrive at any condition other than what can be immediately experienced. The direction must be set by sighting the goal, the "polestar," not evil or things.

"Our inventions are wont to be pretty toys, which distract our attention from serious things. They are but improved means to an unimproved end, an end which was already but too easy to arrive at; as railroads lead to Boston or New York" (144). The cart quickly runs ahead of the horse. Eyes avert from the goal and forget direction and instead stray towards *things*, then make things life's new direction. Objects once secondary but now primary become life's purpose. Life becomes the tool of its tools. Possessions entrap, the railroad rides on, and life loses meaning. Next, Thoreau applies his criticism to education. The student pays rent to attend school when he could learn more by building a place to live. He pays tuition for professors but learns more from his friends. "Those things for which the most money is demanded are never the things which the student most wants" (1981:142). The student should not *study* life, but *live* it, from beginning to end. He should dwell within his education like the inhabitant in his house.

He should not be learning one thing while living another, or else he might become expert at something abstract yet incompetent in his own life. Rather than going to school to "train" for an anticipated future, he should begin life immediately by advancing down his chosen path, acquiring education as it becomes necessary.

Thoreau observes that "the man who goes alone can start today," and also, "I have learned that the swiftest traveller is he who goes afoot" (1981:159,144). Bit by bit through various examples and by such metaphors for simplicity, Thoreau builds an argument for contentedness, for *being*, a revelation of happiness or immediate self-realization that is independent of material conditions. *Awakening* is this realization of what is truly important, and that we are surrounded by this importance. Early morning is symbolic to Thoreau as that time of day when the mind is unfettered by social convention and more likely to perceive the truth. In morning is the hope of waking "to a higher life than we fell asleep from;"

> ...and thus the darkness bears its fruit, and proves itself to be good, no less than the light. That man who does not believe that each day contains an earlier, more sacred, and auroral hour than he has yet profaned, has despaired of life, and is pursuing a descending and darkening way. (1981:171)

Here Thoreau inserts the symbol "darkness", to challenge the categories of good and evil and introduce his ethic of wildness. Here and in "Walking" he uses the metaphor of night's darkness as a time of growth. "I believe in the...night in which the corn grows," he writes (1975:609). This belief, or *faith*, in "something higher", like faith in light emerging from darkness, is important for Thoreau - not faith in a higher *plane*, but in a higher *truth* - a clearer and less threatening representation of reality than what is commonly perceived. The growth that occurs in darkness, the awakening that occurs each morning, are also meaningful symbols of the constant renewal of perception. What "profanes" each hour is the mind's interpretation of the real, which wrongly stresses the importance of *things*, but the newness of each morning is unsullied, experienced directly for a time. But newness is forever dawning. Time is the evolution of wildness. Ongoing renewal is possible for one who is open to this process. "To him whose elastic and vigorous thought keeps pace with the sun, the day is a perpetual morning" (1981:172).

"Moral reform," then, is not the effort to "do good" in the world, but rather, it "is the effort to throw off sleep" (1981:172). Morality is not a function of *doing*, but of *being* in proper relationship to the world. Wildness is the source of this being for Thoreau. Only misperception closes us off from its inspiration. Thus he concludes,

> To be awake is to be alive. I have never yet met a man who was quite awake....We must learn to reawaken and keep ourselves awake, not by mechanical aids, but by an infinite expectation of the dawn, which does not forsake us in the soundest sleep. (1981:172)

Moral *being* is a mental posture, the fruit of a conscious endeavour. The key to living a good life, for Thoreau, is correct perception, which is something like an ongoing "expectation of the dawn." This posture requires *faith*, but it is a faith no more difficult than the faith in the presence of the sun through the night; it is a faith that justifies itself, constantly reaffirmed by the *experience* of its effects - a perpetual feeling of being alive.

Another way of describing the mental posture of perpetual awakening is as being "lost". Feeling lost and "bewildered" is what happens at the moment of awakening before a person takes hold of their familiar perception of the world. To clearly perceive reality, Thoreau observes that one must somehow be disoriented from this old perception. Morning is a metaphor, but Thoreau's true "awakening" more likely happened on Maine's Mount Katahdin, as reasoned by Oelschlaeger (1991), where the Romantic and Transcendental categories for wilderness fell apart, and Thoreau was filled with a horrifying bewilderment (in Oelschlaeger, 1991:149):

> I stand in awe of my body, this matter to which I am bound has become so strange to me. I fear not spirits, ghosts, of which I am one, - *that* my body might, - but I fear bodies, I tremble to meet them. What is this Titan that has possession of me? 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?

This *is* like the feeling of waking up in a strange place, or waking up in a place that once seemed familiar and seeing it anew. Here was the wellspring of Thoreau's genius. He had to see beyond the Transcendental and nationalist cliches of wilderness' meaning (Nash, 1982). On Katahdin he ceases to take the world for granted, because he sees that

wilderness is not Romantic, divine, ordered, or familiar. Thoreau's "bracketed" perception is initially horrifying as the concept of "good" is also eliminated, along with the realization that the nature is "a force not bound to be kind to man." Feeling himself as a "spiritual" being, perhaps he could find fellowship with ghosts, but in the world of matter there was no comfort. Oelschlaeger (1991) describes this moment as Thoreau's coming-to-terms with the world of matter and amoral nature, which was essential before progressing to a satisfying view of the world. It was his "second birth" of facing evil in the world, requisite to a religious perspective (James, 1985).

With a sickening horror Thoreau came to the realization of the human condition, human insignificance, the vertiginous revelation of humanity's tenuous, vulnerable, improbable hold on life in nature; the absurdity of human intellectual constructions and explanations; the futility of metaphysical projects like Transcendentalism; the ridiculous arrogance of any presumption that human thought or human action could change reality in any meaningful way; utter, hopeless impotence. This experience of disorientation marks a shift in Thoreau's mental posture, from the cart-before-the-horse attitude of placing mental categories on nature - the Transcendentalist's attempt to perceive in nature the intimations of a divine plan that was wholly good - to the right perception of nature without abstraction (Oelschlaeger, 1991). Thoreau's description of this pivotal experience on the mountain appears in *Maine Woods* (Oelschlaeger, 1991:148):

> Perhaps I most fully realized that this was primeval, untamed and forever untameable *Nature*, or whatever else men call it, while coming down....And yet we have not seen pure Nature, unless we have seen her thus vast and drear and inhuman....Nature was here something savage and awful, though beautiful. I looked with awe at the ground I trod on, to see what the Powers had made there, the form and fashion and material of their work. This was that Earth of which we have heard, made out of Chaos and Old Nights. Here was no man's garden, but the unhandseled globe. It was not lawn, nor pasture, nor mede, nor woodland, nor lea, nor arable, nor waste-land. It was the fresh and natural surface of the planet Earth, as it was made forever and ever, - to be the dwelling of man, we say, - so Nature made it, and many may use it if he can. Man was not to be associated with it. It was Matter, vast, terrific, - not his Mother Earth that we have heard of, not for him to tread on, or be buried in, - no, it were being too familiar even to let his bones lie there, - the home, this, of Necessity and Fate. There was clearly felt the

> presence of a force not bound to be kind to man. It was a place for heathenism and superstitious rites, - to be inhabited by men nearer of kin to the rocks and to wild animals than we.

The direct experience of Nature requires Thoreau to redefine what he means by God and Creation. Reality is what he *experiences* in nature, but not what he *thinks* he experiences. He has changed his worldview, because he no longer sees reality in abstractions. This is a "waking up" from sleep, a mental "breaking out" of civilization to realize the value of "wildness" which manifests a transcendent reality.

Thoreau's realization of "correct priorities" continues to flow through *Walden*. Later in the book he develops the analogy of being lost to describe the process of "awakening". He also explicitly admits that "sleep" is a metaphor used to describe a form of abstraction, like language and socially constructed reality, concealing wildness.

> It is a surprising and memorable, as well as valuable experience, to be lost in the woods at any time....not till we are completely lost, or turned around, - for a man needs only to be turned around once with his eyes shut in this world to be lost, - do we appreciate the vastness and strangeness of Nature. Every man has to learn the points of compass again as often as he awakes, whether from sleep or any abstraction. Not till we are lost, in other words, not till we have lost the world, do we begin to find ourselves, and realize where we are and the infinite extent of our relations. (1981:231-232)

"Waking up," or the experience of "getting lost" can be seen in Thoreau's description as a form of the "Self-realization" to which deep ecologists refer, introducing a perspective in which we "find ourselves" and discover the "infinite extent of our relations" to other things. The resultant identification with nature is the source of Thoreau's happiness - his mental as well as his physical well-being (indeed, he recognized that the mental and the physical are inseparable). He calls this unprejudiced vision, "morning air," his "panacea."

The Walden experiment, then, was a proving ground of sorts, for Thoreau's perception of a reality in which human artifacts were subordinate. The presence of civilization and its media was dangerous to his plans, only serving to reinforce skewed priorities and to compound problems. What they portrayed as real, he perceived as unreal. The greater part of what his neighbours believed to be good, he writes, he believed in his soul to be evil. To set his eye on the goal, he had to escape to wilderness,

where he could be free of this distraction. He sensed life's purpose, but was himself lulled into a slumber by civilization. "It is by a mathematical point only that we are wise"; that is, it is enough guidance for life to remember the "point" that what is ultimately true and important is the wholeness that transcends the detail in which our days are enmeshed. Thoreau went to Walden to cut away life's trivia to see this "polestar" more clearly,

> ...to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear, nor did I wish to practice resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms....
>
> Still we live meanly, like ants; though the fable tells us that we were long ago changed into men; like pygmies we fight with cranes; it is error upon error, and clout upon clout, and our best virtue has for its occasion a superfluous and evitable wretchedness. Our life is frittered away by detail.... Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity!... In the midst of this chopping sea of civilized life, such are the clouds and storms and quicksands and thousand-and-one items to be allowed for, that a man has to live, if he would not founder and go to the bottom and not make his port at all, by dead reckoning, and he must be a great calculator indeed who succeeds. Simplify, simplify. (1981:172-173)

On a national scale, the culture of skewed priorities has attended to its "ornamentation" and its "leaves and branches" only, and also missed the point of what it is to *be*.

> The nation itself, with all its so called internal improvements, which, by the way, are all external and superficial, is just such an unwieldy and overgrown establishment, cluttered with furniture and tripped up by its own traps, ruined by luxury and heedless expense, by want of calculation and a worthy aim.... It lives too fast. Men think that it is essential that the *Nation* have commerce, and export ice, and talk through a telegraph, and ride thirty miles an hour, without a doubt, whether *they* do or not; but whether we should live like baboons or like men, is a little uncertain. If we do not get our sleepers, and forge rails, and devote days and nights to the work, but go to tinkering upon our *lives* to improve *them*, who will build railroads? And if railroads are not built, how shall we get to heaven in season? But if we stay at home and mind our business, who will want railroads? We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us....
>
> Why should we live with such hurry and waste of life? We are determined to be starved before we are hungry. Men say that a stitch in time saves nine, and

> so they take a thousand stitches to-day to save nine to-morrow. As for *work*, we haven't any of consequence. (1981:173-174)

Awake! Thoreau advises that we concentrate on that, and let all else follow. Let railroads arise as a consequence of following the path that unfolds upon awakening, and if railroads do not get built, forget them. Something better will happen. Awakening is the *only* priority. This, he argues, is the only way to be fully *human*; otherwise we live like ants or baboons, despite our material progress.

Here is where Thoreau identifies his ultimate concern as *reality* - the broader vision that restores the proper order of horse and cart, includes the relation of a person to his or her clothes and his or her house, the process that underlies getting educated, doing good. Reality is perceived at dawn, when fully awake. *News* represented for Thoreau a distraction, mental "rubbish", nothing but gossip and diversion from the reality of a person's own life. "We should wash ourselves clean of such news" (1975:366). It does nothing more than reinforce illusion. Thoreau suggests that "we do not ourselves rest on an underpinning of granitic truth, the lowest primitive rock" (1975:365), because our minds collect trivia like dust, we are awash in the frivolous and superficial. When meaningfully engaged, we would recognize the insignificance of the most sensational news, just as we would not be swayed from our course by money. Thoreau writes, "Of what consequence, though our planet explode, if there is no character involved in the explosion? In health we do not have the least curiosity about such events. We do not live for idle amusement. I would not run around a corner to see the world blow up" (1975:366-367). Where "the mind can be permanently profaned by the habit of attending to trivial things," it is our imperative to turn to nature to ensure mental health, lest "Our very intellect shall be macadamized, as it were, its foundation broken into fragments for the wheels of travel to roll over" (368). "Really to see the sun rise or go down every day, so to relate ourselves to a universal fact, would preserve us sane forever" (1975:367).

Thoreau is careful to explain that reality is not *invisible* to us. It is only *misinterpreted* as its wholeness is replaced by trivial detail, as idols are substituted for God. It exists not on some higher plane that is inaccessible to the human, but is here and

now, perceptible in the direct experience of the real world in its wholeness.

> Shams and delusions are esteemed for the soundest truths, while reality is fabulous. If men would steadily observe realities only, and not allow themselves to be deluded.... If we respected only what is inevitable and has a right to be, music and poetry would resound along the streets. When we are unhurried and wise, we perceive that only great and worthy things have any permanent and absolute existence, - that petty fears and petty pleasures are but the shadow of the reality. This is always exhilarating and sublime. By closing the eyes and slumbering, and consenting to be deceived by shows, men establish and confirm their daily life of routine and habit every where, which still is built on purely illusory foundations....I perceive that we inhabitants of New England live this mean life that we do because our vision does not penetrate the surface of things. We think that that *is* which *appears* to be.... Men esteem truth remote, in the outskirts of the system, behind the farthest star, before Adam and after the last man. In eternity there is indeed something true and sublime. But all these times and places and occasions are now and here. God himself culminates in the present moment, and will never be more divine in the lapse of all the ages. And we are enabled to apprehend at all what is sublime and noble only by the perpetual instilling and drenching of the reality that surrounds us....
>
> Let us spend one day as deliberately as Nature, and not be thrown off the track by every nutshell and mosquito's wing that falls on the rails. Let us rise early and fast, or break fast, gently and without perturbation; let company come and company go, let the bells ring and the children cry, - determined to make a day of it....Let us settle ourselves, and work and wedge our feet downward through the mud and slush of opinion, and prejudice, and tradition, and delusion, and appearance, that alluvion which covers the globe, through Paris and London, through New York and Boston and Concord, through church and state, through poetry and philosophy and religion, till we come to a hard bottom and rocks in place, which we can call *reality*, and say, This is, and no mistake; and then begin, having a *point d'appui*, below freshet and frost and fire, a place where you might found a wall or a state, or set a lamp-post safely, or perhaps a gauge, not a Nilometer, but a Realometer, that future ages might know how deep a freshet of shams and appearances had gathered from time to time. If you stand right fronting and face to face to a fact, you will see the sun glimmer on both its surfaces, as if it were a cimeter, and feel its sweet edge dividing you through the heart and marrow, and so you will happily conclude your mortal career. Be it life or death, we crave only reality. If we are really dying, let us hear the rattle in our throats and feel cold in the extremities; if we are alive, let us go about our business. (176-178)

Thoreau realizes the impermanence of human creations and of individual life, compared to the underlying flux of natural, evolutionary process. There is no reality in *things*, and

true reality is in this sense "spiritual". *Reality* in fact is not the substance that it appears to be, but the process that gives rise to substance. The earth is "...not a fossil earth, but a living earth; compared with whose great central life all animal and vegetable life is merely parasitic....And not only it, but the institutions upon it, are plastic like clay in the hands of the potter" (in Oelschlaeger, 1991:163). Thoreau's aim is to inspire such a redefinition of reality, by which the "mortal career" of apprehending a "fossil" reality would be ended. The "mortal career" can be replaced with a different way of being, a life obeying "higher laws", a "spiritual" career.

Seeking the "reality" beyond life's dull routines, Thoreau sought to transcend the mediocrity of popular culture and reality as taken-for-granted, advocating always pushing outward, seeking the mental challenge of the finest literature, the highest thoughts.

> I think that having learned our letters we should read the best that is in literature, and not be forever repeating our a b abs, and words of one syllable, in the fourth or fifth classes, sitting on the lowest and foremost form all our lives. Most men are satisfied if they read or hear read, and perchance have been convicted by the wisdom of one good book, the Bible, and for the rest of their lives vegetate and dissipate their faculties in what is called easy reading....The result is dullness of sight, a stagnation of vital circulations, and a general deliquium and sloughing off of the intellectual faculties. This sort of gingerbread is baked daily and more sedulously than pure wheat or rye-and-Indian in almost every oven, and finds a surer market....our reading, our conversation and thinking, are all on a very low level, worthy only of pygmies and manikins....We are underbred and low-lived and illiterate....We are a race of titmen, and soar but little higher in our intellectual flights than the columns of the daily paper. (183-185)

Thoreau felt that one could be always fully *alive* by maintaining the forward-looking attitude of "infinite expectation." Ceaseless striving drives this constant evolution beyond our old selves, a lifelong education that has the moral, "liberalizing" effect of teaching the universality of human experience above and beyond details and doctrines that divide. This never-ending process of learning has the same effect as the "morning or the spring," teaching a perception with power to unite humanity and make institutions obsolete. He suggests that reading teaches "the liberalizing influence of all the worthies," the commonality of Zoroaster with Jesus Christ. The reader can "commune" with their wisdom "and let 'our church' go by the board" (1981:186). Thoreau wished for all the

villages to be universities, and the elderly their fellows, and dreamed of a society that would see that increasing wisdom was more important than increasing material progress.

> If it is necessary, omit one bridge over the river, go round a little there, and throw one arch at least over the darker gulf of ignorance which surrounds us. (1981:187)

"Seeing" is the key to the process of authentic education and the secret to Thoreau's happiness. The value of reading notwithstanding, life is not to be found in books, but directly in front of us in "the language which all things and events speak without metaphor" (1981:187). More important than studying books, he recommends "the necessity of being forever on the alert" and "the discipline of looking always at what is to be seen" (1981:187). What he praises in education is not the dissemination of knowledge but rather the perpetual realization of ignorance. For even "the facts of science may dust the mind by their dryness, unless they are in a sense effaced each morning, or rather rendered fertile by the dews of fresh and living truth" (1975:369). Knowledge arises out of something beyond knowledge which Thoreau encountered in daily walks in nature, to the "springs of life" (1975:596). To refer to this "something beyond" that was the essence of what he was talking about when he discussed "reality" and "purpose," Thoreau used the term *wildness*. He concludes that "In short, all good things are wild and free" (1975:618).

> The West of which I speak is but another name for the Wild; and what I have been preparing to say is, that in Wildness is the preservation of the World. Every tree sends its fibers forth in the search of the wild. The cities import it at any price. Men plow and sail for it. From the forest and wilderness come the tonics and barks which brace mankind. Our ancestors were savages....(609) How near to good is what is *wild!* Life consists with wildness. The most alive is the wildest. Not yet subdued to man, its presence refreshes him...(610). Here is this vast, savage, howling mother of ours, Nature, lying all around, with such beauty, and such affection for her children, as the leopard; and yet we are so early weaned from her breast to society, to that culture which is exclusively an interaction of man on man - a sort of breeding in and in, which produces at most a merely English nobility, a civilization destined to have a speedy limit. (1975:621)

As much as it is the source of human life, Thoreau argues that wildness is also the source of thought. Ceasing to be captivated by concepts, rather than by what is beyond conceptualization, Thoreau is seeing beyond the good-evil abstractions to affirm the

goodness of night's darkness, of rain, of swamp and woodland as well as Arcadian field. He seeks a way to live a "higher life" which incorporates this wildness which he recognizes as so much the source of all that he values in civilization that it must be rightly loved "not less than the good" (Nash, 1982:161). This necessary wildness cannot be encapsulated by culture, to be ingested in commodities or discovered in words, although, "mythology comes nearer to it than anything" (1975:618). A different kind of knowledge than what is typically valued in education is required to incorporate Thoreau's understanding of wildness, and to maintain communication across the boundary between wildness and culture. It is, Thoreau says, "wild and dusky knowledge...Tawny Grammar, a kind of mother-wit derived from that same leopard [Mother Nature] to which I have referred" (1975:622). Included in this way of knowing must be an understanding of ignorance, for ignorance is more useful to Thoreau than that formal knowledge which "dusts the mind." Ignorance is more closely related to beauty, and other things of true value. Ignorance implies a "return to the senses" and the perception of reality in its wholeness which correctly aligns priorities.

> A man's ignorance sometimes is not only useful, but beautiful - while his knowledge, so called, is oftentimes worse than useless, besides being ugly. Which is the best man to deal with - he who knows nothing about a subject, and, what is extremely rare, knows that he knows nothing, or he who really knows something about it, but thinks that he knows all?... The highest that we can attain to is not Knowledge, but Sympathy with Intelligence. I do not know that this higher knowledge amounts to anything more definite than a novel and grand surprise on a sudden revelation of the insufficiency of all the we have called Knowledge before - a discovery that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy. It is the lighting up of the mist by the sun. Man cannot *know* in any higher sense than this. (1975:622-623)

The realization of ignorance, which is like the lighting up of the mist (so-called knowledge, which is abstract) by the sun (higher truth, which is in direct experience), is the highest mode of knowing, and is clearly a form of intuition. This perspective saves us from mistaking knowledge for truth. Knowledge, too, is best applied as a means to a higher end, and placed subordinate to life's transcendent purpose, which cannot be contained within it any more than wildness can be contained within goodness. In this

sense it is idolatrous to seek a conceptually defined morality.

> There is something servile in the habit of seeking after a law which we may obey. We may study the laws of matter at and for our convenience, but a successful life knows no law. It is an unfortunate discovery certainly, that of a law which binds us where we did not know before that we were bound. Live free, child of the mist.... The man who takes the liberty to live is superior to all the laws, by virtue of his relation to the lawmaker. (1975:623-624)

Thoreau discovered that meaning could be restored to life by holding to "Beautiful Knowledge" at the "wilderness" of Walden Pond and by the practice of walking in everyday life. The appreciation of natural beauty was a consequence of perceiving through the "senses" rather than the captivating-yet-enslaving strictures of thought. Thoreau chided, "How little appreciation of the beauty of the landscape there is among us!" (1981:625). "In their relation to nature men appeal to me for the most part, notwithstanding their arts, lower than the animals" (1975:624-625). The aim of Thoreau's "experiment" was to demonstrate that from closer relation to wildness ensued a more appreciative, dignified way of living that was intrinsically beautiful, and a cure for the depression that was a disease of civilization and a life that fails to experience renewal. By going into nature he sought the proper perspective of "infinite expectation" that results in happiness. Walking for him was a practice of "remembering ignorance" by escaping a civilized context where only knowledge is deemed valuable and ignorance is seen no more useful than the "loafer" who spends his time appreciating rather than exploiting the world. Like contemporary wilderness travellers he expresses the need to undergo a "transition" not only physically, but also mentally from thought to the immediate world of "sense."

> It is of no use to direct our steps to the woods, if they do not carry us thither. I am alarmed when it happens that I have walked a mile into the woods bodily, without getting there in spirit....But sometimes it happens that I cannot easily shake off the village. The thoughts of some work will run in my head and I am not where my body is - I am out of my senses. In my walks I would fain return to my senses. What business have I in the woods if I am thinking of something out of the woods? (1975:597-598)

Thoreau is naturally drawn to the woods where thought's importance is undermined by

the absence of thought's products. As Thoreau observes the difficulty of finding this renewal in civilization where humanity's works constantly suggest the significance of human ideas, his comments have an unintentional contemporary relevance when he wonders what would happen "if we walked only in a garden or a *mall*?" (1975:597). Unlike such walking which might be done for the benefits of exercise, Thoreau's walking, which "is itself the enterprise and adventure of the day," is intrinsically valuable (1975:596). An afternoon of walking takes Thoreau to a place where nature belies the insignificance of human works and heals the "dyspepsia" of civilization by a perspective which puts it in its proper context.

> From many a hill I can see civilization and the abodes of man afar. The farmers and their works are scarcely more obvious than woodchucks and their burrows. Man and his affairs, church and state and school, trade and commerce, and manufactures and agriculture, even politics, the most alarming of them all - I am pleased to see how little space they occupy in the landscape....In one half-hour I can walk off to some portion of the earth's surface where a man does not stand from one year's end to another, and there, consequently, politics are not, for they are but the cigar-smoke of man. (1975:599)

Thoreau made walking a priority in his life and maintained health and high spirits by walking for hours each day, "free from all wordly engagements" (1975:594). Walking was like a form of meditation. Thoreau spent not more than half of each day writing, but walking was also a creative exercise. He claims that like Wordsworth's, his "study" was not a room, but nature. Those who spend whole days working indoors, he suggests, "deserve some credit for not having all committed suicide long ago" (1975:595).

Returning to his senses is leaving the life of the mind to enter the spontaneity of life in the present moment, which is connected directly, by the senses, to nature. Any such complete "return to the senses" is a dawning, an awakening and coming home to immediate experience which knows no past or future or elsewhere. This experience can occur anywhere when thoughts are turned to wildness.

> When, in doleful dumps, breaking the awful stillness of our wooden sidewalk on a Sunday, or, perchance, a watcher in the house of mourning, I hear a cockerel crow far or near, I think to myself, "there is one of us well, at any rate," and with a sudden gush return to my senses. (1975:629)

This reorientation of thoughts towards the "dawn" that is immediate and ongoing experience, is an important aspect of Thoreau's recipe for happiness, which is clearly a psychological orientation to the reality encompassing human existence, a reality for which "wilderness" is but a metaphor. Morning dawning and the cockerel, somewhere, crowing, represent the mental cleansing that is also accomplished in walking. This "mental chastity" discussed in "Life without Principle" is a form of resistance to the cultural process by which "our very intellect shall be macadamized...." This is the same cultural machination that takes to railroad building with an ambition "equivalent to grading the whole surface of the planet" (1981:145). This slavery to misplaced ends, all for the sake of getting nowhere faster, is fatal by its effect on diversity, and thus threatens to end human evolution and civilization for the sake of its goal, as Thoreau recognized when he observed "Conventionalities are at length as bad as impurities." When conventionalities grip life in routine, boredom ensues.

> Men come tamely home at night only from the next field or street, where their household echoes haunt, and their life pines because it breathes its own breath over again; their shadows morning and evening reach farther than their daily steps. We should come home from far, from adventures, and perils, and discoveries every day, with new experience and character. (1981:259-260)

The alternative to the fateful monoculture of the mind is a new attitude, "elastic and vigorous thought" keeping "pace with the sun" (1981:172), an attitude of almost restless curiosity and unflagging commitment to exploration.

> One who pressed forward incessantly and never rested from his labours, who grew fast and made infinite demands on life, would always find himself in a new country or wilderness, and surrounded by the raw material of life. (1975:610-611)

Thus Thoreau was able to live always in the moment, and experience spontaneous joy of living in the world as it is. He describes an unhurried life at Walden Pond, where he ceased to be bothered by how much he accomplished or by the passage of time. Whether he was working or resting, he experienced "incessant good fortune," constant renewal, a "fresh prospect every hour" (1981:188).

"Give me the ocean, the desert, of the wilderness!" he exclaims (1975:612). Thoreau did not want for happiness because his home was steeped in nature. Even

inconveniences were a source of life, and windstorms and snowstorms liberating rather than oppressing, so that he writes, "my spirits infallibly rise in proportion to the outward dreariness," that is, with outward wildness (1975:612). He further rejoices (1981:200),

> No yard! but unfenced nature reaching up to your very sills. A young forest growing up under your windows, and wild sumachs and blackberry vines breaking through into your cellar; sturdy pitch-pines rubbing and creaking against the shingles for want of room, their roots reaching quite under the house. Instead of a scuttle or a blind blown off in the gale, - a pine tree snapped off or torn up by the roots behind your house for fuel. Instead of no path to the front-yard gate in the Great Snow, - no gate - no front-yard, - and not path to the civilized world!

He continues, "there can be no very black melancholy to him who lives in the midst of nature and has his senses still" (1981:202). Depression cannot occur to one who is "simple and brave." These two words perhaps sum up Thoreau's prescription: *simplicity* means cutting away illusion to assert freedom for one's "elastic and vigorous" thought; and *bravery* implies the forward-looking mental posture of "infinite expectation."

Through sensory experience of nature, Thoreau identified with his surroundings, felt at home and was spiritually refreshed. In his ability to appreciate life's simple pleasures, Thoreau felt privileged. Other people appear compelled to make their lives more complicated than necessary, and cause themselves undue hardship and misery.

> Sometimes, when I compare myself with other men, it seems as if I were more favoured by the gods than they, beyond any deserts that I am conscious of; as if I had a warrant and surety at their hands which my fellows have not, and were especially guided and guarded. I do not flatter myself, but if it be possible they flatter me. (1981:202)

Thoreau writes that he never experienced loneliness or oppression at Walden Pond, except once, and it quickly passed and was replaced by *identification* with wild nature. Here is perhaps a good description, to juxtapose with his horror on Mount Katahdin, of Thoreau arriving at Self-realization, or what has otherwise been called a "postmodern", "ecocentric", or "symbiotic" relationship with nature, characterized feeling "at home".

> In the midst of a gentle rain while these thoughts [of melancholy] prevailed, I was suddenly sensible of such sweet and beneficent society in Nature, in the very pattering of the drops, and in every sound and sight around my house, an infinite and unaccountable friendliness all at once like an atmosphere sustaining me, as

> made the fancied advantages of human neighborhood insignificant, and I have never thought of them since. Every little pine needle expanded and swelled with sympathy and befriended me. I was so distinctly made aware of the presence of something kindred to me, even in scenes which we are accustomed to call wild and dreary, and also that the nearest of blood to me and the humanest was not a person nor a villager, that I thought no place could ever be strange to me again. (1981:202-203)

Here is Thoreau grown beyond feeling completely alien in the world of matter, having developed what Oelschlaeger calls "a genuine relation to the universe" (1991:149). He realizes that humanity is made of the same stuff as nature - "Shall I not have intelligence with the earth? Am I not partly leaves and vegetable mold myself? (1981:208) - and appreciates what the deep ecologists call the "intrinsic value" of natural things, existing in and for themselves, rather than as commodities. He observes in his bean field that he is not the "principle cultivator", but only one of many who share in its bounty, including the woodchuck. In his broadened perspective, there is infinite cause for optimism, and he exalts, "How, then, can our harvest fail? Shall I not rejoice also at the abundance of the weeds whose seeds are the granary of the birds?" (1981:228).

Thoreau loved the outdoor life, and the identification with nature, but he recognized that it was possible to live spiritually destitute and stagnant in primitive conditions, and civilization was a fabulous tool for adventures of the spirit. So primitivism is not the final answer; nor is wilderness adventure. And with modern communication, he argued, "why should our life be in any respect provincial?" (186). All exploration, all travelling, ultimately, is an exploration within - "explore thyself," he intones (342). We require nature, in the sense of *wildness*, but there is no requirement to *go* anywhere in particular. From his unconventional perspective, Thoreau continues deconstructing conventional conceptions of time and space and value.

"Why should I feel lonely?" he asks, "is not our planet in the Milky Way?" (1981:203). "What sort of space is that which separates a man from his fellows and makes him solitary? I have found that no exertion of the legs can bring two minds much nearer to one another" (1981:204). Thoreau felt as close to humanity at Walden, in identification with all of nature, as he felt in town. "What do we most want to dwell near

to? Not to many men surely...but to the perennial source of our life, whence in all our experience we have found that to issue....This will vary with different natures, but this is the place where a wise man will dig his cellar" (1981:204). Thoreau advocates freedom in the choice home - not in the city or in wilderness necessarily, but in proximity to that which through our experience we have learned is the source of what we most value. But having said this, he concludes that time and place are irrelevant and distracting. Alienation is always surmountable - "Nearest to all things is that power which fashions their being.... *Next* to us is...the workman whose work we are" (1981:204).

Wildness is a quality ultimately independent of place. "I have travelled a good deal in Concord...," he writes, "It is vain to dream of a wildness distant from ourselves...I shall never find in the wilds of Labrador any greater wildness than in some recess in Concord, i.e., than I import into it" (1981:8). Travel may unlock something within a person, but there are other ways to accomplish the same discovery. There is nothing to be found by travelling other than what is already contained within the traveller. So it is for wildness and also for freedom: they need not be earned, but rather *realized.*

In the "Conclusion" to *Walden*, Thoreau continues the deconstruction of illusion, lest his own advice be misinterpreted, his own necessary abstractions be taken too literally (1981:341-342),

> The other side of the globe is but the home of our correspondent. Our voyaging is only great-circle sailing, and the doctors prescribe for diseases of the skin merely. One hastens to Southern Africa to chase the giraffe; but surely that is not the game he would be after.... I trust it would be nobler game to shoot one's self.... What does Africa, - what does the West stand for? Is it not our own interior white on the chart?... What was the meaning of that South-Sea Exploring Expedition, with all its parade and expense, but an indirect recognition of the fact...that it is easier to sail many thousand miles through cold and storm and cannibals...than it is to explore the private sea, the Atlantic and Pacific Ocean of one's being alone.

Thoreau advocates using civilization's material advance to achieve a spiritual advance. "Were preserved meats invented to preserve meat merely?" Nay, he claims. They are to supply exploration. Once material needs are satisfied, the pursuit of truth is a more worthwhile endeavour than the acquisition of luxury. And the pursuit of truth is an

individual project, he argues: "let every one mind his own business, and endeavor to be what he was made....If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away" (1981:345).

"Truth" is another name for "reality". Face life directly and appreciate it for what it is, he advises. And as a final justification for this courage, Thoreau concludes with a message of hope and a call to faith in a world greater than our imaginations. How much more there can be to life! he exclaims, if only we would wake up to our own potential.

> What youthful philosophers and experimentalists we are. There is not one of my readers who has yet lived a whole human life. These may be but the spring months in the life of the race.... We are acquainted with a mere pellicle of the globe on which we live. Most have not delved six feet beneath the surface, nor leaped as many above it. We know not where we are. Beside, we are sound asleep nearly half our time.... As I stand over the insect crawling amid the pine needles on the forest floor, and endeavoring to conceal itself from my sight, and ask myself why it will cherish those humble thoughts, and hide its head from me who might, perhaps, be its benefactor, and impart to its race some cheering information, I am reminded of the great Benefactor and Intelligence that stands over me the human insect.
>
> There is an incessant influx of novelty into the world, and yet we tolerate incredible dulness....Who does not feel his faith in a resurrection and immortality strengthened by hearing of this?...The light which puts out our eyes is darkness to us. Only that day dawns to which we are awake. There is more day to dawn. The sun is but a morning star. (1981:349-351)

Thoreau died at age 45. He was not afraid of death, nor was he haunted by his neglect of formal religion. On his deathbed he made the famous rebuke to a friend who mentioned the afterlife: "One world at a time" - a line that would later become a theme and inspire a book title for Edward Abbey. Thoreau is famous for saying, in defiance of social morality, "The greater part of what my neighbours call good I believe in my soul to be evil, and if I repent of anything, it is very likely to be my good behaviour" (1981:19). Krutch (in Thoreau, 1981) writes that Thoreau did not retract this sentiment at the time of his death; he remained unrepentantly rebellious. A pious relative asked him if he had made his peace with God and he replied "I am not aware that we ever quarrelled" (19).

Robinson Jeffers (1887-1962)

A severed hand
Is an ugly thing, and man dissevered from the earth
and stars and his history
...for contemplation or in fact...
Often appears atrociously ugly. Integrity is wholeness,
the greatest beauty is
Organic wholeness, the wholeness of life and things,
the divine beauty of the universe.
Love that, not man
Apart from that, or else you will share man's
pitiful confusions,
or drown in despair when his days darken.

(Jeffers in Oelschlaeger, 1991:253)

The poet Robinson Jeffers unlocks the meaning of the natural beauty surrounding the wilderness adventure experience. He lived on the wild coast of California at Carmel, in a self-built stone house called "Tor." His poetry is inspired by the wild sea coast and mountains of his home. "Inhumanism" sums up Jeffers' approach to life and poetry, as Oelschlaeger (1991:252) explains,

> This is as far as Jeffers cared to go in his affirmation of a path: turn love outward from humankind to the transhuman magnificence of the beauty of things, the cosmic whole that enframes the human odyssey and, indeed, is itself divine.

"Breaking out of humanity" is the key to Jeffers' philosophy (Gilbert, 1965). For his rebellion against Modernism, Thoreau has been called "an American analogue to Schopenhauer, Marx, and Nietzsche" (Oelschlaeger, 1991:133). Jeffers was "a soul-faced American Schopenhauer, an indigestible American Tolstoy, and insufferable American Ibsen, an incredible American Nietzsche...one true-blue, solitary rhinoceros" (Gilbert, 1965:168).

Jeffers's vision is built upon what Wendell Berry calls "the healing power of perspective" - the accurate perception of humanity's place within the grand scheme of things, which is one of incredible insignificance. Jeffers's vision, indeed, "saw man risen but lately from sea slime" (Coffin, 1971:xxiii). Jeffers says that his outlook is "based on a recognition of the astonishing beauty of things, and on a rational acceptance of the fact

that mankind is neither central nor important in the universe; our vices and abilities are insignificant as our happiness" (Oelschlaeger, 1991:247). Jeffers's life work is an expression of the peace that can be found in this perspective. From this awakening to the indifference of the overarching wild reality to human schemes, Jeffers builds his philosophical attitude of "Inhumanism", which in his own words means

> a shifting of emphasis and significance from man to non-man; the rejection of human solipsism and recognition of the transhuman magnificence. It seems time that our race began to think again as an adult does, rather than like an egocentric baby or insane person. This manner of thought and feeling is neither misanthropic nor pessimist, though two or three people have said so and may again. It involves no falsehoods, and is a means of maintaining sanity in slippery times; it has objective truth and human value. It offers a reasonable detachment as rule of conduct, instead of love, hate and envy. It neutralizes fanaticism and wild hopes; but it provides magnificence for the religious instinct, and satisfies our need to admire greatness and rejoice in beauty. (Oelschlaeger, 1991:246-247)

He further explains that this philosophical attitude (Oelschlaeger, 1991:247)

> - the devaluation of human-centred illusions, the turning outward from man to what is boundlessly greater - is a next step in human development; and an essential condition of freedom, and of spiritual (i.e., moral and vital) sanity.

Jeffers's Inhumanism is a mysticism that provides redemption through union with nature's beauty. Identifying a foundation for belief that is experienced in immanent reality, it is a religious alternative to traditional Christianity, which was problematic because it placed humanity separate from God and homeless on wild Earth, resulting in the twin evils of, to use Berry's (1977) terms, pride and despair. Judeo-Christianity, Oelschlaeger explains, produced "the reification of humankind into Lord Man and the isolation of both Lord Man and God from the cosmic process which sustains all being" (1991:250). Jeffers left a Christian background to arrive at his pantheism. But becoming a pantheist meant coming to terms with the appearance of evil in nature. The only way to do this was to transcend the categories of good and evil, which meant transcending social morality and human thought altogether. Accomplishing this transcendent vision required the healing perspective of human insignificance. Turning outward against human value and the arrogant myth of "Lord Man" was a mystical project for which Jeffers found

inspiration in the "second scientific revolution" of evolutionary science and twentieth century physics. Jeffers explains (in Gilbert, 1965:34-35):

> We have learned within the past century or so that humanity is only a temporary and infinitesimal phenomenon in a large universe. The knowledge involves a readjustment of values that can only be managed by looking at humanity objectively - from the outside. It seems to me wasteful that almost the whole of human energy is expended inward, on itself, in loving, hating, governing, cajoling, amusing, its own members. It is like a new-born babe, conscious almost exclusively of its own processes and whence its food comes from. As the child grows up, its attention must be drawn from itself to the more important world outside it. In a civilization like ours - metropolitanism intensified by machinery - human nature (which we developed under very different conditions) becomes an anachronism. We can't turn back the civilization, not at least until it collapses, and our descendants will have to develop a new sort of nature - will have to "break out of humanity" or suffer considerably - probably both.

Embracing scientific insights like some of the earlier Romantics, Jeffers represents the "evolution" of the Romantic perspective through Darwinism and quantum theory, plus the realism learned from his own studies in medicine, to arrive at a vision of the chaotic amorality of nature that is undistorted by Transcendental optimism. He was prepared to face things as they are.

"I will touch things and things and no more thoughts,/That breed like mouthless May-flies darkening the sky," wrote Jeffers (Oelschlaeger, 1991:249). Here he states his preference for the *real* and concrete over the products of human thought, including formal religion. By creating goodness human thought creates misery. Jeffers writes how the human mind is the result of human problems, when

> the desire of acquiring and grasping objects, or of enslaving men and animals, in order to minister to the self, becomes of the main motives of life; and when, owing to this deep, fundamental division of human nature and consciousness, minds are tormented with a sense of sin, and their bodies with a myriad forms of disease. (in Gilbert, 1965:52)

Redemption is self-transcendence to encounter the real. Thus humanity, Jeffers writes, is "the blind mask crying to be slit with eye holes" - humanity is something to be overcome (Gilbert, 1965:52). In relation to Buddhism, this enlightenment of self-transcendence is the goal Nirvana. The resultant union of mind with nature is analogous to the

organization of consciousness in flow, which is the affirmation of human freedom from control by social forces and animal instinct - in Freudian terms, the freedom of the Ego from control by the Superego and the Id - creating an internal locus of control (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). And if we choose to take a positive spin on Nietzsche in preface to Jeffers, it is this courageous freedom of the self from the tyranny of human thought that he advocated through the will to power (Coffin, 1971).

"Turning outward" Jeffers became, in Oelschlaeger's terms (1991), a "primeval materialist" - primeval materialism distinguished from modern materialism because it did not lead to arrogance or despair, but rather to a fuller life. Like Thoreau in his preference for reality, be it life or death, Jeffers finds in breaking away from humanity, curing "the fever of self-involvement," the cosmic process - source of life, where true being is experienced. *Being* is Jeffers's transcendent value: "I have chosen/Being; therefore wounds, bonds, limits and pain; the crowded mind and the anguished nerves, experience and ecstasy" (Oelschlaeger, 1991:251).

In "choosing being" Jeffers affirms that the ultimate reality that feeds life is *process* rather than a static order that can be conceptualized by the human mind. In reference to this type of thinking, the process philosophy of Whitehead is commonly cited (Evernden, 1993; Gilbert, 1965; Griffin, 1998a; Henderson, 1995; Oelschlaeger, 1991). Identification with this process, though it includes what is called pain and suffering, is our salvation. Real suffering is, as Kvaloy (1993) explains in reference to Buddhism, the denial of reality: it is thinking we are space when in fact we are time. To truly *be*, we must overcome the fallacy of permanence, see that the only permanence is change, and turn our love outward to encompass this flux, which is the truly divine. The problems of Christianity are thus resolved. Humans cannot be arrogant, because we realize our insignificance, and yet we have no reason to despair, because God is everywhere, in the process of nature that is our beginning, our life, and our end. Finding pantheistic God in the concrete reality of "things", Jeffers is again *Homo religiosus* (Oelschlaeger, 1991:253):

...the inhumanist accepts pain and death, for all is part of the holy, transhuman

> magnificence of things. The psychic allure of Jeffers' ecological vision is that nature and God, rent asunder by the modern mind, are reunited.

Jeffers speaks of the divine, the cosmic process, in terms of *beauty* - "the transhuman beauty of things" is the face of *Deus sive Natura* - God or Nature. *Deus sive Natura* is a phrase borrowed from the philosopher Spinoza who believed God and Nature were the same substance and could thus be referred to interchangeably. Human consciousness, the divine, and the material were all interpretations of this single interconnected Reality. According to Spinoza's theories, religious faith and scientific reason were both inadequate ways of knowing Reality. The highest form of knowledge was *Scientia intuitiva* - intuitive knowledge which was capable of perceiving the whole, *Deus sive Natura*, without distinction (Oelschlaeger, 1991). Spinoza's notion of intuitive knowledge bears much similarity to the methods of the Romantic poets, and to Thoreau's concept of "beautiful knowledge." For Jeffers, affective realization of the unity of the natural and divine comes about aesthetically, to the observer of "the beauty of things." Beauty is the symbol of transcendent value, indeed the *source* of meaning and value, synonymous with wildness. Jeffers observes that the world was not created for "happiness nor love nor wisdom...pain, hatred and folly" - in the end these things cancel each other out, "But the beauty stands" (in Oelschlaeger, 1991:257).

> Jeffers's poetry belies the outlook that behind this world lies an all-pervading, timeless reality: change is the central reality. Yet he also looks to establish culture in some deeper, perdurable surrounding context of being - something beyond the dollar, progress, democracy, and all the measures that the modern mind assumes are a part of the basic furniture of the universe. For Jeffers *the one abiding pattern* is the beauty of things.

"The beauty of things" is the underlying pattern that is Thoreau's bedrock *reality*, apprehended by the intuitive knowing called "Beautiful Knowledge." Connectedness to God - that is, religion - comes about by turning attention from parts to whole, as Wordsworth and the Romantics did, and appreciating the beauty of the whole, which is permanent. Jeffers affirms the intimate connection between beauty and religious experience. He writes, "it seems to me that the mystical experience grows out of the aesthetic experience, naturally, almost logically" (Coffin, 1971:28). Jeffers thus

prescribed a bitter medicine - to look directly at the world:

> One light is left us: the beauty of things, not men; the immense beauty of the world, not the human world. Look - and without imagination, desire nor dream - directly at the mountains and the sea. (Coffin, 1971:48)

Beauty was for Jeffers what Thoreau meant by a "polestar," providing a guiding and balancing perspective for life. As Evernden observes (1993:54, emphasis added)

> Aesthetics is *a way of being,* a stance towards the world; an aesthetic experience requires a relationship between a seeking subject and a responsive world.

Care must be taken, however, in labelling Jeffers's values solely in terms of "beauty" or "accepting pain and death", without further elaboration. Jeffers expounds what Carpenter calls "transcendent" or "mystical" values, which are individual values, because they transcend social morality ("above" good and evil). That Jeffers' is a mystic, a Romantic, or a primitive vision is affirmed by Gilbert (1965:70):

> Jeffers, like the old Christian writers, always works and sees from the dark centre of his being from the point we call the purely subjective which is beyond science and reason. This centralization or deracination of the unconscious is called by the Chinese *Tao*, that which is outside mathematical truth and time. The Upanishadic *demiurgus* is the same eternal actualization of the dark self breaking out into the vast not-self, the universal. To Boehme this was "seeing with philosophic eyes." To Blake it was the "double vision". This seeing from the dark centre of one's being is not a pessimistic nor an optimistic outlook as regards earthly things; it is the Nietzschean road beyond good and evil.

Gilbert identifies this same "prelogical, instinctive reaction to nature" in Keats, Spinoza, St. Francis, Sir Thomas Browne, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *The Tempest*, Nietzsche, Wordsworth, and Shelley. He writes (1965:88):

> Such a belief leads to a pantheistic communion with immortality, a new spiritual birth regenerated from death, through losing the self and finding the self; it is a primitive inheritance, an intuition; it has as little in common with reason as theology with religion.

Mysticism is "spiritual exaltation of the individual...the height upon which intelligence reaches complete unity in 'self-collectedness' and 'out-of-selfness'" (Gilbert, 1965:186). The mystical experience is indeed the experience of redemption - forgiveness for human evil is inherent in the cosmic consciousness. It is this grounding in freedom

and mystical value that enabled Jesus to express forgiveness - an attitude not followed by Christianity in practice, according to Carpenter (1990).

For his poetic discipleship of inhumanism, Jeffers is criticized for denying morality and human values (Carpenter, 1990). His transcendental values are, in the tradition of Emerson and Thoreau's, a morality of self-reliance and individualism - "to thine own self be true." Being anti-social or more accurately asocial, such mystical values are problematic in the social sphere. Bertrand Russell (1972:681) makes this observation regarding Romanticism: throwing off social restraint results in "a new energy and sense of power from the cessation of inner conflict....a sense of god-like exaltation," but is at odds with the social order.

> The mystic becomes one with god, and in the contemplation of the Infinite feels himself absolved from duty to his neighbour. The anarchic rebel does even better: he feels himself not one with God, but God.

Anyone can find wholeness between self and amoral nature, arguably, if by "turning outward," social morality is left out of the equation. Mysticism can imply moral anarchy.

Another important criticism of mysticism is that in the transcendence of good and evil, the affirmation of a wild, amoral force, it becomes powerless to resist evil. This was also Peel's (1958) criticism of Transcendentalism, which he would likely apply also to Jeffers. (Jeffers further invited such criticisms by his controversial objection to American involvement in World War II.) The transcendental aesthetic is similarly amoral. In reference to Jeffers's understanding of tragedy, Gilbert (1965) observes that the Greeks considered the contemplation of suffering and pain, as a manifestation of the universal will, as adding to the beauty of life. An aesthetic of suffering can be downright sinister. Arne Naess similarly observes in discussion of deep ecology the problems of basing an ecosophy on the central norm of "Life!", because a "cult of life" can be unethical, and led in part to Nazism: "You read nature in a certain way....You begin to say yes to brutality. Yes to exploitation. And among the humans, yes to sadism. One must be very careful, then, if one is to use "Life!" as the center of an ethic" (Naess, in Reed and Rothenberg, 1993:106).

Here is a problem with any attempt at the unification of is-ought, and it should at least be noted here that headlong yea-saying to life can be dangerous. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) also admits that sadistic activities can be flow producing; optimal experience is not necessary "good". To avoid getting into trouble, Jeffers's transcendental ethic must be further elucidated, to return it to the social realm.

Jeffers and Naess both attempt to resolve this problem by emphasizing *wholeness*. When good and evil are transcended, what remains in terms of *value* - and is likely the source of moral empowerment, in response to criticisms like Peel's - must be integrity. Carpenter calls integrity a mystical value, which "transcends the old values of good and evil (as Emerson knew), but at the same time preaches the oneness of man with nature" (1990:191). And this is how *beauty* must be interpreted: as the appearance of wholeness. Anything, including humanity, severed from wholeness is ugly; whereas beauty is truth, sin is fragmentation. Jeffers echoes Wordsworth's admonition of the "meddling intellect" which murders to dissect (Porteous, 1996). Dissecting destroys beauty, because, as Jeffers agrees with Wendell Berry, "beauty is wholeness".

Jeffers also valued *freedom* - freedom makes the mystical experience possible - but the value of integrity was key to his thought (Carpenter, 1990). Integrity is discovered in freedom; an ethic of integrity sustains freedom. In "Shine, Perishing Republic" Jeffers preaches that the love of luxury will betray the love of freedom, and the nation will decay. Freedom is destroyed by the love of things - "The states of the next age will no doubt remember you, and edge their love of freedom with the contempt of luxury" (Carpenter, 1990:194). Freedom is best supported by valuing integrity above things.

Instead of "Life!", Naess based his ecosophy on the central norm of "Self-realization." Jeffers' integrity/wholeness is the same as this Self-realization - discovering one's identity consisting in relationship with myriad things. A "realized selfhood" is the unification of the self and the not-self (Gilbert, 1965). Indeed the mystical experience *is* an experience of the realization of Self, particularly strong for the *introvert* because, as Gilbert observes (1965:23):

> In the true introvert, the *animus* or surface-self, with its extraverted, rational knowledge, is submerged by the *anima*, or deeper self, through mystical or poetic knowledge of the Prime Mover. Not to feel or to be moved by this faith is to miss the fundamental meaning of Jeffers, the poet, when he emphasizes the belief in the unity of life and in the soul that breathes through that universal unity, which he calls "the rhythm of that wheel....Who can behold it is happy and will praise it to the people."

The experience of beauty is a connection to that part of self that has been called the divine soul. Jeffers' beauty and wholeness is God. Life is good but impermanent; nature does not value life, as Dillard has observed time and again (1990;1998). Freedom is better than life, but only integrity has the permanence of beauty - so there lies truth; there is integrity in dying as well as in living, and a surer integrity in nature than the human world (Carpenter, 1990). Salvation is found in loving that beauty, and trying to emulate its integrity, which is the conclusion of Lopez's *Arctic Dreams* as well as Dillard's. An ethic for living is found in beauty:

> There is one God, and the earth his prophet.
> The beauty of things is the face of God: worship it;
> Give your hearts to it; labor to be like it. (in Oelschlaeger, 1991:259)

American desert rambler Everett Ruess based a lifestyle on the love of natural beauty. In reference to this "vagabond for beauty" Wallace Stegner writes (in Krakauer, 1996:87),

> Esthetics as a parlor affectation is ludicrous and sometimes a little obscene; as a way of life it sometimes attains dignity.

If the experience of beauty is the experience of redemption, from overweening pride and despair, the mystic would return to civilization not as dictator, but as redeemer. This is where Jeffers' fundamental assumptions (which are founded, notably, in a lifetime of personal experience) differ from the academic Russell's. Does freedom tend to produce *good* or *evil*? It could be either. What is our inherent tendency? Mysticism begins with freedom, and then morality becomes an individual choice. Gilbert cites T.S. Eliot on the dangers involved (1990:137): "Most people are only very little alive; and to awaken them to the spiritual is a very great responsibility: it is only when they are so awakened that they become capable of good, but at the same time they become first

capable of evil." Russell observes that the mystic united with God is absolved from responsibility to his neighbour, implying the assumption that the mystic, once redeemed by the experience of union with God, would not *feel* any responsibility to his neighbour. Jeffers assumes the opposite as do, apparently, Arne Naess and the Buddha - compassion is a natural consequence of Self-realization. The human mind facing the sorrow of human tragedy finds *katharsis* in the cosmic not-self, and thus comes to self-understanding; *understanding*, in the form of perspective on human insignificance, destroys evil's source, which is tragedy stemming from disintegration, where the human mind has the hubris to defy fate - a.k.a. "the will of God" or "natural law" (Gilbert, 1965). Human freedom is realized *within* the constraints of these limits - through Nietzsche's *Amor fati* - love of fate. From the religious experience derives religious sentiment. With hope, it is a return to universal values.

Uniting fact with value seems to result in its own dualism between mystical value and social morality. Carpenter writes, "only if the humanistic and the transcendental levels of life are confused does moral anarchy result from the practice of this ideal of 'integrity', for the morality of the mystic does not destroy the morality of traditional society, but goes beyond it to a new set of values" (1990:197). A multifaceted reality seems essential to the responsible life. The mystical is destined to remain transcendent in relation to social morality. But the mystical experience contains within it morality's renewal. Morality should serve value, then, and be considered secondary to freedom and integrity. Turning outward is a way to a higher good. This is Jeffers' point.

In expressing his point, Jeffers' attitude is similar to the "resigned pessimism" of Norway's Zapffe (in Reed and Rothenberg, 1993): the realization of the futility of human ambitions is requisite to spiritual enlightenment, which is the realization of what is truly important and ultimately real - process alone. Like Zapffe, Jeffers speaks of mountain experience as a curative for the ills of civilization. Speaking as the redeemer in "Meditation of Saviors," Jeffers writes, "I am here on the mountain making/antitoxin for.../the terrible/arrogant cities" (Carpenter, 1990:192). Also like Zapffe, Jeffers is perhaps exaggerating to make a point - there is something wonderful beyond the world of

human creations, in the realization of which we can seek solace so pure that human striving loses importance, and even the end of the race can be serenely contemplated. That the human could value what transcends human value - consciousness' end - though paradoxical, may be requisite to the virtue that Jeffers imagines. He urges us to become this paradox - our survival may depend on it. The vainglorious ambition that is the cause of so much devastation cannot anchor itself against such perspective. Jeffers writes (Gilbert, 1965:123),

> The hopeless prostration of the earth
> Under men's hands and their minds,
> The beautiful places killed like rabbits to make a city,
> The spreading fungus, the slime-threads
> And spores; my own coast's obscene future.
> I remember the farther
> Future, and the last man dying
> Without succession under confident eyes of stars.
> It was only a moment's accident,
> The race that plagued us; the world resumes the old
> lonely, immortal
> Splendor;...

In contradiction of Jeffers' critics, this poem clearly expresses not nihilism, the sentiments of a madman or a dictator, but the rather moral outrage and hope for human dignity that fired a lifelong art. Jeffers was deliberately extreme, singing the end of civilization, because he sought to accomplish the an extreme shift in perspective, to "uncenter the human mind from itself" (Coffin, 1971:10). As Shebl observes, "Jeffers often may have seemed to overillustrate his case.... His was a corrective vision, and his poetry remained, in a large sense, offending" (1976:31).

There may be no clear prescription for action in Jeffers' attitude, but it is at least as useful as Christianity: there is comfort, as it heals frustration by affirming that frustration is inevitable, and teaches the contentment of *being* through the appreciation of beauty. Jeffers' poetry, itself grown by the sea, provides the best insight into the feelings of the wilderness traveller who sits by a waterfall, or a crashing surf, or upon the arctic tundra, and has an ineffable experience of "just being." There is consolation in human

impermanence and the permanence of the inhuman: "The beauty of things was born before eyes and sufficient\to itself: the heart-breaking beauty\Will remain when there is no heart to break for it" (in Gilbert, 1965:53). The inhumanist says (Oelschlaeger, 1991:259):

> ...it is deep peace
> and final joy
> To know that the great world lives, whether man dies or
> not. The beauty of things is not harnessed to
> human
> Eyes and the little active minds: it is absolute.
> It is not for human titillation, though it serves that. It is
> the life of things,
> And the nature of God.

Jeffers was a wild evangelist, spreading the gospel of "the beauty of things" - the face of God. As the truth of God and the source of his happiness, he sought to "praise it to the people."

> ...the great cosmic cycle - the stars wheeling in their heavenly course, the endless cycle of birth, growth, decline, and death, and the diving beauty of things - enframes the human condition and...any man or woman oblivious to this central reality is, in Jeffers's estimate, lost in a sea of illusions. (Oelschlaeger, 1991:261)

Jeffers's values make sense and do not seem brutal when seen together - in their integrity. Echoing Thoreau and prefiguring Tuan's conclusions about the good life, Jeffers concludes that life is to be accepted, and faced as it is. Even in the sour end near death, "who drinks the wine/Should take the dregs; even in the bitter lees and sediment/New discovery may lie" (in Oelschlaeger, 1991:260). Preserving freedom and valuing integrity can be lived through the appreciation of beauty, but this means facing pain, and requires a hardness, courage. According to Carpenter (1991), "cowardice, or submission to tyranny" is to Jeffers the ultimate evil, and Jesus is seen as divine because he was a revolutionary with a passion for freedom - he lived the mystical experience; Judas was a coward. Courage is requisite to mysticism; the appreciation of beauty is the reward of courage.

What is the aim of this mix of values? It is dignity; wisdom; the perspective to

love humanity with sincerity. In his long poem, *The Double Axe*, Jeffers' character, the Inhumanist, offers some answers to the question of what it is to live, loyal to the fact of wildness (Oelschlaeger, 1991:248),

> "O future children:
> Cruelty is dirt and ignorance, a muddy peasant
> Beating his horse. Ambition and power-lust
> Are for adolescents and defective persons. Moderate kindness
> Is oil on a crying wheel: use it. Mutual help
> Is necessary: use it when necessary.
> And as to love: make love when need drives.
> And as to love: love God. He is rock, earth and water, and
> the beast and stars; and the night that contains them.
> And as to love: whoever loves or hates man is fooled in a
> mirror." He grinned and said:
> "From experience I speak. But truly, if you love man,
> Swallow him in wine: love man in God.
> Man and nothing but man is a sorry mouthful."

Inhumanism disempowers the evil of human arrogance, replacing it with a common sense ethic of humility and basic kindness. In this sense transcending social morality is not a megalomaniacal, "superhuman" endeavour to break moral limits, but a return to Christlike love.

Finally, Jeffers provides sane advice to those of us who are on "the search for truth". First, like a good Romantic, he advises against taking answers already given. He writes (Coffin, 1971:22):

> I decided not to tell lies in verse. Not to feign any emotion that I did not feel; not to pretend to believe in optimism or pessimism, or unreversible progress; not to say anything because it was popular, or generally accepted, or fashionable in intellectual circles, unless I myself believed it; and not to believe easily.

Experiencing wilderness is part of a religious quest for truth that requires answering three questions, identified in the poem "Theory of Truth,": "First, is there a God and of what nature? Second, whether there's anything after we die but worm's meat?/Third, how should men live?" (Oelschlaeger, 1991:251). There is truth for Jeffers in the insights that come from searching, but orthodox religion fails when the insights of prophets are translated into dogma - truth can only be known individually (Oelschlaeger, 1991:251):

There is no valid authority
In church nor state, custom, scripture no creed,
But only in one's own conscience and the beauty of things.
Doggedly I think again: One's conscience is a trick oracle,
Worked by parents and nurse-maids, the pressure of the people,
And the delusions of dead prophets: trust it not.
Wash it clean to receive the transhuman beauty: then trust it.

The search for ultimate truth ultimately ends in madness, argues Jeffers (Oelschlaeger, 1991:252).

Why does insanity always twist the great answers?
Because only
tormented persons want truth.
Man is like other animals, wants food and
success and women, not truth. Only if the mind
Tortured by some interior tension has despaired of happiness:
then it hates its life-cage and seeks further,
And finds, if it is powerful enough. But instantly the private
agony that made the search
Muddles the finding.

In the context of my own search for the meaning of wilderness, the salience of this passage from Jeffers' poem, "Theory of Truth", should be understood. There is something wrong with the questioning to begin with, and the only answer the wilderness provides is happiness - which is neither necessarily moral nor true, but enough to resolve the madness that prompts questioning and muddles answers. "Theory of Truth" reveals the paradox of expecting wilderness experience to contain any meaning at all, and stands as testament to the way out from the inevitable frustration with searching. In the fog of such muddle-headedness and frustration, wilderness remains ineffable and transcendent to the mental struggle - an emergency exit to understanding.

In summary, I offer Jeffers' statement of the religious belief he found in observing the wild, in his own words (Coffin, 1971:123):

> I believe that the universe is one being, all its parts are different expressions of the same energy, and they are all in communication with each other, therefore parts of one's organic whole. (This is physics, I believe, as well as religion.) The parts change and pass, or die. People and races and rocks and stars; none of them seems to be important in itself, but only the whole. This whole is in all its parts so

> beautiful, and is felt by me to be so intensely in earnest, that I am compelled to love it, and to think of it as divine. It seems to me that this whole alone is worthy of the deeper sorts of love; and that there is peace, freedom, I might say a kind of salvation, in turning one's affections outward toward this one God, rather than inwards on one's self, or on humanity, or on human imaginations and abstractions - the world of spirits. I think that it is our privilege and felicity to love God for his beauty, without claiming or expecting love from him. We are not important to him, but he to us. I think that one may contribute (ever so slightly) to the beauty of things by making one's own life and environment beautiful, so far as one's power reaches.

Edward Abbey (1927-1989)

Edward Abbey, significant in the inhumanist tradition of Thoreau and Jeffers and a self-described romantic, also "turned love outwards," seeking to avoid the "interaction of man on man - a sort of breeding in and in" against which Thoreau cautioned. Abbey took the Romantics seriously, believing that they were "onto something" very important in their way of perceiving the world directly. In his journal he writes, "Romanticism was not merely an aberration.....My philosophy, I guess, insofar as I still have one, would fall under some such heading as Romantic Naturalism" (1994:206). ("Naturalism," as defined by Reese (1996), holds that all explanations must be "this-worldly," because there is no non-natural order to appeal to. Naturalism differs from materialism, however, in believing that some things are irreducible to matter-in-motion. Proponents of naturalism are Santayana, Dewey, and William James.)

Like Thoreau and Jeffers in many ways, Abbey also claimed to prefer life's dark and uncomfortable side to any surrogate reality. Also like Thoreau, he used biting humour and social criticism to turn attention away from the trivialities of human culture to what was most important, a source of redemption, liberation, and all things valuable in human experience: the beauty and mystery outside. Abbey's inspiration was the beauty and sensual experience of nature, as expressed in selections from his journals (1994):

> Sunrise! A canticle of blue and gold, a cantata of color and clean air and the cries of meadowlarks, mockingbirds, bobolinks, finches, blue jays...(125). Walking in the morning near the head of Cherry Creek Canyon. Salmon-colored clouds, surreally streamlined by the wind, sail slowly across the green and silver sky of

> the east. This is the world, *muchachos*. This is *our* world, mate, comrade, friend, lover...(259). Wind howling outside my cabin, moaning and rustling and fidgeting. Good. I like this beleaguered sensation. White woolies drifting across a blue sky. Big purple shadows on the mountains. Trees and shrubbery weaving in the foreground. Excellent...(325). Fine grand summer storms. Flickers of lightning across sunsets like grand finales to this foolish world. Patches of snow dwindling fast on the mountainsides. Pack Creek roaring in its channel. Wind rushing down at night from Mount Tukuhnikivats. Bluebirds, kestrels, robins, ravens, golden eagles. Hummingbirds. Pink morning-glories blooming on the asphalt berm of road. Minarets of Moab Wall silhouetted against the sunset. Immaculate white marshmallow clouds rising above the mountains...(328). Autumnal winds off the mountains; patches of golden aspen appearing; new moon on the evening sky; almost time to finish the novel, head for the canyons! (329)

"Almost time" to go merge with nature, to *just be*. Almost but not quite - a metaphor for Edward Abbey's life: writing, making meaning, but always facing outward, a posture of longing until death's final union with nature.

Abbey's foundation was "paradox and bedrock" He sought *reality*, but perhaps more insistently than Thoreau tried to resist the complications of explaining reality and distinguishing it from the unreal. Reality as he perceived it required no uprooting or explanation. His reality is no mystic's quarry. For him, it lies on life's bare surface. "Only surfaces are of ultimate importance" he writes, expressing an opinion as it appears again and again in his journals and, ultimately, in the introduction to *Desert Solitaire*. In *Desert Solitaire* Abbey agrees with Thoreau about the preeminence of *fact*. "I believe there is a kind of poetry, even a kind of truth, in simple fact" (1968:x). Abbey agrees with Thoreau about most things except, apparently, the relationship of surface appearance to reality.

> It will be objected that the book deals too much with mere appearances, with the surface of things, and fails to engage and reveal the patterns of unifying relationships which form the true underlying reality of existence. Here I must confess that I know nothing whatever about true underlying reality, having never met any. There are many people who say they have, I know, but they've been luckier than I.

Abbey was influenced by Thoreau and agreed that Thoreau outgrew Transcendentalism early in his writing career. Abbey knew that Thoreau was no more a mystic than himself.

To whom then is he referring when he speaks of people who say they have encountered "true underlying reality"? Emerson perhaps. Or Dillard. Abbey and Thoreau both believed that reality was not "underlying" so much as ever-present in direct experience. It was "underlying" or "transcendent" only in its relationship to human abstractions from fact. But the two authors explain this point in differing terms. To Thoreau, "appearance" was the unreal, the human interpretations that interfered with sense experience. But for Abbey, "appearance" refers to this direct experience.

> Appearance *and* reality? Appearance *is* reality - the only reality we know, will ever know, will ever need to know. (1994:156)

We need not worry ourselves over whether experience is real or true. It merely *is* - but, as Abbey observed, there is no *mere* about it. Experience is all we have to build on. Abbey, who lived his *Desert Solitaire* a century after Thoreau published *Walden*, was experimenting with the same *epoche* in wild nature - letting fact and experience speak for themselves.

> I am here not only to evade for a while the clamor and filth and confusion of the cultural apparatus but also to confront, immediately and directly if it's possible, the bare bones of existence, the elemental and fundamental, the bedrock which sustains us. I want to be able to look at and into a juniper tree, a piece of quartz, a vulture, a spider, and see it as it is in itself, devoid of all humanly ascribed qualities, anti-Kantian, even the categories of scientific description. To meet God or Medusa face to face, even if it means risking everything human in myself.

Abbey is, as Oelschlaeger (1991) describes Jeffers, a "primitive materialist". At age twenty-four, contemplating his mission as a writer, Abbey tells his journal that he would gladly accept the appellation of "rank materialist," never to deny the earth as his home and the body as a part of himself (1994:7-8):

> Never shall this flower of the spirit reject the good earth from which it grows....I celebrate the earth, my home, my mother, my grave, and as long as men are Man they must, if they would preserve the integrated being, do the same....Never to let men forget that they are animals as much as gods - that is one thing I shall say.

It there is anything to reality beyond what lies on the surface, it is the beauty that is apprehended there by the human subject. Beauty is the face of wildness, and is not captured in words. Only effective art - poetry, painting, landscape photography - portrays

this wildness. In *Down the River* (1991), Abbey praises the landscape art of his friend John DePuy, who paints a world of savage beauty beyond the human. Like Thoreau's wildness and Jeffers's transhuman magnificence, Abbey is speaking about a reality that is not contained in words, and what this reality means for the human spirit. Abbey explains how this prelinguistic reality, this savage beauty, as Thoreau knew, has a *liberating* effect. Beauty is liberation, it is a "return to the senses", providing immediate salvation.

> I never tire of looking at his pictures. They have a liberating quality. They make a window in the wall of our modern techno-industrial workhouse, a window that leads the eye and the heart and the mind through the wall and far out into the freedom of the old and original world. They take us back to where we came from, long ago. Back to where we took the wrong fork in the road. (223)

Mystical experience is nothing but a union with this beauty, with the wild earth. Abbey describes his experience of the earth as a love affair that was never consummated in the "hard and brutal mysticism" of which he dreams. The only way to know the earth, to experience anything truly, is to experience *directly*, in an unmediated way.

> ...you can't see *anything* from a car; you've got to get out of the goddamned contraption and walk, better yet crawl, on hands and knees, over the sandstone and through the thornbush and cactus. When traces of blood begin to mark your trail you'll see something, maybe...(1968:xii). I dream of a hard and brutal mysticism in which the naked self merges with a non-human world and yet somehow survives still intact, individual, separate. Paradox and bedrock. (6)

Given this desire to unite with beauty, Abbey's life and work was a paradox. Writing was a celebration of what he loved that at once separated him from it, serving his creative and social ambitions, but interfering with his dream to just *be* (1994:324).

> Sometimes I feel so *sick* of writing. Can't cope with it all. Would much rather retire, build my cabin, spend the rest of my life contemplating rocks, buzzards, distant sunsets, remote mountains, and gradually gently by imperceptible degrees *fade away* into the desert...into the sunset....

Abbey claims, however, not to be a mystic. To him, anything that suggests transcendentalism is anathema! "Mysticism is a relaxation of the mind," he writes. "'God' is a substitute for thought. The supernatural is a failure of the human imagination and an insult to the majesty of the real." (1994:266-267). What separated Thoreau from the Transcendentalists also characterizes Abbey: they saw "divinity" immanent in

immediate experience. The cosmos *is* divine, not just some intimation of the divine from some higher plane. Separating God from his "creation" separates us from God, Oelschlaeger (1991) argues. Taking the immediate reality to be the only realm that exists, the only divinity we can know, grounds us within the holy. Except Abbey resisted terms like "divine" and "holy" which connoted the *meta*physical and the *super*natural, and traditional religious doctrine. Abbey would make no peace with religion; he wanted no piece of religion. For him, the only true religion is *no* religion.

> The world is really nothing but an idea in the mind of God, say the physicist-orientalist-mystics. To which my response is: So what? Who cares? What difference does that make? We still have to live in the world of actual daily experience, of all those hard objects and firm living bodies that certainly *appear* to share the world with us. We are not alone...(311). Religion, self-deception - the compulsion to believe in some form of life after death, without examining what such a disembodied existence could consist of or amount to. Suppose there really is an intelligent Being "out there" - a transcendent God. So what? We are still confronted, God or no God, by the riddle of the universe, the mystery of existence. (1994:326-327)

"Love of Heaven slanders earth;" he writes, "be true to the earth" (1994:139). Earth - "the only home we will ever know, the only paradise we ever need - if only we had the eyes to see" (in Bishop, 1994:172). Abbey felt that he could not get closer to God than what was available through his direct, unmediated experience of nature. He had no more need for religion than for "underlying reality".

> "When I see a mountain like that, I know there *must* be a God."
> When *I* see a mountain like that, I know we don't *need* a God. (1994:10)

Metaphysical issues he dismissed and replaced with fact. The appreciation of natural beauty was enough satisfaction for his religious sentiment. What better foundation could there be for belief?

> What do I believe in? I believe in sun. In rock. In the dogma of the sun and the doctrine of the rock. I believe in blood, fire, woman, rivers, eagles, storms, drums, flutes, banjos and broom-tailed horses." (in Bishop, 1994:vii)

By comparison to his tangible belief, Abbey called Christian theology "grotesque", "dark, ancient, vile and filthy...horrible...a contemptible and nightmarish horror-story." "Christianity," he writes, "with its appalling and horrible promise of

immortality...makes Heaven and Hell indistinguishable, and life a vale of dread" (1994:85). He believed that Christianity was irresponsible in the way that it accepted and forgave sin:

> It's time we stood up like men and faced our responsibilities, admitted and lived with our past sins, and cleared our hearts, in so far as we can...by refusing to cooperate with evil and insisting upon doing good. (1994:36)

Abbey's reaction to Christianity is very similar to Nietzsche's, who wrote

> Hatred of 'the world', condemnation of the passions, fear of beauty and sensuality, a beyond invented the better to slander this life, at bottom a craving for the nothing, for the end....a sign of abysmal sickness, weariness, discouragement, exhaustion, and the impoverishment of life.... It is false to the point of nonsense to find the mark of a Christian in 'faith', for instance, in the faith in redemption through Christ: only Christian *practice*, a life such as he *lived* who died on the cross, is Christian.... (in Coffin, 1971:68-69)

Wildness was Abbey's God, and the way he chose to come to terms with the wildness within himself was his own morality and his own religion. No doctrine which robbed him of this control could compete for his convictions.

While condemning religion, Abbey equally distrusted the power of modern science, which he observed had not increased the natural human life-span, but reduced the *life-expectancy* to fifteen minutes - the time it takes a nuclear ballistic missile to cross the space dividing two superpowers. The "riddle of the universe", "the mystery of existence" was more important to Abbey than God, and in wilderness it could be experienced. But by *science* it could also be uncovered, so Abbey joined the ranks of Jeffers and Shelley and other Romantics who praised science when it served to replace the anthropocentric illusions of traditional religion with a healthy sense of *mystery* and a relationship with the "real" world. Science was beneficial where it had the effect of destroying *Knowledge* and substituting ignorance, or what Thoreau called "Beautiful Knowledge," a liberating ignorance and a profound appreciation of natural beauty. Abbey understood that redemption lies in mystery, in the fact of our ignorance. "What matters is the strange, mysterious, overwhelming truth that we are here now, in this magnificent place, and never will know why, or why not" (1991:130) In a passage resounding strongly of

Jeffers, twenty-five year old Abbey explains his position in a 1952 journal entry (1994:93).

> Science has made the world a sweeter cleaner fresher place in which to live. I mean physics, not chemistry, and the world, not the Earth. The old gods have been swept like so many mildewed spiders out of the skies, out of space. And the frontiers have been pushed way back; the stars, stripped of adolescent fantasy, are brighter and bigger and a thousand times more beautiful. And the universe is big and open now, with ample room for adventure and mystery, novelty and breathing and speculation.
>
> The moral: The human imagination, when it feeds only upon itself, as in the Dark Ages, does not liberate - it confines and poisons the imprisoned spirit....But when the imagination can break through the wall of its own desires and fears, and can embrace the naked beauty of the real world, then we have discovered Paradise. Natural happiness.

For Abbey too, science helped to fill Jeffers's prescription to "turn love outward" and "break out of humanity." Abbey also agreed with Thoreau, that most people appear to live in "quiet desperation" - to be trapped in such a life was Abbey's great fear - and it is necessary to turn attention outwards, beyond the human, beyond human concepts like linear time and "progress", if humanity is to be anything more than a race of "titmen", living with the perspective of ants.

> Most of us have no more *awareness* of the grandeur, beauty, mystery, complexity, vitality, form and infinite possibilities of the world of earth and space, than the ant has of the landscape beyond the denuded perimeter of his anthill. Why? Because most of us are exclusively preoccupied with the human sphere only - or not even that much - obsessed with the interhuman, the personal, subjective, internal region....(1994:180)

Like Thoreau, Abbey advocates waking up to an awareness of something greater than ourselves; only in so doing to we fully realize our humanity, as Jeffers understood when he advised, "if you love man,/Swallow him in wine..." (in Oelschlaeger, 1991:258). Turn to the *real* world (1994:185):

> In the desert, a man comes directly upon a world that is *not* a projection of human consciousness, a world that has *not* been interpreted by art or science or myth, that bears no trace of humanity on its surface, that has no apparent connection to the indoor human world: In the desert one comes in direct confrontation with the bones of existence, the bare incomprehensible *is-ness* of being. Like a temporary rebirth of childhood, when all was new and

> wonderful....A church, e.g., is a place in which to *hide* from the real world. That's why they're so comforting.

Wilderness was a source of hope for Abbey. But like Thoreau's Katahdin, Abbey's actual experience of the real world of wilderness was less comforting than the myth. In the desert he was faced with loneliness and longing for human company. In Arches National Park, where he worked as a seasonal ranger and received the inspiration for *Desert Solitaire*, he writes in his journal,

> I'm weary of grandeur. I long now for the grime, noise and confusion of the cities, for little touches of Nature - like a potted geranium on a windowsill, or a dead tumbleweed rattling over an asphalt parking lot. Such is the fickle whim of this human heart. Oh for the taste of hashbrown potatoes, oh for the smell of the men's room at Minsky's. (1994:136).

Solitude filled him with dread, though it was also his inspiration to write and to love - the place from which he resolved to be a better father, husband, friend.

> Alone on my mountain, feeling oh so lonely and desolate. I wish Judy would come. I wish Al would come, or Gus, or *somebody* for Godsake. Even God.
>
> Good old Bartok on the radio - insufficient consolation. Howling winds outside, the sky full of dust and smoke - condemned Arizona, lonesome Abbey. And this is what I think I love? Solitude? Well...sometimes. (Terrible dreams lately...those wails of anguish.) Gotta get to work on my masterpiece.
>
> A great grimy sunset glowers on the west. Plains of gold, veils of dust, wind-whipped clouds. The big aching tooth of Baboquivari far and high on the skyline.
>
> Oh Lord have mercy. Mercy. Not justice. Mercy. Forgive me if you can my meanness and selfishness, my cruelty and stupidity. For I cannot. Darkening now. The light is going out. I cannot. (1994:220)

The empty and sometimes dreadful experience of solitude *is* part of the wilderness experience. This confrontation seems prerequisite to a deepening relationship with nature. It was for Abbey, as for Thoreau on Katahdin, a prelude or undercurrent to the experience of identification with the natural world (1994:186):

> Back in the West again, rangering again, lost and bewildered again as always, a bit lonely, but the air and light are exhilarating, the desert landscape almost as marvellous as before.
>
> The brave, sweet, heartbreaking beauty of all wild and lonely things.

"Heartbreaking beauty" was the face of reality for Abbey as it was for Jeffers the face of God. Nature was lonely, but humanity was also a part of nature, and could find solace there. In the savage beauty of the wild was redemption. Appreciation of this beauty was Abbey's Self-realization. Paraphrasing Jeffers, he writes (1994:142-143):

> Man is not an alien in this world, not at all. He is as much a child of it as the lion and the ant. Nevertheless, it is true that the natural world does *not* return our love, that it is indifferent to our ideas and that, after all, the heartbreaking beauty will remain when there are no hearts to break for it. (Gulls on the shore, the sough of the wind among mountain aspens, the red-tailed hawk soaring over the silence of the desert....)

Abbey worked and played in wilderness, but what he in fact did more than anything was *write*. He was happy, free from depression and worry and regret, when he was "engaged, involved." He sought this engagement mainly through his literary work. Writing to him was "therapy." Art was a form of adventure, a forthright courageous exploration and expression of wildness. Both wilderness travel and adventures in art represented retreat from culture, and he was comfortable in both, as a self-described Romantic and outsider living on the margins of culture. "Art as a refuge, a retreat" was, he explained, "Perhaps the best form of outlawry...next to mountain banditry" (1994:116). Elsewhere in his journals he advised himself, "Hide. Work. Work. Hide" (1994:161).

He sometimes claimed that if he were free to do as he pleased, he would never write again: "There are, after all, several things more important than art. Like a pine tree on a mountainside. Like a juniper in the red desert. Like air and sunlight" (1994:185). But he knew that something about the human condition prevents these things from being perpetually enough. The human being must create meaning out of them. Abbey's ideal life was one of "simply being": "carrying water, wandering about naked, reading, writing, thinking, playing flute, dreaming, doing nothing at all" (1994:258). But by writing, Abbey made the best living he could out of loving and contemplating nature. From despair and the inevitable loneliness he felt in the wilderness, the melancholy and restlessness of the city, he wrote, "my only salvation is work, work; I know this well" (1994:213).

> Melancholia - dread - the sick sad heartsick yearning for something lost, remote, past, future, forever out of reach. An absolute love for something absolute. Infinitely good and sweet and pure and beautiful - immutable. Forest - mountain - desert - sea! (1994:214)

"Melancholia" was his motivation. He felt always compelled by a restlessness to do *more* than "dribbling my days away in petty routines", to "transcend my own limits, to exceed myself" (1994:238). Melancholy restlessness drove him to write, and made him a domestic failure for most of his life, destroying three of his five marriages.

His life revolved around his wilderness freedom and his craft - as close as he could get to fulfilling the "hard and brutal mysticism" of which he dreamed. From letter to a friend, appearing in his journals, he writes (1994:209)

> "Frittering my life away"? Perhaps. I don't know. What *should* a man do? I'm assailed at times by a sense of desperation - in seven weeks I'll be forty years old and still don't know with any precision who or what I am. Or why....I am resolved, therefore, to continue on my present course: to compose somehow the one good novel; to try to be good to my wife; to run Cataract Canyon in a kayak; to raze more billboards; to built that solid house of rock and wood far out somewhere....

Abbey knew that he was a "primitive materialist" and reaffirmed it again and again in his writing. He was also strung tight between the paradox of loving nature and wildness, but also being a thinker. This was just one of many paradoxes in his life, the "paradox and bedrock" upon which it was founded. "Irony, paradox, and contradiction" were very important to Abbey (Bishop, 1994:108). Nash (1982) observes the ambivalent characteristic of wilderness writers, who are typically highly educated and maintain close ties to civilization. Like Thoreau, Abbey was no exception. There was irony in that by going into wilderness Abbey could make peace with the cities, and Bishop (1994) calls this Abbey's "quintessential paradox" - he loathes the direct experience of cities; but is nostalgic for their comforts and sophistication when he was in the wilderness. He lived an uneasy balance between the dichotomous ills geographer Relph (1976b) calls "nostalgia" and "*melancholia*".

Paradox was also in the tension between the abstract, "high thinking" of his writing and the concrete, sensual, "plain living" of his wilderness ideal. But these two

extremes provided an effective balance to his life. Each served the other: Though he worked in abstraction, he lived in the concrete, and he worked in praise of the concrete. With "high thinking" he cultivated appreciation for the sensual pleasures of "plain living" (1994:125).

> I still insist on plain living and high thinking. I enjoy chopping wood; I love wood fires; I don't mind carrying water; I find ecstasy in *building* a fire. Like Lawrence, I am taken by the primeval charm and fascination of the simple mysteries: fire, fucking, building in mud, rain, sunlight, the smell of greasewood and live oak after a cloudburst, the luxury of a sleeping hound. I require openness, space, economy, natural resistance, red meat, women, fire, water - the essentials of liberty....
>
> The more I dim my eyes over print and frazzle my brain over abstract ideas, the more I want and appreciate the delight of being basically an animal wrapped in a sensitive skin: sex, the resistance of rock, the taste and touch of snow, the feel of the sun, good wine and rare beefsteak and the company of friends around a fire with guitar and lousy old cowboy songs. Despair: I'll never become a scholar, never be a decent good Christian. Just a hedonist, a pagan, a primitive romantic.
>
> But what's an honest soul to do? I don't know. I can say this: Be loyal to what you love, be true to the earth, fight your enemies with passion and laughter.... (125)
>
> Keep my body alive, even if the soul is dead. Get out in the wind and sun every day....Think of others more....Transcend thyself, man. Write your three pages each day before you allow yourself any indulgences. Daily labour is good for the spirits. Chop wood. Make things. Play with your child. Share with your friends. Grow something. Moderate your wrath, moderate your anger, pacify your hatred. Build a cabin in the woods or a hut in the desert. Avoid the cities. (230)

Most important to Abbey was not to "sell out" his life to "petty routines", quiet desperation, the trap of domesticity. He explained, in the spirit of Thoreau, "I don't believe in doing work I don't want to do in order to live the way I don't want to live." (in Bishop, 1994:4). He shared Thoreau's fear of arriving at death and realizing that he had never truly lived. "It is not death or dying that is tragic," he observes in his journal, "but rather to have existed without fully participating in life - that is the deepest personal tragedy" (1994:277). *Being*, in this sense of full involvement, can only be fully realized in freedom and wildness. "Liberty is life," Abbey writes, wildness the source of liberty,

wilderness the place of liberty, and thus of life. "The indoor life is the next best thing to premature burial". Only the life directed outwards, towards wildness, is fully lived.

Abbey calls the life of adventure "the only life that makes sense". "Adventure" is broadly interpreted to include all forms of action, exploration, love, ideas, ideals, arts, and everyday life well lived. "The man climbing the mountain" represents this ideal, he explains (1994:97). Abbey agreed with Thoreau that an individual should be foremost whomever/whatever he or she truly is.

> A man must be true to the best that is in him, and he must know what he is doing. In that way and in that way only can he act honestly, joyously and in liberty. (1994:108)

Having the desired liberating effect, even nature's dark side was a positive life force. "I've had bad luck with natural disasters" Abbey writes, only because he had never had the good fortune to experience one (1994:198). Like Thoreau, Jeffers, Zapffe, Abbey characterized civilization as diseased. He likened New York City to a cancer, describing it with such adjectives as cold, frozen, tomblike, fearsome, powerful, crowded, dark, sombre, horrible, terrible, magnificent, terrifying, icy, dreadful, hellish, ugly, useless, impotent, hard, tedious, humiliating, gloomy, damp, uncomfortable, worrisome, dismal, bleak, gray, and hopeless. New York was, however, at the same time "almost sublime in its fearful inhumanness, almost beautiful?" (1994:138). He similarly saw Europe as depraved, "rotten and evil and ugly to the guts, beyond, hope, not worth saving, stinking to the skies" (1994:86), though at the same time he was aware of the contradiction implied, because he loved Western philosophy, literature, and classical music - products of the civilization he disdained.

America, by comparison, still had hope, because it had wilderness - "we are still a young country, still half-open and big, with room to breathe and a gigantic sky, still wild and lonely in patches, still new and daring and unique, still a Land of Promise" (1994:88). Abbey is making the same metaphors as Thoreau did in "Walking". The American West is most wild, a place of freedom. The East for him was home of the cancer of New York City and its literary establishment, the publishing houses and highbrow magazines and

influential critics against which Abbey waged lifelong the struggle of an embittered outsider.

Like Thoreau and Jeffers, who wrote that the love of freedom was usurped by the love of luxury, Abbey despised the tendency to trade individual freedom for the luxury that a highly organized capitalist state could provide. The love of liberty and suspicion of luxury was also shared with Tolstoy, who wrote (1987:103): "Luxury cannot be obtained other than by enslaving other people. As soon as there is slavery there is an increase in luxury, and the increase in luxury inevitably instigates an increase in slavery." Abbey justifies his environmentalism as an act of defence against The Enemy, in favour of a last remaining symbol of freedom and wildness (1994:257-258):

> Why, in all this peace and beauty, should I trouble my soul with thoughts of war, politics, the endless battle to save a little of the free, wild, agrarian America?
>
> I don't know. Some vestigial sense of honor, I suppose. The less honor we have left - after all these decades of compromise, trade-offs, cowardice, evasion, temporizing, equivocating, fence-straddling - the more urgently we cling to what sense of honor still remains. I love the hills and the fresh wind, the desert and the sea, the forest, the swamps, the rural towns of America. I am obliged, therefore, morally obliged, to defend these things against the Enemy. Honor requires it.
>
> The Enemy? We all know who the Enemy is. The Enemy speaks to us all the time - from the radio, on the television, on billboards, in the newspapers and slick magazines, in the halls of Congress, at the state capitol, in city hall.
>
> And the Enemy says, "....Would you turn against the thing which has enriched you, which has given you safety and security and comfort... - electronic toys, computerized thinking, a life air-conditioned from womb to grave, an existence of endless novelty, luxury, diversion, things and more things, a universe of sport and adventure and romance and travel in the softness of your armchair, the ease of your V-8 four-wheel-drive wheelchair tourism, the sedation of your living room? A painless, discrete, sedated death? And all this for so little, so very little - merely for the price of some of your independence, a bit of your freedom, a little part of your manhood or womanhood, for only a little sacrifice of your humanity and honor...."

Like Thoreau, Abbey knew that the true cost of a thing was liberty - *life*. Fighting to save wildness for Abbey was a significant act of moral courage - of resisting the compromise that was responsible for those aspects of civilization he loathed.

Abbey's advice was to go "beyond the wall" and experience the world, and then *act* in defence of what is discovered there (1984:xvi):

> And in fact in short and in sum the entire American West - property of all Americans, home of the wild things, last stronghold of the Ghost Dancers - lies under massive assault by the industrial armies of Government and Greed.
>
> We need no more words on the matter. What we need now are heroes, and heroines. About a million of them. One brave deed is worth a thousand books. Sentiment without action is the ruin of the soul.... So much for all that. Now I can do no more than offer one final prayer to the young, to the bold, to the angry, to the questing, to the lost.
>
> Beyond the wall of the unreal city, beyond the security fences topped with barbed wire and razor wire, beyond the asphalt belting of the superhighways, beyond the cemented backsides of our temporarily stopped and mutilated rivers, beyond the rage of lies that poisons the air, there is another world waiting for you. It is the old true world of the deserts, the mountains, the forests, the islands, the shores, the open plains. Go there. Be there. Walk gently and quietly deep within it. And then -

Ending his introduction thus, Abbey seems to imply that the experience of nature was more important to him than the "And then - " whatever came after. Abbey's environmentalism was secondary to his love of the wilderness experience. Wendell Berry argues that Abbey was an autobiographer first, environmentalist second; he protested on behalf of himself, of what he felt important (Bishop, 1994). Abbey's advice is liberating, like wilderness itself. He advocated that we "wake up" to nature first and foremost. As Thoreau advised, before trying to heal the world, we must first make ourselves whole. Live in the world, claim freedom, discover what is most important, Self-realize. Never mind if this entails some contradiction. Paradox and contradiction carried over to Abbey's recommendations about the Good Life. A free and wild individual should not be afraid to contradict him or herself, he would have argued. Whitman was an inspiration, writing in "Leaves of Grass," "Do I contradict myself? Very well, I contradict myself. I am large. I contain multitudes" (in Bishop, 1994:174).

To all environmentalists, Abbey recommended the same order of priorities that Thoreau demonstrated in his own life as "reluctant crusader".

> Do not burn yourselves out. Be as I am: A reluctant enthusiast and part-time crusader. A half-hearted fanatic. Save the other half of yourselves for pleasure

> and adventure. It is not enough to fight for the West. It is even more important to enjoy it while you can, while its still there, so get out there, hunt, fish, mess around with your friends, ramble out yonder and explore the forests, encounter the griz, climb a mountain, bag the peaks, run the rivers, breathe deep of that yet sweet and elusive air. Sit quietly for a while and contemplate the precious stillness of the lonely, mysterious, awesome space. Enjoy yourselves. Keep your brain in your head and your head firmly attached to the body, the body active and alive. And I promise you this one sweet victory over our enemies, over those desk-bound people with their hearts in safe-deposit boxes and their eyes hypnotized by their desk calculators. I promise you this: you will outlive the bastards.

"Saving the world was only a hobby," Abbey writes, keeping things in their proper perspective. He was not foremost an environmentalist. He believed, furthermore, that nature could take care of itself long after humans destroyed themselves. He wanted to save *humanity*, to protect human nature, human dignity. He defended wilderness to preserve "human habitat." Wild nature is a metaphor for this human nature. Humanity could not be preserved without preserving the earth. "But man belongs to the world," he wrote early in his journals, "he is no more enemy or alien than the saguaro, the jaguar or the spinning spider..." (1994:6).

The only position to take, after realizing the value of the wilderness to the human spirit, is passionate *defence* - "Sentiment without action is the ruin of the soul." Reasoning with the Enemy is futile, Abbey realized. He reasoned that eco-defence, including sabotage, is the justifiable reaction of any creature to the destruction of its only home. From the deep ecological position, ecological defence is Self-defence; it is rooted in the realization of the Self within nature, which occurs in the experience of freedom.

Abbey valued wilderness *because* he valued freedom first, just as Thoreau valued wilderness because he valued *wildness* above all. Much like Thoreau, who saw Americans as slaves to an idea of freedom, rather than as truly free, Abbey describes Western popular culture as "a culture of slaves," implying that what he valued about Western culture - philosophy and classical literature, music - was the fruit of the creative labours of people who claimed their freedom, in contrast to cultural products created for the primary purpose of making money, vainly consumed by slaves to fill a spiritual void

(1995:368):

> Never before in history have slaves been so well fed, thoroughly medicated, lavishly entertained - but we are slaves nonetheless. Our debased popular culture - television, rock music, home video, processed food, mechanical recreation, wallboard architecture - is the culture of slaves. Furthermore the whole grandiose structure is self-destructive: by enshrining the profit motive (power) as our guiding ideal, we encourage the intensive and accelerating consumption of land, air, water - the natural world - on which the structure depends for its continued existence. A house built on greed will not long endure.

Abbey is observing that a civilization based on freedom - and thus decentralization, self-reliance, inherent value, beauty, creative endeavour - will tend to be sustainable, whereas the present civilization based upon the surrogates of freedom - money, greed, palliatives of a slave culture - is bound to collapse. By this logic the environmental crisis is in fact a *consequence* of the slave culture - the same argument that Wendell Berry (1977) makes in saying that the environmental crisis is a crisis of culture, and fundamentally a crisis of *character*. The *root* problem is the lack of freedom - what Thoreau identified as mistaken priorities. Following this logic further leads to the argument that people who realize their freedom realize with it the inherent value of things, and thus overcome the problem of Modernity, which is the loss of value by abstraction.

I have been using these words interchangeably - *civilization* and *culture*. But it is useful to pretend, for a moment, that the two can be distinguished, as Abbey did in *Desert Solitaire* (1968), to make a point. He argues that the laudable results of humanity - the great thinkers, spiritual leaders, creative geniuses, and all the honourable qualities of the human spirit - can be summarized by the term *civilization*, while slave culture, the bureaucracies of the State, and undesirable human qualities like fear and greed, fall into an opposing category termed *culture*. Abbey does not carry on this terminology in his other writings, but the fundamental distinction remains, and is best summarized in Thoreau's words - "In short, all things good are wild and free" (1975:618). Civilization means freedom and wildness - the prerequisites for growth, life, joy, etcetera. Culture is constraint, stultification, stagnation, death.

Civilization is the vital force in human history; culture is that inert mass of

> institutions and organizations which accumulate around and tend to drag down the advance of life;...
>
> Civilization is mutual aid and self-defence; culture is the judge, the lawbook and the forces of Law & Ordure;...
>
> Civilization is tolerance, detachment and humour, or passion, anger, revenge; culture is the entrance examination, the gas chamber, the doctoral dissertation and the electric chair;...
>
> Civilization is a youth with a Molotov cocktail in his hand; culture is the Soviet tank or the L.A. cop that guns him down;
>
> Civilization is the wild river; culture, 592,000 tons of cement;
>
> Civilization flows; culture thickens and coagulates, like tired, sick, stifled blood. (1968:276-277)

Humanity's prize achievements, life's greatest moments, Abbey is arguing, are the products of our freedom, not our institutions. Wildness, indeed, is the source of the moral *character* that sustains civilization. Who we are is what we make of our freedom; without freedom we are nothing. Responsibility is a consequence of individual and cultural coming to terms with wildness; nothing good comes from its denial. Denial is ugly and immoral and irresponsible. It is on the grounds of this observation that Abbey decries Christianity as a poor root for morality. Wildness is the source of a true morality - civilized character, rather than the "Law and Ordure" of "culture."

As Thoreau also intimated, Abbey believed that only the truth could set humanity free. Fully realized humanity could only be achieved if our biological heritage was accepted, along with the insignificance allotted the human position by evolutionary theory. Human life is debased, he argued, by denial and struggle against reality. When the truth is accepted, humanity can

> ...perhaps begin to realize the potential of mind, personality and spirit; and through sympathy, mutual aid, justice, creative work (the true forms of love), establish at last on earth a community and society where ever man, every woman, will be free to fulfill the highest desires of the human soul. (1994:205)

Abbey's core values are evident by examining who he targeted for criticism, and why. In his own wildness Abbey defied categorization, making enemies on the pro-environment front even as he made enemies among political conservatives. The conservative he stereotyped as "a sell-out from the beginning, an ass-kisser and power-

sycophant by definition" (1994:246). He resented the environmental groupies he attracted, and criticized hippies, writing,

> I respect only *men* - and *women* - who can *act*, who can do good things well, who are responsible to others, who are honest in all ways, who *really care* about this earth we live on. Letting your hair grow is not good enough; nor does a headband make an Indian. I'm tired of soft weak passive people who can't *make anything* - except babies. (1994:234)

He was as ruthless in his criticism of "conventional *chickenshit* liberalism," loathing its "cant and sham and hypocrisy, intellectual dishonesty and moral cowardice" (1984:351).

In the category of cowards, among conservatives and hippies and liberals, Abbey passionately vilified those writers who shied from the truth, whom he called the "*castrati literati*", "moral jellyfish", "Banana slugs of literature! A living slime-mold on our intellectual life!" (1994:343). He believed in truth, in "surfaces", and that good nature writing should be about surfaces, about detail, and not about metaphysics: "Dillard will be a good environmental writer, once she outgrows her adolescent mysticism" (1994:317). All writers raised his ire, in fact, save the ones he felt dwelled in a world of hard fact, and portrayed that fact using real, natural language, and maintained commitment to the truth. The writers he most criticized - notably John Updike - were those he perceived to have turned away from Nature, focussing solely upon the trivial, twisted soap opera of urban human life, or those who turned away from fact to "superstition" - like Dillard and her purported "mysticism" - transcendental inclinations. In his essay, "A Writer's Credo," Abbey outlines the true role of the writer, whose *first* responsibility, he concludes, is to write something interesting, but who must also have concomitant moral courage and commitment to the truth. Words count, he argues. They make a difference, and the writer must accept the moral responsibility implied by the power of words, to tell the truth, which for Abbey implies social criticism. Truth, Abbey argued, is "the enemy of Power." Power, in turn, is the enemy of liberty. Echoing Thoreau, he writes, "A literary career should be not a career but a passion" (1995:388). Careerism implies selling out. Passion grounds in the truth. Abbey gives his own career as testament to Thoreau's assurance in "Life without Principle" that money can follow the

honesty of passion: "All great enterprises are self-supporting....You must get your living by loving" (Thoreau, 1981:359).

Amidst his vitriolic criticisms Abbey valued the individual foremost, above the special-interest groups for whom the liberals were advocates (1994:327):

> Individual humans here and there may be admirable - wise, beautiful, even heroic - and the common run are decent enough. But who can think of any group, class, nation or race (as such) that is unworthy of the vilest insult?

All special interest groups were reviled, because each represented an ideological position that Abbey saw as a threat to freedom, and the beginnings of an institution. It was because of his inherent distrust and dislike of human groups that he was deliberately politically *un*correct, and therefore often accused of racism and sexism. He concluded that by "moral cowardice" the reviewers of his books had compromisingly sought alliance with special interest groups, and it was this specious alliance that destined his works to receive unfavourable press. If he was unpopular it was because individuals lacked the courage and had given up their freedom to be individuals, and in the process lost their sense of humour along with their perspective on truth (1994:352-353):

> Almost all reviewers, these days are members of and adherents to some anxious particular sect or faction. i.e., they are lesbians or New Agers or fem-libbers or (even worse) male fem-libbers or technophiles or self-hating white liberals or right-wing conservatives or Growth maniacs or Negroes or female Negroes or Third-World lesbian militant Negro poetesses or closet Marxists (Marxoids) or futurologists or academical specialists or Chicano idealogues or ballerinas or Kowboy Kultists or Kerouac Kultists or Henry James Minimalist Perfectionists or one-tenth Chippewa "Native American" Indians or at very least and all-inclusive Official Chickenshit Correct-Thinking Liberals etc. etc. As such, any member of any one of those majority minorities is going to find *for certain* a few remarks in any of *my* books that will offend/enrage "s/he" to the marrow....

Because one needed courage to be moral, to face the truth from whence morals derived, courage to resist the temptations that cloud truth and usurp value, courage to be an individual in defiance of the Enemy, courage to act honestly from a foundation of passion, Abbey's core value was *courage*. And in a list of core values, Abbey understood that material wealth beyond necessities had no place among them. He longed to escape from "the crushing burden of things" to experience more love, more beauty, more

freedom and nature.

> *The cardinal values:* To love and be loved - a good wife, family, friend; good health; good work to do; intelligence, humor, sympathy, gentleness, strength, generosity; courage -without which all other virtues are useless; obvious necessities like sufficient food and shelter obtained without servitude; a beautiful home in a good place; or a humble home, any old shack, cabin, but in a free, wild, beautiful place; music, whiskey, art, poetry, sex, nature....(1994:260-261)

The best way to become wealthy, Abbey observed, was to do without: "Reduce your needs to the minimum required for a healthy life. Get by on part-time work. Enjoy the leisure of the leisure class" (1994:330). Greed for money and power was the ultimate evil - "the profit motive is the ugliest thing in America," he writes (1994:342).

> I have less and less patience with fools, bores, pedants and crooks. I do not love, respect, or admire the human race. I think modern history is a horror story. I fear for the lives of my children. I regret and am outraged by the systematic destruction of the natural world for the sake of human greed. (1994:332)

Abbey valued "*real*" people - ones who work with their hands, make things, have the courage to accept the world of fact and experience without rationalizing it out of existence or denying it, without taking refuge in the diversionary amusements of popular culture, power-ambition or religion. "Real men" - "hunters trappers rangers cowboys soldiers surveyors and such, men who spend their working lives out-of-doors, always seems to possess interesting personalities and basic knowledge and good stories to tell" (1994:274). Ironically, Abbey concluded "It is too late for me, now, to become a real man"; but he made "real men" out of his literary heroes, and out of the myth of himself that he, admittedly, created. They were practical, down-to-earth yet sensational people, alienated and marginalized by a cowardly and corrupt civilization that had taken a turn away from the real, free and natural life.

Bishop argues that Abbey's writing, in such "environmental" works as *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, is not so much about environmentalism as about individual liberty. The same could be said of Thoreau, however. Nature was merely representative of wildness - the essence of freedom - a place where humanity could be whole and free. The ideal society for Abbey was of course one founded upon the core values of wildness -

individual freedom and courage. Such an ideal, he argued, would be "democracy taken seriously", which meant *anarchism*. His utopia was the ideal of Jefferson and anarchists like Proudhon - the individual farmer-artisan as the basis of a free, agrarian society (Bishop, 1994).

Abbey completed a Master's degree in Philosophy with a thesis titled "Anarchy and the Morality of Violence". He studied, according to Bishop (1994), those philosophers who opposed the morality of the modern middle class that emerged in the nineteenth century - "especially the commercial morality" - a morality of skewed priorities, which worshipped wealth and growth and technology as false idols, subordinating individual freedom to the bureaucracy that served these ends. Abbey's conclusion was that the anarchists he studied - Proudhon, Bakunin, and others - had failed to make a strong case for the use of political violence. So Abbey, like Thoreau, was non-violent, though violence against property was exempt from this pledge: His literary heroes, and consequently his followers in real life, were avowedly non-violent "eco-terrorists" who worked by sabotage and rallied to the slogan, "no compromise in defence of Mother Earth."

Thoreau believed that politics should be a side-effect of the path of individual freedom. Politics, like material wealth, is not inherently evil, but is enslaving when it becomes an end unto itself. The same logic is the basis for Abbey's anarchism: human society is desirable, but society institutionalized, in the form of the State, corrupts the process of authentic society. The same distinction could be made between the anything which is good in spirit but corrupt in practice. As in the case of religion, the institutionalization undermines the original purpose. The only good society is a free and dynamic one. Abbey, like Thoreau and other wilderness writers, encouraged the opinion that the false idols of Modern civilization be combatted with a clear understanding of life's purpose, life's true meaning and value. The *goal* should be somehow understood, against the intrusion of false goals, the confusion of priorities. Abbey's writing sought to identify what was important, and to demonstrate how American society was destroying these cardinal values. His motivation was the same as Thoreau's - if we do not

understand what we value, what we wish to do with our freedom, then we will never be able to preserve that value or claim that freedom. What truth we do not assert will be destroyed.

Abbey summed up anarchism as the belief that a good society is one where power is as equally distributed as possible throughout the population, i.e. decentralized. From his essay, "Theory of Anarchy" (1995:366-368):

> An anarchist society consists of a voluntary association of self-reliant, self-supporting, autonomous communities. The anarchist community would consist (as it did in preagricultural and preindustrial times) of a voluntary association of free and independent families, self-reliant and self-supporting but bound by kinship ties and a tradition of mutual aid. Anarchy is democracy taken seriously....Ten thousand years of human history demonstrate that our freedoms cannot be trusted to those ambitious few who are drawn to power; we must learn - again - to govern ourselves. Anarchism does not mean "no rule"; it means "no rulers." Difficult but not utopian, anarchy means and requires self-rule, self-discipline, probity, character.

Anarchism as an ideal of freedom is an inspiration for individual morality, since the sustenance of freedom requires good character.

The Good Life meant neither to command nor to serve. "I *hate* the rich and powerful," he writes in his journal, "and those who support *them* while not *of* them - servile and sychophantic natures: the servants, lackeys, court jesters. They I despise more than any other" (1994:199). The rich are inevitably complicit in some form of slavery, and are therefore enemies of freedom. Wealth is immoral, Abbey concludes:

> Money means power, not merely wealth. Money gives us power over others - to command their labor, their minds, even their souls. Even their behavior, conduct, attitudes. No wonder money possesses such glittering attraction for those who crave power. If all people were self-reliant - a nation of artisans, craftsmen, hunters, trappers, farmers, ranchers - the rich would have no means to dominate us. Their wealth would be useless. Cities: The realm of masters and slaves. (1994:285)

Abbey saw that Modern culture was unsustainable, predicting that it would self-destruct within a century. "That belief is the basis of my inherent optimism," he writes (1995:368)

> the source of my hope for the coming restoration of a higher civilization: scattered

> human populations modest in number that live by fishing, hunting, food gathering, small-scale farming and ranching, that gather once a year in the ruins of abandoned cities for great festivals of moral, spiritual, artistic and intellectual renewal, a people for whom the wilderness is not a playground but their natural native home.

Like Thoreau, Abbey believed that a free life was a creative, inspired, meaningful life. He valued the creativity of the artist, and the ideal of a society that would, by decentralizing power and achieving individual self-reliance, provide this creativity to all its members.

Abbey was philosophically an anarchist, but in practice he was principally a dreamer and a successful writer who paid taxes to the government, bought properties in the Southwest, and sent his children to private school and college. He was, he admitted, "bogged down in the whole catastrophe like everyone else" (Bishop, 1994:30). He shows no evidence of trying to become agriculturally self-sufficient. His projected ideal had meaning for him as a symbol of the freedom that he most valued. But perhaps more important than the form the ideal society would take are the ways by which it must be achieved - the uncompromising independence and depth of character required to sustain freedom, and the wilderness that sustained this independence. "We cannot have freedom without wilderness," he writes. He was more rooted in the land itself than was Thoreau, who writes more abstractly about wildness as a quality. "True human freedom," writes Abbey, "economic freedom, political freedom, social freedom, remain basically linked to physical freedom, sufficient space, enough land" (in Bishop, 1994:13). Abbey understood that in practical terms, wilderness would be best preserved by human population control and some concentration of population in cities, rather than by agrarian decentralization. In *Down the River*, Abbey explains this more practical vision (1991:237):

> Why can't we have a moderate number of small cities, bright islands of electricity and kultur and industry surrounded by shoals of farmland, cow range, and timberland, set in the midst of a great unbounded sea of primitive forest, unbroken mountains, virgin desert?

Abbey's attitude towards death follows logically from his beliefs in the ultimacy

of immediate sense experience and of wild nature. He shares with Thoreau the themes of courage in accepting and facing death without denial, and a refusal to contemplate the immortality of the soul, Heaven, or any plane of existence other than the present one. Thoreau's obstinate character is famously revealed in his dying remark, "one world at a time." Abbey praises Thoreau's attitude in the title of his 1987 book of essays, *One Life at a Time, Please* (Bishop, 1994).

In the denial of fact, life, death, and nature - the reality of *surfaces* - Abbey saw cowardice and irresponsibility. He criticized Christianity for its emphasis on the supernatural, Heaven. The doctrine of the immortality of the disembodied soul, he described as "grotesque." "What is the meaning of it?" he wonders. "Why the insane desire to perpetuate through and beyond all time the identity of the person and the personal consciousness?" (1994:85). He consistently argued that he wanted no part of a bodiless eternity in a Christian paradise, which would mean an eternity devoid of life's sensual pleasures. And in the meantime, the ever present possibility of death made life all the more sweet.

> On the whole, I enjoy this earthly career - so much to do, to learn, to enjoy. If it were offered to me, would I refuse an immortality serum? I would not.
>
> However, in the meantime, we are left with the choice between accepting death with some pride and dignity, or grovelling in fear and clinging with terror to a medicated survival for as long as possible.
>
> Furthermore, without death, life would lose half its drama. Joy would seem pallid, beauty pale, danger insipid, adventure empty.
>
> Our existence would become merely spiritual - off-white and ghostly. Sort of - idyllic but boring. (1994:327)

"I have never heard a mountain lion bawling of the fate of his soul," he writes (Lyon and Stine, 1992:11). The courage that he valued implied living fully in the present moment, and consequently having no fear of death or thoughts of the afterlife. "The fear of death follows from the fear of life," he writes. "A man who lives fully is prepared to die at any time" (Bishop, 1994:5). In his thinking about death, Abbey reveals the importance of living *immediately*, in the present moment. To whatever extent immediacy is accomplished, earthly immortality can be experienced.

> The eternal is now. The present moment, fully lived, is the eternal; the only eternity we can know. The purpose of art is to *fix* those moments for all eternity. Or for as long as eternity endures. Eternity is but a moment. (1994:266) In this world or the next our prime concern must be, can only be, the eternity of the moment - the joy of the race. One world at a time. (1982:198)

In a moment fully lived, facing of the beauty of nature, concerns of life and death, immortality, redemption, salvation, religion, are rendered as trivial and meaningless as the news. This perspective is redemption unto itself. Abbey writes in a 1952 journal entry (1994:85):

> *I can hear the sea:* the roaring surf, the waves, the wind.
> I haven't seen a newspaper, read a magazine or heard a radio broadcast for nearly two weeks: I haven't the mistiest notion of how the Russian situation is coming along, or whether Eisenhower is beating Taft or how many atom bombs were last dropped on poor old Nevada. I don't know, and for the time being anyway don't give a good goddamn - all such matters, when compared to my own thoughts or to the curl of a sea wave or to the memory of a girl's touch, seem ridiculously unimportant, pathetic and foolish, pointless.

Early in his career, Abbey dreamed of a violent and premature death, as he felt befitted a romantic. In the end, he succumbed from a lengthy battle with illness at age 62. Like Thoreau, whose attitude to death he admired, Abbey is said to have died "bravely".

The wilderness lover needs to understand that what he loves is the inherent value of experience, and that the only way to preserve the *meaning* that he loves is to continue to *experience* it. Meaning cannot be defended as something abstract, like a wilderness park or a painting. No meaning resides in the object. If he is to look for meaning in the right places, he must learn this lesson that what he values about the wilderness is a function of experience, and it cannot become a commodity. This value might be summed up as "beauty of living." Abbey is a hero because he was unabashedly Romantic. As passion has been sublimated in reason, and environmentalists have disenchanted themselves, rationalized their souls out of existence, Abbey stands as a continual reaffirmation of what it means to be an environmentalist - one who defies categorization, who "protests on behalf of value" (Evernden, 1993). He understood where life's true meaning lay, and wrote wonderful, joyous, hilarious, wildly successful and unashamedly

bad novels to prove it. He had the courage to do so, to contradict himself - the courage without which, he said, all virtues are worthless. This is why he is valuable; because there is joy in reading his work. He is more self-contradictory than Thoreau, who was a more meticulous thinker. But like Jeffers, he directs attention outward from the compulsion to seek an ordered and static truth, towards the direct experience of nature. His writing is liberating. There is redemption in it, as there is redemption in wildness; salvation to those "tormented persons" who, Jeffers laments, would "seek truth."

Barry Lopez, Annie Dillard

Barry Lopez's *Arctic Dreams* (1986) and Annie Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (1990) are two award winning books that were of some inspiration to me during my search for the meaning of wilderness. Both authors approach nature to find an answer to this question of what can be learned from the experience of nature. "Turn to the land for answers," is both their introduction and their conclusion. Lopez asks,

> What does it mean to grow rich? Is it to have red-blooded adventures and to make a fortune....Or is it, rather, to have a good family life and to be imbued with a far-reaching and intimate knowledge of one's homeland...? Is it to retain a capacity for awe and astonishment in our lives, to continue to hunger after what is genuine and worthy? Is it to live at moral peace with the universe? (1986:13-14).

He is asking towards what end are we acting in the world. Like Thoreau, then, he must believe we need some definition of desired ends. Dillard sets out to "explore the neighbourhood" and discover where she is if not why. Both arrive at an answer that was, like mine, already contained in their question. Their answer is to look at the world, experience it directly and immediately, and find grounding in that experience.

Lopez considers the history of Arctic exploration and development in juxtaposition to the native lifestyle. He considers alternative ways of relating to the landscape, as alternative ways of conceiving reality and being in the world. He concludes that there is something of these ways to be learned from the landscape, if one is open to this learning. Openness means becoming receptive to a dialogue or reciprocity with the land. There is brutality and cowardice in refusing to accept the land as anything other

than our static interpretation of it, than the storehouse of the resources we select as valuable. The land serves the dream of the adventurer, to be free of the "grim weight of life," but it should be more seriously considered as the teacher of a way of seeing and a way of being. Seen in this way, the Arctic might be hoped to revitalize the modern cultures that seek its inspiration.

Lopez believes that approaching the land in this way can help to resolve some of the pressing questions of human existence; namely, how to live a life of "dignity," a moral life - indeed, how to be human, conscious - in an amoral world. There is no solution to this basic problem, but by observing a landscape where an "original order prevails," Lopez believes that we may find hints for life lived "in the midst of paradox." At the same time we learn that this "paradox" or "contradiction" - "bedrock," as Abbey calls it - of light and dark, life and death, is somehow key to the sustenance of life and what we value. We would learn to be like Thoreau, love the wild "not less than the good," because what supports us and what we value as good is more complex than our ideas of it. The moral, dignified life we crave can only be sustained by something that transcends human ideas, but which can be intuited in the land. The one-way relationship between the human and nature as "resource" does not benefit from this awareness, and is consequently as damaging to the human spirit as it is to the land itself.

How, then, are we to act in and upon the land? Again emphasizing paradox, Lopez notes that cultures in close relationship to the land may at least have a better understanding of the difficultly of this question, if not of its answer, whereas Modern culture tends not to entertain such a profound awareness of human ignorance. Lopez writes (1986:411),

> Our long-lived cultural differences with the Eskimo has been over whether to accept the land as it is or to exert the will to change it into something else. The great task of life for the traditional Eskimo is still to achieve congruence with a reality that is already given. The given reality, the real landscape, is "horror within magnificence, absurdity within intelligibility, suffering within joy," in the words of Albert Schweitzer. We do not esteem as highly these lessons in paradox.

Lopez's implication is that our culture should at least seriously consider the alternative

way of being - achieving congruence with a "given" reality first, rather than transforming the world to fit our ideas of what reality should be. This will require a revaluation to recognize the importance of nature's being in itself. We need to learn to accept things as they are, and let this acceptance - call it, say, "deep appreciation" of nature's inherent beauty - be recognized as one very important form of *wealth*:

> And we need a tolerance for the unmanipulated and unpossessed landscape. But what I came to see, too, was that we need to understand the relationship between tolerance and different sorts of wealth, how a tolerance for the unconverted things of the earth is intertwined with the substance of a truly rich life. (1986:313)

Dillard explores her Tinker Creek neighbourhood and stalks the mystical experience. The mystical experience has been called "self-collectedness and out-of-selfness" (Gilbert, 1965). It comes about when eyes are open, self is forgotten, and life is immediately lived. She strives to fully *see* the world in all its detail. Her exercise is the pursuit of innocence. The goal is to live fully by achieving a receptivity and connection to the immediately real world.

Dillard observes that the one thing that all religions recognize as separating humans from their creator is self-consciousness. She writes (1990:81), "It was a bitter birthday present from evolution, cutting us off at both ends" - alienating us from God and from our fellow creatures. Being fully *conscious*, she notes, is useful for living in the present - "it is only to a heightened awareness that the great door to the present opens at all" (1990:82). But it important not to be *self*-conscious. Innocence requires being un-self-conscious. Un-self-consciousness enables living in the present, which is being fully, truly alive. She describes this process, and how it comes about more easily in nature than in the city (1990:83-84):

> Self-consciousness is the curse of the city and all that sophistication implies. It is the glimpse of onself in a storefront window, the unbidden awareness of reactions on the faces of other people - the novelist's world, not the poet's....I remember how you bide your time in the city, and think, if you stop to think, "next year...I'll start living; next year...I'll start my life." Innocence is a better world.
>
> Innocence sees that this is it, and finds it world enough, and time.... It is not lost to us; the world is a better place than that. Like any other of the spirit's

> good gifts, it is there if you want it, free for the asking, as has been stressed by stronger words than mine. It is possible to pursue innocence as hounds pursue hares: singlemindedly, driven by a kind of love, crashing over creeks, keening and lost in fields and forests, circling, vaulting over hedges and hills wide-eyed, giving loud tongue all unawares to the deepest, most incomprehensible longing, a root-flame in the heart, and that warbling chorus resounding back from the mountains, hurling itself from ridge to ridge over the valley, now faint, now clear, ringing the air through which the hounds tear, open-mouthed, the echoes of their own wails dimly knocking in their lungs.
>
> What I call innocence is the spirit's unself-conscious state at any moment of pure devotion to any object. It is at once a receptiveness and total concentration.

What Dillard is describing here - innocence - is like *flow*; it is being *involved*. She explains awakening to the present, the taste, smells, and other sensations of walking out of a movie theatre into the real world. (Abbey - "This is the world, *muchachos*.") Trade nothing for that world. Her "innocence" strongly recollects Whitman, who seems to have been a mad dasher himself in pursuit of the present (1982:262-263),

> One hour to madness and Joy! O furious!
> O confine me not!
> (What is this that frees me so in storms?
> What do my shouts amid lightnings
> and raging winds mean?)...
> To escape utterly from others' anchors and holds!
> To drive free! to love free! to dash reckless
> and dangerous!

"Lick a finger, feel the now," Dillard writes (98). Evident in Abbey's writing, like Whitman's, wind and storms awaken an awareness of the present. A storm for Abbey. A cockerel crowing for Thoreau. Awake! Return home to the senses. Redemption. Hope! The ingredients of the mystical experience: *Horizon and sky - mountains, wind, shifting cloud, and low angled sunlight*, plus a moment of special receptivity - solitude, a new place not taken-for-granted, or a moment for pause at the end of a long day, interlude to work; or, Dillard, patting a puppy at a service station lot, on coffee break:

> I am absolutely alone....The road is vacant, the interstate is out of sight and earshot. I have hazarded into a new corner of the world, and unknown spot, a Brigadoon. Before me extends a low hill trembling in yellow brome, and behind the hill, filling the sky, rises an enormous mountain ridge, forested, alive and

> awesome with brilliant blown lights. I have never seen anything so tremulous and live. Overhead, great strips and chunks of cloud dash to the northwest in a gold rush. At my back the sun is setting....Shadows lope along the mountain's rumpled flanks; they elongate like root tips, like lobes of spilling water, faster and faster. A warm purple pigment pools in each ruck and tuck of the rock; it deepens and spreads, boring crevasses, canyons. As the purple vaults and slides, it tricks out the unleafed forest and rumpled rock in gilt, in shape-shifting patches of glow. These gold lights veer and retract, shatter and glide in a series of dazzling splashes, shrinking, leaking, exploding. The ridge's bosses and hummocks sprout bulging from its side; the whole mountain looms miles closer; the light warms and reddens; the bare forest folds and pleats itself like living protoplasm before my eyes, like a running chart, a wildly scrawling oscillograph on the present moment. The air cools; the puppy's skin is hot. *I am more alive than all the world.*
>
> This is it, I think, right now, the present, this empty gas station, here, this western wind, this tang of coffee on the tongue, and I am patting the puppy, I am watching the mountain....this is it, this is it; praise the lord; praise the land. Experiencing the present purely is being emptied and hollow; you catch grace as a man fills his cup under a waterfall. (1990:80,82 emphasis added)

This experience of the present is important, she concludes. "These are our few live seasons. Let us live them as purely as we can, in the present" (84). The mystical present springs out of detail; it is the "scandal of particularity," she observes. Into intricacy we lose ourselves, experience "self-forgetfulness," paying attention to the small things in this world. As we get older, she claims, we "take leave of our senses," lose our innocence. Innocence regained is a return to the senses, a return to youth - "only children keep their eyes open," Dillard presumes, because they are not old enough to fear death and withdraw (91). But eternity is *in* the present: "it is the live water and light that bears from undisclosed sources the freshest news, renewed and renewing, world without end" (103). We must learn to overcome the fear and turn towards the world.

But the problem of evil arrives in observation of "Fecundity" - Chapter 10. Nature does not value the individual. Dillard repeats the same observation in the January 1998 issues of *Harper's*. Living and dying drives a greater process. Human emotions seem to have no place in the midst of it. We must either turn our backs on nature, or end ourselves. One of us must be wrong - "Either this world, my mother, is a monster, or I myself am a freak" (172). Dillard, being mystic, favours her second alternative - turn

away from humanity, accept nature. The wilderness lover seems destined to lean in this direction.

> I am the freak. Perhaps I don't need a lobotomy, but I could use some calming down, and the creek is just the place for it. I must go down to the creek again. It is where I belong, although as I become closer to it, my fellows appear more and more freakish, and my home in the library more limited. Imperceptibly at first, and now consciously, I shy away from the arts, from the human emotional stew. I read what the men with telescopes and microscopes have to say about the landscape. I read about the polar ice, and I drive myself deeper and deeper into exile from my own kind. But, since I cannot avoid the library altogether - the human culture that taught me to speak in its tongue - I bring human values to the creek, and so save myself from being brutalized. (174)

So the nature mystic turns outward, to the land for a moral lesson, and to science, which brings in news from the outside. The Principle of Indeterminacy, for example, is a useful metaphor. "Some physicists," she writes, "now are a bunch of wild-eyed, raving mystics.... Heisenberg himself says, 'method and object can no longer be separated. *The scientific world-view has ceased to be a scientific view in the true sense of the word*" (196-197).

But Dillard seeks a balance between nature and human values, not turning away from humanity altogether, so as not to become brutalized. Finally, she concludes there may be less of a black-and-white, yes-and-no choice between the human and the natural, as nature is not, after all, black or white, yes or no. Looking to the whole, she learns that "nature loves the *idea* of the individual, if not the individual himself." Individual phenomena are "branches of the same creek, the creek that waters the world."

> Its source is freedom and its network of branches is infinite....That something is everywhere and always amiss is part the very stuff of creation....We could have planned things more mercifully, perhaps, but our plan would never get off the drawing board until we agreed to the very compromising terms that are the only ones that being offers. The world has signed a pact with the devil; it had to....The terms are clear: if you want to live, you have to die....The world came into being with the signing of the contract. (175-176)

Spending time with nature Dillard learns the paradox upon which our life depends, without which we cannot have life, that we must learn if we are to participate in this world. She learns what Thoreau learned - to love the wild less than the good is a mistake

of priorities, because the latter is a consequence of the former. This realization, Lopez decides, is a step towards dignity, a maturing. He writes (1986:370)

> No culture has yet solved the dilemma each has faced with the growth of a conscious mind: how to live a moral and compassionate existence when one is fully aware of the blood, the horror inherent in all life, when one finds darkness not only in one's own culture but within oneself. If there is a stage at which an individual life becomes truly adult, it must be when one grasps the irony in its unfolding and accepts responsibility for a life lived in the midst of such paradox. One must live in the middle of contradiction because if all contradiction were eliminated at once life would collapse. There are simply no answers to some of the great pressing questions. You continue to live them out, making your life a worthy expression of leaning into the light.

Understanding the necessity of paradox and the joy of participation, the naturalist becomes a better citizen of this world.

Dillard stalks wonder, pursuing innocence, searching for as "hard and brutal" a mysticism as Abbey longs for. She writes,

> A little blood from the wrists and throat is the price I would willingly pay for...the scent of deserts, groundfire in my ears - for being so in the clustering thick of things, rapt and enwrapped in the rising and falling real world. (213)

Dillard finds the experience of immediacy and innocence through the intricate detail of nature. Thoreau fishes for the present in his nets of fact, Abbey finds it in surfaces. The absolute is everywhere. As Abbey willingly admitted, these naturalists have a love affair with the world.

Dillard observes, "'In nature,' wrote Huston Smith, 'the emphasis is in what is rather than what ought to be'" (229). Dillard also learns from Tinker Creek to values is over ought. This means accepting imperfection. Life is special; it is not perfect or whole. We are lucky for whatever wholeness we have, she observes. We are "nibbled and nibbling - not held aloft on a cloud in the air but bumbling pitted and scared and broken through a frayed and beautiful land" (218). Love the world, she concludes; it's all we've got. "Here may not be the cleanest, newest place, but that clean timeless place that vaults on either side of this one is noplace at all" (231). Loving what *is* does not require loving evil; corruption is not the essence of beauty. The world is redeemed by the beauty that

can be found in the midst of corruption, and in spite of it.

> I am not washed and beautiful, in control of a shining world in which everything fits, but instead am wandering awed about on a splintered wreck I've come to care for, whose gnawed trees breathe delicate air, whose bloodied and scarred creatures are my dearest companions, and whose beauty beats and shines not *in* its imperfections but overwhelmingly in spite of them, under the wind-rent clouds, upstream and down. Simone Weil says simply, "Let us love the country of here below. It is real; it offers resistance to love."
>
> I am a sacrifice bound with cords to the horns of the world's rock altar, waiting for worms. I take a deep breath, I open my eyes. Looking, I see there are worms in the horns of the altar like live maggots in amber, there are shells of worms in the rock and moths flapping at my eyes. A wind from noplace rises. A sense of the real exults me; the cords loose; I walk on my way. (233)

In acceptance and awareness, turning toward the world, lies salvation.

> *Spend* the afternoon. You can't take it with you...(258). There is not a guarantee in the world.... There is nothing to be done about it, but ignore it, or see. (259)

Western Canada - Malcolm Lowry (1909-1957)

Malcolm Lowry's time squatting at Dollarton on Vancouver's Burrard inlet is partly chronicled in the story "The Forest Path to the Spring," in *Hear Us O Lord From Heaven Thy Dwelling Place* (1961). In the vein of Tolstoy's *The Cossacks* he expresses a yearning to sustain a life in nature, wherein the love between man and woman and humanity and nature are intertwined in a mystical idyll.

> I reflected how little I had known of the depths and tides of a woman until now....Often I had the feeling that she had some mysterious correspondence with all nature around her unknown to me, and I thought that perhaps she was herself the eidolon of everything we loved at Eridanus, of all its shifting moods and tides and darks and suns and stars. (247)

Living a life of simplicity, close to nature and on the margins of civilization, like Thoreau at Walden pond, Lowry marvels at the effortlessness of his happiness.

> Often I would linger on the way and dream our life. Was it possible to be so happy? Here we were on the very windrow of existence, under conditions so poverty stricken and abject in the eyes of the world they were actually condemned in the newspapers, or by the board of health, and yet it seemed that we were in heaven, and that the world outside - so portentous in its prescriptions for man of imaginary needs that were in reality his damnation - was hell. And for these

> illusory needs, in that hell of ugliness outside Eridanus, and for the sake of making it a worse hell, men were killing each other. (242)

On British Columbia's shore, Lowry learned Thoreau's lesson of material simplicity, and perceived the absurdity of a life based upon acquisition. Lowry explains how happiness entails discovering wealth and sufficiency in natural *beauty*, in the beauty of a life lived in humble relationship with sun and wind and tides, plus love.

> There was at one time, in later years, a family with three children living in Eridanus by necessity and not by choice and they were indeed convinced that it was 'beneath them', and that the true values were to be found in 'keeping up with the Joneses.' They let themselves sink into degradation, as seeming to be the conventional counterpart of poverty, without ever having looked at a sunrise. (245)

Lowry explains how turning to nature can provide a feeling of wealth in such minor blessings as the sunrise, whereas human measures produce dissatisfaction. The city life means forgetting the natural standard of wealth: "Even its richest comforts that one day we might in cowardice yearn for, and finally have, would almost suffocate all memory of the reality and wealth of such a life as ours" (252). "Civilization" he calls "creator of deathscapes, like a dull-witted fire of ugliness and ferocious stupidity" (276). Lowry implies that to appreciate the wealth of nature as it is requires courage. The yearning for luxury is cowardice. Luxury destroys the freedom out of which "pure spontaneous happiness" arises, and out of which also arises spontaneous love and a moral impulse. He raises the question, which was what Thoreau explored, of how such a happiness might be sustained.

> One evening on the way back from the spring for some reason I suddenly thought of a break by Bix in Frankie Trumbauer's record of singing the blues that had always seemed to me to express a moment of the most pure spontaneous happiness. I could never hear this break without feeling happy myself and wanting to do something good. Could one translate this kind of happiness into one's life? Since this was only a moment of happiness I seemed involved with irreconcilable impulses. One could not make a moment permanent and perhaps the attempt to try was some form of evil. But was there not some means of suggesting at least the existence of such happiness, that was like what is really meant by freedom, which was like the spring, which was like our love, which was like the desire to be truly good? (252)

Lowry's mystical experience with nature is lived by his story's character on a series of forest walks between the cabin and the spring. These experiences have the characteristics of self-forgetfulness, alterered sense of time, a loss of fear, ineffability, effortlessness, a feeling of redemption accompanied by moral impulse, realization of self as a part of nature, and the presence of nature's power in the form of a windstorm driving chaos.

> Though it was a warm evening, it was windy, and the mountains were wild with chaos, like an arctic island seen through snow....The wind roared and howled through the rocking tree tops like an express train....In the chaos high up there appeared a church of blue sky by mistake, as if put in by Ruysdael. A gull whose wings seemed almost a maniacal white suddenly was drawn up, driven straight up perpendicularly into the tempest.... I remember filling the cannister with the cold mountain water pouring down. Gulls were blowing backward above the trees and one came to rest on the roof of Hi-Doubt. How touching the gull, dovelike there, with his white blowing feathers! But the next thing that I remembered was that I was singing and had passed the hill without remembering a single step I had taken or with any recollection of its difficulty; and the next thing I was down the steps, cannister and all, with no clear vision once more of how this had been managed, and my wife was greeting me as usual, as if I'd come back from a long journey. To the mountain lion I had given no thought at all. It was like a dream, with the difference that it was reality.... The next time I went for water, despite the fact that I had forearmed myself consciously against any illusion, almost exactly the same thing happened; this time indeed the feeling came more strongly than ever, so that it seemed in fact, to me, as if the path were shrinking at both ends. Not only was I unconscious of the hill, and the weight of the cannister, but I had the decided impression that the path *back* from the spring was growing shorter than the path *to* it, though the way there had seemed shorter too than on the previous day. When I returned home it was as if I had flown into my wife's arms, and I tried to tell her about it. But no matter how hard I tried I could not express what the feeling was like - beyond saying that it was almost as if "a great burden had been lifted off my soul." Some such cliche as that. It was as if something that used to take a long and painful time now took so little time I couldn't remember it at all; but simultaneously I had a consciousness of a far greater duration of time having passed during which something of vast importance to me had taken place, without my knowledge and outside time altogether. No wonder mystics have a hard time describing their illuminations, even though this was not exactly that; yet the experience seemed to be associated with light, even a blinding light, as when years afterwards realizing it I dreamed that my being had been transformed into the inlet itself, not at dusk, by the moon, but at sunrise, as we had so often also seen it, suddenly transilluminated by the sun's light, so that I seemed to contain

> the reflected sun deeply within my very soul, yet a sun which as I awoke was in turn transformed, Swedenborgwise, with its light and warmth into something perfectly simple, like a desire to be a better man, to be capable of more gentleness, understanding, love. (264-268)

The experience of nature, as described here, elicits a sort of moral optimism. Porteous (1992) explains how Lowry believed that Canada's wilderness was a moral landscape which might exercise such an influence on the world. He quotes Lowry as writing, "Some final wisdom would arise out of Canada, that would save not only Canada herself but perhaps the world." Wilderness is not perceived as inherently moral, but the opinion of the wilderness mystic is that the landscape of *reality* inspires an authentic morality. The feeling is that in wilderness one is confronting something essential, fundamental to a genuinely moral life, requisite for what Lopez terms a life of dignity. Lopez makes the same observation, explaining that the Arctic could be seen as a far point towards which England was reaching, where it would undergo a collective learning, and then turn back to transform life at home (1986:40)

> The European culture from which the ancestors of many of us came has yet to make this turn, I think. It has yet to understand the wisdom, preserved in North America, that lies in the richness and sanctity of a wild landscape, what it can mean in the unfolding of human life, the staying of a troubled human spirit.

A more contemporary and local writing of wilderness experience reveals similar insights. If wilderness has a moral for Vancouver Island sea kayaker Michael Blades, it is, similar to Lowry's observation about wealth, to live in the present and appreciate the simple details of everyday life. In his book about sea kayaking on Canada's west coast, he observes,

> Initially, the kayak had simply been a means to get away from the confines and clatter of civilization.... The limits of my own physical strength and skills, coupled with the need for acute awareness of my surroundings, acted as a simple but powerful motivation to be in the "now." Failure to see the reef that lay ahead, or the increase in a changing current, could easily spell serious trouble. The water, sky, and land all became an open book, full of wonder and information. (1993:3)

Blades's personal philosophy, informed by a contemplation of death, was to "count my blessings and value each day as a gift...worrying less, smelling the flowers more, and

appreciating the wonder and mystery of daily life."

> It all seemed to point strongly to the notion that satisfaction and contentment did not exist in some other time or place, but rather right here, where I sat today. (3)

Wilderness travel by kayak, because it required him to live in the present, was a way of exercising this philosophy, a technique for recapturing a presence of mind that the civilized rush tends to undermine.

Another sample of contemporary western Canadian wilderness writing appears in Sharon Butala's *The Perfection of the Morning* (1994). Butala leaves an urban, academic career to become the wife of a cattle rancher in rural Saskatchewan. For her, the experience of living close to the land fills life with satisfaction, a sense of "rightness." Nature has taught her the attitude of Dillard's innocence, which sees that "this is it, and finds it world enough, and time" (Dillard, 1990:83). She observes that her new husband's relationship to the land reveals itself in "strength of character and physical strength," stability, integrity, and "quiet competence" (17). "Unlike most of the city men I knew," she explains, "he didn't nourish in secret bitterness unfulfilled dreams about another, better life" (17). Living close to nature, on the farm, she discovers "life makes sense...the world has a governing body" (49).

> The world is more wonderful than any of us have dared to guess, as all great poets have been telling us since the invention of poetry. To discover these truths we don't need to scale Mount Everest or white-water raft the Colorado or take up skydiving. We need only go for walks. (65)

Whether or not you feel the ineffable effect of nature of which she writes, Butala says it depends on "whether or not and to what degree you accept nature as she is" (132). The mystical experience requires receptivity, openness, humble acceptance, an attitude of ignorance.

> You have to be still and quiet...you have to release your expectations; you have to stop thinking you already know things, or how to categorize them.... You know nothing. You understand nothing.... Teach me, is what you should say, and, I am listening. Approach the world as a child seeing it for the first time. Remember wonder. In a word: humility. Then things come to you as they did not when you thought you knew. (147-148)

She advocates the same attitude to natural reality as Thoreau, Dillard, Lopez, and Lowry.

Eastern Canada - Bill Mason (1929-1988)

There is a contemporary "wilderness cult" in Eastern Canada that was my original wilderness inspiration. It centres around the canoeing tradition promoted by Ontario children's summer camps and expressed in the films and books of Bill Mason and subsequently in the academic and non-academic writings of such paddler-scholars as James Raffan and Bob Henderson.

Canoeing-based summer camps are popular in eastern Canada (Hodgins and Hobbs, 1985). The "alternate penetration of the wilderness and return to civilization" has remained as, according to W.L. Morton, "the basic rhythm of Canadian life" (James, 1981:154). The resulting relationship to wilderness has been called an "ironic but essential" part of urban life in Canada: "...the wilderness traveller of the past and present displays an inner tension resulting from a simultaneous commitment, both personal and political, to the 'natural' and to the urban world" (Hodgins and Hobbs, 1985:4). The result is that the wilderness canoe tripper becomes what Raffan (1988) calls "a wilderness traveller in everyday life". The outdoor experience is a source of values, which shape one's behaviour within the civilized structure. Raffan's (1988) concept clearly aligns the wilderness canoeing tradition of the Canadian east with the environmentalism of the American west, as expressed in the writings of Gary Snyder, who explains, "The wilderness temple is only a beginning.... Great Brown Bear is walking with us, Salmon swimming upstream with us, as we stroll a city street" (1990:94).

Raffan is a central influence on the contemporary Canadian wilderness myth, whose works include a biography of Bill Mason (1996). To illustrate the eastern tradition and my own key influence, I will discuss Bill Mason here. For Mason, paddling was a religious path. He encourages his readers to think of canoe tripping not as camping, but as "living outdoors." He advocates a deepening relationship to the wild, and advocated recreational canoeing as a path to environmentalism which would ultimately reduce wilderness destruction. At the end of his life, he expressed the regret that he did not become more environmentally active, and sooner - leaving the world in such a mess.

Mason was a committed Christian, but he did not favour institutionalized

Christianity, eschewing churchgoing in favour of outdoor experience. Salvation to him was more of a geographical issue, represented in a union with God that occurred in connection to God's creation, which was achieved when a threshold was crossed from civilization to wilderness. The threshold was the portage, which separated the frontcountry which was accessible to all from the wild backcountry that could be reached only by those willing to accept physical hardship. Raffan explains that the wilderness for Bill Mason was the divine on earth, and wilderness travel was his way of relating to God. "In its simplest and most pure incarnation, the connection was made with the canoe and consummated by doing something creative with what he found there" (1996:180). Raffan explains that when Mason had an early heart attack, it threatened his religion by threatening to sever his bond with ultimate reality.

> If this heart attack were to cut him off from portaging and wilderness, it would be cutting him off from his connection with the creator, denying him ultimate salvation. He could believe in Jesus Christ with all his might, but to stop communing with the Almighty in the wilderness was reason to die or to get well enough to once again carry a canoe. (139)

Mason conceived of his religion in Christian terms, but his true religion was wilderness canoeing. In explaining his belief, in his film *Waterwalker*, he mixed Biblical references with aboriginal concepts. In his own words, Mason explains that his mission was to inspire a reconnection to nature and therefore to God the Creator (Raffan, 1996:188-189):

> My films are to the best of my ability an attempt to bridge the gap between ourselves and things natural. I am dealing with things closely related to the spirit. The spirit of man, the spirit of nature which is for me God. The God who created it and breathed life into it. I am convinced that our problems in relation to nature and also in human terms are because of our alienation from God the Creator. And alienation caused by us. Not god. It is not his fault that we prefer to leave him out of our lives. To disassociate him from nature. To assume that the world around us is nothing more than a process of natural selection. I just don't buy that. The world around us speaks to me of an incredible mind. A mind beyond our comprehension. A mind that designed it and put it into operation and then gave us the various senses and a mind capable of wonder and awe. We are born to ask questions - why and how.

Mason believed that the world was a wonderful and beautiful place, a home created for us by God. "We have the capacity to use it with compassion for all creatures that share it

with us but we have turned the air, water and land into a chemical soup," he writes in a farewell letter, penned while dying of cancer (1996:265). Mason surmised that his own premature death was likely due to his own exposure to this human-caused "chemical soup." He believed a better attitude for humanity, and the one which he tried to encourage through his work, was one of gratitude for nature, an appreciation of the "wonder and infinite beauty of the world" and a consequent concern for its welfare.

Ultimate salvation can be understood through the wilderness experience, Raffan reasons, because it is at times an experience of timelessness and connection to a larger reality. For the wilderness traveller, separation from nature and return to civilization is a death worse than real death. Raffan cites canoeist George Grinell, who had a life threatening experience on the Kazan River. Grinell concludes that he would rather have died on the river than stayed at home in civilization. Grinell realized that establishing a relationship with nature on the Arctic tundra was an experience of true happiness, and while a return to civilization meant a separation from that happiness, dying on the river would not be a separation.

> What I would mourn was the separation from nature, from the relationship we had gotten into with the caribou, with the fish and the mushrooms, with the weather, with the beautiful lakes and rivers, with the sky. And this was the relationship it would have been death to be separated from, but it wasn't a separation to die.... (in Raffan, 1996:267)

The relationship of wilderness to Christianity, and the idea of salvation in wilderness, links Bill Mason with the American Sierra Nevada wilderness crusader John Muir (1838-1914). Both men believed that popularizing wilderness recreation would have a beneficial effect on civilization. Both experienced a form of salvation in the wilderness. Muir explains how immortality can be achieved in the "eternal present" of the mountain experience (in Oelschlaeger, 1991:189-190).

> Much faithless fuss is made over the passage in the Bible telling of the standing still of the sun for Joshua. Here [in the mountains] you may learn that the miracle occurs for every devout mountaineer, for everybody doing anything worth doing, seeing anything worth seeing. One day is as a thousand years, a thousand years as one day, and while yet in the flesh you enjoy immortality.

Muir also writes "Life seems neither too long nor short, and we take no more heed to save time or make haste than do the trees and the stars. This is true freedom, a good practical sort of immortality" (in Oelschlaeger, 1991:189).

Muir shared the attitude of Abbey, Jeffers, and countless other wilderness enthusiasts that civilization was a "galling harness" which "chokes the soul" (Nash, 1982). Bill Mason's message was similar to Muir's, and the spirit in which Muir founded the Sierra Club. Muir's famous quote expresses his rationale for popularizing wilderness:

> Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as the sunshine into the trees. The winds will blow their freshness into you, and the storms their energy, which cares will drop off like autumn leaves. (Nash, 1982:128)

Inspired by Emerson and Thoreau, Muir saw natural objects as "the terrestrial manifestations of God" (Nash, 1982). Oelschlaeger (1991) makes a subtler observation, arguing that Muir proceeded from Christian theism to panentheism in the Transcendentalist style, but as he was further steeped in the direct experience of wilderness, he completed a "cognitive revolution" to arrive at a "profoundly insightful evolutionary pantheism" (Oelschlaeger, 1991:173). It took Muir ten years in the mountains, away from religious convention, to learn a conception of God as wholly incarnate - "the idea that everything that exists is unified in a single process" (Oelschlaeger, 1991:190). "*God was nature*," Oelschlaeger explains, "a sacred living temporal presence in *everlasting* process" (191). Unlike Edward Abbey, Muir uses religious terms to convey the experience of wilderness. He demonstrates how the word "God" is used by the faithful in much the same way that "wildness" might be used by someone like Thoreau or Abbey. Oelschlaeger observes that "Muir's god-talk provides an alterative vocabulary to that of Modernism" (1991:192). Muir's vocabulary also provides the bridge to understanding Bill Mason's "god-talk" in the context of other wilderness writers. Mason's philosophy is clearly theistic, and he uses Christian terms to describe his experiences, but he speaks of a mysticism identical to Muir's. Mason, for whom the spirit of nature was God, used the traditional language of theism and Transcendental panentheism, but he too may have been in the process of a "cognitive revolution" towards

pantheism, which is not far, even, from Edward Abbey's philosophy of avoiding metaphysics entirely and affirming the presence of humanity's ultimate concern in the immediate world. Oelschlaeger notes, citing Charles Hartshorne, that the God of the Bible is neither categorically theistic nor pantheistic.

Conclusion

The wilderness artists, as disparate-seeming as Mason and Abbey, have more significant thoughts in common than differences. For all of them, wilderness is the place where they encounter the ultimate truth and establish a relationship with it. The Good Life is one which appreciates the value of this relationship as paramount. The "wilderness experience" refers to a way of perceiving reality that subordinates all products of human thought to a larger truth that can only be known intuitively through direct experience of places where nature dominates. The writers' primary value is the freedom that is represented by this metaphorical "breaking beyond humanity." "Protesting" on behalf of the value found in this experience makes them libertarians and environmentalists, and non-traditional in their adoption of a religion too honest to be represented by institutions. Practically speaking, their lifestyles involve reconnecting with this restorative vision on a regular basis, by going for walks or carrying canoes across portages, always returning to the direct experience of the world which cannot be "replaced" by a "morality," a "law to live by." They suggest that a truly moral way of being must be continually inspired by this "polestar" - the experience of "freedom and wildness" that is above morality.

Part 4: Explanations of the Wilderness Experience

Introduction

The literature review concludes here with a return to the academic writings which suggest an "explanation" of the optimal wilderness experience. The emphasis is on Csikszentmihalyi's concept of "flow," from humanistic psychology, and Victor Turner's anthropological theory of the ritual process which yields "communitas." Both of these theories have relevance to how the "meaning" or "moral imperative" of the wilderness experience is interpreted, as discussed in Chapter 5.

Flow

Flow is a name for optimal experience. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) defines optimal experience as a state of *total involvement* in an activity that produces a feeling of mastery or control, resulting in happiness.

> Flow denotes the holistic sensation present when we act with total involvement....[It is] a state in which action follows action according to an internal logic which seems to need no conscious intervention on our part....we experience it as a unified flowing from one moment to the next, in which we feel in control of our actions, and in which there is little distinction between self and environment; between stimulus and response; or between past, present, or future. (Csikszentmihalyi in Turner, 1974:87)

An example of flow is the climber's fearless sense of a"Zen-like" state or "perfect action" in harmony with surroundings. Flow has six key characteristics: 1) merging action and awareness; 2) centring of attention; 3) loss of ego; 4) a sense of control; 5) non-contradictory demands for action and clear, unambiguous feedback; and 6) an inherent value which makes the activity self-justifying, performed for its own sake (Turner, 1974).

The "flow" concept originated in a study of *autotelic*, or intrinsically-valued activities such as rock-climbing and painting in which participants reported experiencing loss of self-awareness and time consciousness. Csikszentmihalyi (1975) discovered that any activity requiring a total investment of psychic energy can produce flow, including professional ones like writing and surgery.

Csikszentmihalyi (1988) explains that Abraham Maslow first studied intrinsic motivation in terms of "process" versus "product" orientations. "Peak experiences" were had by people with a *process* orientation, who were not motivated by conventional rewards, but by the satisfaction of the work itself. "Maslow ascribed the motivation to a desire for 'self-actualization,' a need to discover one's potentialities and limitations through intense activity and experience" (1988:5).

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) describes flow as being "beyond boredom and anxiety" resulting from the balance of challenges with individual ability. Non-flow states of less than perfect engagement are caused by an imbalance of challenge and skill. An individual faced with challenges that overwhelm his/her abilities to exercise competence and control experiences uncertainty, or anxiety, termed "anomie." Alternatively, an individual equipped with skills in excess of life's challenges experiences certainty, or boredom in life, termed "alienation." Symptomatic of both conditions is a feeling of futility, because the individual has the impression that he/she is powerless to have a meaningful influence on the world. The self feels "out of place" in the world. Conditions of both alienation and anomie are associated with an external locus of control and with "psychic entropy." Optimal experience, on the other hand, is psychic negentropy and an internal locus of control. Happiness, Csikszentmihalyi explains, is "order in consciousness" (1990:6); it is experienced as *harmony*.

Quality of experience depends not on external circumstances necessarily, but more on what enters awareness, because "the content of consciousness is experience" (1988:17). Unhappiness results from perceiving disharmony between personal goals and the contents of awareness. In states of boredom and anxiety, consciousness is either unfulfilled or overwhelmed - understimulated or overstimulated. The lack of inner order results in depression, "existential dread." "Basically, it is a fear of being, a feeling that there is no meaning in life and that existence is not worth going on with. Nothing seems to make sense" (1990:12). The young climber's drive to scale mountains because "nothing else makes sense" can be understood in terms of a quest for order in experience. Optimal experience results from a perfect focussing of attention in such a way that stimuli

are wholly relevant to personal goals and no dissonance is perceived. In this situation, as Csikszentmihalyi explains it, "psychic energy flows freely" - the sensation is often subjectively described as effortless "flow." In other terms, optimal experience is the experience of compatibility between self and the information that is entering awareness. Self, in this sense, is defined as the "dynamic representation we have of the entire system of our goals" (35). Information entering consciousness which is irrelevant or contrary to goals are perceived as hostile to self, resulting in psychic entropy.

> Psychic negentropy, optimal experience, or *flow*...obtains when all the contents of consciousness are in harmony with each other, and with the goals that define the person's self. These are the subjective conditions we call pleasure, happiness, satisfaction, enjoyment. Because the tendency of the self is to reproduce itself, and because the self is most congruent with its goal-directed structure during these episodes of optimal experience, to keep on experiencing flow becomes one of the central norms of the self.... This is the *teleonomy of the self*, that is, the goal-seeking tendency that shapes the choices we make among alternatives. It is the third set of rules...the others being the genetic teleonomy...and cultural teleonomy.... (1988:24)

Csikszentmihalyi describes flow activities as sources of not merely pleasure, but *enjoyment*, which result from meeting a challenge that demands total involvement. He explains that for an activity to be enjoyable, producing optimal experience, it must be structured in a way that facilitates 100% concentration, including: an above-average challenge requiring skill; clear, achievable goals; and immediate feedback. For flow to occur attention must be centred on a limited stimulus field such that reality is simplified to the point that it is "understandable, definable, and manageable" (Csikszentmihalyi, in Turner, 1974:88). Elements in consciousness must be situationally relevant. Turner explains that in flow "*intensification* is the name of the game," and is accomplished by rules and incentives in games, though the same effect of narrowing attention can be achieved by drugs (1974:87). Furthermore, the activity must be autotelic - that is, done for its own sake rather than with an emphasis on external rewards. Flow is in turn self-justifying. As Turner observes, "To flow is to be as happy as a human can be - the particular rules or stimuli that triggered the flow, whether chess or a prayer meeting, do not matter" (1974:89). The individual can then act with deep but effortless involvement

with no awareness of the worries and frustrations of everyday life, and experience flow.

Important to note is the relationship of flow to *freedom*. In flow, because flow activities are undertaken for their own sake rather than for external rewards, one is following freely chosen goals. One therefore has the impression of fully expressing one's self. This is an important concept for the understanding of freedom, which is so important to all the wilderness writers. Whether one perceives oneself as internally controlled and free, or externally constrained, determines to a large part whether one is happy, and the quality of one's life experience. But as Thoreau suggests, freedom is only significant as a function of perception, not as an external, objective condition, because only the subjective condition of freedom is prerequisite for flow. Remarkable instances of flow have been observed in prison settings (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). Because flow is the compatibility of goals with the contents of awareness, happiness can be achieved as long as there is no perception of barriers to the goals of self. Though it is also true that the realization of freedom is a prerequisite for flow, the experience of flow results in feelings of liberation. Flow could be defined as the *realization* of a freedom which always exists in potential.

"Transcendental" or non-dualistic optimal experience described in wilderness studies may be the same as flow. Flow has identical characteristics, for example, as the "ethereal elements" of the optimal experiences discovered among whitewater river recreationists by Beck (1987). Other characteristics of the flow experience, in addition to freedom, account for the main characteristics of the optimal experience described by wilderness adventurers. Consciousness is ordered in flow. A feeling of psychic harmony results. When the flow episode is over, "one feels more 'together' than before, not only internally but also with respect to other people and to the world in general" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990:41). During the experience of flow, awareness is filled with goal-compatible - that is *self*-compatible - inputs. There is thus no differentiation between the one's concept of self and one's immediate knowledge of the world. The flow experience thus consists of a "merging of action and awareness," and the loss of any sense of self existing apart from the field in which the self is acting. There is no dualism

in flow (Turner, 1974). Actions are experienced as spontaneous, un-self-conscious, and immediately effective. Action carries forward into other action "as if by magic" without reflection, and the actor has the feeling of being in control. The outcome of flow is a feeling of power and efficacy, as well as a feeling of union with environment, a universal harmony or "oneness."

> When a person invests all her psychic energy into an interaction - whether it is with another person, a boat, a mountain, or a piece of music - she in effect becomes part of a system of action greater than what the individual self had been before. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990:65)

Here, the common wilderness experience of social and environmental harmony is explained. LaChapelle (1988), for example, observes that in her powder skiing experiences there was a sense of intuitive, seemingly telepathic functioning together of her group of companions as one organism, like a flock of birds flying in unison. She wonders why this phenomenon seems common in nature and uncommon in human experience. During the flow experience, self-consciousness and individuality is replaced with total union of self and surroundings.

> Flow reaches out to nature and to other men in what Csikszentmihalyi calls "intuitions of unity, solidarity, repletion and acceptance"; all men, even all things, are felt to be one, subjectively, in the flow experience. Much evidence is brought forward to support this; Levy-Bruhl's "participation mystique" and Suzuki's "non-dualistic (Zen) experience" are cited, as are the comments of athletes and sportsmen. (Turner, 1974:88)

Mitchell (1983) explains the phenomenon of social union in flow, noting that Freud defined the function of the self as the mediator between the individual organism and the social group, to work for the integration of the individual with the group. The self, understood in these terms, becomes unnecessary when the individual is functioning within a clearly defined system of voluntarily shared rules and responsibilities. As Csikszentmihalyi explains of flow-producing activities,

> Since they are based on freely accepted rules, the player does not need to use a self to get along in the activity. As long as all the participants follow the same rules, there is no need to negotiate roles. The participants need no self to bargain with about what should or should not be done. As long as the rules are respected, a flow situation is a social system with no deviance. (in Mitchell, 1983:167-168)

Along with the concept of self, the total involvement of consciousness' limited attention in immediate activity also displaces the concept of time from consciousness. Past and future are irrelevant to the task which is consuming attention, so the subjective impression of time is altered. Climber Krakauer's (1996) statement that "hours slide by like minutes" is typical of the flow experience, as is the loss of fear that occurs with involvement in the climb. Also, just as there is no concept of past or future, there is also no knowledge of "elsewhere" in the flow experience. This results in the sense of being "home."

Does the flow experience in wilderness account for the reported psychological outcomes of self-realization? An apparent paradox of the flow experience would suggest that the answer is yes: Flow results in the simultaneous loss of a subjective self and growth of self. Flow theory is an account of the personal growth process that can be applied to wilderness. Like flow, wilderness has been described in Zen-like terms, as ego-dissolving, what James (1981) calls "a death and self-annihilation." Csikszentmihalyi (1990) argues, however, that from these activities, a more complex self emerges. Turner (1974) observes that flow is an experience of self-forgetfulness, but does not imply the loss of self-awareness. It is, rather, an experience of heightened awareness. Furthermore the experience of flow matches individual skills with the demands of the situation and produces feelings of control and competence, resulting, when the experience is over and self-reflection occurs, in increased self-concept (Turner, 1974).

> Outside "flow," such a subjective sense of control is difficult to attain, due to the multiplicity of stimuli and cultural tasks - especially, I would hold, in industrial societies, with their complex social and technical division of labour. But in the ritualized limits of a game or the writing of a poem, a person may *cope*, if he rises to the occasion with skill and tact. (Turner, 1974:88)

Mitchell (1983) confirms that flow opportunities in mountaineering provide this experience of "rising to the occasion" and results in the demonstration of competence that would result in an improved concept of self. Indeed, positive self-evaluation is difficult in the chaos of everyday life, where goals and rules are not clearly defined, whereas flow

activities provide clear feedback. In an extreme example, climber Marc Twight explains how climbing was a tool to make him "honest." Climbing became a moral field of action, where staying alive was the certain indicator of success and death was the price of failure (Cardinal, 1996). Turner (1974) observes that if you "throw yourself" into the flow game with such a total faith and commitment, you emerge knowing if you have performed well. "Flow differs from everyday life in that it contains explicit rules 'which make action and the evaluation of action unproblematic'" (Turner, 1974:89).

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) defines the self in terms of a "clutch" mechanism allowing humans potential disengagement from the flow of life, placing us in a position to negotiate self-consciously with biological and social imperatives, and thus become something other than the product of those imperatives (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). *Humanity* is distinguished by and contained within the self, which has already been defined as a package of goals. Satisfying biological appetites produces a form of psychic harmony in the form of *pleasure*, Csikszentmihalyi (1990) observes. But flow is a result of a harmony which includes the *self*, suggesting the realization of human potential.

Personal growth is defined by Hendee and Brown as

> a range of effects leading to expanded fulfilment of one's capabilities and potential....conceived as beginning with an increased awareness of one's desires, abilities, and values, which makes possible the satisfaction of needs and the achievement of personal goals. (cited in Robinson, 1992:90)

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) defines personal growth as increasing *complexity* of the self. And he defines increasing complexity as simultaneous *differentiation* and *integration*. Regarding flow and personal growth, he writes, "A person who has achieved control over psychic energy and invested it in consciously chosen goals cannot help but grow into a more complex being" (1990:6). Human development occurs as a result of the heightened awareness in the engagement of self with the world. "A self-centered self cannot become more complex"; external stimuli are necessary elements to growth (1990:83).

A complex self is one whose goals are well-integrated with the world, and thus resilient in the face of a diversity of direct experience.

The self represents its own interests as goals.... A bit of information that fits these

> goals strengthens the structure of the self, whereas one that conflicts with them creates disorder in consciousness and threatens the integrity of the self. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988:22)

Csikszentmihalyi explains that growth occurs as the self strives to reproduce itself, by the "teleonomy of the self".

> Pleasure, power and participation are not enough to account for the daring variety of new goals that people constantly adopt and pursue. The motivation to go beyond established patterns of behavior is due to an organizing principle of a different kind.... The evolution of consciousness - and hence, the evolution of culture and ultimately the evolution of the human species - hinges on our capacity to invest psychic energy in goals that are not modelled exclusively on the teleonomy of genes or cultures. (1988:28)

As the self attempts to continue experiencing flow, it must become more complex, because challenges must be balanced with skills. "To remain in flow, one must increase the complexity of the activity by developing new skills and taking on new challenges" (1988:30).

The conclusion that experience of *being* in a wilderness *environment* can be explained by flow - an effect typically associated with *doing* a particular type of *activity* - is supported primarily by the Kaplans' findings. Kaplan and Talbot (1983) found that a wilderness program enhanced participants' self-esteem. They also concluded that the participants' relationship to the natural world was the most central and profound outcome found in analysis of the wilderness experience - suggesting that experience of nature was related to the benefits to self-concept. Kaplan and Talbot (1983) conclude that the wilderness environment is beneficial because it produces "compatibility":

> Wilderness provides a striking contrast to many other environments in its capacity to facilitate compatibility. In wilderness what is interesting to perceive tends to be what one needs to know in order to act. For many people the purposes one carries into the wilderness also fit closely with the demands that the wilderness makes: What one intends to do is also what one must do to survive. (191)

For these reasons it is easy to understand why wilderness would be considered a place of what Csikszentmihalyi calls "psychic negentropy" - that is, *happiness*, peace of mind. Compatibility produces flow, and accounts for the "sense of wholeness" and "simplicity" commonly reported in wilderness experience (Kaplan, 1984).

Psychic negentropy in nature might be accounted for in evolutionary terms, because the human mind developed in response to natural stimuli. Natural and unnatural stimuli are also fundamentally different, as Greenway (1995b) observes. Unnatural stimuli are dualistic and require conscious response, whereas natural, non-dualistic stimuli can be apprehended on a more intuitive level.

Another study (Talbot and Kaplan, 1986:186) supports previous findings about "compatibility" and observes the unique effect of the wilderness environment in encouraging an attitude of self-control. Talbot and Kaplan observe that wilderness, by placing participants in a situation where they are forced to accept their external circumstances as given, results in "harmonizing of one's own capabilities and inclinations with the opportunities and limitations present in the physical surroundings" (186). In this manner, the wilderness effect can be explained as a shifting of perspective from an external to an internal locus of control, resulting in a perception of freedom and self-motivation requisite for flow and, consequently, happiness and personal growth. Scherl (1989) also concludes that the wilderness environment demands of participants a reorientation towards self-control. By placing them in a situation of being unable to change their external circumstances, wilderness teaches participants how to affect the quality of their experience by changing the way they relate to the external reality. Rather than exerting "primary control" over the environment, wilderness travellers are required to exert what Scherl terms "secondary control," which is a process of adaptation and results in changes to self - that is, personal growth. Enhanced awareness, including the awareness of self, is an outcome of the perception of surroundings as uncontrollable which leads to greater self-understanding. In this way wilderness experience requires the development of what Csikszentmihalyi (1990) calls an "autotelic personality," with attitudes conducive to the realization of freedom and optimal experience independent of external circumstances.

Flow as it is described by Csikszentmihalyi is typically associated with *doing* engaging activities like rock climbing or painting. Wilderness experience, however, suggests the potential of a flow-inducing *environment*, where protracted flow can be

experienced without doing anything at all (Scherl, 1989; Talbot and Kaplan, 1986). Flow seems to occur as a result of simply *being* in wilderness because a compatibility is achieved between mind and environment to produce the psychic negentropy requisite for flow. The entire wilderness experience becomes a flow experience. Similarly, long-term activities like ocean cruising and certain traditional farming lifestyles incorporate flow into *lifestyle*, on a potentially permanent basis (Della Fave and Massimini, 1988; MacBeth, 1988). The ocean environment has the same effect of wilderness in inducing compatibility and self-control, as Csikszentmihalyi explains, citing the comments of a sailor:

> On a larger time scale, ocean cruising provides an equivalent to merciful oblivion: "but no matter how many little discomforts there may be at sea, one's real cares and worries seem to drop out of sight as the land slips behind the horizon. Once we were at sea, there was no point in worrying, there was nothing we could do about our problems till we reached the next port....Life was, for a while, stripped of its artificialities; [other problems] seemed quite unimportant compared with the state of the wind and the sea and the length of the day's run." (1990:59)

The *uncertainty* of the natural environment in such a case is important for producing a flow experience, because it requires total investment of attention in the present moment. Certainty in the civilized life, on the other hand, can produce alienation and disengagement. Csikszentmihalyi explains, "It is not possible to experience a feeling of control unless one is willing to give up the safety of protective routines" (1990:61). As observed by Mitchell (1983) and others in the case of mountain climbing, external conditions of risk and uncertainty induce flow by threatening the attitude of disengagement with unacceptable consequences.

Anti-Structure and communitas

An anthropological account of the wilderness experience is found in Victor Turner's studies of ritual. I owe a significant debt to Ken Andrews for making me aware of this connection. Andrews (1996) studied wilderness travel as a rite of passage and found that wilderness experience - experiential sea-kayaking education programs on the Alaskan coast - had the characteristics of the ritual rite of passage described by Turner.

What sets the wilderness experience apart from traditional forms of education, he concludes, is that students learn *communitas*, which is the essential transformative characteristic of the wilderness experience. Building upon Van Gennep's research on rites of passage, Turner explains communitas as an outcome of liminal phase of the ritual process which occurs in between separation and re-integration or *incorporation* into society. In Van Gennep's formulation of ritual, *separation* marked the boundary between the profane and sacred, marking a distinction between the profane realm of everyday life and something existing *outside* of this normative structure (Turner, 1974). Turner's theory of the ritual process is broadly applied beyond traditional rites of passage and the wilderness experience, to explain

> the attributes of such seemingly disparate phenomena as...court jesters, holy mendicants, good samaritans, millenarian movements, "dharma bums,"...and monastic orders.... All have this common characteristic: they are persons or principles that (1) fall in the interstices of social structure, (2) are on its margins, or (3) occupy its lowest rungs. (Turner, 1969:135)

This common characteristic of "outsideness" is described by Van Gennep and Turner as "liminal" or "liminoid" (Turner, 1974). Liminality, named for its latin root *limen*, meaning "threshold", occurs "betwixt and between the categories of ordinary social life" (Turner, in Andrews, 1996:27). Representing the "basic building blocks of culture", liminality marks *transition* to new states of mind or society. In contrast to prevailing social structure, the liminal phase is an experience of *antistructure*. Antistructure is not an absence of structure, but as an alternative to socially institutionalized structure, it fosters connection rather than social differentiation and results in the experience of communitas, wherein social distinctions are replaced with comradeship and communion, egalitarian and direct relationships. Other features of liminality that coincide with the wilderness experience include absence of property, nakedness or uniformity of clothing, humility, disregard for personal appearance, economic equality, unselfishness, sacredness, silence, foolishness, simplicity, and acceptance of pain and suffering (Turner, 1969).

Turner defines the communitas which occurs in liminality as "a direct, immediate

and total confrontation of human identities" (1974:79). According to Turner, the boundaries of this immediate confrontation are "ideally coterminous with those of the human species," but particularly in the case of wilderness experience, the boundaries can be enlarged to include self and non-human others (1974:78). As by-products of communitas in the liminal wilderness, the students in Andrews' study learned a *sense of self, a sense of community, and a sense of place.*

Self is freed from its social roles in the liminal experience, becomes a non-identity and is thereby free to become authentic. There is a sense, in wilderness, of "being true to oneself." Andrews observes that Goffman's theory of "the presentation of self in everyday life" accounts for a self-delusion in the acting out of social roles and results in self-distanciation - the alienation of the individual from his/her authentic identity. R.D. Laing's (1969) existential study of "the divided self" makes similar conclusions. Laing describes the distanciation of an individual from the world and, simultaneously, from his or her self, as "schizoid." He explains that a person suffering from this distanciation does not experience him/herself "at home" in the world, "together with" others, or united as a complete person. Psychopathological states discussed by Laing are characterized by an extreme form of self-conscious detachment of the self from the world, the presentation of a false self to others, and the disengagement of the real self from any direct experience and participation in the world. The individual's experience is in effect deadened by the mediation of lies between his/her authentic self and the real world of interaction. The world is experienced as alien, oppressive, and lonely to the extent that the individual is psychologically removed from immediacy of experience. As cited in Henderson (1995), the experience of Self-realization can be explained in reference to R.D. Laing's schema of the "divided self" - where the true self emerges in a wilderness landscape that transcends the social context, where the projected false self has no power. Turner explains that antistructure eliminates the need for social role playing and frees the authentic self, producing what Andrews calls the "sense of self" arising in the wilderness experience.

Paradoxically, communitas strengthens individuality at the same time that it produces a strengthened sense of community. This phenomenon of simultaneous

individuation and integration has been observed elsewhere in connection to the optimal experience. Mitchell (1983) observes this in the context of mountaineering. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) identifies increasing differentiation and integration as the characteristics of the increasingly complex self emerging from flow experience. This is not surprising if one realizes that a characteristic of ritual is the reconciliation of opposites. Erikson writes, "there is a reconciliation of the irreconcilable in all ritualizations" that includes "*mutual fusion* of the participants and yet also a simultaneous *gain in distinctiveness* for each" (in LaChapelle, 1988:136). Turner, as cited in Andrews (1996) explains that at the same time that it frees the individual self, the antistructure of the liminal experience undermines the social structure that is the cause of structural conflict and competition among individuals; it uncovers the bedrock experience of "generic human relationship" - *communitas* - that underlies social structure and "without which there could be no society" (Turner, 1969:97). The outward connection to humanity occurs at the same time as the inward connection to the humanity within oneself (Andrews, 1996).

Alienation from the natural world is seen to be the result of the same social structure that produces self-distanciation and social conflict. The definition of humanity apart from nature is also a social construction. The wilderness traveller in communitas perceives "the natural facts" of existence apart from their social representation (Andrews, 1996). The boundary of the communitas is extended beyond the human community to include "a generic 'reverence for life'" (Turner, 1974:82). Although Turner states that communitas is "ideally coterminous" with the boundary of the human species, the eco-psychological and deep ecological concept of Self-realization is premised upon the enlarged definition of communitas. As the rite of passage ritual has the effect of transcending the social order, a "sense of place" is experienced in communitas (Andrews, 1996). In terms of self, community, and the cosmos, harmony is experienced. Turner explains, "some might say that communitas knows only harmonies and no disharmonies or conflicts" (in Andrews, 1996:34). In such a state of mind, one comes to sense the vision of absolute wholeness that is the end of Buddhist enlightenment, in which "This

earth on which we stand/Is the promised Lotus Land/And this very body/Is the body of the Buddha" (Smith, citing Buddhist scripture, 1991:146).

From Turner, Andrews explains that the characteristics of the communitas experience include harmony, "camaraderie, sacredness, humility, simplicity, nakedness, and an altered sense of time," a sense of wonder, of "being alive," of freedom, awe, connection, "magic" (Andrews, 1996:33). Sense of time is altered because the common perception of linear time and historicity is a product of the social structure, and is replaced in ritual experience by the "eternal now." Communitas is the way of "being with" rather than above or "against" that Henderson (1995) identifies in wilderness adventure. Martin Buber uses the same description, "being with," for the *I-Thou* relations that occur in genuine community. Turner (1969) observes that the relationships that occur in communitas are between beings in their wholeness, whereas structure is strictly cognitive.

Turner also describes communitas as a religious experience, associated with the supernatural and with feelings of love:

> Spontaneous communitas has something "magical" about it. Subjectively there is a feeling of endless power... It is almost everywhere held to be sacred or "holy", possibly because it transgresses and dissolves the norms that govern structured and institutionalized relationships and is accompanied by experiences of unprecedented potency.... [C]ommunitas is brief, as measured by objective time, though subjectively powerful and the seedbed of many subsequent thoughts, words, and deeds.... Communitas strains toward universalism and openness.... [It is] a spring of pure possibility.... And because communitas is such a basic, even primordial mode of human interlinkage, depending as it does neither on conventions nor sanctions, it is often religiously equated with love - both the love of man and the love of God. The principle is simple: cease to have and you are; if you "are" in the relationship of communitas to others who "are", then you love one another. In the honesty of being, people "naturally" relate to or "dig" one another. (Turner, as cited in Andrews, 1996:34)

Raffan, in a study of cross-cultural experiences of land in the Thelon Game Sanctuary, found that *love* and religious feelings were significant in a European eco-tourism operator's understanding of the land, who stated,

> I have often felt that being there in the Barren Lands (and in the Thelon for

> instance) is something akin to a religious experience for me. I know I think that wild country out there as my religion, my church. I worship it. It is also my mistress. It has taught me how to love. Maybe that's what I meant when I said earlier that it has taught me "the meaning of life". It is the great love of my life. (in Raffan, 1992:206)

The relationship to the land teaches love, and Self-realization is experienced as love, and the desire to love, as Malcolm Lowry observed on the British Columbia coast, and as Tolstoy expresses referring to the mountain environment in his early novel *The Cossacks*.

Communitas is also an opportunity for "deep questioning" about the social structure from which one is temporarily removed by the liminal experience. In the liminal mode, the social structure is no longer taken for granted. The traveller has stepped outside of structure, and has the opportunity to reflect inwards with a new perspective. Turner explains,

> Society takes *cognizance of itself*.... Members of that society may obtain an approximation, however limited, to a global view of man's place in the cosmos.... Contemplate for a while the mysteries that confront all men, the difficulties that peculiarly beset their own society, their personal problems, and the ways in which their own wisest predecessors have sought to order, explain, explain away, cloak, or mask...these mysteries and difficulties.... If liminality is regarded as a time and place of withdrawal from normal modes of social action, it can be seen as potentially a period of scrutinization of the central values and axioms of the culture in which it occurs. (Turner, in Andrews, 1996:35)

The liminal experience of wilderness thus produces the feeling of holistic understanding, having the enlarged perspective of a "global view", and a critical vantage *vis-a-vis* the dominant cultural mode. Wilderness becomes symbolic of this enhanced understanding because it exists, by definition, apart from the social structure. The natural landscape associated with the liminal, communitas experience, is thus perceived as "sacred" or "holy" by those who experience it in the context of withdrawal from the structure of everyday life. Turner's theory accounts for the aboriginal experience of wilderness, which was perceived as a source of spiritual *power*, cultural cohesion, the context for rites of passage into adulthood (M'Gonigle, 1988). The global perspective arising from liminality explains M'Gonigle's conclusion that "only through a direct personal experience of nature unmediated by the intrusion of human artifice can one truly come to

understand and know the essence of the world" (1988:15).

Raffan's (1992) study explains how in the traditional Chipewyan worldview, *God* and *understanding* are one, and known through the experience of *land*:

> Felix was able to help me see that to him the Creator is equal to understanding and rationality. The land is the work of the Creator on Earth, and as such, for Chipewyan people, it is a living connection to Him.... much more than a connection to an abstract deity, it is the Chipewyan link to understanding.... breaking Chipewyan connections to land would be tantamount to severing the tie to a whole system of understanding. (Raffan, 1992:112)

The social structure provides *knowledge*, but Turner's theory explains how the antistructural experience of nature is a source of wisdom or holistic understanding which transcends knowledge. Andrews (1996) describes Turner's theory that this liminal experience of understanding is a "generative center" for creativity, for improvements upon culture. It is a time for flexibility, creativity, questioning, and experimentation. The liminal, antistructural realm of communitas is the domain of the wildness that Thoreau rightly perceived as the culture's vital *source*, linked with creativity. Turner writes (1969:127):

> Relations between total beings are generative of symbols and metaphors and comparisons; art and religion are their products rather than legal and political structures. Bergson saw in the words and writings of prophets and great artists the creation of an "open morality," which was itself and expression of what he called the *elan vital*, or evolutionary "life-force." Prophets and artists tend to be liminal and marginal people, "edgemen," who strive with a passionate sincerity to rid themselves of the cliches associated with status incumbency and role-playing and to enter into vital relations with other men in fact or imagination. In their productions we may catch glimpses of that unused evolutionary potential in mankind which has not yet been externalized and fixed in structure.

The concept of moving "outside" of social structure into a cognitive wilderness is also reflected in the notion of the wilderness experience as a "phenomenological *epoche*" - a move beyond the dualistic categories of cognitive thought to perceive the world as it really is. This is Oelschlaeger's (1991) explanation of the wilderness experience. As an opportunity to perceive reality without the dualisms of Modernity which separate God and nature, fact and value, matter and spirit, Oelschlaeger sees the wilderness experience

as a "postmodern hierophany" - the dawning of non-dualistic perception in consciousness, otherwise interpreted as a return to the "Paleolithic mind."

This phenomenological metaphor is evident throughout the works of the great wilderness writers, representing a mystical experience of exiting the human realm of ideas and sensing the wholeness beyond, the overarching reality - wildness, "God," nature, mystery, reality, truth, Logos, Tao - from which Modern humans are alienated in their everyday lives. Wilderness for Edward Abbey (1984) represents what is found "beyond the wall" of conceptual abstraction - the "rage of lies" - just as it represents for Thoreau, "a hard bottom and rocks in place which we can call *reality*."

Communitas and Flow

Having discussed two accounts of the optimal experience, in terms of *communitas* and *flow*, the logical question is are these two formulations really referring to the same experience? Turner (1974) has addressed this question in a cursory manner, writing,

> ...*communitas* has something of a "flow" quality, but it may arise, and often does arise, spontaneously and unanticipated - it does not need rules to trigger it off...."flow" is experienced within an individual, whereas communitas at its inception is evidently between or among individuals - it is what all of us believe we share and its outputs emerge from dialogue, using both words and non-verbal means of communication, such as understanding smiles, jerks of the head, and so on, between us. "Flow" for me is already in the domain of what I have called "structure"; communitas is always prestructural....But "flow," for me, seems to be one of the ways in which "structure" may be transformed or "liquefied"...into communitas again. It is one of the techniques whereby people seek the lost "kingdom" or "antikingdom" of direct, unmediated communion with one another.... (1974:89)

Turner observes that both communitas and flow were experienced in ritual in pre-industrial societies, and subsequently mainly in the domain of leisure. He notes that flow can be solitary, whereas communitas presumes a group, and that flow is defined by the merging of action and awareness, whereas communitas sometimes involves the separation of these two elements. His main distinction, however, is in the area of rules, as he emphasizes flow as an experience initiated and bound by rules and emerging from

doing, whereas communitas can arise spontaneously merely in a group's *being* together without necessitating that they be acting together in flow.

I feel that the distinctions between communitas and flow, being minor ones, are less important than the similarities. Indeed, Turner writes, "'Flow' may induce communitas, and communitas 'flow,'..." (1974:79). In Modern societies, both communitas and flow occur outside the constraints of culture and the necessity of work, in an antistructural domain of *play* - the realm of *freedom*. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) and Turner (1974) both stress the importance of free play as a restorative and experimental ground, a source of creative inspiration, invention, novelty, criticism and vital purpose for culture, where flow and communitas are likely to arise. Communitas and flow are both products of a mental state more than a clearly definable external set of circumstances - they are both coincident with a *sense of freedom* from external constraints and motivations.

The dependence of flow on rules, on doing rather than being, and on the experience of self-forgetfulness, cause it to be distinguished from instances of communitas where these conditions do not appear to be present. But this distinction may be immaterial, since "flow" has also been associated with instances where none of these conditions are as obvious as they are in the typical examples of flow, such as chess. Such notable exceptions are flow "lifestyles" such as ocean cruising and farming (Della Fave and Massimini, 1988; MacBeth, 1988). The Kaplans' research as well as Mitchell's (1983) study of mountaineering also suggest that the compatibility of the wilderness environment with human goals tends to produce flow on an ongoing basis, or at least repetitively throughout an ongoing experience. Flow that perpetuates sufficiently over the long-term to characterize a lifestyle, permeates a way of being which transcends particular instances of action and self-forgetfulness. The wilderness traveller, ocean sailor or farmer would certainly emerge from the pure flow state in reflective moments, but the external conditions that produce flow are sustained throughout the experience. The sailor is in a "betwixt and between" state for as long as he/she is away from home, between ports or stopping briefly in foreign ports - a condition which can last for months

or even years. This state of being also has the effect, requisite for flow, of focussing attention on the here and now, without imposing "rules" in the formal sense of the games or sports with which flow is commonly associated. The ocean cruising condition is an environmental circumstance and way of life that results in a particular way of being which induces flow. In this sense flow is, like communitas, as much an outcome of being as of doing. Such cases illustrate that too much is made of the being-doing distinction, as well as of Turner's distinction between what arises spontaneously and what arises out of a rule-bound process. A sense of community, identifiable as Turner's communitas, also results from this flow-producing way of being, as Mitchell (1983) observes of mountaineering. *Both* flow and communitas describe aspects of the wilderness optimal experience. Turner and Csikszentmihalyi provide two ways of explaining a non-dualistic state of ultimate happiness, in which self, society, and environment are felt to be united.

Wilderness studies

Various wilderness researchers also provide related "explanations" of the experience, which are similarly based on an understanding of wilderness as a non-dualistic or non-conceptual environment. Stringer and McAvoy (1992), for example, found that spiritual experiences on wilderness adventure trips were perceived to be due to "the absence of constraints and obligations that people usually had in their everyday lives," and also "a new and/or unusual living environment."

> It might be surmised...that the operative factor for some participants was being in a **different** environment, free from normal constrains on time and energy, as opposed to being *necessarily* in a **wilderness** environment. (1992:17)

The spiritual experiences reported in the study were related to the typical triad of extended relationships: a heightened awareness of or attunement to self, others, or environment.

Greenway (1990;1995a;1995b) has conducted extensive research on wilderness experience and concluded that the wilderness effect is due to a non-dualistic environment. Greenway observes that the intensity of the wilderness experience is related to the degree

that it is "ego-dissolving," which is in turn related to the absence of cultural influences, which are dualistic and ego-reinforcing. For this reason Greenway (1995b) operates his trips as rituals to accentuate the natural and deemphasize the cultural. His trips have much in common with Turner's descriptions of antistructure, incorporating times of silence, rules against talking about civilization, new names for the participants, minimal food and minimal variety of food, no reading or writing materials. Greenway argues that such a strict elimination of cultural influences is necessary for a true wilderness experience, for entering a *psychological* wilderness, which is a non-dualistic consciousness. By his standards, the majority of "wilderness trips" do not enter psychological wilderness, because they do not leave behind the trappings of culture.

> It is my opinion that very few wilderness trips cross the wilderness boundary, psychologically. Most people, leaders or participants, play out their cultural ideas of wilderness, so the trip enhances their power as defined by the culture, or their ability to integrate into the culture. Such excursions look on the wilderness itself as a kind of a theme park, an experience for which one pays an entrance fee and expects a certain amount of adventure, or weight loss, or improvement in a relationship; plenty of gourmet freeze-dried dinners; some campfire songs like in the movies; and warm snuggling in the $350 down sleeping bag with the Gore-Tex outer shell. (1995b:191)

Greenway finds more profound psychological effects on trips with stronger anti-cultural, "ego-dissolving" elements. On such trips there tends to be an increase in the severity of depression occurring upon return to civilization. His research is inspired by the question of how to overcome this depression and conflict, to fully realize wilderness benefits. He finds that it is critical to understand the root of this problem in the difference between dualistic and non-dualistic modes of processing information, which represent the key difference between cultural experience and wilderness experience.

The wilderness experience is "a shift from culturally reinforced, dualism-producing reality processing to a more nondualistic mode" (Greenway, 1995a:131). The non-dualistic mode of awareness is similar to psychedelic and meditative experiences. Experiences of consciousness in wilderness are described as "open" and "airy," versus "turgid," "tight," and "crowded" in urban culture. The cultural mode of processing

information, Greenway calls "dualism-producing," whereas "systemic communion" occurs in wilderness. Civilization is characterized as a rampant dualism that has severed human experience from a whole that could be called "Mind." Greenway explains this vision, expressing a pantheism reminiscent of Spinoza and Jeffers,

> Bateson, John Dewey before him, and Buddhist philosophy long, long before either, have defined Mind as the sum of all natural processes and the information that emanates from them. Mind is an immanent property of the universe.... Mind seen this way is not limited to the human brain. It is more fundamental than consciousness, and encompasses all consciousness.
>
> Consciousness would therefore be a property of Mind that allows for self-reflexive experience. Consciousness arises *out* of Mind and thus can exist in various relationships to it. In urban-industrial Western culture, consciousness is often experienced as separate from Mind. Certainly the self-reflexive consciousness....this ability to make distinctions and "self-reflect" now appears as a beautiful capacity run amok, proceeding from distinction to disjunction, from reflection to alienation, and from alienation to the kind of full-blown split between subjects and objects (or between the poles of any disjunction) termed "dualism." Dualism summarizes our cultural "mode of knowing" or "information processing" and is perhaps the source of our pervasive sense of being disconnected. This in turn produces our obsession with needs and wants - the massive addictions that characterize our period in history. (1995a:130-131)

Greenway claims that his influences include the wilderness experience itself, Jung, Bateson's systemic work related to "Dewey's magnificent philosophical analysis of dualism", psychedelics, and Buddhist practice. Furthermore, he explains, "Always underlying this quest for language has been the exquisite prose and poetry of the 'nature writers' such as Gary Snyder, Annie Dillard, Barry Lopez, Aldo Leopold, Richard Nelson, and many others, who were indeed finding a voice to express our relationship to nature" (123). What these influences all have in common is their effort to express an uncommon form of relationship of consciousness to the whole of Nature, Mind, or God - a "non-goal oriented awareness" which "seems to have the capacity to open consciousness to Mind" (1995a:132).

Using this understanding of the wilderness experience as a different form of relationship that enhances connection rather than separation, Greenway is able to account for the post-wilderness depression, and posit solutions. "In the painful 'reentry'

experience," he explains, "we *feel* our newly open and connected beings congeal into hardened, separate, well-defended selves" (1995a:133). Csikszentmihalyi (1990) claims that in the optimal experience "psychic energy flows freely" as the world is perceived as an ordered system in which there is a feeling of control. In Turner's (1969;1974) description of communitas, there is a similar sense of empowerment, "potency." Depression, by contrast, can be explained in terms of a lowering of available mental energy or a dissipation of energy by the urban environment which is overstimulating in a dualistic way which requires sensory processes to be "closed, limited, or...selective" (Greenway, 1995b).

As Turner (1974) has explained, it is difficult to experience a sense of control, of "flow," in civilization because life is too complicated by the social structure to allow attention to be focussed in an unselfconscious way. Constant demands are placed on the self as mediator. In this sense, as long as psychic energy - of which Csikszentmihalyi (1990) observes there is a quantifiable and limited amount - is spent on the mediating action of the self, the full complement of one's attention can never be brought to bear on action itself. He explains that "psychic energy" is really a term for *attention*; it could be interpreted as the ability to focus attention, which would be related to the ability to perceive order in experience. Csikszentmihalyi writes, "one cannot think, feel, and will in relation to more than a few stimuli at the same time" (1988:22).

> Psychic entropy not only causes disorder in consciousness, but it impairs its efficiency as well. Attention is withdrawn from other tasks to deal with the conflicting information. (1988:22)

Because, as Csikszentmihalyi explains, the self is represented by goals, encountering stimuli which conflict with personal goals results in a disintegration of self. This dissipation of attention accounts for a feeling of frustration and incompetence, as the self is continuously encountering barriers to "throwing itself" into action with a totality that produces satisfaction and feelings of efficacy. In contrast is the wilderness that provides goal compatibility, which induces an "effortless" way of being because opportunities for action exist that do not demand self-conscious "negotiation" with

surroundings (Kaplan and Talbot, 1983). Depression results not from having "work" to do in civilization, but rather from the sense of being unable to act freely that comes from a dualistic way of processing information, a disengaged and self-conscious form of relationship between consciousness and the larger reality. The return to civilization produces a sense of loss, which characterizes the quiet desperation of everyday life in a civilization where something vital is missing, but nobody seems to know how to articulate the problem:

> The anguished yearning for something lost is inescapable for those not in psychiatric care or on weekend psychic sprees, but who live daily in time-serving labor, overdense groups, and polluted surroundings. Blurry aspirations are formulated in concealed infantilisms and mediated in spectator entertainment, addiction to worldwide news, and religious revivalism. (Shepard, 1995:36)

Henderson (1995), in a ten-year study of wilderness trips with university students based on literature, personal experience and a qualitative interpretation of student journals, interprets the "reality transition" of wilderness travel as a "disorientation" from culturally-determined modes of thought, operating in much the same manner as the Zen *koan*. "Having surfaced from immersion in our conventions and structures, we may begin to see anew, in a way Alfred Schutz called 'a wide-awakedness.'" What we come to realize in nature, he explains, is "understanding of our organic reality to the earth, that we are largely losing as a culture/self-misunderstanding" (184).

"Self-realization" is rooted in what Henderson terms "the wild centre" - which is the non-conceptual area of "doubt" which is "left out" of traditional academic discourse. The "wild centre" is encountered through wilderness experience. "Doubt" is the source of self which was left off the "maps" of Schumacher's childhood; and it is the ignorance which Thoreau preaches in "Walking." Passionate wilderness canoeist, writer, and filmmaker Robert Perkins in a book titled *Against Straight Lines* (1983), expresses the similar view that true life is what happens "between the facts." The "wild centre" is a place in which self and others can be experienced as "immediate reality." Henderson holds the belief common to other wilderness writers that this "source" or "centre" is civilization's salvation, the source of goodness, and hope, contact with which must be

maintained.

Duerr (1985) interprets wilderness travel as a stepping into wildness, and the experience of "what we are *not*." For him, true wilderness is what he calls "dreamtime" and "dream place." The "dream" concept expresses wilderness' absence of absolute, objective existence. It is rather a state of mind. Dreamplace for Duerr is analogous to Henderson's "wild centre" and perhaps Thoreau's "polestar." Duerr writes that dream place "is *in the centre*, and that centre is both everywhere and nowhere." In Sioux tradition, explains Duerr, in the centre of the earth lives the deity *Wakan-Tanka*, but the center is in reality everywhere.

Dolores LaChapelle (1988), a deep ecologist and freelance scholar, has been inspired like the Romantics and environmentalists described by Evernden (1993), to critically examine Modern civilization in a search for lost value. She discovered "value" missing from cultural "maps" of everyday life, in deep powder skiing and mountain climbing in the Colorado Rockies. She writes, "the mountains not only saved me from eurocentric delusions; they taught me things that our dominant culture lost long ago" (1988:9). In search of an alternative way of being that reincorporates such values into everyday life, she is typical of many deep ecologists in that she draws on diverse sources of inspiration, including Taoism, Joseph Needham's studies of Chinese thought, pre-Socratic Greek philosophy, native wisdom, Victor Turner's studies of ritual, Gregory Bateson's systems theory, the existential phenomenological philosophy of Heidegger, Jungian psychology, ethology and neuroscience. LaChapelle cites Needham, arguing that Chinese thought, including Taoism, is important because it finds reality in *relation*, whereas Western philosophy finds reality in *substance*. What we in the west experience in wilderness, she observes, is something of a relational worldview, in contrast to the dualistic philosophy upon which our civilization is based. A direct experience of the world is responsible for the wilderness effect, she implies. She argues that civilized humans have been alienated from this experience primarily as a result of Greek rationalism, and the "Greek language problem" which arose because Greek was the only language which did not develop directly from spoken language. She cites Barrington

Nevitt (1988:24):

> The very process of reading and writing Greek...transformed the tribal dream into the private psyche of ego-trips unlimited; it had divorced thinking from doing; it had...replaced myth replaying universal human experience, with history recounting particular events about individual people; it had substituted abstract nature for chaotic existence as the basis, not only for science and philosophy, but for all thought and action that constitute Western civilization.

In contrast, she argues that the Chinese language is necessarily poetic, based on individual characters that have their own meaning, derived directly from drawings of physical things, portraying the relations of man, nature, and the divine. Unlike Western language, she claims, the Chinese language does not presuppose the concept of a subject/object dualism and humanity apart from nature. The Western focus on objective, substantial things, out of the context of their relations to other things, is presumed by our language, which was designed to encourage an abstract relationship to the world. She explains (1988:26):

> A person looking at the written signs could review, rearrange and take a second look at it, "torn out" from its natural context. Hence intellectuals were created. This was the goal of early Platonism - the autonomous thinking subject - working on the wholly abstract "object." This is what Platonic ideas are all about. Plato felt that they should not be real in any way or else the people were in danger of falling back onto the bardic world where everything was connected to everything else.

LaChapelle explains that Plato created the perfect, predictable world of "forms" to support the reflective, scientific, technological, theological, analytic experience of the world. In Platonic idealism, according to Konrad Lorenz, "images formed by our perceiving apparatus were taken for reality and the real objects to be imperfect, fleeting shadows of perfect, imperishable ideas" (in LaChapelle, 1988:55). She explains (1988:26):

> Only a few, such as Bateson, see this problem clearly. Too many are still pursuing "ideals," blissfully unaware that, that in itself is part of the problem. Beginning with Plato, *physis* - "that which was beyond all order and which was holding everything in order - itself became merely matter exposed to the ordering principle, ideas; it became that which can be ordered." So, in the realm of nature itself, humans decided they could organize nature according to what the rational

> neo-cortex thought it should be. Furthermore, the human psyche itself became "identified as the cognitive or rational element in human beings." But this false understanding "was a new one, and only after Plato did it come to dominate the earlier view of the psyche as essentially biological, emotional, or non-rational." Thus you can see how we become estranged from our true nature inside and all of nature outside.

The effect of organizing the world according to an abstract, dualistic, scientific mode of perception means, according to Bateson, "we are all in a lab of our own making, in which we drive each other crazy." Our alienation from nature is a source of madness, of disease. Citing an example from Bateson, LaChapelle (1988) explains that we are conditioned by the situation of civilization to expect perfection, and are thus easily driven mad by little things that would not bother us in a natural setting. Thoreau would agree that this sort of inward awareness is a diseased perception, as the awareness of politics is a form of "dyspepsia." Bateson explains that in a laboratory, an animal's behaviour can be conditioned by a pain stimulus that would have no effect on the creature in a natural setting. Similarly, LaChapelle observes that when rock climbing, scraped and bleeding hands are often unnoticeable. She also tells the story of a time when a serious pelvic joint problem was healed by a day of rock climbing. She argues that many such problems result from the lack of a holistic perspective which prevents humans from being what we truly are, and experiencing wholeness, and thus healing. Using addiction as example, she argues that with a holistic perspective, it is not possible to be addicted to a particular "thing," or substance, because substance has no reality. LaChapelle argues that addictions are a product of artificial surroundings, writing,

> Every single traditional human culture has used either alcohol or a drug...but there was seldom addiction to these drugs before the modern era because they weren't used as a "substance" but rather as a gift of the Gods which enhanced their "relationship" to all other beings: human, natural, and sacred. But today in our world, where life itself has been made so boring and monotonous because we humans have been turned into another substance to be managed by multinational corporations; the normal life, which produced these endorphins, automatically, in us is no longer possible. Addiction in some form is the natural result. Over-eating is another form of this addiction. Eating, not because one is hungry but because one is starved for real living. (1988:50)

LaChapelle argues, interestingly, that "the entire development of capitalism consists in making a group of people addicted to some 'substance' and selling it to them" (1988:49). And by similar logic, Shepard observes that "the psychology of self-actualization, group dynamics, and personal therapy, aimed at healing individuals deprived of appropriate adolescent religious experience, though helpful to the individual, is basically antagonistic to the modern state, which needs fearful followers and slogan-shouting idealists" (1995:38). The modern state, which has elsewhere been called the "Industrial Growth Society" is a "commodity culture," built on the spurious and specious belief that reality and value consists in things (LaChapelle, 1988).

LaChapelle explains that the wilderness experience is a healing experience of wholeness, that we cannot experience in civilization because the rationalization of the world in technological society has eliminated opportunities for such total mind-body-spirit engagement in the world. She turns to evolution and to ethology to explain that we feel joy in wilderness because we are animals. "Unless we realize the glory of being both animal and human we will keep trying to destroy the earth to save it with new 'ideas'" (1988:57). For example, she speculates that rock climbing may be so inherently pleasurable because it engages the body "doing what it was designed to do by millennia of evolution." Her analysis expands the discussion of "compatibility," to understand wilderness as an environment for which humans are adapted by evolution, and civilization as an environment that denies some of our basic needs, because from a rational perspective, we have a very limited accounting of the full complexity of those needs are and tend to deny that we are anything but rational beings with no "natural" needs.

From Jung, LaChapelle (1988) derives the idea that the full depth of the self, of which the conscious mind is a small part, contains an essence which is an extension of the essence of wild nature. Our alienation from nature and the joy we experience when reunited with it represents our alienation from the whole of our being, caused by Plato's legacy of an overemphasis of the rational mind, and the wholeness that we feel when we are freed to live through the whole of our brain. She argues that cultures once

incorporated the means to restore the balance between the rational and the non-rational, and to make human life responsible to a larger reality. These avenues to wholeness which include ritual, myth, poetry, chanting, and the experience of wild nature, have been suppressed by Modern culture which has replaced them with "things."

Explanations of the optimal, or "spiritual" experience in wilderness are not limited to those of the humanistic social sciences given above. Wilderness spirituality may be explained in scientifically materialist terms. The experience of rhythm, for example, in repetitive physical activity or by observing the rhythms of nature in such phenomena as moving water and celestial cycles may be responsible for inducing a subjective sense of unity by stimulating the simultaneous firing of the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems (McDonald, 1990). Variations in the earth's magnetic field, the effects of altitude, the presence of anti-depressants such as lithium in drinking water, or atmospheric ionization in storms, at waterfalls and seasides, and on mountain summits are all possible explanations of spiritual wilderness experiences (LaChapelle, 1988; McDonald, 1990). Unfortunately, given the aim of this study, the "moral" of the wilderness experience may be as varied as explanations of the experience. A full neurophysiological account of the wilderness experience, if it were possible, might make the moral conclusions of the humanists, artists, and qualitative researchers like myself seem naive and obsolete. But there is not and will likely never be a complete scientific account that answers the question of how one ought to live, which is a distinctly unscientific question. My moral conclusions will remain within the humanistic tradition, by examining the moral implied in how myself and other writers, researchers, and wilderness adventurers have attempted to resolve the "problem" of wilderness.

Conclusion

A review of wilderness academic and non-academic literature relevant to the question of the meaning of wilderness adventure experience to everyday life, reveals a variety of perspectives that analyze the wilderness experience in terms that are remarkably congruent around the concept of dualism versus non-dualism, structure versus

freedom, rational knowledge versus ignorance and intuition - concepts that have not changed significantly since originally expressed by artists of the Romantic movement. A "wholeness" is experienced in wilderness which is the "optimal" or "spiritual" experience. "Making sense" of this experience reveals the problem faced by religion, predicating the existence of an ordered wholeness in a world that too often appears fragmented. A way of coming to terms with the wilderness experience can thus be seen as "a religion." Such a way is found in the lives and works of wilderness writers and also implied in academic works. It already appears that it may be wrong to use the term "moral" to describe the a way of living inspired by wilderness. But this "way of being" is discussed in upcoming chapters, beginning with a presentation of the results from interviews with eight wilderness adventurers.

CHAPTER 4
DISCUSSION: INTERVIEWS

Introduction to interview participants

This discussion is an amalgamation of the individual summaries of eight interviews to reveal the common experience as it pertains to a moral inspiration for everyday life. Seven of the participants are male and one is female. I have assigned them the pseudonyms Chris, Alex, Simon, Rachel, Reed, Scott, John, and Robin. These names are listed in ascending order of age, which ranges from late twenties to late fifties. Three of the participants - Chris, Rachel, and John - grew up in Victoria and Vancouver. The remainder are from other parts of Canada but also now live on Canada's West Coast. All of the participants are "wilderness adventurers" in that they hike or paddle or climb regularly in natural settings. Their experiences in relatively natural, unmodified areas are a root inspiration in their lives. Most agree that they can have wilderness experiences close to the cities in which they live, but they differ in how far afield they will ultimately travel. For two of the participants, Rachel and John, the most significant wilderness experiences are in local areas accessible within one day of home. The other six participants travel to remote areas on a regular basis for days or weeks at a time. The outcomes of both types of experience are remarkably similar, as are the ways in which the experiences are interpreted as an inspiration for everyday life.

All of the participants except Rachel have completed university undergraduate degrees. Four have been to graduate school - Reed and Simon have Master's degrees, Alex is completing a Master's degree, and Scott has completed a PhD. Two of the participants, Chris and Alex, are involved in wilderness adventure as full-time professional outdoor instructors. For the remaining six, wilderness experience is strictly recreational. Of these six, Scott teaches university chemistry, Robin is an engineer, and the other four have sought careers related to their wilderness interests. Rachel has searched for a career that pertains directly to her nature experience, such as wilderness therapy or education, but is currently unemployed. The remaining three were inspired by

their outdoor backgrounds to take environmental degrees and seek jobs with government. Of these three, Reed has quit and moved on to a career in environmental education and activism, Simon has quit and sought other ways to fulfill interests in wilderness experience and environmental activism, and John has retired early and devoted more time to wilderness experience. Five of the eight - Chris, Alex, Scott, Rachel, and Reed - have career interests related to education.

Outline of major themes

The common experience reveals how the wilderness experience is primarily one of engagement - a subjective experience of total involvement with the environment that demands heightened awareness and results in a heightened sense of being alive, a more intense experience of reality reminiscent of Edward Abbey's longing for "a hard and brutal mysticism in which the naked self merges with a non-human world" (1968:6). The result is a sense of connection to an environment that represents an all-encompassing, ultimate reality, as well as a more authentic sense of self and community. This reality becomes seen as ultimately important, a spiritual inspiration presenting a truthful perspective upon which life should be based. The result is an attitude in which life's main priority becomes maintenance of an ongoing relationship with this reality mainly through regular trips into wilderness and other activities that have the effect of "freeing" the mind from the everyday perception that produces stress. Also, the adventurers demonstrate humility, aiming to conform human actions to the limitations and interconnections learned in nature, rather than to cultural trends. Finally, they live by a definition of success inspired by the experience of relationship rather than an attachment to things. The major themes are presented in Table 2 in the order that they will be discussed.

Table 2: Outline of major themes from the interviews

- The Childhood Experience
- Wilderness Adventure as an Experience of Engagement
  - Experiences of adventure
    - Transition into mental wilderness
    - Getting into intense relationship
    - Awareness
    - Risk and isolation
    - Accepting responsibility
    - Meditation
  - Experiences of wildness
    - Wilderness as a relative concept
    - The essential wildness and freedom
    - The absolute need for nature
    - Nature in the city
    - Wildlife encounters
    - "Just being" - the aesthetic experience
    - Wilderness definitions
  - Optimal, "root experiences"
    - Cause for gratitude
    - Being real to self and others
    - Connection with the land
    - Spiritual renewal and inspiration
    - A sense of perspective
    - Wilderness experience as life's core, as religion
    - A moral imperative from the wilderness experience
- Wilderness Adventure Religion
  - Defining Ultimate Reality
    - Down-to-earth religion
    - Seeking to know a larger reality, to learn and grow
    - Loyalty to the natural order, living within limits
  - Attitude for maintaining a relationship with reality
    - Awareness and acceptance of reality
    - Humility fitting into a natural order
    - Responsibility
  - Staying mindful
    - A rootless civilization
    - Remembering what's important
    - Change for the sake of change
    - Always returning to wilderness
    - Structuring lifestyle around a unifying purpose
    - A sense of purpose
    - A commitment to education
    - Environmental activism
    - A non-materialistic view of success

The Childhood Experience

One of the participants, Robin, became most involved in wilderness activities in mid-life, after the pressures of early career and family life yielded to allow more time for mountaineering locally and abroad. But he remembers being interested in wilderness adventure at an early age, growing up on the prairies and hunting to supply game to the family dinner table. In high school he read Maurice Herzog's classic mountain tale, *Annapurna*.

> I got quite interested in that climb and I made my own crampons out of old tacks and old shoes, and I took his maps and reproduced them, and got quite interested in the process of Himalayan climbing.

Later in life he fulfilled the ambition to go trekking in the Himalayas, and climbed to 18 000 feet.

For all of the other interview participants, a lifelong involvement with the wilderness began early in life, with childhood experiences of hiking with parents, grandparents or youth groups, with the wonder of wilderness areas close to home kindling the desire to travel farther and farther afield and become more immersed in wilderness. Books and magazines fed their ambitions too. As Chris recalls, "I saw pictures of climbing and skiing and just *knew* I wanted to do those things, so it just snowballed from there." Simon remembers wanting to walk through mountains he saw pictured in a grade school library book about the Yukon.

The inspiration of mentors and books seemed to combine with something innate in the adventurers themselves that turned them to wilderness for inspiration, as Simon explains.

> I grew up in Toronto but my mother's parents lived in a small town about an hour and a half east of Toronto. And they lived a country lifestyle. They had the big old house and the huge garden...and their way of life was...much more in tune with natural processes. They grew most of their own food. They never had garbage. They had an old wood burning stove.... I think it was important that I had that other influence in my life, that there was reasons that I was...not attracted to the city and the urban sort of lifestyle and all...the material things that are associated with that. It was just something that I never learned to respect.... That in line with

> my interests I already had in outdoors things led me to always not like the city. I've never liked Toronto. I couldn't wait to get out of it.... My spare time was never into doing things in the city. I was always doing outdoor things....

John iterates the sense of an innate attraction to wilderness, and raises another line of questioning by wondering why he is unlike many other people in his passion for nature:

> I don't remember a specific time in my life when I suddenly said, "oh my god! I really like being outside!" I have always, always been like that.... My parents were avid hikers.... My mother in fact hiked right up until about her eighth month of pregnancy with me, and they still hiked after I was born. And whether that has anything to do with it, I mean maybe is it something you learn in your formative years? Is it something you sense when you're in the womb? Is it something you inherit as a posture of your parents...?

Their memories recount the themes of later experiences: freedom; the wonder of a new experience; the intensity and excitement of danger and unfamiliarity; positive "connection" feelings of peace, well-being, and friendship; and a sense of accomplishment from facing new challenges and learning.

Early experiences in wilderness areas close to home or school are meaningful introductions to what grows to become most important in life, as John explains:

> My uncle is a fisheries officer...and we spent a lot of time going up the Sechelt Peninsula area and Howe Sound, and I can remember sitting in the boat in absolute awe at that time, because at that time...it was not uncommon to see killer whales. It was not uncommon, I believe my recollection tells me, to see pilot whales. And the fishing was just unbelievable...! We spent a lot of time in his boat, and then he transferred to Vancouver Island. In the summer time I would come over and we would spend our time going up places like the English River and French Creek and Big Qualicum River to examine the salmon stocks. And in very late summer we would go into the creeks and pick up any young fish that had been stranded by the drying of the river. And then he moved to the Queen Charlotte Islands...! And that was just absolutely remarkable...! I don't know if that's what *started* me, or if it was always there, but that's my first recollection of something telling me that this is an experience that is more than high school dances, playing pool, going to a movie, or going to house parties. From that point on I can recall every opportunity I got to spend some time in what I guess to me at that time was wilderness, because I was still quite young but there were a lot of areas of Vancouver which were still undeveloped.

Chris likens wilderness travel to an art, striving to recapture this original awareness of what is most valuable. He cites Camus, saying, "Life is nothing but the slow journey to

rediscover through the detours of art those first few and simple images in whose presence the heart is first opened." Early recollections of his wilderness experience include a sense of wonder at seeing wild animals, and the danger of winter ice on a lake where his brother fell through. Compared to the already confined and predictable life at home, the wilderness represented freedom and excitement.

For Alex, who spent his early childhood in Africa, it was the "power of life" that he remembers.

> The school that I went to was...on this huge estate, so there was a forest, and you saw snakes and birds. I remember seeing a toucan for the first time at the school property. The sense of the world around us and animals.... I got interested in that kind of thing at an early age...just the amazing amount of life that's just around you all the time there...going through game parks and seeing lions, and leopards, and cheetahs, and elephants and giraffes.... Just being totally amazed at the sheer power of all these creatures and animals and their life.... I remember seeing rhinos lying dead with the horns cut off, animals dying because of a drought or whatever. I mean it wasn't all sort of Garden of Eden kind of image, but just the sheer power of all the life there...I remember really quite profoundly.

He went hiking with cub scouts to an old volcano crater, and recalls, "I just remember feeling really good about myself, really happy...."

The sense of freedom that came with the wilderness experience was important, a feeling of being in an area without boundaries, exposed to reality outside the physical mediums of buildings and vehicles, and outside the social confines of school. Wilderness represented something of the larger world beyond the day to day experience. Alex recalls,

> What's neat is so much of the traveling we did as a family in East Africa, because of the nature of the parks and stuff, you're in a Land Rover, for example, and it's really hard to get - for safety reasons it's very hard to get away from the car. And one of the neat things with being with the scouts is that we did trips on *foot* there. We walked through the bush...and just getting to do that there, being able to get away from everything and just thinking, "Wow". Cause there's a sense of fear when you see a lion kill...and you know they could be around and it's just kind of a neat thrill.

John's experience highlights the sense of deep significance that came with the experience of a limitless terrain, how the feeling of awe was counterposed by a sense of the relative

unimportance of everyday preoccupations.

> I think just the sheer size of it all- the size of it and its dimensions! Its dimensions within its size. I mean to me in my younger years it seemed limitless. If you think of your life in your first thirteen years you think of basically being within forms. You're in a school or you're in a house or you're in your friend's house or you're in a hockey rink or you're in a swimming pool or you're in something that confines you, particularly if you grow up in a city. You're in downtown or.. Everything has boundaries.... But being out in the middle of the Strait of Georgia, there didn't seem to be any boundaries, even though you could see both coastlines, it just seemed because it went on forever beyond, that you could see beyond and you could see the mountains on the other side, you could see the Coast Mountains on this side. I think the size of it and the fact that it didn't have any apparent influence by what we culturally see as beautiful things.

This citation recalls Aldous Huxley's (1994) observation that the experience of distance is one of the first and fundamental religious experiences.

Closer to the theme of religion, the wilderness experience is also remembered as a profoundly peaceful experience, one which provided a refuge and realization of one's true identity, away from the pressures of life at home and school, as well as a sense of interconnectedness with friends and the natural environment. There were also opportunities to learn new skills, demonstrate competence and gain a sense of independence. These themes are evident in the following quotations. Learning and camaraderie were important to Simon, as was the sense of peace that became a highlight of his later experiences.

> We'd learn how to build a fire without any matches and stuff like that. There was a neat independence about it.... Basically teaching ourselves outdoor skills is what we were doing.... Those early experiences were a time when we...learned by the seat of our pants as we went along. And it was a time when we were informing ourselves. And we weren't making mistakes. We were doing things properly. And that felt good. It instilled a certain sense of confidence, in myself at least, that, "yeah, I've got the brains to do this." That "this is fun, and we're relatively safe here.... It was also a bonding thing. Those guys are still my best friends to this day, even though we're now scattered across the country.... We established a bond that I don't think will ever be broken.... There was a certain camaraderie with these early friends of mine.... It was always like from the time we left to the time we went home was a big laugh-fest. We'd be joking around the whole time. And then things like at nighttime just sitting out, no-one would say a word and we're looking up at the stars...just really enjoying the time. We'd

> all build a fire and sit around and we'd talk and shoot the shit and then eventually there'd always be a time when the conversation would just stop and we'd all just sit there for a while, yet no one felt the need to say anything! And then just those moments when it's like you're at peace with yourself, and that was a precursor to the time I spent alone after that. It made me comfortable with those sorts of moments.... And for me...it started this desire to be able to get away and spend quiet time like that.

Alex developed his outdoor skills at summer camp, and learned a sense of competence and independence that came from living outdoors, where he felt "true to who I was."

> I wasn't being pushed and reacting in certain ways. All kids rebel.... But I don't think that rebellion necessarily reflects who they are.... I did a solo trip when I was fifteen as part of a camp project, and it was great! Used the axe, started the fire, did all those things. I was perfectly capable of living my life, living for four days on my own and doing those things with no one saying I couldn't do that, I couldn't do that. There were no rules there. So it was a very powerful experience, and it made sense, that ultimately I could take on that responsibility and meet other people's expectations. It was good. I learned a lot of self-confidence in the wilderness....

Reed felt a deep affiliation with nature from the earliest times when he grew up literally on the edge of a national park, with a wilderness playground in his backyard. His desire to wander was so strong that his parents would tie him to a tree behind the house. But his grandfather was a great woodsman, a logger turned park warden who would take him on walks and teach him the lore of the forest. When he grew old enough he began a private campaign of wilderness immersion, trying to blend into the forest the way he learned in books by Grey Owl and E.T. Seton. When Reed felt at one with the environment around him, he also felt that he was being accepted for who he was.

> I could sit still for a *very* long period of time, and just let the forest close back in around me, and have all sorts of wild creatures come up very, very close.... That was my introduction to the woods at a very, very young age. And the woods for me became a place where I felt totally accepted. Just unconditional acceptance! There was nothing out there to judge me, to blame me. Nothing! And I loved it! I loved being alone. I loved just rambling, I loved just listening, and stalking.... I still have the memory of the smell of the forest in the spring...aspen, which has a very sweet, pungent odor in the spring as the resins are starting to come up. I still have that smell burned deep in my olfactory senses.... And the sound of the frogs

> as they're first emerging out of the muds.... It was just an opportunity to be in a place, or to slip into the forest and then see how much of the forest I could...become! Literally! How much of what was going on around me could I meld in with, and to what degree could I be accepted by what was there?

Rachel experienced a similar sense of connectedness when she went alone into wilderness near her home. Nature was her true home, a refuge where she could experience spiritual renewal.

> If I could spend time doing what I was doing with a friend I would, but a lot of times you can't. You get bugged or you get talking about something at school and you're not there. You're like, right there...! I...wouldn't be able to say when I was little what I was doing...but it was really important to me. It fed me. It recharged me. It took away everything. It made nothing else exist.... What existed in front of me was more important.... It just seemed to transform.... It was all real...it's all hard rocks and cold...water getting you wet.... But something would happen to me. Things seemed to be there that weren't. I had a sense that there was something there, alive, not human, but not something you can touch.... I felt that I was in it, somehow, that I was a part of it, not separated from it....
>
> And then, sort of like a meditation I guess...! Just constant rushing of the water and the sun dancing on the water and everything else and you're somewhere.... And then you start to experience everything as being different.... You start to see things you didn't see before. And they are there! Like the rainbows coming across on the mist and stuff. But at first you don't see that. And then, seeing...coloured light off trees.... When I was a kid I remembered that I saw that all the time, but you kinda lose it....You're just in it. You become part of it.

Already the wilderness experience was overwhelmingly positive, something that came to be seen as more significant than home or school life. With this set of priorities putting wilderness experience first, Simon viewed school as "just a filler between camping trips." The wilderness experience was so important, he says, laughing, that he did not even have a girlfriend in high school. "If someone comes along who wants to go camping, great. But if not, forget it. I'm not into it!"

Wilderness Adventure as an Experience of Engagement

The wilderness experience that was already so important in the wilderness adventurers' childhoods has yielded many more memorable moments. These moments

can be roughly divided into experiences of adventure and experiences of wonder or "wildness." The former are experiences of direct involvement with landscape that are intensified by situations of uncertainly, unfamiliarity, danger, isolation, or physical challenge. Experiences of wonder are experiences of "connection" that arise from seeing wild animals, or from the aesthetic-mystical appreciation of beauty in wild nature. There is much overlap between these two forms of the experience. Even the concept of the "sublime" so central to the wilderness experience of grandeur and vastness derives its power from the combination of aesthetic beauty and a fear born of perceived risk or unfamiliarity. The outcomes of the experiences are the same: a sense of exhilarating freedom, fullness of "being," presence of mind in-the-moment, a sense of connection. Both types of experiences do not belong to the wilderness exclusively, but nature or "wildness" is their ultimate source, where they are most intensely felt.

Experiences of adventure

Through adventure, one works on "getting into relationship" with the land. The second, "deep appreciation" type of wilderness experience is more spontaneous. Intuition and experience suggest, however, that involvement in adventure enhances receptivity to this second type of wilderness experience. Many explanations of the wilderness experience describe this process of "getting into relationship," which has much to say about the "moral" of the experience. In a sense "the way is the goal" - the process that one follows to arrive at the optimal experience is also the moral imperative of the experience. What yields good becomes defined as good.

Transition into mental wilderness

At the outset of the wilderness experience, the adventurer is in wilderness physically, but a transition must take place before he is "there" mentally. An element of this transition is relinquishing the desire to control one's external circumstances. To a degree the traveller must replace the habitual civilized mindset of controlling with a wilderness mindset of *accepting* situations that seem uncomfortable or inconvenient.

Thoughts of complaint or fear are replaced with the commitment to cope or "deal" with matters at hand, like the discomfort of a heavy pack or the inconvenience of cooking a meal in the rain. Chris describes this acceptance as a "mental struggle" which is ongoing throughout the wilderness experience. He equates the mental struggle with "suffering," but ironically uses it to define the wilderness experience that he loves. On his first trips hiking on the West Coast Trail, he faced rain, learning

> that really you can't just go turn on the light switch and close the window, and that you just were getting wet and had no choice but to deal with it. I remember the frustration of being wet and not being comfortable, which is knowing that you have to get on with it.

The key to the experience was "just learning how to be prepared for those situations or how to deal with them and get things done." For Chris wilderness adventure came to mean the mental struggle against the desire to have things "be easy." Chris remembers feeling rewarded by the "struggle" even while he endured it. "It almost seems looking back on it that I shouldn't have ever wanted to do it again, but all that suffering appealed to me.... It seemed to be the way it was supposed to be." Mountaineering for him is simply a more intense version of "just dealing with some adversity"; it is the "art of suffering." Chris mentions a climber who lives by the credo, "those who choose the easier path are spiritual middle classers." Wanting things to be easy, he suggests, is "giving up." Scott agrees:

> If it was all easy you wouldn't bother doing it. A few years down the road when we can do it all on virtual reality without even leaving our living room, then who cares. I think part of the reason people go out there is that it isn't always easy, and so people who go into the wilderness are willing to put up with a certain amount of stuff like that just because the payoff is so big in terms of a sense of accomplishment or a sense of experiencing nature or just a feeling of being more involved with the planet.

The struggle occurs partly because wilderness is an unfamiliar situation. Alex defines wilderness as a place where our "lore" - the practical knowledge that we use in our day to day lives - is no longer applicable. Thus in wilderness "you get thrown into confusion and conflict." "So the question is how do you cope? If your worldview's challenged and is no longer valid, how do you cope with it?" The traveller faces the

growth experience of coming to terms with reality in new ways. Alex describes the transition from being an "introvert," withdrawn and confused by the unfamiliar, to understanding the environment enough be more at ease. Of the confusion at the outset, Alex says, "sometimes you have to go through those rough times in order to understand what's going on."

For Alex the transition is not a "mental struggle" that is ongoing, but an opening up and letting go. This attitude contrasts with the stress of everyday life and the hectic planning that comes before any wilderness trip.

> The first part of the trips have always been a very mentally active time - that whole questioning and readjustment and just trying to get everything sorted out.... At first it's an effort. The first couple of days of a long trip, "what haven't I done? What have I forgotten? Oh I'm starting to feel dirty and gross.."

Similarly, Alex explains how he opens up to the environment once he can slip into a wilderness frame of mind.

> What frustrates me most about camping is up until the point at which you can't change anything. I find weekend trips very frustrating.... You're rushing around on Friday afternoon trying to get all of your shit together so you can get out of the frigging city. But then it's just sort of this great unwinding, and you get to wherever you're going...and I like sort of putting on a pack or getting in the boat and just kind of relaxing, and just hanging out for a while and smelling and looking.

The reward of getting through the transition is a heightened awareness to detail, an immediacy that is spiritually energizing.

> It takes me a couple of days to get to that point where I can just watch my feet or just watch the trail, and just be like, "oh, look at the slug, look at the flower...!" Then you get into the pattern and it's fine, you're comfortable and away you go. And I like that sense of just the rhythm and repetition of moving through that space, and it's very relaxing.... By day three or four you're living for the moment, you're going through the day and you're enjoying what's around you, you're more in tune. Euphoric, relaxed, energised. Emotionally energised, physically exhausted.

Like Alex, Simon explains the transition as one of learning to be comfortably at ease with the environment that was previously perceived as hostile.

> When you're in that environment you become so attuned to it somehow.

> And...when it's minus thirty out and you're warm it's just like "this is amazing! It's not that bad. It's minus thirty. Who cares? I can be warm in this!" There's a certain bragging element to it where we get home [*boasting*] "*Yeah*, we braved the elements! We made it, we survived! Yeah. Rararr!" We weren't like that a whole lot, but people would say, "you're crazy!" People thought that we were nuts for going winter camping, but it felt good knowing that [*explaining calmly*] "we can do this stuff. It's not that big a deal, as long as you're ready for it."

Another way of expressing the initial mental transition into wilderness is as the process of removing mental clutter to arrive at the clarity of focus that comes when the traveller is "in the here and now," free of distractions. Reed explains the frustration of having "mental baggage," when he knows what to expect from the wilderness experience,

> For example on that canoe trip we did in Myrtle Lake, it still took me two and a half days to settle in, to really feel I was 'there'. It took me two and a half days to drop all the baggage I brought with me. I'm not talking about physical baggage here. I'm talking about the worries about this and that and everything else. By the end of that second, going into the third day I was starting to get very frustrated with myself. 'C'mon...y'know, you're in one of the most beautiful places in the world. How come you haven't felt the rush yet? Where are ya? C'mon, snap in here...!' You're there, but you're just an observer. You're just passing through.... The better part of the day is just spend like you're detached...you're an alien just moving through observing. You're not part of it. And I don't like that feeling.... It's intensely frustrating, intensely frustrating! But really what it is is making that transition from the civilized world, from the everyday world, where your senses are constantly bombarded with all sorts of stuff.... It takes a while to adjust to complete silence.... There's a very distinct transition period moving from this world into that world. And unfortunately that other world, the world of wilderness, the world of nature...is retreating. It's becoming more and more difficult to find those places where you're not encountering human induced disturbances.

Rachel describes a similar experience of mental housecleaning when she found herself walking in the forest at night, illustrating her observation that "if you stay long enough things empty out of your head and you act more from your gut." The transition moves the subjective centre of action and self-awareness from "mind" to "body." Because she had to focus on walking in the dark, her sensory awareness felt heightened, "really magnified." She felt she was thinking more clearly, and that the mental distractions of civilization - "commercials from TV, songs I'd listened too..."- were disappearing, "like a

tape was unwinding and going 'gjzzz' really fast out of my head...". She concludes that this transition is essential, saying, "You can't really experience the total experience of wilderness until your conditioning is gone."

The transition from a feeling of disorientation and discomfort to one of ease and enjoyment is intensified when the wilderness traveller is alone, as Simon observes. After finishing high school in Ontario, he went backpacking in the Rocky Mountains for four months. When his friends had to go home early, he found himself facing two unexpected months alone in the mountains. He had never camped alone before. At first, he felt a loss and discomfort, thinking, "here I am alone, by myself," and missed the laughter and companionship of his friends. He resolved, however, not to give up and return home early. "I mean I've bought a train ticket out here and I've got another two or three months of good weather. I'm damn well going to stay and do some more hiking!" "Still," he explains, "there was a real adjustment period.... I'd sit in my tent at night totally homesick, missing my friends, feeling my stomach in knots...forcing myself to eat because I knew I had to." But eventually, Simon "got comfortable with the idea of being alone" and began to enjoy himself, feeling completely free and inspired by the landscape he travelled through. One day, he hiked through an alpine meadow and saw a grizzly bear with cubs in the distance. His was amazed, thinking "Wow, this is fantastic!" Feeling no fear, he realized how comfortable he had become in the mountains. He met other hikers as he travelled, and would sometimes join them at a campsite and talk around the fire at night. He concludes,

> And so I spent the first week being really homesick, the second week being kind of all right with it. By the third week I was really enjoying it. And by the end of September I didn't even want to see anybody. I was having such a good time just being by myself, thinking my own thoughts. I was just in heaven enjoying where I was.... I had never experienced that feeling where it's just you, yourself, and you're alone, and...you're completely in control and completely vulnerable, and yet feeling so alive.

Accepting his vulnerability in the Rockies, Simon found himself having experiences he could never before have imagined - a heightened perception, a closer attention to landscape, concentration on photography, comfort being alone and an absence of fear.

His solo experience exemplifies the transition from discomfort, apprehension, fear or fatigue in the face of challenge, to a positive, vivid experience of being alive.

Getting into intense relationship

The wilderness adventurer undergoing the initial transition experience is getting into a closer relationship with the land. He comes to know reality more directly and "immediately." The process of getting into relationship, of getting "im-mediate," also includes the removal of the things that mediate the direct experience of reality. These "screens" include primarily technology, not to mention that being "outside" already implies being, as Alex recalls from his youth, "away from buildings, away from cars," and as John recalls, outside the boundaries of civilization in a world without limits.

The best description of the "technological inversion" that characterizes wilderness experience is offered by climber Yvon Chouinard in his classic book, *Climbing Ice* (1978:188-189).

> The technological imperative of industrial man has always been that if it can be done it should be done. There is no choosing; if it's possible it must be right.... Declining a possible technology is the first step toward freedom from this bondage - and returning human values to control. The whole direction of climbing moves against the technological gradient. Here personal qualities like initiative, boldness and technique are supported rather than suppressed by the tools of the trade.... This is the technological inversion: fewer tools applied with increasing delicacy. I was rewarded for walking this edge by seeing more sharply what was around me, and I felt more deeply what comes boiling up from within. Thoreau put it that 'simplification of means and elevation of ends is the goal.' They can't help happening together.

Wilderness adventure is quintessentially the "simplification of means," the replacement of technology with *technique*, a power that dominates with a skill that *participates*. Part of what initiates the "transition" experience are the demands the traveller places upon himself by the mode that he chooses to travel by. Besides going into the unknown, the simplification of means exposes the traveller to the need to understand, to learn, to grow, to adapt. It impels a more aware, "wondering" state of mind. Chris's wilderness activities, for example, are defined by the act of moving from one place to another on foot

or on skis or over vertical rock in such a way that demands "a kind of awareness." What the wilderness experience has to teach us about life, even about staying still and "just being," Chris observes, comes about by moving - "largely through the activities of being there - the ski tour or climb...and just the process of travelling in the setting." In a sense, sedentariness is another "medium" by which reality can become taken-for-granted. The traveller's itinerary carries him forward into the unfamiliar. Marked trails are another form of mediation. Trackless wilderness is better, in Chris's opinion. Routefinding presents a greater challenge and incurs the "mental state of involvement" that is the primary characteristic of his wilderness experience.

Alex describes the same process of "getting in tune" with the land, which is best experienced by travelling on foot instead of by car, submitting oneself voluntarily to greater exposure, facing reality more directly. The goal is to increase one's interaction with the wilderness "space," so Alex is also in favour of the "technological inversion."

> I think you're more in tune that way.... The simple solution...is to bring your own shelter, your own food.... That makes that space safer.... But all those things are mediating what's around you, right, so how to open yourself up to that space? Slowing yourself down, maybe not bringing all the latest gizmos. The big thing these days: "Aw, who needs map and compass skills! I have a cell phone and a GPS...." Personally I don't feel good about those things because they take away from the experience. They take away from my ability to interact with my space.... People try and get as much equipment as they can. This is why I'm so anti-radios and things up north. It's nice to be able to just kinda not have that stuff, cause it forces people to think about that space differently.

Alex would rather the richer experience that comes from being "forced to think" and interact than to have things "be easy." For this reason he emphasizes the role of the traveller's own skill as a medium that enables him to experience the wilderness more directly. He says, "my understanding comes from being there and how I manage the gap between the skills that I have and the environment." He recounts a parable from his own experience to demonstrate how overwhelming the wilderness can be without the appropriate level of mediation; it may be psychologically if not physically unbearable. On a whim inspired by a magazine photo, one of his clients arrived on a wilderness backpacking trip to Baffin Island with very little experience.

> And you have to understand the geography there. Everything is *big*, like *huge*, and no trees.... You walk *on* the forest.... So after about half an hour...she's sitting *in* this gully, crying...! "I don't know where to put my feet...!" Totally terrified.... She was completely overwhelmed by the space and the place! She had none of the emotional, physical and mental skills to deal with that reality! Totally unprepared...! And she was hysterical for the better part of two weeks.... I think it totally knocked her on her ass and she had *no* concept of what she was getting into! Blown away...! She just kept on saying, "I don't know where to walk. I don't know where to go." Totally overwhelming! And that had everything to do with that space.... We evacuated her two days from the end.

Experiencing wilderness means the direct experience of reality, a connection with wildness (animals, landscape) through experience that is *relatively* unmediated, at a level that is still psychologically and physically manageable.

This "getting engaged" with the wilderness environment, intensely enough to promote what Chris calls a "mental struggle" or "mental state of involvement," is what wilderness adventure is all about. Travelling in small groups, in remote areas, on challenging terrain without trails, are all ways of intensifying this experience of engagement, placing a higher emphasis on the need for skill, and thus mental involvement. As Sax observes, discussing development in wilderness parks, "It is not that the motorized tourist or the visitor at a highly developed site must necessarily lose intensity...," however, "the circumstances we impose on ourselves have the power to shape our experience" (1980:31). Robin expresses this importance of "intensity" in the adventure experience, which from his perspective as a mountaineer is more important for what it can teach the adventurer than the ego-gratifying experience of achieving success at the summit.

> The summit was always important. At least it was always a big high physically and psychologically when you reached the summit.... The scenery is wonderful. And when you get to the summit in beautiful weather it really is a tremendous uplifting of spirit. But if I think about the experiences later, it was not the simple climbs, it was not even the hard climbs that went well that formed memorable occasions. It was the difficulties we got into. That's what provides the adventure. They may not be planned, but they happen. It's being in the avalanches. It's falling. It's being a in a snow cave overnight and waking up and finding that it's two feet lower than when you started. It's the people. It's how people interact on the mountain.... One of the things I've found is, mountaineering is a crucible. It's

> like a crucible that you put chemicals into. You're adding stress, a great deal of stress, and exhaustion in some cases, fatigue over a period of time, short period of time. And I've often thought of mountaineering therefore of being compression of life into a very very short time. And you learn in one day on the mountain what would take months and months to learn in normal life. About people and about yourself.... I haven't concentrated on the land...though you need the land to have the experience. It's a new idea to think about what effect that land has been for me.

Awareness

It should already be evident that another way of describing the experience of adventure must be in terms of *awareness* or *mindfulness* - a mental state of immediate focus that is the essence of the wilderness adventure experience. Interestingly, awareness is identical to the experience of engagement or "blending in" with the environment, and it is the same experience sought by both adventure "pursuitists" like mountaineers and whitewater paddlers, but also less adventuresome nature-seekers. One group focuses on "movement" while the other emphasizes "being," but the end result is a mental state of awareness and of total relationship. The adventurer is often stigmatized by the nature-seeker, who perceives him as too preoccupied with the goal or the activity to have a genuine experience. My findings suggest that this stereotype is not valid. The quotations which follow represent both perspectives.

Reed explains the primacy of "awareness" and "immersion" - the goals of the wilderness experience:

> Wilderness is not for me a backdrop in which I prove my prowess as a canoeist or as a backpacker. "Yeah, I did twenty-two miles today" and all this kind of garbage. I'm not interested in that. Never was. For me it's always been more important to just soak it! To become a sponge. To just immerse...! For me it's much much more important to really have a sense of the place. It's not about conquering. It's not about proving myself in any way. Don't need to! Not when I'm out there! Where I get caught into trying to prove myself is back here....
>
> When I watch these people just forging ahead of me, I say like "Shit! You could be doing this in a city park! Just how important is what you're passing through here to you? Are you even *aware* of what you're stepping over, through, on? Are you even aware of what you're *smelling*? Are you *aware* of what you're *seeing*?"

> "How aware *are* you?" is the ultimate question I would ask anyone. How aware are you?! For me it's really an exercise in mindfulness.

Likewise more concerned with "being" than "doing," Simon expresses similar sentiments, referring to a winter snowshoeing trip that was particularly challenging, yet enjoyable.

> And to me that was a different thing [than] mountaineering where it's "the challenge to get to the peak". I've never appreciated that and I've never liked that...whole mentality of..."conquer the mountain!" I was never into conquering nature. It's a weird concept for me. It was like you're there, you're part of it, you're equal with it. In fact you're not even equal. You're subservient to it. And that day when we managed to get through it was like, "yeah, this has been an incredibly tough thing" and it was like the forces of nature let us through. We worked our asses off and we got through. And we didn't conquer anything. We were allowed through.

Rachel's approach to the wilderness is also one of stillness, silence, watching, and letting-be. The worst wilderness experiences happen when other people interrupt this awareness, or seem to be "missing the point" themselves. Once at a popular camping area, she complains,

> At nighttime it seemed that everything that everybody was doing was to distract them from being aware that there was wilderness out there.... And they would just create this whole big shield around them to act like they weren't there.... They came there to experience it, and yet they wouldn't experience it.... It wasn't that I was angry at them. I just wanted them to experience what I was experiencing.... They'd go away thinking they'd had this wilderness experience when they didn't at all.

Rachel explains exactly what the wilderness experience is *not* - distraction by humanity and the accoutrements of civilization. Her goal is simply "to blend in with what's there." For the same reason that many adventurers like to travel, she often prefers to stay in one place. "Hikers don't understand how much noise they're making and how much their smell travels, she explains. "By the time they get to a place the experience they're looking for is gone." Many people bring their distractions with them, and come with the wrong set of priorities, and do not make the transition into wilderness, she explains.

> Well they never get out there! And then you have to carry all this stuff and get it all there, and you're caught up with protecting things...making sure that your car when you leave it behind is locked up, and [you] better get back because, I don't know, the parking meter's running. All that takes away from it.

Chris, a more activity-oriented adventurer, describes his wilderness experience as a "being through doing." For him, heightened awareness comes about through the "decision-making process" that is part of his "mental struggle" to cope with the wilderness. He describes the journey as a dialogue between the traveller and himself, his companions, and his surroundings. The dialogue represents the expanding awareness that culminates in a deeper understanding and more intense relationship with all the parties of the "conversation." The conversation would not exist at all without the stress of the wilderness journey. He is forced to ask what are his own abilities. How far can he travel? When does he need to rest? He probes himself with these questions as much as he is directing awareness outward to the trail at his feet, the rock at his hands, the weather overhead. Travelling on a trail in a less wilderness environment, he has a tendency to "zone out and stare down." Being outside wilderness "doesn't get you involved as much." He would rather face the uncertainty in wilderness, with the added challenge of a long approach hike and all the small and large decisions that are involved, than go rock climbing indoors or close to a road, where is ease of access and a good, clean route to follow:

> On one level it's your safety you're having to be aware of, and the conditions around you - maybe not getting caught by weather in an exposed place or not making an error in route finding and ending up in a dangerous situation. So you're having to make decisions for and about yourself and others you're with. Those decisions are based on what's around you, what's happening and where you're trying to go, what you're trying to do. So...the small decisions are quite meaningful and consequences can be immediate and to me that enhances a sense of living actually. To me it makes living more real.... For me...the experience of wilderness is a being but through doing.... It comes down to...an interaction with terrain and the demands of making decisions of route, or to go on or turn back, and where you're going to go and where you're going to stop, managing risks.... I don't find I can intentionally get into that state of mind.... Though...there are things I can do to encourage it, like...just to really focus on the route finding so that my attention isn't off in lala land daydreaming. I find trails aren't conducive to that, that's for sure! But when I'm having to pick my way through terrain that doesn't have a trail, avoiding things and the like, I think is more conducive to that. Focussing on the terrain and where I'm going to go.... There's a whole...journey. It's going there and coming back and to me there's a lot more uncertainty I mean, 'is the weather going to hold?' and 'am I going to get lost on the way there?' or 'is

> there going to be enough time?' and 'when should we get up in the morning, what should we take,' and those sorts of things. Maybe it's just there's more uncertainty, more choices to be made than the convenience of going somewhere that's right by the road....

Risk and isolation

In addition to the challenge inherent in the adventure objective, and the direct relationship of the technological inversion, other characteristics of the wilderness environment are catalysts to awareness; namely, risk and isolation. It is an honest cliche that the wilderness experience is "unforgiving." A key to the experience of adventure is that the traveller is forced to accept responsibility for the consequences of his actions, consequences which tend to be direct, immediate, and severe. As Alex explains,

> In some ways I feel like I understand the rules better, the rules are simpler. They're more cut and dried. My understanding of the risks and consequences of actions are much more clear cut.

The adventurer accepts risk as part of the activity, and realizes that help may be out of reach in the event of an accident. These traits of wilderness are valued, because it is known that they aid the adventurer's ultimate goal of awareness.

Reed values the wilderness partly because "wild" things are dangerous - powerful and unpredictable. The presence of wildlife - bears and cougars - thrills him in part because it requires him to be "mindful."

> Those things out there encourage me to keep mindful. So I'm constantly, even while I'm drinking in the vast horizons and all that kind of stuff, also scanning the ground constantly, watching for track, watching for sign.... What I get out of wilderness, it's that sense of mindfulness.... The thing I love about wilderness is that it's unforgiving. You screw up and you can screw up *bad*!

Risk is merely another facet of technological inversion - a consequence of getting into more direct relationship with nature. Reed expresses his choice to travel by simple means in terms of the risk that it implies. A twelve day canoe trip with his wife forced him into a state of mindfulness. There were no powerboats, he says. There was nobody around. In case of accident, they would be in serious trouble. They also had to be aware of the weather, because they were paddling on a large lake. They noticed the weather

changing and decided to leave early to paddle out before the wind, but they still found themselves in enormous waves, paddling at the limit of their abilities. This kind of experience is a "wake up call".

> Phew! Man, if we had flipped the canoe - sheer rock walls all along the shoreline. *No* place you could have dragged yourself out. I don't know what we would've done. But that's what I like about wilderness. I'm reminded of John Muir.... at one point he was walking along a very high ridge, a rock bluff, and he slipped, and hit his head...and he damn near rolled off the edge of the cliff.... Another couple of feet and he would've plummeted to his death. To Muir, that was a wake up call. That was the way I interpret it as well. A wake up call. *Not* to take nature for granted. And it's so easy here. You get in trouble dial 911. Out there, *no* dialling 911. You're on your own, to a very large degree. And that too I love! It reminds me that I'm not invincible here. I and my species do not have control over everything here. I don't *need* to engage in extreme sports to experience that.... There's so many different places that you can get into trouble, serious trouble, if you're not just really being mindful of where you're at...! I love it! [*laughing*] If you could somehow magically appear in the canoe right there and stand in front of me [*pretending to hold out a microphone*] "Well, are you enjoying yourself?" [*laughing*] "*No* fucking way man...!" We had to tack back and forth. It's the only way to keep from being swamped by the waves, and they're *big* suckers. But once we got into this safe little bay, and pulled the canoe up and such, sat there with [*laugh*] the shakes, settling down realizing "whoah, that was close!" [*laugh*] I mean, *yes! Yes!*

Nature is a wake up call, and when the mind wakes up in nature, what it sees is "wonderful!" "*Oh God yes!*" he says when I ask him if he loves it. "Unquestionably." But it is noteworthy that he admits he is not as enthusiastic about the experience at the time it is happening.

A similarly powerful experience was had by Simon when he exposed himself to the power of Lake Superior by sea kayak. He explains, "on Superior you get out there and it's like, 'what's the wind doing? Am I going to be able to get out without killing myself?'" The power of the lake forces him to immediately begin paying attention.

> We loaded the boats up and we head out and you get to the mouth of the bay, where it's one of these things where you're hitting the waves and your bow is pointing up towards the sky, and you come crashing down the other side. And I'm thinking, "ooh yeah, there's no turning around now!" And so we get out through the surf zone and there was just *massive* swells! I mean we figured they were anywhere between fifteen and twenty feet high.... On top of those swells it

> was choppy, 'cause of the wind, and it was windy enough that you didn't want to take your hands off the paddle. And the waves were coming at us from slightly behind, so they were coming as a following sea, which isn't so much fun to paddle in. And I knew we had to go up the coast a little ways, so we turned and went with it. And eventually we got kind of used to it, but it was one of these things where, in retrospect it was an amazing day! But when you're in it, I mean it was not fun at all. Because you'd be up on top of all the waves, and I'd see my friend Steve over there on one side with a wave behind him, and to my left you could see all the land, and the trees. And you go down in the trough of the wave, and you had walls of water on both sides. I mean like, I'm not kidding! I mean we guessed they had to have been twenty feet high! Cause they looked forty feet high to us...! The sheer strength of that water, and just...to be in that I was half terrified and half just in absolute ecstasy. It was amazing! And we're paddling along, and making good progress too! The waves were pushing us along pretty well which we didn't quite realize at the time.... It was just really unnerving to be paddling in the water like that.... I remember the whole thing, for two and a half hours - that's how long we paddled for that day - just alternating between being down in the water, and up above looking at the whole vista round you. Back and forth, back and forth, for two and a half hours. It was just, it was crazy. It was....in retrospect it was amazing. But again while it was happening it was quite intimidating.

Simon explains how these experiences of "exposure" to wilderness that incite fear are appealing.

> It is always kind of scary going out there.... You wonder if you're going to get one of those days where there's a bad combination of wind and waves and you're going to have a really scary experience. And there always is a little bit of fear.... It's the whole thing, you're on the water and, especially when you're out somewhere that's remote, if something's going to happen, you could die without a whole lot of trouble. In some ways there's almost an appeal in that, knowing that you're exposed to that.

Alex recognizes that putting himself into a wilderness situation that is out of his control entails accepting risk. "There's risk associated with all of that," he admits, "but that's fun. That's one of the things that makes life interesting." Relinquishing some technological power over the environment tends to reduce the traveller's margin of safety. In another sense, however, it may simply be reducing a false sense of security, allowing a more realistic appraisal of the risk inherent in living. Technology offers a sense of control over experience that is often illusory. Without it, the adventurer is more aware of

reality, and in a better position to respond appropriately.

> That's the standard joke: "We can phone from Ellesmere and order a pizza." But it's artificial. I mean who would you phone? And what good does it do to talk to somebody? The classic example of that is that guy [Rob Hall] who died on Everest and phoned his wife, and basically talked to her while he died. [*sarcastic tone:*] "Well that did you a whole lot of good...." People have this false sense of security by bringing all these things. I want to have the ability to have my experiences as unmediated as possible. And I want to be on a much more equal footing.... Be able to actually judge the risk and be able to make decisions, and know that I can't prevent everything. Shit can happen. And just being able to say "Oh well" and deal. Deal with that reality and be able to say "Oh well."

Alex is reiterating the importance of the attitude of acceptance that comes with the mental transition into wilderness. Wilderness adventurers do things that seem risky because they recognize that risk is inherent in living, and it is better to be aware of it than slip into complacency. They realize how much of risk is relative to one's perception and one's knowledge. Speaking of the city, Alex explains,

> Wilderness exists *here*...in a real sense. There's as much risk being here as there is in grizzly country. It's just that we know how to look both ways before we cross the street so we don't get hit by a car here. We don't know how to live with grizzlies because we haven't been brought up in that environment.

Rachel, who is not so much of an adventure-seeker as the climbers interviewed, nonetheless has an attitude of accepting risk. On one trip, she jokes, "I liked being able to swim in a glacier lake. I was told not to go in, that it was dangerous, that I could die. So I went in!" For her, accepting risk means opening up to experience "something that's important in life!"

> We've gotten too comfortable, and we have insurance and we have everything.... We live under this illusion that we're now protected.... But I start to ask the question, "what are we really protecting ourself from?" The only thing I can see is we're stopping ourselves from having those experiences....

Accepting responsibility

Becoming self-reliant, accepting responsibility for the actions of oneself and one's group, are keys to the wilderness adventure experience related to the acceptance of risk. Self-reliance, balanced within the context of group cooperation, and responsibility, are

skills which the wilderness adventurer can carry back to everyday life. Alex explains the attitude of self-reliance and responsibility, indicating how this attitude overlaps with the relinquishing of control over environment, and the acceptance of risk.

> People [ask]..."what about bears in the North?" "Well, they're marine mammals. They're not really where we are in the summer." "Well what happens if we come across one?" "Well it's a national park so I'm not allowed to carry a gun so I carry bear mace and bear bangers and an ice axe." "Yeah but what happens *if*?" Well yeah so, I mean okay, what if? what if? what if? what if? It doesn't stop me from going.... I get frustrated with people that want signs, and they sue because they have an accident.... At some point you have to sit up and say "this is my life. I choose what I want to do *for* myself, and I'm willing to *take* those risks." So I get really frustrated when they boardwalk and make access.... You need to open things up to people, but the thing that really pisses me off is that at Grand Canyon there was a lawsuit a couple of years ago. This guy fell off, and the basis of the lawsuit was the park had put up signs, "Danger. Cliff. Stay away, blah blah blah". By putting up those signs that park consciously admitted the risk associated with that space and therefore were liable because that guy fell off.... But I'm thinking "Buddy, get a fucking grip!" Any *moron* knows that falling off a couple thousand feet's going to do damage to your body. Like, "figure it out!" That's really my reaction.... It really pisses me off because we put up all these barriers and we don't take responsibility for ourselves. Being outdoors for me I guess gives me some sense of responsibility for myself and my own life and my own existence. I *have* to make decisions.

Echoing Chris, Alex notes here how the risk of the wilderness experience requires decision-making, which is essential to the process of growth that occurs in adventure, and part of the process of "getting into relationship," becoming aware.

Scott has a similar attitude about responsibility in wilderness that is indicative of a way of thinking about life in general.

> One of our ongoing problems is to do with access to private land.... Landowners are paranoid about lawsuits.... It's totally unreasonable to me that someone could go onto someone else's property and fall off a cliff and sue them for it. I mean it's just completely so far away from the way that I think that I can't imagine how anybody could actually get away with it.... That whole business is perverse. It's quite perverse.

As a wilderness adventurer, Scott has an ethic founded on the experience of self-control, of being responsible for his own actions.

Remoteness and solitude are important aspects of the wilderness environment

because they force this self-reliance, responsibility, and attitude of acceptance. Robin argues that places like the West Coast Trail, where permit fees are charged and there are waiting lists to use the park, do not provide the same quality of experience as a true wilderness, where one can travel for ten or more days at a time without seeing another person. Adventurers have a tendency now to rely on rescue, he suggests, when they should be striving to be more self-reliant.

> I do feel that the adventure experience is more important than the place, but you've got to have the place.... I'm saying you have to have a bit of isolation to have the experience, and probably the more isolation, the more distance from civilization, whether it be in actual miles or in actual minutes, depending on how you're travelling - I think that distance makes a considerable difference. I've thought about that a lot since we talked last time and the most significant experiences I've had have been in more remote places, places where we either had to limit what we were doing because of our extreme remoteness, or just you were not able to ask for help whenever you needed it.

Robin says that after climbing in the European Alps, he feels blessed to have access to the undeveloped wilderness of Canadian mountains, which affords the more intense experience of wilderness.

> I like to go and visit Switzerland, and I like to go to lots of places where there's lots of people and spectacular sights, *but*, the greater experiences for me are the wilderness.... I think that the isolation factor of wilderness, the aloneness, the need to be self-reliant is a big factor in the experience.... I think that you do have to have the opportunity to be self-reliant to whatever extent you can and want to be.

Rachel, despite enjoying less intense experiences, has similar feelings about self-reliance.

> Going out in total wilderness you have to prepare, "what if something happens and I don't get back...?" You're totally, totally just dependent on your own self and the people you're with.... You can't just go running in the house and get a Band-Aid.... You have to find another way to deal with it. And I like that.... I like improvising.

Scott, mountaineer and arctic traveller, offers two definitions of a wilderness environment. One is an ecological definition, the other is based on the concept of self-reliance. Speaking of wilderness areas, he explains,

> I think of them as places, no matter what size they are, where you have to assume personal responsibility. Maybe that's actually a more functional definition for most of us, is just a place where you have to assume a lot of personal

> responsibility. That can be East Sooke Park. That can be anywhere you want to go in Strathcona Park. That can be a hike up the Chemainus River area behind Duncan. So because there are relatively few areas nearby of the other definition of wilderness, the functional one of assuming a high level of personal responsibility is probably a good one. I think that's one of the things that outdoor enthusiasts - not just mountaineers but rock climbers, kayakers, canoers, whoever - want, is the luxury of being responsible for their own actions.

Meditation

The wilderness adventure experience as a way of achieving a mental state of awareness could be called a meditation. Robin identifies this "spiritual" aspect of adventure, as he reiterates the need to "embrace risk." Here, Robin is referring to another climber whose ethic he admires.

> He maintains that there needs to be a reemphasis on what he calls "classical mountaineering values," which can be defined any way, but he defines them as getting out there without a lot of support, deciding on your own adventure, doing it, being totally responsible for yourself in the process, don't expect somebody to come in and save you, but don't stop doing it. Prepare for risks. And actually he feels that risk taking takes you to a different level, mentally. I guess I've experienced that on one or two mountains, but not very often.... I did quite a bit of yoga and one of the things people talk about a lot is meditating. Meditation really is concentration, of focus. And I remember after I got into yoga a bit I climbed a mountain called Andromeda. You know the Columbia Icefields I suppose. Well Andromeda is the mountain to the left of the main glacier. And there's several very steep ice faces on it. The one we did was the Skyladder which is not that bad. It's about forty-five, fifty degrees. But it was mind-blowing to me, absolutely mind-blowing! If you ever came off that you'd never stop. Well maybe you would. We put belays in and maybe that would stop you. But I remember finishing that climb and thinking, "God, I've thought of absolutely nothing else but what I've been doing for the last two and a half hours." That to me is meditation. And that's something you get from climbing, under certain circumstances, but it only happens to people once in a while.... But that was quite an experience for me. And I think that's maybe what [he] is talking about. He maintains that we live in such a coddled society wherein we're insured against everything, and we're worried about increasing the length of our life, so we don't smoke, we don't drink, we don't do anything else, we even avoid eating bacon sometimes because of the nitrates. I mean what is life? Is it a process to try and prolong it or is it a process to live it?! And I think that's what adventure does for people more. It makes them enjoy, it makes them understand, it makes them

appreciate their lives more.

Robin explains the long hiking and paddling trips have a similar but less intense meditative effect. It is a time for him to think, to become inspired.

> That's what yoga - that's what people do when they try to meditate, or concentrate, which I think is a better word. You're really trying to still the background noise. And when you do, whether it be through meditation or through climbing or whatever, you get a lot of stuff that comes to the surface - inspiration, clearer thought of situations that might confront you or psychological experiences that might be bothering you, or any number of things. I find it a very clearing experience. Maybe that's part of the reason I think it's worth going on these longer trips. It gets you away from all that stuff that's at home - the mail, the mail and the phone, and now the e-mail as well.

Alex also refers to his experiences in the wilderness as "active meditation," recognizing the value of the adventurous state of mind. The activity is a *mudra*-like, kinaesthetic path to the enlightenment that comes when the adventurer becomes more immediately aware of himself and his surroundings. "Slowing down," removing mediating technologies, doing longer trips, the pursuit of solitude - all these ways of getting at a more direct experience require a mental awakening, or "transition." Action is yet another way of achieving the experience. As Alex says, "for me it's activities-based. My understanding of wilderness is definitely tied to the things that I do in that space." He continues, "whitewater paddling for me now is...like an active meditation. I'm not sitting on a mountain going 'Ohm.'" The goal is to be fully engaged in the moment, intensely focussed, highly aware, and to experience the spiritual renewal that meditation implies.

> What I really like about paddling [is that] when I go I really *do* focus. And I'm having a hard time explaining that experience to people. And it kind of hit me that I've done some yoga and stuff and there's this idea of concentration, focussing on a single image. And that's a passive meditation. And you sit there and you think about it, and you try and let go of the world and let go of all the worries and your attachment to things. That's kind of the purpose of meditation.... [When paddling] I'm being very active, but it allows me to peel away a lot of the stuff that's going on around me and I can concentrate on something very specific.... The word that best describes it [is]...meditation, because...I'm concentrated on one thing, I'm focussed. My body's being very active. My mind is being very focussed.

Long trips, day trips, paddling, backpacking: what they have in common for Alex is that

they force him to concentrate on a single thing. Activities in wilderness are a focus on the here and now.

> What I'm doing when I go paddling is I'm concentrating on my immediate environment. It's not like I'm worried about the rapid down river. I'm worried about this rapid right now, this one wave, surfing this wave or whatever. And the days when I *do* worry about what's downstream I don't have a very good day at all. I'm not...dealing well with what's right around me.

What is most important in determining the quality of the experience is the adventurer's state of mind and the quality of his relationship to the surroundings. Total involvement makes the experience "good." Happiness comes with the meditative state of "living in the moment". In such moments, the mental transition is complete. Alex explains that when he is "dealing well with what's right around" him, "it doesn't matter if it's raining or whatever." For Alex, the wilderness experience is this process of "dealing with reality." The outcome of the meditation is what Alex calls an eye-opening "wow! experience," in which the adventure kinaesthetic merges with the landscape aesthetic.

> I haven't lost the "wow! factor"...the sense of "oh this is just amazing! This is totally cool!" Surfing on a wave, like getting on a wave [on a river] and just carving back and forth for five or six minutes. It's this incredible sense of speed, but you're not going anywhere. You're just sitting there! And the trees are there; the cliffs are there. And you know if you lift your eyes up away from your boat for a second and you look you're just thinking, "I'm not actually moving," but you look back down and "gneiro!" there's stuff going past you. And it's really cool.

In very similar terms Chris explains that the adventure activity is inseparable from the wilderness environmental experience. The meditation is sustained by the adventure objective.

> The experience of being in wilderness is a *being* but through *doing*.... I like having an objective, of travel and movement. I'm not inclined to go into the middle and just camp, sit in one place. I think that's why I like mountaineering, is the objective is really tangible. It's a point you're heading to and coming back from.

Chris says that the wilderness environment is a teacher, with the lesson being "awareness in the moment and really just having to pay attention to what's around you - ...the environment, the terrain, the weather." He describes climbing a 20 000 foot peak in Chile

as an example of the meditative state of mind he seeks in wilderness. Again, the meditation of adventure merges with an appreciation of the land.

> [It was] just eight hours of walking up a thirty degree slope and just sucking air, and having a headache, being tired, and basically...quite monotonous.... But really still had to remain aware, because you could fall, and slip, and get hurt! Looking for...at the really micro scale, just better placements for crampons. Flat lumps in the snow or ice where it would be easier, just looking at the slope for subtle features that would be easier to walk, just slight ramps or things like that.... While walking there was a focus on the particular, just what was immediately in front of you, but then stop and rest and sit down and kind of turn away from the slope and look at just miles and miles of Altiplano and some other peaks, and that was definitely one of the rewards.

Rhythmic, repetitive, simple, the journey is a meditation on and in and through the landscape. The traveller becomes, as Simon observes of his own experience, "totally wrapped up" in the place, "soaking it in." In seeking exposure to risk, and the physical challenge of sea kayaking, he is also pursuing a meditative state of involvement with the activity and the place, which ties together mind and body in the attention and response to nature. Mind, body, environment - "When all those elements are together - that's when I have these really incredible moments."

> There was a day one time I paddled from Flores Island back to Tofino into a headwind the whole way, like twenty-five knots probably, and what usually takes me three and a half hours took me five hours that day, and I was completely exhausted, but I got back and I felt great! "Yeah. I did it!" That was incredibly tiring but it was fun. I just sat in my boat and paddled as hard as I could. And I really enjoy that. I like getting in my boat and just paddling as hard as I can. And when the water's flat calm it's not fun, but paddling into the wind can be really fun at times. I enjoy that. Part of the whole outdoor thing for me is also getting exercise. And to me there's a combination of using your body physically as well as the whole mental perception of where you are and what you're doing. And it's that whole experience, somehow of tying those all together, that combination of work and thought and digestion of the whole package that you're dealing with at that moment.

Experiences of wildness

Here I explain how the definition of wilderness might be viewed as completely relative and independent of the need for a natural environment. But I also argue, based

on the findings of my interviews, that the root of the wilderness adventure experience is always raw nature, or "wildness." The true adventure experience is inseparable from the experience of nature, and a natural environment is necessary for the ultimate experience of engagement. The outcomes of the "*wild*ness experience", be it fundamentally adventure-driven or the nature-inspired experience of wonder, lead into a description of the common optimal, "root" experience of wilderness.

Wilderness as a relative concept

The wilderness is viewed by the adventurer as a landscape that demands awareness, because it is unfamiliar, unpredictable, unforgiving. For some, this aspect of "newness" appears to be the core of their experience of wilderness. This interpretation would suggest a definition of wilderness that is utterly relative, subjective, independent of the need for a pristine natural setting. Alex argues for example that it is the unfamiliarity and unpredictability of the of wilderness that provides challenge to the adventurer. To him wilderness represents what is outside the bounds of familiar knowledge; it is thus the *reality* that is beyond the categories of conceptual thought, a limitless source of renewal and critical perspective for everyday knowledge which is inherently incomplete. Wilderness symbolizes the source of learning and growth which can occur as much in the city as in a completely natural setting.

> I think what's really...interesting is that it takes you out of what you know and puts you into what you don't know and...allows you to question things. You need to create a new vocabulary, a new understanding. You can look back on your life here for example, in the city, if you're out there, even if it's for a half a day hike or whatever. It gives you some of that back and forth ability.... And the more I do it, the more comfortable I am in both.... Coming back to my definition of environment, I don't make that distinction as much as I used to.... I mean I don't care so much whether I'm in town, East Sooke Park hiking, West Coast Trail, or Baffin Island, as much as I once did.... I think you can get the same things out of all those spaces.... The advantage of something like Baffin Island is that...you have to travel so far and it costs so much money, and it's so different physically looking that...it sits you back on your heels and you gotta kinda go "Okay, what's going on here?" You've got to deal with things that you wouldn't normally have to deal with. It's an opportunity for growth and experience and a positive

experience.

Scott describes the experience in similar terms, suggesting that much of the value of the wilderness experience is simply change for the sake of change. There may not be anything inherently superior about the experience of nature. The most meaningful wilderness experiences in his life, and most notably a trip to Greenland he took while in graduate school, were outstanding because they were "new."

> Greenland...is always going to be a special experience for me because it was the first time I was ever in the Arctic. It was the first time I ever saw a glacier or an iceberg or mountains like that, or the first time I ever experienced midnight sun or twenty-four hour daylight, or met those people. And there were just so many new experiences that year that it can't fail to stand out as a pivotal experience for my whole life. And I didn't think of it in terms of wilderness. I thought of it in terms of incredible landscape with an incredible bunch of people doing incredible things that I a year or two earlier wouldn't have ever dreamt I'd be doing.

The wilderness experience is one of novelty, beyond the frontiers of personal experience and even beyond the frontiers of the imagination.

The essential wildness and freedom

Now I introduce the importance of nature to the wilderness adventurer's experience. First, one sees nature as a place without which the ultimate risk adventure experience would be impossible. Gradually, however, the experience of nature becomes meaningful unto itself.

The way in which the natural environment supports the adventure experience can already be deduced from the previous discussion of adventure. It is the absence of civilization, for example, that adds an important element of uncertainty to the wilderness experience. Alex explains,

> Working up north has taught me that...you make the best laid plans, you have a beautiful brochure, "we will leave on this date, we'll get back on this date." People want an itinerary. People want to *know* what they're doing. And I just say, "okay, this is the plan. Please keep in mind that everything is subject to change."

The same emphasis on uncertainty in wilderness is important for Chris. The

completely natural setting is the source of the mental state of awareness and wonder that he seeks. Besides being for him "at least a day away from a car," wilderness is definable as a place where nature is "more pronounced." Nature, for example, is responsible for the uncertainty of weather and terrain and results in the risks that teach awareness by being unforgiving of mistakes. Nature, says Chris, "encourages all of that greater awareness, in the moment."

The term "wildness" is useful here because it unifies the relative concept of wilderness-as-unknown with the somewhat more objective idea of wilderness-as-nature. The spirit of nature *is* wildness. Nature is the ultimate wilderness, the ultimate unknown and the ultimate uncertainty. Nature or wildness as "the force behind places" (Grumbine, 1995) can be seen as the root of this experience of newness. The aesthetic experience of the sublime is sometimes powerful because it suggests that the prevailing order of things *might* be different (Spufford, 1996). The experience of the sublime is really awakening to the *idea* of wildness. It suggests the possibility of having an "adventure" experience while doing very little at all, simply by "waking up" to the possibility of danger and a reality beyond the familiar. The idea of wilderness "lightens" our perceptions of the day to day reality, and is thus also liberating. So again, one could argue that *any* experience of novelty, contrast, as might occur during travel to a third world city, or even unknown parts of one's own city, is an experience of "wilderness." But this relativism is refuted by Thoreau's realization that the spirit of "wildness" is the wellspring of all this diversity (Rothenberg, 1995). The root of the definition of wilderness is this "ultimate reality" that transcends all socially constructed realities. The fact that what is not a "wilderness experience" in the traditional, adventuresome sense of the term, can produce a wilderness outcome, can be accounted for when it can be understood as a "*wild*ness experience."

The power of even the idea of wildness to be liberating accounts for another important element of the wilderness definition that is related to the absence of social structure - *freedom*. The feeling of freedom is responsible for Rachel and Reed's experiences of feeling accepted for who they are. For Scott, the long days of arctic summer accentuate this freedom on his trips up north.

> I think one of the things about the light up north is kind of a freedom - to just do whatever you want whenever you want. You can kind of throw your watch away and you don't have to pay attention too much to the cycles of the days, except that it's colder at night, but otherwise it's a very freeing thing just to be able to do whatever you want as long as you can stagger and then you finish when you're done. You don't have to stop for a while.

The wilderness experience is one of freedom from rules and constraint. This observation refers to socially structured restrictions on freedom. Constraints of nature, such as weather, are not begrudged by the wilderness adventurer, do not seem to impinge on the perception of absolute freedom. It is an old observation that natural constraints do not oppress like social ones. There is a Confucian tale of a woman who has lost three generations of men in her family to attacks by tiger. When asked why she continues to live near the wilderness, she replies, "Because there is no oppressive ruler" (Smith, 1991:178). Alex also observes that the rules provided by nature are "almost liberating."

The absolute need for nature

The intuition that there is "something more" to the experience of nature above and beyond the wonder of a new experience or the excitement of adventure activity, comes through in the words of the interview participants. Chris explains that nature "resonates with something in us" - perhaps that part of the mind or heart that is responsible for the initial attraction to wilderness. He expresses a general preference for a natural context, even if the "mental state of involvement" which he seeks can be reproduced at home.

> I can get the same state of mind [when climbing indoors], and I got the same state of mind when I used to play rugby actually, but it isn't the same. Just the context: I definitely prefer the natural setting...even a place like Smith Rock or Squamish which I hesitate to call wilderness.... It's just you're outside. There's wind, there's sun. It's real rock you're touching. Trees. That sort of thing. There might be a lizard on the rock somewhere.... It isn't artificial and...it just seems to inspire the imagination for me more than plastic, plywood, or rugby.... When it comes down to it if I had the choice I would rather do something like that outside...in a more 'wilderness-like' or wilderness setting.

Alex is also dependent upon the natural environment for a complete experience. Nature is central to the feeling of connection that he gets from the experience of "active

meditation."

> The only thing that comes as close in the city is things like gym climbing at a rock climbing gym, but even that's not quite the same thing. I don't *feel* the same when I leave. I feel good. I feel rested.... I don't have the same mental "zing". I get some of it, but not all of it. I think part of it for me is just the physical space of being in and around trees and water and that kind of thing. I feel it in a different part of my body. Climbing [indoors] is more...[in my head]. I don't feel it in my heart....

Nature is an important part of the sensation that comes at the end of a day of activity that Chris calls "a tired calm" and Alex calls "emotionally energized, physically exhausted." Alex's description of the whitewater paddling experience indicates the importance of being in nature.

> You just feel good. And I like being out. It was great to be on the river yesterday. The sun was out for a while and we just got to kind of play around and watch the water and the leaves and there were a couple of mergansers out there and a golden eagle.

Besides being integral to his optimal experiences, wildness is a salient metaphor for Alex's worldview of a reality that is "fluid and interpenetrated". He has an inherent preference for nature perhaps because it resonates with his own perception of reality. In other words, nature's non-dualism is a reality more compatible with the human mind, the subjective experience of reality.

> I do know that I enjoy certain kinds of activities a lot more than other kinds, and they are tied to being outside.... I like water in particular - that is an important part of my understanding of wilderness actually - its fluidity. I have trouble with this notion of linearity.... I like a much more porous kind of world where things are more interpenetrated and kind of little backwaters and eddies and things.... I really like that metaphor. There's a French philosopher...he uses liquid physics...as opposed to solid physics of Western philosophy. Yeah it's a process. Constantly changing but it still has form. Chaos theory - an unpredictable pattern.

Nature provides feedback for a sense of understanding, whereas stimulus from civilization is overwhelming. "We can get overloaded! Information overload. And nature's very simple," says Rachel. Nature is "simple" insofar as it seems to tell a coherent story, informing mental clarity. This feedback from nature is indispensable for a sense of renewal. Rachel says that when she goes for walks in the city,

> I can't relate to a lot of it. I can get used to it and familiar with it and relax a little bit but it doesn't "feed" me as much. It's not giving me everything I need.... Now that I have my car...I tend to want to head out to Sooke where I was from and get a dose of it once in a while and just want to walk where there's trees and by the ocean.... It revives me. It recharges me to do that.

John also explains that the experience of the natural environment is fundamental to his adventure experience, even if the emphasis is on a particular activity that can be had in artificial surroundings. His statement also reveals the opinion that natural boundaries can be liberating, whereas artificial boundaries are perceived as constraining.

> ...I was a competitive swimmer for about eight years...and I also did lake distance swimming. I can't tell you the difference between swimming in a pool, again which has boundaries, and swimming long distances in lakes. Now they have boundaries too, but the boundaries are... And not only that - When I stop to rest in a lake swim I look up, I see mountains, I see trees, I see sun glistening on the water, I can taste the water, I can feel it. When I'm swimming in a swimming pool I don't like the taste of the water, I don't like the way it feels, I don't like all the people around and I hate the building! [*laugh*]

In the above passages the relativism breaks down to reveal the dependence of the wilderness experience upon wild nature. The adventurer realizes that the experience is not complete without the natural setting, for reasons that go beyond the practical role of wilderness as a place that enforces responsibility, self-reliance, and attentiveness. This suggests that nature has an inherent psychological significance apart from what it can do to enhance the adventure experience.

Nature in the city

The only reason that a "wilderness experience" can be had in the city is that it is possible to come to an awareness that the overarching reality of nature, or "wildness," exists everywhere. Wildlife becomes an important symbol of this fact. Chris recounts an experience of being on the university campus during a study break, and spending half an hour in a copse of woods watching an owl and a hawk flying at each other in a treetop.

> It was great actually cause I just came away from it feeling really excited and refreshed, and I never ever would have expected to see that or have that kind of experience right there, that close....Experiencing the uniqueness or the wonder of

> the natural world, and seeing it there....I don't see it in these gardens as readily. And I was in a place in the woods there where I couldn't see any buildings, so it gave that sense of being somewhere else. And it's sort of quieter and the air's fresher. There weren't paved trails or anything like that.

Chris describes this as a "miniature" wilderness experience. Seeing wildlife, mountains, moon and stars from the city all inspire him in this way. He says this experience "reconnects me to what I enjoy if I'm forgetting." John has a similar experience of watching the skies from a sea kayak in the city harbour.

> You know what we did the other night? We went out and watched the lunar eclipse from the water. There was a lunar eclipse and there was comet Hale-Bopp off to the left. Fantastic, sitting right on the water! Gorgeous! It was so perfect. It was just absolutely fabulous. That's a wilderness experience. The moon was fairly low and it just sort of cast this long, silvery light across the top of the water. There was hardly any wind. As the moon started to disappear the silver line got narrower and narrower. It was just fascinating! Sorry, I just get very excited about this kind of stuff [*laugh*].

Alex uses wildlife sightings to support his conclusion that wilderness exists in the city, and cites an experience in New York as reaffirmation that the reconnection he experiences in wilderness is nature-dependent.

> People choose to go away to that space to live their life and be closer to nature, and I don't see it that way.... People see a problem with here. They feel out of touch with something and I don't feel that way.... I don't see wilderness as something being "out there". I see a lot of people drawing this line, "urban space is in here and wilderness is something out there". It's a much more fluid and interpenetrated kind of thing. I see a racoon, I see birds, I see seals right here in the city. And I saw an albatross last summer, off Ogden Point. It's an occasional visitor. "Wow...!" I was in New York for a week. There are not things growing. There's no grass or anything.... I went and sat in Central Park for a day. Felt better, listened to the birds chirp.... [Nature is] I guess the whole biology, chemistry of life.... There wasn't enough to give me the sense of being connected. Just green and quiet, sounds that I'm used to, animals, seeing a bird, flowers.... I felt a bit lost.

Wildlife encounters

The inherent power of nature to inspire is evident in the experience of encountering wildlife outside the city. These are highlights of the wilderness experience

that are not dependent upon the activities of adventure. Indeed, Alex's experience reveals that wildlife can bring with it all the traits of adventure - danger, uncertainty, novelty.

> We were camping in this crater once, which is sort of north central Tanzania. It's an old volcano thirty kilometres across. And we're in this little tent. It's fucking hot and there's no wind. Bugs are buzzing. We woke up in the morning to all this noise, we unzipped the tent and there's a herd of elephant all around.... We're in this little tent lying down and you look up and all you see is elephants eating.... We couldn't get out to take a leak or anything. We just had to lie there. What made it terrifying was just the sheer size of these creatures, the difference of the landscape.... You're lying on the ground...looking up...twelve, fourteen feet..... So what is the elephant going to do? Is it going to step on us? Is it going to chase us out of the tent? Is it gonna not be happy that we're gonna cook our breakfast? All those questions made it nervous and exciting and fun, and you go through that and you think "Wow! That was amazing!" I learned so much that evening.

Wild animals are the incarnation of wildness. David says of the wolf, "it's almost a totem for me." Two of his prime examples illustrating what he seeks in wilderness are wolf encounters. Drifting in a canoe at night on the west coast of Vancouver Island, looking up at the stars, and listening to a wolf howling nearby, for example, was experience of "just *being*!" "That's all it was. Just being!" Intimacy with these animals on their own terms is a sign that the goal of connection has been achieved. Rachel also says, "for me a wilderness experience I think is having contact with animals." She describes seeing seals in the ocean close to Victoria. David also recounts the highlight of seeing grizzly bear with cubs in the Rockies, and Scott recalls a similar sighting of polar bears on Baffin Island, which he describes as "amazing" and "most impressive."

"Just being" - the aesthetic experience

Now it will make sense to describe a range of environmental experiences that seem distinct from the adventure experience. "Wonder" or "deep appreciation" is a good term to describe the aesthetic nature experience that seems to arise spontaneously, unlike the focussed "mental struggle" of adventure, from animal sightings, or a view of mountains or moon or stars. This experience of wonder is described as an almost identical mental state of being fully alive and connected. Chris explains that there is the

experience of "being through doing," and then the experience of "being there" that arises "regardless of what you're doing." He says "there's just the sense of appreciation of the elemental simplicity. And that appreciation needn't rely on just having done some big hike or something." The physical and mental experience of travel, however, is important for unlocking this deeper aesthetic appreciation of the land. Chris tells of gazing at the mountain skyline from the window of a house and having a sense in that moment that "that's really what it's all about." That's what all of his experience of mountain adventure comes down to. But he feels he has come to understand this aesthetic-mystical deep appreciation more profoundly, somehow, through the direct experience of mountain travel. The significance of the aesthetic experience lies in "the sense of looking at and appreciating the beauty of it, and the 'naturalness' of it, I think. Just that and the peacefulness of that experience, of looking at that and appreciating it." In such moments, the wilderness travel activity is relevant as "just a way of being there."

Alex describes a more sublime experience of landscape as a realization of immensity of scale and distance, sheer power as well as beauty.

> There's all kinds of examples.... On Ellesmere there's this glacier.... It's about ten k. across at the base. And just walking around this corner and seeing this thing. And because of the distance it's kinda hard to tell how big it really is but you realize it's *huge*. And then the next day, walking down to it, and you have to cross real - right near the foot of it.... And standing at the base...the glacier's there [*pointing close*], and it's two hundred feet straight up, ice. And you're thinking, "okay, I'm seeing a little piece of it. I can't see the far side of it." How much sheer power is in what's there? And you can't see it moving but you know that it's moving, it's alive, it's a river. You just think, "Holy shit!"

Simon was similarly attracted to paddling on Lake Superior because to him there was something "magic," "incredible," and of "really strong spiritual significance" to him. He also describes a feeling of awe associated with the trees in the Carmanah Valley.

> I freaked out the first time I went there. I almost cried! I found that to be an incredibly magical place! You walk down through those trees.... I was walking around with my mouth open for half an hour. And I just couldn't believe what I was seeing...! I could not look at that and not be moved somehow.... Knowing that those kind of places are still there and to be in those places and somehow connect to that sense is important to me. Because it's the complete opposite of

> everything else that the world is becoming. And the fact that it's there is a special thing.

Carmanah provides a "wildness" experience for Simon without being a true wilderness. "I think of it in terms of what it represents," he explains. "The area is limited in size. It's surrounded by clear-cut. There's a trail going into it, there's a logging road going around it. That's not wilderness." But "in that particular place," he says, "the areas is just so intense that I...feel like I'm getting away from it all." This is a similar intensity to what Chris experienced briefly in the woods behind campus, watching birds. Simon says this is a "different type of experience" than the remote wilderness kayaking or hiking trip.

Wilderness definitions

Ultimately the adventure experience does not depend on a completely natural setting. Nor does the experience of nature depend on a setting that is remote and dangerous, or a challenge that focusses the mind. For these reasons it is difficult to define what type of environment is necessary to induce a wilderness experience. More than anything, the definitions of wilderness provided by the participants reveal that their wilderness experience is a state of mind, induced by a variety of circumstances. What is common to the definitions of wilderness is that the environment must somehow allow the mind to be focussed so that it experiences the immediacy of the present moment, the "here and now." This immediacy can be felt either as a narrowing of attention within the bounds of a particular meditative activity, or an "opening out" to the larger, sublime reality of "wildness" or nature that lies beyond the human world. Both perspectives lead to the apprehension of a larger reality that is harmonious and interconnected, a source of happiness and renewal. Environmental characteristics of wilderness are whatever the adventurer perceives is necessary to achieve this state of mind. Notably, wilderness is an "absence of" people and the sights and sounds of civilization, which represent distraction, reminders of a narrower vision.

Reed's perspective reveals, along with Simon's experience in Carmanah and Chris's campus bird-sightings, that as long as "wildness" can be felt, then many natural

places can be substitutes for real wilderness.

> I don't necessarily have to go into wilderness to get that.... I feel very, very fortunate that I have - I wouldn't call it a wilderness, but I would call it a place where I can experience something *close* to what I experience in wilderness, and that's East Sooke Park. It's a big enough protected area. And I can go *into* that place and I have several places I go where I can get away from people. Completely! Utterly! Except for the odd plane that flies over, and the odd high pitched chainsaw, virtually there's no other sign or sound of human activity. I don't delude myself into thinking that this is wilderness.... But nevertheless, it's a place where, even though the large carnivores are gone, I know that when I sit and look out into the forest...many of the big veterans there of Douglas fir etcetera, pfew! They were here long before us, *long* before us. The eagles flying overhead are still very, very much their own species as it were. There's enough there - thank God! - there's still *enough* there to let me know that 'Creation', as I call it, is still alive and well. And it's a place where I can get that reconnection, that reminder that I am not everything, that humanity is not everything. That for me is my refuge, and if anyone ever decided to take it away I'd be just out there! [*laughing*] How does that song go by Bruce Cockburn, y'know, "If I had a Rocket Launcher"?

What he is suggesting is that the idea of pure naturalness can be intuited anywhere that is relatively undisturbed.

Remoteness and inaccessibility represent the assurance that one will not be disturbed by human influences. Simon explains,

> Wilderness...is a place where I can go a couple days at least and not see anybody.... Not seeing people but also the influence of people. I don't want to see garbage, I don't want to see clear-cut. I don't want to see signs of obvious recent human use of the area. Because...I've linked that with something which I don't like about our society.... Kayaking around the island here...everywhere I've paddled I've felt like "yeah, this is accessible to anybody". There's boats all around, there's other kayakers and other people. Obvious evidence of clear up logging around. I don't consider it wilderness. It's beautiful. Amazing place and all. The sea life is incredible. But I don't consider that to be wilderness.... If you want wilderness you gotta go north, 'cause I don't think there is any...wilderness left on Vancouver Island.... 'Cause my definition of wilderness is someplace that really has no signs of human activity, no obvious signs....
>
> Another thing which had always been really, really important to me [is] to be able to be someplace where you can hear absolutely nothing.... Certain spots in Ontario...like in Algonquin or other park areas you get into the backwoods somewhere, you're sitting on the shore of a lake on a calm day and you hear nothing! And at nighttime you hear nothing and you can hear the hum inside your

> own head. And to me that's a very peaceful place to be, where there's no sound at all. And I've always liked that because, again, it means that I'm in a place where there's probably no other people, place that's relatively untouched. That's what I associate with it. And I think that ultimately comes back to my kind of worldview about I'm attracted to the places that haven't been spoiled by people yet [*laugh*]. And that human influence is always a real turn-off in many ways.... I don't have a lot of faith in humanity anymore. Any place I can go to get away from all the shit that we've done to this planet is a place I want to be!

John says that "A four hour hike...will put me anywhere that a five day wilderness adventure could put me." For him, like Reed, all that is required for a "wilderness experience" is the absence of humans and human signs, and he disagrees with Simon, arguing that wilderness can be experienced as purely on the edge of the city as in the far North.

> First it's the absence of people and second it's the absence of any *noticeable*, any noticeable impact that human activity has had. I don't feel that in order to have a wilderness experience I have to go up into the Taku Valley or Alaska.... There's almost nowhere on the face of the earth today where nobody has been, so to try and define wilderness in those terms would be naive. But for me as I say it's very simple - the absence of people and the absence of signs of human activity. And I can find that on Snake Island which is a forty minute paddle....

Scott clearly divides his definitions of wilderness in two - a place which is remote enough to allow the adventure of self-reliance, and a place where the natural order has not been disturbed. He sees benefits in both. Both require leaving everyday civilization behind. Ultimately, the places that provide the freedom he seeks in wilderness also tend to be natural. For the adventure experience, he seeks places free of crowds of people, and for the natural experience, he seeks places free of the crowds but also the signs of people and the influence of people. He summarizes these twin needs neatly,

> As far as my own personal involvement speaking as an urban person, it's useful for having a place where I can feel this sense of independence and responsibility for myself, and feed a sense of wonder.

To feed wonder, he says, "its nice to go to places where everything just looks right, where it looks like it has a natural order and everything in place and there're not cast off oil drums or clear-cut or radio towers." He values a place where the "natural order" seems to be intact, such that it inspires a sense of "numinous magic" and causes the traveller to

wonder about the impacts of his own footsteps. To experience this sense of a larger order of things, and to have freedom and a need to take responsibility for himself, Scott seeks a wilderness that is best defined as the absence of people.

> It's not that I don't like meeting other people. Usually the people you meet out there are pretty much like-minded people and often really interesting to meet. But after a certain point it gets too crowded, and after a certain point of crowding there gets to be rules, and it gets to be - if it's in a park there gets to be rules like quotas and tenting restrictions that there gets to be problems like polluted water and all kinds of things follow after that. It's not so much that I hate to meet people as I like to get to places where there's a freedom as long as you behave yourself and try not to change things that are out there, at least any more than you have to. Then it's a pretty big luxury to just be able to wander around anywhere out there and kneel down and drink the water. I don't take that for granted anymore. So there is something about going somewhere where there aren't people, and like I said I guess that just being away enough so that you actually have to take responsibility for yourselves.

For him wilderness is provides a contrast to everyday life and also freedom - freedom from social structure and clock time, freedom to take responsibility for himself - and also the experience of nature either through animals or "primal raw action and ice and rock and water and the elements" that are so visible in the arctic, and the important social experience of his companions as well as native cultures encountered.

There appear to be four elements to Scott's experience: camaraderie; newness; natural order; freedom/responsibility. The latter three elements are characteristic of place, which can now clearly be seen as being all elements of nature, or wildness. The fourth element, camaraderie, touches upon an outcome of the experience of nature - the wilderness experience is one of reconnection, to people and to the world.

What this basically reveals is that it is impossible to identify specifically when or where the wilderness experience will result. Individual definitions of wilderness differ, but accounts of the experience are fundamentally the same, requiring overcoming the mental preoccupation with past and future, with fears and concerns in the human world, and experiencing something which transcends these distractions.

Optimal, "root" experiences

Where the experiences of adventure and the experiences of wild nature merge there is an optimal experience that is life's root inspiration. The environmental aesthetic, the heightened awareness that comes through adventure travel or by encountering something wonderful in nature, and other elements of the experience, such as the social, become inseparable.

Cause for gratitude

Part of the optimal experience of wilderness is the feeling of wonder and deep appreciation which seems to occur most often as a response to landscape within the context of adventure travel. There several examples of this type of aesthetic experience. Scott recalls one particularly moving experience in Canada's Arctic.

> May nineteen ninety four we were on the northeast coast of Baffin Island in the impressive fjord country where they have these long fjords with steep walls, and we happened to be skiing out one of the most spectacular fjords at the same time the weather got really nice again - clear sky, sunshine.... we decided to hang out for a day or two.... We hiked up a thirty five hundred foot snow slope thing to a minor peak at the end of the fjord. Well it got cloudy and it was actually really kind of grey and dull when we set out in the evening to do this, but after about five hundred feet up we went out through the inversion layer into the bright sunshine, so even though the snow was horrible and the plodding was quite hard we managed to stagger our way up to the top of this kind of twin peaked thing that just dropped off vertically in cliffs right down to the fog over the ice in the fjord on the other side. We arrived at something like nine-o'clock in the evening and spent about seven hours up there, and it was completely still. There was not a breath of wind, the sun was shining, and everything down below as far as you could see was just covered in this blanket of cloud at five hundred feet with little islands sticking up through it and the other side of the fjord. The light at that time of day is kind of a golden soft light and it comes from the north. We just watched the sun go like that and reach its bottom at midnight and come back up the other side and never went out of sight. A little bird called a snow bunting - it was like three or four inches long - a little tiny bird that you normally see at sea level came up and buzzed around my head at thirty five hundred feet. It's easily one of the most spectacular places I've ever been. It was truly amazing - the lighting, the vertical cliffs going down into the fog, the complete absence of any wind, and this view of essentially unaltered landscape everywhere you could see. There's a tremendous sense of privilege to be able to sort of wander around on this

> hilltop in these beautiful conditions for the whole night and just have it all to ourselves, to watch the light change, and it's the most amazing thing to look along these rock cliffs in that golden light and see the snow stacked on the ledges, and then it just drops into the fog, three thousand feet below. You just took pictures and hoped that they'd turn out, and you just took more pictures, and then you just watched, and you just kind of walked back and forth.... We had taken sleeping bags and kind of bivouac bags and shovels and we made platforms to walk around on in the snow, but there was no way you could get in a sleeping bag when it's like that. It's so beautiful there's no way you could even close your eyes. It was amazing. It's definitely one of the most precious moments ever. And part of it is that I was able to share it with somebody who also appreciates it, a friend of mine who I really like and who has an eye for that kind of stuff too. We were just beaming. We were so happy. Just that enormous privilege of being able to do that which is neat enough anywhere, plus being able to do it in the midnight sun, plus having it happen in some ways the most geologically spectacular fjord region of northeastern Baffin Island, plus there not being a single breath of wind, and plus being with somebody who shares the same sort of sene of what it's about. Sharing, the sense of "this really is a moment among moments, or a special time. We're really privileged." And I think just sharing that sense of "this is a really privileged time". You talk about going up to the north and seeing the midnight sun for example, and in fact for the whole time that I was there - three and a half months plus - there're actually very very few occasions when you could see the midnight sun because either the weather, cloud cover, didn't permit it, or because there was something in the way, a fjord wall or something. Unless you happen to be in a particular area and stay there where it has northern exposure, wait for good weather, seeing the sun at midnight just doesn't happen every day. We staggered down in the morning and collapsed, having been up for a day and a half without sleeping.

Alex has a similar experience where intimacy with the land produced misery, which eventually yielded to an extraordinarily intense and overwhelmingly positive experience of beauty. Again, there is a sense of deep gratitude at seeing what few people have the privilege to see.

> One of my best experiences I think was on this really difficult trip.... We had to hike up into the mountains, and we were just climbing over passes and getting farther up into the hills. And one day, it had been this brutal day. There was snow in this valley and the only place we could walk was actually up this river bed. There wasn't much water in it, but it was flowing. Our feet were soaked.... All we could hear...was water running and boulders falling. And the ground is very rough, loose rocks, and it was really foggy. I couldn't see...twenty feet.... We finally came across this one spot that had a little stream and it's a flat, and so it

> was two o'clock in the afternoon and I said, "we're making camp. That's it. We're stopping." And it was wet, and everyone was miserable. We made...lunch and went to bed. The other guide and I were just exhausted at this point and we said, "fuck it." And I got up at seven o'clock at night to take a piss, and I unzipped the tent, and it was clear clear clear clear clear. Not a cloud in the sky. Blue, but no light where we are. We were in a shadow, but [there was] really bright light away.... And we were a hundred metres from a precipitous drop, and we didn't know it was there. And right up the other side was a series of hanging glaciers that were calving all the time [*making big explosive sound effects*]. It was amazing amazing amazing. I grabbed the other guy. I said, "get your ass out of bed man. You gotta look at this. It's just absolutely incredible".
>
> I remember sitting in front of the tent, like just after the worst possible morning. It's one of those days when you just want to cry that your pack is heavy and your group is cold, wet, tired, scared, hungry.... You're thinking, "this is the biggest fucking disaster." There's nothing you can do to change it.... But in the midst of all that incredible chaos is this scene of incredible beauty. And...I'm probably one of five people in the last fifty years that have been there.... It's just an incredibly intense experience. It's an incredible sense of joy, and wonder, and awe. I wanted to cry for all the good reasons at that point.... Four hours earlier I would have given anything to be somewhere else.... There was no way they could have paid me enough money to go through that hell again. And then it's like, "okay, this is worth it."

Alex's experience reveals what is likely a two-way relationship between the mystical and the aesthetic, between the relatively unmediated experience of connection with the land through adventure, and the experience of deep appreciation and wonder in nature. Alex's story also suggests that this experience of wonder redeems the hardship of adventure, making the "suffering" worthwhile.

Simon has many similar aesthetic experiences of wonder and gratitude intertwined with his experiences of adventure travel, particularly kayaking, snowshoeing and hiking along the north shore of Lake Superior in Northern Ontario. Such experiences reveal how the heightened sensitivity to place that comes about through the "meditation" of adventure makes the adventurer receptive to the aesthetic-mystical experience of landscape. The deep appreciation that results from intimacy with the land is an experience of profound joy, peace, and gratitude that also includes a sense of connection. Simon recounts one time on a kayaking trip:

> We'd come around a point, Pointe La Canadiene, it's called, and it's a big

> headland that sticks into Superior. It's a gorgeous spot...! This big rocky headland with a...large cap on the end of it which sticks out over the lake. It's a really impressive spot! And of course when you round that point the winds are usually pretty bad. And we got down there. The winds are strong but it was all right to go around. We went around and in behind there's this huge bay...and there's a lot of big cliffs on your left hand side as you paddle along, and I got in there and it was quiet again, and again it was that same sort of feeling that I had snowshoeing through that area. It was like, this is incredible. Tears came to my eyes. It was like "I'm so happy to be here, to be able to enjoy this. And to be in that spot." And then again we hadn't seen anybody else for about three days. To me there's always something about that – knowing there's no one else around.

It seems significant that a common aspect of the experience of deep appreciation is related to the absence of people. This contributes to the sense of privilege, and of experiencing something extraordinary that cannot be taken for granted. There is a feeling of incredulity that comes with experiencing something far beyond what could have been expected, some synergy of what Simon calls a "convergence" of events that could hardly have been planned.

> I mean mostly the people are good. But it's a combination of a really beautiful objective in really beautiful conditions, really beautiful weather and situation, and then just having everything work so that it's not only the achievement of the goal of course but it's putting it all together, it's the techniques of getting there, it's routefinding, it's a bit of climbing ability, it's some rope work now and then, it's knowing how to put it all together and so there's some experience and skill and knowledge about what's out there to be done I guess in the first place and then of course the people, so yeah, definitely a convergence.

Scott's "magical" experiences reveal the complexity of this "convergence." He explains how mountaineering is not an end unto itself, but a medium for this rare richness of experience. Many of his most cherished memories include surpassing a barrier of challenge or uncertainty to achieve something new and unexpected. He describes climbing in the Alps and having an unforeseen opportunity to summit the Matterhorn in perfect weather. He says,

> ...it's a really famous mountain...a very beautiful mountain...we had such incredible conditions, perfect climbing conditions - beautiful, clear, sunny, wonderful day...I was with really good guys, friends, and...I almost never really expected to get up it. I guess I'd kind of in the back of my mind written it off.....And so when we ended up there and we ended up having such a cool kind

> of convergence of good luck in terms of timing when there weren't very many people, and good weather, and perfect route conditions and a good team, and it all came together and there we were suddenly standing on top of the Matterhorn, yeah it was wonderful, really excellent.

Scott describes a similar experience climbing 18 500' Mt. Elbrus in what was then Soviet Georgia, and yet another trip, demonstrating the same convergence of elements, was to a remote summit on Vancouver Island.

> And just putting the whole thing together in a weekend from Victoria is kind of crazy in the first place. It's about a seven hour drive to get there. And so you get there at one or two o'clock in the morning on Saturday morning and you sleep for a few hours and then you get up and do the approach.... we set up camp and we kept on going and we climbed the peak and we arrived at it just before sunset.... We were coming down and we had this beautiful low light over the ocean and the fjords, and golden glow on the rocks as we were trying to get off the thing, and then we rapelled and it got dark and we got out the flashlights and we rapelled again - once or twice, I don't remember anymore - and we got back to the tents in the dark, and the next morning we get up and came back to the car and drove back to Victoria late Sunday night. And just that sense of it all fitting together so perfectly again with good people, good weather, you have a goal that's achievable but a little bit out there, beautiful scenery. Another magical trip, and just amazing.

Scott has been able to sustain this wonder and newness of experience from his earliest mountaineering trips, when he recalls seeing icebergs floating in a Greenland bay, catching reflecting sunlight like stars in the night sky. "The really big ones were beautiful to look at but they also move around with the tide and they roll over and they crash apart and they make noises...." It was an experience of "having fun and being in control of what you're doing and no rules and beautiful scenery, good companion, and relatively new experience." Here his four themes are repeated - companionship, natural order, freedom, and the newness that is fed by an attitude of facing challenge. "There were these things that were all new experiences for me," he explains of his earliest mountaineering trips.

> I remember the first time I really went rock climbing on a big mountain cliff and I just had an old ratty pair of sneakers and I barely knew what I was doing, but it was such a beautiful situation, such a beautiful day, and people were just great, and kind of sitting there, on the side of this cliff, I can't believe where I am! And I

> got this picture of myself. I got this picture with this huge smile on thinking, "Holy cow!" [*chuckling and smiling*] "I can't believe where I am!"....And one other time I remember we were hiking around in the fog one morning and we were trying to get up this big hill, and it was kind of drizzly, and then suddenly we just kind of broke through above the cloud and it was sunny...and it's nice and it's colder and you can see just kind of the sea of clouds stretching out in every direction, and not only that but, in this particular instance, you could go to the edge of a cliff and...there's a kind of a rainbow-like phenomenon where if your shadow is projected on a cloud bank you often see a ring of colours around it called a "glory", and this is the first time I'd ever seen one. I never knew it even existed before....It was all just like every time almost was a new experience of some kind.

There are many more accounts of experiences where the challenge of adventure yields to moments of deep appreciation. Simon recalls a time in winter.

> ...just one friend and I...snowshoed down the coast trail on Lake Superior. And they had a *lot* of snow that winter! It was just really deep snow! And so we're slogging through with eighty pound backpacks and it was hard going! It was tough...! You were going over big slabs of granite...the snow is four feet deep in spots. You'd hit it with the snowshoes and you'd start sliding down the face of this rock...and it's like, "aww man!" You'd try and dig your way back up out of this little trench of snow. And it took us hours to go three kilometres. And I've never been so exhausted in my life. We were trying to get to this spot where the trail comes out on the coast, and we finally got there. We were just exhausted, but it was *so* good to get there finally. It was like you'd really accomplished something that was challenging, physically and mentally. I remember my friend and I stopping at one point and munching on these rock hard frozen granola bars and just looking at each other and shaking out heads. We didn't even say anything. It was just like I knew what he was thinking. He knew what I was thinking. It was the most physically demanding thing I have ever done in my life. Every muscle ached. I consumed more water than I can ever imagine cause we were sweating so much, and it was cold! Minus twenty-five probably. But it felt really good to have done that!

The shared experienced brought Simon closer to his companion, enabling a communication that transcended words. Challenge in wilderness, combined with the experience of landscape, produced a feeling of being "alive", characterized by immediate, total happiness, and a sense of experiencing something truly important. Simon felt deeply appreciative, full of joy in the moment, in the place. "It was a fantastic day to be alive!"

As Simon's account reveals, the experience of deep appreciation, wonder, or privilege in the wilderness results in a sense of "just being" in the moment, whether it arises out of an adventure experience, an aesthetic experience, or both. Along with gratitude and immediacy are other common feelings: joy, heightened meaning, heightened awareness. Heightened meaning comes perhaps as a result of how the severity of consequences of decisions in adventure situations imbue the minutiae of experience with significance - the snow, ice and rock on a climb, for example. Along with this vividness of detail and immediacy of mind, Chris recalls a feeling of gratitude that pervades everything. A cup of tea at the end of a long day, silence, and simple companionship all seem special, as if the "wake up" effect of the aesthetic experience reaffirms the value of everyday things. Being "tuned-in" to the land in this way means for Rachel that she is in a position to have rare encounters with animals, as in "all of a sudden a hummingbird would just come up...and it would be right in front of your face."

Being real to self and others

The optimal wilderness experience includes a connection self and others that can be interpreted as a function of the same experience of "im-mediacy" or "connection" that intensifies the experience of landscape. Chris claims that the journey through the land, a decision-making process that forces him to probe not only his surroundings but also himself with questions, also results in a journey into himself. T.S. Eliot, he observes, writes, "I found that going outside I was really going in." Chris also feels closer to the people he travels with in wilderness, as well as those he leaves behind in the city. With his fellow travellers, climbing partners, a strong feeling of community develops as they rely on each other in situations where there is nobody else to rely on, and lost lives are the price of misplaced trust. Even the absence of distraction of everyday life that wilderness represents is an opportunity to connect with fellow travellers on common ground, without the interference of conflicting work schedules and professional roles.

Rachel and Reed also emphasize the sense of self-discovery that comes with the wilderness experience. The wilderness connects Reed with a voice that he recognizes as

his authentic self which, as Alex also observes, is not shaped by reaction to social pressures. Rachel, particularly sensitive to the social voices that seem to be telling her how to live her life, seeks wilderness to reaffirm her personal convictions. She says, "the wilderness always teaches you where you're at. It's like a mirror...reminding us who we are." She says, "I was starting to have people tell me what to do in my life, and the only way for me to centre myself...the only way I could get any peace was to just sit and stare at the river going by somewhere and...then feel strong again."

Alex also observes the heightened sense of self and the intensified friendships that he experiences in wilderness. The mutual understanding and intensity of shared experience that occurs within a group is evident in the difficultly of explaining the experience to people back home. Of trips with friends, Alex says, "it's a shared time...and it's something that brings us as a group closer together."

Of an adventure experience, Rachel says,

> It just gave me the sense of really participating more in life! I just felt more alive, and it was important to do it with other people too.... We all had the same experience. And it was the experience of looking back and seeing what we had done and going "wow!"

The fact that she had little in common with the other people in her group was made unimportant by the shared adventure.

For the mountaineers, Scott and Robin, the social element is perhaps the most important part of the wilderness experience. Scott found that mountaineers were a "new category of person" different from the people he met before he began climbing. The magic of the mountaineering experience, he writes,

> had to do with long drives and singing in a crowded minibus, with long dark hikes to some remote shelter, with a spirit of doing something in all but the worst weather, with sharing laughter and song and accordion music in a chilly bothy, with the social scene of village pubs, and with the sheer vivacious enthusiasm that powered the legs and was sustained by the feast of the senses.

"It wasn't just you go hiking and then that's it," says Scott, who joined a university mountaineering club in graduate school. Including weekly meetings in the pub and frequent slide shows, "there's a whole social thing around mountaineering as well as just

the activity itself." Scott refers to lines from a climber named Kevin Fitzgerald that express the magic of "convergence" and the primacy of the social experience:

> Climbing is about being in the right place at the right time with the right people. What is actually done is of no importance whatsoever. Serious climbing, and there should be no other kind, is almost entirely a matter of personal friendship.

This citation supports the emerging theme that the wilderness experience is primarily about relationship, be it a relationship to the land or to people, through adventure or aesthetics, or even a way of relating to oneself.

Besides being in some way a "new" experience, Scott's wilderness experiences must have a social element, more so than for any of the other people interviewed. In corroboration Scott notes that he has done no solo trips worth mentioning - only one-day side excursions off other trips. Robin derives companionship from the wilderness experience, but also the right kind of "aloneness," - a positive connection to self, as opposed to negative loneliness.

> The aloneness I feel in the mountains is almost always a positive feeling, even though I sometimes wish I had some help with whatever problems I'm dealing with. I think it's a very positive type of aloneness. And similarly the companionship. You know who are your true friends in the wilderness, or are really supportive. Fear and exhaustion are two factors that generally tend to change a personality in a negative way, mine included. And if you are with someone who can deal with those kinds of emotions, threats, and still be supportive, then you have really found a companion. And that's what I mean. So I think that that's a good [kind of] companionship as well. I would say that you can't find that in the city as well. There's other challenges to life of course, but it's so easily defined in the wilderness, and it happens so quickly. I've often said...that you can learn more in a day in the mountains than you can in a month in the city under similar circumstances.

Connecting with oneself also provides inspiration for life, feeding into a sense of purpose, which is discussed shortly.

Connection with the land

The optimal experience is a general sense of connection that includes the land. Learning the "lore" of wilderness is a way of connecting or "becoming intimate" with

people and the land, says Alex. These elements of experience become "real" rather than abstract, and the adventurer develops an awareness of interconnectedness through the process of "being out there and seeing it and watching it and trying to get a handle on why things are the way they are" - what Chris describes as a "decision-making process." Connectedness is the outcome of the mental struggle, the transition into wilderness.

Scott also writes of this general feeling of connectedness:

> A mother bear and cub strolled idly a few metres in front of our tent at Bedwell Lake. We groped our way through clouds and mist to the two eastern summits of Big Interior Mountain with no-view.... We traded stories and news and plans and banter. There was nothing "New Age" about it, no beating of drums, but there was a kind of reconnection, and a pause to reflect on shared wonder, and on the wonderful people brought into my life by the habit of hiking up hills.

Scott explains that his wilderness experience inspired a sense of connection perhaps not as great as encountering native cultures in the arctic who had a much more direct connection to the land than he did as a mountaineer. Scott observes that in civilization,

> ...even in the small towns there's so much disconnection. There's cafeteria food or fast food or grocery stores full of everything you ever wanted. Okay sure there are lots of people who have it hard, but the average person's connection to nature is awesomely diminished in an urban setting, and I think I did start to contemplate the contrast more over the years since the Greenland trip.

He is careful to distinguish his experience of "connection" from a native experience. Mountaineering is not truly "connection" in that sense, he explains, but it nonetheless gives a feeling of being "involved with the planet." Robin is also inspired by the interconnectedness of people with land and also community in more traditional cultures. Robin, Rachel, Scott, and John observe the such cultures are more inspired by a worldview of interconnectedness than the modern one of individualism.

Reed explains the feeling of interconnectedness in wilderness that is simultaneously a connection with nature, a "deeper unity," and an experience of authentic self. This is the quintessential deep ecological or transpersonal experience of "Self-realization." These experiences, he explains,

> [are] somewhat mystical. There is a sense...of transcending the material and the physical, that there's a blurring of reality.... You gain a sense that while whether

> there be moose or elk or even bears in front of you, [or] if that landscape is devoid of any other animal life and all you're doing is passing through say a cirque, climbing up to a higher ridge, you have the sense that you and everything else around you are all part of one reality, that in some fundamental way there is a deeper unity, or higher unity that you are a part of.... In those moments is when I certainly feel I am most authentic, most in touch with who I really am, and what is my place in the world.... I do not feel like I am being judged. I am being accepted for who I am.... It's the absence of people that enables you to drop the defences, to not feel like you're having to be careful what you say or whatever..... I experienced that at quite a young age, and through my adolescence, and still do, as almost like a voice that when I become very quiet - and I can achieve this now too through meditation - where I hear -literally!- a voice that I recognize as me, but yet is not the me that I find myself too often caught up in.... It can be experienced in a number of ways. It can be experienced as a deep peacefulness, being 'at peace' with oneself and the world. I think that's probably one of the most predominant feelings I have when I'm in deep wilderness - just being at peace with myself and with the world. Being in harmony with it.

The feeling of immersion in environment that comes either through adventure or from an eye-opening experience of wildness is so complete that there is no distinction between self and surroundings. Reed explains,

> For me the environment is everything! It's everything and I am nothing in many respects.... It's just going into it, and allowing something much, much bigger than me to swallow me up, so I am nothingness, I am absolute nothingness!

The loss of a feeling of an independent "I" means that the adventurer experiences a total absence of conflict. As Reed explains, "nothing else exists." Rachel also remembers, of her childhood experience, "it made nothing else exist." Various other descriptions are used - "blending in," being "swallowed up." This experience of harmony is felt not only as interconnectedness, but as peace, relaxation, a sense of well-being and absolute happiness. This feeling that Rachel describes as being "less fragmented...more at one with everything" is also Reed's definition of happiness. Happiness for him is being "fully present, fully engaged." Otherwise he does not feel he is being true to himself. His experience of himself is of too much conflict, a schism between what he says and does, and who he truly is.

Spiritual renewal and inspiration

The experience of interconnectedness, a feeling of unity with a larger reality, is a spiritual experience and a source of spiritual renewal and inspiration. Often this renewal is associated with a feeling of the insignificance of humanity before the grandeur of nature, affirming the place of the individual as but a small part of an all-encompassing whole. A significant thing about this experience is that it begins to be interpreted as an experience of ultimate importance, of what truly matters in life. This is the beginning of a religious inspiration. Simon describes having this "root experience" early in his adventure career, on his first trip to Lake Superior.

> We hiked down the beach at the far end [of a bay], and we waded through the little river mouth there and set up our tents on the beach. And it was one of those typical Superior days in summer. It was overcast and then...it fogged in just when we got there.... It fogged in so much that you couldn't see anything. You couldn't see a hundred feet down the beach.... The other three guys took off to...hike down to...where the cliff face was, and I just didn't feel like going. It was a really neat thing to watch the fog come rolling in off the lake.... I remember I sat there on this log and...watched the fog roll in. And there were pretty good swells breaking in on the beach, and it was a really steep beach at that point, kind of cobblestone, and so the waves would crash in and this spray would actually cover our tents.... But I just sat there and didn't even bother moving the tents.... I sat there for probably an hour...and just watched these waves come in. And that moment still sticks with me. In retrospect it was a feeling of for the first time I realized that regardless of whether I was sitting here or not, those waves would be pounding in. There could be no humans on the face of the planet and those waves would be rolling in, pounding that beach, and I remember that moment distinctly. Because it just instilled in me some sense of, well, how insignificant we are! Take us away, still would go on without us. And that to me is actually the root. That's the moment that I remember, quite clearly. I remember being quite moved by that realization. And so after that...my energy was focussed on trying to have other experiences like that, and to me it means something in the outdoors in a place where there weren't other people around.

The root experience is a realization of human insignificance and of the importance of nature. Simon came to this awareness as he sat alone and watched the waves pounding the shore of Lake Superior. From this perspective, reality was not human creation, but something beyond the human. Getting away from people became important as a way to reconnect with this extraordinary reality. This is part of the value of the wilderness

environment - it fills awareness with the transcendent reality of the present moment.

Simon describes another instance of what he calls a "root" experience that reveals what is central to his experience of wilderness. On a snowshoeing trip by Lake Superior, it was dark very early, and everyone but Simon had gone into the tent.

> It was just such a nice night that I wanted to stay outside, so they're all making fun of me.... I was in my wool pants, wool sweater. I went for a long time without getting a fleece jacket. So they called me "Mister Pinecone Natural Fibre Man".... So they were all making fun of me cause I'm standing out in the cold. It was like minus thirty probably, at that point, but it was a clear sky. It was crisp and cold, and I'd just made some tea. I sat out on the snow looking over this harbour, down this cove into Superior. And in this harbour...the water was frozen. You get out on the Lake, nothing was frozen. And...it was perfectly still! You could hear the hum inside your head! And...I'd look back to where we were camped and see the tent with the candles on inside and I thought I was kind of a nice warm looking spot. And you look out in the Lake and the stars were just starting to come out, the moon was not that bright but the stars were really bright.... It was just one of those really special moments when you feel that, "yeah, we're ultimately extremely insignificant in the grand scheme of things." And all of a sudden there's this crack, like a sharp thunder crack. And it's the ice cracking in the bay there. And it was really amazing! Just sitting. I'm perfectly warm, I'm dressed for it, I'm drinking my warm tea, and it was freezing cold outside! And there was just...*no* place on the planet I would rather have been at that moment than right there.... The only way to describe it is that there is no other place I would rather have been. That is exactly where I wanted to be. I just was perfectly at ease with myself in that spot. It was like this is what living is all about! And I remember that...was the coldest night I think we had. It probably went down about minus forty. But all night long the ice kept cracking in that...bay. And it was just amazing because it was just deadly quiet, no wind or anything, and all of a sudden this, "crack!" And it would wake you up during the night. And it was kind of, "what the hell was that?" And then, "oh yeah," you go back to sleep. Then it'd happen again and you'd wake up [*laugh*]. I think I woke up every time it happened. It happened about ten times over the night.

Many themes are evident here: the experience of what might be considered a hostile or uncomfortable environment; the challenge and reward of travelling and being comfortable in that environment; a sublime aesthetic experience, accentuated by the contrast between the warmth and safety of the tent and the inhuman booming of the lake's ice; the camaraderie of a group juxtaposed with the contemplative mood of standing alone; an inspirational feeling of insignificance in "the grand scheme"; full

attentiveness to the present and the details of clothing, tents, tea, weather, lake and sky; the wonder of a new, unique, unfamiliar experience; feeling harmony, at ease with self and environment; the immediacy, joy, and gratitude of ultimate unrivalled happiness in the present time and place. It is difficult to find anything in the words of any of the interview participants that is not simply rephrasing these basic themes leading up to a moment of total integration with the all-encompassing reality of nature - an experience that is at once peaceful/comforting and wonderful/awe-inspiring. Such experiences are the gems in a lifetime of wilderness travel, amidst countless more mundane or uncomfortable or conflicting experiences that are forgotten or put aside when the time comes to tell a tale about what makes it all worthwhile. As Scott is wise to observe,

> In terms of just general misery, there have been a bunch of occasions where we just got cold and wet and tired and came home, with or without getting anything done.

The optimal experiences are worth emphasizing, however, because they are the ones which justify a lifetime commitment to wilderness, and which are the most powerful inspirations for everyday life. They are the times when the traveller realizes, "this is what living is all about."

When Reed describes the type of experience that inspires him to return to wilderness again and again, his passion is obvious:

> One of the places I've enjoyed immensely is Quetico, in Northern Ontario. It's one of the prime canoe areas in North America. What park management has done is they've dictated a ceiling over the park, so there's only one aircraft you hear the whole time that you're in there and that's the ranger's patrol.... So it's wonderful! And once you get away from the front country lakes, where there's boats allowed, pshew! You don't hear anything! Not a thing! It is absolutely *awe*some! Where the sound of the waves against the rocks is almost deafening, cause it's so quiet. I love it. I love it I love it I love it. Some of my best, some of my favourite memories are from that place. Spent sitting on a small little island - ...and this is Canadian Shield country so a lot of it's rock and pine and such - pulled up on this one little island which was essentially one big domed rock, and that's where we made our camp that night. And it's so fantastic! You have the lake all your own, loons calling, beautiful. The sky shot red with the setting sun, fire crackling away. Ach! Waves lapping up against the canoes. [*sigh*] I gotta get outta here. [*laugh*] Oh man! [*laugh*] Oh, ohww! [*laugh*] How the hell can I get out of here!

> Oh I gotta get out of this place. I gotta get back. [*laugh*]. It's been too long! It's been too long. Yeah, yeah. I love places like that. And it's important for me to know that it just exists even if I can't get there.

Overwhelmingly, the participants agree that this optimal experience of wilderness is a source of spiritual energy and inspiration for their everyday lives. Reed's statement above reveals how strongly he craves this experience of "reconnection." The rejuvenation that comes through a meditative experience of landscape is deemed so essential for well-being that a lack of it drove Simon to quit his government job.

> You get into this rhythm of your days just kind of start melding together. You wake up, you cook a meal, and you pack your stuff up, hop in the boat, you paddle and you take a break here and there and you eat, paddle some more, set up camp. And it's just this really simple existence.... Overlaying that whole thing, is the cycle you develop around the daily routine.... So you're doing the same thing each day but what's changing is where you are and the scenery. On those trips I would get totally wrapped up in where I am because there are some incredibly beautiful spots there.... I'm always taking pictures and...just soaking it all in.... Oftentimes when...I'd set up camp in the evening, if it was a calm night I might go out for a paddle in the evening or go for a walk.... Or even better do absolutely nothing. I really like doing nothing! I'm a big fan of that. And actually when I say do nothing I don't mean, "do nothing". I mean not read or do something but just sit there, let my thoughts travel through my mind. And that's to be honest when I feel most a peace. You're in a spot and there's no one else there, and you listen to the sounds around you and the wind and the water and the almost constant sound of the waves crashing up on shore. And you just soak that in somehow. It's like...it's my tank of fuel and I'm filling myself up. And that gets me by the next few months of not doing that if I have to. But eventually my tank runs dry and I have to do it again, which is why I just quit my job! It's been three years since I felt I've really done anything major like that. And it's like I'm on major empty mode right now, and I've got a huge fucking tank I've got to fill up right now!

John explains in similar terms how this spiritual experience is critical to his well-being, and further reveals how the spiritual experience is a core upon which he balances life's lesser priorities. Maintaining a connection to this fundamentally important experience is the key to a happy and healthy life. He sums up the reward of the adventure experience as a "tremendous feeling of well being." This feeling is the goal of his wilderness excursions. When asked to describe this sensation that he has in the

mountains, he laughs at his use of an odd analogy.

> I said to you I don't like to have to try and explain to people why I'm standing there with my eyes bulging out of my head or I'm gasping for breath or something. It's not that I've just climbed a mountain. It's that I can't believe what I see. And I can't believe how, how, how - I don't want to say "electric", cause electric's the wrong word. It just it, just I dunno.... You're too young. I'll bet you've never read Lil' Abner. In Lil' Abner - it was a comic strip - it had this stuff called "kick-a-poo joy juice" [*laughing*] and it made you feel good! It feels like somebody injected me with kick-a-poo joy juice, y'know, it just does! It just makes me glow! It's better than an orgasm. There's just nothing that compares to it. I would give up sex for that kind of experience! And I have on many occasions [*laughing*].... And that's how it is. It's just that simple. *And*, and having said that, I think I can sort of put it in context by saying...I was an administrator...for fifteen years! We had three hundred and fifty employees. We had about thirty-five different services we offered.... So that was a pretty intense position. And we had a fourteen-member board that I had to report to.... It was pretty - I'm sorry, I don't like to use this word but I'm going to use it - "stress". It was stressful. But I found an absolute perfect balance, because I would make sure that when that was taking too much of "me" - not my time, it was demanding too much of me - I would simply go and climb Mount Arrowsmith, or climb Mount Albert Edward, or climb Mount Benson, or go out in my flying junior [sailboat], or whatever. It would all be well! In one day I would come back *completely* rejuvenated! *Ab*solutely and *to*tally rejuvenated! As if nothing had happened, even at the worst of times, which would be budget times or labour negotiations or something like that. In one day I could completely rebuild! Now *that* is worth... How do you measure that? How do you measure that value?

Wilderness rejuvenation resets life's equilibrium and empowers a focussed, committed, energetic approach to daily life. John interprets feelings of "stress" as a loss of perspective, or balance. The balance is restored by returning to wilderness for a brief reminder of life's priorities.

> What I experienced is something that just says, "this is something that is necessary in my life, to provide the balance that makes me feel good about life, makes me feel good about myself, and gives me the peace of mind that allows my body to stay healthy." But it is such an incredibly *intense* feeling! When I stand there and look at it. I mean I don't know what to say. I don't want to have to say anything. That's why I'm having such a hard time telling you.

Rachel also expresses the need to seek wilderness inspiration on a regular basis. Speaking of a recent experience, she says, "I don't know how long it's going to last, and

then I'll go running back." Chris feels empowered by the heightened sense of meaning, the more vivid reality of the climbing experience, the felt connection to things which were before abstract. Alex experiences the same effect of being "emotionally energized, physically exhausted" from "active meditation."

> People think that's kind of funny cause you're tired, your shoulders are sore, you're limping the next day cause you bruised your shoulder on that rock or whatever. But I feel like, "wow!"

He, too, describes the need to have this experience continually renewed, to have "a fix."

> After a very hard day of paddling I can come back and feel incredibly rejuvenated, excited, and alive. And that's what for me the out of doors has done, whether it's wilderness or whatever, however you want to define that space.... It always gives me the ability to balance my life here.... It's a very positive experience for me all the time.... And when I get off, I'm just feeling good. I have lots of emotional energy to deal with things. I sleep really well.... It's like a drug.... I can do more during the week. I can fall asleep better. I deal better with people. I can deal with...the regular problems of life much more effectively.... When I don't get that exercise, in that kind of environment...I don't feel as good.

The meditative experience is a panacea. It is a fundamental need, required for happiness, as if without it life would remain bogged down in the detachment, frustration and confusion of the pre-transition phase of wilderness experience.

Alex describes the eye-opening, "wow!" experience of wilderness adventure as an inspiration "that's *gotta* change a person." The experience has transformative power. Simon describes a similar feeling of empowerment. Returning home in the fall to Ontario from the Rocky Mountains, he stopped at his favourite place on the shore of Lake Superior - Oiseau Bay. When he arrived at the bay, he says he "just felt amazing".

> I was just so happy to be there. I'd done stuff in the previous two months which I'd never thought I'd do.... It was like I could do anything! My mind probably hasn't been so clear since it was then [*laugh*].... I was doing what I wanted to do. There was *nothing* could possibly bother me. Except the fact that my pack weighed eight thousand pounds and I was packing up a wet sandy tent each morning, but that was trivial. So my frame of mind was such that there was nothing bothering me at all. I just felt so alive. And I was in this place that was incredibly beautiful, and alone - no one else around. And I remember...standing on the beach there watching the sunset and just singing as loud as I could. I was just so happy to be there! This to me is what was real, about living, and being

> able to appreciate this kind of stuff.... But how do you explain that [feeling of being "alive"]...? It's this feeling where your senses are completely tuned to everything around you. You're picking up on everything. You're in touch with who you are as a person.... When I was finished that couple of months I spent by myself it was like I could do anything! I knew that there was nothing I can't do.... After that it was like I felt that I know who I am. I felt somehow I had instilled in myself certain values which really defined who I am as a person. And that sticks with me to this day.

This experience of "being alive" has eliminated for Simon any doubts about who he is or what he lives for. He describes this wilderness experience as "a touchstone" which reminds him of what is most important in his life, what really matters. When a car accident paralyzed his legs, making him unable to hike into the wilderness, getting back to wilderness was his primary concern.

> When I was...in the hospital recovering, one of the main thoughts on my mind was..."how am I going to get back to Pukaskwa?" And I was determined to get back there.... Because that was the place that was so important to me. And it still is.... I wanted to stand on the...beach at Oiseau Bay and know that I got there under my own power somehow.... It had been a place that a year before that, I felt on top of the world. *Nothing* could have taken me down at that point. I felt better than I ever have and ever will probably. So to me it was important to know that I could do that sort of stuff.

The experience demonstrates how wilderness was the most important thing in his life. He took up kayaking immediately, so he could return to Lake Superior.

> I had to prove to myself that I could still get out there, and enjoy the wilderness like I had before.... If something were to happen to me now that I couldn't get back out into the outdoors I don't know what I'd do. I've always said that after my accident kayaking saved my life, saved my sanity. And it did...! If there wasn't that outlet, it would have been really hard for me to cope!

Simon expresses the same attitude about the importance of wilderness as the famous Canadian canoeist Bill Mason. When Mason had a mid-life heart attack, his wife Joyce recalls,

> He said it was almost as if he had to escape; he felt he could really get well if he could escape and get out. He was deathly afraid that he wouldn't be able to escape and go to the wilderness. Wilderness for Bill began when he carried his canoe around the first falls or rapid. This meant he could be alone. If he could not portage, it was like he was trapped, for the rest of his life. (Raffan, 1996:139)

Rachel expresses the same feeling that she would "die" if she could not live close to wilderness. At difficult times in her life, "the only thing that I could think of that would save me and give me some kind of reason to live was to live in the woods."

A sense of perspective

The feeling of human insignificance in the face of a larger reality is a positive experience because it offers a perspective in which the sources of everyday stress also lose their power. Rachel explains,

> It really calms you, that's for sure. It grounds you. It takes away from all the other stuff. It makes everything less important, I think. 'Cause it is, really [*laugh*]. Well really, I mean you still have to do it but you don't have to get so stressed out about it. You can get caught up in it and get separated from everything.... Like for my studies and all which I think "uh oh, I don't know if I'm ever going to be able to go back to college and keep up with everybody else" or whatever, I'm worried about things. And then if I go out in nature and I walk along the beach or whatever it"s like, "well, the waves, the rhythm of the tide are still here [*laugh*]. It's still gonna go on, whether I'm here or not."

Alex agrees that wilderness provides perspective, and in so doing realigns priorities to emphasize the importance of what John calls "balance." The perspective is a relief for Alex because it demonstrates that what is ultimately important is also within his control.

> I think it's showing people that they...really have more control over their lives than they think.... They can control the fundamentals. And for me it sets realistic goals. We get less upset about things because in the end it's not earth shattering. It doesn't matter if this doesn't get done today, or if it gets done tomorrow morning. I'll live. The world will go on. The more important thing has to do with me living, being healthy.

The wilderness perspective undermines what Reed calls the "illusions" of modern life - common definitions of wealth and success, for example. Alternative definitions for these things derive from the perspective that allows everyday priorities to become insignificant.

Scott also values the wilderness perspective on what's truly important "in the big scheme of things." "And so the big lesson for me," he says,

> is about trying not to take things too seriously. That usually means trying not to take minor inconveniences very seriously. I think I might be getting even less patient as I age instead of more patient, but I try to step back from situations that

> are frustrating and just say "well, y'know in the big scheme of things this is pretty much diddly squat." Y'know I think there's a kind of attitude that comes from wilderness travel, the backcountry experience thing that just says "hey wait a minute, how much does this really count? It's not very big, y'know. I'm gonna get up in the morning, and I've still got shelter and food, and friends are still around and so y'know let's let go of this." So it's not always that easy to put into practice but there's an awareness that we're pretty privileged in modern society and we should let go of the small stuff sometimes and maybe even just temper our wants and needs.... It's about humility and being satisfied with what you have. I think we just get carried away with the perceived need for more and more consumerism and looking at what other people have got and in the end most of that doesn't mean a whole lot.

Wilderness experience as life's core, as religion

The fundamental importance of wilderness experience in the lives of participants should now be evident. As John says, "I consider my whole life to be a wilderness experience. That is what makes my life.... That's me. That's who I am." Simon has explained that his experience of feeling "alive" in wilderness is the root inspiration in his life, the core of his values and a sense of direction.

> There are people I know right now who are wandering around, "I don't know what I want to do with my life. I don't know what I like or don't like." And it's more common than not actually. I can think of a lot of people who are like that.... Well for me it's like I always know what I want to strive towards, and it's the values and the feelings I associate with those wilderness experiences.

Alex similarly describes wilderness adventure as a "way of life" that ties into his worldview and the choices that he makes from day to day. John explains the desire to find a way of living that would tap into the spiritual inspiration of the wilderness experience.

> I would say it was probably the way I wanted my everyday life to be. In fact when I first started thinking about going to university I seriously considered oceanography.... I just wanted that experience to be the way I lived. In other words I said to myself, "I can't live if this isn't a part of what I'm doing.... I will not be content and happy unless that can be a part of what I'm doing, a part of my life." So I tried to find some way I could incorporate that into my life.... This is something I want to make sure you know before I leave - that no matter what I was doing, no matter how incongruous it was with my philosophy of life, I

> managed to maintain my philosophy of life. And I think that really provided me with a good sense of balance.

From the root experience in wilderness, Rachel has grown an absolute faith in and commitment to a natural order. Health, wholeness, balance in life depend on "staying connected with the ground," that is, not compromising too much the natural order.

> When we fall out of...balance and we fall out of synch with it, we're not centred with it...we get sick. And it might not be physically, but we're...just not balanced. We're not living in a way that's honouring wholeness.... We're dependent on that to keep us [whole]....[I] lost contact with it, totally. I lost focus, I got...all caught up in money and power and debt. There's nothing wrong with that, but doing in a balanced way, staying connected with the ground. I just got very stressed out and wasn't eating properly and was trying to fit in with what other people were doing and got caught up in rushing around, and started listening to...other people's values...and thinking that I had to give up mine in order to succeed, only to find out that I sacrificed a lot.... I don't think that people that are successful...are doing anything wrong...but we don't realize how easily we do become disconnected, and people and myself go back to the wilderness to get reminded, to slow us down, make us think about what we're really here for.

Reed explains most clearly how all of life's choices are tied into the spiritual inspiration of wilderness, the vision of wholeness that is central to life.

> It's all part and parcel of the same practice. Very much so. Tai Chi, meditation, journal writing, walking, reflecting - it's all part and parcel. Writing. Doing my work! Doing my life's work.... It's all part of the same practice, it's all coming out of the same place, it's all driven by the same energy, same purpose. It's all a manifestation of the same thing. It's just my path. It's just my way of being.... It's all part and parcel. Everything..... I think that's the way it ought to be, for everyone. That ideally, the ideal is to have everything you do flow out of that core, out of that sense of oneness, whatever you want to call it. Your work, your life, your family, everything you do is just a manifestation of those deeper realizations. And those realizations being what comes out of being in contact with the wilderness. With the wild. It all flows.

A moral imperative from the wilderness experience

Eventually the wilderness experience inspires the desire to make changes at home. The wilderness traveller invariably finds herself living in the city, and everyday life must be "dealt with." Simon has a dream of ultimate freedom in wilderness - the mystic's

desire to wander indefinitely:

> To paddle out somewhere and just go, and just vanish for a year, two years, ten years. I mean, in some bizarre plan that's what I'd love to do...! I've given serious thought to the idea of selling this house and everything and just living in my van, and I could park it somewhere and just paddle. Just *go*! It's a bit of a pipe dream I think, when you really start thinking about it.... But that sort of idea was always in my mind.... The reason behind that is to get away somehow, get away from this society we have here.

He imagines going and never having to return to civilization, but realistically, "I can't say I'd probably like that, as the way I'd like to live my entire life. But in those moments, if I didn't have to go back, I could do it for a long time."

Rachel agrees that because the wilderness experience cannot be sustained indefinitely, it must act as an inspiration that can be applied to a life in civilization.

> I can't see myself going out into the wilderness and being far, far way from everything because the whole idea is I'd like myself and my children to know that...cities and villages and a community of people is really important.... I can't see myself just going totally into the wilderness and just staying there.... "Don't turn your back on the world...." I think a lot of people think I think about that, "ah one day wouldn't it be nice to have no worries." But you can't do that. The only way things are going to change for us is to have that and then take it and bring it to the people, share so that - I mean if all the people that had some kind of a sense of value instilled in them all went away and hid...we wouldn't be helping to heal and make it a better place. We have to find ways to make a difference.... But for a while everyone has to do that. They have to escape and totally submerge themselves. That's what a vision quest does. Totally charge you back up...! Something has to change.... And for me, I have to help with that. And I don't think it's enough just to take my kids out and experience that. I think we have to do something about it too.

Chris expresses the same sentiment when he quotes wilderness guide Willi Unsoeld, who posed the question,

> "How well does your experience of the sacred in nature enable you to cope more effectively with the problems of mankind when you come back to city?"... You go to nature for your metaphysical fix - your reassurance that there's something behind it all and it's good. You come back to where men are, to where men are messing things up, because men tend to, and you come back with a new ability to relate to your fellow man and to help your fellow man relate to each other.
>
> The empowerment of the wilderness experience produces a resolve to approach

life in the city in new ways. Reed explains that each wilderness inspiration is part of a process of change. Alex explains that the resolve coming out of wilderness pertains to an attitude:

> You just have this wonderful experience. "Okay, I'm ready to deal with whatever's going on here again." It's just this commitment to be more enthusiastic and more energized.... "I'm gonna be more alive! I'm gonna be more awake in the city."

Rachel sums up the wilderness motivation best, as it has inspired this research:

> For me it's not just going out and experiencing going "wow wow wow" and then going back.... For me if I'm going to experience something I want it to change me. I want to go back with something and make my life different because of it.

Wilderness Adventure Religion

How does the experience of wilderness as life's core transfer into a "religion?" In other words, how does it translate into a way of being for everyday life? It is useful to recall that religion is what *binds* the individual to what is perceived to be ultimately important, the source of life.

Defining Ultimate Reality

In experiencing a sense of reality that renders human creations seemingly insignificant, the wilderness adventurer has the basis for a religion - a belief in something beyond the human realm in which to be loyal. The ultimate reality is experienced as interconnected and whole. The experience of this wholeness becomes a moral inspiration. Few wilderness adventurers would claim to "worship" nature, but their experiences in wilderness provide a tangible foundation for a view of human life embedded within a much larger, interconnected system which implies moral limits.

Down-to-earth religion

When everything in his awareness is swallowed up and made insignificant by the all-pervasive reality of wild nature, Reed feels he is experiencing God, or what he terms Ultimate Reality, The Force, Creation, Life, or the Wholly Other. He sees that it is only the human-made world that reinforces the illusion of our separateness from this unity. "What it all comes down to," he explains, "is something that we as a species, as humanity, did *not* create."

> I do not like the notion of a paternalistic, father-knows-best kind of image of God. I'm much more comfortable with...the notion out of Star Wars. The Force. Let The Force be with you.... But if you or anyone wants to call it God, Mohammed, whatever, the Creator...that's fine. We're all talking about the same thing.... It's in those moments when I'm in wilderness or when I'm even in...East Sooke - ...I can get away from people there, I can be totally surrounded by nothing else but nature - when I am receptive, when I drop the baggage, when I still the chatter in my mind, I feel that reconnection. I feel the presence of something bigger than myself, that something which I call The Force or "The Universal Force", or some people might call it God, whatever. That's what I'm referring to when I say something bigger than us, which is something most of us no longer believe in. And I think that is extremely dangerous.

This wilderness experience defines Reed's ultimate priorities in life and merges with Taoist and Buddhist practices in his everyday life to form his religion. Reed explains how "the relationship between myself and that which I consider Creation...is my religion."

> That feeling of connection with something larger than myself is probably the most meaningful thing I've derived from the wilderness experience.... That's what keeps drawing me back to the wilderness is that renewal, that rejuvenation that comes, remembering that I am a part of something much larger. That then imbues my own personal philosophy, my own way of being when I'm both out there and when I'm back here in the city...to live as lightly as possible on the planet, to have as minimal impact as I possibly can.

The humbling perspective of seeing oneself in relation to something much bigger and more powerful, when accepted as a guiding truth, leads to a way of being much different from the dominant Western one, which is premised on no such ultimate vision. Reed identifies key traits of this way of being as *humility, wisdom and compassion*. These

morals depend upon the vision of wholeness that he calls "sacred", rather than a fragmented secular view. The sacred vision is the basis for an attitude that respects the inherent value of things, and thus does not seek to turn nature into a commodity.

Like Reed, none of the interviewees have a formal religious life distinct from their experience of wilderness. Chris was not raised in a formal religion, but respects religious values pointing the way to a larger vision, towards an ethical life that strives for self-improvement within the limits placed on it by nature. The moral of this view for him is having the dignity to relate in an aware, accepting, humble, and responsible way to reality.

Alex's ethic is based on a model of interconnectedness that requires the individual to be responsible to a reality that extends beyond the bounds of himself, to incorporate human and natural communities. There is a premise of something more important than the individual. "I do have some sense of community, I guess, and that community includes everything around me." But more important than the general notion of interconnectedness for Alex is the idea of reality beyond the limits of human knowledge. "Spirituality" for Alex more accurately implies that "there's another dimension to reality." More than anything, his religious belief entails the conviction that human perspective is always too limited to contain the truth, and that the good life entails constant questioning, the ongoing effort to get into a more genuine relationship with the reality outside, to gain new perspective, in a way for which the process of wilderness adventure is a metaphor. Indeed, preceding a discussion of religion, Alex shrugs. But then his comment, "I don't have a whole lot of answers," reveals the essence of his belief.

> I'm not necessarily looking for a solution but the process of that questioning makes my life interesting.... In the end for me it's a process. There is no ultimate position from which you can stand back and say "I know everything...." Process is more important than any kind of conclusion.... I don't see it as linear even. It's very much more cyclical.... I've thought about this whole notion of the mediums through which we interpret our experiences. We put things, screens between us and what's really going on. I'm not saying we can actually know...what's real or not. I don't think we actually can. There's always going to be something mediating the experience, but being able to question those is...what gives me energy.

Robin also denies having any specific religious belief, but his actions in life are also motivated by a worldview in which the individualism of western civilization is absurd. One "spiritual" experience for him was sea kayaking in a place where he was able to see the advantages of a less materialistic worldview. One island that he passed by, he explains, was

> ...owned by white people, and there is no village. Everybody has their own little place, everybody has their own wharf, everybody has a boat beside it, everybody has a glass house up on a hill. And I watched a couple of old guys struggling trying to get their boat down the ramp into the water by themselves, and I thought, "y'know what we are doing is crazy! Why are we living this way? Why do we put such a heavy emphasis on private ownership of land?" It is just totally wasteful of resources - I mean all those fibreglass sailboats, and some wood, whereas then we passed the Indian village. And yeah there was some guys out there with chainsaws cutting brush and using modern technology, but as I passed the village I could hear somebody up above beating a drum and chanting. And as I got farther down there was hardly any sound at all - and this is the same size of island, so I got to compare these two cultures. And white culture came out second by a long shot....

Robin sees his wilderness experiences feeding into a critical perspective on his own culture, and in much the same way, views his mountaineering experiences as a taste of the greater possibilities of his own life. He is motivated by the hope of improving life in the direction indicated by his transcendent experiences in wilderness, like one ice climb he remembers which was a spiritual experience....

> mainly because of the methodical nature of the climbing, the extreme difficulty of it, the extreme danger, which caused me to focus, and I think everyone else.... we had a hundred metre climbs each. We were not stopping for belays every fifty metres. So we were up on our own for fifty metres...we had an ice axe in one hand and a piton in the other - an ice screw. So that's how we climbed.... Fifty degrees, but it feels like vertical. And when we started off at the bottom there was quite a bit of snow, and as we got to the top there was less and less. Probably the last hour we were on two or three inches of snow, so you really were climbing on front point, on the crampons. So that was really a spiritual experience....which was absolute concentration on what I was doing for a period of two and a half hours. I thought of nothing else except where to put my feet and not to fall. And that hasn't happened to me for a long time, to be able to say that I have been able to focus my mind, my energy totally on that. That for me was a spiritual experience.... Some people say, what is the result of having a spiritual experience?

> And the answer that they're looking for is well you'll realize there's something more than you, there's something greater than you. I'm not sure that's true, from my experiences. My definition of a higher being, a god, or something like that, now, is my higher self. Or the way I'd like to be, or something in my mind which allows me to be better than I am.... Life after death or any of the traditional religious views of spirituality escape me, at this point.... I think a lot of people take off on those spiritual experiences and say "oh well there is a God, I can trust in the God now. I know there's something other than just me." Um, if it works for them fine. That's not the way I deal with it. I still whistle when I get into trouble.

Simon does not identify such specific spiritual experiences, but he has clearly described many occasions of sensing a larger reality in wilderness which inspires his actions in day to day life. Raised Anglican but rejecting Christianity, he retains his belief in a "Creator" or "Something," inspired like the late Bill Mason not so much by church as by his experiences on Lake Superior, sitting quietly watching the waves roll in, timeless and independent of humanity's presence.

Scott also parted ways with a Christian background, "realizing of course...that there is some value to having a set of principles that are fairly well-defined...." His religion is more one of common sense. He is more likely to trust his own experience of the world than any divine authority. But it is important to live a life of integrity that shows moral concern for other people, the planet, and a realistic perspective on humanity's relationship to the natural world - the maintenance of his "core values": "things like honesty and trustworthiness and self-respect and trying to be fair to people and having a certain respect for the world, environment, whatever."

> ...the problem comes when...there's some rigid adherence to some kind of beliefs that don't seem rational in the face of what I would like to think of as sensible behaviour or right behaviour, or they don't seem rational in the face of what I understand about science. So in a sense I admire people who have chosen as their path some religion, especially I guess one of the ones that's ancient and well-known and structured and what not. But I'm not there. I'm a loose floater. I'm not really interested in old men with beards and halos or much of anything else really. Just kind of a sense of religion as a set of behaviour codes about trying to be fair and honest and trustworthy and be good to the planet as reasonably far as you can and try not to lose touch with the fact that you're another animal and you depend on stuff that comes out of the ground ultimately. So my religion has no

> name. It's not even paganism really.... It's pretty unstructured.... I don't have a defined, structured, easily-explainable set of beliefs, and I'm hypocritical enough not to denounce organized religion, and I'm hypocritical enough to go to church if someone asks me to just for the heck of it.

Scott is like Alex in that he prefers to be loyal to a reality and a way of living that cannot be structured or easily explained.

Rachel is definitely committed to a religion of the "here and now," as opposed to the transcendent beliefs of Christianity. She finds nature is the best source of religious insight, through direct experience and observation. "The mystery of life," and a sense of one's place within it, provide a religious foundation. She remembers having religious questions even in her childhood:

> Even though I was five or six years old I was questioning life and wanted to know about philosophy of religion.... I wanted to understand and I could understand it better through nature, without it having to be explained too much and have dogma attached to it like structure. And I kept that with me. Whenever I got confused and people started talking about religion I would go back to that. I still do. And if I had to adopt one way of living I would adopt the native way...the earth way.... The teachings of Christ and all that stuff doesn't reach me. Still hasn't to this very day.

Abstraction, structure, and dogma heighten confusion and misrepresent reality. She believes that nature resolves this confusion and teaches "how things really are." As she sees it, moral, environmentally responsible behaviour results from this intuitive understanding. She wants her children to have experiences of wild places so they can come to have this understanding.

> I just didn't want my kids to be around cars and fumes and hearing sirens and relating to the television...having everything, the outside world, more through television, and no yard to play in! And if he was in a yard it wasn't going to be all manicured with sidewalks and everything. It was going to be wild, just native plants that were from here and rocks and things to climb on and things naturally happening so he can understand how things really are! And have his bare feet walk on natural grass growing too and not...grow up seeing his mom mowing the lawn all the time every week.

Her spirituality is immanent. Her commitment is to live in the moment. There's no heaven - "This is it. This is the better place." Her words reveal a "one life at a time

please" credo, to live the best life possible here and now, without belief in a higher being or a better life in heaven. Nature provides all the answers for this life.

> I have arguments with my brother now because he's become a born-again Christian and...this is his way of finding peace because he finds it a hellish world to be living in and he just doesn't think that this is where we're supposed to be. We're supposed to be going somewhere else and we're going to be dependent on God and everything. I'm listening to him going "oh my God, how can you listen to all that and really feel good?" Because what if he's going to live for the next still sixty years or whatever...knowing that where he is is not it...? Yeah maybe we do come from there and maybe we do go back, but maybe we were sent to be stars here, light up down here, not just think about getting back. That's what I said to him. I said that's the only thing that I can tell you. I don't have a religion.... And for me being a kid and experiencing being in nature first and foremost, this makes sense for me, where reading the Bible didn't.

John's religion is also rooted in the order that he perceives in nature, which to him is "where the answers lie." If religion is about finding order in the world, he argues, then look to the cycle of a salmon laying eggs in a river - "that's pretty orderly to me!" "The order we create I don't think is superior to what's already there." There is a "reality to life" he argues, to which society has become blind. Going into wilderness provides exposure to this reality. It also inspires the dream of a better way to live. It empowers the choice of a simple lifestyle, a responsible way of being, in opposition to the materialism of popular culture. The complete absence of humanity and signs of humanity is necessary to sustain this conviction, and an optimism that could never survive in civilization,

> Because I think as a species we are probably the most insidious thing that ever inhabited the earth. I think we have been given a bounty, we have inherited a bounty, which is just absolutely indescribable in terms of what potential it has for us and yet we have consistently shown that we don't appreciate that or respect it. We've abused it, we've tried to dominate it, and we have fucked up everything we have done, basically. So for me...it's an ability to remove myself from a social context which I find generally unsatisfying and put myself in a context which just makes me stand in awe, and realize that if we had more sensitivity, if we had more foresight, there are so many changes we could easily make that would ensure that as a species we could not only live very full lives, but we could also allow other species that inhabit the earth to be able to continue to have the relationships they have and continue to provide for us, without having to simply exploit, for reasons

> which generally come down to economies, as opposed to survival.... When I say "what we have been given," there's no hidden meanings in there. I don't mean God gave it to us. I'm not a religious person. I don't believe in God. Somehow we ended up sitting somewhere in this solar system on this absolutely magnificent, beautiful piece of earth! And I think we've got to be better caretakers. I really do. Not just for the people who like it. It's literally a matter of life and death.

What John finds in wilderness is a source of wonder, and happiness, and a moral imperative. He disassociates this experience from God and religion, which he believes perpetuate a flawed, anthropocentric, unrealistic worldview. But his wilderness philosophy is essentially a religion or "spirituality." The wilderness experience provides a basis for a whole system of values, a sense of responsibility, an intuition of limits or natural laws that informs his morality.

> Standing on the top of Mount Albert Edward, I started having feelings like..."maybe I don't really belong here. Maybe I'm a reincarnation of something that lived earlier than we did, that had this intense appreciation of what we have been given as our environment, and learned to live by the rules of what we've been given."

Seeking to know a larger reality, to learn and grow

As John explains, the wilderness can be a place to encounter the "rules" that pertain to how we should live our lives. Each of the wilderness adventurers interviewed finds religious inspiration primarily in the intuition of this larger reality of which human civilization often fails to recognize it is but a small part. As Alex has already explained, it becomes important to adopt an attitude of questioning, one which seeks to know this reality. Wilderness adventure can be an allegory for this attitude which can carry over to everyday life. Enlightenment, for Reed, is waking up to this larger reality. His words echo the poet Jeffers, who advises "breaking out of humanity."

> To move out...of what I perceive to be an incredible self-centeredness, human-centeredness! To begin to recognize that there are other things that lie beyond the human realm.... That's why I use the term 'waking up'. I think it is almost like a waking up process. We're both wide awake and we're terribly asleep.
>
> Alex explains that like all forms of knowledge, maps are only abstract

representations of reality. They depict a world very different from what one comes to understand through direct experience. Alex describes a chart from Africa that bears a blank spot labelled "data not available." He "deliberately drove into the centre of what's on the map 'unknown,'" and found a village. "There's people, there's trees, there's animals. It *has* a reality beyond that map." "In the end you gotta go there" in order to understand. But Alex makes the further point that understanding space through travel should not be mistaken for a complete picture.

> I always liked that song by Stan Rogers called "One Thin Line" about the Northwest Passage.... The idea is that...there's this huge space...but in reality what we know is a very thin line through it.... Our experience is actually down this little...ten or twenty kilometre wide corridor. That's as far as we can see either way, really. There's tons of stuff that...we don't know.

To either side of the corridor of the familiar is an unknown dimension of reality constituting "wilderness", and living should be the ongoing process of getting beyond the mediums of old knowledge, trying to relate to that reality more intimately, in ways which incorporate a better understanding.

Alex observes that this process which happens in adventure is the process by which learning and growth occurs, and new knowledge is created. The commitment to personal growth is another facet of the drive to seek a larger reality. Part of life's purpose for Chris is to strive for self-improvement, which is defined in a way similar to Alex's idea of growth as a process which allows one to interact more intimately and comfortably with a larger reality. Chris uses the metaphor of watching a river, and learning to flow with the current, rather than against it. A commitment to personal growth is also a large part of Robin's philosophy of wilderness adventure. The "intensity" of the mountain experience is most valuable to him because it challenges him to grow, and improve particularly in the way that he relates to other people.

> I think a part of the mountaineering experience is learning how you relate to other people and changing it if you don't like it. And that personal growth, which is really what it is, can happen on the trip, but it can also have a great deal of effect on how you live your life.

He describes stressful situations that have taught him to be more patient, "to be cool"

under pressure, to exercise greater self-control.

> When you are unhappy with your performance or reaction in a certain situation, that's when you're learning. When you realize that you haven't been up to your own standards, or someone puts you down for something, you have to think about it, and you may react negatively to that person, but if you don't give it proper weight, you won't learn from it. So it's always painful to realize that you haven't performed the way you want to, but it's a learning experience, and mountaineering or other adventures have this crucible effect I mentioned last time, where you're in the crucible of fear and exhaustion and you still have to perform in way that's consistent with your values.

Scott advocates a process of ongoing discovery similar to Alex's, recognizing similarities between wilderness adventure and his work as an academic. Both are motivated by the desire to cross frontiers, by a desire to sustain the experience of wonder.

> Even as early as when I was a grad student, I used to talk about coming into the department and going about my research as "another day at the frontier," right, except the frontier of science instead of - well in the context of nature and wilderness I hate the word "frontier". I think we gotta get rid of it. But I guess maybe there is a connection about liking to explore things and use knowledge and some kind of skills base to see farther than you've seen before, and that part is the research in chemistry or also in exploring mountain areas or whatever.

Scott's experience recommends an adventurous way of being, and he provides a quote from Alfred Lord Tennyson's *Ulysses* that has inspired him to this end (1987:616-618):

> I am a part of all that I have met;
> Yet all experience is an arch wherethrough
> Gleams that untravelled world, whose margin fades
> For ever and for ever when I move.
> How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
> To rust unburnished, not to shine in use!
> As though to breathe were life. Life piled on life
> Were all too little, and of one to me
> Little remains: But every hour is saved
> From that eternal silence, something more,
> A bringing of new things; and vile it were
> For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
> And this gray spirit yearning in desire
> To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
> Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

Echoing Alex's "questioning" approach to religion, Rachel also sees herself as

one who questions things.

> I take everything as deep as I can go. I'm very curious. I want to go right to the bottom of everything and see how it relates to everything else.... I think as long as you stop being a seeker, you die somehow.... I was starting to stop doing that and then I felt dead inside, and had to find something to remind me, "Why am I here?"

Asking deep questions is also a way of being for Reed, who explains,

> Our education is too focussed on making us little minions of the economic system. It's too focussed on production.... You [need to] encourage people to really discuss things, to not take things for granted, to try and bring to the surface the underlying assumptions that are behind the perceptions and so forth...so essentially you end up "outside the box," outside your own paradigm, or your own normal paradigm.

The adventurers associate their experiences with the inspiration to reject dogmas and easy answers, with the dissolving of dualistic distinctions and boundaries and the discovery of a reality that is more complex, unpredictable, and uncontrollable. For Alex, "conscious ignorance" is the key to accepting this questioning stance as a way of being. The wilderness experience is a crossing of boundaries that he calls a "flip flop." It provides him with the perspective to break out of stereotypes and reality as it is taken for granted.

> It just gives me perspective.... Everything's kind of broken up into the inside and the outside, the left and the right, the light from the dark, and if you can flip flop across those borders, then you can see the other side constantly.... I try and always play with those boundaries.... I think that gives you a better perspective, more reality, a better grasp on what's really going on around.... It's more empowering.... You get a getter handle on what's going on...and people who are trapped in one tend to stereotype and misinterpret the other.

Loyalty to the natural order, living within limits

The danger of having a view of reality that is as "fluid" as Alex's is that the resulting relativism will be disempowering. As he observes, "maybe I flip flop too much. I get like there is no real solution anymore because it's all just there and it all just exists and there's no right and there's no wrong." But as the highest tangible reality and religious inspiration, nature is seen as a model for life that provides some absolute rules to follow. As Robin says,

> I think nature was probably a very very early influence. And now I view anything

> in life that is quote unquote "not natural" as being not something I want to promote. I other words I would promote the use of natural methods for living as much as possible.... We should live close to this model. When we get away from this model we use excess resources and cause all manner of psychological problems.

Alex agrees that despite "flip-flopping," an absolute line can be drawn.

> In the end we have to live, breathe, and eat and drink, and the way I see the world is all interpenetrated, interconnected, and at some point we're going to hit a critical threshold, and there's not going to be enough water and food and air.

Rachel agrees, saying, "I'm so afraid that my point of view is wrong." She doubts that her own view is the only right one, but feels that she has no choice but to fight on behalf of nature. "I just can't see fighting for more golf courses....Something's still not right."

Scott agrees that living a moral life entails maintaining some connection to the ground, or as he puts it, not losing "touch with the fact that you're another animal and you depend on stuff that comes out of the ground ultimately."

> Part of me...forces me to imagine sort of an apocalyptic vision of society. Somebody's made the comment about hoping that a few hundred years down the road society doesn't have to look at the late twentieth century as a time when we spent the family fortune.... In a real sense, part of me wants to think, "yeah we're going to hit the wall" and yet another part of me wants to say that there's a tendency for society not to hit walls.... But when I see the rapacious consumption of natural resources...it's just finite. It just is.... So we gotta deal with that and come face to face with the fact that there's a lot of people and a finite number of resources and what that's going to mean.... I think somehow it'll work out but I'm not sure I have a good vision of what that's going to look like.... Using less and modifying and reducing needs and wants and getting along with all of our neighbours are going to be pretty important. I'm stepping out of my areas of real knowledge, but it seems to me that almost everything about economics and the world is based on a model of indefinite growth, and that model is just going to fail according to my view because we can't have indefinite growth. You can't continue over the next century to design your business so that it has to increase by productivity or profits by seventy percent a year. Somewhere there has got to be some stability.... So reuse, reduce needs and somehow getting a little more reality with the connection of our dependence upon agriculture and land use for food production.

John is particularly outspoken about the need to find a way of living within the limitations imposed by nature. For him, the natural order suggests a set of "rules" that

humans ignore at our peril.

> There is nothing we can do to insulate ourselves against natural occurrences, and I think we tend to build a little cocoon that pretends that can't happen, and in so doing we insulate ourselves against understanding the kinds of natural forces that allow us to exist.... We have to look at our relationship with other living species.... And quite frankly I think we have to start getting really serious about limiting our population. We absolutely have to. We have over five billion people living in our world today, and the only reason that we can do that is because we have a tremendous technology that allows us to produce food at an unprecedented rate without regard to season, and to distribute it without regard to season.... What I'm saying is we cannot continue to consume at the level we are...we can't continue to pretend that it's okay to just keep reproducing without limits....

As Robin concludes, the feeling of insignificance that comes in the wilderness experience is a reminder that the natural order of things must be followed.

> We had climbed Mount Victoria...in behind Lake Louise.... It was actually quite an enjoyable climb, and it was good from that point of view to be able to look down on the piddly little development that is Lake Louise and the piddly little highway that you used to figure was so large in that valley. It's almost one percent of the whole valley. Even with the ski development on the opposite side of Mount Temple...it was so small. It's interesting to see how small that all was from the elevated platform of Mount Victoria. And I think that's another thing that maybe the land does for us, or the geography, is it shows that nature is in many ways very powerful, very large, very much more significant than we are, although we seem to be able to ruin it. It is still, it is still really the basis of our lives. And it comes to you in places like that.

Maintaining a relationship with reality

Awareness and acceptance of reality

One of the basic lessons of the adventure experience in particular is an attitude, which can be summed up as "accepting reality." When the adventurer "tunes in" to the wilderness environment through the process of "transition," he is moving towards an attitude of acceptance. The adventurer learns that the optimal experience follows this relinquishing of control, rewarding the openness that comes from accepting reality. The transition process thus becomes a metaphor for a way of living. Chris calls the resulting attitude "dignity." Dignity is life's purpose, he maintains. It means

> awareness of limits; and acceptance. Acceptance of what has happened, and what is, and a willingness to accept what will be. Dignity is that sense of consciousness for where you are, where you're going.

Dignity also has at least two abetting character traits: humility and responsibility. Consciousness of where one is and where one is going is the literal and/or figurative secret to life. Life's success requires awareness of the facts, the humility to accept the facts, and the responsibility to act in accord with facts to get, in terms of the life-journey metaphor, "from A to B". The decision-making process that defines the wilderness journey is really seen as a process of bringing perceptions of the world in line with how it truly is.

The moral of the wilderness experience is to carry over its qualities of optimal awareness, involvement, and relationship to everyday life. The relationship applies not just to natural landscape, but to reality as a whole. It is a way of being in the world. What is to be avoided is a way of living in which the "questioning process" ceases.

The technological inversion applies to an extent, for example, when deciding how experience will be mediated in everyday life. Stories about how technology interferes with optimal wilderness experience become parables for how technology can limit life experience. Chris tells a story about meeting snowmobilers on a winter ski trip. He was somewhat offended by the fact that the snowmobilers mistook their location for an icecap that was in fact thirty miles away. "Knowing where you are," Chris explains, is equivalent to "being conscious of the fact that you're alive and not dead." His reaction to the snowmobilers reveals much about the wilderness adventurer's opinions about technology and more generally about life.

> I've been on skidoos and they're fun, they're fast...but as far as if I was to go out into a more wilderness environment, I would rather ski there. I like the effort of getting there. I like the silence, and the simplicity of not having this sputtering, noisy, maybe-breaking-down machine. Plus it's cheaper to ski.... The sense of more independence comes from using skis as opposed to a snowmobile. Both are technology, but to me there's more independence with something like skis.... We need tools, technology...and we need help from other people a lot, but I also think you need to be able to rely on yourself for as much as you can before you start relying on other people to solve problems for you or technology to solve problems

> for you. For me doing a more independent trip in wilderness requires you to live in the moment but also you need to think about where you're headed so you end up where you want to be.... That translates into taking individual responsibility for where you're going away from wilderness, so in your home or your city life....

This memory represents for Chris the Modern Western way of relating to nature, in opposition to the adventurer's efforts to refine the intensity of experience, heighten the perception of reality, optimize the application of skill in deliberate response to the world.

> [To] these guys with the probably hundred and fifty horsepower snowmobiles [it] didn't necessarily mean very much that they even knew where they were.... It wasn't really necessary. And the same with avalanches. They've got these high powered machines. They could go back to the road or they can outrun the avalanche - these are some of the common ideas they have.... it was more "ego" than "eco".... It's too much a machine-oriented, ego-overcoming way of dominating the natural world or the wilderness.

Ultimately, the high-tech, dominating way of being is irresponsible. It interferes with the awareness upon which responsibility depends. If the snowmobilers had been hurt, Chris observes, they might have had a hard time effecting a rescue, since they did were not "conscious" of where they were.

Acceptance is also an important element of dignity because, to be in position to respond to reality, one must be willing to accept that reality is more than merely what the mind believes it is or wishes it to be. Chris learned this lesson on his earliest trips when he found that camping in the rain was not a situation to be avoided, but rather "dealt with." The wilderness traveller must respect reality as it is given.

> Getting lost, making bad choices in routes, or on the opposite end, picking a great route or getting exactly where you wanted to when it's a whiteout, in the wilderness, travelling. That's feedback on how you're dealing with the things around you. When you don't end up where you wanted to be or you make a bad choice, it might encourage you to have respect for the complexity of things around you, or humility that you might not have the experience or the fact that you're not always going to make the right choice. To me those things are just really tangible and they're felt. The consequences are immediate. Sometimes you don't make the best choice of where to go, and you realize it, and you figure 'I'll just go a little further, and then it will be okay,' and 'I'll just go a little further, and then it will be okay', and 'I'll just keep going and it will be okay' and y'know at one point you have to realize that 'no, it's just getting worse!', that you've made a mistake, and often the best thing is just immediately to just deal with it, go back and start over.

It's not always easy to admit you've made a mistake.

Chris tells the story of a group of his students who made a wrong turn and walked a short distance out of their way. Once aware of their mistake, they were too impatient to backtrack. On their attempted short-cut, a student fell down a steep embankment, was injured and had to be evacuated by helicopter.

Many of the adventurers' comments reflect this ethic of "accepting reality," not as a passive way of being, but as the basis for effective and responsible action. The wilderness traveller learns an accepting and participatory attitude, even a kind of *faith*, from working from the "transition" of the wilderness challenge through to the optimal experience of wilderness. Alex applies an attitude of "realism" to his everyday life. As an environmentalist, for example, he admits, "Okay, we're gonna have to cut trees, and people need jobs. Those are *real* issues, and environmentalists should be taking those up as well." He criticizes former U.S. Secretary of the Interior James Watt for having an attitude that is irresponsible because it is unrealistic.

> It was just frightening some of the shit that came out of his mouth. He firmly believed...Jesus was coming back to earth in twenty-five years.... We didn't need to keep trees because we weren't going to be here anyway. We were going to be with God or we were going to be in Hell.

Alex strives in his realism to make his wilderness philosophy a practical part of his everyday life, rather than an escapist or utopian attitude. He believes that the wilderness adventurer should acknowledge that the day to day experience in civilization is *as* real as the wilderness experience.

> To me it's not a question of what's out there, bringing it in. It's already here. It's trying to make people understand that it's already here. This isn't artificial. It's *real*. It's *real* brick. It's *real* sidewalks. To say that this is wrong, that what's out there is good, misses the point. And this is an important reality. This is here to stay.

Rachel's realism is revealed not only in her down-to-earth approach to religion, but particularly in her admiration of some traits she has observed in native cultures. To her the native way of being invested the details of life with heightened meaning, increased significance, and greater awareness through ritual. She admires the attitude of

respect that this approach encouraged, and its acceptance of the facts of existence with a patient and composed attitude. This attitude she feels brings life closer to the vividness and connection of the wilderness experience.

> Experiencing things with the native people was really great because they would make rituals and...everything that they did...there was such attention to it and they would say prayers and there was always something deep about it.... everything was sacred to them and...they would make it ceremonial and religious, and I liked that a lot.... And the fire wasn't just - you didn't see people roasting marshmallows! [*laugh*] The fire was a lot of time where people reflected and said prayers.... You weren't allowed to even throw your cigarette butts into it. And it made you aware, of everything that you do, every little thing.... Everything just tasted better, everything was more alive and again it's that feeling I that's probably what you hear from everybody - feeling more alive and more connected. Everything expanded and like being on drugs [*laugh*].

Like the realization of death, wilderness also is a reminder of "what we're really here for." Life's purpose, says Rachel, is openness to accepting what is and trying to live in harmony with it. Rachel believes that "fear doesn't exist" when living "in synch" with nature. The cosmos is fundamentally good and the human role is to fit into its order. The mystical experience is an affirmation of faith in the ultimate goodness of reality, an affirmation of a commitment turning towards this life.

> What we're really here for - well for me it's to live in harmony. It's not to fear this planet and who we are as people. Not to fear it but to live in harmony with it and accept it and embrace it and just go with it instead of fearing it and trying to create a situation where we need to be so far removed from it.... There's only two things that really exist for me.... Fear doesn't really exist, really.... I would say love...and being accepting.... There's only one purpose that we really have and that is to be living at peace with the earth, and in a loving situation.... Living at one there is no fear. It doesn't exist. Fear only exists when we're out balance, out of synch with it. Then we have it because...it creates like a hole, and you become anxious and you want to fill it, 'cause it aches.... When you're [not] living in a sense of balance with nature and people and the land and your community...you're constantly reaching out for things that don't feed you, and you become fearful because it's not enough, you want more, and...you get caught up in a cycle. But suddenly when you're removed from a lot of things and you're in the wilderness, you really do just need basic things. You're in a place where there is a wholeness there, when nature or wilderness sort of mirrors you in the wholeness, you can kind of relax, and there's no need for a lot.

John also believes that reality as it can be experienced by the traveller in wilderness contains all that humans require for guidance and inspiration. He thus criticizes traditional religion among the products of human culture that he sees as distractions and diversions from this basic truth. Like Rachel, he sees the natural order as synonymous with health and happiness, and the acceptance of natural reality as the basis for a "balanced" life. John repeatedly argues that human woes result from the ability to think, and thus the drive to transform the world to fit ideals, rather than to transform ourselves to accept and fit into our world. He believes humans are divorced from the world of fact by what Jeffers calls "the fever of self-involvement."

> I've said it before and I think it's worth repeating that in my opinion the worst thing that ever happened in terms of creation or evolution or whatever you want to call it is us being given the power to think and to reason.... The ability to think and reason has got us into more trouble than anything else. I suppose you'd say we're no different than the animal world because the animal world when you get to a certain point where populations exceed the capacity of the environment to support it they die off. But we don't accept that! We say, "we're not going to die off. We'll just make some other little switch that will change everything and effect everything around us so we can live a little longer." There's something missing there. And then we develop all kinds of technologies, medicines, procedures that allow us to extend life over a hundred years! And probably thirty years of that we're lying in a goddamn hospital bed plugged into some kind of intravenous system. I think if we were really socially responsible and didn't depend so much on our thought processes and our emotions and our reason, when somebody was ready to die we would just let them die! I mean get a grip. We hold onto these things in life. We need to hold onto everything! We can't let things go...! We have become so sheltered from the *reality* of life.... There is a reality in life and we refuse to recognize it. We create all these diversions and these forms of entertainment and we become dependent on other people to make us feel good and to make us forget about the things that make us sad and we have counsellors and we have self-help books and gawd- shit- we're all psychologically screwed! And I mean for what? I say "Get a grip!"

For John, accepting reality-as-given is the key not only to long term survival, but also to basic happiness. During the time of our interview there has been a highly-publicized cult mass-suicide. He has come across a newspaper article that identifies cult members as people who are looking for ways to "control life's uncertainties." And to this he vehemently responds,

> Get a grip!! How are you going to control life's uncertainties...? It's just futile to look for guarantees in life... To me that is incomprehensible.... Listen to this [*reading from the article*]...: "Religion is one of the most lasting belief systems.... It helps us control the world and what will happen in life.... Some people are naturally drawn to create some kind of order, even a false order. The idea for most of us that the world is random and arbitrary is frightening." I don't believe that at all! I believe that if you accept that the world is random and arbitrary, you live at peace with it. I mean, that's as simple as that.... They have now concluded that there are fifty billion galaxies within a range that we can see! And that doesn't take us to the end of whatever this is.... And the closest one is fourteen billion light years away. Now pardon me. How could you ever conclude that there is order in life? Give me a break!! It just isn't there. God...! My first order of business when I make a decision about who will share parts of my life with me is that they have a fairly realistic attitude toward life, and if they're living in a world where they're constantly searching for meaning of life or looking for some kind of order, they're gone! I think it's a colossal waste of energy to agonize over what life means or where it came from or whatever. Just accept that that's what it is! We're here. We have it. Let's make the most of it. Period, the end.... It's all there for me right now just by accepting we're here. And understanding some of the scientific principles and environmental principles that relate to our lives. That's all I need. Happy as a clam...!

John iterates this theme that joy in the moment, the experience of gratitude and satisfaction with the way things are, should be sought in life as it is in the wilderness experience, by trying to accept the world as it is rather than setting out to change it.

> The problem is, I don't know how many significant principles or activities you can identify in human civilization that the civilization has really ended up feeling "comfortable" or "good". One thing always leads to something else, and then somebody wants to embellish it some other way and then it gets drawn off in another direction, and we end up with a lot of institutions and we end up with a lot of physical creations and we end up with a lot of natural alterations, but we're never satisfied! We're never happy just to say "Goddamn it feels good just to live today!"

The attitude of acceptance in the face of challenge is what sets climbers apart from any people Scott had met before joining the university mountaineering club. He uses the term "dynamism" to describe an attitude which goes beyond mere acceptance to incorporate a drive towards new challenges and experience. Dynamism is "sheer vivacious enthusiasm", open, and active, a commitment to invest one's energies in the accomplishment of whatever might be possible. It denies that the acceptance of reality is

a passive way of being, implying instead that in beholding opportunities for involvement in the world, one is inspired to act. This attitude is the essence of a "whole new category of person." Scott's descriptions of dynamism give a good picture of what the lived philosophy of wilderness adventure entails. Joining the club was "like a complete awakening, a real eye-opener,"

> at least as much a discovery of mountaineers as it was a discovery of mountaineering, and when I think back upon those times it is the people I remember more vividly than anything we ever did.... I don't mean to say that there were not people in Canada or even in New Brunswick at the time who've had that kind of dynamism or whatever, but I never met them.... I wasn't in the position of meeting mountaineers because I didn't live where there were mountains, but the big thing about Scotland for me was this attitude about "let's go do something, let's have fun, it doesn't matter if it's raining, dark. Let's just do it anyway. Let's go have fun, let's sing a song, let's hike up a hill, and let's push ourselves...." Part of it was the whole concept that you leave town Friday night, it's dark and you'd drive for several hours, and then you get somewhere at the end of a road or whatever and you load up your pack and you start hiking for another hour or two just to get somewhere, and you're hiking in the dark and going by headlamp or flashlight, and just the whole idea that it doesn't matter that it's dark, it doesn't matter that it's late. Who cares, we're going to get there, we're going to have some fun.... I remember [we went] somewhere on the west of Scotland one day to climb a hill. The weather wasn't spectacularly good. It rained a bit in the morning and I think we got damp from sweating and from mist and stuff and we got to the top of this hill and I thought, "y'know that's pretty good, okay. I'm ready to go back now." And...the leader of the group was a girl. There were quite a few girls who were active in the club. It wasn't just a guy thing. And she's looking at the map and looking off in the distance, "well there's a couple more we can do. We just have to drop down here and go along these ridges and we can do a couple more hills today before we go back." And I'm thinking, [*chuckling*], "Okay, I guess. Let's see how far I get...!" and just trotting along, doing okay but not previously having run into a situation where I needed to give myself a sort of psychological boot in the bum to keep on going because the day's not over yet and we can do a lot more. So, and the attitude about "yeah, let's do some more. I mean we're here. We might as well keep going. It's too early to go back." And the attitude about it not being guys necessarily but of being a lot of dynamic women in the club too who were rock climbing and ice climbing and hill walking or whatever. It just started out for me as a really social and open and fairly all-encompassing kind of attitude. So that, which I will summarize as "dynamism", I hadn't previously experienced.

Dynamism might be defined as the motivation to attempt whatever might be possible; it

is the desire for action empowered by the knowledge of what can be done. Scott's description gives the impression of one who acts on a reasonable faith, to get through the difficult times presented by a journey into the unknown. He says,

> When you're in wilderness or mountaineering you set goals, local goals like getting a certain number of kilometres or overall goals like maybe getting to a certain summit or covering a certain huge distance or getting past a certain obstacle, and you develop your strength and your techniques to overcome those local goals and then the overall goal, and so you come to a place where you can trust yourself and you know what your abilities are and what kind of obstacles you can reasonably undertake and what kinds are pushing it a bit, and that knowledge of your abilities leads to a certain dynamism where if you see an obstacle then you can just tackle it and say, "well okay even if I can't see the final end, I can't see the complete solution, I have a really high confidence in my abilities and so I want to just take this on right now rather than sitting around dithering about it...." You know you can do them so you do them.

From this observation it follows that paying attention to reality yields the dynamism to follow through on the possibilities that present themselves, and this becomes more true as one becomes more aware of one's own abilities. And indeed, attention to reality is one of the lessons Scott has learned from the wilderness experience, simultaneously with less serious "letting go" that the broad perspective has taught him. When I ask him, "What has the wilderness experience meant for the person that you have become?" He replies,

> I think the response to that would be something about, "don't sweat the small stuff but pay attention to the details". It sounds contradictory but it isn't. The lesson's about certain things going wrong are not so bad, or carrying a heavy pack or wading a creek or whatever you have to do is part of it and okay it's kind of difficult sometimes, but it's okay. Whereas you do have to pay attention to details. I mean that's how people succeed at doing any big project like Baffin Island traverse or getting across Strathcona Park or long kayak journeys or climbing Everest or going to the North Pole or whatever it is people do. It's because they pay attention to details, and that means they didn't just pick up a sled and a pack. They paid attention to details about those pieces of equipment and about planning and about route and food and about all those things, so y'know don't sweat the small stuff but pay attention to details, and I think you can bring that lesson into your everyday life too. It pays off.

Humility, fitting into a natural order

Following the attitude of recognizing a natural order and accepting this reality is a humble ethic of trying to "fit in" rather than overcome. As Scott observes in the context of dynamism, "fitting in" can be a way of acting within the possibilities presented. In this spirit, John explains that nature offers a "set of principles" that can be followed.

> Of course there's order in life. What I'm saying is, we try to create artificial orders ...we often try and do it in a context which doesn't necessarily accommodate the natural forces we live in. We try to develop agricultural systems that are completely artificial - I mean the desert wasn't intended to grow grapes and oranges and grapefruits, and support huge urban areas...to have fountains that are spraying twenty four hours a day into hundred and ten degree, zero percent humidity air.... That's not the way nature says we should do it. But we've decided we can do it anyways.... I'm not saying it's wrong. I'm just saying we look for an order in life over and above the kinds of order that can be achieved. If we ordered our lives in a way which was consistent with the natural order, we'd be much better off.... I don't think I was saying that you should let nature control your life. What I'm saying is I think nature provides us with a set of principles, and if we recognize them we have the potential to live a better life and have less impact than if we ignore the order that exists... There's nothing wrong with controlling nature...using nature to our advantage. There's nothing wrong with that. I think it's the extent to which we do it.

Reed's vision of "the sacred" is the basis of his argument for humility. His goal is to respect the sacredness of what exists, and to try and bring his life into harmony with this larger reality.

> There's something good about accepting nature on its own terms. About knowing that you can take care of yourself.... Once you learn some of the basic dos and don'ts, once you've learned the *protocol* I guess, of wilderness, of *being* in wilderness, of *being* with other wild creatures, then you even becomes mindful of things like elk, particularly the bulls when they're in rut.... You say, 'okay, I understand what the rules are here. I can fit in with that. I don't need to try and change you. I can try and change myself here to fit in.

Scott's wilderness experiences also inform a thoughtful approach to life, which seeks to a reasonable degree to "fit in." In an essay written for a mountaineering audience, he is musing about a "little rock" unearthed from its place by his careless footstep.

> How many of us, seeking our own true path, can follow it through such places and

> leave no trace? (There are two senses to this question.) How many will come if the "barrier of fatigue" is removed? Is every glistening lake and every shining summit to have a cleared and graded trail, a horse track, a cable-car, a heli-pad? I thought of Graeme Pole's two thought-provoking essays about the barrier of fatigue. His lament about the helicopter is that "Its use for recreation, for bringing the otherwise unreachable into our immediate domain, represents the height of consumptive elitism: I want it now!" "...while grabbing for more with technological ease, have we let the very wilderness values we seek, slip unnoticed between our greedy fingers?" While the ethics in my own record would be found wanting if measured against the rigorous standard championed in his essays, I nevertheless feel that he has made an important point.... I promise I won't fly to Lake Lovelywater again, but as for other Coast Range destinations, well... Let's keep talking anyway.... And respect the place of the little rock.

His conclusion provides no easy answers, but encourages an attitude of respect, awareness of impacts. A certain compassion or forgiveness, too, comes from the awareness that one really cannot travel through wilderness, or through life, without having some impact.

Alex mentions the colonial attitude which tries to recreate home wherever it goes, and observes that the contrasting wilderness attitude is one that "surrenders and goes native." It is a "process of discovery by experiencing and talking and trying to understand, internalize.... It is a personal, intuitive embedding approach." He describes "fitting in" as "becoming intimate" or "getting into rhythm," a growth of understanding. Of the wilderness reality, he comments,

> You can't challenge it. Because it's just there and it just exists. But...it's almost liberating. There's basic rules that you have to play by and you just do whatever in and around them.... [In] paddling...the water will win every single time. It doesn't care. And the more successful paddlers learn to play with the water and use the water to accomplish what they're doing, and so there's a certain economy of motion involved in being a very good paddler.... The good paddlers really have it figured out. They're not working that hard. It's just very simple body positions and very little movement and it all just works. It's the hackers that are thrashing and bashing and haven't got it figured out.

Reality has a pattern, like a river. The wilderness experience teaches openness and understanding of this pattern, how to move gracefully within it. The wilderness adventurer finds freedom within the rules provided.

The wilderness perspective suggests a view of reality which undermines arrogance and what John calls "a homocentric attitude," the tendency to "modify and control and master." If we look at the broad perspective, he explains, we see that such arrogance has been the downfall of past civilizations and it could well be the downfall of ours.

> It's such an incredible arrogance that we think we can build structures or we can redefine river valleys or reorganize mountains slopes to suit our needs, when something as simple as a typhoon, or a heavy rain, or an earthquake can just - everything that we've done is just rendered nothing!

Reed is motivated by a nightmare vision of what might happen if we take our arrogance too far. "My worst fear," he says,

> is a totally managed planet, where everything...is a human artifact....where we sit on...say the patio of Banff Springs Hotel sipping our drinks and admiring the elk that are all very, very carefully genetically manipulated now such that...we have bred out of them the aggressiveness so they can live with us without goring us with their antlers.... We're creating the world in our image. And I think...as we continue to accomplish it, we're going to find the world's a very cold and lonely place.

Reed argues that this humility which seeks to preserve instead of change the world, is necessary to prevent the loss of all forms of diversity. He says, "it's diversity that makes us strong." This diversity depends upon an attitude that reveres wildness. "I don't want to live in a world that's like one great big sort of vanilla pudding that you shake out of a box - it's colourless, tasteless, odourless."

Responsibility

Finally, the wilderness religious views and attitudes discussed thus far, like the awareness of moral limits and the need to act humbly within a natural reality that is interconnected, can also be termed *responsibility*. John, for example, concludes that humanity's ability to think, because it is extremely dangerous, implies a great responsibility. He explains, "We were given the ability think, therefore we should *think*. We should think not only about how we look after ourselves, but how we relate to the things that allow us to continue to live." Scott concludes,

> For me being out in wilderness is humbling, so it helps with a sense of perspective about one's place in the universe and society, and the word responsibility keeps coming up. One is more responsible for one's own actions, so it teaches when you do things or don't do them those choices have consequences which may be really important - it's often direct consequences which sometimes actions don't have in urban society. I think if you develop a certain kind of independence or ability to be alone or operate without too many people around then you develop abilities and you develop a trust for yourself so you can make decisions and trust your own actions, and maybe that carries over into decisions about interactions with people as well as decisions about things.

Staying Mindful

A rootless civilization

The experience of the natural order can teach the right attitude towards life. This observation implies that lacking the "numinous magic" and "sense of wonder" that wilderness provides, humans are likely to suffer from arrogance, boredom, and a lack of commitment to life itself. As Scott muses regarding his life's purpose,

> I think just to be able to feed that sense of wonder that I was talking about is important.... The word I hate...is 'boredom.' I think if we just start taking everything for granted and not realizing how interesting things are at whatever level from whether it's a thousand miles of nothing but sand or ice to a beautiful rainforest waterfall - I just think that somehow there is value to a sense that there's beauty out there that's not all made my humans and that things kind of work even if we're not here.... The value of it is certainly part of a sense of perspective and just kind of an ongoing motivation to hang around.

Indeed, the dangers of losing the wilderness perspective are evident in the wilderness adventurer's outlook on Modern civilization, which depicts absurdity, heightened arrogance, the imbalance arising from self-involvement, and the lack of perspective to judge what priorities are appropriate in a larger context. The wilderness experience counteracts this "forgetting" of the sacred - the larger context and foundation of our lives.

The threat of forgetting is the threat of a life that has lost all significance. As Oelschlaeger writes, referring to Jeffers' poetry (1991:260-262),

> Thus we see, ultimately, that the great cosmic cycle - the stars wheeling in their

> heavenly course, the endless cycle of birth, growth, decline, and death, and the divine beauty of things - enframes the human condition and that any man or woman oblivious to this central reality is, in Jeffers's estimate, lost in a sea of illusions.

Rachel describes a "life without foundation" as one that has lost its soul. Her life is defined by her relationship to wilderness, as a searcher in pursuit of life's meaning. The unquestioning routines of everyday life do not satisfy her, do not provide a connection to what seems important. Oelschlaeger claims that in Thoreau's prose "the east symbolizes tradition, a cultural shell encasing and restraining life, and the west represents creativity and freedom, the palpable essence of life" (1991:165). Rachel echoes Thoreau in this regard, associating with her relatives in Ontario and easterners in general, the values of mainstream modern materialism to which she cannot relate.

> I just try and imagine what it's like for other people.... But it's just that they kind of fit into the typical family where...they're caught up with business and money...and this idea of what a family is.... I find people back East - it's...always the same kind of thing and when they talk, they talk like they didn't *have* a soul! And everything was about what kinda curtains match their kitchen, for the women, and the men were talking about what kinda interest rates they're getting on their mortgage or where to invest their money and what kind of snowblower they had.... I can't relate to these other people that don't have that [connection to nature].... And they're kind of fat and, well, they're parents now and they have kids and everything, but not all parents have to get fat. Y'know what I mean? They're all getting fat and like I don't recognize them anymore.... They work hard and their kids are all in daycare and they're two and three years old. AGHH...! I'm just looking at these people and I listen to what they're talking about and it's still the same! They haven't changed! It's like they're all still the *same*...! How can people just be content with - that's what I don't get is - getting up at nine in a nine to five job and coming home and doing this and this and you rent a video on the weekend and you have this car and you do this and you start...building RSPs and "building for your future...." I want to figure out their secret because I just don't understand! It's not enough for me, and then when I do have what I want it's never enough either.... They can just have this same goddamn life every day, and then their idea if they want to lose weight is they get their exercise bike and put it in their basement, and for me it's like I'll go out walking in the wilderness once a week instead. But they might have a good life. I dunno. But this is how they experience their life.... Maybe it's because their winters are so long too, but...when I was back East...I'd be the only one walking outside and everybody who saw me, [*frantic voice*] "do you want a ride! It's cold out!" It's like, "no I'm

> walking because I want to be outside and experience this." And there's just nobody that goes out right. They all drive their cars and go to malls and go on the subway and everything's underground.

Rachel raises here a related point associated with the absence of foundation, which is the adventurers' sense that their experience of a deep personal connection to wilderness is not widely shared; the experience sets them apart. Part of this sentiment seems related to the common feeling that the wilderness experience is somewhat ineffable. It must be directly experienced to be understood. "How do you explain ninety or a hundred kilometre an hour winds to someone?" Alex asks. After wilderness trips, Rachel says, "I remember feeling like I just wanted to keep talking about it to everybody.... No one really knows what you're talking about." Ultimately she realizes that some people are missing out on the experience of nature altogether, which makes her wonder how and why she is unique.

> ...it seems like there's eighty percent of people that can live without it, that don't think about it. Why? Is it because they were never brought up with it...? Why is it that we got so disconnected? Why are there so many more of a majority of people that haven't thought about it? Even when I was a child it was really important to me. Why wasn't it to other people that were growing up? How did we get so many developers that could just come in and go fwooghk? The high school I went to - the only thing that inspired me was being able to go sit in the backyard in the grandstand and look out at this beautiful forest that had almost every tree you could imagine out there. It's gone...! So everything around that high school that used to be nature is gone, so their experience of high school's different than what I have, and I don't think that's right. I think "God, we used to go jogging in the woods right beside our school!" They can't do that now...the kids on their break go to the mall. And we grew up not knowing anything about malls.

It is difficult for the adventurer to imagine what kind of a life one could have without the core inspiration of nature.

Scott expresses the joy of being able to share a special wilderness experience with someone who can appreciate it in the same way. Presumably there are some people who cannot. When Simon was in the wilderness, he also felt "so few people can really appreciate this." He says,

> I often felt like I'm experiencing something, I'm appreciating it in a way that other people probably don't, or the majority of people don't. They just don't get

> it. "Why would I want to do that? Why would that guy want to go out there and tromp around through the woods by himself?" People would always say that to me, "why do you want to do that? That's dangerous." And it's like [*laughing*], "You just don't get it! HELLO!"

John struggles to understand people who do not respond in the same way to "the beauty of things" that is the central inspiration in his life.

> I can't look at architecture and say "that's beautiful." I can't look at art and say "that's beautiful". I can stand at the top of a mountain and say, "that's fucking beautiful!" I mean there's just nothing like it.... It's a relationship that's a psychological one...I don't know what prompts it and if anything comes out of your research to identify this I'd be fascinated to see it because I've never read anything on it, whether it's a genetic thing that causes some people to be more stimulated by natural phenomena or natural surroundings than they are stimulated by cultural surroundings. I've always wondered about that. Because I have friends who love going out with me on these kinds of experiences, adventures, but they're the kinds of people who when you stand there almost speechless or suck your breath or your eyes light up or you look like you're going to pass out they say, "what's wrong?" and you have to explain to them why you're feeling the way you do...! I can't remember feeling any other way. I can't remember ever feeling moved by cultural creations of any kind. Whether it be architecture, automobiles, a sculpture, paintings, theatre.

John suggests that a life without the foundation of wilderness is a life out of balance. For example, since the wilderness experience gives him the perspective to relieve stress and find happiness in the moment, he suspects that people without this perspective are vulnerable to stress and to depression. He has something to renew him, he says, but

> Some people never find that. They come home. They're tense as hell all weekend, they go back to work Monday morning, they feel that nothing happened. I don't like the word "stress" because it...has become the catchword for any feeling of discomfort and people are constantly going off on "stress leave". Stress has become just a major, multi-million dollar industry in North America, and that's because [*said perhaps not entirely seriously, but emphatically*] those people don't take advantage of the natural world! [*laugh*] They don't have balance in their life!

John doubts that a city life that has no connection to nature can be a complete and fulfilling life. Because their lives must be in some way hollow, empty, or without meaning, he suggests, "I feel sorry for the people who live in the heart of New York City,

or Toronto." John laughs when I point out, "Some of them may feel sorry for you." He does not want the importance of the wilderness experience as life's bedrock to be under-emphasized. He reiterates that the wilderness perspective is a spiritual perspective and a healing perspective, because its alternative wisdom about success offers a way of resolving stress, and presumably the physical symptoms that accompany mental distress. Again he is referring to the ability feel a joyful, profound sense of well being that comes from the "deep appreciation" of nature - a gift that he feels blessed with, but which many of his friends do not appear to share.

> I know that a lot of the people that I know don't have that balance and they are *not* very happy people. And I believe that has the potential to make everybody happy. And it may come down to what it is that clicks in your head and makes you appreciate that. Maybe some people just could never be happy with that. But the thing is, the reality is that if they *could* be happy with it, they would be happier.... Like if they could experience it and get some sense of what it does for you, that would put some balance in their life that would offset some of these incredibly negative forces that work on them.... I don't know how you get people out of that rut, to make them recognize that there are things that can balance you.

For John, the life without foundation is one that has replaced the life-sustaining and enhancing awareness of nature with priorities that are absurdly unimportant.

> Jesus Christ! When I hear these people in Vancouver moan and cry about the Molson Indy isn't gonna be in Vancouver next year and they're absolutely in tears I think, "Jesus, get a grip!" Y'know, who cares!? Who *cares* whether the Molson Indy's in Vancouver next year! It's got absolutely nothing to do with anything!

John is adamant, as was Jeffers, that humanity separated from the "central reality" of nature is "lost in a sea of illusions." His worldview incorporates an obvious hierarchy of importance that places the preoccupations of popular culture categorically at the bottom. And anyone who credits undue significance to the trivialities of, for instance, popular entertainment, is heartily encouraged to "*get a grip!*"

> I see no value in what I consider to be "fluffy" social convention, where people just get together and just *talk* about absolutely inconsequential, insignificant things, and then participate in some activity which some people find - I'm going to be very careful here because there's a lot of value in cultural activities but - some people see as the most important thing in life. I mean how can people get so fucked up? How can they!? How can that become the most important? I see it as

> a major diversion from responsible thinking about what the hell we're doing. I mean there's close to six billion people living on this earth. Twenty percent of them live in China, and twenty percent of them live in India. The other three fifths are spread all over the world. We've got a higher standard of living than anywhere else in the world. We produce more *gar*bage than anybody else in the world, and we sit back and we think "isn't this great? It's okay to just keep doing this." Get a grip! When do we get to the point where we say, "hold on a minute, um yes, life is sustainable on earth, but in very different terms than we're doing it now?"

To Simon, modern civilization from the wilderness perspective is similarly absurd. He states,

> The city is just, there's cars everywhere. We live in such a car culture. Man I hate cars...! I remember seeing this cartoon when I was a little kid about aliens looking at earth and all they saw was cars going all over the place, they didn't see people! It was quite hilarious too. The car leaves the house in the morning and drives into the city and parks somewhere, and then the car goes back to the house at night and it runs out to this place called a shopping centre. And...cars, they're everywhere! That's all the world is now is cars...! Victoria's not that bad in some cases. It's small. But Vancouver I think is just a horrid place. Congestion and buildings and cars and people everywhere and the smog over the Fraser Valley's ridiculous. I mean, I've flown over there now coming in a plane a couple times in the summertime and...you come over the mountains over Harrison Lake, and you see this brown. And I think, "what is that? Wow! That's, that's the *air*!" [*laugh*] "People are breathing that!" And it's really quite disgusting. It's amazing.

Remembering what's important

Avoiding the rootless and absurd life of civilization and remaining "grounded" in the wilderness experience requires fighting distraction to remain mindful. One is reminded of Thoreau who likened walking through town as "running a gantlet" of distractions. Chris describes the overwhelming experience of facing civilization after being in the wilderness:

> ...when I do get home...there's just this unease, and it takes a while to get through that. All of a sudden you're having to adjust to may a lot more different stimuli, and life's not so simple. You have more than one t-shirt to choose from. And I often find it hard to deal with the hectic pace. And there's a tendency to want to run back to where I came from...and just sort of want to bury my head somewhere.... I find often there's maybe just some angst. It's just too much to deal

> with that the simplicity's gone.... I remember once not being able to find my toothbrush, but my toothbrush is always in the stuff sack in the top lid of my pack. Well not anymore.... bills or what you're going to do in six months and that kind of stuff just...can sort of bog me down and I get kind of depressed for a couple days before getting back into city mode.

Rachel's experience is even more extreme. Compared to the peaceful grounding experience of wilderness, civilization is associated with depression, fear, confusion, boredom, and death. It is dissonant and "deadening," threatening to stifle the constant renewal that comes from her nature experiences. Staying sane in the city requires finding ways of "remembering," of staying "connected," of living for the moment.

Telling about a winter camping trip, Simon describes how the experience of attention to detail in the wilderness experience makes the simplest acts seem more vivid and meaningful than in the everyday life of distractions.

> You wake up in the night time and your nose is FREEZING cold! And so you try and get the sleeping bag done up as small as you can around your face.... The inside of the tent in the morning would be covered in about a half an inch of frost, on the inside walls.... You wake up in the morning and trying to get dressed in this tent without moving, and so all the frost falls on you.... And the whole thing around putting your boots on each morning.... The best thing when it's really cold are probably Sorels, with the felt liners and two pairs of wool socks. Your feet are all right during the day, but of course...all day long you're wearing your boots and your feet are putting out moisture into the felt liners, so I put the felt liners into my sleeping bag at night. So I put them on my feet and put my feet into the boots. The bottom part of the Sorels are rubber so that's okay, but from the ankles up to the top is leather, which is now frozen solid.... I remember there's this picture of all six of us trying to ram our feet into these boots in the morning. And you get your feet into the boots and for the next two hours all the heat from your foot goes into the boot to warm it, so your feet freeze for two hours....These seemingly simple things like putting your boots on, was a major event. In our normal everyday life we're so caught up in everything else. We're caught up going to work and going to school and worrying about this and that, and you never think about what it's like to put your feet into cold boots! There's not meaning to that. And that's something which is really important to me, the simplest things become so important that we take for granted, that we don't think about.

"Live in the moment" is one of the lessons that Chris takes away from the wilderness experience. To live in the city, he finds ways to release mental interference and be more aware of where he is, more engaged, more "questioning," and "wondering"

like in the wilderness adventure attitude that is always making "assessments of where you are in the moment."

> Living in the moment you have the ability to let go of the worry or the tension about something that needs to happen or worry about how something might turn out. There's kind of a patience for letting things become.... I actually write a fair bit..as a tool for thinking, and for getting thoughts out. I find often that process unloads all the thought processes, the worries or the concerns, and may lead to...some resolution so that you can move on. That I do quite often. I guess ultimately it's some means of letting go of those thoughts, or even not taking them on.... Everything from when I'm going to recert my first aid to how the hell I'm going to pay off my student loan and still go rock climbing for two months in the fall, that rationally I know I can't do anything about right now but there's just that human tendency still to worry about them.... I sure find in the city though I take a lot more for granted - stars. A lot of the students I work with it's the same. They get out there and all of a sudden they start thinking about things they haven't thought about before. I don't know if it's because there's too much stimulus here and your mind get bogged down.... You get out there and it's just things are quieter and simpler and you just start to think about where things come from. Whereas here you just flush the toilet.... Taking moments to relax and for quiet. Just in a sense thinking. I have a tendency I find now I just get up in the morning and I go! I just start doing stuff. And...out there there's always quiet time in the morning, and time in the evening where you're basically say sitting having a coffee or tea and it's calm and it's reflective. And I don't do that all enough here. And I've never learned that. I always want to take that back. Or evening walks. Things like that just to think and relax or sort of wind down. Looking at the horizon. You're always looking around you three hundred and sixty degrees when you're out there. You're just always looking at things. You notice the sky, and I've found here you're always just looking down, looking at the road or looking for cars, and I've found that I'm not as aware of everything that's going on around me.... I think [wilderness] encourages awareness of our connection to the natural world and our reliance on it for sustenance. Maybe it's a little more clear there. We're carrying our own food and things, but I think of that a lot when I'm out there - what society takes for granted here. The process of always asking questions. I guess to me the journey in the wilderness is a process of asking questions. It's asking questions about where you're going and how that is relating to the terrain that's unfolding in front of you and the weather conditions and the time of day and all those things are going on in your head. It's that interaction between what you're trying to do and what's there and what's happening. And that's like a continual reality check assessment of what's going on. And I forget to ask questions enough here, in the moment.... Those questions are assessments of where you are in the moment.

Writing, walking, relaxing, thinking, looking around: all meditative techniques for living in the moment, ways to try and bring the mental state of wilderness, the state of being, back into everyday life, cutting through the extraneous inputs that diffuse attention, and return to some of that 360 degree awareness of the wilderness experience, looking at the sky, the horizon, returning to the wisdom of constant questioning. Wilderness travel is a questioning process, a constant "reality check assessment", and Chris says he needs to ask more questions in his everyday life too.

Reed's practice for "staying mindful" in the city includes meditation, Tai-Chi, writing, thinking, walking, asking deep questions, and living a simple and uncluttered life. He reiterates that when he is lost in the "illusions" of civilization, wilderness provides a sense of direction.

> There's just so many distractions. And also I have to say that the kind of society that we are building, that we are constructing, reinforces the notion that there is no other thing bigger than ourselves, that true happiness is found in not having a ring around your collar, having the latest model of whatever car it is that your income level allows you to aspire to - it's gotta be the latest, it's gotta be the greatest and it's gotta be the best...! Whenever I'm deeply stressed or frustrated by life's experiences, I'll try and get out to East Sooke or wherever.... It's a way I can tune in again, to remind myself 'who in the hell am I?' Cause you get into the workaday world, the so-called physical world which I quite accept as the Buddhists say 'this is Maya; this is illusion!' But I mean you get so caught up in it you begin to think it's real! My God, y'know, like 'my neighbour over there. Holy shit! He's got three vehicles now and I've only got one, and mine's a really old one and shit!, why don't I have what he's got.' Bang! Before you know it *you're* caught up in the trap as well. You're just as deeply ensnared as everyone else! So when I get out there it's an opportunity to just let all that *shit*, that chatter, wind itself down. And then you get this incredible peacefulness. And you being to *really* hear, feel, sense what's really important - who you really are (or who you're really not).... It's a sacred experience. It reconfirms, it reconnects me....the real me, the essence of who I am, the inner nature - whatever you want to call it, the Buddha within, the Christ within....

Reed allows himself at least one long, two-week wilderness trip every year. But living and working in the city means he does not get away to wilderness as much as he would like. Preserving his wilderness outlook, his "awareness" of what's ultimately real, and of the unreality of civilization, requires staying mindful amidst the mental hurricane that is

modern life.

> There's so many distractions - constant distractions...! The Force is still here.... It's around us. It's present. It's constantly present. But it's just that much more difficult because we're being hammered by bills to be paid, wife who is struggling with work, you're struggling with work, kids involved in six kazillion different things and you're having to run them around. Like I look at my lifestyle compared to many of the other people that I know and wow! My lifestyle must appear like the eye of a hurricane compared to most other people! I listen to for example...some of the managers that I'm working with - both husband and wife work with kids in school. So as soon as they get home they're feeding kids and feeding themselves and they're going in separate directions taking the kids off to hockey, soccer, ballet, piano, thousands of different things. They finally get the kids off to bed around eight thirty, nine-o'clock at night, they're absolutely exhausted, so they fall into bed. And the only time they really get a chance to connect with each other is on the drive into town in the morning, or back out of town in the evening. That's it! Thirty-five minutes of quiet, of relative solitude. Phoof! Hey that's not the kind of life I want! That's a hurricane! That's being wrapped up in gale-force winds all the time.... Now I'm like "slow down. Slow down. You don't have to program your kids' lives, and you don't have to program your own life. There's things you can do to start stepping out of that turbulence." And as long as we keep ourselves shook up all the time, then how in the hell do we expect to gain any clarity over our lives, over what's important?

Gaining clarity over life and over what is important in life begins for Reed by rejecting the obsession to keep up with the social mainstream and measuring success by different standards; seeking refuge in his "eye of a hurricane" lifestyle; relinquishing the urge to "program" life. Distractions are eliminated by living simply and tending to accept life's natural direction and dropping the impulse to control. In this manner he can fully invest himself in what the wilderness experience teaches is happiness: being mindful, in the present moment, and not allowing desires, fears, past regrets and future worries distract from a sense of immediate wholeness.

> So happiness to me is being fully present, fully engaged. Yeah, fully present, fully engaged. Here, now, in the moment. And that's happiness...! Something I experience in wilderness and something I am learning to experience here in my home, going out for a walk with my friends. It's a practice. It's a discipline. You have to work at it all the time.... Steve Van Matre has a wonderful image of many of us get caught up in 'the ping pong game of life'. We're either regretting what we've done, or fearing what we might do, and not really spending the moment on the net. We're on one side or the other. Ding, ding, ding, ding. Passing over the

> net of the moment. So for me it's very, very much about that practice. And it's...a transference of that kind of awareness from the wilderness setting back into your ordinary life...outside of the wilderness experience.

Life becomes a "practice" or "discipline" to cut through distractions and tune into the wildness that is always present, a "deeper current" that is the ultimately real and important. Meditation is part of this practice.

> I strive to practice meditation every day. And meditation for me is very much about learning to...find my true mind, to return to my mind...remind myself of my true mind.... I think probably one of the biggest things that could be done right now is if somehow there was a way to teach Western civilization how to meditate, and make it mandatory. [*laugh*] Nobody goes into work, nobody *starts* work until they've done a good thirty minutes of meditation. Nobody leaves work until they've done a good meditation, dump all the stuff.

Journal writing helps to embed the insights that he learns in wilderness, allows him to achieve a similar mental clarity and sense of himself. Tai-Chi is a Taoist physical and spiritual discipline to "bring one's own internal energies in line with the greater universal energies." Walking is another way of relaxing and finding, early in the morning or late at night, "cracks in the civilization" where the intuition of wildness can come through. Alex also walks a lot in his day to day life.

Rachel explains what it is like for her to be susceptible to the distractions of civilization, which include other people's values and expectations.

> All of a sudden I had to have all these things that demanded that I had to put a lot of time out working.... I just started to get really afraid that I would...become something I didn't want to be.... I would need to be working eighteen-hour days in order to do all the things I needed to do, going to school actually and then working a full time job and...looking after children. And I would have no time for what really was important to me, no time at all! And then what would happen? It happened anyway.... I was running around. I was pounding the pavement in Victoria a lot. I was along with all the traffic a lot and breathing all the fumes and just talking to people everywhere.... And...then I had to stop, because I was told I...was starting to develop cancer. And I wasn't eating properly, and you're eating on the run and just grabbing things. You stop breathing. You kind of hold your breath and you're everywhere and you try to be three different people and do two different things and the demands all of a sudden are crazy.... I was so used to just being laid back and spending time paying attention more to what the weather was doing, busy still doing things, looking after family and all that stuff, but I was

> more in tune with myself. I could be more in tune with myself when I was around nature. I felt strong.... I think that the wilderness takes me out of my head. At first it doesn't but then it's more a in-your-body kind of experience.... You can point to where you feel yourself, you center is. Right now talking to you it's more up here [*pointing to head*].... If you stay long enough things empty out of your head and you act more from your gut. You start getting tuned back into..."yeah, I knew I should have stuck to that. I *knew* in my *gut* that I was right!" But I started listening to other people...and plugging into other people's fear and stuff.... It doesn't go away...your intuition.... It's still there but it just seems to be there's too many other things going on, like more than you want. You have the TV on, the phone could be ringing, you gotta get groceries and like I dunno. There's stuff happening and it's really easy to miss it, or not listen to it. There's these influences and you're crowded in with all these other people doing things and so you think that maybe what they're doing is what you should be doing.... Other people might not be so caught up in comparing with what other people are doing or so insecure, but for me I have trouble feeling confident and feeling secure.

For Rachel, maintaining a sense of identity means staying in touch with nature, something she has not yet learned how to balance with a life in the city. The only solution she knows is returning to wilderness when she can.

There is hope, however, in finding the "reconnection" experience somewhere close to home, as all the interviewees do. Living and working in the city is a compromise balanced by staying in touch with wilderness on weekends and holidays, as Simon explains.

> The last three years I've been working most of the time. I do a lot of day paddling, like all year round, even in the winter I try and get out every couple weekends, and usually that's just around here somewhere. In the summertime I don't spend a lot of weekends at home. I either go paddling somewhere or else try to go somewhere just – I just like getting out.... To me it's important. I need to get out and kind of clear my head.... I feel like I just need to kind of get away and recharge a little bit. And that's the way it's always been! Like I go for a while and it's like eventually I realize yeah, I should probably get away for a day or so. Cause I find when I don't do that I just kind of start.... I can't say I get uptight cause I don't really get uptight. But I just start thinking about it more and more and so it's like, "yeah, I've got to get out and do that". It feels great. It allows me to go back to work, for example, and just deal with everything. It's like yeah, I just had a really good experience in a place that is really special for me and I feel like I've somehow gotten back to what's real. And yeah, I can go back to the stupid...machine and work for it for another week or so.

The "micro" experience close to the city has many of the same elements as the wilderness experience. Simon's favourite place for this is two islands east of Victoria.

> When I go out to a place like Chatham and Discovery...for a day paddle it's always my number one destination.... It's a combination of some fun paddling to get there, crossing the channel there. You've always got a lot of paddling you can do around the islands. Again, you don't see a lot of people. The islands have nothing on them. I mean there's a lighthouse on one and those transmission towers on Chatham, but it's not like they're developed. And they're beautiful, like there's a lot of Garry oak and stuff, a lot of nice, nice sites. And it's a nice spot where in the summertime I can go out there and just sit out in the sun for a while and read. When I think about paddling in general or getting away it's like a little micro...shot of what the whole experience is like for me. Going out to a place that's aesthetically pleasing to look at. Hopefully no one else around, or not a lot of other people around. And a bit of paddling, a bit of exercise, a bit of relaxation. Hopefully always see lots of seals out there and sometimes a sea lion. See some wildlife of sorts, and again it's like in one days it's a snapshot of what I get from a long trip.... It's a setting I feel I can go to even just for a day and have a bit of a recharge.

Change for the sake of change

To whatever extent the wilderness experience is simply one of "newness" that inspires a degree of wonder and heightened attention, the wilderness adventurer can find the required inspiration simply by adding variety to life, or finding ways of "becoming involved" in everyday life. Chris, for example, walks off the sidewalk on the way home from school.

> I walk from home to school, and I walk from across that way towards the stadium, and rather than walk through the parking lot by the stadium I often pop up onto this berm that has pine trees down it. It goes towards the stadium with all the fields on your right and I walk along the top of that berm and [*smiling*] - I even think of it this way, that it's nicer walking on grass by the trees, with a better view - then I'll *contour* down the side of it to the sidewalk and then come around and then *avoid* the sidewalk again and walk up a slope sort of winds through some trees right by the stadium. That's my thought process. I relate doing that to being elsewhere....

Alex believes that the wilderness experience can be had in the city, if one can make good on the commitment to be "awake" and "alive" in everyday life, rather than following

routines. He says,

> We have habits when we're here.... We drive the same roads going to school or work, same corner store, hang out with the same friends.

Alex's commitment is to "stay on top of things...don't get caught up in the drudgery.... Try to find the little things that break up the routine and keep you alive and paying attention." Life has to be lived in a way that preserves mindfulness, and Alex says he is getting better at this, so he no longer makes as much distinction between wilderness and civilization. "I like flexibility in my life," says Alex. "Locked in," following a routine, nothing changes, he begins taking things for granted. Instead, "I try and create little rebellions and try and break through," he says of living metaphorically off-the-trail.

> You could just walk to work differently one day and you'll find something different.... I went into this bakery over at Bastion Square for the first time. I've been here for three years. It was neat. It was a little something different in the morning. It was like, "ah, cool! I've never been here before...." Or just phoning in sick one day because you need a mental health day and go paddling. Don't do it very often, but it's good just to say, "No, I'm not going to fall into the trap...." J-walking has some real value for me. I'll J-walk all the time, just because. Why should I cross at the cross walks? I've got two tickets in Victoria already.

As Scott observes, sometimes change is important for the sake of change.

> But the contrast, the contrast of simplicity in a way, of being on a wilderness trip, a routine of just camping and doing whatever it is you're doing, versus the land of clocks and being places on time and starting work and stopping work and shopping and all that.... It's really important because I think that somehow it maintains some kind of equilibrium or balance.... You're just out there and you carry some number of your modern conveniences with you, but at least it's a simpler existence and it's closer to the elements. And I think the contrast between that and the physical activity of it and the contact with the elements versus the land of the day to day and the urban especially, and the clock. I think it keeps a certain sanity in things. Equilibrium.

Alex and Scott both provide a reminder that the wilderness experience may be most important for providing "balance" to everyday life, and should not be viewed as "better." Scott concludes,

> You need some change every once in a while.... It's not that I don't like my day to day life. I'm actually privileged to have a day to day life that's pretty good actually - better than pretty good. But the contrast of being able to do wilderness

trips for a while and then come back to this is valuable to me.

Always returning to wilderness

Talking with wilderness adventurers reveals the absurdity of trying to stay away from wilderness, for one who loves it. During the course of doing this study, my own perspective changed significantly. I forgot that when I had set out to do the research, I believed that the wilderness experience suggested an "ideal" way of living that would preclude the need to go into wilderness. The interviews revealed, however, that wilderness adventure is a necessary part of the good life, and that this life is a process of continual growth, rather than a definable end. The adventurers I interviewed do not see the wilderness experience as something they will "grow out of;" rather, it is an essential part of their lives that defines who they are, something they cannot imagine living without. Affirming wilderness adventure as part of their identities and a life necessity, it is the one of the last things they would consider giving up. Even Alex, who comes closest to relativism in his definition of environment, claiming that "there's no reason why what you're doing out there...and those experiences can't happen here [in the city]," admits that the wilderness experience is essential to "a way of life."

> What it is for me is just a way of life, a way of living. I don't "go" somewhere to participate in wilderness. I just...live my life in the way that I eat and sleep and go to the washroom and I expect to go hiking and walking and paddling and stand in front of a tree and look at the slugs in the summer. It's never a question of "am I going to do it?" If I don't do it, I get depressed, I get frustrated, I get angry. I need to do those things.... [Compared to being in wilderness] it's hard to imagine having that many powerful experiences all the time here.... You get caught up in a routine and when you have to work...you get up at eight thirty, you go to work, you work all day, you come home, you have dinner, you watch TV, you go to bed. And it's just that cycle.

Furthermore, he says,

> If you find yourself out of balance, take the time to bring yourself back in balance. Exercise, particularly exercise outside; that's what does it for me. It's going for a really hard paddle. And just...focus, focus, focus. Meditate on your activity.... The thing that worries me the most...is not being able to do the things I like to do, being forced to make too many compromises....I want to be happy. It's as basic as

> that. And I guess what that means is I want to do the things that make me happy. It's not that you can do them all the time, but you got to have enough of it to keep your energy and your spirit up.

Simon explains that the wilderness always provides a place to escape to for recharge, when the need arises.

> For me it's always a bit of an escape, and it's this chance to get out there and recharge myself, fuel up those cells so that I can come back if I have to and face this stuff. [Escaping from] just the whole society we live in now. The city, the consumerism, the money-driven, profit-oriented, greedy bastards that we [*laughing*] have to deal with every day. Everything. I mean the world really is a shitty place.... I like to get away from that. I guess I don't mean it quite that harshly. Just I don't find that anything in an urban area gives me that feeling of being able to recharge myself and fulfil any sort of spiritual need I would have, and that combination of being able to feel mentally and physically really connected to everything around me. I think that's a key for me somehow. When I'm outdoors and I'm paddling I feel that I'm using my body and I'm using my mind and my senses are completely tuned, and...you're not worried about bullshit. I'm not worrying about my stupid job wherein I have to get eight thousand people to agree to make a decision on a new stupid policy which is completely irrelevant in the grand scheme of things because it's a goddamn fucking government bureaucracy...! That's not reality. To me reality is being in natural places.

The other adventurers agree that the wilderness experience should not be forsaken, even if it does require the consumption of resources and the dependence on a modern industrial culture. They are willing to claim a prerogative to go into wilderness whenever they feel the need. This view is a consequence of the "realism" that they embrace, and also the non-dualistic view which does not perceive wilderness as a place "out there" to go into or stay away from. This view, which Chris, quoting Gary Snyder, calls "the wild mind," is perhaps also more tolerant of contradictions. In this formulation, the idea of a "moral" responsibility to stay *away* from wilderness, to protect it or to conserve the resources required to get there, is undermined by the experience itself which dissolves the notion of wilderness as a distinct place.

For Scott and Robin, wilderness adventure appears as a "lesser sin" than forms of recreation that are more technologically-dependent. "There are some ironies or paradoxes there for sure," says Scott in reference to the environmental impacts of the wilderness

experience. Mountaineers consume resources and cause pollution with their clothing, equipment, and by travelling. Scott observes that mountaineers do, however,

> try and carpool, minimize the number and vehicles, and pat ourselves on the back saying "at least once we're there we're going on foot." We're not using snowmobiles or dirtbikes or motorboats or whatever. Ah, the occasional helicopter [*chuckle*].

Mountaineers are not engaging in what Scott calls "the most recent abhorrence that I've heard of," which is "heli-snowmobiling."

> I don't have the answer to those contradictions. They're there and I think about them and I think quite a few people think about them, but in the grand scheme of things maybe they're at least lesser sins.

Chris also feels this way. Like Simon, who says that if he let it bother him he would not be able to sleep, the adventurers are willing to accept the contradictions that are apparent in wilderness adventure, and to continue making it the focus of their lives, the source of their spiritual well-being. Robin admits that consuming resources, and certainly flying overseas, in order to visit wilderness is a contradiction, but concludes "I think I'll just live with it". Chris explains,

> Going to the wilderness there's impacts. I recognize that. It's selfish, but I'm going to keep doing it. But then I think there's no way to live without impacts. Humans have always have impacts on the natural environment. I think we view wilderness as something that doesn't have humans in it and has no human impact, but I think that's just a construct of how wilderness is viewed. Wilderness only had boundaries put around it really in this century or later parts of the last century. Before then it was sort of maybe more everything. A lot of the world.... I can see how meditation and things like that could create the same effect and...I don't wanna do it...! To me the trips out there are a meditation in a sense. But I'd much rather meditate by travelling.

Structuring lifestyle around a unifying purpose

Because the wilderness experience, however it is defined, is so centrally important to life, the wilderness adventurer has no regrets about structuring lifestyle in a way that makes the wilderness experience accessible. Simon, for example, quit a well-paying job because it did not provide him with the time to find the inspiration he found in

wilderness. Alex chooses to live in a place where he can go for walks and experience nature.

> I walk a lot. My partner and I walk a lot together. We choose to walk on the grass, not the sidewalk. We choose to walk in the park...just to be outside and look at things. We tend to choose where we live so that we can walk.... I've chosen a lifestyle and a job in a city where I have relatively easy access...to those things, where even...this urban space has a fair amount of wildlife, trees.... So we've made decisions about...who we are and where we're at and what we're doing based on our general beliefs, and all those are tied to our sense of space.

The importance of the wilderness experience has inspired Alex to seek flexibility in his life and work. He recognizes what he requires to experience a sense of "balance" and has adjusted his life so that he can afford those experiences. The bottom line is, "not compromising what you believe in too much," not swaying the balance too far from the fundamentals.

For Chris too, the decision to become a wilderness guide was based on the aim to give the experience precedence in his life. His ideal is a work and family life that are structured to around what provides meaning and purpose to life. Scott accepts that the wilderness influence may have played some part in his detour from the "obvious" career path.

> There was a point some long number of years ago that the obvious thing for me to have strived for would have been a faculty position at a university and for various reasons I partly chose and partly just fell away from that path and chose something in terms of I guess professional merit or income status or whatever didn't go that direction but had big benefits in terms of free time and flexibility and the ability to travel around, and so I became a professional sessional lecturer and itinerant academic [*laugh*].... That change of direction from the pursuit of a path of a professional academic to being incredibly casual about work, which always seemed to be there in one form or another, and just letting life contain big spaces for other activities - it was all a part of that realization that you don't need to really accumulate a whole lot of things, and time is really precious.... I think some people have a harder time actively succeeding in that choice than others do but...y'know you think of doctors as being pretty ensnared by the profession, but there are doctors out there who make a point of putting up with a lower income or different kind of work to have three months off a year and things like that. It can be done. It requires some trade-offs.

The conviction that "it can be done" reveals the opinion that the way one chooses to

allocate one's life energies is largely a matter of one's own control. By making trade-offs of relatively unrewarding things like money and prestige, Scott finds the time to devote to his priorities, which include making long trips in wilderness. Like all of the wilderness adventurers, Scott finds it hard to imagine finding a replacement for wilderness experience in his life.

> I hesitate to contemplate what life would be like if I couldn't ever go out into the wilderness.... It would have to be an unlearning of what I live now and a reinventing of my own life to accommodate the inability to get into wilderness. I mean a lot of people have good lives and they're happy and they enjoy things and they don't go into wilderness. I mean I think there are such people out there! I'm assuming there are! So...I'm not sure that I can say that it's a universal requirement, so I might be able to learn the other way, but I'm not that keen to try.

That wilderness involvement is a way of life for Scott, and not simply something he does on weekends, explains the influence that it has on his lifestyle choices. For example,

> It's a choice not to have ever applied for jobs in big cities.... It's a function of being near an interesting landscape and also being able to find work in the line that I like to do and I'm trained to do..... As far as the kind of accommodation I have, well I'm just in apartment after apartment, but I usually do try to avoid apartment buildings. Maybe that's part of it. Maybe I like to live in a house, an older house even that's got apartments, or one apartment even. And I have images around me from where I've been and what I do...pictures of mountains and pictures of glaciers and little reminders.... I have quite a lot of material things but mostly they're camping and mountaineering equipment and books. [*chuckle*]

The choice of where to live, particularly for the five participants who have moved to the West Coast from other parts of the country, is largely influenced by their desire to stay close to nature. John explains that his choice of home is based on the need to be...

> geographically positioned to be able to easily create that balance in my life...without expending a lot of energy, personal energy and resource energy like the gas, and to have all those things within easy reach. I don't think life gets any better than that. And of course that's one of the first things I said to you - why I live in Nanaimo. The maximum length of time I have to travel to get anywhere I would want to go in my life is three hours, and more likely everything I want to do is within an hour.

A sense of purpose

Although for the most part the participants perceive their lives as "a journey," and are more concerned with the process of living than the ultimate ends, the way they live their lives structured around the wilderness experience represents their commitment to a sense of purpose, an objective or overarching order. Just as in the wilderness experience, there must be enough of an objective in life to sustain active, purposeful engagement, and to produce a sense of meaning. This purposefulness echoes the existential idea that human beings create their own essence through purposeful striving, that one must be striving to experience full being, to overcome a general condition of alienation. "Man," in Sartre's philosophy, "is a project. He projects himself to distant goals and values. His life is that restless movement to become something he is not..." (Reese, 1996:678). The landscape is a place where the adventurer practices this commitment, which is later applied to everyday life. Wilderness seems to have the concurrent effect of teaching the need for a purpose, and also what that purpose might be. Reed explains that being inspired by the wilderness means having a sense of one's place in the universe, and a sense of direction. In the spirit of Thoreau, who writes that "in the long run, men hit only what they aim at," the wilderness travellers agree that one must endeavour to define the aims of one's life. Then there is the possibility of proceeding deliberately, as Thoreau endeavoured, on a path that has meaning.

> I focus on today, and my choices right here and now.... I try and encourage everyone else...to be more mindful of their choices and the consequences - long term consequences - and to think in bigger and deeper terms: Why are you here? Why are we here? Where are we going? What kind of world do we want? Think big questions. Think worth-knowing questions. And pursue them.... Because.... Each of us by virtue of being here at this time and this place can either help make the world a better place, or continue to make the world worse, by virtue of the choices we make.

Having "some kind of an objective" is also as important in life as it is on the wilderness trip. I ask Scott what is the purpose of life and he says

> I would say that it has no purpose at all [*laugh*], from my kind of stand-back-and-have-a-look-at-it point-of-view, but I think a person has to define his or her own purpose, and maybe sometimes that happens early on, other times it happens later,

> but you have to define your own purpose. I think you have to decide. You can make a conscious decision what the purpose is.

A commitment to education

Life's purpose is closely tied to the concept of "identity." The wilderness adventurer finds a sense of identity in the wilderness experience, which in turn provides direction. Work is clearly subservient to this higher purpose. The adventurer recognizes that work should be an expression of identity, but not the source of identity. This is part of the "balance" that the adventurer seeks to maintain. Work must be meaningful, but retiring from work must not leave life devoid of meaning.

The wilderness adventurer seeks a career that is related to the meaning experienced in wilderness. For Alex and Chris, this is accomplished most directly by becoming wilderness guides and outdoor skills instructors. Other adventurers find wilderness interests relating to their careers less directly. Reed also initially sought a career path that took him directly into wilderness. Working as a park naturalist enabled him to achieve his goal of getting "deep" into wilderness areas. "I still count myself very lucky," he says. "When most of my friends in the boomer age were tearing off to Europe, I was pushing deeper into wilderness areas."

What is common to many of the wilderness adventurers, however, is a commitment to education that represents the connection between wilderness adventure and career. Wilderness adventure is a commitment to growth and a new perspective. Wilderness itself is symbolic of the larger reality that the learner seeks to know, and of the wonder that motivates inquiry. Scott explains the principle of crossing "frontiers" that is common to the wilderness adventure, academic research, and educational parts of his life. Of life's purpose, he says,

> For me it would certainly be something about being a little bit independent, about trying to help other people - that's certainly what my job is about is helping other people learn, and I also have done a whole bunch quasi-instructional stuff helping people to learn about getting out into the mountains. And just to, I don't know, feed a sense of wonder about life.

Much of Scott's life in and out of wilderness has been committed to teaching. The wilderness adventure commitment is a commitment to truth, to newness, to going "outwards." A commitment to wonder is his religion, in a sense. It is a commitment to growth. His best outdoor experiences are the accomplishment of "a goal that's achievable but a little bit out there." Wonder lies beyond the familiar, and teaching is a way of helping others to make those steps that lead them "out there". So the commitment to wonder translates into a commitment to teaching, to bringing a sense of wonder to others, to going farther, helping others to come as far as he has come, and give them the skills to go beyond. And the wonder that is conveyed in both wilderness and the classroom may be what makes life ultimately worthwhile; part of what Scott calls "an ongoing motivation to hang around."

Rachel felt much the same way but found that university was too much of a threat to her own motivation to "hang around." Whereas wilderness for her represented newness, school was stultifying boredom. But the career she dreamed of was one where she could tap into the meaning of the wilderness experience and share with others the inspiration she found.

> It was all stuff that was coming at me that didn't make any sense. It didn't pertain to any experience I have ever had...and I got really restless and really bored and frustrated.... I was going to have this great future...becoming some great person that was going to make a lot of money and have all these letters behind my name and all this stuff that didn't mean anything to me.... I was going to be a major in psychology, or education...to be able to teach people about life and what I experienced. And what I was being exposed to at university just seemed so, so distant from anything that I knew. And having to be stuck in these little boxes.... Nothing is exciting! That feeling that I would feel, alive, would go.... When you're in the wilderness, it stays new.... There's always something happening. [But in the city] it deadens...something deadens inside of you.... I know that I could be a good teacher.... I wouldn't allow that to happen.... The whole idea is to inspire people right...? Not...become stale. And if you do, then suddenly do something different...to get it back. Like I always wished the professor would just say, "okay, we're going outside today!" Or something! "Let's get out of this damn dark hall!" [*laugh*]....

Rachel observes that "people have no awareness," and would like to help them to understand their connection to nature. "There's just a real deep sadness that comes when

I see people that don't experience it the way I do." She says her goal now "is to be involved with some type of nutritional counselling or healing type counselling where I work with people to have them understand."

Observing the loss of diversity, the replacement of wilderness with subdivisions whose streets bear the names of the animals who once lived there, Reed was also inspired to change careers from "managing" wilderness to educating people. Through education he hoped to impart the worldview of the "sacred" that he learned from wilderness. He wanted to teach the ethic of "fitting in," whereby humanity would seek to transform itself before transforming the world, because he saw that preserving wildness is a matter of changing attitude.

> Over the years I just grew further and deeper into that awareness or that belief that to save wildlife, to save wilderness, to save anything wild, *we* have to change. We can't change it. It's *us* that has to change. And something very fundamental in us has to change, something deeper than just attitudes and behaviours. It's a way of perceiving ourselves. It's a way of perceiving the world.... So there's got to be...some kind of religious revolution.

Reed calls for something other than traditional environmental activism. Like Thoreau, he wants to change the individual's perspective fundamentally, towards a different orientation to nature. Questing for a different approach to saving wildlife led Reed to quit his parks job and pursue post-graduate education. He dedicated himself to the task of education.

> Virtually all my work right now is focussed towards that end, towards educating, in the truest sense of the word, myself and the rest of my species.... We have got to learn to put limits on ourselves. And the only way we're going to do that is if we reclaim the sacred. Because as long as there's nothing there to stop us ethically-morally, we'll go ahead and do it, as we have been.

Alex's career agenda also incorporates imparting a way of perceiving and relating to reality that is only superficially the act of teaching "the skills that will get them out and away from their homes and their television sets." The ultimate goal is transformation, paradigm shift. Alex wants to share a non-dualistic view of reality as "fluid," "interpenetrated," and "interconnected." In the absence of this vision, he says people have a tendency to perceive environment as a place that is separate from their day to day

lives, something "out there" to be managed for use or protected in a patchwork of parks. According to Alex's vision,"the environment is the space around us", reality is more complex than people tend to acknowledge and transcends the boundaries used to define it. In a non-dualistic perspective, environmental issues are "made real," they become meaningful.

> The solution comes...in the long run...from changing people's perceptions of the world, changing how people use the word "wilderness", how people perceive the word "environment". I'm quite frustrated with the mainstream environmental movement...because what they've pushed is the notion of environment as being something "out there", and they haven't made the connection with people, for example, making it real.

The wilderness experience is a questioning process, both a medium and a metaphor for this form of education, and a tool for long-term change. Its result is personal (and societal) growth: an evolution to a more complex understanding through the process of boundary crossing. It takes people to the periphery of the familiar and offers a new perspective on reality, which is an impetus for change.

> Moving people from their everyday lives and getting them to look at the world differently, by putting them in a kayak and getting them to paddle into Victoria harbour, for example. Many people haven't seen Victoria from the water, and they...go "Hoh!" So it gives them this different take on their lives, so that's an opportunity for them to think about things differently.... We just look at the world in a certain way, and say "this is the way things are". And how do you get outside of that? This is going to the periphery and looking in.... Empowerment comes from the periphery.... The real change comes from the margins.... That's why I like teaching. I see my teaching kayaking as a very political thing in a way. I'm giving people new experiences and a new language and a new way to experience the world around them, so I'm introducing a new medium, [*chuckle*] really, right.... Dualities...make up our world.... We just see the world that way.... But you can flip flop. Like you can go around them.... Borders, and margins...that's where our solutions will come from.... bell hooks' book...title says it best...*Teaching to Transgress*. Teaching is not indoctrination. Teaching should be an empowering process.... It's not about telling them "this is the dogma". It's about giving them the tools to get a perspective on that dogma.... 'Cause of how I see my politics I think that the more people that are involved in those kind of activities in these kinds of spaces the better off we'll be and so will this group of people. I think it will lead to more substantial change at a macro level...a substantial change in the worldview. The whole system we have in place in terms

> of our economic and social structure...can be changed if people start to take responsibility for their own lives and feeling that strong sense of personal connection to space. I think it can be empowering to people.

Alex's commitment to education means facilitating the direct experience of reality for others. The first step, he repeats, is for people to be aware of their ignorance, and therefore open to a new experience. Alex's goal as an instructor is then to lead his students through the steps of direct experience, accepting risk, taking responsibility, learning and growing, so that they can connect with the land. As instructor, he sees himself gradually trying to reduce his own role as a mediator of his students' experiences. The learner must, he says, "experience something at some point.... I could tell you what to do all day but you're not going to learn fuck all."

> I see myself as an educator and...I'm very much concerned with developing relationships with people. And that means that they grow and develop as people in their skills. I don't want them dependent on my knowledge. I want them to...become independent.

Working with trust, Alex facilitates relationships with place by gradually peeling away the barriers separating the familiar from the wild.

> If you create a very positive experience maybe you can open their minds.... You get trust...given to you. You're the guide so they assume you know what you're doing.... It's an opportunity to introduce people to that space. Make it a positive experience and show them things they haven't seen before. And if that means you have to initially have a fairly large medium through which they see that experience...then you go pick blueberries and you have a blueberry pie...and you catch a char and you serve char one night.... You make a willow herb tea cause it's got acetylsalicylic acid in it and someone's got a bit of a sore joint and it makes them feel better. Very simple things that you can introduce to that experience that...makes it much more real for them....

Environmental activism

The environmental activism of the adventurer is influenced by a perspective that sees paradigm-shift or "religious revolution" as the truly effective way to achieve change. The adventurers interviewed are environmentally active to varying degrees. Chris's contribution to change is his role as a wilderness adventure instructor. He shies away

from activism in the political arena because he feels this would be a distraction from his priorities. "I think I would spread myself too thin," he says. "I find I dislike a lot of the politics of zealotism - zealousness of a lot of environmental organizations. I prefer to just do it on my own, my own sort of way."

His realism makes John similarly reluctant to come across as a "rabid environmentalist." In this manner he is similar to Alex, who is active in environmental organizations, but feels at odds with many environmentalists who he believes perceive wilderness and environmental issues as "out there," separate from everyday life, and who do not seek realistic solutions. The adventurers' environmentalism is based upon their experience and understanding of the world, and they do not want it to be stigmatized as idealistic. They are also humble about imposing their beliefs on other people, because they understand the limitations of their own perspectives. John says,

> Maybe I have a responsibility to do that. Maybe I should go out and try to raise people's awareness. Mind you, who says I'm right? [*laugh*] I figure if I take personal responsibility for living that philosophy, then I have done my part. The next step is whether I feel it's important for me to convey to other people the importance of doing that, and I don't know if I've reached that point yet, although I do it on an individual basis with people I interact with. I try to share with them what I believe to be right, and if they accept it they accept it. If they don't they don't. Values are clearly different for everybody. All I know is when I die...I will go out being able to say to myself "I think I lived responsibly" and I still had a hell of a good time. Responsibility in terms of...leaving the smallest ecological footprint possible.

The wilderness adventurer is inspired by the worldview which perceives natural limits, to take responsibility to minimize environmental impacts in his own life. Reed has devoted his life to promoting attitude change about the environment, and also has made significant alterations to his lifestyle to reduce impacts. Scott claims to be involved in what is by his humble reckoning "low-level environmental activism," which in fact includes much letter writing, petition-signing and telephone calls to politicians, membership in four or five or six environmental groups, contributing to public land use planning meetings, presenting a brief at a forestry hearing about logging practices, and attending "most of the environmental rallies down at the legislature."

Robin has also been active environmentally for much of his life. His belief that humans are using more resources than those to which they are entitled, has inspired him to start an alternative energy company, and to make "almost a religion" out of reducing his family's energy consumption. His conviction came from observing human energy use, "from living in our society and seeing how we waste it," but also from his experiences in the landscape. Like Reed and Scott, Robin defines his core value as "to live lightly on the land." In life, as in recreation, he aims to live simply with reduced dependence on technology.

> Mainstream society says you should buy a new car every two years or whatever, and if it's not cars it's boats, it's sea skis, it's kayaks even - things. And all these things require energy. We gotta stop sooner or later.... I view anything in life that is quote unquote "not natural" as being not something I want to promote. In other words I would promote the use of natural methods for living as much as possible.... We should live close to this model. When we get away from this model we use excess resources and cause all manner of psychological problems.

The adventurers' environmentalism is also influenced by how they conceive of change - as an ongoing process rather than striving for a fixed end. This emphasis on process is also evident in the way they define personal success.

A non-materialistic view of success

The adventurer's definition of success lends itself well to the material sacrifice involved in reducing environmental impacts, because it is a spiritual view. The participants invariably define success in terms of the types of relationships experienced in wilderness. "Deeply questioning" what life's purpose should be, Reed concludes,

> If I accept sort of the dominant western mythology right now, that's determined by the almighty buck. But if I really think about it more deeply I'll probably begin to realize that there's more to life than getting money. There's relationships with other people, relationships with my community, relationships with the planet, with all of life.... We're not...motivated by materialist, consumerist values. It's just not a part of who we are. Having all the latest goodies etcetera just doesn't tickle us, doesn't turn our crank. We take more pleasure, more joy out of going for walks, going camping, canoeing, that kind of thing.... All we have to do is focus on more spiritual values, recognizing that it's more important to be part of a community, to know who your neighbours are, to care for them, to be concerned,

to spend time with friends.

Chris cites Wordsworth, saying,"getting and spending we lay waste our powers."

> There's hard work that one can do to pay for the house they live in and the amenities that are in it, and then there's hard work on can do within themselves to deal with how they interact with the world around them, which I think is more internal/spiritual. I think our society doesn't promote that awareness of yourself in relation to people and the environment around you so much as it promotes that you learn the appropriate scientific-technological skills to participate in the market economy.... I think that you should definitely do the former. Look inside yourself. But at this moment I think you have to participate in the market economy because that is what the society functions by.... But you can live in a market economy and still not be an ultimate consumer. You can choose...your income levels and how you live within that income, definitely. You don't have to have everything. It's just and awareness of limits, and choosing to give up some things in exchange for having more time off which is what I've done. I think the tools to find happiness in life reside in a person, but the environment is a medium that teaches you how to use those tools or that they exist....

Simon's way of living reflects his root belief in the reality of natural process, and the absurdity of a human civilization severed from this root. This "inhumanism" informs his choice to live in Victoria rather than Toronto, which is a place he says he could not wait to leave. And he shares the opinions of many wilderness lovers who feel, despite its international reputation as one of the world's finest cities, proximal to mountains, forest and sea, "Vancouver is a horrid place."

Simon's lifestyle is an expression of his relationship to nature and a rebellion against civilization's game of material gain.

> My idea lifestyle is to live in the country somewhere on a piece of land where you can grow a lot of your own food. My dream would be to have somewhere where you can be almost self-sufficient, but not be in a place where you never see anybody else or are completely blocked off from society.

Simon's life goals are structured around experiencing and preserving wilderness. He is anti-car, anti-consumption. In the city, he has a large garden and grows his own food. He points out that he has relatively few possessions, most of which are books, and he actually owns more than he wants to own. In a rather good-humoured way, and admitting some of his inevitable hypocrisy, he rejects humanity for what it has done to the world,

joking that if everyone had his values, the world would not be such a screwed-up place. He aspires to becoming more involved with environmental organizations, or to start his own, inspired again by Bill Mason who at the end of his life regretted not joining the environmental cause sooner. Simon's non-materialism is particularly evident in the fact that he quit a high-paying government job because he wants more than three weeks off a year to do the things he feels are most important.

Many of the interview responses about success came when I asked participants to define their "ideal life." Simon provides an answer to this question, but I was surprised to find that few of the participants wanted to talk about "ideals." Instead, they explained that "life is a journey." This is particularly true of John and Scott. I ask Scott to define the good life and replies, "My life's been pretty darn good." As part of the good life he cites social elements, elements of wonder, connection to place, and also health, including: supportive family, good friends, and "more recently a wonderful partner," "keeping the needs relatively small and time for doing other things - going on mountaineering trips, travelling, reading", "enjoyable work", and "connection to a place or a home is important.... So the good life includes that, good friends, activity, intellectual stimulation, good health."

Besides representing "dynamism" the wilderness attitude for Scott includes a different perspective what is truly important "in the big scheme of things." In the wilderness Scott has realized that there is not much that is required for happiness beyond basic necessities and good friends - an attitude reflected again and again in an inventory of Scott's core values. As other wilderness adventurers - David and Rachel in particular - have noted, there is a tendency in civilization to get caught up in comparisons with other people - how many cars one owns relative to one's neighbours, how much money one earns, and so forth. Wilderness is an antidote to this specious business of comparison, providing concrete answers to the question, "how much is enough?" Of the Greenland natives, Scott says,

> Their living accommodations were small, and they lived in a fairly isolated area with a harsh climate most of the year and it impressed me how happy they all

> were. They just seemed to smile all the time and there didn't seem to be any big problem. I've read this in other books about people who've been to the Arctic. There's this consistent observation that they seem to be a pretty easygoing people and they're happy and they don't yell at their kids and their kids do what they're supposed to, more or less, and they have some kind of sense of responsibility instilled from an early age, and that doesn't take away the ability to have a bit of fun, but it means that you don't do things that are irresponsible and endanger the community.

Here Scott elaborates on the many facets of the way of being that evolves out of wilderness experience, which includes an attitude of responsibility tempered by a healthy sense of humour, a talent for having fun balanced by an innate sensitivity to limits imposed by one's relationship to a community, humility in one's relationship to nature and to the land, the ability to take care of oneself without dependence on others, and happiness that is not dependent on a high material standard of living.

The wilderness experience that is essentially an experience of wonder, including the direct observation of the lifestyles of natives who live in what westerners call "wilderness", caused Scott to value these particular traits of character, and also to redefine wealth and success in terms of a "wilderness perspective", wherein watching the sun skirt the horizon from a mountaintop in Baffin Island is a immeasurable privilege, but having a career of high salary and prestige is not particularly important. Some interviewees, like Simon and John, see the *ability* to appreciate wilderness as a privilege that not all people share. It is with the same concern that Scott worries what might happen if nature was taken for granted, seen as boring. But wilderness adventurers have the ability to appreciate wilderness, and to see this opportunity as a privilege. They are less motivated by other forms of wealth. The result is a lifestyle of voluntary simplicity, where earning power is traded in for richer life experiences. Moments of "wonder" are cherished as the most valuable parts of life to be experienced and shared with others. Scott reiterates in writing how native cultures he encountered in Greenland came to symbolize this alternative to the modern western way of being.

> For now it will be enough to say that the greatest treasure I found on those Arctic islands was the sure knowledge that happiness has not much to do with how much one owns, that many of us in this society are pretty darned spoiled, and that each

> one of our days is likely to go much better for us and for our neighbours if we acknowledge that simple fact upon waking.

Keeping this in mind, here is what Scott says about the way he defines success:

> The quotation I like most about success which I kind of have had in the back of my mind for a long time now...is, "success is a journey, not a destination." As soon as I got that thought from somewhere...I kind of relaxed and said, "phew!" y'know, "wow, I don't actually have to achieve anything. I mean I can just define success as getting along in a good way, in whatever way I want." Success is a journey and as long as you're getting along in a good way that keeps you happy and healthy and you have good friends, then that's success.

John has a very similar attitude that he also sees tied directly to the wilderness experience, stressing that "life is a journey." Having learned this lesson of happiness, John finds that he is not motivated by other definitions of success, the illusions of dissatisfaction and incompleteness that drive capitalism. He describes the freedom he has discovered, realizing this, to follow an authentic path in life's journey.

> I think it's really hilarious that when the Europeans came and found, particularly the churches that came and found people living in this particular geographical area [they thought they] were just lazy. I mean all they did was hang around all day! And they just walked down and picked their oysters and picked their clams or whatever. "Now what an absolutely useless life!" Pardon me...! [*laugh*] They had a pretty darn good life! And this ethic that says we must always be out achieving something or working or producing, this puritan ethic...I wonder if that's really true. I have never agonized over whether I should work hard. I mean...I always believed in doing a good job of what I committed myself to.... My daughter's going to be very much like me. She's going to wander through life and just enjoy every day, and I love her for that. I think it's wonderful because I see so many people in her age group right now who are just agonizing over what they're going to do for the rest of their lives... She doesn't worry about it. She's having a good time. Now is that wrong? And yet her mother, who figured she should be a brain surgeon by the time she was fourteen is just in absolute grief over this.... And I say, "chill out, whatever unfolds...whatever she does with her life is what she does.... You have to let her live. Look at you. You're fifty-one years old now, you're a professional, you've got a wonderful career. You would by most measures in our industrial society be deemed as successful, both financially and intellectually. You have all the possessions you're supposed to have at age fifty-one, but you're one of the most miserable people I've ever met in my life." She is...! She's absolutely miserable. She feels empty and unfulfilled and all those other human misery things that happen when we have the ability to think about how we would like things to be, and I think "why would you want that for your

> daughter? [*laugh*] Do you want her to share in your misery...?" And yet her daughter is just happy and content and rolls with the punches, and I don't know what she'll do with her life, and I don't care. It'll be her journey.

With the insight from his wilderness experiences, he finds himself unconcerned about his daughter's career path, or lack of "career path" in the traditional sense. Alternatively, he favours a definition of success similar to Scott's "getting along in a good way," which means applying oneself to the challenges of the moment, but not presuming to plot out the distant future. "Life is a journey," he argues. People go through life "fighting all the way," John emphasizes, trying to achieve the social or professional goals that they believe will make them happy. But if achieved, these goals do not provide any real happiness. And when life's preoccupations are lost, as in retirement, or if the goals are not achieved, there is nothing to fall back on to provide a sense of self, lasting values, and contentedness. Furthermore, John argues, a meditation on nature teaches that there are "no guarantees in life"; it is specious to believe that life's destination can be controlled. Satisfaction must come from something other than the realization of our ideals. Wilderness teaches the feeling of satisfaction in the moment - intrinsic well-being. From that perspective, he laughs, "what the hell's to fight about?"

> Life's a journey! It's not a destination! *Man*! "Now when I'm fifty five years old here's what I'm going to be doing and here's what I have to do to get there." Well that's great. If you can guarantee you're going to be alive when you're fifty-five, and you can guarantee that everything you're going to do between now and then is going to work, then go for it. Who's got those kind of guarantees? Nobody. So they end up frustrated. I'll be fifty-six this year. I retired at fifty-one. I know *many* people in my age group who have retired and they have simply either died or just atrophied. They have literally atrophied because their career became who they are. I mean, that's so bizarre! Take the job away and they don't have any identity. They don't exist anymore. I can't imagine living that way!

The foundation of John's values can be found in his "peak experience" - standing on top of mountains. What he sees from his mountain perspective is that nature is the ultimate reality, and the opportunities it provides to experience challenge and natural beauty are as close as one can get to ultimate happiness. By failing to recognize this fundamental truth, individuals and society as a whole are pursuing diversions that result in misery on the

personal scale and eco-catastrophe on the planetary scale. The experience of nature is his prime source of pleasure, so his material demands are very simple.

> I have never been an acquisitor.... Boats and my bicycle are my luxury items, and I have never had anything larger than a fourteen and a half foot sailboat. All the rest have been rowboats and my kayak.... I don't collect a lot of things. I don't have a lot of toys. And I think that's a conscious choice. Maybe I'm just a simple person. Maybe I'm not really as bright as I think I am [*laugh*]. But I have never...found any need to look for anything more than that to make me very content.... So what I'm saying is things don't give me any pleasure. Places give me pleasure. And the only things I own are the things that allow me to get to those places. I have a very simple house and I have very simple furniture.

Like Alex, John's definition of "success" is having enough access to this experience that provides him with a sense of "balance."

Robin is, like Scott, inspired by experiences of other cultures that place less emphasis on consumptive individualism and instead stress community. This one of the ways that adventure opens the mind to alternative ways of living. "Spiritual" experiences in wilderness were times of unusual mental focus, clarity - the sensation of a "higher self." Observing the communities of non-westernized cultures is another type of "spiritual" experience perhaps, because it too suggests the hope of a better way of living, a better way of being in the world than the individualistic and technocratic modern way. In these ways adventure travel enables a critical view of culture from the outside, a sudden realization that "something's still not right." In this way Robin realizes what Alex means by a politically-powerful experience of "perspective" on culture. This perspective inspires a different way of living in much the way that mountaineering's perspective on his own character empowered Robin to change himself. Third world travel provided this perspective.

> I'd love to go back to Nepal....The people are really, really quite interesting there. They work together in communities, they seem to be very happy while there must be a fair amount of disease and death from simple overwork. They all work hard - even the children and the old people have work to do.... They have a seven day week. They work every day. Except for festivals, and they seem to have festivals a lot. There's a certain Buddhist slant to the area I was in and a lot of them chant in the evenings and dance and drink chang. But it's a kind of a society which seems to work, and at the time which I was there...I couldn't help but compare it

> to the life in Canada and how isolated we all are in our society as compared to how their communities fit together.

Robin expresses the common feeling that wilderness experience enhances self-reliance and personal responsibility while at the same time teaching the importance of community. He surmises that there must be some relationship between his value system, and his lifelong experiences of adventure in wilderness, which has influenced where he has sought success in his life.

> Certainly I think that I am not mainstream in my thinking. I think that wilderness has made me a conservationist, and whether it's had - I think that's probably the major factor.... I do think that it has affected my strong feeling of conservation of energy and of trying to conserve some part of our world - a large part of our world - in its natural state. And I think that it's also had a big effect on my personality, but that is so hard to evaluate.... It's taken me away from what you might call "the hard driving world of business" more. I'm trying to think back to when I was not doing much in wilderness, in the early years of our marriage when our kids were small and I was very much trying to get a professional career organized. I would say I've come a long way from that personality now.... I think by becoming more involved in the adventure life, in the wilderness life, in the wilderness, I'd say that I became less focussed on worldly problems - not worldly problems but on a traditional definition of success, and I started to evaluate my personal success in different ways. And I think that - I just thought of this - I think I've affected my children in the same way - one of them more than the other. I climb with my son quite a bit now.... I think that is a major change that it's had on my life.... It has had a major effect I'd say on me in making me a person who's more interested in conservation, and perhaps a person who's more interested in people, and community, than a person who is interested in specific success in specific lines of endeavour - business or whatever.

From the views he has expressed, one might easily anticipate Robin's vision for a better society - one which is patterned after a natural model.

> I think that as a society we have to cut our use of energy tremendously. I think that we have to become far less reliant on the car, which means probably less travel overall. We have to reinforce communities, geographically as well as in other ways that I described - professions, clubs etcetera. Get more value out of life without being such a blight on the surface of the earth. There's so many people...we need population control of course. But we in North America - I'm not sure what the latest figure is - use so many more resources than any other people in the world. Surely to God we can change that way of living and still be just as happy, and I think that it certainly ties into an appreciation of nature and the

> wilderness. As I said before, we have the Gowland Range right beside us, and yet we all want to travel to Vegas or California or somewhere - Florida - for our entertainment. So there's a beautiful place for anyone who wants to go.... There's all sorts of recreation available here, and we have wilderness more or less right on our doorstep.... So my view is that we have to begin to work extremely hard to keep those places that are natural, natural.... - if we do have increases in population we have to concentrate them in nodes, and those nodes have to become communities in themselves, and we have to start devising transportation systems...we've *got* to start thinking in terms of mass transit.... I live on the Saanich Peninsula. Well that whole peninsula is going to be houses before long, whereas it shouldn't be. There should be a node Sidney, maybe Brentwood Bay, Victoria, and there should be natural places in between, agriculture. We think nothing of importing vegetables from California and other places. We could grow them here just as easily. If we evaluated the cost of transportation properly, it would be just as economical to grow them locally. My future vision is that we could really do a lot as far as developing a more self-sufficient society here. Self-sufficient society, and one that would be equally pleasant if not more so.

The vision enlightened by wilderness is a cause for hope because it affirms that the most desirable future is also the most responsible future.

Conclusion

The experiences of wilderness travellers reveal that the experience of wholeness in wilderness is one of life's core values. A good life is one which retains the wilderness perspective, and is thus patterned in many ways after the wilderness experience. Everyday reality is approached with a similar openness and acceptance, while the vision of a larger reality which gives meaning and purpose to life is maintained to give a sense of priorities and to guide actions. There is an emphasis, particularly in the commitment to constant questioning and education, on experiencing and sharing this perspective of a "spiritual" reality, beyond the bounds of concepts, which is the basis for the wilderness adventurers' religious beliefs. Life is lived in a way that stays rooted in this essential inspiration, which is perceived to be the basis not only of a happiness independent of standard definitions of success, but also of an ecological, moral perspective. Contact with nature and ongoing wilderness experience remains central to this way of life.

The lesson from the wilderness adventurers' lives, summed up very simply, is "affirming the ultimate importance of what's felt to be ultimately important." The adventurers' lives were clearly inspired by the wilderness experience. Recognizing this, they allotted it the importance it deserves, allowing it to be self-justifying, without subordinating it to other concerns that would cause them to question its value. Being a wilderness adventurer means, quite simply, having adventures in wilderness again and again, and then going back for more; loving and celebrating the experience, and making life choices that affirm the value of what is experienced as ultimately valuable.

CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION: LITERATURE

Introduction

In Chapter 3, literature was reviewed that describes and explains the wilderness experience. Explicit conclusions about what to "do" about the wilderness experience were withheld until nearer the end of the thesis, where they could be presented here in the context of a "discussion." Chapter 5 now addresses the question or problem of this study more directly by discussing of how findings in the literature can be interpreted to suggest the wilderness experience's moral imperative for everyday life. This discussion also develops, through the literature, many of the principles suggested by wilderness adventurers in the interviews and discussed in the previous chapter.

In what follows, revisiting the "problem" of Modernity reveals a way of life that is over-rationalized, fragmented by an overemphasis on dualism and a neglect of non-dualistic experience and a holistic view of reality. Wilderness experience, on the other hand, is a suspension of the rational and an experience of non-dualism which includes, to name some traits of the experience, a feeling of total awareness, being fully alive, a heightened sense of reality, a sense of community, effortless and perfect action, synchronicity with other people and the land, altered time consciousness, and a sense of global understanding. This is an experience of value and meaning, in contrast to the disenchantment associated with Modern life. The wilderness experience prompts a return to value in everyday life, a deep questioning about what is important in life that is not recognized by Modern culture. The idea of wilderness in the literature inspires an ideal of life that is connected, meaningful, whole. There are common themes about what such a way of life might look like, which would incorporate non-dualistic experience into everyday life. Such a life would serve "ultimate importance." Definitions of "importance" can be grouped under the common theme of *wildness*, as representing that which is outside culture. Because the source of ultimate values appears to be necessarily distinct from cultural structure, it is questionable that a way of life could fully incorporate

the values of the wilderness experience, for the same reason that it is impossible for humans to inhabit the wilderness, or to preserve the perfect wilderness. The ultimate solution is a way of life in close relationship with wildness - what has been called a "wild culture" (Rothenberg, 1995). Such a culture would incorporate a balance between structure and antistructure, maintaining close affiliation with its margins. The ideal cultural form might be called "structural minimalism." What sustains such a culture is less structure than individual character - an attitude or "way of being" that sustains a preserving relationship with wildness in all aspects of life. The ultimate "moral" of the wilderness experience, then, is an attitude or way of being in everyday life. The ideal cultural form would be an outgrowth of this way of being, of this quality of relationship, which is life's primary priority, above social structure and moral law and defined ends. There is a role for wilderness in this vision, and for wilderness experience, along with other forms of ritual and religious practice, as a way of maintaining a proper orientation in life, or relationship to wildness.

Revisiting the Problem of Modernity

Modernity is the essential "problem" faced by the wilderness adventurer returning to civilization. It is characterized by "rationalization" - the increasing application of a dualistic worldview to all aspects of life (Mitchell, 1983). Rationality is not all bad, but the critics, and writers from the wilderness perspective, emphasize the negative effects of rational*ism* - the Modern preoccupation with rationality. Rationalism and dualism are synonymous. Negative effects of rationalism are presented here, before a "solution" is discussed. These negative effects are described by such various terms as "fragmentation" and "disenchantment"; however, the main effect of Modernity is a condition of disengagement, which implies the distanciation or alienation of consciousness from reality which includes nature, other humans, and also parts of the self. Modernity's other problems arise from this fundamental consequence of dualism. As Aldous Huxley observes, "Without [dualism] there can hardly be good literature. With it there can be no

good life" (1994:199).

Dualism is the worldview of scientism, of the thinking subject and the knowable object, the view against which the Romantics reacted . They rebelled in affirmation of all values lost by valuing the rational solely, above all other modes of knowing and being. Continuing the Romantic argument, LaChapelle (1988) analyzes rationalism in a wilderness context. The "rational research and planning mentality," rooted in Greek rationalism and Platonic idealism, produces Modern problems, illusions of "ideas and the ideal," a distinction between nature and spirit, and "perfectionism." In this view, the subject/object dualism necessary for rational thought is the ultimate reality. But this rationalism results in an attitude of disengagement. The world is perceived as fragmented, because rationality as a necessarily partial vision is a way of knowing that cannot accommodate wholeness. LaChapelle's analysis reveals the danger of rationalism to be that by devaluing all modes of knowing, we condemn ourselves to partiality.

Critics of Modernity are not criticizing rationality, but rather its destructive preeminence. LaChapelle, for example, observes that Taoism was a significant contributor to early science and technological innovation in China, because it encouraged an attitude of learning from nature. Unlike Modern science, it did not divorce fact from value. Criticism of Modernity seeks not an unscientific or irrational alternative, but rather a postmodern science which places rationalism in a larger context (Griffin, 1988a). "Postmodern" in this sense refers to a *constructive postmodernism*, which aims to replace the dualistic, "substance-based" worldview with a holistic, ecological, relational, or evolutionary paradigm that would reunify fact and value, science and religion (LaChapelle, 1988; Oelschlaeger, 1991). As Griffin explains, citing John B. Cobb,

> [constructive] postmodern thought generally is identified by an ecological or holistic perspective, which, among other attributes, eliminates mind-matter and subject-object dualism. A postmodernist is one "for whom the vision of the interconnectedness of all things has become the inclusive context in which virtually all things and relations - both theoretical and practical - are seen."(Griffin, 1988b:203)

This view is distinguished from *deconstructive postmodernism,* which is extreme

relativism, an anti-worldview, an ultimate Modernism (Griffin, 1988a).

The conscious part of the mind functions by drawing distinctions between individual "things," distinctions between self and world, between humanity and nature, subject and object. Standing apart from the world in this manner is useful, but it is dangerous as a way of being and of defining reality. Jung emphasized that the conscious mind and its contents is a very limited part of the human being and the world, and the danger of rationalism is a destructive "one-sidedness." He explains "that the conscious mind 'knows nothing beyond the opposites and, as a result, has no knowledge of the thing that unites them'" (LaChapelle, 1988:77-78). Jung thus perceived consciousness as a limitation that inhibited full Self-realization. Jeffers' view of humanity as something to "break out of" can be thus interpreted, if we see "humanity" that part of the mind that suppresses our full being. D.H. Lawrence writes, "One has to face the whole of one's conscious self, and smash that" (LaChapelle, 1988:263). LaChapelle concludes, "Remember, Gregory Bateson wrote that the rational part of the mind, alone 'is necessarily pathogenic and destructive of life'" (83).

An alternative model is a traditional way of life that makes living in engagement with the world the prevailing way of being, and the rational mode extraordinary, a tool used for performing specific actions.

> When such actions are over, those taking part must undergo specific rituals to get them out of that "dangerous" state of mind and back into the "flow" of the "sacred" ongoing, daily life within their own place. In our modern industrial growth society, the exact opposite situation takes place.... Small children are wrenched forcibly out of their brief experience of this flow early on.... Thus children become the victims of conscious willing. While trapped in this state they can never experience "the sacred." (LaChapelle, 1988:127)

Ritual in traditional societies had the effect of reconciling dualistic opposites and expressing the fullness of being which included the rational mind as only a small part. As LaChapelle explains, Modernism is the acceptance of this analytical state of mind as the *only* valid way of perceiving reality. Rationalization - the application of dualism through our actions, our rational social planning, our architecture and institutions - transforms our day to day reality, our mental and physical environments, into rational environments that

do not permit anything but rationality. No longer a mode of consciousness that we shift in and out of as the need arises, rationality is the prevailing condition of our lives.

The problem of Modernity is that what began as a usefully fragmented way of thinking is now a perpetually fragmented way of being, living, and perceiving. As Greenway (1995b) explains, "distinctions become disjunctions" as dualism becomes increasingly entrenched. Berry explains this fundamental dilemma of our culture:

> The modern urban-industrial society is based on a series of radical disconnections between body and soul, husband and wife, marriage and community, community and the earth....Together, these disconnections add up to a condition of critical ill health, which we suffer in common - not just with each other, but with all other creatures. Our economy is based upon this disease. Its aim is to separate us as far as possible from the sources of life (material, social, and spiritual), to put these sources under the control of corporations and specialized professionals, and to sell them to us at the highest profit. It fragments the Creation and sets the fragments into conflict with one another. For the relief of the suffering that comes of this fragmentation and conflict, our economy proposes, not health, but vast "cures" that further centralize power and increase profits: wars, wars on crime, wars on poverty, national schemes of medical aid, insurance, immunization, further industrial and economic "growth," etc.... (1977:138)

As rationalization proceeds, it becomes increasingly difficult to experience anything other than this fragmentation, which is reinforced by bureaucracy, and by a capitalistic economy that depends on the process of commodification to turn a universe into a myriad of discrete commodities. Our misinterpretation of reality as dualistic is reinforced by our artificial environments that reflect these misinterpretations back to us.

By this process the duality of things - the distinction between spirit and nature, divinity and humanity, humanity and nature - is interpreted as truth, as reality. Following Plato, all things are seen as having an absolute and unchanging essence (LaChapelle, 1988). Along with rational consciousness comes self-consciousness. The self is conceived as being one such essence, distinct from other selves and from the world. As Laing (1969) and Goffman (Andrews, 1996) observe, this perception of reality, combined with the tendency of the rational mindset to *control,* results in "self-distanciation." The self is estranged from itself. As the interaction of self with world comes under the control of rational consciousness, the spontaneous involvement of the total being with the world

becomes limited by the conscious mind's definition of what the self must be, and what the world is. The problem of Modernity can be summed up as this *mediation of experience by rationality* - the pollution of consciousness by the distortions of rationalism, such that non-dualistic reality is not perceived, experienced, or understood. The metaphor of being "cast out of the Garden" and alienated from spiritual being is apt for this experience of becoming victim to our own illusions. The outcome is something like hell. Severing our relationship with the world, with God, with ourselves, with nature and with other people, our "disengagement" or "disinvolvement" with the world, is the essential outcome of dualistic fragmentation. The following are five main consequences of this problem as they are described by Modernity's critics such as Berry, Csikszentmihalyi, LaChapelle, Oelschlaeger, and Orr, who represent the classical leisure and/or deep ecological perspective: *the loss of a vision of wholeness; lack of meaning and purpose; a sense of powerlessness, imprisonment, and inadequacy; perpetual dissatisfaction and displacement in time and space; and, a tendency towards self-destruction.* The main problem of Modernity is a disengaged consciousness that results in a loss of a vision of wholeness. Other Modern problems are a result of this fundamental loss, culminating in self-destruction.

The loss of a vision of wholeness is the phenomenon of the exclusion of non-dualistic reality from our experience that I have already mentioned, of becoming victims to our own illusions, our own limited dualistic perception of reality. Mitchell (1983), for example, identifies "linguistic restrictions on the expression of leisure states" as one of the consequences of rationalization. Rationalized language becomes "a rational linguistic trap" that de-emphasizes the flow experience in favour of extrinsically motivated experiences and objective states. Subjectivity, wonder, spiritual experience are all devalued in a rationalized social structure and removed from common language. Rationalized "discursive language" becomes common whereas the "presentational" language of poets is marginalised. The dominance of discursive language is a barrier to the discovery of non-dualistic reality in verbal communication, the expression and sharing of alternative realities.

Advertising and the popular media are also responsible for perpetuating dualism, by communicating a fragmented, commodified vision of reality and a misrepresentation of the purpose of human life. Thoreau is not the only wilderness writer to lament the distorting and corrupting perspective of the "news." Henderson (1995) also observes how the media has the effect of turning attention away what is ultimately important, in the way that it interprets the wilderness adventure experience as "an 'against nature' phenomenon."

The rational planning of human environments makes the experience of non-dualism less accessible through places (Angell, 1996). Even home environments evolve through rationalization from representing wholeness to reinforcing fragmentation. Deep ecologist Sigmund Kvaloy provides the example of his son's bedroom, as a "'bed and media chamber,' where every item in the room is expressive of the total standardization and the commercialization of the world" (in Reed and Rothenberg, 1993:137).

In these ways the rationalized society becomes self-perpetuating. Capitalism is insidious because its success depends upon limiting the consumer's ability to arrive at satisfaction. Porteous (1996) observes that it is in capitalism's best interest for people to remain frustrated at the lower levels of Maslow's hierarchy, focussed on the endless process of getting and doing "enough." He points out that evolution beyond crass consumerism towards the actualization of wholeness would be an economic disaster.

In industrial societies where everyday life is rationalized, the remaining source of a vision of wholeness is in leisure activity, where dualism can be transcended through creative play outside the strictures of rationalism. Leisure serves the revitalizing and transformative role that ritual served in pre-industrial societies (Andrews, 1996;Turner, 1974). But the process of rationalization works to make the realization of wholeness inaccessible in leisure as everywhere else (Mitchell, 1983). Non-dualistic experiences arise from activities that are pursued for their own sake (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). Rationalization, however, encourages a preoccupation with ends, and a tendency to choose leisure activities for extrinsic reasons. "Leisure pursuits offering intrinsic satisfaction in existing conditions are shunned in favour of utopian striving for a

promised world offering greater improvements in external conditions" (Mitchell, 1983:212). Citing Lasch, Mitchell explains that games which are rationalized tend to degenerate into trivial recreation and crude sensationalism, like video games and spectator sports. Wilderness adventure that takes on the media's competitive "against nature" emphasis also becomes less likely to promote experiences of Self-realization (Henderson, 1995).

Kvaloy (Reed and Rothenberg, 1993) describes rationalized leisure activities as "pseudocomplexity," because they replace the complex activity of the fully engaged human body/mind with compensatory amusements mediated by human rationality. Pseudocomplexity is quintessentially "bad leisure." What happens to the playful creativity of natural leisure when it is rationally processed and subsumed under the control of the dominant structure

> is the human invention of various arrangements and activities designed to keep people occupied in a diverse manner, through mass media, hobbies, tourism, schools, and so on, but on the kind of shallow level that is exemplified by the amusement park - without offering training or development that equips them better for creative interaction with nature or with human society. Environmental PCX [pseudocomplexity] gives a "safety-valve" outlet for the inner urge toward complex development that any human is born with; it offers, however, only the sort of interaction that leaves the personality unchanged after the event. (Kvaloy, In Reed and Rothenberg, 1993:123-124)

"PCX" is analogous to any activities, like television viewing, modern comfort tourism, and forms of addiction, that are merely stimulating but not flow-producing, and thus not providing personal growth, which is defined by Csikszentmihalyi (1990) as an increase in individual *complexity*. For PCX, Kvaloy also uses the terms "Amusement Park Diversity" or "Disneyland Effect."

The types of high-tech leisure that are promoted as desirable by Modern civilization are at once more energy intensive, less satisfying, and less conducive to flow, than more traditional activities:

> When people were pursuing leisure activities that were expensive in terms of the outside resources required - activities that demanded expensive equipment, or electricity, or other forms of energy measured in BTUs, such as power boating,

> driving, or watching television - they were significantly *less* happy than when involved in inexpensive leisure. People were happiest when they were just talking to one another, when they gardened, knitted, or were involved in a hobby; all of these activities require few material resources, but they demand a relatively high investment of psychic energy. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990:99)

Activities that are good for people, promoting self-realization and a vision of wholeness, engage people in the world, *not* in the economic system. Bad leisure, like bad food, is promoted *by* the system precisely because it is good *for* the system, not for people. This promotional message falls into the category of social controls from which the individual must claim freedom, if he/she is going to realize wholeness in flow, and claim an independent existence (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Otherwise, the human being becomes a consumer and a wage slave to bad economics.

The rationalization of leisure is the destruction of leisure. Leisure, as freedom, is incompatible with rationalization. Freedom cannot be rationalized. The rationalization of leisure is also the destruction of ritual. Berry (1977) and LaChapelle (1988) explain that traditionally, ritual provided a vision of unity, harmony, wholeness, reconciling conflicts and paradoxes, partiality and disunity. It provided a way out of the contradictions of dualism, the "curative power of perception" of humanity's *place* within Creation. Furthermore, Berry continues, "by understanding accurately his proper place in Creation, a man [sic] may be made whole" (1977:98). A vision of wholeness is the same as a "sense of place," because it is a vision in which the separation of humanity and environment has been transcended.

> Until modern times, we focused a great deal of the best of our thoughts upon such rituals of return to the human condition. Seeking enlightenment or the Promised Land or the way home, a man would go or be forced to go into the wilderness, measure himself against the Creation, recognize finally his true place within it, and thus be saved both from pride and from despair.... Returning from the wilderness, he becomes a restorer of order, a preserver. (1977:99)

The experience of wholeness in ritual is called *communitas* (Turner, 1969). Communitas is experienced in the state of "liminality" "betwixt and between" the categories of socially structured reality. In Modern society, the liminality that was once experienced in ritual is experienced in leisure. If leisure becomes rationalized to reflect

the social structure, however, it is no longer free, creative, and playful "antistructure." It is no longer "liminoid," and communitas cannot be experienced. The rationalization of leisure and the loss of a vision of wholeness is really the destruction of ritual (Turner, 1969). The rationalization of ritual is the destruction of religion.

The relationship of leisure and religion has been discussed in Chapter 3. The rationalization of leisure mirrors the process by which religion ossifies by the self-perpetuating tendency of orthodoxy. The mystic who must renounce the Church to experience the vitality of living religion is like the player who must leave the arena of competitive sport to recapture the soul of the game. The dangers of "rationalizing" religion will be discussed further in a subsequent section.

The illusions of rationalism are self-perpetuating, resulting in the loss of the vision of wholeness. A consequence of losing the vision of wholeness is a sense of meaninglessness.

Lack of meaning and purpose corresponds to the absence of any holistic understanding of the world, and results in what has been termed *disenchantment*, alienation and anomie, boredom, anxiety, existential angst or dread (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Mitchell, 1983). Mitchell explains that disenchantment is "a fundamental malaise" resulting from a lack of purpose - a lack of "a sense of belonging to a unified, animated, spiritually encompassing world" (212).

Despair resulting from meaninglessness arises from the inability to perceive order in the world. Disorder and chaos ironically complement rationalism's efforts to impose an ideal human order on the world. The division of labour in work, for example, separates the effort of work from meaningful product. Work ceases to be a creative endeavour and instead serves predetermined ends (Mitchell, 1983). Berry (1977) explains that "Creation is one; it is a uni-verse, a whole, the parts of which are all 'turned into one'" (46), but the attempt to control nature and transform it to fit a human definition of Paradise requires the fragmentation of the whole into component parts understood only by specialists. A general sense of order is lost and the specialist is caught battling the chaos of a reality which seems increasingly unruly.

> This attempt at total control is an invitation to disorder. And the rule seems to be that the more rigid and exclusive is the specialist's boundary, and the stricter the control within it, the more disorder ranges around it. (Berry, 1977:71)

Whereas Turner's studies among others reveal that the "betwixt and between" state of leisure or ritual invokes a holistic understanding or "global view of one's place in the cosmos," Mitchell (1983) explains that the increased complication of rationalized society means that the individual lacks *understanding* of the world in which he/she lives. A distinction between *complexity* and *complication*, important to deep ecology, is relevant here. *Complexity* is the "dynamic, irreversible, self-steering, goal-directed, conflict-fertilized manifoldness of nature"; *complication* is the "static, reversible, externally steered, standardizing structure-intricacy of the machine" (Kvaloy, in Reed and Rothenberg,122-123). A rationalized society, complicated as in the machine metaphor, becomes increasingly to hostile to healthy, complex humanity. The human body/mind organism *is* complex, and capable of understanding and even identifying with complexity intuitively, on a "common sense" level, within the context of an abiding sense of *mystery*. Complication, however, replaces mystery and holistic understanding with the assumption that all things can be understood in principle (Mitchell, 1988). The average Modern person for example can know very little about the origins of his/her food or heat or electrical power, or the increasingly complicated computer and telecommunications technology she/he uses daily. Information about any of these things is available somewhere, somehow, sometime, theoretically, but a sense of total, immediate understanding remains elusive to rational consciousness. "Existence is no longer encountered holistically as a unified spiritual experience, a world of shared definitions and clear consequences" (Mitchell, 1983:213). Porteous explains that rationalization is a "fetish of control" by which "the control of people and production in factories and factory-like offices and schools, prevents most people in the industrialized world from achieving transcendental social or personal meaning in their work" (1993:180).

Lack of meaning also results from disengagement from reality. Meaning arises from the perception of the relationship between things, and the relationship of the self to

those things. More specifically, meaning arises from the self's involvement in the world. Disengagement prevents the perception of meaning, while total involvement maximizes the perception of meaning. The term "flow" means a condition of total involvement; flow is the source of meaning (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Flow is order in consciousness, whereas disorder in consciousness - psychic entropy - is the non-flow situation of alienation or anomie - boredom or anxiety, where the individual has no perception of control over experience. The loss of a vision of wholeness results in meaninglessness, because it promotes disorder in consciousness, and inhibits flow.

A sense of powerlessness, imprisonment and inadequacy results from extreme dualism. There is no freedom, no sense of control, no experience of challenge or growth. Imprisonment is the best metaphor to use because the relationship of non-dualistic consciousness to freedom is evident if one imagines the rational, disengaged consciousness as existing in a prison, prevented by its detachment from spontaneous *involvement* with the larger world. This inability to become involved would also mean having a lack of any sense of control over the outside world, and an inability to demonstrate competence. The specialization of knowledge disempowers the individual from acting from the holistic intuitive or common sense perspective.

The experience of powerlessness can also be explained by flow theory, by recalling that flow is the realization of freedom, the experience of total involvement, which results in a sense of control (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, 1988, 1990; Mitchell, 1983). Mitchell (1983) identifies the twin forms of dissatisfaction in Modern life as *alienation* and *anomie*. Alienation is a sense of boredom or extreme certainty while anomie is a sense of anxiety or extreme uncertainty, but both are the opposites of flow resulting from feeling a lack of the ability to act meaningfully within the world, to control one's destiny. Flow depends on perceiving opportunities to act within a unified system, which means that the world-in-consciousness must be *understood* in an immediate, holistic way that empowers spontaneous action. The perception of incompleteness and disorder resulting from extreme dualism thus makes it difficult to experience the order in consciousness that is flow. The individual cannot perceive a role for him or herself in the world. The

individual's skills are either overwhelmed or under-utilized. Flow is the balance of challenge with individual ability, and is the source of a sense of *competence*. Leisure is by definition a condition of *freedom*, valuable because it provides the individual with an opportunity to seek this balance for challenge and creative self-expression, to experience intrinsically rewarding activity, enjoyment, "fun," and to demonstrate competence.

> Competence grows from the process of recognizing one's abilities and applying them meaningfully and completely. Competence means assessing oneself as qualified, capable, fit, sufficient, adequate. Competence emerges when a person's talent, skills, and resources find useful application in meeting a commensurate challenge, problem, or difficulty. (Mitchell, 1983:180)

A mode of consciousness that stresses detachment, and a rationalized world which reinforces the reality of this detachment, stifles a sense of power and control in the same way that it eliminates meaning by replacing an intuitively understandable complexity with rationalized complication. Rationalization is separation, well-represented by the division of labour in work, which replaces complex, multi-task, small-scale work with large-scale, complicated, production in which "jobs" are simplified, meaningless, and unchallenging. Leisure is the last stronghold of *freedom*, but the rationalization of work is accompanied by the rationalization of leisure (Berry, 1977; Mitchell, 1983). As leisure ceases to be leisure in the classical sense, freedom is lost in the last domain where freedom can be experienced.

Perpetual dissatisfaction and displacement in time and space is an additional consequence of accepting rational disengagement as a metaphor for reality. The loss of a vision of wholeness results in what Berry (1977) calls the "displacement of the Modern mind." We have posited ourselves as distinct from the whole of reality. Accepting this distinction as truth has rendered us homeless in nature, as many nature writers have observed (Berry, 1977; LaChapelle, 1988; Oelschlaeger, 1991). We have also accepted as true the vision of a reality which is fragmented and incomplete. This results in a Modern condition of being perpetually other than where, when, and what we wish ultimately to be. This is not just the Modern condition, so much as the *human condition*. What the literature suggests, however, is that Modernity threatens to make the horrors of

the human condition inescapable, by providing no way for us to come to terms with it. Religion is a coming to terms with the human condition of incompleteness that seems to follow from the development of rational awareness (James, 1985). Modernism as the reification of fragmentation is the antithesis of religion, incorporating no antidote to dissatisfaction.

The dissatisfying state of perpetual incompleteness is what Thoreau termed the common person's lot of "quiet desperation," and likely what the Buddha meant by "suffering" (Smith, 1991). Mitchell (1983), LaChapelle (1988), Berry (1977) and others explain how happiness is postponed indefinitely when rationalism prevents us from perceiving wholeness. Enjoyment is postponed in favour of future ends which will never be reached. Understanding is postponed until further knowledge can be acquired, though knowledge produces more questions than answers. And we are perpetually diseased because we are unable to perceive our health.

This "quiet desperation" is a consequence of the myth of progress which is, as Oelschlaeger (1991) explains in detail, a consequence of Modernism. Linear time itself is a consequence of the Modern worldview. Berry (1977) explains that Modernism's machine metaphor replaced the "Wheel of Life" with the "highway of progress" and an obsession with the future. The prehistoric experience and the wilderness experience have in common a cyclical or non-linear conception of time (Henderson, 1995; LaChapelle, 1988; Oelschlaeger, 1991). Progress has no meaning in this non-dualistic conception of time. There is no justification for postponement and no source of desperation.

In other terms, dissatisfaction as a result of the loss of the vision of wholeness, is a loss of the sense of the sacred. Citing Weber, Mitchell explains the Modern dilemma:

> The Biblical Abraham lived in a time of great mystery, powerful magic, and encompassing myth. He died an old man, satiated with life, having seen and done all there was to experience. In today's rationalized world, men and women simply wear out, frustrated in their inability to achieve through technological means an elusive goal they cannot comprehend. (1983:214)

The vision of wholeness provides meaning in life and a sense of "enough," releasing the individual from an otherwise ceaseless cycle of getting and doing. Mountaineering has

this effect, but most people fail to discover this sense of the sacred in Modern life.

> Others in rationalized society respond to their confining circumstances with greater emphasis on the tasks at hand in the hope that increased effort will somehow produce greater and more abundant satisfactions than the paltry ones now available. That faith is ill-founded. (Mitchell, 1983:212)

The experience of immediate and total satisfaction dispels the illusion that "more is better." Beyond basic life necessities, developing a sense of "enough" material wealth depends upon this perception of wholeness. Satisfaction is unachievable as long perception is fragmented by dualism. Beyond a basic level, increasing standard of living does not produce significant increases in happiness, and can even result in increased fear of loss. Durning (1995) cites research confirming that productivity increases mean that the average U.S. worker could work half-time and live at 1948 standards, but instead chooses to work the same hours and earn twice the money, without appreciable increases in life satisfaction. Behind addiction is the same flawed perception (LaChapelle, 1988).

The state of "quiet desperation" is expressed by deep ecologist Drengson (1996) as the "historical ego," in contrast to the "ecological Self." The historical ego also implies a self trapped in linear time; it is plagued by a sense of incompleteness, lost time, limitation, constraint, defensiveness, and "fear of the other." This dualism is a perception oriented towards problems, perceiving conflict where non-dualism perceives harmony.

A tendency towards self-destruction is the ultimate outcome of disengagement and the loss of a vision of wholeness. A perception oriented towards problems tends to perpetuate problems. It produces the desire to change and control the world by the same means that it destroys the perception of any moral limits to this change. In this way, the loss of the vision of wholeness is a recipe for destruction comprised of simultaneous arrogance and dissatisfaction - what Berry (1977) terms the "pride and despair" that result from humanity's loss of a *sense of place* within Creation.

Despair is the first problem. The loss of a sense of place, or wholeness, is a loss of perspective on the human condition, which is a condition of being related to all of reality while at the same time having the perception of being separate. The lack of perspective results in despair in the same way that it results in dissatisfaction - by making

impossible the attainment of completeness. The individual who cannot escape from dualism cannot escape from incompleteness. If no escape is perceived, life's situation appears hopeless. The lack of a vision of wholeness makes us unable to live with ourselves. While feeling powerless, we have monumental expectations, because we are at the end of a history of forgetting who and where we are. We have become "less and less capable of seeing ourselves as small within Creation" (Berry, 1977:100). What would save us from the gravity of our situation would be the realization that "at best we are a spindly legged, upstart, disruptive species whose intellect exceeds its wisdom, located on a small planet attached to an insignificant star in a backwater galaxy" (Orr, 1992:139). We should resolve to *be* just that. But when rationalization has removed the power of leisure, religion, or ritual to liberate us from our own illusions and provide salvation by restoring "perspective," suicide is a likely alternative (Berry, 1977). The wilderness experience, as a ritual process, is a source of hope (Andrews, 1996). Only the ritual death and rebirth that occurs in these "liminoid" activities can heal us from the "unhuman conditions of godly pride and fiendish despair" (Berry, 1977:99).

> The fatal sickness is despair, a wound that cannot be healed because it is encapsulated by loneliness, surrounded by speechlessness. Past the scale of the human, our works do not liberate us. They confine us. They cut off access to the wilderness of Creation where we must go to be reborn - to receive the awareness, at once humbling and exhilarating, grievous and joyful, that we are a part of Creation, one with all that we live from and that, in turn, lives from us. They destroy the communal rites of passage that turn us toward the wilderness and bring us home again. (1977:104)

Arrogance is the other problem. If we do not kill ourselves outright as a result of despair, we survive by the arrogance of claiming that we are right, and can save the world by taking control and changing it to fit our ideals. If we rely in this manner on our ideals to sustain us, they will also destroy us. Berry (1977) observes that with no sense of place in Creation, we see our role as that of gods overcoming our homelessness by creating an earthly Paradise. The belief that such a goal is possible is the "deadly illusion" of perfectionism (LaChapelle, 1988). In this endeavour we are already doomed because our ideals are only the memory of an experience of wholeness that we can never recapture as

long as we are convinced of the necessity of trying. Perfection can never be achieved. The desire that motivates change means that success will forever elude us, because this motivation is a problem-perception, an endless dissatisfaction and, as Shepard observes, a project born of pathos (Shepard, 1995:37):

> The West is a vast testimony to childhood botched to serve its own purposes, where history, masquerading as myth, authorizes men of action to alter the world to match their regressive moods of omnipotence and insecurity.

We will destroy ourselves by arrogance because the limitlessness of our dissatisfaction is also the limitlessness of our morality. Berry (1977) explains that Modern society is a fragmented society, "divided against itself," where consumer and producer are separated, home and work are separated, action and consequence are separated, so there is an absence of moral responsibility. Morality depends upon a foundation of intact connections (Berry, 1977; Orr, 1992). Like meaning, it is a function of relationship. It is based upon an assumption about consequences in a system of relationships. Social and economic ties are the basis for an ethical way of being. Orr (1992) makes the point that "connectedness" is inherent in the meaning of the Greek root words for both ecology and religion - *oikos* and *religio*. Disconnection means a lack of context, a lack of the basis for morality. The fragmentation of wholeness, the loss of a sense of "place," means a loss of moral responsibility.

Modern people are bioregionally "placeless," Orr (1992) argues. Rather than "inhabitants," who "dwell" in their places, we have become "residents,"having no meaningful connection to where we live.

> The resident is a temporary and rootless occupant who mostly needs to know where the banks and stores are in order to plug in.... The sum total of violence wrought by people who do not know who they are because they do now know where they are is the global environmental crisis. To reside is to live as a transient and as a stranger to one's place, and inevitably to some part of the self. The inhabitant and place mutually shape each other. Residents, shaped by outside forces, become merely "consumers".... Good inhabitance is an art requiring detailed knowledge of a place, the capacity for observation, and a sense of care and rootedness.... Historically, inhabitants are less likely to vandalize their's or others' place. They also tend to make good neighbors and honest citizens. They are, in short, the bedrock of the stable community and neighborhood that

> Mumford, Dewey, and Jefferson regarded as the essential ingredient of democracy.... the lack of a sense of place, our "cult of homelessness," is endemic, and its price is the destruction of the small community and the resulting social and ecological degeneracy. (102, 130-131)

The ecological crisis is a moral crisis which is the result of placeless global culture.

Berry expands the concept of "place" as it relates to morality. Being "in place" includes not only a dwelling in habitat, but also having a sense of the human place within "Creation." The human place within "Creation" is an important determiner of morality, by providing a cause for moral restraint. "A live and adequate morality is an accurate perception of the order of things, and humanity's place in it" (Berry,1970:165). An inability to perceive an ordered unity, a wholeness in the world, means an inability to be moral. In flow experiences - the ultimate experience of unity - there is *no* social deviance because there is a union of self and group goals (Mitchell, 1983). An individual behaves morally within a system with which he/she is fully engaged; that is, in which he/she has a role or *sense of place*. Berry implies that an environmental morality cannot be complete unless there is a sense of humanity's relationship to all of nature. Originally, Berry claims, humans saw their place as above animals and below the divine. The understanding of this *human condition* gave rise to defined limits regarding our powers: "...only evil could be the result of the transgression of these limits: one could not escape the human condition except sinfully, by pride or by degradation" (1977:55). Loss of a sense of place is the source of both arrogance and immorality. Modernity's loss of a sense of place within Creation has resulted in a redefinition of human place, to one of "absolute sovereignty," in charge of ourselves and the universe.

In the effort to recreate paradise, Modern humans operate within a definition of nature that is purely utilitarian.

> By means of the machine metaphor we have eliminated any fear or awe or reverence or humility or delight or joy that might have restrained us in our use of the world. (Berry, 1977:56)

Generally speaking, dualism is incompatible with morality because it stresses the autonomy of discrete parts of reality, and promotes a view of disconnection.

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) and Orr both cite Alastair MacIntyre's moral philosophy, agreeing that morality and Modernity are incompatible.

> In MacIntyre's view, it is not possible to be both modern and moral since "the fully autonomous self knows no morality other than the expression of its own desires and principles." (Orr, 1993:182).

Without a sense of connection there is no moral restraint to limit human arrogance. Furthermore, dualism's problem of perpetual satisfaction prevents any immediate state of affairs, what Lopez (1986) calls the "given reality," from being valued in itself, aside from its instrumental value in the project of striving to get elsewhere, into the Better Future with which the Modern mind is obsessed (Berry, 1977). This is the Modern paradox in which "nothing is sacred," because nothing that exists has value unless it can be transformed into something "better." *Everything* is necessarily devalued in Modernity, and what is devalued is up for exploitation. Modern culture has been characterized for this reason as a culture of exploitation, as opposed to what Berry calls a culture of "nurture" (Berry, 1977; LaChapelle, 1988). The absurdity of Modernism is that humanity "is everywhere eagerly conniving in the destruction of what it says, and thinks, it wants to preserve" (Berry, 1977:75). For example, physical health has been destroyed by devaluing work in favour of an ideal of idleness, and devaluing the body in favour of an ideal of spiritual transcendence. Our relationship to the body is a metaphor of our relationship to all of nature.

> And it is clear to anyone who looks carefully at any crowd that we are wasting our bodies exactly as we are wasting our land. Our bodies are fat, weak, joyless, sickly, ugly, the virtual prey of the manufacturers of medicine and cosmetics. Our bodies have become marginal; they are growing useless like our "marginal" land because we have less and less use for them. (1977:108)

Our lives come to represent the fragmentation of our perception. We face the consequences of our mind's denial of our bodies and the land.

If we do not destroy ourselves directly, our addictions will kill us. The basis for limitless consumerism and addiction has already been discussed. Exploitation replaces "statesmanship and craftsmanship" with "salesmanship" - "the craft of persuading people to buy what they do not need, and do not want, for more than it is worth" (Berry,

1977:11). LaChapelle (1988) contends that Modern civilization has progressed by peddling addictions to turn individuals and cultures from a position of sustainable independence to to consumer slavery. Advertising aims to transform a condition of satisfaction to a condition of perpetual dissatisfaction, by transforming the perception of wholeness into the perception of dualism and incompleteness. If our addictions do not kill us directly, our insatiable consumer appetites will destroy the planet (Durning, 1995).

The doomsday scenario of extreme dualism suggests that if we do not kill ourselves in the pursuit of goodness, we will kill ourselves in the eradication of evil. Dualism dooms us to perceive division and conflict, to place blame and to seek cures. The absence of the wholeness we crave is a fault in ourselves, or the world, or some other person or group of people. Our dissatisfaction is transferred into violence against ourselves, against other people, or against nature, as we seek to restore harmony by eliminating the offending elements. To blame ourselves is to despair, and contemplate suicide. If in our rationalism we do not blame ourselves, and destroy ourselves, we will blame something in our world, and destroy ourselves by destroying our world. "Fear of the other" can drive the historical ego into conflict, as it perceives itself in competition, rather than cooperation (Drengson, 1996). Bateson explains that the idea of man-apart-from-nature created by a God-apart-from-nature results in a view of man-against-nature, and of nature as mindless substance unworthy of ethical consideration. The Modern project is formulated in these terms, dominated by the ideas of "us *against* the environment," "us *against* other men," the importance of the individual, the belief in unilateral control, economic determinism, and technology. However, Bateson declares, the truth is "The creature that wins against its environment destroys itself" (LaChapelle, 1988:45).

Finally, if we do not destroy ourselves in any other way, the extremely dualistic species would be doomed by its failure to evolve. Intellectual pride has nothing to learn from the world. It forgets that the world and human life was not originally a human idea, and that the source of wisdom is not ultimately the human mind. If human order could sever itself completely from natural chaos, it would end. "When we get the entire world

genetically engineered what will be left to teach us humans?" (LaChapelle, 1988:35).

Deep Questioning: What is Important in Life?

Identifying the problem of Modernity as a lack of wholeness, or health, is the result of *deep questioning*. Deep questioning is inspired by the experience of wholeness, which illuminates the absurdity of the Modern life as a life that has lost the vision that everything is all right, or that everything has the potential to be all right if only everyone would stop trying to make it better. By restoring this vision, the wilderness experience presents us with a "problem," motivating research to find out "what's wrong" (Henderson, 1995; Greenway, 1995a,b). This is the same problem faced by the Romantics - a dominant reality that contradicted their deepest values (Evernden, 1993). Henderson describes this lifelong motivation for doing wilderness research:

> Personally, I have been that wide-eyed camper/student/traveller who cannot express himself...lost in a vague formless swell of well-being, unable to do or say much more than, "what a great trip!" Over time, this inability to express oneself produces a "chip on the shoulder" attitude, an annoyance that begs some satisfying leap out of the unknown.... That is how I had so often felt in growing up a keen outdoor traveller and guide. My camping trips were thought of as mere leisure distraction.... But I knew them to be...ways of being, knowing/valuing, and learning that were both a loss of conditioning, an un-learning from my urban and schooling context, and a learning of something new and essential in the way that nature works on the human psyche....(1995:170)

A common theme among wilderness writers is the deep questioning of fundamental values: "Who or what is humankind? Nature? and how are they related? What is the good life? the good economy? the good government? the good society?" (Oelschlaeger, 1991:134). The implication is that such deep questioning is, and should be, the outcome of wilderness experience.

> Certainly it is rare to hear people talk of outdoor travel as an education of revelation for an emerging critical redesign of basic beliefs via the asking of such fundamental questions as, "what is our place in the universe?", "who might we become?", and "how do we find the will to re-enchant and re-enmesh ourselves with the earth?" (Henderson, 1995:175)

The deep questioning following the experience of wholeness is what holds the promise for lasting change (Greenway, 1995a). LaChapelle (1988) notes this potential in the observation that her "Taoist autumn equinox celebration" has "ruined more people's lives" than anything else she has done.

> I warn them by saying you probably will be sorry because it will "ruin your life." And it usually does - meaning they can no longer take the Industrial Growth Society seriously. And that means quitting the usual, normal job and other traumatic events. Of course, once all this happens, none of them would ever go back to being half dead. (LaChapelle, 1988:204)

Once the experience of "anti-structure" takes the wilderness traveller beyond taking-for-granted the status quo, it becomes imperative to question the prevailing order of things and seek change.

Deep questioning becomes a fundamental value unto itself, basic not just to wilderness experience, but to any religious worldview.

> Man need only divert his attention from searching for the solution to external questions and pose the one, true inner question of how he should lead his life, and all the external questions will be resolved in the best possible way.... Salvation does not lie in the rituals and professions of faith, but in a lucid understanding of the meaning of one's life. (Tolstoy, 1987:214,220)

Deep questioning, involving self-questioning, is the first moral imperative of the wilderness experience. The first step is to begin looking, in the face of valueless Modernism and the ultramodern relativism of deconstructive "postmodernism," for something to stand *for*, in an affirmation of freedom, rather than *against*. What, then, does the wilderness experience *mean*? What values does it represent, if wilderness is all that we can identify with value? What does it mean for how we should act? Henderson (1995) calls this questioning a search for "what is worth doing." The founding moral imperative of an alternative worldview is to *search* for value in defiance of a worldview that denies value, by asking *where* we are, *what* we are as a species, and *who* we are as individuals. The wilderness philosopher's first principle is "know thyself," identify your "core values." "As an example," explains wilderness writer Sigurd Olson, "I ask what motivates my life. What is the most important element in it? What brings the most

enduring happiness?" (Olson, 1976:145). This is the identification of priorities that was of utmost importance to Thoreau: given ultimate freedom, what would we choose to do?

Deep questioning reveals the problem of Modernism. An alternative worldview embraces as a fundamental value the vision of wholeness - i.e. "the sacred" - hidden to dualism. Wilderness as the source of this vision comes to be the central value, of "ultimate importance." Accepting the vision of wholeness as ultimate reality is "conversion" to a moral way of being that restores value to the world (M'Gonigle,1988). To this vision, Modernism's cycle towards self-destruction appears as a crisis - an individual, social or ecological crisis. What is perceived as urgently important for the resolution of this crisis is *the restoration of the lost vision of wholeness; the rediscovery of lost meaning and purpose; the recovery of freedom, competence, and control; an affirmation of health, completeness, immediacy, and rootedness in place.*

From the individual perspective, the problem is perceived as a need to recover in everyday life the level of involvement experienced in leisure - in wilderness. This re-engagement promises to restore a sense of control, creative freedom, challenge, meaning, and identity. This is existentialism - the conclusion that a prevailing condition of estrangement from one's true nature must be overcome by creative involvement with the world. Deep questioning is existential questioning, arriving at an understanding of the human condition as one of disengagement.

The conditions necessary to arrive at engagement/involvement are outlined by flow theory. The individual needs to perceive an order in the world. He/she needs to arrive at a sense of understanding of his/her role, or "place", within a larger system. The optimal wilderness experience acquaints the individual with the basic value of wholeness - the ideal of a universe in which all things have a rightful place. From the experience of wholeness arises a yearning for wholeness in life, as Lopez observes (1986:405).

> The dignity we seek is beyond that articulated by enlightenment philosophers....And that common dignity must include the land and its plants and creatures.... From that dignified relationship with the land, it is possible to imagine an extension of dignified relationships throughout one's life. Each relationship is formed of the same integrity, which initially makes the mind say:

> The things in the land fit together perfectly, even though they are always changing. I wish the order of my life to be arranged in the same way I find the light, the slight movements of the wind, the voice of a bird, the heading of a seed pod I see before me. This impeccable and indisputable integrity I want in myself.

The longing associated with wilderness is a longing to return to the sense of order that is encountered in a natural environment, where the individual can see him or herself in engagement with the system of the universe. Raffan's (1992) study affirms the relationship of religion to this compulsion for order, or universal understanding, and the value of a natural landscape for providing this sense of order. He observes that for the Dene natives in Canada's Northwest Territories, "The Creator...*is* understanding. The land, therefore, links people with understanding. Without land, there can be no connection for Chipewyan people to the Creator, to understanding" (1992:78).

Berry's deep questioning uncovers *health* as the fundamental value alternative to Modernity. Health is another way of expressing wholeness, order.

> What I have been preparing at such length to say is that there is only one value: the life and health of the world. If there is only one value, it follows that conflicts of value are illusory, based upon perceptual error. Moral, practical, esthetic, economic, and ecological values are all concerned ultimately with the same question of life and health. (1977:164)

The wilderness traveller has a powerful experience, returns to civilization and perceives a problem. When deep questioning reveals the nature of the problem as dualistic fragmentation and disengagement, a human condition sorely exacerbated by Modern rationalization, the wilderness traveller resolves to be whole. Here begins the solution. As Gary Snyder writes, "To resolve the dichotomy of the civilized and the wild, we must first resolve to be whole" (1990:22).

A Healthy Life: Applying Postmodern Values

Accompanying the optimal experience of feeling part of a unified whole is the desire to see this experience reproduced indefinitely - the resolution to be whole. In flow, the environment matches individual goals. The self can be defined in terms of this

package of goals. Flow, then, is self-realization. The self's desire to reproduce itself - the teleonomy of the self - compels the quest for perpetual flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). Communitas is a similar state of perceived harmony, unity or wholeness (Turner, 1974). The experience of communitas is also accompanied by the desire to see communitas sustained (Turner, 1969; 1974).

> ...where [liminality] is socially positive it presents, directly or by implication, a model of human society as a homogenous, unstructured communitas, whose boundaries are ideally coterminous with those of the human species [or sometimes, he notes, extending to incorporate nature as well]. When even two people believe that they experience unity, all people are felt to be one by those two, even if only for a flash. (1974:78)

Communitas suggests that all human problems could be resolved, if the quality of direct relationship among all things could be sustained. The question becomes, as D.H. Lawrence observed while watching the unity of swimming porpoises, "what civilization will bring us to such a pitch of swift, laughing togetherness...?" (in LaChapelle, 1988:149). Similarly, the moral imperative of leisure is that everyday life should resemble leisure (Wilcox, 1991). It is in fact by this quest for the reproduction of wholeness that individuals, and cultural structures, evolve, in the manner that games become sports and sports become institutions (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Turner, 1974).

Implementing the solution of wholeness, then, making everyday life whole, having all activities serve this higher purpose. How might such life appear? A whole, or healthy, life is one with intact connections, argues Berry (1977).

> Only by restoring the broken connection can we be healed. Connection *is* health. And what our society does its best to disguise from us is how ordinary, how commonly attainable, health is. We lose our health - and create profitable diseases and dependencies - by failing to see the direct connections between living and eating, eating and working, working and loving. (138)

From the imperative of seeking reconnection, it is possible to imagine postmodern values expressed in healthy individuals, healthy home places, healthy work, and healthy environments. A morality which sustains connection, or engagement, can be suggested for the basis of an alternative social system.

So, the ideal social form must be one which sustains connections. Modern society

recognizes the fundamental value of material wealth. In contrast, a postmodern society must recognize wholeness as a fundamental value; that is, it must emphasize *spiritual* values, because success would be defined in terms of relationships, rather than material things. This shift in emphasis is the basis of a transition to a postmodern society (LaChapelle, 1988; Oelschlaeger, 1991; Orr, 1992). Deep ecology emphasizes this social shift. Deep ecology is essentially the pattern of thought that arrives at the root problem of dualism from an analysis of the environmental crisis, in the same sense that existential and transpersonal psychology arrive at the problem of dualism from an analysis of a psychological crisis (Reed and Rothenberg, 1993). Arne Naess founded the deep ecology movement on the principle that Oelschlaeger (1991) says is key to the postmodern perspective - rejection of the "man-in-environment" or "thing-in-milieu" concept in favour of "the relational, total-field image," wherein organisms are "knots in the field of intrinsic relations," such that things are defined by their relationship to other things. Naess explains that in the postmodern view, the dualistic mode of distinguishing between discrete objects only remains "at a superficial or preliminary level of communication" (in Reed and Rothenberg, 1993:69). The deep ecology tradition converges with other strains of anti-modern criticism in advocating "voluntary simplicity" as the ideal social form.

Voluntary simplicity is based on the premise that after the basic life necessities are met, an economic rationality and a materialistic definition of success becomes obsolete. This conclusion is evident enough in Abraham Maslow's "hierarchy of needs" (Porteous, 1996). Happiness is itself a function of wholeness, of unified relationship. The main determinants of happiness are satisfying "social relations, work, and leisure" - "satisfaction with family life, especially marriage, followed by satisfaction with work, the leisure to develop talents, and friendships" (Durning, 1995:71). The aesthetic, ethical, spiritual, and emotional values which become important when all lower needs have been met, are sustained by *relationship*, which is a function the *being* - "being with"others or "being in place" - that occurs when the needs of *having* and then *doing* have been transcended (Porteous, 1996). Similarly, Csikszentmihalyi (1990) defines happiness as the state of total involvement in which personal growth occurs.

The principle of voluntary simplicity implies that when one is forced to question what is ultimately meaningful in life, the absurdities of the Modern way of life become evident, and a lifestyle that values relationship becomes the obvious way to maintain the wholeness that is ultimately important. Such a lifestyle entails a shift from "standard of living" to "quality of life," away from materialism to valuing "non-economic environmental intangibles;" and towards the deep ecological maxim of "simple in means, rich in ends" (Devall, 1988; Porteous, 1993;1996:264). Kvaloy (Reed and Rothenberg,1993) explains this shift in terms of three forms of society. The contemporary, *Industrial Growth Society* (IGS) is characterized by: steady or accelerating expansion of the production of industrial goods; individual competition; the use of applied science; and valuation by quantification. All other societies have been *Life Necessities Societies* (LNS). The LNS is the foundation for the ideal model of a society of voluntary simplicity, because its production is based on providing the only the basics necessary for life. From there, wholeness can be realized. The ideal society is an LNS which is also a *Life Growth Society* (LGS). An LGS channels the maximum amount of human energy into some form of "spiritual" development, based on meaningful, creative, artistic, challenging, and stimulating activity. To whatever extent possible, in the alternative advocated by writers like Berry (1977), the two goals of producing necessities and spiritual growth, are integrated, so that the emphasis becomes not freedom *from* work, but freedom *within* work (Stormann, 1989) - the principle which was expressed by Thoreau as "getting your living by loving." In this scenario, life mimics the ideal flow situation that is experienced in wilderness, where what one *wants* to do is also what one *must* do in order to survive (Talbot and Kaplan, 1986).

The LGS concept is analogous to the notion of a *sustainable* society. Orr (1992) identifies a current ecological crisis as a result of humanity's failure to live within the limits of natural systems. This crisis could be interpreted as a lack of wholeness, or a loss of connection between human and natural systems. In terms of the definition of complexity discussed below, the ecological crisis is the result of human system *differentiation*, unbalanced by sufficient *integration* with natural systems. Orr advocates

ecological sustainability, based upon the following: the premise that humans are limited, fallible creatures; the notion that the individual citizen plays an important role, as the best solutions proceed from the bottom upwards and are small scale, rather than being top-down, centralized and bureaucratic; the belief that past tradition is as important as new knowledge; the belief that nature provides a set of limits and also a model for design; an emphasis on ethical notions of appropriate scale and decentralization in social structures; an epistemology based on interrelatedness and the incompleteness of human knowledge, as in the ideas of Gregory Bateson.

The alternative moral values that form the foundation of such a society are based upon this vision of wholeness, which is experienced subjectively as engagement. The term *growth*, as in "LGS," is often used because growth is the consequence of engagement (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Promoting growth means promoting engagement. The concept of values-for-growth is expressed in terms of the goals of an "aethetico-ethical consciousness" or "self-actualization" (Porteous, 1996), "flow" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), or the cultivation of humanity's creative or "spiritual" talents (Zapffe, in Reed and Rothenberg,1993). What is "worth doing" according to this mode of valuation is an activity wherein value, meaning, and creative involvement are inherent to the process. An activity that has these inherent values is more valuable than another activity that produces the same extrinsic results more "efficiently" in economic terms. By a common sense evaluation, the activity that has intrinsic value is more efficient, even if there is more labour involved. This activity can be done for its own sake, so produces extrinsic rewards for "free"; for example, riding a bicycle for fun provides the spinoff benefits of transportation and exercise at virtually zero cost. The automobile is splendid in terms of a "labour saving" device that generates an enormous amount of economic activity, but abysmally inefficient by any common sense evaluation. A society based on intrinsic valuation would be more "complex" rather than "complicated." For example, "spiritual, social, and cultural complexity" of inherent valuation promises the reunification of the work and leisure spheres of life by restoring meaning and enjoyment to work (Kvaloy, in Reed and Rothenberg, 1993:124). Modern society by its

complication, on the other hand, tends to operate by creating multiple problems out of the deconstruction of neat solutions (Berry, 1977). Before further discussing the application of postmodern values to work, I should mention their influence on technology.

In Modernity's technological rationality, the absence of moral limits on the human capacity to control and to change means technological "can" equals "ought." Modernity's critics emphasize that they are not against technology, but rather in favour of moral limits on technology's application (Oelschlaeger, 1991). These moral limits would operate to uphold the values of wholeness already discussed. They would be based on an ethic of engagement, stemming from the knowledge that it is an optimal investment of human mental and physical energy into an activity that makes the activity rewarding, rather than the "saving" of this energy (Berry, 1977; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). "Appropriate technology" must be consistent with the maximum application of human abilities and the greatest possible level of human involvement. Wilderness adventure provides a metaphor for this morality by emphasizing the appropriate use of technology to maintain challenge balanced with human ability. In the freedom of leisure, as in the case of mountaineering, this morality is self-regulating, because the climber understands that it is a challenging process, rather than a glamourous end, that produces enjoyment and the meaningful reward of personal growth (Mitchell, 1983). It is the search for this balance, absent from Modern life, that drives climbers into the mountains in the first place, at least until media attention and commerce distorts the emphasis of outdoor adventure from means to ends, from process to product (Henderson, 1995).

Technology can be seen as a metaphor for the mediation of rationality between humanity and the direct experience of nature. Moral restraints on the application of technology can be understood as a restraint on dualism. The goal is to come as close as possible to an *unmediated* state, what Thoreau termed a "return to the senses." The wilderness adventurer experiences the world more directly, subjectively but also physically, as mediums are removed from the relationship of the whole person to the whole environment to induce directly a kind of practical mysticism. Yvon Chouinard, outdoor equipment maker, explains (in Mitchell, 1983:34-35):

> We are the Homo sapiens; we are the tool users. We develop tools to increase our leverage on the world around us and with this increased technological leverage comes a growing sense of power. This position of advantage, which protects us from wild nature, we call civilization. Our security increases as we apply more leverage, but along with it we notice a growing isolation from the earth. We crowd into cities, which shut out the rhythms of the planet; daybreak, high tide, wispy cirrus clouds forecasting storms, moonrise, Orion going south for the winter. Perceptions dull and we come to accept a blunting of feeling in the shadow of security. Drunk with power, I find that I am out of my senses. I, tool man, long for immediacy of contact to brighten my senses again, to bring me nearer to the world once more; in my security I have forgotten how to dance.
>
> So, in reaction, we set sail on the wide sea without motors in hopes of feeling the wind, we leave the Land Rover behind as we seek the desert to know the sun, searching for a remembered bright world. Paddling out, we turn to ride the shore-break landward, walking on the waves of smell of wildflowers meeting us on the offshore breeze. In the process we find not what our tools can do for us but what we are capable of feeling without them, of knowing directly. We learn how far our unaided effort can take us into the improbable world.

The unmediated unity of individual and environment is life. *Life* is another term for the ends that technology, machines, ought to serve, by enriching direct experience.

> As machines replace skill, they disconnect themselves from life; they come between us and life. They begin to enact our ignorance of value - of essential sources, dependencies, relationships. The catch is that we cannot live in machines. We can only live in the world, in life. To live our contact with the sources of life must remain direct: we must eat, drink, breathe, move, mate, etc. (Berry, 1977:91-92)

Chouinard sees tools as a metaphor for civilization. By a morality of "technological inversion," the application of this rational power over nature is gauged to maximize richness of human experience. The moral imperative suggested by the wilderness experience is the maintenance of a particular quality of relationship with the reality beyond the human. Mitchell (1983) explains that outdoor adventure is perhaps best characterized by this search for a moral balance between *absolute control* and *absolute chaos* - Berry's (1977) pride and despair.

Postmodern valuation can be summarized as an ethic of *complexity*, where healthy systems - individuals or communities - are defined as those which are both *differentiated* and *integrated* (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Complexity represents the ideal of an all-

encompassing wholeness - a unity which includes the maximum number of individuals at an infinite range of scales. This definition can be extended to larger systems of social and ecological community. Complexity is really a prescription for what is the desirable condition of all systems. Ecosystems provide good metaphors for the ideal of complexity, and models for the design of sustainable human systems (Orr, 1992). Technology represents the human will to differentiate, but according to the imperative of complexity, technologies which dis-integrate are immoral. In comparison to complexity, dualism is an imperative of maximum differentiation - maximum projection of the human will onto external circumstances, an imperative of arrogance. An imperative of maximum integration is an imperative of despair, a total devaluation of the individual. A postmodern morality seeks the desirable balance in terms of complexity. This morality overcomes the problem of moral relativism, and cultural relativism. On the individual scale, complexity is the goal of self-realization. A complex person is one "whose desires, emotions, thoughts, values, and actions are strongly individuated yet do not contradict each other"; a good social system is one which produces a minimum of "psychic entropy," where individual goals and social and physical environment are perceived to be in harmony (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990:244). Complexity incorporates the twin religious values of self-realization and unity with others, which are experienced in communitas (Turner, 1969,1974; Tillich, 1984).

An ideal of complexity as differentiation and integration implies harmony between the essences of the individual and the world, and is similar to the religious notion of a sacred order. Differentiation is the realization of the essence of individuality. Integrity is the government of natural law. *Life* is the merging of the individual essence with this universal law. This merging is the zone of growth. Valuing complexity has been termed an "evolutionary" faith or paradigm (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Oelschlaeger, 1991). Without this unity in complexity, no life is possible. The goal of complexity is for the individual purpose to merge with the "universal flow" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The experience of the "sacred" is the experience of complexity. This is the basic religious experience of unity intuited between something essential within the human

being, and something essential outside, in the universe, that is felt to be divine (James, 1985). The intuited pattern transcends the rational consciousness, but is not beyond the realm of non-dualistic *experience*. This "abiding pattern" has aesthetic import; it is what Jeffers called "the beauty of things" (Oelschlaeger, 1991). A sacred way of being aims to be "beautiful." Lopez's (1986) dream of a life with "dignity" implies this way of being that mimics natural beauty without dissonance.

> The essence of "the sacred" is relationship. It has to do with conforming to the patterns (Chinese, *Li*) in nature because the patterns in nature are both within us (evolved through millennia) and without - in nature outside of us. In a good culture there is little dissonance between these two patterns. (LaChapelle, 1988:127)

The individual seeks harmony in life with the pattern of wholeness that is deemed ultimately important; this is the essence of religion (Griffin, 1989). The exclusively differentiating and dis-integrating rational mode of being is made subordinate to this "sacred" pattern (LaChapelle, 1988). This is why so many religions emphasize overcoming the human will.

A practical application of the moral imperative of complexity is Berry's (1977) critique of Modern agriculture. He claims the twin evils of *specialization* in knowledge, and the standardization or *generalization* of agricultural practices across disparate landscapes. Both result in the loss of connection and moral relationship to the land. A moral imperative to reconnect a disintegrated system would require the re*integration* of fragmented knowledge and the *differentiation* of the essence of individual places; it would be an imperative to complexity. Seeking connection, or harmony, must be fully understood in this manner, as seeking complexity. Absolute *integration* is *not* wholeness, but a return to standardization. Absolute *differentiation* is *not* wholeness, but a return to specialization. Morality in the sense of complexity is balance. Balancing integration with differentiation means attention to individual essences, the small scale. Complex social forms are thus small scale, decentralized forms. Centralization leads to standardization. Critics from this perspective commonly cite the principle of E.F. Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful* (Kvaloy, 1993; Orr, 1992).

The reconnection of aspects of life fragmented in Modern society includes the rooting of "leisure" within work, and the rooting of life within environment. Critics of dualism conclude the ideal social form would include *meaningful work* and *bioregionalism.* Morality would include a complex vision of humans within healthy ecological systems.

Discussion of work and leisure has revealed that an orientation towards *process* sustains the values of wholeness, allowing activities to be pursued for the sake of relationship; whereas, an orientation towards *product* devalues relationship in favour of quantifiable ends. In other words, the condition of freedom sustains spiritual values, whereas the condition of economic necessity sustains material values. Absolute rationalization, operating on the principle of economic rationality, is the fulfilment of a total product orientation; work as a meaningful end unto itself is devalued. Work itself becomes something to be avoided, if the same ends can be achieved by alternative means, such as the application of "labour saving" technology (Berry, 1977). People have a tendency to avoid work and devalue work, even while reporting the highest levels of satisfaction at work (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

But Modernity's critics observe that the search for meaning in leisure is already condemned to failure by the same orientation towards product that devalues work. Dualism's loss of the vision of wholeness means indoctrination for the devaluation of balanced relationship, resulting in an inability to perceive the source of happiness. What people think they want - idleness, ease, technological power, speed, amusement - does not make them happy, healthy, or whole (Berry, 1977, 1990; Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, 1988, 1990; Roszak, 1979). Work-avoidance means seeking subjective, self-destructive states of apathy and disengagement. Forms of "spectator leisure" - the mass entertainment activities of television and movie viewing, and spectator sports - typify work-avoidance and "pseudocomplexity" - substitutes for balanced relationship (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Reed and Rothenberg, 1993; Roszak, 1979). The worst-case scenario of rationalized work and leisure is a life in which work is done purely to support the goal of escape from work, and escape from work is unsuccessful because the

individual remains in a rational mode, a consumer servant to the economic system with desires that are insatiable (Allison and Duncan, 1988; Delle Fave and Massimini, 1988).

> We are defeated at work because our work gives us no pleasure. We are defeated at home because we have no pleasant work there. We turn to the pleasure industries for relief from our defeat, and are again defeated, for the pleasure industries can thrive and grow only upon our dissatisfaction with them. (Berry, 1990:140)

In tourism, for example, the persistence of the everyday imperative to "save labour" results in a preoccupation with "arriving" at commodified ends, with "comfort" and "ease," and a subsequent loss of the quality of relationship that is required for satisfying, enjoyable, authentic experience (Cohen, 1988; Johnston and Edwards, 1994). This results in a condition of leisure addiction; a self-destructive dependency on "bad" forms of leisure that are perpetually unfulfilling (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975).

> The farmer's Sunday afternoon of sitting at home in the shade of a tree has been replaced by the 'long weekend' of a thousand miles. The difference is that the farmer was where he wanted to be, understood the value of being there, and therefore when he had no work to do could sit still.... Meaningless work must produce meaningless leisure. The freedom from work must produce not leisure, but an ever more frantic search for something to do.... (Berry, 1970:119).

A society which sustains spiritual values of health and wholeness must be a society which values individual freedom, because it is only in freedom that intrinsic values, process or relationship values which are the source of life's meaning, can be discovered (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). So along with health, wholeness, and complexity, *freedom* is a fundamental value of an alternative society. Modernity's critics typically cite nonviolent anarchism, and Thomas Jefferson's democratic ideal, as the ideal form of society in which the principle of individual freedom is paramount (Berry, 1977; Bishop, 1994; Naess, 1993; Roszak, 1979).

For work to be valuable, producing the same benefits as classical leisure, it must be performed for its own sake, freely (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; 1990). If freedom cannot be found *within* work, it will not be found at all, because work escapism is a mentality of perpetual limitation (Stormann, 1989). In healthy society, work would be restructured to serve the same values as technology - the values of health and wholeness. Berry (1977)

advises getting over the preoccupation with escaping work, because work is the source of, along with "sweat and sorrow," "love and excellence, health and joy" (12).

> We are being saved from work, then, for what? The answer can only be that we are being saved from work that is meaningful and enobling and comely in order to be put to work that is unmeaning and degrading and ugly. (Berry, 1970:120)

The alternative society is closer to a monastic, agrarian model, in which work activities have spiritual meaning (Roszak, 1979; Stormann, 1989; Drengson, 1993). Research on traditional farming and hunting gathering cultures suggests that this unity can be achieved where the activities necessary to sustain life are structured in such a way as to be fully engaging of human attention (Della Fave and Massimini, 1988; LaChapelle, 1988; Oelschlaeger, 1991; Tuan, 1986). *Manual* work is important for this engagement, because full involvement in the world means valuing and *using* the body (Berry, 1977,1990).

Work done for its own sake is authentic *vocation,* implying care, crafstmanship, and a concern for the ethics of process and product (Roszak, 1979; Stormann, 1989). In Norwegian ecopolitics, meaningful work has five characteristics: it is necessary for the human being's material life; its products do not damage but rather enhance life (dynamic complexity in human and natural systems); it poses challenges to the potential complexity of talents in the human individual (i.e. it is flow-producing); it demands loyalty and techniques for cooperation; it engages children in a useful way (Kvaloy, in Reed and Rothenberg, 1993). The premise here is that changing the nature of work is a root that can resolve social problems as well as environmental problems such as energy overuse.

Health is wholeness, wholeness complexity, complexity the merging of the individual will with the universal will, the merging of the free expression of individuality with the morality of the system. The conception of work that is both intrinsically meaningful and extrinsically necessary is the basis for the ideal society. Leisure as freedom is experienced within work, which is experienced as flow. Flow researchers, leisure researchers, outdoor educators, wilderness researchers, existential philosophers, Buddhists, wilderness writers and deep ecologists are all in agreement that this is the goal

of life: to have our day to day routines contain the wholeness we realize in simple acts of play to the extent that our routines become indistinguishable from leisure (Aristotle, 1962; Bell, 1989; Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; Dustin, McAvoy and Schultz, 1991; Fain, 1991; Greenway, 1995; Reed and Rothenberg, 1993; Roszak, 1979).

In addition to an ideal of meaningful work, the vision of a healthy society imagines the bioregional home as the locus of a unified life. *Bioregionalism* is based on the premise that social and ecological community ties are the basis for an ethical way of being, and that these ties can only be developed and sustained by "staying put" (Berry, 1977; LaChapelle, 1988; Orr, 1992; Snyder, 1990). Bioregionalism is a deep ecological definition of intact community. Bioregionalism is a practical response to the perpetual "placelessness" of rationalism and the "placeless" spaces of rational environmental planning that perpetuate the loss of a vision of wholeness (Relph, 1976). Beyond morality, a healthy, fully realized individual life requires a sense of place within, or connection to, to a larger system. "Being in place" is crucial for sustaining the aesthetic, spiritual, ethical, and emotional values - "non-economic environmental intangibles" - which become ultimately important for personal development after physiological and social esteem needs are met (Porteous, 1996). Practically, bioregionalism means developing close enough relationship to a place, by living in it, to have an immediate understanding of ecological limits to human action, and a personal, emotional stake in ecosystem health. It means a definition of humanity's place in nature evolving from one of domination, to one of separation, to one of identification (Drengson, 1996; Duenkel, 1994). Rather than being a "biosphere person," who lives generally on earth, the bioregionalist lives specifically in place, as an "ecosystem person" (LaChapelle, 1988). "For 'ecosystem' people, it is not possible to speak of the human being as related to the universe, but rather of universal interrelatedness. Humanity is not the focus from which the relations flow" (LaChapelle, 1988:258). The bioregionalist is one who "inhabits" or "dwells" in place, rather than being a "resident" whose identity is independent of geography (Orr, 1992). Bioregionalism is the practical expression of the non-dualistic, spiritual experience of spontaneously finding oneself "home." In this sense, it is an

attempt to live out the essence of the sacred experience. Out of loyalty to the spontaneous experience of connection, it seeks to forge persistent connection. "First, don't move. Find a place to live, live there, take responsibility for where you live, learn what's going on there and become involved.... You can't make a culture if you don't stay put" (Snyder, in LaChapelle, 1988:183). In bioregionalism, place becomes the unifying contextual framework for life and for knowledge. *Education*, Orr (1992) argues, should be based upon this central theme of place. "Ecological literacy" restores morality to knowledge by restoring context (Berry, 1977; Orr, 1992). Bioregionalism is the basis for restoring order to life, for finding dignity (Berry, 1977; Lopez, 1986).

I have attempted here to provide a picture of what the ideal postmodern society might include, based on the fundamental value of wholeness. This is not a complete picture, but it gives an idea of what we might be aiming for in terms of an "ideal." Listing the values for a postmodern sustainable or "deep ecological" society has been accomplished more comprehensively elsewhere (Naess, 1989; Orr, 1992). The point I wish to make here is that alternative values lead to anticipated ends. But once the anticipated ends are idealized, the means to achieve those ends become routinized and normalized in social structure, institutionalized as social policy or law or religious doctrine.

A Return to the Problem of Despair: Rationalization of Postmodern Values

The institutionalization of means to an idealized end is another form of rationalization, leading back to the original problem of the loss of a vision of wholeness. The basis for the experience of wholeness is the subjective condition of freedom from external structures. The realization of freedom cannot be socially structured, because when an individual is following a structure, he/she is no longer free. The rationalization of postmodern values follows the same process as the rationalization of leisure, discussed earlier.

Rationalization begins with the desire to see the experience of wholeness

sustained indefinitely. Turner's studies of communitas describe this phenomenon that occurs when optimal experience inevitably comes to an end:

> We thus encounter the paradox that the *experience* of communitas becomes the *memory* of communitas, with the result that communitas itself in striving to replicate itself historically develops a social structure, in which initially free and innovative relationships between individuals are converted into norm-governed relationships between social *personae*. (Turner, 1974:78)

Communitas occurs spontaneously in moments of liminality, which by definition is the absence of social structure. Communitas thus cannot be sustained by social structure. But the attempt to sustain "spontaneous communitas" yields "ideological communitas" - utopian prescriptions for the promotion of ultimate experience - and ultimately practised as "normative communitas" (Turner, 1974). Ideological communitas, expressed historically by such figures as Buddha, St. Francis, Tolstoy, and Gandhi, emphasizes values such as freedom and universal love. But the translation of ideological communitas into socially structured norms results in the loss of these values. Monastic orders, for example, attempt to perpetuate liminality by normalizing equality, poverty, sacredness, silence, humility, simplicity, and uniformity of dress (Turner, 1969). But loyalty to such norms squeezes out opportunities for authentic, spontaneous communitas.

Historically, Turner observes,

> Maximization of communitas provokes maximization of structure, which in its turn produces revolutionary striving for renewed communitas. (1969:129)

Turner argues that the attempt to sustain an anti-structural state of freedom cannot succeed. Such attempts in the past have produced a pendulum between totalitarian structure and anti-structural anarchy. Martin Buber, Marx and Rousseau too, are criticized for missing the point that no social structure can sustain the spontaneous experience of wholeness.

The same process of rationalization is described by Csikszentmihalyi (1990) as the "routinization"of flow. Formal religion represents such a routinization which suffers from a failure to understand that "control over consciousness cannot be institutionalized" (1990:21). When religion succumbs to the rigidities of orthodoxy, it tends to stress

extrinsic rather than intrinsic motivations in its followers, and it no longer provides the condition of freedom in which flow occurs. Tillich (1952) explains that the symbols originally used to connote a religious experience lose their original meaning as they come to be valued unto themselves. Flow theory teaches that religion must *evolve* to sustain the meaning that its symbols were originally meant to connote. Orthodoxy represents religion's tendency *not* to evolve, the "tendency toward encapsulation of human order" which is an expression of the rational desire for absolute control (Berry, 1977:130). Orthodoxy by its very nature is destined to become "narrow, rigid, mercenary, morally corrupt, and vengeful against dissenters" (1977:173).

This problem of the literal interpretation of symbols and the encapsulation of human order plagues the "religion" of wilderness as well. This is the manner in which the wholeness of the experience is lost by the influence of rationalization, which promotes a focus on ends instead of means, on achieving a mountain summit rather than entering into a balanced relationship with environment (Henderson, 1995; Mitchell, 1983). The "wilderness experience" then threatens not to be a wilderness experience at all, in the sense of a non-dualistic experience of freedom, engagement and wholeness (Greenway, 1995b). When wilderness itself becomes an ideal, it becomes as transcendent to earth and the human experience as supernatural God. That is, when the non-dualistic experience is interpreted in dualistic terms, it becomes unattainable. It is by this process that Modern dualism transformed pantheism into supernatural theism, and transformed Eden into a "vale of tears" (Oelschlaeger, 1991). The wilderness *ideal* ceases to be *experience*, and becomes an unattainable heaven and a consumer commodity and the substance of self-destructive addictive behaviour. Because an optimal experience is had in a "natural" or "remote" environment, transcendent value is attributed to an ideal of "nature" or "remoteness." Wilderness perfectionism means that the realization that nothing is ultimately natural or remote leads to despair or "horror" (Turner, 1994). Attempting to "hold on" to the ideal of wilderness results in depression (Greenway, 1995a,b).

Rationalism is really the invention of ideals. The idealization of an ecological

monasticism or an ideal of spontaneously satisfying work, an everyday life incorporating ongoing flow, or a fully realized bioregionalism, is likely to produce the same problem of despair as the idealization of wilderness. Once we define wholeness, as something like "bioregionalism," we can look around us and see that we have not achieved it. Thus we are no longer whole. We are not bioregionally home. We are lost.

Redefining Postmodern Values: A Wild Culture

Avoiding a return to despair requires "deeply questioning" what we stand *for*. Before continuing I wanted to make the point that standing for health, wholeness, or complexity is not the same as standing for the symbols of those values - be they wilderness, bioregional community, or meaningful work. Missing this point will lead to despair. We have to return to deep questioning and make sure that we understand that we stand for wholeness, that wholeness is a *quality of relationship*, or engagement, that could be called "complex" because it maximizes both differentiation and integration, and that this relationship is associated with the condition of *freedom* from structure. Freedom is a confusing term because of its subjectivity. We cannot say really whether engagement is a consequence of freedom, or whether freedom is a subjective state that follows from entering into non-dualistic engagement. Is it freedom or involvement that accommodates the fundamental value of complex, healthy wholeness? Maybe neither. A better definition of the means to our ends is "a quality of relationship." Relationship with what? To clarify what we stand *for*, I think we have to redefine our value in terms of a relationship with *wildness* and to redefine the "ideal" culture as a culture that accommodates wildness. Wildness is a term that can include all the other values discussed so far.

To arrive at wholeness, we have to claim freedom from our definitions of what this wholeness entails, which are forever incomplete. The closest we can get to wholeness is to be striving to enter into relationship with everything that is outside of what we have already entered into relationship with. To include everything that we do

not already value by our definition of wholeness, we can value "wildness." Wildness is what is outside social structure, the essence of things that always eludes our definition of them. The goal is to realize a "wild culture" - experience wildness, "Take people out there. Listen to the silence. Find a way to live in and with it. We in the developed world must change our way of life" (Rothenberg, 1995:xxi).

Wildness is the basis for all the values expressed so far. Rationalization can be interpreted as the exclusion not only of wholeness, but of wildness, or "nature." Wildness, like the term *nature,* denotes what is outside of human structure. According to Reese (1996), the word "nature" is from the latin *natura*, a translation of the Greek *physis*, suggesting "production, growth, and bringing to birth." Reese writes, "thus the early signification of the term concerned that part of reality subject to change" (509). The Stoics, followed by Spinoza, viewed nature as "the point where man, finite things, and God formed part of a single system. Nature was the all-inclusive system, and there was nothing beyond nature" (509). This ideal complexity of a fully unified system is the ideal of the sacred towards which we are striving (LaChapelle, 1988). Wildness, as "the process and essence of nature," is an expression of this goal that incorporates its essential dynamism (Grumbine, 1995:6). Wildness, then, includes the goal of complexity, as well as other values such as creativity, growth, challenge, engagement, connection, health, and love, which are associated with the optimal experience. Wildness, as "naturalness," is the true fundamental human value. Sigurd Olson expresses his discovery of this insight:

> I am convinced that nature, in all its aspects and my relationship to it, is and always has been my guiding light....(145) Nature, I found, did not necessarily mean to others what it meant to me. To some it was the evolution of mind and recognition of the creative forces in the realm of thought and art, beauty, and religion - all a way of attaining fullness and contributing to man's cultural or humanitarian needs. (1976:144-145)

Inherent value *is* nature, and what we will truly wish to do for its own sake is really going to be something *wild*, something new, either probing the recesses of the mind, or outward nature, to explore, or produce poetry, or simply *be* in it. And this activity is "serious work," "authentic vocation." It is what is "worth doing."

The good culture is really one which is oriented towards wildness, striving for the ideal of order while attempting to maintain a relationship with what is inevitably *outside* this order. A morality of wildness, like the morality of complexity, must incorporate this *balance* - a balance of the civilized and the wild. Turner (1969, 1974) explains that anti-structural "liminoid" states exist in a "figure-ground" relationship with social structure. Social life is not a thing, but a dialectical process (Turner, 1969). Turner was critical of religious cults, the hippie counterculture and other such movements that mistook anti-structure as the end of human endeavour, because they did not appreciate this dynamic balance: "man is both a structural and an anti-structural entity, who *grows* through anti-structure and *conserves* through structure (Turner, cited in Andrews, 1996:36). Turner cites anthropologist Brian Sutton-Smith, who studied *play* as a form of anti-structure:

> The liminoid genres...."not only make tolerable the system as it exists, they keep its members in a more flexible state with respect to that system, and, therefore, with respect to possible change. Each system has structural and anti-structural adaptive functions. The normative structure represents the working equilibrium, the anti-structure represents the latent system of potential alternatives from which novelty will arise when contingencies in the normative system require it.... We might more correctly call this second system the *proto-structural* system because it is the precursor of innovative normative forms. (1974:83)

To experience what it is to truly *exist* - the state described in wilderness experience as "being fully alive" - Turner observes, one must "stand outside" structure, which is, literally, to be in *ecstasy*. The fact that the ecstatic state cannot last forever is not a "problem" to be solved.

> Once more we come back to the necessity of seeing man's social life as a process, or rather as a multiplicity of processes, in which the character of one type of phase - where communitas is paramount - differs deeply, even abysmally, from that of all others. The great human temptation, found most prominently among utopians, is to resist giving up the good and pleasurable qualities of that one phase to make way for what may be the necessary hardships and dangers of the next. Spontaneous communitas is richly charged with affects, mostly pleasurable ones.... [it] has something magical about it. Subjectively, there is a feeling of endless power. But this power untransformed cannot readily be applied to the organizational details of social existence. It is not substitute for lucid thought and sustained will. On the other hand, structural action swiftly becomes arid and mechanical if those involved in it are not periodically immersed in the

> regenerative abyss of communitas under the *given* circumstances of time and place. (Turner, 1969:139)

The wilderness experience would be viewed by Turner as an ecstatic inspiration to return to civilization and accept social responsibility with a renewed sense of purpose, and as a source of creativity to prevent social stagnation. As anti-structure, it is a "dialogue" of structure with nature, or wildness (Turner, 1969). It is "a means to the end of becoming more fully involved in the rich manifold of structural role-playing" (Turner, in Andrews, 1996:36).

The same criticisms of rationalized leisure given earlier still apply, however, because the implication of Turner's theory is that *freedom* is necessary in leisure in order for spontaneous communitas to be experienced. The argument of the leisure critics and deep ecologists is not that anti-structure is the *end* of human endeavour, but that it is one essential component to a complex social structure, a wild culture. They argue that rationalization eliminates opportunities for spontaneous communitas. From the wilderness perspective, a wild culture must incorporate these opportunities into everyday life. Free and playful leisure is important because it provides opportunities for spontaneous communitas (Turner, 1969). Without it, there is no "dialogue" with nature. There must be opportunities for "freedom to transcend social-structural normative limitations, the freedom to *play* - with ideas, with fantasies, with words..., with paint..., and with social relationships" (Turner, in Andrews, 1996:37). We have seen that rationalized leisure may not provide these opportunities for spontaneous creativity. Wilderness provides the ultimate opportunity for creativity because it is essentially anti-structural, imposing no social structure of its own. Wildness, as Thoreau knew, is the source of creativity. As the zone where all things connect, where the individual meets universe, it is the zone of *growth*.

> The real secret of life is to return to the "primitive chaos-order or 'chaos-mos' of the Tao." But in some ways we moderns feel that chaos threatens our planning of order.... But the Taoists tell us that the "cosmos originally came from, and continually depends on, the chaos of creation time." Myths often show us this disguised or suppressed hidden connection, "linking chaos and cosmos, nature and culture." Sometimes this is called "the playing of the Gods." Fundamentally it is

> the playing of human, earth, sky and gods in the great festivals. This is precisely why "play" is the crux of it all. True play in early life lets the child become a fully functioning human adult; true play in the great festivals allows human culture to happen. (LaChapelle, 1988:98)

Turner's insights question the ideal of a culture from which escape becomes unnecessary (Faarlund, in Reed and Rothenberg, 1993). His insights also call into question the notion that a trip into wilderness ought *not* to serve the purpose of "self-efficacy within the social order" so much as it serves to question the assumptions of the dominant cultural ideology (Henderson, 1995). Turner's findings suggest that the role of anti-structure is to accomplish both; anti-structure sustains structure in this manner. The deep ecological critique concurs with Turner's findings if we interpret the notion of a "wild culture" not as one from which escape becomes unnecessary, but rather as one in which a condition of "escape," the exercise of freedom, is interwoven into the fabric of everyday life. This is an ideal of nature-culture unity - a culture that incorporates nature within its structure.

Berry (1977) argues that Modern humans have forgotten their dependence on nature, as nature has been romanticized and relegated to "wilderness". We forgot

> that the civilized and the domestic continued to *depend* upon wilderness - that is, upon natural forces within the climate and within the soil that have never in any meaningful sense been controlled or conquered. Modern civilization has been built largely in this forgetfulness. (1977:100)

Wildness is simultaneously a threat to cultural order, and the source of its renewal. The experience of wildness can allow the home order to be appreciated, as Berry notes in reference to *The Odyssey*: "The farm life of the island seems so sweet and orderly because we know the dark wilderness of natural force and mystery within which the fields are cleared and lighted" (Berry, 1977:130). In this sense the direct experience and ongoing awareness of wildness provides meaning and value to an ordered, civilized life. Rather than ignoring the paradox that "the natural forces that so threaten us are the same forces that preserve and renew us" (130), our culture should accept wildness, mystery, and ignorance. Wildness is the zone of *freedom* and also of *ignorance*; as knowledge is structured, ignorance is anti-structure. Retaining the possibility of wildness, a close

association with ignorance or *mystery*, is retaining the possibility of choice, enabling the realization of freedom *within* structure, sustaining life's meaning and overcoming escapism. Wendell Berry explains how wildness makes everyday life meaningful by sustaining the possibility of alternatives:

> Fidelity to human order, then, if it is fully responsible, implies fidelity also to natural order. Fidelity to human order makes devotion possible. Fidelity to natural order preserves the possibility of choice, the possibility of the renewal of devotion. Where there is no possibility of choice, there is no possibility of faith. One who returns home - to one's marriage and household and place in the world - desiring anew what was previously chosen, is neither the world's stranger nor its prisoner, but is at once in place and free. (1977:131)

Wildness preserves the vision of wholeness, and in the vision of wholeness we can realize ourselves as being free. For this reason, without the possibility of wildness in our lives, "the more numb and dead we feel" (Drengson, 1996). The wilderness experience allows us to return home, and to feel free in our choice of being home. It gives *meaning* to home life. Turner and Berry confirm that wildness sustains involvement in structure, in the "political quagg," as Snyder (1990) observes. A wild culture pays homage to wildness, by setting aside "sacred groves" of wilderness to maintain the possibility of wholeness and of freedom. We need this "double faith," says Berry. The nature-culture dualism is in this sense affirmed, *not* denied.

Wilderness experience facilitates the act of "remembering" human "place" as surrounded at all times by wildness, and that culture is a structure as temporary and flexible as human consciousness. It is in this juxtaposition that lies the power of the sublime to exhilarate, by reminding us of the arbitrariness and fragility of the structure that would otherwise seem to dominate our everyday lives (Spufford, 1996). The result is a vision of humanity both differentiated from and integrated within nature, a "sacred attitude." "The necessity of the sacred attitude is one of remembering - remembering the larger context of one's existence..." (Critchlow, in Todd and Todd, 1984). This "remembering" is a return to what Berry (1977) called "perspective" or "sense of place within Creation." It is a remembering of what the human condition is, as a necessary condition of alienation (Duerr, 1985). But we proceed in a three-stage process from a

definition of reality based on separation, to the sublime awe of realizing this separation, to a position of "Self-realization" or "identification" of ourselves with the wild (Drengson, 1996; Duenkel, 1994).

> The wilderness temple is only a beginning. One should not dwell in the specialness of the extraordinary experience nor hope to leave the political quagg behind to enter a perpetual state of heightened insight. The best purpose of such studies and hikes is to be able to come back to the lowlands and see all the land about us, agricultural, suburban, urban, as part of the same territory - never totally ruined, never completely unnatural....Great Brown Bear is walking with us, Salmon swimming upstream with us, as we stroll a city street. (Snyder, 1990:94)

We remember that to *be* human is to live *on* the fence between wilderness and civilization (Duerr, 1985), to be neither animals nor machines, in neither "nature extremism" nor "technological extremism" (Berry, 1970). "Remembering" wholeness, we see the absurdity of "using and protecting" "wilderness," distinct from civilization, because we encounter the frontier of wildness in everyday life with our bodies, food, and the world around us (Berry, 1977; Greenway, 1995b; LaChapelle, 1988). Life becomes not wild in some places and civilized in others, but a constant free balancing of the civilized and the wild by becoming *aware* of the wild in such activities as eating, gardening, sex, and exercise (Greenway, 1995b). A wild culture affirms our humanity by inhabiting this "margin"of complex relationship between civilized and wild, mind and nature. As Duerr (1985) concludes, "we can *be* only what we are if at the same time, we are also what we are *not*...we can only know who we are if we experience our boundaries and, as Hegel would put it, if we cross over them" (125). If we live as *structural minimalists*, as loyal to our margins as well as our centres, we will experience optimum health. Change, Berry (1977) observes, comes from the margins of culture.

> The pattern of orthodoxy in religion, because it is well-known, gives us a useful paradigm.... It is changed by one who goes alone to the wilderness, where he fasts and prays, and returns with a cleansed vision.... In going to the wilderness, he goes to the margin, where he is surrounded by possibilities - by no means all good - that orthodoxy has excluded.... He returns to the community, not necessarily with new truth, but with a new vision of truth; he sees it more whole than before. (Berry, 1977:174)

The pattern of relationship to wildness in Modern culture is one of going back and forth

between wilderness and civilization. Wilderness writers like Thoreau straddled the margins of both (Nash, 1982). A wild culture is one that incorporates marginality, nature, into the weave of culture. There is a possibility in such a way of being of

> a sort of reconciliation by which we might escape the endless swinging between centre and margins, rigidity and revolt, that has dominated our culture for so long. The remedy is to accommodate the margin within the form, to allow the wilderness or nature to thrive in domesticity, to accommodate diversity within unity....graceful, practical generosity toward the possible and the unexpected. (Berry, 1977:178-179)

By comparison with this form of integrated life, the absolute divisions between urban and rural, civilized and wild, are a "crude and dangerous" balance. A "marginal way of thinking" rejects the fragmentation of dualism and incorporates maximum diversity at every scale of life. Following "the theme of settlement, of kindness to the ground, of nurture" rather than exploitation, this way of thinking would replace "the concern for production with a concern for reproduction" (Berry, 1977:217).

Wilderness is less important now as a physical place than as the presence of wildness, the experience of being at or beyond the margins of social structure and rigidly rational consciousness. We do not experience a sense of "order" or "understanding" in nature because nature is ordered in the rational sense, but because in nature we perceive the possibility of an underlying order within chaos (Lopez, 1986). Rather, we realize that we can live in the midst of natural chaos and experience psychic negentropy - the optimal experience of order in consciousness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988,1990). Our experience of order and control, our sense of understanding, is in fact *enhanced* by the need to relinquish our rational imperative to order and control (Scherl, 1989). We discover our humanity not in *spite* of nature's chaos, but *because* of it. In principle, the same subjective state can be achieved anywhere. Csikszentmihalyi explains, "A person can master flow activities in almost any environment. A few will need to live in the wilderness, or to spend long periods of time alone at sea" (1990:175). Flow is possible, however, "whenever unswerving commitment, energy, and will find meaningful and effective application in the world of social experience" (Mitchell, 1983:225). For the

same reason that mountaineering is not primarily about climbing mountains, the wilderness is potentially everywhere and nowhere (Duerr, 1985; Mitchell, 1983). The wilderness experience is a spiritual experience in that it is a quality of relationship to a larger reality. The experience is more the result of a mental posture enforced by the wild landscape than anything inherent in the landscape itself. If there is a moral imperative, it is to sustain a wild culture. A wild culture is not based primarily on the preservation of wilderness, however. The notion that we have to change the planet, instead of changing ourselves, is part of the problem, not the solution - "The trouble with the eagerness to make a world is that, because the world is already made, what is there must first be destroyed" (Shepard, 1995:32). The imperative to preserve wilderness landscape is a structural response to the experience of wholeness in wilderness. The definition of wilderness itself, as a place "elsewhere," apart from humans, leads back to self-destruction (Grumbine, 1995). Wilderness preservationism is not a wild idea, it is orthodoxy. Wild culture is not sustained by structure, but by individuals, living wildly.

The changing of self is an important theme in the literature. Berry's (1977) thesis is that the ecological crisis is a crisis of *character*. The solution calls for bottom-up change, based upon a foundation of good character which is more fundamentally based upon enlightenment, "religious" insight into the nature of wholeness, a "conversion" or "paradigm shift" away from dualism (Berry, 1977; Duenkel, 1994; Henderson, 1995; Oelschlaeger, 1991; Orr, 1992; Porteous, 1996). In "flow" terms, the "wild" experience requires not an objective condition of freedom, but is rather the subjective realization of freedom; it requires not wilderness, but "control over consciousness" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The goal of salvation or arriving "home" from dualism is immediately achievable. We do not have to transform the landscape or other people first, or undergo a physical journey. The foundation of a wild culture is the living paradox of structural minimalism, a marginal, or wild way of being - the mental posture discovered in wilderness. What is really needed to overcome the problem of modernity is a *wild attitude*.

Sustaining Postmodern Values: A Wild Attitude

Gary Snyder (1990) chose his words carefully: The wilderness traveller does not resolve to *become* whole. He resolves to *"be* whole"! This is critical, because it expresses the possibility of an immediate cure by a change of *attitude*. The individual seeking to become whole, healthy, is seeking involvement with the world, engagement. The qualities which sustain health - social and ecological system health - begin with psychological health, as traits of character. The balance of order and chaos that is a paradigm for a healthy society develops from the individual scale where it is a paradigm for a sane mind.

So, the moral imperative of wilderness experience is a way of relating to reality. "A way of being" that represents psychological health is expressed by Rogers (1970). This is very similar to the way of being characterizing Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) "autotelic personality" - the character traits conducive to the experience of flow in all situations. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) observes that his prescription has much in common with religious and philosophical traditions including Hinduism, yoga, Zen Buddhism, Aristotle's notion of virtue, Stoic philosophy, and the Taoist concept of *yu*, or right living. Based primarily on Rogers' (1970) and Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) summaries, concurrent with observations from the wilderness literature, I have compiled a description of nine main characteristics of "a wild attitude," - the fundamental moral imperative of wilderness suggested by the literature that was *also* consistent with findings from the research interviews and my personal experiences while doing the research.

1. Opening up and letting go; living in the moment

The wild attitude is one of seeking total involvement. It is thus a "giving," participatory attitude, rather than a taking and withdrawing attitude. This attitude can be well summed up by the theme of "openness." "Active openness" is basic to the philosophy of existentialism as a struggle against estrangement from the world (Johnston, Gregory and Smith, 1994). It is an attitude of "letting be" rather than the dualistic one of

seeking absolute control. Findings in the literature reviewed in Chapter 3, and also in research interviews and personal experience, confirm that the wilderness experience is an experience of "openness" consistent with definitions of psychological health. Rogers (1970) describes becoming open as the process of "becoming a person" - a state of being fully human, or "self-actualized," to use Maslow's term. Moss (1989) explains "openness to the mystery beyond" as the basis for psychological health, consistent with wilderness poet Robinson Jeffers's prescription to "turn love outward" from humanity to wildness.

> Von Gebsattel characterized the essence of psychopathology as a "no saying self-constriction".... [The Swiss existential analyst Medard Boss] conceptualizes much of psychopathology as a loss of "world-openness." In attempting to refuse some potential invitation or challenge presented by the world, the patient eventually paralyzes his or her capacity to respond spontaneously. (Moss, 1989: 199-200)

Moss explains that a variety of existential and psychotherapy traditions have emphasized the importance of "openness," "letting go," "receptiveness," or what Heidegger called *gelassenheit* ("letting-be-ness"). This openness includes Kierkegaard's goal "to be that self which one truly is" (Rogers, 1970).

> This idea of *gelassenheit* is centuries old. Two German Rhineland mystics of the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Meister Eckhart and Johannes Tauler, recognized that much of the malaise of the individual arises from the attempt to be something in particular - to force one's fate into a particular mold. The meaning of our destiny always exceeds in scope the efforts of the individual to keep it tight in hand, and such efforts to grasp and contain fate do violence to the spontaneous emergence of our future. Eckhart and Tauler guided the individual toward a deliberate, methodical cultivation of a willful passivity, toward facing the nothingness of one's own narrow intentions and projects, and toward surrendering one's whole life over to the mystery of being. They called this openness to the mystery beyond one's individuality *gelassenheit*. (Moss, 1989:200)

By encouraging openness to the individual and being "intolerant" of withdrawal, the wilderness serves the role of "psychotherapist," initiating an open acceptance of self and others.

"Openness to experience," which Rogers (1970) defines as the opposite of "defensiveness," is fundamental to his notion of "personhood." Individuals with a fixed definition of themselves and of reality are defensive. They have a tendency to distort

sense impressions which contradict these a priori definitions. Openness means being less likely to categorize according to stereotypes, to oversimplify and idealize. A state of harmony with reality is more likely to be achieved, because openness means that the complexities of reality can be more effectively taken into account. Openness is fundamental to responding to the world in an effective way, to entering into direct relationship with the world and experiencing the flow situation of being "in control." The open individual is more sensitive to the immediate reality that he/she inhabits. The open person is much more accepting, resilient, flexible, and responsive to novel situations (Roger, 1970). Because the open person can"tolerate ambiguity," he would satisfy Barry Lopez's (1986) criteria for maturity, as one who is content to live "in the midst of paradox." He "sees that not all trees are green, not all men are stern fathers, not all women are rejecting, not all failure experiences prove that he is no good, and the like" (Rogers, 1970:115). The world is perceived as a much less threatening and constraining place - more of a "wilderness."

Another way to describe "openness to experience" is in terms of "living in the moment." "Past" and "future" are preconceived categories, whereas "experience" is immediate. "Openness to experience" is a what Thoreau called a "return to the senses," a waking up to the present moment. "To open one's spirit to what is going on *now*, and to discover in that present process whatever structure it appears to have - this to me is one of the qualities of the good life, the mature life, as I see clients approach it," writes Rogers (1970:189). Maslow observes that "self-actualized" people, who are open to experience, have an "ease of penetration to reality," a more immediate experience of the world. They appreciate "again and again, freshly and naively, the basic goods of life with awe, pleasure, wonder, and even ecstasy" (Maslow, in Rogers, 1970:174). Csikszentmihalyi (1990) writes, "the most important step in emancipating oneself from social controls is the ability to find rewards in the events of each moment" (19). The autotelic personality is one that has mastered the ability to enjoy immediate experience.

"Openness" is an important basis for religious experience. Tillich's (1984) advice to people who want to experience God is to "open up." "We must keep open for all

experiences," he says, "...in all experiences, there is a possibility for having an ultimate experience" (201).

Openness is presented as an alternative to prejudgement, and the tendency to impose a preordained structure on reality as, or rather *before*, it is immediately experienced. Rogers stresses openness to individual human nature within oneself and others, but psychology becomes "deep ecology" as this openness is easily extended from human nature to all the whole of nature, or *wildness*. A prerequisite for openness is "letting go" of desires and definitions of ideal conditions. Such "idealism" and "perfectionism" are "deadly illusions" because they interfere with the realization of wholeness in the immediate moment (LaChapelle, 1988). Letting go means relinquishing the desire to control, and the desire to see the optimal experience of flow or communitas perpetuated in a particular, ideal way. According to Turner, communitas should be experienced under the "*given* circumstances of time and place" (1969:139). This means accepting the ongoing flow from anti-structure to structure, not "hanging on" to the optimal experience, because hanging on restricts openness (Greenway, 1995a). The goal is "to accept each modality when it is paramount without rejecting the other, and not to cling to one when its impetus is spent" (Turner, 1969:139).

2. Being aware and focussing outward

According to Gary Snyder, "wildness is the state of complete awareness" (in LaChapelle, 1988:180). The wilderness experience is one of being "awake and attentive" because "we do not know what will happen next in wilderness. The landscape is alive and changing, constantly evolving with a will of its own. It is a great mystery" (Drengson, 1996:184).

Openness is consistent with being more *aware* of reality, because non-defensiveness means that information that enters awareness is more likely to be seen as it really is, rather than redefined to fit a predetermined conception of reality. Striving for a state of awareness can be a way to become open, and to arrive at optimal experience. Ultimately, experience must be defined by structure in order to be meaningful. Flow can

only be achieved within a structured "system of action" that provides clear goals and feedback (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The likelihood of becoming involved in flow, however, is increased when a person's chosen structure conforms to the given reality. This flexibility is destined to be far more successful than searching for an external reality that suits a rigidly predetermined structure. Flow depends upon this attitude of "restructuring experience," exercising "control over consciousness" - and "internal locus of control" - to change how we relate to the world rather than controlling the world to conform it to our desires. Subjective freedom, autonomy, is experienced when control over consciousness is mastered, because the individual is no longer dependent upon external conditions for happiness. In theory, this freedom can be claimed in consciousness at any moment, under any circumstances, by a process of "waking up" to see ourselves as controlling experience rather than controlled by experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) calls control over consciousness "transformative coping." Experience is "restructured" by allowing a structure to be "given" by reality. Finding opportunities for engagement in the world requires an outward focus. "A self-centred self cannot become more complex" (1990:83). Again, this reminds of the wilderness writer's theme of "turning outward," "breaking out of humanity" (Oelschlaeger, 1991). Csikszentmihalyi cites Bertrand Russell as an example of outward focus (1990:192):

> Gradually I learned to be indifferent to myself and my deficiencies; I came to centre my attention increasingly upon external objects; the state of the world, various branches of knowledge, individuals for whom I felt affection.

By taking in information from the world, one is adjusting personal goals to be compatible with the opportunities presented by the situation. Changing goals eliminates the need to change the environment or go in search of a different environment. Arriving at satisfaction requires the resolution to be aware. Involvement tends to follow naturally from paying attention to a situation. For a mountaineer, for example, careful investigation of route options before deciding to proceed is more likely to yield a

satisfying experience where there is a high degree of involvement and a reasonable chance of success. A system of action is chosen, and then psychic energy is invested into the system of action in the aim to unite self with system (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). As Huxley observes in his utopian novel *Island*,

> Concrete materialism only the raw stuff of a fully human life. It's through awareness, concrete and constant awareness, that we transform it into concrete spirituality. (1994:169)

3. Accepting reality

The open, healthy person is one who is less likely to seek mediation of the experience of reality by rationality - a constructed image of self, or a preconceived definition of reality - or by rational products such as technology or, literally, the "media." Instead, reality is accepted as it immediately and spontaneously *is*. When we accept it, "the natural world provides a real context to enframe human action, defining both limits...and potentialities" (Oelschlaeger, 1991:345). This acceptance is grounded in a faith in the basic goodness of the world, or in the ability of the self to cope with the world. Faith is also grounded in the realization that open acceptance is likely to yield a more effective, appropriate gauged *response* to reality, because the response will be based on more accurate, less distorted information, a greater receptivity to context. So the healthy person recognizes that acceptance of reality is a *superior* way of being in the world. The wilderness experience teaches this faith by providing a relatively unmediated encounter with reality and producing a positive outcome. Rogers (1970) calls this basic faith "trust in one's organism." The healthy person develops a faith in his/her ability to react unselfconsciously and spontaneously in a way that is appropriate for the given circumstances, without depending on a rationalized, predetermined response.

Acceptance of reality is presupposed by the *awareness* of it. To become fully aware one must decide not to pre-judge experience. Acceptance allows the "discovery of structure *in* experience that is the basis for the experience of flow (Rogers, 1970). Acceptance includes not only the world as it is, but also the self as it is; and this means

not striving to realize an ideal of what one perceives is truly oneself, but rather to accept the self however it is in the present moment - to engage in "self-discovery" by the process of living, rather than to live according to a definition of self. Rogers (1970) contends that one should also accept *other* people as they truly are, attempting to understand them without prejudging them. Accepting reality means "letting be" things as they are.

Everything and every person is accepted as unquestioningly as one would accept, for instance, the wilderness, without the presumption of changing anything.

> One does not complain about water because it is wet, not about rocks because they are hard.... As the child looks out upon the world with wide, uncritical and innocent eyes, simply noting and observing what is the case, without either arguing the matter or demanding that it be otherwise, so does the self-actualizing person look upon human nature both in himself and in others. (Maslow, in Rogers, 1970:173)

Thoreau had an interesting outlook on the notion of "philanthropy" based on his attitude of accepting things as they are. He suspected well-wishers of doing more harm than good. Because of their failure to perceive reality in its wholeness, there was a danger that in their enthusiasm; they would spread their diseased perspective. Acceptance of reality suggests a very Taoist, *wu-wei* sort of approach to action and change in the world, in which moral action is based upon a principle of non-action, as Rogers explains:

> I believe that it is an increasingly common pattern in our culture for each one of us to believe, "every person must feel and think and believe the same as I do".... The more I am open to the realities in me and in the other person, the less do I find myself wishing to rush in and "fix things" I am much more content simply to be myself and let another person be himself. I know very well that this must seem like a strange, almost an oriental point of view. What is life for if we are not going to do things to people? What is life for if we are not going to mould them to our purposes? What is life for if we are not going to teach them the things that *we* think they should learn? What is life for if we are not going to make them think and feel as we do? How can anyone hold such an inactive point of view as the one I am expressing?... Yet the paradoxical aspect of my experience is that the more...I am willing to understand and accept the realities in myself and in the other person, the more change seems to be stirred up. (1970: 21).

The need to "accept reality" is expressed by many writers as the need to face uncomfortable truths, to confront life's dark side. Only in doing so, they suggest, can we

be fully human. Berry writes "we can make ourselves whole only by accepting our partiality, by living within our limits, by being human - not by trying to be gods" (1977:95). Accepting the "predicament" of our lives instills in us the right attitude, he suggests, of humility and gratitude and patience - the openness that we require for positive experience to occur. Acceptance means living with dignity "in the human estate of grief and joy" (Berry, 1977:106). As Lopez observes, borrowing words from Albert Schweitzer, "The given reality, the real landscape, is 'horror within magnificence, absurdity within intelligibility, suffering within joy'" (1986:411), and the mature person sees this. Orr also cites Schweitzer to support his conclusion that solving the modern ecological crisis requires rejecting New Age idealism and embracing a "sense of the tragic"

> A tragic sense of life turns us...toward suffering, healing, and service in which, as Schweitzer describes it, "the soft iron of youthful idealism hardens into the steel of a full grown idealism which can never be lost." This "sobering down" process requires that "our development...make us simpler, more truthful, purer, more peace loving, meeker, kinder, more sympathetic." (1992:139-140)

William James believed that complete religions "are those in which the pessimistic elements are best developed" (1985:xxxii). The truly religious are the "twice-born" who have faced disenchantment with life, and moved beyond naive, New Age style optimism. Being twice-born implies being delivered from this illusion to commence a real life. Of the value of accepting reality, Aldous Huxley concludes,

> You don't renounce the world or deny its value....No, you accept the world, and you make use of it.... [The ideal life involves] No hells on earth and no Christian pie in the sky, no communist pie in the twenty-second century. Just men and women and their children trying to make the best of the here and now, instead of living somewhere else...in some other time, some sort of other home-made imaginary universe. (1994:80,121)

4. Accepting risk, challenge and discomfort

The communitas of the ritual experience is typically preceded by challenge and discomfort that comes from confronting unfamiliar circumstances outside the boundaries of everyday structure. There is emotional, perceived risk if not physical risk, as the old

reality and identity-structure is endangered by the new experience. The engagement with anti-structure means learning to cope with a new reality. The risk of change and the stress of coping with a novel experience must be accepted for the optimal experience, which is an experience of personal growth, to occur. Of his study of wilderness travel, Andrews writes,

> Initially, participants had experienced the discomforts and anxieties of entering a new situation which had rendered them incompetent. Even the most taken-for-granted aspects of their lives needed to be relearned. (1996:5)

Experiential learning and communitas emerge from having to deal with "Disappointment. Anxiety. Confusion. Frustration. Anger" (Andrews, 1996:8). This experience generates learning and growth because old ways are sloughed off in the novel context of the wilderness challenge: "Accepted schemata and paradigms must be broken if initiates are to cope with novelty and danger. They have to learn how to generate viable schemata under environmental challenge" (Turner, in Andrews, 1996:36). Arriving at the understanding of a new system involves the risk of change. This includes the "systems" that are other people. To enter into relationship, we must accept the risk of change.

> Our first reaction to most of the statements which we hear from other people is immediate evaluation, or judgement, rather than an understanding of it.... I believe this is because understanding is risky.... I might be changed by that understanding. And we all fear change. (Rogers, 1970:18)

Likewise, the experience of flow is an experience of personal growth that is, by definition, beyond the state of boredom and verging on the stress of anxiety (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). Prerequisite to the experience of flow is an acceptance of initial "psychic entropy" and discomfort that results from having to revise personal goals to fit the opportunities presented by the environment. To arrive at flow, one must move "beyond anxiety" to arrive at a state of total involvement.

> It is not possible to experience a feeling of control unless one is willing to give up the safety of protective routines.... Most enjoyable activities are not natural; they demand an effort that initially one is reluctant to make. But once the interaction starts to provide feedback to the person's skills, it usually begins to be intrinsically rewarding. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990:61,68)

Mitchell (1983) emphasizes the importance of accepting, rather than seeking to avoid

"stress." Stress, simply defined as "stimulation," is essential to the creative, meaningful, rewarding life - to "being" in the highest sense. Mountaineering's moral imperative is the balanced application of technology to maintain opportunities for "personal expression, creativity, and self-guidance" (223).

> To be without stress is to be eddied in the stream of life-experiences, cut off from stimuli, noxious or otherwise.... The opposite of stress is...a state of reduced awareness and diminished capacity, of torpid disinterest as found in drug-induced stupor and, when logically extended, in coma and quintessentially in death.... Civilization protects us from not just from real dangers but sometimes from the possibilities of our humanity. (Mitchell, 1983:224-225)

Growth, which necessarily entails risk and challenge, is as fundamental to the wilderness experience as to the practice of psychotherapy. Moss explains,

> The poet Rilke...advocated that whatever uncomfortable and strange experience presented itself to one's life ought to be welcomed and nurtured.... In his letters to a young poet, he provides a vivid image to advocate his Zarathustralike embrace of the possible: "For if we think of this existence of the individual as a larger or smaller room, it appears that most people learn to know only a small corner of their room, a place by the window, a strip of floor on which they walk up and down. Thus they have a certain security." Outside this familiar zone of comfort and familiarity lies growth, and the guiding ethos of psychotherapy is to ease the individual's movement beyond this comfort zone. (1989:200)

The wilderness experience is similarly described as a "guided discovery" (Faarlund, in Reed and Rothenberg, 1993). A participant is introduced to challenges that he or she can solve without serious risk to life. A "guide" begins with what is known and expected by the participant and then "pulls" him or her into a stream of experiences toward the remote and unknown, from a position of being a detached "tourist" or "spectator" into the process of full participation, conducive to the optimal experience of being arriving "home" in nature - a "joyful "aha!" experience." Tourism is discouraged as immoral because it is "superficial involvement" - comfortable but not engaging, it does not lead to deep ecological "Self-realization." Wilderness researchers agree that the goal of wilderness experience *should*, morally, be to produce this state of engagement (Drengson, 1996; Duenkel, 1994; Dustin, McAvoy, and Shultz, 1990; Greenway, 1995a,b; Henderson, 1995; Mitchell, 1983; Sax, 1980).

A way of being that sustains the liminal ground for communitas and flow would be open to this process of learning, to challenge, to novelty, and to perceived risk. An understanding of the origins of spontaneous communitas and flow suggests an ethic of lifelong learning and constant questioning of established modes of thinking and acting; an acceptance of change. As Rogers (1970) explains, echoing the nature writers Dillard and Lopez, one must learn to "tolerate ambiguity" and live "in the midst of paradox."

> Elemental play and scientific curiosity stem from a common source, a generous hospitality toward newness, puzzlement, the untried difficulty, the emerging unknown. Creative acts of whatever order, in play or art or scientific inquiry, call for a willingness to follow the flight of hazardous processes, to surrender the self to forces beyond one's control. Creative life, which is to say a vitally experienced and satisfying life, is not led easily or safely. It is demanding, challenging, stressful. (Mitchell, 1983:222)

5. Being intense: concentration, courage and faith

Accepting risk, challenge and discomfort requires courage and faith, or belief. To have a "wilderness" experience of non-dualism, "control over consciousness" must be maintained in the face of fear (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Tillich (1952) observes that both desire and fear conspire to invent themselves; the Stoics realized that there is nothing to fear but fear itself. The climber who faces fear in a wilderness situation is compelled to discover that fear is a fiction, the product of a mind obsessed with past and future which dissolves when attention is directed fully to the present (Simpson, 1993). The autotelic personality seeks immersion, engagement - the state in which abilities are fully utilized; this is a "giving," participatory attitude. Flow, as "total involvement," is an experience of intensity, the opposite of fearful withdrawal. Finding flow means having the courage, even the *authority*, to seek out the experience of order within chaos. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) uses the term "unselfconscious self-assurance" to describe the non-egoistic courage that is required to seek harmony with environment. This is the "complex" attitude of humbly seeking integration, without sacrificing individuality.

Ultimately, flow cannot be experienced without commitment to the system within which one finds oneself - the *given* reality. Going into wilderness is an expression of this

courage; although the wilderness environment is useful for enforcing control over consciousness by making withdrawal impossible, even dangerous (Scherl, 1990). The wilderness experience is likely not to *begin* as an experience of finding yourself where you want to be. Personal experience suggests that wilderness is more likely a place where you learn to enjoy being because you have no choice to be anywhere else. This fact of wilderness experience must be understood if the moral of the experience is not to be misinterpreted. One way or another, you have to "throw yourself" into the system of action in order to experience flow. Turner explains how the moral imperative of flow must be belief in the rules of the game for the game's own sake (1974:89).

> Flow differs from everyday in that it contains explicit rules "which make action and the evaluation of action unproblematic." Thus, cheating breaks flow - you have to be a believer, even if this means temporarily "willing suspension of unbelief," i.e., choosing (in liminoid fashion) to believe that the rules are "true."

The particulars of the situation that produces the optimal experience do not matter in and of themselves, and it is a dangerous error of dualism to assume that they do. One might call such an error the mistake of "spiritual materialism," or the mistake of the literal interpretation of abstract symbols - a step towards rationalization and the loss of the vision of wholeness. Material conditions are only coincidental to the quality of relationship that is sought.

Once a state of engagement is achieved, life is "justified in the present" and the investment of faith, i.e. the commitment of attention, is redeemed (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Another term for this faith is *resolve*. Our investment of attention is represented by our resolve to follow through on our *goals*. "The goal is really just an excuse to make the experience possible," but we must nonetheless have the resolve to follow through (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988:34). Free goal-setting is a significant trait of the autotelic personality. The individual with "unselfconscious self-assurance" has the courage and commitment to set goals, and the resolve to follow them, but also the freedom to change them if they become unrealistic; the understanding that the goals are arbitrary prevents tragedy. "Faith" is a useful term because it implies the "blind" belief that is justified when activities that are initially unattractive turn out to be rewarding once we approach

them with commitment: "It does not matter whether one originally wanted to do the activity, whether one expected to enjoy it or not" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990:32). All it really takes is arbitrary faith for the sake of faith itself, for indeed as Csikszentmihalyi explains, "The meaning of life *is* meaning" (1990:217). Just as the meaning that is in mountaineering is truly in the morality that the climbers bring to the mountains, it is the way we structure our own experience, rather than the characteristics of the experience itself, that makes the wilderness experience what it is (Mitchell, 1983).

Tillich's conclusion to *The Courage to Be* recommends knowledge of a transcendent reality, equivalent to wildness, as grounds for a resilient faith:

> Absolute faith, or the state of being grasped by the God beyond God...is the situation on the boundary of man's possibilities. It *is* the boundary. Therefore it is both the courage of despair and the courage in and above every courage. It is not a place where one can live, it is without the safety of words or concepts, it is without a name, a church, a cult, a theology. But it is moving in the depth of all of them. It is the power of being, in which they participate and of which they are fragmentary expressions. One can become aware of it in the anxiety of fate and death when the traditional symbols which enable men to stand the vicissitudes of fate and the horror of death have lost their power.... That which was once the power in these symbols can still be present and create the courage to be in spite of the experience of a chaotic world and a finite existence. The stoic courage returns but not as faith in universal reason. It returns as the absolute faith which says yes to being without seeing anything concrete which could conquer the nonbeing in fate and death....(1952:188-189)

6. Expressing and encouraging playfulness and freedom

There should be a "Golden Rule" of freedom, that what freedom one desires, say, from wilderness, one should also provide. By expressing openness to other people and to the world, one is essentially "giving freedom" to their "being." The value of wilderness to experience is that it provides us with freedom to discover our own structure. A moral imperative of wilderness experience might be to embody this freedom ourselves, and pass it on to others. As health flourishes in the freedom of anti-structure, by giving freedom we are giving health.

> The right of each individual to utilize his experience in his own way and to discover his own meanings in it, - this is one of the most priceless potentialities of

> life.... I find that when I can accept another person, which means specifically accepting the feelings and attitudes and beliefs that he has as a real and vital part of him, then I am assisting him to become a person: and there seems to me great value in this. (Rogers, 1970:21)

Freedom is the medium of inherent value; that is, for the realization of the spirit, soul, or essence of a person or thing as opposed to its instrumental value to the economy of structure. By giving freedom, we can discover the value that inheres in the contents of our world.

When we are pressured by external circumstances to be more or less than we truly are, Rogers (1970) explains, we experience insecurity and defensiveness, or guilt and "self-depreciation," - states of anomie or alienation, anxiety or boredom (Mitchell, 1983). The freedom of anti-structure - leisure, play, ritual, or wilderness - is the opportunity to be nothing more or less than exactly what we are. It would seem that the person who is free becomes his or her true self, and the person who becomes his or her true self has the subjective experience of being free, regardless of the circumstances. Freedom, in either case, is experienced as a good thing. One way or another, the Good Life is accompanied by the experience of freedom. The Good Life, as Rogers (1970) explains, *is* what the individual who perceives him or herself as free, will choose. He claims that there is a tendency for the individual who feels free to move naturally towards harmony, in a greater range, richness, and intensity of experience. "The deeply exciting thing about human beings is that when the individual is inwardly free, he chooses the good life in the process of becoming" (Rogers, 1970:193). Presumably, giving freedom is giving the opportunity for individuals to find a moral way of being. People tend towards goodness. Rogers says, "I find that in my work as a therapist that if I can create a climate of the utmost of freedom for the individual, I can really trust the direction that he will move" (in Tillich, 1984:196).

7. An aesthetic way of being

As a mode of perceiving, giving freedom or "letting-be" the world seems to be an aesthetic mode - one which seeks to appreciate the beauty of things, rather than seeking

change. This way of being is what nature writer Lopez (1986) tried to encourage with the acceptance of "the given reality." Thoreau understood how realizing our ignorance opened us up to the beauty of the world, and termed this realization "Beautiful Knowledge." Jeffers and Abbey both practised a profoundly aesthetic way of being. For Jeffers, life's purpose was to perceive beauty, and in some small way to contribute to the beauty of the world with our lives. And Drengson writes, "The way of wild journeying can be called the Art of arts. From it we learn artfulness in the heart of the aesthetic - how to walk and live in beauty" (1986:186). Beauty is a vision of wholeness, not fragmented, and thus potentially a moral vision. Beauty can engender not only a sensuous response, but a response from one's whole moral being (Porteous, 1996). For this reason Porteous recommends "childlike (not childish) appreciation of the earth and world...go out and encounter a moral landscape on aethetico-ethical terms" (1996:264).

8. Expressing and encouraging process

Process is a very significant concept for a wilderness morality. Reality is a process, and wholeness cannot be achieved unless process can be accepted as a way of being. "Willingness to be a process" is basic to the idea of "personhood" (Rogers, 1970). Maslow studied "process" versus "product" - that is, intrinsic versus extrinsic - orientations in individuals and found that those oriented towards "process" were more likely to achieve self-actualization, peak experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Rogers, 1970). In other words, although goals are important for structuring experience and promoting involvement in the world, a preoccupation with *ends* is not likely to lead to satisfaction or to health. *Means* are of utmost if not absolute importance in the wilderness worldview, and it follows that means are not justified by ends. Ends, extrinsically defined, are of questionable value, if any. A worldview of process is one based on relationship rather than substance (LaChapelle, 1988) - a "spiritual" worldview in the sense that its values cannot be quantified or represented in any abstract way.

Because reality is a process, people who cannot accept process are not at home in the world or in themselves. The rational tendency to categorize segments of reality

according to abstract and absolute definitions is useful. This tendency, however, places the individual who is strictly rational in conflict with reality because the definitions are necessarily incomplete. Reality defies the categories. Furthermore, the same tendency defines happiness, satisfaction, "the good life," in static terms, according to an idealized vision which is forever elusive.

> When he enters the therapeutic relationship, the client is likely to wish to achieve some fixed state: he wants to reach the point where his problems are solved.... He tends, in the freedom of the therapeutic relationship to drop such fixed goals, and to accept a more satisfying realization that he is not a fixed entity, but a process of becoming. (Rogers, 1970:122)

Desirable end states can never be reached; life is ever evolving. Turner (1969) made the same observation in reference to social life, that it is a mistake to wish to see structure or anti-structure sustained as the static form of social life. When the individual realizes that he/she is and will always be in process, it becomes evident that happiness can be had now or never. The good life can be realized immediately. With nothing particular to be achieved, the individual is free to seek enjoyment in the present moment, to *be*.

> Life, at its best, is a flowing, changing process in which nothing is fixed.... I find I am at my best when I can let the flow of experience carry me, in a direction which appears to be forward, toward goals of which I am but dimly aware. In this floating with the complex stream of my experiencing, and in trying to understand its ever-changing complexity, it should be evident that there are no fixed points. When I am thus able to be in process, it is clear that there can be no closed system of beliefs, no unchanging set of principles which I hold. Life is guided by a changing understanding of and interpretations of my experience. It is always in process of becoming. (Rogers, 1970:27)

To explain the "existential quality of satisfying living," Rogers cites Lao-Tzu: "The way to do is to be" (1970:163). The good life itself, Rogers stresses, is a process, a direction, and not a destination. Hand in hand with this vision is the principle, central to the ecopolitical movement, that one cannot change the world from a standpoint of scientific or ethical detachment, without first seeking *involvement* in the process that one is trying to affect:

> You have to step into the stream and be grabbed by something outside your own private soul, *something you do not control*. It's then that you have a chance of

> being shaken so that you're changed, and through that already contributing to changing the system. Instead of observing the river "scientifically," from a safe distance, you step into the river, are - surprisingly - grabbed by the current, and are *forced* to learn to swim. That's when you learn to accept that nothing is permanent, that everything is time and that time is creativity. Only then will you have the initiative and ability to escape control by the powers above you in the pyramid. (Kvaloy, in Reed and Rothenberg, 1993:128)

In embracing process the non-dualist gives up the notion of "control" and the static "Parmenidian" vision that it entails, and relates to a flowing "Heraclitean" world from a standpoint of participation (Oelschlaeger, 1991).

The individual is free to be his or her true self when he rejects static definitions of self and accepts that identity, too, is a process. "It is more fruitful to look upon the person's full environment - all the things and events that are near to him - as elements that are being *integrated into his personality* as it matures and unfolds.... Developing a personality means to become part of a large environment, which is a field of activity" (Kvaloy, in Reed and Rothenberg, 1993:137, 147). Accepting process means willingness to accept oneself as a process - willingness to accept change, a fluid definition of identity. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) observes that entering into any relationship necessarily involves a transformation of the self. To experience flow, one must be open to personal change, to becoming something unknown.

Being a process means following Thoreau's advice - not to look for a law to live by, but simply to *live*. One does not seek the approval of others, or standards to live by, but instead realizes independence (Rogers, 1970). Berry writes, "ways of life change only in living. To live by expert advice is to abandon one's life" (1977:131). Rogers explains that the person tries to move "away from oughts," "away from pleasing others," and "away from meeting expectations," towards an expression of autonomy. Morality then, like the good life, is a function of a process of right living. The core of Thoreau's argument in *Walden* suggests that the attempt to anticipate right living by moral prescription is a reversal of priorities, distracting attention from the ultimately important process. Tillich describes the attentive orientation to the process of living as *agape*:

> ...namely love which is listening. I call it listening love, which doesn't follow

> abstract valuations, but which is related to the concrete situation, and out of its listening to this very moment gains its decision for action....(1984:202)

The danger of institutions, moral laws, political and religious "isms" and other forms of "orthodoxy" is that they endanger this process and threaten moral law by making it no longer an act of freedom, but rather something to be "broken" out of, where the effort to break free diverts attention from the course of true freedom.

9. Rejecting orthodoxy, celebrating ignorance

> In short, as a snowdrift is formed where there is a lull in the wind, so, one would say, where there is a lull of truth an institution springs up. But the truth blows right on over it, nevertheless, and at length blows it down. (Thoreau, 1975:372)

The emphasis on "wildness" and "process" means that all forms of orthodoxy are recognized as secondary to the fundamental truth outside of orthodoxy. The aim is to always remember that the true value of wildness can never be encapsulated by structure, which is only good insofar as it preserves this insight. The rejection of orthodoxy is allied with a recognition of ignorance. Berry observed the connection of wildness with ignorance. Of the mystic, he writes, "by praying he acknowledges ignorance; the orthodox presume to *know*, whereas the marginal person is trying to find out" (1977:174). Admitting ignorance is also a prerequisite for openness. Drengson writes "In realizing ignorance our minds open to become like Muir, fully awake and attentive" (1996:184).

Orthodoxy is founded on the presumption of knowledge, while the experience of wholeness requires the presumption of ignorance. Wilderness travellers, in tune with a larger reality, tend to reject the claims to truth of human ideologies and institutions. They concur with LaChapelle, who writes, "One sided allegiance to any kind of 'ism,' Jung explains, means losing touch with the 'dark, material, earthy ground of being" (1988:78). Similarly, Berry observes that "a man finally cannot act upon the basis of absolute law, for the law is more fragmentary than his own experience..."(1970:161). Character is the key - "the real sources of hope are personal and spiritual, not public and political" (168). Berry's logic explains why a wilderness philosophy is an apolitical philosophy, one which recognizes that the truth contained in wildness cannot be encapsulated in an

abstraction or in the institutions which follow (1970:51):

> In my judgement intelligence never goes whole hog for anything public, especially political movements. Across the whole range of politics now (and I suppose always) you find people willing to act on the assumption that there is some simple abstraction that will explain and solve the problems of the world, and who go direct from the discovery of the abstraction to the forming of an organization to promote it. In my opinion those people are all about equally dangerous, and I don't believe anything they say. What I hold out for is the possibility that a man can live decently *without* knowing all the answers, or believing that he does - can live decently out of the awareness that personal acts of compassion, love, humility, honesty are better, and more adequate, responses to that complexity than any public abstraction or theory organization.

Other writers in this tradition agree with their Romantic antecedents on the primacy of individual experience as a guide to life because this experience, like Thoreau's "Beautiful Knowledge" or Spinoza's *Scientia intuitiva*, provides the most complete vision on which to act. Porteous suggests, as an alternative to "conformist individualism," "you can try to think and sense for yourself, even intuit and feel for yourself, embrace wild culture, and become a person, following your bliss" (1996:265).

Because we are ignorant, our knowledge does not provide us with the vision to heal, as Thoreau recognized. So change must not be enacted through structure and moral law, but from the vision of wholeness that is only achieved by *first* becoming involved in the world as it is given, by the active process of living in a way that acknowledges wholeness by seeking involvement with the world. This premise of action is fundamental to the deep ecology movement, which is inspired by the slogan "The way is the goal" (Faarlund, in Reed and Rothenberg, 1993).

A Practical Conclusion: Wilderness, Education, and Ritual

If it is wildness, and not wilderness itself that is the key to the "wilderness experience," what responsibility do we have to the land? The key importance of "perception" and "attitude" coming out of a study of the meaning of wilderness adventure does not suggest that the need for wilderness can be eliminated. To the contrary, the experiences of wilderness adventurers confirm the necessity of wild nature in human

experience. In practical terms, the wilderness adventurer should be encouraged to protect wilderness in "sustainable landscapes," educate for wildness and wilderness preservation, and participate in "ritual" activity that includes ongoing wilderness adventure.

The "postmodern" vision does not suggest that wilderness should not be protected, but that we should change our notions of wilderness preservation so that protecting wilderness practically coincides with the psychological and social evolution to a "wild attitude." Grumbine (1995) recommends that we aim to replace the dichotomy of wilderness and civilization with a vision of humanity living within wildness, with wilderness existing everywhere. In this vision wilderness preservation should continue according to a platform of conservation biology, based on maintaining biodiversity and incorporating human use into protected areas in ways that are consistent with this goal. Grumbine also recommends that we replace the concept of "sustainable development" with the idea of "sustainable landscapes" - places that make room for all species. This would mean not "nature preservation" in the traditional sense, but a practical exercise by which we might learn how to live with wildness, including the wildness in ourselves (Grumbine, 1995). Thus preserving "wilderness" really entails a transformation of ourselves and the way we live in the world, as described in earlier sections. Biodiversity preservation is viewed as a way of realizing, through the process of implementing it, the rejuvenation and transformation of culture that Romantics dreamed about. Wilderness preservation proceeds then, according to the lesson of "priorities," as the material consequence of a much more important process:

> The ultimate purpose of protecting wildness is not to preserve nature or improve upon it, but to learn a sense of limits from it and model culture after it. The hope of protecting large wildlands with ecosystem management is that this strategy would slow the rate of the biodiversity crisis while also providing a model that could feed the nature/culture system *both* ways - sustaining wildness at the core of protected lands and at the centre of human communities. The promise of this strategy is that as people begin to gain direct experience with ecosystems by working to protect biodiversity, wildness may explicitly become a part of culture. It is just this sense of wildness that Thoreau was aiming for when he declaimed about "the preservation of the world." (Grumbine, 1995:21)

Thus "learning to live with nature" is an exercise in the maturing of the self, and a

maturing of civilization, to borrow Shepard's (1995) analogy, beyond adolescence. It is important to understand the act of biodiversity preservation as self-transformation or else, as Shepard explains (1995:32):

> Changing the world becomes an unconscious, desperate substitute for changing the self. We then find animal protectionism, wild-area (as opposed to the rest of the planet) preservation, escapist naturism, and beautification, all of which maintain two worlds, hating compromise and confusing complicated ecological issues with good and evil in people.

The change Grumbine advocates requires the increasing integration of landscape use with protection, reduced consumption of resources by people in the developed world, greater technological efficiency, an equitable redistribution of ecological wealth, and eventually fewer people on the planet. Change must be inspired by citizen involvement in environmental action, which ultimately begins with the inspiration of direct wilderness experience - "it is imperative that young children be connected with wildness," Grumbine notes.

In the process of change towards a "wild culture" education has an important role to play. Experiential education, advocated by writers in this tradition at least since Thoreau, can serve the role of a "ritual" experience while also teaching practical skills. As Andrews (1996) observes on wilderness kayaking trips, along with the skills comes a sense of *communitas*, a religious vision. Experience avoids the impoverishing effect of rationalism by incorporating what can be intuited but not articulated on blackboards and textbooks - it is more holistic teaching. Orr (1992) contends that a "postmodern" society must be based on "ecological literacy," which must result from an education in which the experience of place is the fundamental conceptual framework. Such an education overcomes the specialization and fragmentation that Berry (1977) identified as the root disease of modern civilization, by connecting, integrating across disciplines and from the classroom to the world. Education, argues Porteous, should include "teaching children not merely utilitarian tools for making a living (or a killing!) but also aesthetic and ethical tools for living a full life" (1996:263).

Finally, in Grumbine's vision of change, environmental policy must be treated in

religious terms, introducing "cultural mechanisms that attach symbolic and social significance to the land...rooted in experience of the sacred that...may lead directly to limits on behavior" (1995:22). For the long term, he writes, "what we need are cultural practices that resacralize the world." LaChapelle and Shepard agree that what is needed are ritual and myth to serve this purpose. Shepard writes,

> Initiatory ordeals in wilderness solitude and the ecological methods conveyed by myth are instruments in the maturing of the whole person. Only in the success of this extraordinary calendar does the adult come to love the world as the ground of his being. (1995:37)

Grumbine continues,

> This is what supporters of the deep ecology movement uphold as ecocentrism, transpersonal ecology, or an ecological approach to being in the world. Such approaches seek identification with nonhuman beings and a wonderfully expansive boundary between self and other, where, in Snyder's provocative descriptions, "the flora and fauna and landforms *are part of culture*" and culture itself is "a nourishing habitat." (1995:22)

As a solution, a particular way of living "wildly," LaChapelle (1988) recommends the use of ritual and seasonal festivals to affirm the primacy of wholeness, of which the dualism-producing human consciousness is but a small part. Ritual and festival provides a way to restore balance or "perspective" of humanity's place within a larger reality. They would celebrate the mysterious world that comes to light with "Beautiful Knowledge." Ritual and festival in traditional societies serve the same role as the wilderness experience, of rebirth, renewal, transformation. Both types of experiences, LaChapelle explains, enable for a time an affirmation of the goodness of all of nature, and result in a sense of overflowing gratitude, the joy that Nietzsche associated with the "approval of everything." Ritual, and also myth, serves this function of affirming the value of all things, and providing a vision of unity, a way of reconciling the paradoxes that the nature writers recognize sustain a healthy life. Wilderness adventure continues within this context as a form of "ritual" having this renewal effect, accepted as a necessary part of the balanced life, just as it was for Thoreau's everyday life, and just as it is now where the "compensatory value of wilderness" appears "as a balance in the lives of people who deal

professionally in a real of 'abstractions rather than things'" (Hendee, Stankey, and Lucas, 1990:379).

CHAPTER 6
DISCUSSION: INTROSPECTION

During the process of research, I began to notice significant differences between the wilderness experiences I was having presently, and those memories of the wilderness experience in whose context I had framed my research question. The key to understanding my own research journey is most evident in this distinction between how I perceived wilderness then and how I perceive it now.

The summer before beginning graduate school I was a wilderness guide for trips in the Rocky Mountains and on Canada's Atlantic coast. I had hiked above treeline to alpine meadows, glacier lakes and snowfields in Alberta, and in the barren sub-arctic wetlands of caribou and tuckamore in western Newfoundland's high country. It was a summer of new landscapes and new challenges that left me feeling high on travel and too restless to return to school. University suddenly seemed to interfere with everything that was important in life - "the ecstasy of the stars,...the dark mysterious secret of the origin of faceless wonderless crapulous civilization" (Kerouac, 1952:39). The post-wilderness, restless passion was all the more inspiration, however, to understand this source of a dream of a more real, vivid, empowering, unselfconscious way of living.

The wilderness experience as recalled seemed inextricably entwined, as Malcolm Lowry (1961) observed with his wife at Eridanus, with all that was important in life, including the possibility of authentic love. I felt the same longing expressed by Tolstoy's character from the novel *The Cossacks* (1961) - Olenin, to whom the city seems "distorted," "silly and pitiable" after time spent in the mountain wilderness. Like Lowry's character, Olenin explains that the woman he loves is "like nature," and wonders, "maybe in her I love nature herself, everything beautiful that exists in nature." The experience of all that lends passion and beauty to life - "these remote, snowy mountains and this majestic, happy woman" - is inseparably intertwined with the wilderness which dispels the self-consciousness that Tolstoy himself believed to be "the greatest moral evil." Cursing the self-consciousness dividing him from his passions,

Olenin sees the key to a life truly lived as following impulse to the elimination of all of his painstakingly contrived moral convictions, his carefully thought-out plans for "self-renunciation" that stand in the way of his living and loving. Realizing this, he concludes, "formerly, I was dead. Now I am alive...." The mountain wilderness inspired in him the romantic dream to live amorally, to get drunk, kill, sing, have sex, live like Whitman with "madness and joy" by the freedom of mountains and storms.

Tolstoy succeeds in describing the range of emotions evoked by my own encounters with wildness: human love inspired by, inseparable from, the love of nature and natural beauty; genuine, unwilled emotions of love flowing spontaneously from experience; the urge to cast off all past convictions as empty and contrived; the hope of a better life and a better self, coupled with an intense dissatisfaction with past life and past self; boundless energy for living; a desperation to *act* towards this better life and this authentic love. In the end Olenin finds himself too educated, too far removed by his Moscow upbringing to give himself over to the natural, unselfconscious, amoral life of a Cossack. But the wilderness experience nonetheless suggests a wisdom for a better life, the key to recognizing, in Thoreau's terms, "the essential facts of life" that empower real living. As Norway's ecosophic curmudgeon Zapffe explains of mountaineering,

> It touches a piece of the incomprehensible, the magnificent, the consciousness-expanding cosmic adventure of what it is to be a human being in the world. Its face is turned toward death and nature, not toward the stilted, galling artificiality of human fellowship.... Rocks may be dead, but they are not diseased. The more you climb, the more your body purges itself of the poisons accumulated in human society; when you have enough air under your heel, the poisons loose their grip and sink into the depths like mustard gas. You become purified, and more: you get an antibody in your system, you can go back into the world and remain immune. You become an antibiotic in a degenerating world. (in Reed and Rothenberg, 1993:58-59)

At the campground in northwestern Newfoundland, in the middle of the night my group was down the road at an empty campsite chatting around the fire. I ran out to send them to bed, then back to my tent. The campground was a circular gravel road bordered by a ganglia of gravel campsites, all of which had essentially been dumped onto the surface of a vast bog. I jumped off the gravel pad of our campsite onto the bog, and ran

fifty metres across the springy expanse of sphagnum moss and coarse Labrador tea, looked up at the sky with my heart pounding audibly from my sudden 3 a.m. run, and had a pee. The wide clearing gave an uninterrupted view of the summertime stars from horizon to horizon where it was punctuated by silhouettes of stunted spruce. Stars were a rare sight for us in a summer of early bedtimes. The closest "city" was Cornerbrook, a thousand kilometres south, and the stars must have been as vivid as in the dawn of history. Times like this are pure magic, witnessing these celestial events like something backstage to the human experience, like peeking behind the curtain of everyday reality and seeing the little wizard pulling the levers, having a glimpse at a truth that you'd never been positioned to see before, feeling that you're the only human on earth witnessing pure reality. At these perfect moments there is always the impulse to share, and I wanted to haul my co-leader out of the tent to see for herself, but my enthusiastic recommendation failed to rouse her, and I crawled back into my own sleeping bag.

The mountains of western Newfoundland rise 2000 feet out of the coastal lowlands and fjords of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. They have the smoothed tops of old mountains worn down and grooved by the passage of glaciers. The highlands are sub-arctic bog and scrub-brush called tuckamore which supports snowshoe hare, moose and wandering caribou. Lakes scatter in the bottoms of valleys. Without trees, the eye can see for long distances and the scale of the land is distorted. Water and caribou trails run everywhere between the rocks. When the last glacier melted it deposited worn boulders in odd locations, turning the mountains into an erratic garden of stones. The large rocks perched above smaller rocks on high ridges appear to be floating when the light shines beneath them. Sometimes these rocks turn out to be caribou, standing in the wind to escape the flies - the same motive that drives everyone but myself into bed before sunset. One day after the light has already gone from our valley, I go for a walk alone among the long shadows of the rocks. A boulder still shining in the sun on top of the next ridge demands examination. I run carefree along caribou paths to reach it, then another, and another, until I am high and far away from the campsite. On the way up I surprise a ptarmigan. I have run directly into the setting sun until it becomes visible over the sea,

setting between the cliffs at the fjord's mouth. The water horizon of the Gulf looks overwhelmingly high, as if the sea level is hovering far above the mountains. Three caribou and a moose have walked close by and paid me little attention. I have been leaping and bawling and trying to communicate with them, but they eat grass and keep moving and cast me few glances. Only the moose paused to look, as if she thought she recognized me for an instant. I wait for the sun to set for about half an hour, watching the animals graze past slowly, and leaning into the wind, which is blowing straight out of the sun as if it is the long exhalation of the day. The warm wind is rippling the folds in my clothes and pulling my hair back away from my face. While I outwait the sun, I crouch in the lee of a big boulder.

The wind, Dillard observes, is evocative of the present moment - "Lick a finger: feel the now" (1990:98). It occurs to me that somewhere a thousand miles in the direction of that wind is Toronto, Yonge Street, and subways carrying commuters who are missing the greatest sunset of all time, a nation of people, not knowing the purity of this landscape, the freshness of this air, not looking up from their work to contemplate the setting of the sun and the end of another day. This landscape is here, it will always be here, rugged and undeveloped and humbling, indifferent and unchanged after I leave and return to the city, and I know somehow the knowledge of this will always inspire me.

The summer became a colossal love affair with life and with the land that was marred only by the dissenting voices of teenage hikers who would trade all the mountains on earth for a day at the mall, and later by my sour relations with the sea kayaking outfitter who operated the final trip of the summer. The ecotourism operator, I learned, is not necessarily in the business of providing a wilderness experience, but rather in delivering the wilderness to the paying client while maintaining the most grotesquely extravagant comforts of civilization. He is one who does not comprehend Fritjof Nansen's criticism of tourism as "superficial acquaintance" (Reed and Rothenberg, 1993:161); and who exhibits the antithesis of Edward Abbey's observation that,

> We don't go into wilderness to exhibit our skills at gourmet cooking. We go into the wilderness to get away from the kind of people who think gourmet cooking is

important. (1994:326)

I found myself feeling alienated and iterating vows to abandon leadership altogether and leave ecotourism and adventure guiding to other people and find some other way to structure my life around the wilderness experience. In my journal, I observed that despite my conflicts with the group, "I realize I still like this better than being in the city - I just have to find a new way to make a living out here."

There was a hurricane off the coast of Florida that had caused storm surf on the shores of eastern Canada. The giant pounding surf, the majesty of the mountains, and the company of my co-leader were the key inspirations that summer; they made me feel alive, and I wanted to hold onto my relationship with these things that filled me with dreams of adventure and endless travel. I expressed in my journal again and again, a blue funk about *forgetting* the inspiration - forgetting the memories of summer, what I valued, who I was.

I tried to understand why I felt so confined, being in Victoria. Was it because I was no longer living out in the open? I could no longer in the same way sense a spinning earth, hear the weather in my sleep? I considered that maybe it was because the streets here ran in a few directions, the city grid told you where to walk, park benches told you where to sit. Maybe I missed the freedom that I felt in the way one inhabits, moves through, and alters a space devoid of purpose - running in the mountains above treeline where I could see for miles and hike forever in any direction. There is joy in finding a good spot for the tent, a place to eat, a rock that fits the arch of the back just so, a tree to climb. And in the wilderness there is constant motion - kinaesthesia! In society unrestrained motion is the prerogative of the wealthy and powerful, the consumption of oceans and continents in the roaring bites of jets, but wilderness freedom is the domain of the ordinary person. Listening, it's been said, is the greatest need of people; self-expression is a need. And self-expression is a function of speech, and movement is our most natural language. The land provides a medium for the language of movement and in doing so, it could be said, also listens. If moving through landscape is a speech act, routing this motion frustrates expression. From this perspective, the encroachment of the

human consciousness into the wilderness was a threat to being. It must be fought! Wilderness freedom must be preserved!

For some reason I could not accept that it was enough, in response to a love of wilderness, to simply go out and have the same wonderful experience again and again. I was stuck thinking that there was something *wrong* with civilization. I wanted my wilderness experience to be more than a "safety valve" for an unsustainable culture. To pattern my life after the harmony I experienced in wilderness, I wanted to avoid living in a way that contradicted my wilderness values. Pondering this for many years, I had tried to constantly simplify my lifestyle and envision some sort of decentralized, agrarian ideal. The problem was that I was growing increasingly embittered as I perceived myself at odds with the culture that I inhabited. I would get angry if I had to follow my friends into a Wal-Mart store.

What was worse is that my moral imperative was separating me from the experience that was the root of my sanity, my self. I thought a better life would be one where I did not rely on the modern industrial culture to give me the wilderness experience. I was suspicious of people who seemed not to be bothered by the contradiction of using plastic kayaks or power ski-lifts and four-wheel drive trucks to have an authentic environmental encounter. It didn't matter to them or to any of the commercial outdoor adventure industry that the academic literature suggested wilderness experience should be replaced by organic gardening and meditation. My nightmare was that all this carefree fun would feed a spiral of corruption by which wilderness became parks, parks tourist attractions, and tourist attractions like Banff parking lots and strip malls. I could see the signs everywhere; the world was ending. At times I would get depressed in the aisles of the grocery store.

The only way to get any sense of perspective was to put aside my ideals and go into wilderness. The problem was I couldn't think of anywhere to go, because there was no perfect wilderness nearby that I knew of; it had all been overrun by tourists, or else it was too small, or I had to buy a permit, or something. The goals I set for myself were always unrealistic - climbs that were far beyond my ability, places I didn't have the

resources to get to. It dawned on me one day in the thick of studying the wilderness literature that the wilderness I was looking for didn't exist anywhere; not in this world. The place of ultimate goodness I sought was like heaven. Suddenly my philosophy seemed vaguely Christian. I felt relieved when I realized that the perfect life I was trying to live was also unattainable.

I no longer had to try and achieve anything, but what about the wilderness experience that had originally inspired me? Was it not still possible to have that experience? I made an interesting observation when I tried to go into wilderness. Initially, I was profoundly uncomfortable. I would think, if I was in the mountains, that I should have gone canoeing instead, or stayed home in the city. When I was alone, I was often lonely and realized how much I missed my family. Often when I was not frightened, I was bored. Facing the wilderness experience directly, all my wilderness dreams seemed like silly escapism. Sleeping on the cold side of a mountain, I would look at the emptiness around me and long for the warmth of a city apartment, the comforting diversions of books and human fellowship, and I would have ambitions to settle down in a secure career, and buy furniture. Gone was the contempt for civilization and the discontent that made me wish I could distinguish myself by performing daring feats of adventure on rivers and in mountains.

At the same time, the wilderness forced me to realize the emptiness of my dreams. The easy happiness that I had expected to find was not there. To believe that the good life lay in wilderness was a lie. I found myself exposed to a brisk wind on a mountain's bare scree slope, under a sky growing menacingly grey.

> 2 August 1996. What is life? Why am I here? I used to presume it was to climb mountains. But I went up there to find that I was wrong. That's not it at all. Life is something else. Mountains are just a place that it shows itself. On the dirt trail in I had a hint, before I even started climbing....*Everything* scares me. I don't need to be "extreme". The fear doesn't go away - it's a ceaseless hanging on, and if anything it gets harder. Our muscles weaken. It becomes harder to surpass our past achievements. We can never rest....It's miserable, and the abyss always hangs beneath our feet. It doesn't go away ("There's no lack of void" - *Godot*). If anything, I have to face fear....I've seen this before....The mountains weren't a way out....We face life the way we face mountains.

Passing through a band of steep rock that guarded the approach to the summit, I was climbing through a chimney when my feet started a small landslide. I bridged it with my white-knuckled arms while my legs spun in space with pieces of the mountain clattering down the funnel below them in a rush of noise and dust. I clambered to the top of the chimney and crouched, shaking, to collect myself; dirty and wet and scared. Every danger rational and imaginary was exaggerated by the solitude and my hyperactive imagination. I looked out over the route of my ascent and across the lesser peaks which were now below me. I had reached a point of paralysis between the gully I had just ascended and the rock band guarding the summit where going up and going down were equally undesirable. I'd lost the motivation that was driving me upward. There where the air was thinner and the summit was too close to be seen, the mountain was a mound of rock to which I clung, too huge to comprehend as an objective. I could not remember what made it seem worth climbing. There was nothing calling me down either. I'd already *been* down there. The valley was inevitable. The summit was questionable. I sat on the caramel rock in this puzzled state, just trying to *feel* something that would compel me to go one way or the other. But I felt *nothing* about the climb; only a general effusion of emotion about life. Despair swept over me. I felt as if I was holding on by a small margin to the edge of the earth and to life with the infinity of space gaping before me. I felt a sense of the fragility of my own existence that is most accurately described as sickening. I had no appetite; no thirst. I wished only to be at home, with my family and all the security of childhood. I wanted to love and be loved, to hold and be held, to have some human contact against the inevitability of life's conclusion. I huddled on the mountainside amidst waves of emotion - terror, despair, humility, compassion. Accompanying this was a desperate, pleading will to live.

When I was hanging in the chimney, I realized, it had not occurred to me to *pray*. I had reached out for nothing but the rock. So I prayed, there at 9500 feet. I gave some keen thought to my father's prescription when I left Toronto - to be "spiritually minded"; but I wasn't sure how. There were no supernatural effects. God and his minions were silent. The clouds were dense and cold slate. In the interest of integrity I decided that I

would proceed. I made a renewed commitment to climb as long as I could, or until I reached the summit, or until it started to rain. I forced myself to eat some trail mix, donned my pack, and found a route into the rock band.

I must have been shaking, muttering to myself as I scrambled through the remainder of the rock band, dreading that since each move I made upward would have to be repeated on the way down, the worst was ahead of me until well into the descent. There would be no joy on the mountaintop - only a dull sense of satisfaction - "so here it is. *Good.*" No feeling of triumph. All my emotions blunted by this mass of rock except the all pervasive fear, lingering in my gut, a nervous eye on the clouds, the persistent, suppressed longing to be *anywhere* else but here.

The scrambling eased after the band of steep rock, to churning steps up a low-angled escalator of loose scree which was creeping its way in an unsettling mass movement down a funnel into the top of the narrow gully of rock where I had been in the landslide. My solitary thoughts of doom were interrupted by the incongruous appearance of another lone climber striding towards me against a backdrop of sky, from the direction of the summit. *Fellow mountaineer!* I felt a radical, earthy affinity for this stranger, up here ten thousand feet above the ocean, 15 kilometres from the road, far off the regular hiking trails - the first human I'd seen all day. We came face to face and paused in the wind, conversing as I felt my sweat turning to ice. Piece by piece I layered on warm clothes from my pack as we compared notes about our routes up, hiking times, the distance to the summit, the incoming rain, worthwhile climbs among the dozens of peaks to the east and south and west of us. He made a weather forecast which in the coming days would prove to be unerring, and took the edge off my fear with his nonchalance, a joviality credited to the stunning view, a successful climb, and three beers consumed on the summit. Then we parted, with a short walk remaining to my goal. The mountain man dropped cooly into my gully of dread. I spent a short time on the summit, taking in the view so I could appreciate it all at some later time - the sheer cliff dropping off the far side of the mountain, bits of snow leading to cornice, the ragged grey peaks studding the horizon, an orderly line of them to the east rising out of the Kananaskis River valley.

All of the frustrations and worries of my past year seemed absurd and ridiculous. Had I only had *this* vision of my existential situation, I would not have taken my opportunities for granted, or ever failed to feel anything but genuine, unselfconscious love and gratitude towards my friends and family. And how could I but retain this vision when I returned to life down below? As I began to perceive it, the situation that I now beheld was not restricted to the mountain setting - it was the fact of life's fragility and its inevitable, unpredictable end. This was not something I was experiencing alone, only in this moment, but was an essential fact of my life that I shared with every being on earth. This was an awakening to what had always been true. The hope of *ever* climbing down to a point of safety and security was now clearly an illusion. Even if I made it down from this mountain - as I so desperately wished to do - I would still be living tenuously above an abyss.

Pondering the meaning of the wilderness experience had resulted in so much *doubt* about what to believe in, what mattered in life. I had concluded that wilderness is inescapably corruptible. Where could I place my faith if not in wilderness? In some transcendent idea of wilderness heaven? In God? I found no certain answers to these questions. In its most extreme form this inquiry became "why live?" In this purposeless, irredeemably tainted, life devoid of pleasure, what reason was there to continue? I did not know the feeling of standing *for* anything; so what to make of this sudden, mysterious will to live? On the mountain this surprised me: I was filled with a passion to live for the sake of living, to affirm life in all its wondrous imperfection, and to love in defiance of nature's inhumanity. In my desire to cling to the mountainside, I found a conviction that I did not have to rationalize, a faith that transcended the carefully considered moralism of my city life. In my impulsive reaction against feelings of angst and insignificance I felt a real compassion and love for humanity that had a far deeper source than the loyalty or responsibility or contingency or vague, rationalized love that motivated my relationships at home. All that was important in that moment was to be alive, among family and friends, to be surviving; and beyond that only to feel gratitude, to appreciate life's fleeting opportunity, to preserve life and reduce suffering.

10 August 1996 - Kananaskis. I was shrivelled by fear. I felt very small, very childish....The gully was worse on descent than I could have imagined. Even a small fall I imagined would send me rolling down the entire mountain - perhaps an exaggeration. But at the top of the gully was potential for a sliding fall of several metres, and even a tiny injury to leg or ankle would make it impossible for me to descend safely. The gully was a tenuous downclimb. I did it with intense concentration. Once again I'm particularly surprised by that feeling I had which eliminated all thoughts of failure. Error was not a possibility....All year I'd been letting things slide - principles, dreams, deadlines. All year failure had been my favourite alternative. But suddenly there was no acceptable alternative to success. I thought I could placidly accept anything, but now I *know* I draw the line at injury and death. I choose life.... I wanted to live. As I descended from the crux, made it below the chimney to the easy snow, I shuddered. The emotional release was almost overwhelming. Several times I thought I would cry, or laugh. But instead my breaths would just sometimes come out in a shuddering, soft staccato stammer, a leaking of emotion, a depressurization....In the city I think I had harboured the belief that my salvation lay in the extreme, that I was not fully alive in work or school, but on the rivers or in the mountains I am in my element, facing danger with grace. But in fact I was graceless. On the mountain I was petrified, and wanted nothing more than to come down to the security of flat ground and human company. I am not the man I wished I was. I was deluded by bitterness to think there was something up there for me. But up there I found misery, and the reminder that what goes on down here is worthwhile after all. After the climb I dearly valued my life; I remained acutely aware of death; accepted that fear would have to be a constant factor in the good life, and I was pretty much in the mood to...share my life with any total strangers at the bottom, to rage against the dying of the light, to cease going quietly, to explode with love and wonder and gratitude, and hasten to experience all that I can in this limited time. On the descent I picked alpine flowers and pressed them in my journal. I revelled in movement. I smelled the air. I whooped with joy. I made up a song about "the gravity blues," and I sang against gloom and grizzlies all the way home, clapping a rhythm with my hands....The trend towards extremism tends to devalue the ordinary....The irony is that it in fact teaches an appreciation for the ordinary, but that never comes through in the media....There's even a whole technique to walking....Learning to walk again - the fundamental skill! I found myself feeling a renewed sense of "spiritual mindedness." Why do I fight so hard, I wondered, over how my life should be? I should rest and just let it happen. Let go. Let flow. Just appreciate all that I've got, all that happens...even when *nothing* happens! I can license myself to do small things - to sing, to make jokes, to live and not always be trying to leave it to the experts. I can dip my hands into everything. I am free. I don't need to hold back. Indeed, there is not time to hold back....Now I'm *less concerned* with being elsewhere! More concerned with being where I am.

My spirits rose inverse to altitude on the descent, until I was almost tearful with joy at reaching the gentle sloping, meadowed bowl below the peak. Purple, yellow, blue flowers covered the meadow with a fragile beauty that compelled me to press 6 different specimens between the pages of my journal, uncharacteristically feeling a naturalist's delight at detail. I was singing loudly to myself as I walked the flat 11 kilometres back to the youth hostel at the parking lot, the balls of my feet aching with fatigue. I wrote in my journal that I had found the "antidote to despair" - the knowledge that life is worth living for its own sake, and we need only the perspective of wilderness to remind us that this is sufficient for happiness, and sufficient motivation to love.

For everything from the flowers to the surrounding mountains I felt a deepening appreciation for beauty that seemed to tap directly into my heart and soul, stirring my emotions. As more and more of the mountain came into view behind me with each step back to the hostel, I would turn around and gaze at it with mounting incredulity and excitement, and take pictures. How imponderable that I had actually stood up there, walked all the way around the back of it and onto its summit! Thenceforth I looked at that particular mountain with a deep satisfaction, as a piece of the great blank slate of my life on this planet that had been coloured with meaning. To continue to experience my life in this way was purpose enough, and I felt content, philosophical. I actually enjoyed myself. In my journal I wrote,

> This sense of appreciative well-being, gratitude, and *validity* was very important....It made me feel *alive*. It broadened my thoughts and, I suspect, made me a far more interesting person on return than when I set out.

I had some good conversations when I came off the mountain, and when I met a woman I wrote in my journal, "I hold the mountain entirely responsible for bringing us together." Confusion about my research disappeared, and I returned to Victoria with fresh memories of the wilderness experience that had inspired my research question.

I began to feel that the fear I experienced on in the mountains was a necessary part of being really alive. Without crossing through the barrier of discomfort, fear, or despair that I first confronted when I went into wilderness, I would never experience any renewal,

any joy or happiness or insight. What I experienced out there opened the door to a higher form of being - a "wild" version of myself that was "more interesting" than my lower, civilized self. I felt as if my attitude had changed. I wondered, was this what "spiritually minded" felt like? Somehow I had to make this inspiration a part of my everyday life.

I began to blur the distinction between wilderness activity and my life in the city. I began swimming in the ocean, sea kayaking near the city. I discovered the wonder of phosphorescence in saltwater at night. A cougar was prowling around campus on the University of Victoria. I found that by exercising every day, going out for long runs in the city parks, I could experience some of the rejuvenation I felt in the wilderness.

Meanwhile the pattern became more and more obvious. Every time I went into wilderness, expecting to find perfection and happiness, I found myself facing some kind of doubt and fear and disappointment. I would come to appreciate my life back home, but I would also break through some barrier where the fear disappeared and I became open to the beauty around me, happy to be alive. I would return home feeling enriched by the experience.

There was always a tendency to forget about the difficulty of the initial confrontation with wilderness. Now that I was scrutinizing my experiences more closely, writing in my journal while I was out there, taking inventory of my emotions, it occurred to me that my wilderness experiences must have *always* been this way. I remembered the challenge of being a wilderness trip leader, and how many times I had wanted to give up and return home. I also remembered the first time I went rock climbing, how when my turn came to make that all-committing rappel off the top of the cliff I had cried, and then when I felt so happy at the bottom that I returned for a second attempt, I cried again and turned back. I begged my parents to take me off of my first whitewater kayaking trip. I went down the river paralysed by fear of the rapid coming up at the end. When terror gripped me in the midst of it, I flipped upside down and hit my head. But on the van ride home with a swollen lip, I swore that there wasn't anything for me to do in life but kayak!

> 14 October 1996, 9pm. Mount Arrowsmith was a winter wonderland. Snow covered everything. Drifted thigh deep - waist deep in the mountains. I was

postholing through a heavy crust covered with a powder of crystal dust. But the texture was different everywhere. A thousand permutations of wind and slope and sun made it infinitely diverse. My legs turned to rubber. Walking was a joyous struggle. In some places, it was like walking on a loaf of fresh baked bread. At the top of the mountain Thursday's storm had sent rivers of wind carving pathways in the snow, texturing it, crusting it, whipping it like the icing on a dry wedding cake, like baked meringue, plastering the trees with crystals facing north. It was a whole new work of art - the mark, in snow, of the fiercest storm in thirty years. Savage beauty. It was like walking through a frozen sea. On top of a ridge I saw crows. When I climbed the ridge I saw scuffles with mice recorded in the snow, dusted wingbeats, fingerprints of the spirit of something that happened here, before, and lingers. I didn't make it to the summit. I was afraid, uncomfortable, at first. The usual - expecting to find ecstasy finding instead discomfort, and then charging through discomfort being surprised by ecstasy - riding a roller coaster of wonder and fear. Out there I felt whole. I could *smell*...the summertime odour of sweat, of my own body, of exercise, of woodsmoke, of fresh air. I could hear *silence*, that windless heartless cathedral silence of the mountains, the whisper of the wind, the dense velvet *whoomph* of the crust underfoot, the clamour of my own breath, the rhythmic whoping wingbeats of a pair of crows who came by doing acrobatics, synchronous rolls and dives - like one crow and his mirror image putting on a show - or unselfconsciously sharing some private joy. Beating the air - the sound of wings is unmistakable, undescribable. I could *feel* the snow falling on my back and arms from the trees, the cold air on my bare hands grasping skis poles, the rubbery tiredness of my thighs. I had *vision*. Blindness would be catastrophe, but I take sight for granted. I saw clouds coming in from the northwest, rising out of the valley, dragging bottoms on the summit, the blue of sky, the mountains of Strathcona to the north, the Port Alberni mill piping, hills all around, white snow patches of clearcuts, the dissections of logging roads, the Georgia Strait and the Gulf Islands, shining crystals on the trees, the snow surface, the texture of wind, dead insects on the snow - wasps, spiders surprised by the storm, frozen. This all felt *whole*. I was using every part of my body, pleasantly tired, moving, flowing. It was not always pure joy, but it was pure. I didn't reach my objective, but I reached a compromise - a lesser peak - and felt accomplished by floundering in the deep snow, up treadmill slopes, over rocks, running, climbing, scrambling, sometimes falling, sliding, glissading, and of course walking - *trudging*. And I kept thinking "what is the moral?" "What is the moral?" Because I felt *good*. I felt sane and content. Scared, etc., but also sometimes good. I don't know. Out there the moral is different. It just *is*. The moral....I don't know. I realized I had a ways to go before I could say what it was - the moral. It's still a good question. For *me*, at least, it is desperately important to know what to do. Because *out there*...Well, I'm not *always* happy out there, but I feel...more alive, more whole. So I want to know what to do about it. I have at times like this this great desire to

> take kids out from the city and show them this...Just show them what it is to be happy and alive. But I wonder "then what?" What was the point of that? How do we make city life better? I think we have to strip it down. Let me tell you what I mean by that....First...I had experienced real fear - real *angst* again. I realize that fear is my problem.... I'm afraid of school, I'm afraid of the wilderness. The only time I'm not afraid is when I'm cut off from the truth, *distracted*, diverted, and at these times I'm mad, crazy, lived out. I find out I'm afraid of climbing, afraid of being alone, afraid of avalanches, of injury, of disability, of rockfall, of wild animals, of other people. Ultimately, I realize I'm afraid of who I am. I'm afraid of death. I'm afraid of *everything*. I used to encounter that sickening fear when I faced a rapid or a climb or an oral presentation at school and I thought I could run away from it. I thought that if I survived that episode, or if I ran home and hid, everything would be okay. But once in a while lately - on Mt. Bogart and today - I saw that there's no escaping fear. It's everywhere. The *abyss* is inescapable. It's a *given* that we're going to fall. We're *on* the climb. We've already started. There's no going back down. There *is* no top. We're launched. All we can do is hang on, or climb up....

I begin to see the wilderness experience in purely psychological terms, as a place devoid of the temptations and diversions of city living, where one's attention is directed to the reality of the moment, leading directly to optimal experience of engagement with the task at hand - "flow." Wilderness is mental discipline; it offers no escapes, no alternatives. What I feel initially in wilderness is a willful resistance against this discipline, but going with it ultimately results in joy, an enhanced receptivity to surroundings, a sense of being truly alive.

And yet these two-year old words from my journals don't completely ring true. There was still something that had not yet sunk in. More time and experience had to pass before I felt that I understood the "moral" of the wilderness experience. I had yet to ponder "deep appreciation," and to conclude that there was more to wilderness than privation and fear.

> 29 October 1996....*At Anderson Hill Park.* Beautiful 5 o'clock sunset. I asked "so *this* is why I live, work, struggle. *This* is what makes it all worthwhile. So what does it mean?" The whole Olympic Peninsula, Rainier, purple wisps of cloud, the setting sun, the natural undynamited rock, pot smoke on the breeze. This is truth. What does it mean?...This feeling of longing when we look out over these hills. Why don't I know anyone who's *happy?* It means that we shouldn't kill ourselves. At those moments, it doesn't hurt to live. It should never hurt to live. That's what

> civilization does to us, damn it. It makes misery too much to pay for happiness. It steals the joy of living and prices it at a level we cannot afford. So what do we do? This scenery, this earth - I think it's all we'll ever get. It's our reward. Ask for more and we get less. I think *that* is what it means.

I had not made peace with civilization. When I return to Toronto at Christmas I slip into the old "topophobia". Nothing about the inevitable going to bars and watching movies with my friends makes me feel alive. There never seems to be anything else to do, and my writing becomes angry at the excess of the city and the materialistic east.

> Christmas, 1996 - Toronto. It rained all day until about 3 p.m., when it stopped and I finally decided to leave the house. My plan was to run to Loblaws for flour, go to the bank, hop on the subway at Lawrence and come home. Ran through wind, greyness, scudding clouds over St. John's church and Loretto Abbey, wet pavement. The traffic was loud as it is now outside my window, on the highway, like the factories of hell, like that boat thundering its way up the Juan de Fuca from Anderson Hill, casting its dull roar across the landscape. Everything in Hoggs Hollow was heavily under that sound from Yonge Street. The Hollow was full of it. The Don River, swollen with the morning's rain, raced through a concrete channel, forgotten beneath it. The run was surprisingly effortless. I climbed the hill out of the Hollow to the top of Yonge Street in easy bounds feeling faster and easier than I remember it ever being on my bike when I was in worse shape, in Toronto shape. Jogging at rush hour, though (something has just sent me into violent, allergic, congested fits of sneezing) began to bother me...or was it all in my mind? In the climate? The exhaust from the cars? Could I will it all away with the right kind of thinking? Anyway, asthma hit when I got back onto Yonge Street near Loblaws. The cars roaring by madly; dark oily puddles of water on the pavement, people smoking waiting for buses. Same old dismal 1970s wintertime Toronto..... I may become a B.C. resident. Shun the east.... Too much noise to think. No clean air to breathe. Dead and buried before I started. Life in Toronto *requires* that we posit an afterlife, because life in Toronto is more like death - witness the new houses erected like enormous coffins, mausoleums on treeless, barren grounds. Morgues for dead souls, like our neighbour's house....What can I eat to make me happy? What can I watch that will get me saved? What can I drink that will give me peace? What channel is life on? Where's the stroke of genius? Nothing. Nowhere. Nothing. Nowhere.....
>
> We have to value non-things. The resource of doing nothing, doing less. Save time, save electricity, save money. Eliminate demand. Look into emptiness. Value hunger. Value silence. Value darkness. In darkness we can see stars. In silence we can hear the voice of God. In hunger our appetites direct us to our true needs. Eliminate excess. Calming down, whittling, paring down, simplifying reveals the truth. Hush hush, turn off the TV, stop the highway, shut off the

lights. Silence silence silence. For a while it makes us squirm, it makes us scream and sing, it makes us shiver with fear, and then our thoughts light afire, our creatively goes ablaze, the truth is loud and clear, loneliness subsides. We have to break through, break through, break on through....Oh but I forget these things, and I become a bitter man again, and in Toronto I believe its hard to know *what* love is. It's easier to forget about the value of life and the fear of death. We're all adrift with these disjointed ideas, 24 hours of radio-television-highway noises to deafen us to the quiet inhumanity of the world. We have vague ideas that we have to behave ethically, but nothing like a genuine impulse to do so, or any idea of what it really means. We need good intuition but our intuition is dead. We're supposed to love our neighbours, but we don't know them, and frankly they seem a little bit weird. They live in an ugly house. They drive expensive cars. They've cut down all the trees. They never go outside. I've got several reasons to hate them and no reasons I can remember to love them. I'm not even sure what loving them would feel like. You can't just turn on a love switch. My mother, then, bought them a Poinsetta. But we still hate their stupid house. I find it hard to get past the bitterness. How can I transfer love from church or from a mountaintop in a moment of fear to this crazy place amid the roar of the highway, to neighbours who are icons of much of what I despise in this world? Well, I'm not centred enough, for one thing. I don't love myself. I forget to love my life. I begin devaluing everything. I forget (the highway! the highway! It's drowning out my transmissions from the unknown!) that it's not mine to devalue. I forget that it's all we've got. I forget that it's all I know and have ever known, dear, beloved planet Earth. I forget the futility of arrogance. Ah, I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I forget. It's crazy that I can forget for a moment that this life is the only one I've got, this moment, this wonder, this gift. I should be smiling all the time, but I forget for weeks and weeks, especially in Toronto. I forget that this whole planet is my home, my dear flawed family of 6 billion, my backyard. I forget how close we all are. I forget there's anything else out there. I forget there's a wilderness, a nothingness, empty space an arm's reach away, infinity inside of us, in all directions, billions of stars, galaxies, a universe that ends and an incomprehensible beyond. I forget. But I'll try to remember. The more we remember, the more moral we are. The more we remember how little we are, how little we know, that we don't have the answer. *Morality*, you see, is not based on having the right answer. It's about knowing, within the core of your being, that you truly *don't*, that you don't know...

3 January 1997. Manhattan sent me spinning. Central Park. Fifth Avenue apartments with rooftop gardens, the Park hotel, John Lennon's apartment building, density density density. Highly kinetic traffic. All manner of stylish people. Voyeurism. The United Nations - another centre of high ideals. Honking horns. The art deco Chrysler building with its palatial, rich African marble lobby, inlaid elevator doors. The Guggenheim Museum. On the way into New York, I

felt like a commuter, rushing out of the Darien house with breakfast in hand, half dressed it seemed, barely awake for the commuter train. Looking right off the tracks into the windows of Harlem apartments, deserted or not, all like junkyards, a place where it seemed like the garbage never left, it just piled onto itself, cars rotted like decaying grandfather trees in an old forest. It was a junkyard disaster. The subway looked just like a New York subway. The World Trade Centre seemed threatening to topple over onto me. I couldn't find a decent bathroom anywhere in the city of millions. Like a jamboree that never ended, a perpetual urban Woodstock. This unnatural gathering of people that never dispersed, just kept taking in more from the outside. Imagine - the people stay *together*, the materials come and go. But bathrooms...I went into the bar at the World Trade Centre Marriott Hotel and pushed through after-work crowds of cigar-smoking business men, barely older than me, milling about in winter woolen dress coats, long, suits and ties. I found the bathroom unusable, the toilet covered with pee - a phenomenon I cannot understand - men who direct corporations and investors' millions, men who steer the course of corporate America (thus all of America by default), who can't aim right at the toilet or at least clean up their mistakes. It's telling. Angry, constipated, I pushed back out through these men, all of whom I suddenly hated for smoking, wearing ties, urinating irresponsibly, and being in my way, being happy, holding office jobs in New York...being powerful men who dare drink and forget. I waited *half an hour* for a clean rest room at the Hilton. I looked out over the Hudson at Ellis Island. A Mexican security guard on patrol gave us directions to the centre of Greenwhich Village, smiling amicably. We hailed a cab which fought a Monday night traffic jam to the heart of nightlife. Washington Square was best, with a penned piece of grass formally titled "George's Dog Run" where dog owners congregated. Then we hurried to the subway to catch a train out of town....And it was crowded, overwhelmingly busy in a vibrant, lively, not busy or stressful way, and *I was far beyond bitterness*. Content. Bewildered and therefore *humbled.*

5 January 1997.... *Thoughts on the virtue of flying free of responsibility, breaking out, the impossibility of perfection; laughter and forgetting:*...Jason drove me home from the airport. I began to feel this terrible fear. *Before this Christmas vacation started, I dreaded abandoning my routine. I thought it was immoral, profane, and wasteful; now I feel that it was the best thing for me.*...It scares me how arrogant I can become. I had sworn I would never take a car trip again, would never *fly* again, might never come east again. I was so selfish and I see now that it was *wrong*! Oh dear. May I promise myself that I'll never be so locked-in again. Twice a year or more, we need a break. *Total.*

In the plane I was free, flying, groundless. Ripped from my foundation, yes, but not ill. No. Happy, free, open. If it's *legal*, break out once in a while. Drink, go to Manhattan, drive a Winnebago, or else you'll go mad. The world can't be perfect, you see, because we need this sort of elbow room. There has to

> be a balance. Coming over Calgary I could look down and name mountains in the Rockies, so familiar. More familiar than home. Familiar like Manhattan. Ramparts thrusting eastward. Mt. Temple and the wide-open Valley of the Ten Peaks. I could trace the route, was like looking at a loved one through the glass I wanted to cry out "I've been there!" It was a kind of ecstasy in brilliant white. That is one of the most beautiful sights I have ever seen, I thought. The grand familiarity of it all. Flying over a world I could get lost in. It suddenly didn't seem necessarily *wrong* to be flying over it all. It was actually wonderful. Who's to say what scale we ought to make intimate? Suddenly, who's to say there's any virtue in staying in one place. Suddenly, why not know and love the earth in this grand way, as a great model railway set, a tiny globe we can manipulate in miniature, string with powerlines, learn mountains like freckles. Suddenly humanity didn't seem like such a scourge. Suddenly it all seemed harmless, what we're doing, and I have no gripe against technology....
>
> I forget how far I've come. There was a time I thought the whole world was madder than it is....

I was able to measure the progress of my research by whether or not I was getting into a "wilderness" frame of mind at home, feeling content and alive. As I did the reading for my literature review, things became more desperate, I became more rigid in my ideas. When I began my interviews, I found that not so much in the words themselves, but in the *process* of interviewing, I was finding an immediate answer to my question. It was hard for me to take the step of phoning people, and arranging meetings, which in itself elicited something like the fear of going into wilderness. But I came away from each interview inspired, elated, and feeling free of all the rigid ideas I had gone in with. Not just in a natural environment, but also in conversation, I discovered, one can find the conditions for being truly alive.

I think the problem was a kind of idealism that prevented my participation in life. Life I generally perceived to be a "Big Deal," to be taken so damned seriously, to be avoided at all costs for fear of failure. The sublime perspective of the wilderness, combined with the need it imposed to *act*, lifted the weight of this "Big Deal" view of the world that made everything I said and did seem so monumentally significant. All my life I remember being angry about having to take seriously things that didn't matter at all. But then I took wilderness seriously instead. I took my thesis research seriously, and my interviews seriously, which in themselves seemed like a "Big Deal." I found that when I

forced myself to go out and actually *talk* to people, the weight would be lifted, just as it was in wilderness. Conversation overran all of my rigid theories. I had to reject all of my categorizations and replace them with a reality that was much more complex, but more amenable to the spontaneity and joy I associated with wilderness. I began to see the bizarre congruence between the *ends* of my research and the *way* in which it was conducted. It seemed that these conclusions were predetermined from the outset as the worldview I sought to elucidate influenced the study from ontology through to method. I had opted for a "methodology of engagement" and found that engagement was also the answer I was looking for - the key to the wilderness experience. This is the motivation I always felt returning from the wilderness experience - the desire to participate more, to give more of myself to the immediate experience, to build stronger relationships with the world around me, to get out of school and come to know reality directly, to put aside the fear and discomfort and the desire to be elsewhere that cause me to withhold participation. Studying the wilderness experience taught me that the trips I go on rarely unfold the way I expect them to. The only dependable outcome is an overwhelming joy and creative energy that results from committing myself to the experience.

When I applied this attitude to my everyday life, training to run a marathon, I overcame all of the depression and incompleteness I associated with the city life. I started running purely for the joy of doing it, or getting outside and being physical. Different from my thesis, and even from my wilderness adventures, I did not go running with any great expectations of "success", or even happiness. I ran because I discovered that I *could* run; for some reason it no longer hurt my knees. It allowed me to explore close to where I lived and discover new areas in Victoria. The fact that I needed some way to get exercise was enough justification for me to do it regularly. As I was able to run faster for greater and greater distances, I found myself performing beyond my expectations, and each day that I was able to run without pain was something that I did not take for granted; I was thankful. Running a marathon was another "bonus," as was seeing sunrises and sunsets, views from the hills around town, experiencing beautiful weather, feeling healthy and alive.

I began to learn that I could experience the pure joy I associated with "wilderness" anytime simply by going outside with this attitude of "doing whatever I can" with no particular expectations. I learned that it was this *attitude* of openness to experience, which was really a *faith* to commit myself to involvement in an activity with unknown outcomes, that gave rise to the feelings of "deep appreciation" associated with the best wilderness experiences. Appreciation of natural beauty, and sensory experience as a whole, became a primary part of my experience in a way that it had not before. From this perspective, nature was the most delightful place, the most obvious source to which to turn this appreciation. This is not exactly the same as my earlier concept of nature as a place of fear, and I looked on its beauty as just another gift, rather than a requirement and a right. While my thesis continued as to be a frustration, I did not perceive being in school, in the city, as a barrier to happiness. I found the savage beauty and contentment I associated with wilderness to be ubiquitous.

Out of a cauldron of doubt I begin to locate something I can believe in that resides *in* my immanent experience, in material things, but which is greater than the individuality of those things. I see that wilderness has value because it has put me in a perspective to see this, to enhance my receptivity to it, my awareness. In my journal I worked towards this more complex understanding, beyond the old dualism of "bad civilization versus good wilderness."

> When the ground slips from beneath our scrambling feet, [there] is a power. In the cold bite of winter's wind, the dark of night, the creep of loneliness, the chill of silence, the horror of emptiness, the loss of light that was refuge, belief, companionship, the kitchen, upstairs, solid footing, certainty, is a power. All those things were "good", were blindness, or a crutch, and now we see we are not infirm, the ground was not the ground, the light was not the light, certainty was not right, and might was weakness. Companionship was the most insidious loneliness, and what we held tight as life was not life at all. Out of terror springs a power, springs a faith, springs the courage, to turn and face the greatest horror - the source of love - and see a life more real and that everything, everything, everything, is a wondrous gift of God. And we come home this time really loving, really living, but with a world unlimited spread beneath our feet. This truth was equidistant from every generation, infinite by knowledge, bridgeable by experience. From the howling emptiness springs power; from desire, impotence.

> By my estimation, what's wrong is that we're not amazed and always amazed and in love by the grace of amazement. (That's what amazes me. It's our lack of wonder that I wonder about. Something should be obvious that's not. And it's for lack of wonder that I wander about. And lack of fear. Lack of vision to *be* afraid. And lack of fear to spark vision is the cause of my indecision.) What we call consciousness is hardly. What's obvious is naught, and to what's not we are oblivious. That's what's wrong.

I learned to value the attitude and the process of wilderness experience as a way of being, which is not something that can be used up. As I see it now, it is only from a rigidly idealistic perspective of disengagement that one becomes paranoid about the destruction of wilderness as a purely authentic place, or about forms of wilderness adventure like mountaineering being inauthentic experiences. I have been forced to realize that the commercialization of wilderness adventure has meant that it presents itself as something other than what it is; as, for example, the achievement of a particular mountain summit. From a critical perspective, one can see the type of adventure that inevitably receives the big press, like the ill-fated expeditions to Everest in 1996, as loathsomely egoistic striving. From the same perspective modern civilization appears equally loathsome. I learned that if I am to save myself from despair and live constructively, I need some different way of perceiving - one which allows me to understand the spirit of wilderness adventure without defining it in terms of a corruptible geography. It is the misperception of the nature of wilderness adventure that causes its misadventures, or at least determines that those misadventures be interpreted as tragedies rather than as the consequences of acceptable risk-taking; the same could be said of one's perception of a Modernity that appears to threaten wilderness.

I had an opportunity to "test" my new definition of wilderness adventure as a way of being on an overnight hike into Kananaskis Country. I hiked with the attitude of undemanding gratitude and discovery that I had developed in running. My plan was to head out for two days with no particular place to go, no time in particular to be anywhere, no defined goals. I wanted to rediscover the essence of the wilderness experience that I thought was the inspiration of my life. Recently it seemed as if I had gone searching again and again and not found it, and only concluded that wilderness is the grand mystery

of life that exists everywhere, and all that is needed to experience it is to open our eyes. I found myself situated unexpectedly on a mountain ridge and kept walking until it led me to a high summit just before sunset. It seemed like a wonderful gift that I had found my way up a smooth, aesthetically pleasing ridge to the peak of one of highest mountains I had ever climbed. Near the top I experienced the usual fear and discomfort of being alone, but I trudged on indifferently in the absence of any good reasons to be afraid. The descent from the summit brought me into a feeling of ease that affirmed all I had believed and learned about the wilderness experience.

> At 5 pm I was walking between night and day.... I was happy, less afraid.....After sunset I came out on a low-angle snow slope and I was trudging down in a rhythm that was effortless and steady. The air was still and felt warm. The only sound was crunch of dry snow under crampons and the *squeak* of the butt of my ice axe on the snow with each step. This was pure *joy*. My mind was clear and empty of its previous quarrels, and the sounds of my own walking were as impersonal and hypnotic as a rusty gate hinge in the breeze. I felt absolutely privileged and free. I could sit down and camp wherever, whenever, on the side of the mountain. The sky was glowing. I was all alone and the world was elsewhere. I was in ecstasy.
>
> This was the happiness of "just being". I saw that it came not from *risk*, not specifically from *what* I'd accomplished, but from fighting the thoughts that stood in the way of *doing all that I was able to do, and pushing myself to achieve the possible*. I was no longer terrified and in need of comfort, but still desperately wanted to be with someone to share the experience, to share the beauty and the joy, the setting sun and the pure freedom, the great aloneness, to "just be" in the presence of another....
>
> The sky was crisply glowing. A moon was rising up behind the mountains and lighting the snow. Dead silence prevailed. My mind empty....
>
> When I woke up, all fear was gone. It was warm, another good, clear day, and beautiful view over my feet down to the lake in the valley I'd climbed. I snapped a picture. I found my poppy in the snow. I'd lost it two days before and it had fallen out of my sweater at night. I put it on my pack. *Remembrance Day*....
>
> My mind on this morning felt *blank*.... I felt totally complete, knowing all I had to know, happy with empty mind.
>
> At 12:45 I had lunch at the south parking lot, 4 km away from my truck. It was sunny and warm....Still dead silent. As if in memorium, the lake and mountains had an incredible, yellow stillness....
>
> Geese took off honking at my presence, and skimmed their landing further away on the lake. I heard it through the stillness with such perfect clarity I could *feel* it, and my heart leapt with joy at the sight and the sound. *I* was skimming to

landing on the water. I felt full of energy and smiled.

All thoughts of doing *enough*, being *enough*, proving myself vanished. *Life* was enough. There was nothing else to do, nowhere else to be. I gave up on trying to understand. Wilderness is just *feeling good*. Nothing else compares. Words don't do it justice, and civilization is *not* the same. I felt such a long-lost sense of hope, lightness, joy, freedom. It's a kind of taste for life in your mouth. Something rich - earth, lichen, sun-burned skin, leather, sweat, food, shit, old polypropylene underwear, Gore-Tex and wet wool and pine needles - each *second* brought a new odour, odour mixed with odour, and an onrush of the deep emotion odour carries. So being there was ecstasy. I slowed and slowed, and spent a while sitting timelessly on the lakeshore, grinning at the bright sun over the mountain I'd summited. "The nightmare is over" I thought, "this is heaven." As Fritjof Nansen said, I wrote, "who could expect more from life than this?"

All thought and fear and doubt were gone and all was pure participation, sensation, observation, true living and the ability to give and receive love, living out and through the world and not in my mind! The experience was so rich. It was as if *seeing* a bird land on water, I *was* a bird landing on water. This is how fluid and free I felt.

I believed that it was the experience in nature that was responsible for the richness of my experience, but I had reaffirmed that it was an experience that I could have almost anytime, anywhere. It was immediately available to me and not under any threat from civilization. I knew it had resulted from the attitude with which I had approached the experience, and not from the success I had had in climbing a mountain. There were no obstacles to this joy. With me I carried everything I needed, save more food, to wander for weeks and months, to be an aesthetic vagabond like Ruess - if that's what I truly wanted to do. I did not have to do battle with the modern paradigm, martyr myself for the disintegration of industrial society.

20 January 1998. And idea came to me: I've noticed that my interviewees think it is a rare *privilege* to be able to *appreciate*, to derive joy from wilderness. And second only to their desire to experience wilderness is their desire to *share* it. I realized suddenly that if there is anything I could call a strength, or talent, it is the ability to appreciate wilderness. How do I explain that? Kind of a silly talent to have, isn't it? It's the ability to be ecstatically happy to be skiing or paddling down a river or looking at the stars and to *want nothing more*. And to want only to share...to share that joy.

I guess this is one of my ultimate hopes: That my actions would reflect who I am, that I succeed or fail doing what I genuinely want to do, and do not waste my life in distractions, going down false paths because of fear or other bad

reasons!...

> I might as well have the convictions I'm inclined to have, whether they're right or not, and live out my destiny. How would I define my purpose as it stands now? To be a good human being, as judged by my perspective on Mt. Bogart, Mt. Seraille etc.; through whatever spiritual, wilderness-based practice I need, to maintain my joy, to learn to be a human being, to be my true identity, to give and receive love and find some authentic way to be of service to others. To continue growing. To move dynamically outward beyond the bounds of what I can now imagine for myself - to have the faith to do so....

My motivations for doing this research were misguided when I sought evidence to show me that the way I thought I should live was *right*, only because I lacked the courage to follow my own path. I must have been searching for a license to be myself. I wanted the evidence to replace the faith that I didn't have. But the only answer I found was the need for faith itself - the "courage to be" that the wilderness taught. Ironically, the closest I came to making wrong choices, was when I clung to a narrow vision of what the good life had to be. This vision excluded the world as I experienced it and most of the people I knew, including myself. This was a vision that made it impossible to live, so difficult to experience or express goodness. By trying to live according to a "moral law" that I associated with wilderness, I had cut myself off from the experience of renewal. It was necessary to learn the primacy of the experience which transcends all its interpretations. I had to learn that staying grounded in the "wilderness experience" must be my first priority. This entailed freeing myself to go into physical wilderness when I wanted to, but also learning what the wilderness experience meant psychologically, for my everyday life.

Even now I'm concerned that the way I have expressed the conclusions I found in the literature unduly emphasizes particular images of an ideal life which strives for wholeness. These images of what "meaningful work" or "sustainable society" might look like are among the illusions that the wilderness encourages us to forsake for immediate experience in which the values that are the basis for our morality are affirmed. I was surprised again and again to go into wilderness expecting to have my environmentalist's convictions confirmed, only to find that happiness came from learning that for a while I

didn't give a damn about the fate of the world or the form of an ideal society. When my immediate response was not a desire to return directly to the wilderness, it was a renewed commitment to participate in society as it is, even to become successful in a career and earn lots of money in affirmation of the sense of limitless power and freedom I felt coming out of wilderness! In a lot of ways it was more of a megalomaniacal experience than a moral one. In the end the wilderness inspiration does favour an alternative lifestyle that is easier on the earth and on other people, but one can go too far in interpreting it as an inspiration to change the world. I returned wanting only to sustain the richness of experience, the intensity of life that I felt in that moment.

My original perspective has been turned on its head. I come away from the wilderness experience *knowing* what I believe in. But the moral I had been hoping to articulate in my thesis, as a particular form of life, was *never* true to that feeling. The moral of wilderness is first a lesson of its own transcendent importance, and secondly a way of being that it teaches, a way of relating to reality, which I have explained in Chapter 5. Particular careers, material aspects of culture, are secondary to this way of being; they cannot contain it. By trying, I have learned the futility of defining morality in terms of what will be the likely expressions of a moral way of being. Morality is not to be confused with its consequences; nor is evil. This is the lesson that became particularly clear to me when I go back and re-read the core wilderness literature - not the ecologically-inspired social scientists, but the nature writers and poets, most particularly Thoreau - the wilderness lesson is primarily about priorities. The first lesson of the wilderness experience is not transformation of society, but transformation of the self. All the environmentalist's striving to arrive at a better society is secondary to the realization of happiness here and now. With hope, this realization will inspire a better life and a better world. The correct priority is the attitude with which we approach life, which comes about when we are completely free of the perception of constraint, and of external motivations. It is this attitude of freedom that is meant by the "self-actualized person," or the "autotelic personality" in the psychological literature. Thoreau expressed the forwardness and imperturbability of this attitude as direction towards a "polestar." I have

come to see it also as being like that which is meant by the Taoist conception of virtue, or *Te*. *Oxford* explains that the character for *Te* is composed of three elements: "moving ahead," "the eye," and "heart-and-mind." "Philologically this suggests an underlying sense of a self aware arising and disposition in a particular direction...." (Bowker, 1997). So much like Thoreau's "infinite expectation of the dawn," this understanding recommends that liberating mental posture by which "thought keeps pace with the sun."

CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSION

The evolution of this study represents an odd and, ultimately, ridiculously simple symmetry beginning with fundamental assumptions in the background, concluding with the same assumptions elucidated and placed in the foreground. Thoreau might have observed that a horse followed a cart into the research, but emerged in the lead.

This student-adventurer's personality and experience in wilderness adventure formulated the research question, "How does one proceed to live a life inspired by the recreational experience of wilderness adventure?" Further understanding extended the question to "What is the religion of wilderness adventure?" The same personality and experience that inspired the question, acting maybe not so much directly as *through* the nature of the question itself, compelled the selection of a "methodology of engagement" ideally rooted in the phenomenological notion of a direct apprehension of reality through experience unmediated by the concepts and categories of dualistic consciousness.

An interpretive human science approach was used to look at how the wilderness adventure experience inspired a way of life, to resolve the "problem" and answer the burning question of what to "do about" the experience of wilderness. Three sources were consulted: literature, reviewed in Chapter 3 and discussed in Chapter 5; interviews with wilderness adventurers, discussed in Chapter 4; and the researcher's personal experience, introduced with the methodology in Chapter 2 and discussed in Chapter 6.

The literature concurred that the optimal wilderness experience is subjectively perfect harmony and wholeness, a profoundly inspiring experience of immediate happiness, a connection to self and community existing in union with nature presenting itself as an ordered and purposeful "grand scheme." This "Self-realization" experience of connection to all things is a spiritual experience that suggests itself as a metaphor for everyday life; its subject is compelled to follow a purpose and order in life equivalent to that which abides in the ultimate experience.

A thoughtful look at theories of optimal experience along with various

environmentally-inspired writings produced a conclusion not dissimilar to Thoreau's. The essence of the wilderness experience so celebrated by Romantics and appearing again and again in the wilderness literature before and since Thoreau is a non-dualistic perception in which concepts - including distinctions between past, present and future time, between self and humanity and the rest of the world, between good and evil; concepts which are the root of all human longing, fear, loneliness, conflict, dissatisfaction, perceptions of unease and, arguably, disease - are replaced by sense experience that is immediate and whole. The assumption is made (never questioned!) that this experience so wonderful, rather than being merely aberrant from the greater reality of everyday life, is in fact an intuition of ultimate reality to which the everyday is subordinate. This ultimate reality is labeled "wildness" and seen to be the source of all values, and unknowable to a valueless Modernism. Living accordingly requires a constant reaffirmation of this fact, adopting priorities which rank the whole before the parts, the transcendent value of "wildness" above or equal to the civilized "good," human concepts and creations secondary to that "sacredness" which transcends them all. Wilderness morality, if there can be such a thing, is a morality that preserves amorality, a way of being that is loyal to wildness and to the ultimate human freedom that is realized when the insignificance of all constraining human structure is exposed.

The wilderness way of being derived from the literature is a "wild attitude," quintessentially Romantic, involving: opening up and letting go; living in the moment; being aware and focusing outward; accepting reality; accepting risk, challenge, and discomfort; being intense, having concentration, courage and faith; expressing and encouraging playfulness and freedom; an aesthetic way of being; expressing and encouraging process; rejecting orthodoxy, celebrating ignorance. Practically, the wild attitude means preserving wilderness, educating for non-dualistic experience, and maintaining a "ritual" activity like wilderness adventure. Since the wilderness experience of amorality cannot be contained within a morality, it cannot be replaced. The "mystical" experience must be constantly reaffirmed.

The experience of wilderness adventurers was almost inevitably interpreted in

terms similar to those which were inescapable in the literature. The adventurers are inspired in their ongoing commitment to the activity by memories of deep happiness and a perspective that brings healing balance to everyday life. Recognized as ultimately important, the experience is made central to life and its value is accepted as core principle. Without its restorative experience, life would disintegrate. The extent to which wilderness adventurers act "morally" in the social or environmental field as a result of their experiences varies. What is common to all, however, is the importance they attach to the wilderness perspective as one which would improve the world if it were shared by more people, and which must be sought again and again through recreation, a food for the spirit to be taken regularly.

What was discovered in personal experience as well as in the interviews was a current which was not initially obvious in the literature and which somewhat undermined the study's original aim to derive a "moral" from the wilderness experience. This was the significance of the non-dualistic experience as an apprehension of truth that by its very nature cannot be contained within a "moral" or replaced by a structured way of life. The actual wilderness experience seemed to oppose any efforts to define the truth it contained. The "wild," unstructured aspect of the experience came to be seen as most important, with the various practical expressions of its inspiration always secondary. With perspective renewed by this realization, it was sometimes an effort to "remember" that there was ever a "problem" motivating this inquiry, as it could now be stated with conviction that the "wilderness experience" must be lived and relived, now and forever without end, purely for its own sake. Like the environmentalist's "protest on behalf of value" the wilderness adventurer's discovery of value in wilderness was seen a project above rationality that contained its own justification.

Which is a good thing, because inherent justification is all the conclusion ever had or could have, since every justification was destined to be preceded by the decision to have it justified, and then to proceed from itself by method of itself back to itself: "a direct apprehension of reality through experience unmediated by the concepts and categories of dualistic consciousness." What is new in the end, however, is the

knowledge that justification need no longer be sought, which restores horse and cart to proper order, replaces slavery with liberation, doubt with faith, fear with the courage to be, and despair with authentic life.

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APPENDIX A
LETTER OF INTRODUCTION
FOR INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

"PHILOSOPHY OF WILDERNESS ADVENTURE" RESEARCH PROJECT

Dear Wilderness Adventurer:

I am looking for wilderness adventurers to participate in a research project that I am conducting for my M.A. degree in Geography at the University of Victoria. The project is examining the philosophy of wilderness adventure and aims to investigate how the wilderness experience informs a definition of "the good life". This study is inspired by a problem that is described by Barry Lopez as follows: "The land gets inside us; and we have to decide one way or another what this means, what we will do about it."

The ideal candidate for this study is an amateur or professional for whom spending a lot of time in the wilderness hiking, backcountry skiing, climbing and mountaineering, canoeing or sea kayaking has been central to their life for many years. If you fit this description, I would like talk to you about participating in this study. Although the number and duration of interviews may be flexible, participation will involve meeting for two informal, approximately 120 minute interviews to discuss wilderness involvement in relation to life values, goals and actions. Your choice to participate in the study will be entirely voluntary and you will be free to withdraw at any time without explanation.

To discuss my research, ask questions, or to learn more about volunteering for this study, please contact me by phone (collect if long distance) at (250) 370-9064, or e-mail *tshuff@office.geog.uvic.ca*

Thanks sincerely,

Tim Shuff
University of Victoria,
Department of Geography

APPENDIX B
LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT FOR INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION:
Wilderness Adventure Study

Graduate Student Researcher: Tim Shuff
Phone: (250) 370-9064

Graduate Supervisor: J. Douglas Porteous
Phone: (250)721-7330

This is a graduate research project in the Department of Geography at the University of Victoria. The experiences of wilderness adventurers are being studied in order to understand the meaning of the wilderness for everyday life. In two, informal, approximately 120 minute interviews you will be asked to describe your experiences in wilderness in detail and reflect on their meaning in the context of your daily life and your personal philosophy. You will be invited to read and comment on the accuracy of your interview results before they are submitted as part of a Master of Arts thesis to the University of Victoria. In addition to the Master's thesis, results from the interviews may appear in other publications, such as scholarly journals, and may be presented in public at conference presentations and seminars. Your real name will not be identified in any publication or other public presentation of the research findings.

You have the right to refuse to answer any interview questions you do not wish to answer. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from this study at any time. Should you choose to withdraw from the study midstream, no questions will be asked. In this case, any partial interview data collected from you will remain eligible for use in the study and processed in the same manner as data from completed interviews.

Your participation in this study is confidential. Measures will be taken to protect your anonymity in the collection, storage, and presentation of all interview data. From the moment that your interview responses are recorded, they will be identified only by a code name which will also be used to protect your anonymity in any publications and public presentations of the research results. This coded data will be stored in the researcher's locked office until the research project is complete, or no longer than December 31, 1999, at which time all raw data, including original recordings and transcripts of recordings, will be destroyed. All information which identifies you as a data source and bears your real name, including this signed consent form, will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office separate from the data. Only the researcher and the researcher's thesis supervisor will have access to the raw data and to information which identifies you as a data source.

Audio and video taping can be useful for research. You have the option to decline taping if you wish. Please indicate your consent to **one** of the following options.

___ **NO** audio or visual taping. The researcher will record the interviews by taking notes only.

___ **YES** interviews will be audiotaped. Audiotapes will be used only for transcription to written form, and are to be destroyed when transcription is complete.

Signature of Participant:

Date:

APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW GUIDELINES FOR TWO-PART AND THREE-PART INTERVIEWS

Introduction

Your participation involves a series of two, approximately 120 minute interviews relating to how the wilderness experience informs a definition of the good life; in other words, what the wilderness experience may teach us about how to live our lives. The purpose of the interviews is to understand what your wilderness experiences have been like and how they may relate to your everyday life and your philosophy of life, including your values or ideals, goals, and actions.

Some sample interview questions are shown below. All interview questions will address one of two topics: the background and nature of your wilderness experience; and your philosophy of life. The interviews will be in the form of a relaxed conversation about your wilderness experiences, and the structure of the interviews is flexible. Questions may be discussed in any order. A general goal will be to discuss the topics thoroughly over the course of the two interviews. What is important is to say whatever comes to mind on these topics. There are no "right" answers.

Anything you can do to focus your ideas will make the interviews run more smoothly. This might include reading over the questions below before each interview, making notes of anything that comes to mind before and between the interviews, using photos, journals or other memorabilia to help focus your ideas, or thinking of any quotes which are meaningful to you, representing your approach to life or something you have learned from wilderness. For example, this line from Barry Lopez represents to me the spirit of my research: "*The land gets inside us; and we much decide one way or another what this means, what we will do about it.*"

Guideline for Three Interviews

Topic 1: The Background to Wilderness Involvement

How did you become involved in wilderness activities? What are your earliest or most outstanding memories of wilderness experience? What factors drew you to participate in wilderness adventure? What was your first wilderness trip? What heroes or mentors inspired your interest in wilderness? What was it about those early experiences that made your return? What motivates you to go into wilderness?

Topic 2: Details of the Wilderness Experience

What are your wilderness experiences like? What outstanding experiences have you had recently? What is a typical experience? ...the best? ...the worst? What is it like for you to participate in wilderness adventure? Describe the most powerful moments you have had in wilderness. How do these experiences make you feel? What is it like to return from wilderness?

Topic 2: Philosophy of Life

How do you define "the good life"? What would be your ideal way of living? What do you believe is the ultimate purpose of life? What are your core values? What do you believe in? What does it mean to be happy? How do you define success? How does your participation in wilderness relate to this definition of what you value? What do you think is the purpose of wilderness? What values does wilderness represent to you? In what ways does wilderness experience inspire you to make changes in your everyday life? What is the difference between being in wilderness and being at home? What is the ideal wilderness adventure? Can you imagine a way of life which does not include participation in wilderness adventure activities? How has the experience affected who you have become?

Guideline for Two Interviews

Topic 1: The Background and Details of Wilderness Experiences

How did you become involved in wilderness activities? What are your earliest or most outstanding memories of wilderness experience? What factors drew you to participate in wilderness adventure? What was your first wilderness trip? What heroes or mentors inspired your interest in wilderness? What was it about those early experiences that made your return? What motivates you to go into wilderness? What are your wilderness experiences like? What outstanding experiences have you had recently? What is a typical experience? ...the best? ...the worst? What is it like for you to participate in wilderness adventure? Describe the most powerful moments you have had in wilderness. How do these experiences make you feel? What is it like to return from wilderness?

Topic 2: Philosophy of Life

How do you define "the good life"? What would be your ideal way of living? What do you believe is the ultimate purpose of life? What are your core values? What do you believe in? What does it mean to be happy? How do you define success? How does your participation in wilderness relate to this definition of what you value? What do you think is the purpose of wilderness? What values does wilderness represent to you? In what ways does wilderness experience inspire you to make changes in your everyday life? What is the difference between being in wilderness and being at home? What is the ideal wilderness adventure? Can you imagine a way of life which does not include participation in wilderness adventure activities? How has the experience affected who you have become?

APPENDIX D
SAMPLE OF LETTER USED FOR "CHECKING-BACK" WITH INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

[Name],

Hello. I hope all is going well with you and that you found time during the summer to get into the mountains for a while. You may remember that what now seems like a very long time ago, you helped me out by being a participant in the research interviews for my M.A. thesis. Part of the deal was that you would have the opportunity to comment upon the results if you wished. Enclosed is a write-up based on your interview. It will not appear in my thesis in this form; rather, there will be one chapter that combines these quotations and ideas with those of other interview participants to highlight the common themes. But from this you should be able to get a sense of how I have interpreted what you told me and what I found most important.

I would be happy to hear from you with any comments or concerns, positive or negative; for example, if you are concerned about being quoted out of context, or if you do not approve of the pseudonym I have chosen for you. Also, please let me know if you wish to see how your words will appear in the final draft. If I hear back from you within approximately two weeks I can incorporate your comments into my results, but please do not feel any obligation to respond! The best way to contact me is by mail, e-mail, or by phone as indicated.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you once again for your participation without which this research would have been impossible. Your contribution was invaluable and I hope that I have made a worthy interpretation of your experiences. I cannot say that my results are earth-shattering, but I certainly have a better understanding of how the wilderness experience acts as an inspiration for everyday life, and for that insight I am deeply grateful. Best wishes to you on future adventures.

Sincerely,

Tim Shuff

VITA

Surname: Shuff Given Names: Timothy Malcolm

Place of Birth: Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Educational Institutions Attended

University of Victoria	1995-1998
Lakehead University	1991-1995

Degrees Awarded

Honours Bachelor of Outdoor Recreation	Lakehead University	1995
Bachelor of Arts	Lakehead University	1995

Honours and Awards

University of Victoria Fellowship	1995-1997
Lieutenant Governor's Silver Medal (Lakehead University)	1995
Dean Braun Award (Lakehead University)	1995
Bill Mason Memorial Scholarship	1994

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Title of Thesis:

Living the Religion of Wilderness Adventure:
The Wilderness Recreation Experience and Everyday Life

Author: [redacted]
Timothy Malcolm Shuff

Date: 26 NOV. 1998