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## **Challenge for Education: Learning to Value the World Intrinsically**

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*[T]he universe is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects.*

*Thomas Berry*

### THE PATH

In a celebrated passage in *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein states his view of philosophy: "What is your aim of philosophy?— To shew the fly the way out of the fly-bottle." Although his remark was directed specifically at philosophers whom he likened to trapped flies in their metaphysical fly-bottles, it can apply to humanity in general insofar as we are linguistic-conceptual creatures who live by ontological "pictures" of what the world *is like* and what we *are like*, all the while assuming these pictures to be the reality itself. This unconsciousness happens because we have internalized – that is, reified– these pictures through having been socialized into particular historical, sociocultural, intellectual, religious, and other personal and institutional contexts of situatedness. Moreover, as pictures go, some pictures of reality are more conducive to our living in harmony with the world and each other than others. So, for the sake of living in moral balance, we should choose those pictures that are conducive to this balance. But, if we are not aware that we are living by a picture of reality, the question of choosing a more morally viable picture does not arise in the first place. We are entrapped in our metaphysical fly-bottle, unable to imagine a different possibility of reality.

In this paper, I take up the Wittgensteinian project of showing ourselves a way out of the fly-bottle of a certain ontological picture of the world which, I shall argue, underlies our destructive treatment of the earth, as well as continuing inequities and exploitation in the world. The first part of my paper approaches the problematic ontology first through exposing the hegemony of instrumentalism. The analysis of instrumentalism reveals that its root belief and value system is rationalist anthropocentrism. I then trace the consolidation of rationalist anthropocentrism to the seventeenth century's ontological vision of

the Mechanical Universe. I shall argue that this ontology has legitimated the duality of Mind and Matter, and then reduced Nature to the order of Matter, thereby authorizing humanity, whose essence is supposedly the Mind (the so-called "rational nature"), an absolute dominion over Nature. The consequence is the radical alienation of human presence from the natural world. Moreover, as I shall contend, this ontology is also implicated in the exploitive treatment of fellow human beings.

Moving beyond the terrain of understanding the problem, the second part of the paper addresses the question of practice, arguing that the key to breaking out of the mould of the problematic dualistic, mechanist ontology is the recovery of our capacity to value the world intrinsically through the cultivation of aesthetic consciousness. I contend that the aesthetic consciousness can restore a non-instrumentalist perception of the world, thereby healing the self's existential alienation from the world and establishing our consanguinity with it.

## THESIS

Metaphysical realism is a common affliction: people tend to believe that the way they perceive and relate to the world is the way the world *is*. Implicit in this view is the reasoning that there is a direct one-way causal relation between how the world is (that is, independent of our views of it) and the way we perceive and relate to it. I challenge this reasoning on the grounds of comparative ontology. If the world we have in common brings out completely different perceptions and responses from different individuals (or peoples), then, we have to suspect that different individuals or groups are interpreting the same world differently. Moreover, since interpretation is dependent on the conceptual framework, we then have to account for the difference in our responses to the world in terms of the different interpretive frameworks we adopt.

Here is a case in point: According to the Haida Nations' traditional beliefs, trees are fellow beings who, therefore, had to be treated with the same due respect that we normally pay to our fellow human beings. Thus: "[w]hen a Haida basket weaver collects bark for her craft, she asks the *consent* [italics added] of the cedar tree and sings its praises for having made something as beautiful as bark." Presumably, it may happen sometimes that the cedar tree that

a crafter asks says "no" to the crafter's asking and then she would have to go to another tree. Or, it may even happen that for now she has to give up on the idea of making a basket altogether since no tree would consent to give the bark!

Contrast the above to our usual treatment of trees. Whilst most of us may not deny a certain kind and degree of sentience to trees, we do not consider the kind and degree sufficient a reason to accord them something like the moral status of person as the Haida do. To us, a tree is a "thing," a commodity, although living: we have no intrinsic regard for the tree's own "personal" mode of being. Hence, we have no reservations about cutting down trees for our purposes, whether for Christmas trees, for lumber, or just to make a road, without considering their own well-being, let alone "consulting" them.

The above example illustrates the decisive contribution that a person's (culturally acquired) ontological interpretive framework makes to his or her perception and conduct. In other words, how we perceive the world and respond to it – that is, our moral orientation – is largely a function of our prior understanding of what the world is *like* and what we are *like* in relation to the world. Our perception and conduct are the enactment of our metaphysical notions about the self and the world. *Hence my thesis that ontology entails ethics.* A practical implication of this thesis is that if we want to change the way we act in this world, because we have found it to be damaging both to ourselves and to other beings, we have to change our ontology. But, as I shall address later, changing our ontology is not a matter of simply adopting a set of new beliefs.

Do we have reasons to believe that our own ways in the world are damaging? And what ontology underlies them? In the next section, I will briefly review the state of the world to reveal our ways as rampant instrumentalism. Following that, I will trace instrumentalism to rationalist anthropocentrism, and the latter, to the ontology of a Mechanical Universe.

## INSTRUMENTALISM

We have entered the new millennium to a world of mounting environmental and social disintegration. Everywhere around us are symptoms of ecosystems and human communities suffering from stress and imbalance. To name a few notable distress signs: the serious depletion of aquifers and its consequence on world food scarcity; the phenomenal scale of deforestation; global warming due to increased fossil fuel use and its impact on climatic change; the severity of air, water, land pollution; critical soil erosion and its impact on agricultural productivity; dwindling biodiversity; increasing hunger worldwide and increasing disparity between the rich and the poor. Moreover, consider the estimate that the affluent countries, 20 percent of the world's population, consume 80 percent of the world's resources and that "[i]f 7 billion humans were to consume as much energy and other resources as do today's industrialized countries, five planets Earth would be needed to satisfy everyone's needs." Or, to think in terms of social justice, consider the fact that "[w]hile the industrialized and rich countries have not paid for the ecological damage resulting from their activities, many of the consequences and their cost (e.g., global warming) will fall upon developing, poor countries," not to mention on future generations. It is now an unequivocal recognition that economic growth as the organizing principle for societies around the world—the legacy of the western industrial development—and the resulting acquisitive and consumptive mode of existence are at the root of our environmental and social deterioration. Brown and Flavin's following appraisal is widely shared:

[T]he western industrial development model that has evolved over the last two centuries has raised living standards to undreamed-of levels for one fifth of humanity. It has provided a remarkably diverse diet, unprecedented levels of material consumption, and physical mobility that our ancestors could not have imagined. But the fossil-fuel-based, automobile-centered, throwaway economy that developed in the West is not a viable system for the world, or even for the West over the long term, because it is destroying its environmental support systems.

The throwaway economy is concerned principally with making profits, regardless of such concerns as whether goods and services produced are

inherently beneficial, whether their benefits are shared widely throughout the society, and whether these benefits outweigh detrimental effects of growth on the natural environment and other parts of society. Under the universal ideal of profit-making, everything is viewed as resources for human consumption. Nothing is spared of being turned into a means to economic growth, which has been equated with the nation's "progress." The change in label from "personnel" to "human resources" is one of the more recent witnesses to the legitimation process of the view that everything, including human beings, is just a means to creating financial wealth. Economy subordinates all human activities to production and consumption. This economism is a supreme expression of instrumentalism. By all accounts, we live in an age of instrumentalism.

Instrumentalism is a mode of perception and interaction wherein entities are valued not for what they are in themselves but primarily or only for their utility to the self. That is, we do not value the other for its own sake, as an end onto itself – as a subject. Thus we reduce the other to the status of an object. We call this objectivization, that is, turning the other into an object for the self. The flip side of this process is the corresponding subjectivization of ourselves with respect to the other: the self becomes the subject. Now, when an entity is objectivized, it is abstracted out of the total complexity of its *being* and is reduced to a material, function, feature, force, or any other single variable. For example, we say Johnny is a problem. How can a person in all his complexity of being be reduced to a problem? Another example: how can the land which is a biocommunity of countless life forms be a monetized property? Likewise, how can animals whom the many billion years of complex evolution equipped to live independently of us in their natural habitats be treated solely as our factory-farm products? Here, other beings are abstracted or disembedded out of their own totality of being. Thus reduced, they are then ready to assume a status of raw material, means, or abstract function for instrumental treatment.

Implicit in the subject-object relationship is value disparity: the subject embodies a higher value than its object. Thus, humanity embodies a higher value than the rest of the life forms; also, the folks in the "developed" nations have a better, higher life than the "primitive" folks in the "underdeveloped" nations. This value comparison signals normativity: the higher value is what we

all ought to aspire to and work towards. Hence the notions of progress and development. If these notions signal social agenda, their private counterpart is the notion of "good life." World over, the North American image of good life characterized by conspicuous consumption and mobility is sold to the so-called developing and underdeveloped countries. Examples abound. Mothers in Third World countries who would otherwise breastfeed give baby formula to their newborns because that is what the women in developed countries do. The tragedy is that, lacking the developed countries' standard of hygiene, they are unable to sterilize their bottles properly and their babies face life-threatening infections. Another example: Countries whose streets are too crowded even for comfortable walking aspire to the North American lifestyle of owning and driving cars. Given the global entrenchment of this ideal of a good life, we (the folks in the "developed" nations) can hardly blame the "underdeveloped" nations for clamoring to copy our throwaway economy. The "developed" nations have successfully managed to convince others to adopt the "value program" behind our throwaway economy, which include such values as growth, development, money, speed, efficiency, mobility, consumption, and convenience. And we take this success at converting others to our value program as a sure sign of its inherent superiority.

But the evaluation of success is criteria-specific. By what criteria are the instrumentalist claims of superiority and success supported? What is the ground of justification for such claims? I shall now turn to exploring what I will term the 'rationalist anthropocentrism', showing that instrumentalism has its justificatory source in this ideology.

## RATIONALIST ANTHROPOCENTRICISM

Instrumentalism is a logical consequence of rationalist anthropocentrism, the belief that humans are placed at the top of the value pyramid presumably because of our superior intelligence or rationality. The figure of Kant looms large in this connection because his rationalist anthropocentrism has had a lasting major influence on moral thought to this day. Kant made a sharp distinction between intrinsic value ("kingdom of ends") and instrumental value ("kingdom of means"), rightly equating the former, but not the latter, with the moral point-of-view. To quote the famous moral dictum by Kant: "Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end." To view something morally is to view it intrinsically: that is, to value it for its own sake, as an end onto itself, as a subject.

Now, for Kant, to be sure, this intrinsic valuing is to be practiced with respect to humanity only because, according to him, only human beings are capable of "setting ends." To wit: "Man has a duty of striving to raise himself from the crude state of his nature, from his animality and to realize ever more fully in himself the humanity by which *he alone is capable of setting ends*" (emphasis added). Kant identifies this capacity for setting ends as the "rational nature." We are obligated to treat beings with *moral* consideration only insofar as they possess this rational nature. Consequently, we have moral duties only to other human beings but not to animals or plants. This does not mean that Kant condones abuse and cruelty to non-human beings. Kant in fact has argued that we should not harm animals but the reason is not because they have claims to our moral respect but because cruelty is unworthy of us, the rational beings.

But why should possession of the rational nature be the criterion for ascribing intrinsic value? Just because intrinsic valuing has to do with valuing something as an end itself, it does not follow from this that only the beings capable of rational determination of their *telos*— only human beings, according to Kant — deserve our intrinsic valuing. Also, the assumption that only humans are capable of setting ends is highly contestable. Kant's argument here reflects the anthropocentric and rationalist bias of his time and culture, the bias we still massively suffer from. This bias radically limits the possibility of our moral

relationship with the larger world since we can only have a moral relationship proper (that is, the relationship of intrinsic valuing) with rational beings. Accordingly, with beings deemed to fall short of full rationality, we are justified to have merely instrumental relationships. The logical consequence of this way of thinking has been amply borne out in our increasing mass scale destruction of the biotic communities world over in the last two centuries.

The moral implication of the rationalist anthropocentrism is nowhere else more starkly revealed than in the current trend in species extinction. Under this ideology, we believe that, whether it is through God's ordination or the workings of evolution, humans are at the apex of the hierarchy of terrestrial lifeforms by virtue of our rationality or superior intelligence; hence, naturally (so we reason), we have the dominion over the "lower" lifeforms. The recent decades' holocaust of species extinction is a logical consequence of this worldview. Many have tried to dispel the commonly held misconceptions about evolution as ascension of lifeforms culminating in homo sapience. For instance, Stephen Jay Gould, eminent paleontologist and authority on Darwinism, argues in *Full House* that it is variety, not the "upward" movement towards complexity, which is the meaning of the word "progress" in the context of evolution. Speaking in metaphor, Gould calls Homo sapience "a tiny twig, born just yesterday on an enormously arborescent tree of life." This humble image contrasts sharply with the more conventional image of evolution: the pyramid on whose apex stands "man," peerless and sublime. Notwithstanding the weight of expert opinions such as Gould's, many of us, including professional scientists, find it simply difficult to let go of the centric and hierachical worldview and the accompanying sense of self-importance and superiority. Our whole self-image or -identity is bound up with this view of ourselves as superior to other beings on the basis of our higher cognitive capacity.

The rationalist bias of anthropocentrism is not bad news only for "non-human" (note the anthropocentric label) beings: it also threatens the possibility of moral relationship with fellow human beings. For, rationality as a cognitive capacity of the so-called "higher order" thinking, that is – symbolic representation and manipulation – is not uniformly distributed amongst human beings. Even if we take into consideration that standards of rationality change



time to time, the fact remains that we always end up with the evaluation that some folks are less rational (less 'intelligent', 'smart', and so on) than others. Since, according to the Kantian logic, lack of rationality implies not deserving intrinsic valuing, we would be justified in our instrumental treatment of people deemed to fall below the given norms of rationality. (And, who sets the norm?) Indeed, consider the long history of oppression suffered by women, coloured people, children, and others all on the basis of the alleged claims about these groups' falling short of full rationality. This is also how the so-called "underdeveloped" nations came to be the suppliers of raw materials and cheap labour for the provision of goods and services to the the so-called "developed" nations. Protests against such inequity and injustice have tended to take the form of showing that these marginalized and excluded groups were just as intelligent, or at least potentially so, as, say, white European males – the norm of rationality. Such rebuttal, however, does not challenge the very criterion of conferring moral perception and treatment, namely possession of rationality. For the possibility of more generous moral relationship with the world, including fellow human beings, the rationalist criterion is decisively a limiting condition. Whence does this criterion come?

In the next section, I argue that the rationalist anthropocentrism as the source of our superiority complex is predicated upon the historically constructed ontology of the Mechanical Universe, an ontology that reduces everything in the universe except the Mind to the order of dead matter.

## THE MECHANICAL UNIVERSE

Although anthropocentrism has been a perennial strand in human thought, as can be evidenced by Thales' famous remark about man being the measure of all things, it is to the genius of the seventeenth century that we owe the most decisive formulation of rationalist anthropocentrism. The seventeenth century marks a radical shift from a by and large animistic ontology and the accompanying "participatory consciousness" that pervaded the previous ages to the mechanical, rationalist ontology of modernity and its accompanying "objectivist consciousness." (More on these two types of consciousness later.) Crucial to this shift in ontology is the emergence of modern experimental science

supported by the philosophical justification intent on stripping the universe of any principle or sense of animism, that is, the sense that the universe is alive. Of the triumvirate architects of modernity—Bacon, Descartes, and Locke—it is to Descartes that we owe the definitive argument for the mechanical universe. Descartes argued that "[t]he nature of body consists not in weight, hardness, colour, or the like, but simply in extension." By extension, Descartes meant the property of "being extended in length, breadth and depth." The significance of this argument lies in its ethical implication that the material things are now seen as completely lacking in properties that are capable of affecting us sensuously. They merely occupy space! Nothing else. Indeed, Descartes goes on to argue that "[t]here is no real difference between space and corporeal substance" since "the extension constituting the nature of a body is exactly the same as that constituting the nature of a space." He thus concludes: "The matter existing in the entire universe is thus one and the same, and it is always recognized as matter simply in virtue of its being extended." Having reduced the entire material universe to the order of nondescript, indifferent matter, his only account for the incredible phenomenality is that "[a]ll the variety in matter, all the diversity of its force, depends on motion."

Let us consider how Descartes' above reductionism would change our relationship with the world. If material beings of our world have no properties other than being extended, then we would be mistaken in our previously held belief that they have the power to affect us sensuously and emotionally. In other words, according to the Cartesian reductionism, perception is not a matter of sympathy, resonance, or communion between the perceiver and the perceived. Cartesian perception is no more than the complex mechanism of lights impacting and exciting nerve cells. Any affective qualities that are adjunct to this mechanical process are mentalistic epiphenomena which are best accounted for in terms of the perceiver's cognitive ability to attach symbolic significance to perception. If we are moved at all by what we see, the credit goes not to the perceived at all but to ourselves, that is, to our well-furnished Mind.

I am not here criticizing the scientific validity of the Cartesian account of matter and perception. In fact, we may even grant that, *at the level of physics and chemistry*, all that we have is indeed matter in motion or some other physicalist

description. But it is the reductionism, the exclusivity and hegemony of physicalist explanations, that is problematic. Cartesian reductionism leaves no room to think of perception as *also* the perceiver's participation in the perceived, that is, as a communion, a transfusion, between them. Both Berman and Skolimowski refer to this sort of perceptual consciousness as participatory mind. With the Cartesian ontology, the sympathetic bond that ties the perceiver and the world is irrevocably cut, and the two do not come together except as a mechanical process of perception. The world, thus bereft of our participation, stands "out there," in ready submission to be manipulated and violated as mere objects, "stuffs," and resources. Stripped of the animating power that makes a being its own subject, the world is a collection of objects.

Thomas Berry gives us this dramatic account of the Cartesian legacy of the Mechanical Universe:

The devastation of the planet can be seen as a direct consequence of a loss of this capacity for human presence to the nonhuman world. This reached its most decisive moment in the seventeenth-century proposal of Rene Descartes that the universe is composed simply of "mind and mechanism." In this single stroke [Descartes], in a sense, killed the planet and all its living creatures with the exception of the human. The thousandfold voices of the natural world suddenly became inaudible to the human. The mountains and rivers and the wind and the sea all became mute insofar as humans were concerned. The forests were no longer the abode of an infinite number of spirit presences but were simply so many board feet of lumber to be "harvested" as objects to be used for human benefit. Animals were no longer the companions of humans in the single community of existence. They were denied not only their inherent dignity, but even their rights to habitat.

That we feel superior to other beings is a direct result of our seeing them as belonging to a domain of mere matter and objects. That we dominate and exploit the world is a logical consequence of this perception. Before we could propose to conquer and manipulate Nature—as Francis Bacon persuaded his contemporaries—we first had to reduce it to the order of matter. Such was Descartes' philosophical contribution.

In the next section, I shall reflect on the psychic consequence of embracing the ontology of the Mechanical Universe. With this discussion, I will bring my argument full-circle back to my earlier observations about the connection between instrumentalism and consumerism.

## ALIENATION

The Cartesian self as the possessor of Mind or Reason stands absolutely alone in the centre of the immense Mechanical Universe— "a senseless, impersonal aggregate of matter in motion" whose intricate workings may perhaps provoke awe but not a sense of belonging and kinship. In this ontology, the universe is an absolute Other to the self. Since there is no sense of consanguinity and communion between I as a person and the depersonalized world of objects, my foremost sense of being in the world is alienation. Now, alienation is not just a private emotion that we suffer inwardly and has no moral impact on the world. On the contrary, it has grave moral consequences. Loy states: "As long as we experience ourselves as alienated from the world and understand society as a set of separate selves, the world is devalued into a field-of-play wherein we compete to full-fill ourselves." Alienation is a state of existential lack which relentlessly drives one to fill oneself by taking possession of the world. In this understanding, domination and possession are the result of alienation. Alienation creates a radical hunger for the world. This is the root of our century's manic consumerism. To quote Fromm: "The attitude inherent in consumerism is that of swallowing the whole world. The consumer is the eternal suckling crying for the bottle." He goes on to state: "[T]o consume is one form of having, and perhaps the most important one for today's affluent industrial societies. . . Modern consumers may identify themselves by the formula: *I am = what I have and what I consume.*" But, it is an insatiable hunger that can never be relieved by any amount of possession and consumption.

The existential lack that Loy speaks of or Fromm's radical hunger for the world is at root the problem of the dualistic consciousness wherein the self, the subject "in here," externalizes the world, the object, seeing it as an Other, "out over there," entirely separate and categorically different from itself. This is existential alienation. Since its source is the dualistic consciousness, the way out

of alienation is to recover the nondual consciousness. Any other ways of overcoming alienation while remaining a dualistic consciousness is bound to fail, sooner or later. Loy explains: "The basic difficulty is that insofar as I feel separate (i.e., an autonomous, self-existing consciousness) I also feel uncomfortable, because an illusory sense of separateness is inevitably insecure." All our ways of securing the self as the subject in the objectivized world are like pouring water into a bottomless pit. *Stop pouring the water; discover that what we thought was a bottomless pit is really a deep well filled with water already.* Translation: Stop seeing ourselves as self-existing, self-contained, autonomous, and separate from the world; realize that we *are* the world. Loy again: ". . . I can discover that I have always been grounded, not as a self-contained being but as one manifestation of a web of relationships which encompasses everything. This solves the problem of desire by transforming it. As long as we are driven by *lack*, every desire becomes a sticky attachment that tries to fill up a bottomless pit."

In suggesting the above transformation of consciousness, I do not minimize the difficulty involved. It seems we have nothing less than the weight of the human evolution to struggle against. Loy's assessment of the prospect is both cautious and encouraging:

The evolution of homo sapiens into self-consciousness alienated the human species from the rest of the world, which became objectified for us as we became subjects looking out at it. This original sin is passed down to every generation as the linguistically-conditioned and socially-maintained delusion that each of us is a consciousness existing separately from the world. Yet if this is a conditioning, it raises the possibility of a deconditioning, or a reconditioning.

Conditioning by definition "rules out thought beyond it," as McMurtry has said. Before we can convince people to try a course of deconditioning, we have to persuade them to even try imagining a different possibility. Imagine a nondualist ontology. But this may be so challenging that our imagination draws a blank: it could use a little stimulation. In the next section, I shall introduce as a stimulant the example of the Chinese *ch'i* ontology. This ontology has made a commitment to nonduality of self/other, subject/object, and mind/matter. I am particularly interested in the *ch'i* philosophy because of its suggestion that

aesthetic apperception, the essence of the contemplative mode of being, is a way to cultivating nondual consciousness.

## CH'I

*Ch'i*, usually translated as "vital energy," is considered in the classical Chinese thought as the basic "stuff" of the cosmos, common to all that exists. Moreover, *ch'i* is psychophysical, meaning that it is both spiritual (mental) and material. The meaning of 'both' here is not a conjunction of two categorically separate substances, which would be dualism, but the negation of dualism. As Wei-ming notes, it is not that the Chinese thinkers were unable to analytically distinguish spirit or mind from matter. Rather, they refused to "abandon a mode of thought that synthesizes spirit and matter as an undifferentiated whole." This refusal was their moral choice: to embrace dualism would lead to existential alienation.

The *ch'i* ontology with its understanding of *ch'i* as psychophysical "stuff" that permeates humans and nonhumans alike would naturally lead to the sense of "continuity of being," and therefore, kinship with "the ten thousand things," to borrow the Chinese expression for the 'phenomenal world'. Humans are not radically separate from other beings, such as rocks and trees; for, all beings, that is, all that exist, are "modalities of energy-matter (*ch'i*)." Thus, the following statement of the Taoist philosopher Chang Tsai (1020–1077) is more than just a figure of speech but expresses exactly how he feels about his relationship with this phenomenal world: "Heaven is my father and earth is my mother, and even such a small being as I finds an intimate place in their midst. . . all people are my brothers and sisters, and all things are my companions." We cannot get a more direct and concrete statement of our consanguinity with the world than this.

All beings, whether vegetative, mineral, or animalistic, insofar as they are formed of and partake in the dynamic flow of *ch'i*, are animated, therefore, alive. If so, there is not a "thing" that is not alive in this cosmos. In fact, there are no *things*, that is, *objects*, in the universe. I note here how this view converges with Thomas Berry's own: "[T]he universe is not a collection of objects but a communion of subjects." Communion presupposes a possibility of sympathetic resonance amongst beings, which in turn requires an ontology, such as the *ch'i*

philosophy, that sees no categorical separation, therefore essential barrier, between different beings. The moral import of sympathetic resonance as our primary mode of interaction with other beings is that it is less likely to lead us down the path of control, mastery, and domination – the modernist paradigm in which we have been entrapped.

The *ch'i* ontology does not deny that we are endowed with superbly developed reason or intellect. But there is no privileging of the latter. Given this ontology's commitment to a moral view of the cosmos wherein all beings are consanguineous and support each other, what is in fact privileged as an especial human endowment is this capacity for empathically perceiving and sensing the animate, dynamic *ch'i* shared by all beings. I find the passage from Ch'eng Hao (1032–1085) especially lucid and useful for my purpose of drawing out an ethical implication of the *ch'i* ontology:

A book on medicine describes paralysis of the four limbs as absence of humanity (*pu-jen*). This is an excellent description. The man of humanity regards heaven and earth and all things as one body. To him there is nothing that is not himself. Since he has recognized all things as himself, can there be any limit to his humanity? If things are not part of the self, naturally they have nothing to do with it. As in the case of paralysis of the four limbs, the vital force (*ch'i*) no longer penetrates them, and therefore they are no longer parts of the self.

The dualist (of both the objectivist and the subjectivist varieties) who looks out at the world as an Other, categorically separate from the self, is enormously restricted (above: crippled and paralyzed) in his scope and degree of sentience, for his sentience is basically limited to his own atomistic self, often coinciding more or less with his physical body at whose epidermal boundary the self ends and the world of otherness begins. Given this ontology, the rest of the vast world is often more or less a dead, indifferent, irrelevant, or at the most, usable matter to him. If we subscribe to this ontology, is it any wonder that we would not feel much kinship with other beings, whether human or non-human, with whom we share the earth?

The kind of axiology that goes with the dualist ontology is, naturally, instrumentalism. Values of other beings are never intrinsic but *only* instrumental.

Other beings are valued only to the extent that they serve and satisfy our needs: this is the mind-set of exploitation. Even the enjoyment we seek is, more often than not, obtained in this exploitive manner: by reducing the other merely or predominantly as a means to our pleasure. The name for this mode of pleasure is entertainment. In contrast, the *ch'i* metaphysics gives rise to a different basis of enjoyment: *resonance, attunement, or communion*. These intersubjective modes are the basis of the aesthetic sensibility necessary for contemplative appreciation. Again I quote Wei-ming who offers a definitive statement on the classical Chinese aesthetics .

To see nature [or any perceptual "object"] as an external object out there is to create an artificial barrier which obstructs our true vision and undermines our human capacity to experience nature from within. The internal resonance of the vital force is such that the mind, as the most refined and subtle *ch'i* of the human body, is constantly in sympathetic accord with the myriad things in nature. The function of "affect and response" (*kan-ying*) characterizes nature as a great harmony and so informs the mind. The mind forms a union with nature by extending itself metonymically. Its aesthetic appreciation of nature is neither an appropriation of the object by the subject nor an imposition of the subject on the object, but the merging of the self into an expanded reality through transformation and participation.

Above, the particular characterization of aesthetic apperception or consciousness, namely its essential connection to nonduality, gives us a strong clue as to where we may look for the learning of intrinsic valuing: in the contemplative mode of being. In the following penultimate section, I investigate this possibility through an example of Frederick Franck's zen practice of drawing.

## TECHNOLOGIES OF CONTEMPLATIVE CONSCIOUSNESS

Any sustained practice conditions and forms a particular mode of consciousness, or if you like, a way of seeing and being in the world. I shall adopt Foucault's handy term "technologies of the self" to denote such practices that the self can undertake: ". . . technologies of the self. . . permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being,



so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality." The specific state we seek after, however, is nonduality, and the particular way of relating to the world, intrinsic valuing. Since what we are interested in is not just knowing the various possible technologies but understanding just how these work, I shall again look at a particular example with the aim of gleaning some general principles.

For Frederick Franck, drawing is a transformative technology whereby the usual tendency to *look at* the world as a collection of objects gives way to *seeing* the world nondually. But just how is the transformation achieved? What is the key to this practice? Succinctly put, it is intense, total, and sustained attention. Such attention disrupts the usual pattern recognition that we are amazingly efficient at. For example, one quick glance is enough to identify something as a forest. After such identification, either we move on to thinking of something else, say the next pay cheque, or we engage in a discursive thinking about the forest, say, now much lumber there is. In either case, what does not happen is a sustained contemplation on the object, the kind of sensuous dwelling in the perceived that would enable one to get to know the other intimately. Franck's following statement illustrates well the difference between looking as identification and seeing as in-dwelling: "Driving through the redwoods of California I see "timber," until I stop and sit down in front of one tree and start drawing it, with or without pen or paper."

Thus the first act we have to accomplish in learning to see is the stop. We have to stop the usual rushing-around with discursive labeling and calculative chattering. Without this stop, we cannot achieve enough inner silence, that is, freedom from the fracturing commotion of the discursive mind, to undertake a sustained attending to the other. The act of drawing in Franck's practice is one way to distill and sustain the attention. To note, drawing as a technology of the self does not aim at a particular artistic product: beautiful or realistic or other manner of drawings are not the point. One knows when the drawing is going well by self-checking the quality of concentration and engagement: how focused and quiet one's mind is and how intensely one's attention is engaged by the perceived. Franck states: "The bad drawings happen when, as I start to draw, the world remains closed to me. I am a mere onlooker, "He is Italian," "She looks

ridiculous," goes through my head. . . As long as I recognize objects and name them, I am impotent. There is no greater contrast than between recognizing and seeing. Drawing is, before all else, seeing."

When we direct such an intense attention to an "object" of our face-to-face encounter, there occurs this singular experience of the "subject" and the "object," the self and the other coming together, co-present and co-emergent. Again, here is Franck: "Every dot, every line on the paper had gone through my whole organism. I was no longer the onlooker. . . Drawing the landscape, I 'became' that landscape, felt unseparated from it." It is as though, finally, the two arbitrarily separated parts – the perceiver and the perceived – of one whole come together to belong to each other. This is healing and end of alienation. As a result, a tremendous sense of aliveness is released: the world is alive, and one feels its pulse and rhythm within oneself. One comes to dwell once again in an animated universe in which all beings are consanguineous with oneself. Whether one calls it the work of *ch'i* or some other force, it really does not matter. It is the quality of experience that matters. Here is Franck again commenting on this sense of animated universe: "One day I was drawing a cow in a meadow near our house. As I stood drawing, our eyes met, and at that instant she stopped being 'a cow'. She became this singular fellow being whose warm breath mixed with my own in the cold fall air."

Of course, drawing is not the only "technology of consciousness" capable of delivering us to nondual experiences. All contemplative endeavours requiring a sustained, total, selfless attention, whether found in arts, sciences, or other endeavours, can be such technologies insofar as they yield the nonduality of the subject and the object. However, I would like to emphasize the word "sciences" just because our conventional way of thinking of sciences entrenches dualism between subject (the scientist) and object (the world). But there is no *apriori* reason why scientists cannot experience nonduality with respect to the objects they are working with. Nobel laureate Barbara MaClintock is a good example. Here are her own words describing her in-dwelling experience: "I found that the more I worked with [maize chromosomes under the microscope] the bigger and bigger [they] got, and when I was really working with them I wasn't outside, I was down there. I was part of the system. . . It surprised me because I actually

felt as if I were right down there and these were my friends." She said the same about her cornfield: "No two plants are exactly alike. They're all different, and as a consequence, you have to know that difference. . . I start with the seedling, and I don't want to leave it. I don't feel I really know the story if I don't watch the plant all the way along. So I know every plant in the field. I know them intimately, and I find it a great pleasure to know them."

It is up to each individual to discover particular "arts" congenial to her being and can take her most deeply into the experience of nonduality. Franck affirms this understanding: ". . . I learned that every art has its mystery, its spiritual rhythm, its *myo* in Japanese. The *myo* is intimately related to all the arts. The true artist, the artist-within, is the one who is really moved by the *myo*, the as-is-ness of things, of their intrinsic, unhallowed sacredness." For some, it may be pottery; for others, poetry. From *zazen* (sitting meditation) to scientific observations, the art that disciplines the mind-body-heart to alter one's perception of the world, from that of alienation, duality, and instrumentalism to that of co-emergence, participation, and intrinsic valuing, are suitable pedagogical tools for an education devoted to rediscovering our sacred bond to the world.

## ARRIVING

Ours are nations addicted to action and production. We measure progress by how much we produce and consume, consequently, how much we alter the world. This is the instrumentalist orientation – the "having" mode. The opposite is the intrinsic orientation, the "being" mode, wherein we enter into a sustained contemplation and intrinsic appreciation of the phenomenal world. Obviously, we cannot live solely in one orientation. We need both but in balance. By all accounts, this balance has been broken in the present regime of instrumentalism. We need to regain this balance by recovering the intrinsic orientation. Essential to this orientation is the aesthetic sensibility: the ability to dwell in the sustained contemplation of the phenomenal world and to experience the fullness of Being. Lacking this aesthetic sensibility, we are unable to "metabolize" the infinitely rich nutrients of Life in this phenomenal world. We work harder than ever, produce and consume more than ever, and yet we feel evermore psychically empty and

starved. This problematic situation is analogous to the metabolic disorder where the afflicted is hungry all the time, is addicted to food, and eats ravenously, but is unable to derive proper nourishment. As a treatment for our existential metabolic disorder, I have suggested the cultivation of contemplative, aesthetic consciousness. I am convinced that the more we can dwell in the contemplative / aesthetic mode of being, the less damage we will incur to the world through hyperactivity and hyper-production / consumption. "Do less and be more" should be our motto.

In closing, I would like to share the first stanza of a poem by Daisaku Ikeda. The other day on campus where I teach, I chanced upon an exhibit of Ikeda's "Photo Essays" which was accompanied by a few poems of his own. What I have been calling the contemplative, aesthetic consciousness, Ikeda calls the "poetic mind."

*Poetry is the spiritual bond  
That links humanity, society, and the universe.  
The gaze of the poet is directed at the heart;  
He sees things as more than mere objects.  
At times the poet converses with the trees and the grasses,  
Talks with stars, greets the sun, and befriends all beings.  
In these he sees life and breathes life into them,  
Finding in the changing phenomena of the world  
The unchanging principles of the universe.*