

Encounters with Nature: Essays by Paul Shepard, edited by Florence R. Shepard, with an Introduction by David Petersen. Washington DC: Island Press (1999), xxix, 219 pp.

Reviewed by Eric Katz, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, New Jersey Institute of Technology, Newark, NJ 07102.

The writings of Paul Shepard are, if nothing else, provocative - in the best sense of that word. His work provokes us, shakes us out of our complacency, and forces us to re-examine and re-think our ideas about the relationship between humanity and nature. In a career that spanned forty years he produced several masterpieces of what we now would call "environmental thought" - *Man in the Landscape: An Historic View of the Esthetics of Nature* (1967), *The Tender Carnivore and the Sacred Game* (1973), *Thinking Animals: Animals and the Development of Human Intelligence* (1978), and *Nature and Madness* (1982) - as well as many others books and essays. In this volume, published posthumously, we are presented with twenty-two previously uncollected essays, both published and unpublished in Shepard's life time. The essays have been collected and edited by Florence Shepard, Paul's wife and partner during the last decade of his life.

According to the editor's preface, the essays were selected to illuminate two themes: animals and place (p. xiv), and the essays are grouped into two parts to reflect this editorial organization. But a close reading of the essays reveals four basic themes: (1) the role of animals in the development of human mental and cultural life; (2) the justification of hunting as a basic component of human culture; (3) the need to connect to the earth in specific places, to understand specific natural histories, and to move beyond the simplistic human-centered categories of nature appreciation, such as the beautiful or the pastoral; and finally (4) the need to understand the radical difference between what is truly natural and what is thought to be natural by human society. It is in this last theme that we see the full force of Shepard's critique of current ecological thought and environmental practice. It is here that Shepard attacks the relativism of current science - including ecology - and calls for the objectivity, the trans-cultural reality, of ecosystems and biomes (p. 163).

All four themes are dominated by a deep understanding and respect for the process of evolution. For me, this is the chief insight that Shepard seeks to impale into our consciousness: humans are biological creatures who have a long evolutionary history that preceded by millions of years the establishment of this remarkable civilization in which we are embedded. "Our minds, like our bodies, still live in the Pleistocene" (p. 14). Culture and civilization attempt to separate humans from this biological and natural past, but in the long run this attempt at separation and dualism is doomed to failure: it leads to ecological destruction, the collapse of civilizations, and individual alienation and unhappiness.

The essays in this collection begin on the individual level with the importance of animals in the development of human thought. In "The Origin of the Metaphor: The Animal Connection" Shepard suggests that that the interaction with animal Others by our prehistoric human ancestors laid the basis for abstract thinking through the use of metaphor, imagery, and categorical thinking: "The animal species system in nature is the least ambiguous categorical model in the world. It is the doorway to cognition" (pp. 10-11). Animals are crucial to human development because they reside in that middle ground between the wholly different physical environment and the wholly similar human species they are both different and similar to us, and thus serve as a bridge to our understanding of the world around us and to our understanding of ourselves

Reviews

("Animals and Identity Formation," pp. 26-27). Even more important, the animals serve as "talismans of authenticity" - expressions of the certainty of an objective nonhuman natural reality ("Discoursing the Others," p. 30).

The second theme is introduced by a critical discussion of the "reverence of life" ethic of Albert Schweitzer, which Shepard finds to be an "ethic of the barnyard" • that is, an ethic based on the collective cultural experiences of humans regarding their domesticated animals, rather than the actual lives of animals lived in the natural world. This criticism is followed by two important essays, "A Theory of the Value of Hunting" and "Aggression and the Hunt: The Tender Carnivore" which predate and anticipate Shepard's masterpiece, *The Tender Carnivore and the Sacred Game*. In the first of these hunting essays, Shepard dismisses the traditional rationalizations for the morality of the hunt - the development of self-reliance or the need to escape the roar of civilization - and instead focuses on the importance of the killing itself:

What do the hunt and kill actually do for the hunter? They confirm his continuity with the dynamic life of animal populations, his role in the complicated cycles of elements, in the sweep of evolution, and in the patterns of the flow of energy (p. 74).

And in the second essay, Shepard explains how the aggression of the hunt is combined with the tenderness necessary for human cooperation. "[The hunters'] pugnacity, indispensable to life, contrasts sharply with their tender complicity (p. 80) [for]tenderness is the emotional aspect of cooperation" (p. 85).

In the second half of this collection, the emphasis changes to an analysis of the concept of place. Here a central idea is the difference between the concept of "landscape" - "a representation of a certain kind of visual experience" ("Five Green Thoughts," p. 133) - and the concepts of habitat or place, which are actual physical spaces in which humans (and others) exist and live. An emphasis on landscape is an aesthetic response to the world, an aesthetic response that is based on the humanization of nature, making the natural world more pleasing to human beings.

The difference between human concepts and the actual categories of the natural world are given full expression in two later essays, "The Conflict of Ideology and Ecology" and "Sociobiology and Value Systems." Here Shepard contrasts the relativism of scientific ideas - and their infinitely possible revision - with the certainty of natural processes: "the biological concept of evolution is seen not as a scientific formulation of the integrative processes of nature but as one more construct in the marketplace of ideas" (p. 161). And Shepard chooses the word "marketplace" deliberately, for this attitude to nature leads to the ceaseless activity of economic trade-offs and the environmental policy of "land-use" (p. 167). The environment is seen as an anthropocentric resource, not as a world continuous with our human lives and culture. The dominant view of human society is to reject the holistic idea of the unity of humanity with nature as envisioned, for example, in the theory of sociobiology. "There is almost no limit to what we will do to avoid that intrusion of otherness into the citadel of prideful identity - including, if need be, exterminating the Others" (p. 175).

Is it possible, or even desirable, to summarize this collection of provocative essays? Perhaps the overriding idea is the importance of the non-human in the lives of humanity. Our philosophy, religion, science, and technology tries to humanize the world - "but the heterogeneity of the land is not made by humans • only discovered and celebrated, or ignored and diminished, by them" ("Itinerant Thoughts on Place," p. 189). We must recognize that human culture has its roots in the evolution of humanity in the specific ecosystems of the natural world. To ignore these roots, this real natural world, and to think only of what humans can do and make. To think only of the greatness of human civilization, is to diminish and to destroy both the natural environment and human civilization itself.

Although I share many of Shepard's ideas - the importance of understanding human evolution as the basis of the human/nature relationship, his general holistic and non-anthropocentric view of the natural world, the distinction between place and landscape, and the mistake of imposing human categories of thought and value on natural processes - let me end this review with a few critical comments. First, I remain skeptical of the connection between animals

Reviews

and the development of human maturity, language, and culture. I am always puzzled by the claim, made on the level of individual psychology, that human children “need” the natural world to develop in a healthy way. I just do not see how this claim can be proven. Millions of children grow up in urban areas and only a very few of them become dysfunctional adults. So then I am also skeptical of the general claim that humanity developed language and abstract thinking because of its relationship with the natural world. How could this be proven? Not from the prehistoric cave paintings of animals. So why believe it?

My second problem is more pragmatic. Suppose that most of what Shepard tells us is true • that the basis of the human relationship to the natural world lies in the evolution of humanity in the Pleistocene. What do we do with this insight? How does it change environmental policy? We cannot all return to a hunter-gatherer lifestyle • and of course Shepard does not recommend this.

My final concern lies in the structure of the book itself. Posthumous essay collections are always problematic. Given the fact that Shepard was a prolific and successful author, one wonders why the unpublished essays were never published, and why the published essays were never collected before - perhaps he did not think these were the best expressions of his ideas. The essays are repetitious, of uneven quality, and often fragmentary. Thus I think this collection will be of interest mainly to scholars of Shepard who may wish to see what are essentially earlier drafts of his major works. First time readers of Shepard are urged to consult his books, especially *The Tender Carnivore* and *the Sacred Game and Nature and Madness*, both recently reprinted by the University of Georgia Press.

Sustaining the Forest, the People, and the Spirit, by Thomas Davis. State University of New York Press (2000). 244 pp.

Reviewed by Annie L. Booth, Environmental Studies Program, University of Northern British Columbia.

One of the best known examples of ‘alternative’ ‘sustainable’ forestry is the Menominee Tribe’s forest operation. The Menominee Tribe has resided in what is now the state of Wisconsin certainly since European explorers first encountered them in 1634 and, as archeology suggests, considerably longer. Confined to a reservation by a treaty signed in 1848, the Menominee turned to their land to support the people through developing the oldest tribal commercial forestry operation in North America. However, and this is where the Menominee warrant respect and attention, after one hundred and fifty years of active forestry, the Menominee reservation is covered by beautiful, healthy, and diverse (but not ‘pristine’) forest. The forest is so healthy it stands out from surrounding National Forest on satellite photos. The book under review examines Menominee forestry for the lessons it offers on sustainable resource development. Along the way the author presents the history of the Menominee and of their commercial forestry operation.

The book would have benefited greatly from additional editorial attention, since the writing often comes between the reader and the discussion. However, if the reader persists, it is an

Reviews

interesting story the author tells.

One challenge Davis faces is trying to make an impossible argument: that the Menominee are an example from which western society can learn:

The Menominee model, as a microcosm, provides a wonderful prism with which to look at the macrocosm and the challenges it faces. The model provides hints about answers to some challenges ... They have provided a valuable lesson to the world (p. 224).

However, as the book makes very clear, the Menominee model of sustainable development is a derivative of ancient history and modern reality, the state of the natural environment and community politics; it would be difficult to apply the model to another community or bioregion. And indeed the author does acknowledge this fact:

The model...does not provide all the answers. It is not the mantra that will save the earth (p. 224).

His discussion throughout the book reflects that tension, his sense that there is both much to learn from the Menominee experience and that this experience is unique. Anyone who is interested in indigenous cultures and their implications for non-indigenous environmental consciousness (witness the enduring popularity of a speech attributed to Chief Seattle) will recognize this tension. Davis performs a useful service in articulating it clearly and demonstrating how the tension works out in an applied rather than philosophical manner.

Davis is clearly aware and sympathetic to the concept of the "native as environmentalist" that has been in the environmental consciousness since the late 1960s. I believe part of the book's subtle aim is to refute the current effort on the part of many writers to dismantle that concept. In other words, he is offering evidence of the Menominees' environmentalist leanings through the articulation of Menominee sustainability. However, he is too respectful of his subject to be dishonest by ignoring the evidence that indicates the Menominee are not, and can't be, the "ecological Indian."

Davis, while clearly sympathetic, is nonetheless honest about the challenges the Menominee face, including tribal politics. He cites one leader's analogy of 'Lobster Bucket Politics,'

Indians are a bunch of lobsters stuck in a bucket. If one climbs to the top and starts to grab ahold of the bucket's rim, the other lobsters reach out and, quick, drag the lobster back to the bucket's bottom. Indians progress only when they all get together and make a miracle happen and lift up the entire bucket (p. 92).

The challenge of community politics is significant, and, speaking from my own experience, a challenge for many tribes. In some ways, as Davis notes, it distinguishes Menominee sustainable development from non-native sustainable development: Lobster Bucket Politics limits the amount of change, including change for the worse, that can go on. There is a built-in brake in the process of reaching consensus, and it has benefited the Menominee.

In his examination of the Menominee and their sustainable forestry, Davis explores the history, politics, economics, spirituality and culture of the Menominee, all of which contribute to Menominee sustainable development. His discussion is significantly different from the ordinary ethnography or anthropological study and perhaps more interesting. The Menominee have had an interesting history. The circumstances by which they got into the forest business and their determination to the gain eventual full control of the business present a worthwhile lesson in how and why small communities should gain control over their own destiny. They were the first victims in a misguided 1950s attempt by the federal government to get out of the Indian business, by 'terminating' the tribe's special trust relationship. In response, the tribe mobilized, successfully challenged the legality of this termination, and had their trust status reinstated. The experiences have developed a tough group of people who, nonetheless, must continue to strive. The tribe also face many of the social and economic problems that plague other tribes, including persistent poverty, alcohol problems, and trying to meet the needs of a rapidly growing population.

Reviews

Davis is also clear that the Menominee are no longer the people they were, curiously eyeing explorer Jean Nicolet in 1634. Acculturation has occurred and tradition has changed. Yet they are no less Menominee. The values they bring to the forest management represent a blend of modern ecological knowledge and a traditional understanding of where they came from. Davis describes the unique nature of the forest management plan developed by foresters:

...it is also a document that allows the Menominee to confirm that they are Menominee even after their association with the Long Knives [European descended cultures]. To the writers of the plan, each animal has a spirit that has to be treated with proper respect. Both animate and inanimate objects possess spirits that need protection if the Menominee and earth are to remain healthy and whole. The cultural remains of the old ones found in the forest must be preserved and protected (p. 54).

While protection of cultural sites can be found in most forest plans, the need to protect the spirits of animate and inanimate is somewhat less common; it is part of what distinguishes Menominee sustainable forestry.

It is made more powerful...by a forest that has sustained them as a people for more than five thousand years (p. 54).

It is also clear that the Menominee are wise enough to understand that no one approach can last them 5,000 years. Instead - and this is a crucial lesson they offer - their experiences point to the need to remain flexible, to be willing to change, slowly, to meet new demands, and to understand that one successful model will not be enough:

The essence of what the Menominee model says is that individual places and cultures should, out of their own experiences, fashioning creative technological, cultural, spiritual, and human solutions to the challenges posed by the need for long-term preservation (p. 208).

Is there any better lesson?

Community and Political Thought Today, edited by Peter Augustine Lawler and Dale McConkey, Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers (1998), 244 pp.

Reviewed by Robert Bradley, Department of Political Science, Illinois State University.

This edited volume evolved from a conference on communitarianism and civil society held in 1996 at Berry College. Most of the authors in the volume participated in the conference and include sociologists, political scientists, political philosophers, and historians. They share with the communitarian movement a critical concern about the current state of American society. Some authors agree with many of the precepts of communitarianism while others do not. They also