

FINDING VALUES IN NATURE

THINGS THAT JOIN IN A JOYFUL HEART

(Wilson, Jan 27, 2003)

*Egrets after long absence returning to the lagoon
Bird and angel shaped clouds floating above the hills
The joy of a three-year-old girl helping her family
Move into their new home
New chicks amidst a flock of wild turkeys.
The exquisite symmetries and colors of autumn leaves.
A Kamakura Buddha restored to a Zen garden.*

*Sharing the wisdom of the trees is a sacred grove
Absorbing the sounds and symmetries of a waterfall
Feeling the silent peace of distant hills
Contemplating the reflections in the glass surface of a lagoon*

*Hearing from old friends after a long absence
The Gospel "You too can do all that I have done, and more."
Reading again Emma Goldman's timeless challenge
To the hypocrisy of the establishment's institutions.
Guatama's injunction to Ananda:
"Go beyond what I have taught.
Light new lamps."*

Navajo: The Night Chant

In beauty happily I walk
With beauty before me I walk
With beauty behind me I walk
With beauty below me I walk
With beauty all around me I walk
It is finished again in beauty
It is finished in beauty

Navajo Prayer on Nature: Great Spirit, I raise my pipe to you, to your messengers the four winds, and to Mother Earth, who provides for our children. Give us the wisdom to teach our children to love, to respect and to be kind to each other, so that they may grow with peace and mind. Let us learn to share all the good things that you provide for us on this earth.

TRUTH AND BEAUTY (Wilson May 3, 1991)

There comes a time in our axiology when we cross the ethics- aesthetics interface, cross a boundary from right vs wrong, true vs false, orthodox vs heresy, to beautiful vs ugly. The value of the good or the value of the true is replaced by the value of beautiful.

Roerich felt that adopting the value of beauty could deliver us from repeating the atrocities committed under the values of good and true. But beauty alone can also be a capricious guide. We have the famous quote by Mussolini's son-in-law about how beautiful it was to see the bomb explode and send the troops below up into the air in a flower like pattern. The praises to "bombs bursting in air" and the beauties of mushroom clouds are too common in our heritage. And there is "La belle dame sans merci".

But we also have abundant examples of the failure of 'truth' alone as a guide as in the examples of the inquisition and wars of religion. And in the failure of reason and logic as guides as in the theory and practice of Nazism and of the American military industrial complex.

Is it fair to conclude that no one value alone can safely guide us? The Buddhists require both compassion and wisdom. And some Christian groups have supplemented their scriptural base of 'truth' with the beauties of majestic cathedrals, dramatic rituals, and inspiring music. Are those surrounded by beauty, be it natural or artificial, more safely guided than are adherents to bare boned true-false logics?