

# **Meditation On NATURE AND HUMAN NATURE**

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(The name Arnold Toynbee is listed here; it is not clear whether this text is Wilson's or Toynbee's; whatever, it is the meaning or position, both would agree with)

On an occasion I saw the mighty Himalayas, and my vision of them has made an ineffaceable impression on my mind. I was overwhelmed by their beauty, and their majesty, and at the same time I realized that here Nature was revealing to me something that is beyond herself. The splendor that shines through Nature is imparted to her from a source which is beyond Nature and which is the ultimate reality. If there were not this invisible spiritual presence in and beyond the visible universe, there would be no Himalayas and no mankind either; for mankind is part of Nature, and, like non-human Nature, we owe our existence to the reality that is the mysterious common source of non-human Nature and ourselves.

Man has polluted and marred the more easily accessible parts of the land and water surface of our planet wherever we find this to be economically profitably and militarily advantageous. This brutal treatment of non-human Nature has now been carried to extreme lengths in many countries, but it was Britain that was the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution that has spread all round the globe within the last two hundred years. Within these two centuries, Man has enormously increased his power by harnessing the inanimate forces of Nature on an unprecedented scale. But he has only just begun to realize that, in enslaving Nature, he is threatening to liquidate himself. Man is a part of Nature, and he will not be able to survive if he destroys the natural environment in which his pre-human ancestors became human in the act of awaking to consciousness. From the beginning of this human chapter of his history, Man has been bent on mastering Nature, and he has now succeeded in mastering the whole of terrestrial Nature except himself. This is an ironical achievement and an ironical failure. Self-mastery is, for Man, the key to happiness, to welfare, and to survival. Yet human nature is still recalcitrant to Man's command, and this unregenerate human nature is a threat to Man's existence, now that Man has armed himself with inanimate Nature's titanic forces.

Man has now fallen into conflict with human and non-human Nature alike. This is why, today, his enhanced power and wealth are causing him increasing anxiety and unhappiness. But this present-day disharmony dates only from the invention of mechanized industry. Pre-industrial Man, the hunter and the cultivator, managed to make Nature minister to his needs without going to War with her. Till the Industrial Revolution in England, only two hundred years ago, Man still lived at peace with Nature. He still felt the awe of Nature that he had inherited from ancestors who had been at Nature's mercy. Cannot we regain this lost ancient concord between Man and his environment?

Since Man became conscious, he has been aware that he himself is not the spiritually highest presence in the universe, and he has been seeking to communicate with this higher form of reality in order to put himself into harmony with it. His earliest avenue of approach to it was through his natural environment. He worshiped the ultimate reality through the manifestations of it in mountains, forests, springs, rivers, and the ocean. At the Western end of the Old World and in the Americas this earliest form of religion has been killed by monotheism in the forms of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. But in India and Eastern Asia the worship of ultimate reality through the medium of Nature still survives.