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the necessity of transcendence
and sacred realms**

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- No.3 The evolution of societal values compatible with ecological sustainability
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- No.5 Values for sustainability: the necessity of transcendence and sacred realms.
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Papers in the Fundamental Questions Paper series arise from Part 2 of the Fundamental Questions Program at CRES. The main outcome of Part 1 of the program is presented in *Our biosphere under threat: ecological realities and Australia's opportunities* (S.Boyden, S.Dovers and M.Shirlow, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1990).

The Fundamental Questions Program seeks to engender and inform public discussion of the implications for Australian society of the need for long-term ecological sustainability.

Values for sustainability: the necessity of transcendence and sacred realms

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1.0 Introduction¹

Aboriginal cultures do not have a monopoly on sacred sites. Sacredness cannot be relegated to the history of indigenous tribal societies (Mulvaney 1989, Palmer 1991), nor to the religious margins. All societies have sacred realms although they are often not recognised until violated.

The discovery of what is sacred to the environmental movement has come through the struggle of environmental groups such as Greenpeace and the Wilderness Society. The essential message of the Wilderness Society is the sacredness of wilderness, although this is combined with other arguments for the value of wilderness, such as its contribution to medical research, the control of the greenhouse effect, tourism and aesthetic experience. These different arguments are designed to appeal to varying interest groups. In particular, belief in, and passion for, the sacredness of the wilderness is used to sway the sensibilities of the largely white Anglo-Saxon, affluent, educated middle class who constitute the core constituency of the environmental movement.

Dr. Bob Brown is a leading inspiration for the emergent value of the sacredness of nature. In his speeches he continually relates his personal

experience of the wilderness - its beauty, richness and life, and how it feeds his spirit. He does this in a way that promotes in his listeners their own appreciation of the sacredness of the wilderness. Many of his supporters are happy to know that the wilderness is there as a sacred physical reality, and as a symbol of their commitment, even if they never have a direct wilderness experience. As Livingston says 'virtually all of them [naturalists] have a deep emotional and spiritual feeling for wild nature in all its forms' (Livingston 1981 p55).

The central question addressed in this paper is: can the human capacity for transcendence and the creation of sacred realms play a role in the creation of ecologically sustainable relationships, both locally and globally, between the human populations and the natural environment? Can sacred realms and transcendental experience be reclaimed from the religious margins to rebuild a meaningful commitment to the biosphere?

This paper is premised on the numerous works that reveal the need for societal transformation if we are to attain ecological sustainability. In Australia this means reducing our energy consumption to at least one fifth of

1. This is a speculative paper, provoked by a morning tea discussion with Alan Bellett. It is more an argument for, than an analysis of.

present levels (Boyden 1989, Boyden et al 1990). It is assumed that the human species has at least a residue of an instinctively based propensity to seek its survival, and that there is growing understanding that such survival is dependent upon the health of the ecosystems of the biosphere (Griffith 1989). If we are to survive as a species, we need to call upon all our capacities for transformation. This means, for example, the development of appropriate technology, sustainable economics and of new patterns of social organisation.

Bob Brown's appeal demonstrates that reason alone is unlikely to be sufficient basis for the achievement of biophysical sustainability. Logical explanations of why we should care for part, or the whole, of the biosphere has overriding appeal only to those individuals steeped in one dimensional commitment to the intellect. Likewise, if we appeal only to economic costs and benefits we are party to the current monopoly in our society of this narrow criterion of assessment. For many activists neither logic nor economic arguments provide necessary or sufficient basis for their action. A multidimensional approach is needed that appeals not only to the intellect, but also to feeling and spirit. This is a powerful way to generate a wide constituency for environmental sustainability with a capacity to make the necessary changes, some of which may be painful.

Rather than appealing for a religious quest for the 'highest rung aspect of spirit' (Wilber 1983), this paper addresses the question of the ecological function of the human capacity for transcendence and of sacred realms. This is not to say that a spiritual quest has no role in the attainment of environmental sustainability - it probably has - but this is not the central issue of concern here. As Livingston said, 'that spirituality of some indefinable sort is close to the root of naturalist's ethos is indisputable. We have not yet found a way to market it, we are not even certain whether we should' (Livingston 1981 p.61).

In this paper the human capacity for transcendence is taken as given (Zabinski 1986, Frankl 1963). By 'human capacity for transcendence', I mean the capacity to go beyond present conceptions of self-interest, and to locate self-interest in the context of the needs of the planet; the capacity to go beyond present societal realities, to be outside. The Webster dictionary defines *transcend* as: *to go beyond the limits of; exceed.*

This paper examines the potential of our capacity for transcendence to transform human-nature relationships.

From an environmental perspective, *sacred* means that nature be cared for, loved, and not violated; that which is outside obvious material use for humans; that which is precious and pure, and that which feeds our spirit. *Sacred* is defined in the Webster dictionary as: *given the respect accorded (to) holy things, venerated; that which must not be broken, inviolate.*

2.0 Human environmental ethics and the high-energy society value system

2.1 A critique of the values of high-energy society.

High-energy society has its own sacred realms. These, like all sacred realms, are largely taken for granted. However, their violation is taboo, and they are therefore difficult to challenge.

Two of the basic sacred realms of high-energy society are individual economic freedom and ongoing growth of material wealth through technological progress. These are as much a myth as a reality. A great deal of economic growth consists basically of making the informal economy formal, and externalising the real costs to the future and the commons. We are increasingly living off the Earth's capital rather than income from its renewable resources. This is largely hidden in the national accounts, since expenditure to clean up the social and environmental costs of economic growth is not included in the gross national product figures (see Coulter 1989). Present technological progress is associated with a throw-away technology, the replacement of people by machines, and a narrowing of the range of what people can do and be.

The elite of the high-energy society expresses its view of the future in projective quantitative terms - more of the same, but bigger and more powerful. This means more technology, materialism, increased urbanisation, fewer but larger and more complex organisations, centralisation of power and increased specialisation and bureaucratisation. Technology is seen as the source of stimulus, challenge and meaning - new gadgets and more of them to

titillate interest and maintain existing materialistic orientations. Money defines value. Materialistic sacred realms are depriving us of the awareness and capacity to value the intangible, informal and quiet, and to value social belonging.

The consequences of this kind of sacredness is that every thing, person or other species is perceived as having either material use value or no value, rather than *other* value. 'Other value' is regarded as something not earthly, a sacred state somewhere else called 'heaven', experienced after death. As an alternative, some contemporary theology (eg. that of Paul Tillich) has attempted to bring God back to Earth within the ground of each human's being. Judaeo-Christian tradition has contributed significantly to the estrangement of western people from their biology and being, 'and to concreting the notion of man's domination over nature in the very foundations of western thought' (Livingston 1981 p.86). This helps to explain why the Christian church is active in movements for human justice, but has been seldom involved in the struggle for environmental sustainability.

Through its rituals, the culture of high-energy societies tries to hide death of the individual, let alone the possibility of its own demise. The onrush of eco-catastrophe is driven by a culture that cannot confront its own imminent end. The great difficulty is that we are unable as yet to face the fact that we are participating in the death throws of a culture, that the arrogance of the last 200 years was misplaced, and that we now have to attempt humbly to reconnect ourselves with each other and with our planet. We are beginning to see our coming destruction, to plot it on graphs and analyse its causes. However, we have not yet fully accepted what we are doing to the planet; we are in a state of shock, denying the enormity of what we have done to ourselves, each other and our world home. This is a major impediment to cultural transformation.

The dominant culture's capacity to confront this increasingly known, but still largely hidden threat of death, is lacking partly because of the belief that our future is inevitably an improvement on the past, and that Western culture is the model for all others to follow. This view is manifest in the belief that we are the Earth's only managers, that we should therefore go full steam ahead with the creation of totally artificial human environments. The increasing invest-

ment in genetic engineering is an example. The present social system has largely survived through living off its historically developed cultural capital, its informal economy, the exploitable masses, particularly of women, the Third World and the resources and absorptive capacity of the biosphere.

The price of our material success and ecological failure is reflected in alienation. The high-energy phase has evolved to the extent that the division of labour, the scale of human activities and technology have disempowered the populace, destroyed the community basis of social life and engendered imbalances in the personalities of individuals (Cock 1987).

The social welfare system, and now the environmental welfare system have evolved in response to the human and biophysical consequences of the destructiveness of inherent in the dominant paradigm of our society. Hidden behind the blindness of our suicidal culture is an insidious biophysical poisoning; a dying that suppresses both consciousness of what is really happening, and our capacity to change direction. This is well illustrated by the example from biology of the frog which, if placed in hot water, makes frantic efforts to escape; but if it is put into cold water which is heated slowly, the animal may be boiled to death without so much as a struggle (Boyden 1987). The issue then is this: how can we develop and sustain our capacity to experience and respond to being 'slowly boiled to death' as a signal for transformation, rather than as a call for incremental changes that inevitably characterise bureaucratic environmentalism?

If we are unable to perceive the true nature of our situation - where we are and where we are heading - then we are forced to rely on catastrophes which, in terms of the frog analogy, suddenly increase the temperature of the water, thereby provoking transformation. Herein lies the importance of clearly defined sacred realms, to remind us of the creeping destruction, and to alert us to our danger before the catastrophes occur.

Threats to the biosphere have been developing at an increasingly rapid rate, their potential for destructiveness growing all the time. This tends to sap our faith in our ability to move out of and beyond the high-energy society. We are experiencing a crisis of confidence in decision-making and of not knowing whom or what to trust. Computers full of data fail to produce wis-

dom or certainty of outcomes. Our excessive dependence on technology induces an inability to deal with uncertainty and to trust in openness.

2.2 Values for sustainability

Until recently, humans have regarded the biosphere as a sustainable resource, beyond the power of our capacity for destruction. Members of high-energy societies largely act as if they are free of nature, rather than as being part of, or interdependent with it. Our technology has shielded us from this dependence and interdependence. However, when what was taken for granted is violated we begin to see again the sacredness that is under threat.

Because of the various ecological impacts of burgeoning human numbers, the resource use and waste production, we must now accept the burden of responsibility to manage the biosphere in a sustainable way, in *partnership* with its other living components. We must move from power over to power with. As Roszak argues, it is our special role to participate in the planet's risky experiment in self-conscious intelligence (Roszak 1977). The more its ecosystems are damaged, the more necessary is the work of prevention and rehabilitation, and the more evident are the weaknesses in our culture and social structures.

While we are the only species capable of destroying the biosphere, we are also the only one capable of being its conscious carers. The question then becomes: how can this responsibility to be the Earth's conscious carers be minimised through reliance upon existing or renewable ecological processes? The most effective management for sustainability involves designing ways of minimising the necessity to be proactive, while maximising reliance on known ecological processes. While such minimisation is needed, the destructive processes that we have set in train require the development of normative and organisational frameworks that directly confront humans with accountability for their ecological actions.

The increasing sense of ecological crisis has provoked the search for values for sustainability. Values transformation, in terms of the system and the ordering of values, must be a vital aspect of the development of strategies for survival and the rediscovery of dimensions of humanness suppressed by the values of materialism. We need beliefs and values about

what is sacred. Pictures of desirable possibilities and potentialities for humans in their relationships with nature have now been outlined by a significant number of writers (eg. Capra 1983, Henderson 1981, Lovelock 1979, Robertson 1979, Roszak 1977, Schwartz and Ogilvy 1980).

The values emphasised by different authors as being vital for a sustainable society depend on the particular perspective adopted. Some reformers suggest that we should keep what we have, but do things more efficiently and share in the more equitable democratic and cooperative way (see Pausacker and Andrews 1981). The more radical view, in terms of the extent of change needed, emphasises the notion of having and doing less in order to *be* more (see Elgin and Mitchell 1976). The issue remains of the relevant importance of these values and the perception of their compatibility with each other. While we may share mutual interests and concerns at the global level, these are rather diffuse in nature in comparison to individual and in-group interests at the local level. The difficult challenge is not to articulate the necessary values, but rather to find ways of enabling their inculcation, to engender modes of action that develop and express these values, and to develop social structures to match the dimensions of ecointerdependence.

Our task, then, is to redefine and transform how we see our interests, and broaden the scope of our values to encompass care of the biosphere. To Naess, the proponent of *deep ecology*, the very self is 'that with which we identify ... Identification is a ... process through which the interest or interests of another being are reacted to as our own interest or interests. Self realisation is the mature experience of oneness in diversity' (Naess 1985 p.261).

A strength of the *deep ecology* perspective is that it helps humans to relocate as a part of Nature (Naess 1975, Devall 1980), and to experience attunement to the environment in a way that transcends ourselves, and makes us capable of seeing our interests in broader perspective. The deep ecology movement has heightened awareness of the nature and character of species that are different from, though needed by, humans. It has contributed to the building of the committed constituency for the biosphere.

A difficulty of the deep ecology position that argues for equality of all living beings is that it does not take account of the disproportionate power of humans in the biosphere. The deep

ecology perspective of the intrinsic value of other species refuses to face that this value is defined by humans. "In speaking of ethics in the non-human context we are jabbering into a void. Nature does not need ethics, there is no one to hear" (Livingston 1981 p.54) Values for sustainability therefore need to focus on developing a partnership between the biosphere's own healing capacities and our human responsibility and ability to contribute.

3.0 Transcendence for the biosphere's sustainability

3.1 The experience of transcendence

Transcending the destructive culture and creating sacred realms are necessary processes for the transformation of contemporary society. Significant segments of the educated population now appreciate that this society is, in some fundamental ways, unsustainable. This knowledge is contrary to their socialisation and to the sacred realms that have previously been held dear. We now face the question of how to remain sane, within a flawed society, while working for major societal transformation to enable survival. This is where our capacity for transcendence comes in. To be present in the reality of now, and yet capable of being beyond that present - capable of retaining and affirming sacred realms within and without that assert, and shine light on, our greater potentialities.

Transcendence means enriching one's experience of reality with a sense of sacredness that helps to empower, challenge and change the on-going experience of reality. Transcendence is what people do in the face of extreme adversity. It is the triumph of the spirit, as well as evidence of it. Once it happens, then experiences change. The act of transcendence has a transforming dimension. It helps to break bonds with the present structure of social reality so that we can begin to see creatively into the future.

While the culture of high-energy societies has tended to suppress our psychic capacity for transcendence, technologically it has made it easier. This is because our modern technology has made it possible for us to move physically and visually beyond the local to the global and the universal. The very technology that threatens our survival enables us to see the Earth

as a living organism from outer space. This has helped to make Lovelock's case for Gaia more reasonable and understandable (Lovelock 1979). Transcendence of the dominant culture makes it possible to create liberated zones within ourselves and society that affirm the possibilities of a transition to a new ecologically balanced phase of human development.

Those who can more readily see beyond narrow self-interest are usually seen as psycho-socially and morally developed. At present they are more likely to be female (Salleh and Fisher 1987; Rich 1981; Eisler 1988),

the paradox of morality is that one appears to live best for oneself when one lives for the sake of others ... healthy, well functioning human beings have a basic and pervasive need to transcend themselves, that is to identify themselves as a part of larger, on going and enduring processes (Partridge; quoted by Wright 1988 p.33; see also Maslow 1964, 1970; Hampden-Turner 1970; Kolberg 1981).

What we know of ourselves inside is a reflection of what we will allow ourselves to know of nature outside, and vice versa (Roszak 1977). Such development is a product of one's socialisation and present circumstances. While such psycho-social development is unequally evidenced, the capacity to mobilise a wider cross section of the human population for the biosphere will continue to be structurally suppressed. The existing constituency will remain vulnerable to a powerful backlash, particularly if it sacrifices the moral high ground for immediate political advantage. An example of this was when due process was denied in the Kakadu mining decision (see Kerin 1989).

3.2 Facilitation of transcendence

The expression of transcendence can be facilitated by a number of factors. Examples of these influences, with respect to three different kinds of transcendence, are as follows:

1. *Transcending self boundaries*

- Adult experience of children and their children. The eco-feminist insight is in part related to the female's biological connection with nature that comes from the experience of reproduction, and the transcendence that

comes with socialisation of the next generation (see Rich 1981).

- The recognition and use of non-rational ways of knowing, such as intuition, dreaming, meditation, and trance, near-death experiences, (eg. chronic or acute life-threatening diseases) or experiences in prison camp (Frankl 1963).

2. *Transcending in-group boundaries*

- A historical perspective that looks back into the interactions between humans and nature in the past (Boyden 1987).
- Awareness and affirmation of multi-culturalism within and between nations, through trade, travel and the world media.
- Any significant experience of contrast in social interactions, such as experiences associated with differences in age, gender, class and race. Any segregation from such experiences reduces the likelihood of transcendence (Salleh and Fisher 1987).

3. *Transcending national and human boundaries*

- The development of world networks and organisations such as international agreements, the United Nations, multinational corporations.
- The use of futures - or utopian thinking about what is desired, what is possible, what is likely? (Birch 1975, McHale 1971, Capra 1983).
- Viewing pictures of our solar system and of the universe through looking at stars, science fiction movies and novels (Lefanu 1988, Le Guin 1988), and evidence of the existence of life forms from outer-space (see Good 1987).
- The experience of being in the wilderness habitats of other species (deserts, forests or oceans).

The question still remains: Why care for the Earth just to ensure that we can exist? The human will to survive may well require a spiritual input to provide sufficient reason to argue for the continuation of the species. In this connection the concepts of the various religions of the realities of sacredness and the capacity for transcendence beyond humankind may be useful. Their weakness, however, lies in the fact

that they usually relate to worlds beyond this one, as distinct from the realities beyond individuals and groups of people within today's biosphere. Faith in the continuance of the human spirit after death may be ecologically counter-productive, since it diverts humans from immediate life-giving responsibilities, except in cases where the religious belief involves reincarnation in the form of some other species.

There is a searching within religious traditions for access to enriching spiritual experience that 'celebrates the goodness of life and the struggle of humanity to become compassionate and to fit into the rest of nature with joy and responsibility' (Collins 1989, p.23 quoting Matthew Fox, see also Fox 1989, Sheldrake 1988, Wilber 1983, Spangler 1984). Developing the full potential contribution of transcendence requires a sense of meaning that goes beyond sustainable survival. As Ehrlich has said, 'a quasi-religious transformation leading to the appreciation of diversity for its own sake, may be required to save other organisms and ourselves' (quoted by Suzuki 1989).

4.0 Environmental function of sacred realms

4.1 Wilderness for rediscovery of the sacredness of nature

World heritage areas and, to a less extent, national parks, are an affirmation of our right to set aside certain areas for protection irrespective of conventional economic definitions of value. They are the most powerful symbol of the sacredness of place and nature that we have to draw on in the struggle for a transition to ecological sustainability. The fight for, and the proclamation of, wilderness areas is an expression of the effort to create zones liberated from surrounding destruction.

Affirmation of the sacredness of wilderness can empower people's sense of identity and morale. It helps to soothe the wounded human spirit that is increasingly conscious of society's destructiveness towards the environment. It can play an important part in developing and affirming concepts of national diversity that are not centred on the glorification of destructive struggle between humans, or between humans and nature.

The environment movement has been preoccupied with large-scale flora and fauna issues that relate more easily to the nation than to the global arena. It has succeeded to the extent that wilderness has become, amongst the educated urban middle class, close to being at the motherhood level of sacredness. This valuing, I suggest, remains largely disconnected within the public's mind from the causative pressures threatening its continued existence. It remains soft, after-hours sacredness, disconnected from the demands and impacts of urban life - a sacredness that is presently being used politically to divert attention from the need for urban structural change. Important as wilderness tracts are, they are not the only domain of the sacred that we can draw on, or that we need.

4.2 The struggle for sacred realms within the threatened biosphere

Pantheists believe that all that is, is sacred. The Webster dictionary definition of Pantheism is - 'the belief that God is not a personality, but the sum of all beings, things, forces, etc in the universe - the worship of all gods'. The outcome of such a position is that humans approach their use of nature with a reverence that ensures that they tread lightly on the earth. A difficulty with Pantheism relates to human products that are incompatible with sustainability, but being part of the whole, are considered sacred. Pantheism is a position that was more appropriate in situations in the past when humans had created little that was destructive of the environment. Under those conditions, our ancestors could indeed rely on the biosphere to look after its own sustainability.

Certainly, in earlier times human society had the capacity to significantly affect local habitats and populations, and the local cultures needed to have specific authoritative cultural structures and mechanisms to restrict such impacts. Nevertheless, the cultural circumstances of low technology and low population densities in relation to large forested areas meant that human populations did not have to be conscious of ecological criteria for action, except in certain quite specific and limited ways (Chapman 1985 p.217). This situation no longer exists. The scale and nature of human activities at the present time demands ecosystem accountability.

Pantheism can result in repressive tolerance of human activities that interfere with sustainability. It exonerates humans from the

responsibility of being knowledgeable about what hurts, heals and sustains the biosphere and from the need to behave responsibly on the basis of this knowledge.

In the modern world a consequence of Pantheism is that India is over-populated with environmentally destructive sacred cows. Closer to home, similar problems occur when animal liberationists, seeking to protect the life of individual animals, try to stop the culling of kangaroos necessary for ecosystem management in national parks or the control of cats and dogs on the urban-rural fringe.

On what basis can we make decisions about what is sacred and what is not in human activities? Does something become sacred only when it is threatened with violation or extinction - such as the ozone layer and the wilderness commons of land and sea? To an extent evidence of the value of sacred realms may be reflected in economic criteria, such as the scale of fines for violation and their degree of enforcement, in comparison to other laws. A social criterion is indicated by the degree of public outcry when there is a known violation (eg. the difference of response to the shooting of a koala versus that of a kangaroo, let alone that of a snake).

Native animals that are used as part of national symbols expressed on the nation's coins or coat of arms are particularly powerful as a way of defining realms of nature's sacredness. For example, two Chinese were executed for selling panda skins (The Canberra Times October 21 1989, p.15). The English trees that line certain highways and places as a war remembrance show our capacity to create sacred realms. Instead of burial grounds marked with marble we could use native trees as markers. Other ways of defining sacred in other cultures include taboos that restrict access or use to a certain section of the population (Chapman 1985, p.217).

It is people who, through their actions, define what is sacred. The environment movement creates sacred realms every time it challenges and struggles with threats to the environment. Once struggle is engaged, even if lost, as in the case of Lake Pedder, sacred realms are created. Every struggle gives rise to sacred realms, every threat calls for a transcendent response which, in the face of the threatened or real destruction, asserts how life can be sustained, or how it could be regenerated.

Sacred realms are not limited to wilderness - they can be created through the struggles in the

supermarket, the planning office, or within one's own home, and in the process of giving birth. They are created when people, through action, demonstrate what they are for, and what they believe in, as a counter to purely material definitions of value.

Sacred realms are always important, but they are not sufficient. Left in isolation they are in danger of becoming ghettos. The power of sacred realms expands if they are used as a Trojan horse, within the dominant paradigm, being used to challenge ever-wider fields from within.

4.3 Local realms of the sacred: the role of place and community

The development of environmental consciousness through domains of the sacred requires local grounding - places that individuals and communities can identify with as part of their understanding of what is home. 'What we do need is a place, and any place will do, so long as we know it is ours' (Livingston 1981 p.83). These sacred places, structured within one's everyday life experience, are building blocks for personal, community and Gaia understanding. A sense of place is a key basis for stability of person and community. The sacredness of place as a central feature of Australia's Aboriginal culture is one resource that can be drawn on in affirming the value of sacred realms (Mulvaney 1989) to help the rest of Australia's population to create its own sacred realms and to be more in tune with their natural environment, at the same time as drawing nourishment from it. In terms of human socialisation, this means some on-going direct experience with nature. This means local access to local habitats, through local communities which have direct responsibility to care for and manage them.

We cannot overcome our alienation from nature through individualistic wilderness experiences alone. We need to challenge conceptions of the human self that define the individual as separate, private, naturally competitive and wastefully consumptive. We need the power and sacredness of the community as well as that of nature. The increasing individual alienation from community is linked to our alienation from nature. Community refers to a structure of interdependent cooperative relationships. Cooperative groups are a cornerstone of our biohistory (Boyden 1987). Our relations with nature come first through

connection with parents. Our sense of self is not autonomous, it evolves through interactions with both humans and non-human species.

The way that local social structure connects the individual to other persons and nature is the key to a bridge between the person and the planet. The development of community is vital for us to be able to draw on its informal social sanctioning power. Without it, there is excessive dependency on professional and formalised mechanisms of social control, and these are relatively powerless as preventative agents and are usually applied inequitably.

Sacredness of place, or community, cannot be effectively developed without a structuring that enables a shared expectation of on-going future relations between the people and that place (see Axelrod 1984, as referenced by Bellett 1990, Cock 1979). Without it, an individual's capacity to be responsive *with* their environment is greatly diminished. At best, it is limited to a privileged few, during particular stages in their life cycles. On the other hand, the social power of the community has the potential not only to facilitate, but also to impede human sensitivity toward nature. There need, therefore, to be national and global authoritative reference points for local community accountability.

5.0 Conclusion

Transcendence is a process that aids the transformation of human-nature relations. Sacred realms are a resource for sustaining features of the biosphere which are vital to its survival and to our life within it. Each is a vital part of the transformation of social structures and persons; one that reconnects us with our biohistory before the industrial revolution, and yet one that is creatively responsive to the positive contributions that the high-energy phase of society has made to our capacity for biosphere-consciousness and for ecologically sustainable management of this planet.

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