

*Perspectives on Community Development in Ireland* 1(1), 63-74 (2005).

## **Community development: the spiritual dimension**

**John Feehan**

**Department of Environmental Resource Management  
University College Dublin**

### **ABSTRACT**

Contemporary concern for community development focuses largely on the secular aspects that relate to physical and mental well-being. It is argued here that there is a spiritual element to human community that is not merely an optional efflorescence, but has always lain at the core of being-in-community at its most achieved. The recovery of this dimension is of critical importance if authentic community is to survive. However, it will need to take a new form: one that, while ultimate in the religious sense, is entirely rational and of our time.

### **The evolution of universal brotherhood**

'No man is an Island, entire of itself,' John Donne famously wrote at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century; 'every man is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main.'<sup>i</sup> We are fully human only in community. Nothing is more important to individual integrity and self-worth than a sense of belonging, and so the creation, repair and development of community are a central concern of all modern societies. Much of the emphasis in community development today is on its social, cultural and political dimensions, but there is a further dimension at the heart of it that is best described as spiritual and which enables us to see human development in a deeper light.

A modern society whose proper focus is on the secular aspects of community development may be uncomfortable with the intrusion of this further dimension. While we all admire the work of individuals and organisations that labour tirelessly and selflessly on behalf of the poor and marginalized, we may have reservations about the body of belief

that inspires such dedication. And we will be aware that the faith that underpins it is culturally and geographically conditioned: the traditional Catholicism that inspires Mother Teresa's Little Sisters of the Poor in Calcutta is very different from the Islam of Abdul Sattar Edhi in Karachi.

The first community is the family, and a recurring theme in history is the extension of the nuclear or extended family to the tribe, chiefdom and ultimately state or empire.<sup>ii</sup> Organized religion has an important role as a binding agent in these larger familial organisations, but in the same way as the State itself has its origins in something that is more basic and deeply rooted biologically, namely the family unit, so too the fervour of organised religious zeal is kindled from a fire that is smaller, more intimate, deeply rooted in the essence of human being: an awareness of an overarching custodianship of the creation, a sense of meaning in existence that is best described as spiritual.<sup>iii</sup>

In a somewhat parallel fashion it is instructive to stand back for a fresh look at the evolution of what Kant called 'the ethical imperative.' At the beginning of this process of ethical evolution (and in this as in biology ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny in a sense) every individual is at the centre of the world. Spirituality is about *my* relationship with God or Allah, Mohammed or Jesus. Salvation is all about me. But as we progress deeper into our consciousness, we begin to realise that we can only be fully our human selves in relationship. *I* needs to be embedded in *we*: and so we have community, and as we begin to understand more deeply the meaning of charity the ripples of that *caritas* widen and widen ever further from me and my immediate family until all mankind becomes my neighbour. Out of that new awareness grow all ethics and morality, and in its exterior expression all politics and society.

## **The community of life on earth**

At the heart of all the great religious traditions is this widening outwards of the bounding circle that defines family and community, further out than the reach of established or verifiable kinship, the web of relationships that can be depicted on a family tree. And my neighbour, whom I must love as myself, is all mankind.

We need hardly go further than this to realise the limited extent to which we can call our society a Christian society. Indeed, the true religious concept of brotherhood is the very thing that must be bridled

before religion can be harnessed in the service of the state in ways that are all too familiar from the study of history in every part of the world. In any event, we see ourselves as having moved on, as a post-Christian society, and increasingly a materialist society.

Clearly then, since religious identity is almost always a fundamental part of a particular community's definition of its identity, the resolution of conflict between communities within a Christian society is at a fundamental theological level a call to conversion. As foundation for the advance of spiritual instinct which is the realisation of the notion of kinship to all mankind we can of course now place the biological foundation of the discovery that of course we are in fact all related: all mankind *is* one family, and it is attempts to make this a reality in people's lives that have resulted in our highest achievements in the social and political realms. It is an instinct we find latent in the welcome accorded the total stranger in earlier times: one who might, in unsuspected and often indeed supernatural ways, be my kin.

For people of faith in any of the great traditions there is such human enrichment in the contemplation of all that this expansion of consciousness and concern enables, that they scarcely feel the need to look further or deeper in any attempt to more fully understand who we are, or what God may be showing us about the ultimate meaning of things. In this way the stark, unadorned belief of faith can degenerate to credulity, hope becomes complacency and charity measurable.

What is especially significant is the way this arrested exploration of who and what we are in the eyes of God blinds us to the relevance and significance of the revelation that is embodied within the rest of creation. This is not something we can explore here in the detail it properly requires; we can only state the incontrovertible demonstration by modern science of the extent to which we are all brothers and sisters. The more deeply we grow in our understanding of the creation, the more deeply we understand the reality, and the extraordinary closeness of our kinship with other species. We have all read of Francis of Assisi, who spoke of Brother Wolf: and we approve the metaphor. But we now know (thanks to the advances of the biological sciences over the last century and a half) this is not a metaphor. We may like to think of ourselves as being a little less than the angels, but we have been swept along by precisely the same exhilarating evolutionary maelstrom as all the other species which people this moment of life's time with us, 4,000 million years of life having been spent travelling with them, and before that we have shared the same remote origins in the dust of exploding stars. We are brother and sister, elephant and

wolf and man and woman, oak and dandelion, frog and dragonfly. We cannot think otherwise once we bring our intellect and spirit to bear fully on the diversity of life, all these manifestations of the kaleidoscope of the Great Being 'in whom all potentialities already exist as a plan of action,'<sup>iv</sup> the contemplation of which so thrilled Thomas Aquinas:

God cannot express himself fully in any one creature: and so he has produced many and diverse life-forms, so that what one lacks in its expression of divine goodness may be compensated for by others: for goodness, which in God is single and undifferentiated, in creatures is refracted into a myriad hues of being.<sup>v</sup>

That was way back in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, by which time we were only beginning to appreciate the scale of the diversity of life, so this is not new theology: but our modern scientific understanding gives an altogether new depth to our penetration of what it all means. What I am getting at here is the fact that there is a profound *ethical imperative* to care for the diversity of life: *first* of all because it is the primary revelation, through which God expressed himself for unimaginable epochs of time before our species appeared on the evolutionary scene. And secondly, we are its custodians and its kin.

In other words, they are part of our 'we': and so the ripples of consanguinity must extend to all creatures, and with those expanding ripples the ethical imperative that is grounded in relationship. Theology has hardly begun to take account of the implications, but any consideration of that lies beyond the scope of this essay.

## **Topophilia: community rooted in place**

But however fundamental and inspirational the notion of universal brotherhood, the *real* community does not extend beyond the limit of my ability to touch, to experience directly, however enriching that broader context. It remains, in a real sense, the *parish* community, however we re-define that to fit a modern context. However, much of the sense of identity that constituted the bond of the parish community is lost to us by reason of all that has happened in our society, over the last fifty years particularly.

We compensate to an extent for the loss of traditional community with communities of interest, and now with the cybercommunities of the internet. But in truth the defining link to *place* is one we cannot dispense with. We need it of our very nature. Just as we human beings

need to be surrounded by the sights and sounds, plants and animals of the natural world, we need as a community to be rooted in a particular place. In other words, there is a *topophilia* that runs parallel to the biophilia genetically embedded in us (further explored below). I will explore two aspects of this here: the nature of rural community and the importance for urban community of maintaining or regaining its roots in a countryside because of an enriching and binding ingredient this rootedness imparts to community.

## **The essence of human community**

What binds community is shared purpose and meaning. In earlier stages of society that shared purpose was the production of the food that nurtures all, and each individual had a role in that common enterprise, either directly or at one remove, because the fields in which the corn grew and cattle grazed were the fields of home. Over centuries and indeed millennia, each region of the agricultural world developed a richness and diversity unique to itself: in the ways it learned to use to the fullest effect, without waste, the produce of the earth; in the arts and crafts associated with that enterprise; in the metaphors of Faith that grounded it in something Beyond, something deeper, more ultimate. This cultural diversity was perhaps the greatest achievement of mankind.

The forces that have loosened and eventually broken the bonds that hold it all together, progressively and at different times and places are easily labeled: the expansion of commerce, the development of financial systems, industrialisation, globalisation, and readily glossed with justificatory labels such as progress, growth, inevitability etc. Such developments were seldom undertaken primarily because they helped to nourish and sustain the communities at the heart of these ancient systems, but for the benefit of individuals or groups, often outside the community. In themselves all these developments can contribute to the enhancement of community, but only when applied judiciously and with foresight: and such wisdom in those empowered to make decisions and initiate action is all too often absent. Religious authority has often seen the dangers inherent in 'progress,' but failed to stem the tide and indeed in any case often acted out of self interest.

The dismantling of the material framework of the essential community (i.e. one that revolves around the production of its own food) is one face of the problem and the challenge. The other is the loss of an ultimate goal. Political philosophy often provides a 'penultimate' goal

the attainment of which is often linked to a sanctioning theology (the Irish nation and the Catholic Church is the most familiar example). The achievement of independence clouds the vision of anything more 'ultimate' to be achieved, especially if it leads to greater prosperity and material well-being for a majority of people. This is the situation we find ourselves in today. We have attained a state of material well-being that would utterly astonish a visitor from any earlier Ireland. It is however a prosperity only minimally anchored in the productive capacity of the land, and we have attained it at a time when the credibility of the traditional religious ethos is enormously weakened. This weakening was catalysed by the various scandals that have rocked the church in recent decades, but it has led to a radical and widespread loss of both moral and doctrinal credibility. In this lies the root of the aimlessness that increasingly characterizes our society, and in particular the life of the young (so charismatically identified by the Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly in her lecture to the Céifin conference on social change, held in Ennis in November 2004, the response to which is an indication of the extent to which reflective people are becoming aware of the problem).

## **Urban and rural community**

In earlier times life in the city was the civilised life and country living was for the peasant. The very words bear witness: civil, civilised, civilisation derive from the Latin word *civis*, the city; polite, policy, politics from the Greek word for city, *polis*. Peasant on the other hand came to be synonymous with ignorance, uncouth living and boorishness. Even from the early ages of farming there was much truth in this dichotomy; within a millennium of the adoption of the farming way of life in the near eastern centre of origin of our western farming, cities had sprung up and become the centres of administration, culture and religion, the abode of the specialised functionaries – kings, priests, soldiers, accountants, supervisors, specialised craftsmen that the surpluses of the farming way of life made possible. Here, released from the necessity of earning their own bread by the sweat of their brow they could devote their days to higher things: mathematics and astronomy, tactics, observation of the wider world beyond the horizon and contemplation of the unseen power that governed all, whose good will needed to be secured at all costs, and which could be employed moreover to ensure the smooth functioning of an ever more complex polity. The city provided the setting in which the intellect could roam unfettered, free from immediate need, making possible technology, religion and

sophistication. On the other hand the development of the city was an inevitable consequence of the concentration of power. It facilitated exploitation and the development of a stratified society.

## **Rural living and community**

But the city was not the only focus of cultural evolution. A parallel development occurred among the farming communities which remained outside the walls, closer to the land: a development which was closer to human nature and its essential relationship with wild nature. For the two million years since the establishment in early hominids of the extraordinary neural connections that permitted the spark of self-awareness to light the human mind, the world around which that mind wove its understanding and its needs was a world of forest and stream, permeated by all the sounds, sights, smells of a natural ecology. We were part of an ecosystem in which we originated and evolved, shaped by its resources and its challenges like every other species, as every species needs to be in order to survive. The landscape of an animal other than man is almost literally a physical part of it, an extension of its senses; it is what its senses reach out to and connect, it is what it is made for. For most creatures where they are is who they are, so precisely are they made for a specific ecosystem: and in this we are no different. Our mind and spirit, as our body, are most at home in the traditional agricultural landscape which is the cultural counterpart of the open natural landscapes of our origins, endlessly varied in response to different geographies and climates, and to the different traditions into which mankind evolved in the course of its cultural adaptive radiation.<sup>vi</sup> The traditional rural landscape was our paradise. Fundamental human needs are met by country living. It satisfies needs that have their origins rooted deeply in what we are and where we have come from.

This way of living was characterized by *intimacy*: an experienced closeness to the earth cut to our human measure as it were. It is *parochial*, in the original and best sense of the word. In the first place there is intimacy in our knowledge of the people who live alongside us in this home place and share our lives, developed through shared work and understanding; and secondly with the resources of this home place, knowing intimately how to use them, timber and stone and soil, to build the fabric of our cultural landscape and sustain the community it shelters.

It was among such rural societies that the series of methodologies for right living that became the earth's great religious traditions crystallised. In the case of Christianity the New Testament is like an extended farm tour. The politicisation of the great religious traditions on the other hand is an urban development.

In an earlier time that extends down to little more than a generation ago, there was a mutual dependence between city and country that provided the city with access to this rural dimension. The early city was always an extension of its hinterland despite the walls: unlike today's city, which is not bound by a nourishing root system to the surrounding countryside. Its bread may come from the US prairie, its milk from Cork, its potatoes from Armagh, its tea from Sri Lanka. It was a mirror. The countryside pervaded its streets and rooms and temples. It was conscious of being nourished and supported by these adjacent rural roots.

## **Community and food**

This second aspect revolves around the shared production of food. There is a profound satisfaction in producing the food that sustains me, my family and my community. The bread of life is not simply a commodity: it binds human beings with the nourishing earth, and it binds human community. It is the life blood of the web of relationships within which the human spirit is most at ease. And when this community is allowed the time and space to grow, every facet of human ingenuity and talent find expression, and there is a role for every individual in the working out of which he or she finds fulfillment: for the weak as well as the strong in mind or body.

There are deep biological roots to a need that is within us, to procure our own food, or to be within reach of the ones in our immediate, experienced community, who do. We are *made* to do this: and there lies the ultimate explanation for the satisfaction of gardening or traditional farming.

\*\*\*\*\*

Now our horizons have expanded, and that should be a good thing, enabling us to enrich our grasp of what human brotherhood means, to enrich our cultural achievement and appreciate its unique quality more proudly, mutually able to further our well-being on a material plane as

well as in the sense of more deeply appreciating / experiencing the richness and further possibility of human existence.

But the expansion of horizon has been accompanied less by this deeper appreciation of what we have, this broader vision of what we may be, than by a loosening of the values embodied within local community. The loss of autonomous food production is a key factor in this loosening. It has been a *progressive* process, step by step that is, and there is an assumption that each stage of development therefore marks 'progress,' and it is justified by reference to this shibboleth as if it justifies everything that happens. In modern times the development that characterised any particular stage was undertaken not primarily because careful consideration showed that such development would benefit the community at large and in the long term, using sustainability and the welfare of commonwealth as yardsticks. Of course there were elements within any particular development which could have been applied to this end, but they were applied in the interest primarily of individual or group profit: though of course this motivation is never emphasised in the promotion of development.

The most recent stage in this 'progress' (using the word now in its somewhat antiquated meaning of 'journey') sees the emergence of very large retail and commodity outlets which source their products wherever in the world these can be acquired at the lowest financial cost. This is justified as 'what the consumer wants,' but when the ramifying roots of the system are followed to their geographical origins and their social consequences explored, it is not difficult to see the corroding effects of this ultimate commodification of food and craft on the communities at both ends. J.J. Massingham was wrong to believe he was seeing the end of this process when he wrote half a century ago:

Food comes not from the fields but from the factory; and thought is denatured as well as food. Houses are pre-fabricated and owe nothing to rock, soil or timber. Our native earth was once our home; then it became our recreation; now it is a business like any other industry, not a livelihood. Distance has become a value in itself by the obsolescence of the home-sense. The horizon rules our affairs, not the threshold and internationalism is the new word for neighbourliness.<sup>vii</sup>

No politician is going to raise a voice in protest however, such is the flow of the tide in this direction. No more could a reflective Seneca have stemmed the tide of the popular clamour for bread and circuses

in a declining Rome. It took the advancing hordes of the uncivilised, hovering with envy and dissatisfaction on the fringes of the Empire, to do that.

The inexorable march of mechanisation, industrialisation and more recently globalisation has acted as it were like a form of cultural eutrophication, extinguishing the bright flame of this wonderful, kaleidoscopic legacy of rural culture. Those remote areas in which it survived in most exemplary fashion are even now struggling against the forces of modernisation: for instance the Hunza so eulogized by Guy Theodore Wrench, or Helena Norberg-Hodge's beloved Ladakh.<sup>viii</sup>

The notion of material eutrophication is one that merits closer examination. It is the diametric opposite of what is meant by the virtue of *poverty*, but we are on shaky ground here because of the way the notion was turned on its head when Christianity became institutionalised and it could be used to keep the poor in their place. But in the sense originally intended by the word it denotes something which is strong: and the notion of poverty as strength is something different entirely. The poor in this virtuous sense (remembering that *virtus* in Latin means strength, not weakness) are never in need: this is not destitution; it encourages us to live human life *to the fullest*. It was at the heart of what the great Mahatma Gandhi was about. It was also a defining element in deValera's vision of rural Ireland, though his most famous attempt to articulate it has been the butt of sneers ever since.

Acutely conscious though we are of the misery and desolation in which the greater part of the world is plunged, let us turn aside for moment to that ideal Ireland that we would have. That Ireland which we dreamed of would be the home of a people who valued material wealth only as the basis of right living, of a people who were satisfied with frugal comfort and devoted their leisure to the things of the spirit – a land whose countryside would be bright with cosy homesteads, whose fields and villages would be joyous with the sounds of industry, with the romping of sturdy children, the contests of athletic youths and the laughter of comely maidens, whose firesides would be forums for the wisdom of serene old age. It would, in a word, be the home of a people living the life that God desires that man should live.<sup>ix</sup>

It is easy to be put off by the style or the words. Yet this is what the best of those who sought national independence fought for with such

passion. And it would be easy to paraphrase these words to provide an entirely similar Unionist expression of the same ideal. Indeed, it would not be difficult to translate them into language that many modern critics of developments in rural society would feel able to endorse.

On casual examination it might appear that with the various Land Acts we were well on the way to becoming this ideal nation of peasant proprietors, poised to realise deValera's vision. But there is more to creating a nation of 'yeomen' than transferring title. It involves a relationship with land that is only built over generations, characterised by self-sufficiency, craft and community. It requires the context of tradition within which understanding of the land is acquired, developed and passed on. It is not without significance that we have no word of our own for 'yeoman': or rather, that we have to go back several centuries to the medieval *bóaire* to find it.

## **The spiritual dimension**

Unless we are surrounded by the natural world we cannot be fully ourselves. We are designed for such a world by virtue of our evolutionary history. More to the point of this essay's title, in the countryside or the wilderness from which it is carved we are most receptive to whatever Nature has to teach us, in terms of biology and ecology of course most immediately, but also about the source of the harmony enfolded within, at the very heart and permeating every facet and scintilla of nature's reality. Not everybody can respond to this overwhelming revelation with an adequately articulated expression of Faith, and indeed the more we try to do so the more the harmony diminishes, smothered in words, dying away finally in the abstractions of theology.

But the response of somebody who has absorbed all of this needs few words. Such response finds expression – in ways that are most *adequate* to human achievement and limitation – in the virtue that distinguishes rural culture wherever it has blossomed without obstruction: first and foremost through that *sense of belonging* discussed earlier: in this one place gifted to be my home, with these people gifted to me in community, generating a gratitude that spills over into care for the stranger and concern for other beings.

And although the disintegration discussed earlier can be attributed to a process of economic development and has been extensively analysed and explained in terms of the evolution of free market capitalism

`through the progressive dispossession of the common people of the means to feed and sustain themselves within their local communities:’<sup>x</sup> at a deeper level it can be attributed to the decay at the heart of what is always called `Faith: which can be envisaged metaphorically perhaps as a kind of radioactive kernel emitting a life-giving warmth that in a hundred thousand different ways at all the different hearths of religious expression that have developed to let it glow in and reach out from the human heart and soul.

Toynbee was thinking mainly of the loss of faith in the west when he wrote in his great study of history:

The extinction of faith is being recognized as the supreme danger to the spiritual health and even to the material existence of the Western body social – a deadlier danger by far than any of our hotly canvassed and loudly advertised political and economic maladies. To refill the spiritual vacuum is the most formidable and the most urgent of all problems that are remorselessly crowding upon the present generation.<sup>xi</sup>

Particular expressions of faith are moulded by cultural factors. It is difficult to disentangle the perennial at their core from elements conditioned by their place in history or geography: particularly from within the culture, and especially in relation to those facets shaped by religion. This perennial core is within time, incarnate, and discussion concerning it stretches human language and imagination to their limit and beyond. But their capacity is overloaded when it comes to intuition and discernment of the eternal behind the perennial. However, modern scientific man does not accept that there is in human nature a level of reaching into a higher dimension of meaning where incarnate understanding and expression are inadequate. On this account then, not everyone will be happy with a response that uses religious language, and will find it hard to see that an answer in any language other than Faith is not a superior substitute, or to accept that there might be a further stage in which language slips away, and we find ourselves in a place beyond words where every being each in its own space stands, and the heart echoes in a way that leaves no room for any response other than yes.

## **The recovery of community identity**

If the twin roots of the problem are the loss of authentic community and of a Faith that provides real purpose for people's lives in society, then the great question is whether these may be recovered. An essay such as this can hardly tackle such a question, but some preliminary comments can be made.

The recovery of community identity poses huge challenges, not primarily because of the way we are *displaced* by the nature of modern work, but more fundamentally because of the loss of a common table around which we all sit. There is a growing awareness throughout the world of the failure of modern production systems to sustain community as witnessed for instance by the rapid expansion of Community Supported Agriculture.<sup>xii</sup> Of special note is the Slow Food movement founded by Carlo Petrini, which seeks to re-connect family and community with the local production of *real food* (as distinct from food-as-commodity), of the kind that sustains human togetherness.<sup>xiii</sup>

We have the capacity, the know-how, to recover the scale of human enterprise on which human community is best nurtured. A vast body of wisdom and achievement has been lost over the last century: in terms of plant and animal varieties, in terms of technique, in terms of culture right across its spectrum, from language to religion to art and craft. On the other hand we possess an armoury of new tools and techniques at our service if we decide to forge this new revolution, whose possibilities are to be seen in embryo in a thousand oases scattered across the globe.<sup>xiv</sup>

It is possible that humanity will come to accept by an exercise in intelligence that this must be the way of the future, embrace it and work to bring it about. It is probable however that no prophet's words will spark this determination because 'the people's minds are hardened' – by an education system that prepares them only for the world we have made and the values by which it lives.<sup>xv</sup> It will take the whirlwind to bring us to our senses. In the meantime nothing is more important than ensuring that the alternative survives in viable embryonic form in human minds, hearts and souls, against that inevitable day.

As to religion, the explosive advance of scientific knowledge presents us with a new story of the universe and a qualitatively different appreciation of the scale of the complexity and diversity of life and the matter of which it is composed that can ground the kindling of a new belief in something that can be called ultimate: a faith response that is entirely rational, and at the same time can only attain its proper

fulfillment in the acclamation that community celebration allows.<sup>xvi</sup> For the theologian seeking fruitful expression for a fuller meaning to the concepts of eucharist and, truly ultimately, of salvation, there is much to ponder in such an attempt to see through a glass, however darkly, the faint lineaments of a new future for community, however painful and traumatic the fire in which it must be forged.

## REFERENCES

- Barbour, I.G. (1990). *Religion in an Age of Science*. Harper and Row.
- Berry, T. (1996). The Role of the University. In Feehan, J. (Ed.), *Educating for Environmental Awareness*, 131-140.
- Diamond, J. (1997). *Guns, Germs and Steel. A Short History of Everything for the Last 13,000 Years*. Chatto and Windus.
- Donne, J. (1624). *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*.
- Douthwaite, R. (1992). *The Growth Illusion. How economic growth has enriched the few, impoverished the many, and endangered the planet*. Lilliput.
- Feehan, J. (1998). Millennial Thoughts on Evolving Landscapes. Inaugural World Landscape Lecture. In O'Regan, T. (Ed.), *Through the Eye of the Artist. Proceedings of the Third National Landscape Forum*, 74-81, 186.
- Groh, T. and McFadden, S. (1997). *Farms of Tomorrow Revisited. Community Supported Farms – Farm Supported Communities*. Kimberton PA, Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association.
- Hutchinson, F. (1998). *What Everybody (Really) Wants to Know About Money*. Jon Carpenter Publishing.
- Kellert, S.R. and Wilson, E.O. (Eds.). *The Biophilia Hypothesis*. Washington DC, Island Press.
- Norberg-Hodge, H. (1991). *Ancient Futures: Learning from Ladakh*. Sand Francisco, Sierra Club Books (London, Rider Books, revised edition 2000).
- Orr, D.W. (2004). *Earth in Mind – On Education, Environment and the Human Prospect*. Island Press (10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition).
- Petrini, C. (2003). *Slow Food. The Case for Taste*. Columbia University Press.
- Polkinghorne, J.C. (1994). *Science and Christian Belief*. SPCK.
- Pretty, J. (2002a). *Agri-culture: Reconnecting People, Land and Nature*. Earthscan.
- Pretty, J. (2002b). *Land and Agriculture: A Compendium of Recent Sustainable Development Initiatives in the Field of Agriculture and Land Management*. FAO.

Wilson, E.O. (1984). *Biophilia: The Human Bond with Other Species*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press.

Wrench, G.T. (1938). *The Wheel of Health*. London, C.W. Daniel (New York, Schocken Books 1972).

---

<sup>i</sup> *Devotions*, 17.

<sup>ii</sup> See Jared Diamond's sketch of the evolution of society in terms of its development from primitive band to organized centralised state and the accompanying change in such key features as population size, settlement patterns, basis of relationships, power and leadership that are necessary to permit this transition (Diamond 1997, 265-292).

<sup>iii</sup> In Diamond's account however religion is no more than the institutionalisation of tribal supernatural beliefs, and the role of religion in social evolution is to support what he calls kleptocratic government in various ways.

<sup>iv</sup> G.K. Chesterton, *St Thomas Aquinas*, 1933. London, Hodder and Stoughton, p. 210.

<sup>v</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 47, a. 1. See also *Summa Contra Gentiles*, II, XLV.

<sup>vi</sup> Feehan 1998.

<sup>vii</sup> J.J. Massingham, *The Tree of Life* (p.9).

<sup>viii</sup> Wrench 1938; Norberg-Hodge 1991.

<sup>ix</sup> Éamon de Valera. Radio broadcast, 17 March 1943.

<sup>x</sup> Frances Hutchinson, *What Everybody Wants to Know About Money*; Douthwaite 1992.

<sup>xi</sup> Toynbee *Study of History*.

<sup>xii</sup> Groh and McFadden 1997.

<sup>xiii</sup> Petrini 2003.

<sup>xiv</sup> Pretty 2002a, 2002b.

<sup>xv</sup> For a critique of the education system from this perspective see Orr 2004, Berry 1996.

<sup>xvi</sup> For the philosophical justification of such a claim see the wealth of recent theological discussion, e.g. Polkinghorne 1994, Barbour 1990.