

PANTHEIST VISION



ROBERT CRUMB & EDWARD ABBEY
MEET ON JOHN WESLEY POWELL'S BIRTHDAY,
MARCH 24th, 1985, IN ARCHES NAT'L PARK, MOAB, UTAH.

ROBERT WALDMIRE
1985
DRAWN FROM AN
EXACT DUPLICATION

PANTHEIST VISION

Vol. 10, No. 3

September, 1989

Table of Contents

A TRIBUTE TO ED ABBEY by Robert Waldmire.....	1
Edward Abbey and the Universal Pantheist Society by Harold Wood.....	2
Member Profile: Walter Schwartz by Nicki Reynolds.....	4
John Seed Bestowed 1989 "Spinoza Award"....	7
What Pantheism Means to Me.....	9
by Members of the Society	
Letters to the Editor.....	10
Pantheist Viewpoints	12

Universal Pantheist Society
P.O. Box 265
Big Pine, CA 93513

"If I am right in my diagnosis of mankind's present-day distress,
the remedy lies in reverting from the weltanschauung of monotheism to
the weltanschauung of pantheism, which is older and was once universal."

- Arnold Toynbee

A TRIBUTE TO ED ABBEY

by Robert Waldmire

I saw the Desert ... and all her beauty and fragility ... the harshness, the starkness of her extremes... and i fell in love with her. That was back in the early 60's.

And then, many years later, i heard of a book titled Desert Solitaire. Someone, somewhere, said to me, "If you love the desert, read that book." So i found the book, and i was introduced to the world of Edward Abbey. And my love for the desert deepened. (Only Edmund C. Jaeger rote so affectionately of the Desert).

Abbey described the "awful quietude and fearful tranquility" of the wilderness, and he proceeded to paint a beautiful picture of this sacred place - within the larger sacred place: the living face of Planet Earth.

Years before i had the great honor of meeting Ed Abbey ("dump Watt rally", Tucson, Sept., 1982), i had decided he was "the Mark Twain of the twentieth century". They pulled no punches with their pens, and in the face of man's perpetual madness and folly, they never lost their searing senses of humor.

I don't know what Ed Abbey thought of Twain's work, but i'm confident Twain would have been a great Abbey fan.

Through the years, as i read more of Abbey's work, i felt as if we had a John Muir - a Henry Thoreau - among us. Author Edwin Way Teale called Abbey "a voice crying in the wilderness, for the wilderness." Abbey's classic work The Monkey Wrench Gang (1976) became a kind of "bible" for this steadfast lover of Nature, and i know it did - and will continue to do - for countless others.

Abbey's unwavering, uncompromising convictions were instrumental in the "creation" of a "movement" called Earth

First! Finally, legions of lovers of the wild, of the free, unpaved, un-violated regions of the Planet, have joined together to stand and face the Earth-rapers and plunderers. Ad Abbey helped "draw the battle lines" for our long fight. He once wrote (of the Earth's adversaries), "We have to outlive the bastards." Thank in large part to his words and work, we will.

On March 14th, 1989, Ed Abbey "gave his body back to the desert he loved so." Before he died, he was taken out to the desert to howl one last time. He may be forever silent now, but his work will forever fan the "green fire" that raged within him, helping illuminate our way. Thank you Ed Abbey! If you love the Earth, READ HIS BOOKS. Abbey lives!

Itinerant artist-activist and long-time UPS member Robert Waldmire produces a wide variety of wildlife notecards, prints, and posters. For a catalog, write to Cardinal Hill Candles & Crafts, R.R. 2, Box 110, Rochester, Illinois 62563.

EDWARD ABBEY AND THE UNIVERSAL PANTHEIST SOCIETY

by Harold Wood

Edward Abbey never identified himself expressly as a "Pantheist" by that name. However, in Desert Solitaire he wrote, of a wilderness experience he had on a raft trip down the Colorado River before the Glen Canyon Dam:

"I walk out onto a point from which I can look down at the river, nearly straight below... From up here the sound of the river, until now a permanent part of my auditory background, is no longer perceptible, and the desert silence takes on

a deeper dimension. The sound of nothingness? "In the desert," wrote Balzac, somewhere, "there is all and there is nothing. God is there and man is not."

"God? Nothing moves but the heat waves, rising from the naked rock. It is somehow comforting to see, nearby, the yuccas growing from the sand and from joints in the stone. They are in full bloom today, clusters of waxy, creamy flowers on tall stalks, supported and nourished by the rosettes of daggerlike leaves that form the base of the plant. God? I think, quibbling with Balzac; in Newcomb's terms, who the hell is He? There is nothing here, at the moment, but me and the desert. And that's the truth. Why confuse the issue by dragging in a superfluous entity? Occam's razor. Beyond atheism, nontheism. I am not an atheist but an earthiest. Be true to the earth."

Based on Abbey's writings, I invited Ed Abbey to serve on our Board of Directors when the Society was formed in 1974. I received a polite rejection of the invitation from him. He said, "I prefer to join only gangs of my own invention." Later, I met him at a conference, and showed him our leaflet "Pantheism and Earthkeeping". He told me he thought it was well-written, and wished us good fortune.

Whether people use the nomenclature "Pantheist" or not doesn't matter. Edward Abbey shares with all of us, by whatever name - Pantheists - Eartheists - Paleo-Pagan - Creation-Spiritualists - Panentheists - Universalists - Evolutionary Humanists - Naturalists - Nature-Lovers - whatever, the same ultimate goal of religion, what Abbey spoke of as a fundamental unity-within-separateness of self and Nature: "I dream of a hard and brutal mysticism in which the naked self merges with a non-human world and yet somehow survives still intact, individual, separate."

Member Profile: Walter Schwartz

by Nicki Reynolds

Walter Schwartz grows oranges for health, not for profit. With a lifetime commitment to personal nutrition and global ecology, his principles could not dictate otherwise. Walter has been a member of the Universal Pantheist Society since 1983.

Having always been active and a self-proclaimed "idealist", Walter retired from a position with the Physics Department at the University of California at Berkeley and acquired his homestead in northern California's Sacramento Valley with a two-acre orange orchard, in 1978. Now, brimming with vitality at the age of 74, Walter single-handedly maintains "Rancho de Naranjas" with boundless enthusiasm and athletic agility. His oranges are his pride and passion.

Thoroughly dedicated to the concepts and practice of organic farming, Walter explains its opposite for contrast. The "commercial operations", says Walter, pick as many oranges as soon as possible in the season, allowing them to "stock up" in the event of a freeze. The green oranges are then sent to a packing house where they are steamed to artificially color them, given a chemical treatment and then waxed. This process "sort of mummifies them," states Walter, allowing them "to be shipped as far as Hong Kong." "My oranges," he proclaims, holding a superbly colored and sweetly fragrant specimen, "are sold just as they are picked, with their pores still open and breathing -- we only sell good stuff here - no junk!"

Rancho de Naranjas currently supports 150 orange trees - all Washington navels (and one valencia, "just for fun"). This is a big job for one person. Care of this small orchard requires perpetual mowing, pruning, picking and fertilizing. Because he refrains

from spraying any poison, weeds can be "a big problem." Bermuda grass, especially, notes Walter, spreads quickly and can "choke the orange trees" - hence, the necessity for frequent mowing. The only help Walter solicits is employment of a local high school boy who works four to five hours per week during harvest season.

Walter's irrigation system is his own creation. Each tree has its own "sprinkler" fed by underground pipes and creating a "spray effect" which Walter says is "working very well." He rejects traditional flood-type irrigation as wasteful. With electric utility rates going up on pumping for irrigation, conservation is a necessity. Half of the electricity for Walter's irrigation system comes from his house, the rest from a "community pump" he pays to share.

No oranges are picked from Walter's orchard before they are "fully ripe and nutritious," which, for him, usually means after January 1st. This season presented problems when four days of snow blackened the fruit with "snow burn." Also, an early freeze in November, when sugar content in oranges was low, arrested their further maturation. The net result was a 15% crop loss.

A large organic garden and numerous fruit and nut trees also require Walter's time, including pecans, nectarines, figs, avocados, peaches, plums, grapefruits, apples, pears, apricots and pomegranates. In 1988 Walter sold beets, eggplant, crookneck squash, apricots, golden delicious apples and pomegranates to Chico Natural Foods.

Nevertheless, the orange trees receive the major share of Walter's attention. He dotes on them lovingly, referring to his most prized trees as "queens of the forest", saying he talks to them, pets them, and they in turn give him "oranges galore." "Not all trees obey nature, though", grins Walter,

motioning to some he calls "duds", and then to the "queens," remembering one orange he picked weighing 19 ounces.

Walter's organic roots run deep. He has been a vegetarian for over 50 years. He currently obtains dairy products from a neighbor "who's so organic he doesn't even use a tractor - he uses a horse and plow."

Walter Schwartz, at Rancho de Naranjas, is providing one example of living in harmony with nature. However, his involvement doesn't stop here. He is an active member of a local landowner's association, striving to keep his community rural and agrarian, and is one of the original founders of the local California Certified Organic Farmers.

On a larger scale, Walter is deeply concerned about ecological annihilation of our planet. In a recent Chico Enterprise-Record "public forum" column, Walter urges the creation of a Department of Science in the Presidential Cabinet to begin immediately addressing the "catastrophic effects of any number of vital issues," citing chlor/flouro/carbon depletion of the ozone layer, the Greenhouse Effect, acid rain and the destruction of tropical rainforests, to name a few. Heretofore, efforts in this direction, writes Walter, have been "insufficient for the crises of today or the irreversible predicaments of the future in which all life may face extinction."

As for his personal future, Walter intends to "just keep working", because, to him, "it's all play." Projects he looks forward to constructing are a windmill and a rooftop solar collector. Also, he currently has on order one dozen each of Washington navels and satsuma mandarin trees. The mandarins, due to be planted in March, have an estimated maturity date of three to four years. Looking forward to his future crop, Walter muses, "You always plan as if you'll live forever and then live one day at a time."

JOHN SEED BESTOWED 1989 "SPINOZA AWARD"

The Universal Pantheist Society is pleased to announce the presentation of its first "Spinoza Award", for 1989, to Australian writer-activist, John Seed.

John Seed is noted world-wide for his efforts to preserve tropical rainforests. In addition, he has made significant contributions toward promoting what the Universal Pantheist Society refers to as "a Pantheist World-View".

In his essay "Anthropocentrism", Seed cogently critiques the long-standing view of western cultures that nature was made entirely for man's benefit. Such a viewpoint is fundamental to any modern understanding of the true relationship between man and Nature. The Universal Pantheist Society's quarterly publication, Pantheist Vision, was one of the first American publications to reprint the essay, which has since become a chapter in Seed's new book (with co-authors Joanna Macy, Pat Fleming, and Arne Naess) Thinking Like a Mountain: Towards a Council of All Beings (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1988).

The title of this book refers to another significant contribution made by Seed: the invention of a new art form designed to promote greater consciousness of the existence of non-human lives on planet Earth. Through a creative ritual experience, called the "Council of All Beings", Seed has encouraged thousands to go beyond the intellectual realization that human life is inseparable from Nature, to really experience our intimate connection. While the Council of All Beings cannot substitute for learning carefully about wildlife and Nature through direct observation, it provides an experience which can motivate many people to learn to empathize with the natural world to a greater extent and to help revise societal attitudes away from purely

anthropocentric concerns to a celebration of Nature as the ultimate context for human existence.

In addition to his contribution to modern environmental philosophy, John Seed has been a major advocate for global environmental protection. He is the director of the Rainforest Information Centre in New South Wales, Australia, and is editor of the World Rainforest Report. He has assisted in the formation of rainforest action groups in the U.S., Japan, and Europe, as well as reforestation programs in developing countries. Since 1979 he has been involved in direct actions which have resulted in the protection of Australian rainforests. He has travelled around the world lecturing and showing films to raise awareness of the plight of the rainforests.

The essence of John Seed's contribution to promoting a pantheist world view may be nicely summed up in his own words: "People have always been prepared to sacrifice, even their own lives, in order to defend things they've been conditioned to identify with -- a country, a belief system, a religion. And here, in our own lifetime, we see threatened the very biological foundation of all countries, all religions, all belief systems. I'm surprised there aren't more people prepared to protect the rainforests."

The "Spinoza Award" is named after the great Dutch philosopher who was one of the foremost western exponents of Pantheism, the theological viewpoint identifying deity with Nature. This is the first "Spinoza Award" given by the Universal Pantheist Society.

WHAT PANTHEISM MEANS TO ME

"Personally, to and for me, Pantheism justifies and warrants my existence - and the right to exist. I have long believed of man's duty and obligation to revere the real, the Earth underfoot to the rest of the Universe overhead. Personally, I believe its late for man to triumph over his evil with good... but I'm less concerned with man's salvation than with saving some of his fellow creatures, particularly the great whales, the great apes, and predators and any endangered species. I am interested in Pantheism's potential to 'convert' human arrogance to human humility. Its a losing battle but its the good battle."

- Bob Waldmire

"Recognizing one's role as a plain citizen of the Earth's community of life, instead of being a divinely appointed subduer or steward of the Earth. Respecting the right of all beings to live according to their nature. Backing up your beliefs with action. Learning about the local bioregion, gradually becoming a Native of it."

- Doug Hansen

"To me, to be a pantheist means to give expression to my sense of reverence and love for the natural world and all its creatures. I have experienced the divine as identical with the created Universe. My main concern now is to encourage others to move beyond speciesism. I would like to learn new ways to show my loyalty to the Earth and promote the well-being of all its life-forms, but especially to help those which are currently forced to suffer most at the hands of 'man'."

- Jean Pearson

Letters to the Editor

Editor:

I've recently come across the article on "Modern Pantheism" by Harold W. Wood, Jr. in the Summer 1985 issue of Environmental Ethics. It was nice to learn in this way that there is a Pantheist Society, something I did not know currently existed.

We Reconstructionists are Jewish religious humanists including a variety of non-traditional spiritual approaches. As I in my own work seek to combine traditional religion with both mysticism and humanism, I often find myself rather close to the pantheist end of the spectrum. I enclose a couple of recent articles that might illustrate how a Jew who still uses "God language" is nevertheless quite close in spirit to pantheism.

The figure of God imaged by most religion is a human projection. The person on the throne, to paraphrase one surprisingly radical Hasidic statement, is there because we put him there. No God-figure would exist had we not created or projected it.... But we who create "God" are also created by God. We are creatures of a natural world that is itself a multicolored garbing of divine glory.... Here we must involve ourselves in a deep subtlety of religious language, in order to be quite clear. All the images through which we depict the divine, both personal and nonpersonal, are human creations. The reality toward which we are reaching through those images is entirely real. It is in fact the essence of reality itself. But its nature is so subtle, the manner of its existence so profound, that only by means of projected images can we address it.... "God" is in that sense a symbol, a human creation that we need to use in order to illuminate for ourselves, however inadequately, some tiny portion of the infinite mystery....

We remain somewhat uncomfortable with the English word God. This term, rooted in Germanic paganism, does little to express our personal reality. The Hebrew name, written consonantly Y-H-W-H, goes a lot further. It can be taken (as the Torah and midrash suggest) as an arrested form of the verb "to be," a conflate of all its tenses at once. It refers to all that was, is, and will be. Y-H-W-H is, in short, all of being, but so unified and concentrated as to become Being. This is a deity beyond naming, one that fills all names as the soul fills the body, transcending them all as it fills them. It is none other than the universe, yet it bespeaks a vision of the universe so utterly transformed by integration and unity as to appear to us as indeed "other", a mirror of the universe's self that becomes Universal Self. It is beyond the experience of our ordinary mind, even beyond articulation in any language except that of mythmaker or poet. Yet it is no "other" than we ourselves and the world in which we live, transformed as part of the transcendent vision.

Such a religious viewpoint is that of mystic and naturalist at once. It demands no "leap of faith" as does the miracle-working deity of conventional Western theism. It requires rather a "leap of consciousness," an openness to considering that the universe could be more whole, more beautiful, more perfect than the ordinary mind would ever allow. .. Not faith, but vision is what such a religion demands; it does not call upon us to believe in the prophets, but rather to develop the prophetic consciousness in ourselves.

I would be happy to hear more about the Universal Pantheist Society and receive any other literature you may have.

- Dr. Arthur Green,
President, Reconstructionist Rabbinical
College, Wyncote, Pennsylvania

Pantheist Viewpoints

"No less a great thinker than Shopenhauer asserted that compassion alone is the critical determinant of ethics, and if history has taught us anything, it's that compassion is a product of the soul, not the mind. It wasn't reason that empowered Gandhi, but the sheer force of his spiritual energy, and it's that energy which all of us must cultivate within ourselves and others. Gandhi's impact, like others before and after him, was tragically short-lived because it died with the original source. For such energy to endure and expand, it must emanate from within the depths of each person rather than an external source or authority figure - bringing us back to empowerment and change through individual journeys of the spirit.

What is the essence of these journeys? By their very nature, the behavioral dynamics of such journeys are unique to each individual and thus defy explicit definition, but the common denominator is the quest for inner light and peace. Bergeson described this light as elan vital, the life-force; Spinoza called it Nature's God; some refer to it as a metaphysical leap of faith; secular humanists call it justice; and still others apply a theological interpretation. There are no right or wrong path to uncover this inner light, only varying degrees of illumination. Ultimately, the journey culminates with the realization that we are interconnected with not only everything we're able to see, but also with the rest of the universe that eludes our limited vision. More specifically, it's reclaiming and embracing the noblest dimensions within us that rarely survive childhood in this violent and avaricious culture."

- E.S.D.

Excerpted from "Music of the Soul", published by: animalines, 814 Castro St., San Francisco, CA 94114.

* * * * *

* PANTHEIST VISION (ISSN 0742-5368) is a quarterly publication *
* of the Universal Pantheist Society, P.O. Box 26 5, Big Pine, CA *
* 93513. The Universal Pantheist society is a non-profit religious *
* corporation. The purposes of the Society are: "to unite *
* Pantheists everywhere into a common fellowship, to undertake the *
* conveyence of information about Pantheism to the interested *
* public, to encourage discussion and communication among Pan- *
* theists, to provide mutual aid and defense of Pantheists every- *
* where, to stimulate a revision of social attitudes away from *
* anthropocentrism and toward reverence for the earth and a vision *
* of Nature as the ultimate context for human existence, and to *
* take appropriate action toward the protection and restoration of *
* the earth." Recognizing that freedom of belief is inherent in *
* the Pantheist tradition, Society bylaws prohibit the requirement *
* of any particular interpretation of religion or subscription to *
* any particular religious belief, doctrine, or creed. *

* Annual memberships are \$8.00 for Regular members; \$15.00 for *
* Contributing members; \$25.00 for Sustaining members; \$50 for *
* Supporting members; \$100 for Donors; and \$500 for Benefactor *
* membership. Student/Retired/ or Low income memberships are \$5.00. *
* Non-member subscriptions are \$8.00. Contributions are deductible *
* for income and estate tax purposes. *

* Board of Directors *

- * President Derham Giuliani *
- * Vice-President..... Enid Larson *
- * Secretary-Treasurer..... Harold Wood *
- * At Large..... Margie Gibson *
- Nancy Pearlman *
- Bill Cahalan *

* Editor..... Harold Wood *

* PANTHEIST VISION is published as an idea interchange among *
* Pantheists. Members and non-members alike are encouraged to *
* submit articles and other written contributions. *

* The views expressed in this publication are those of the *
* authors, who are solely responsible for the content. *

* Copyright of all articles held exclusively by the authors where *
* noted in the credits. All other material is Copyright 1989 by *
* the Universal Pantheist Society. Permission to reprint will be *
* generous. *

* * * * *

Universal Pantheist Society
P.O. Box 265
Big Pine, California 93513