

TOWARD A PLANNING FRAMEWORK FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY:  
THE NON-DUALISTIC APPROACH OF TRADITION

by

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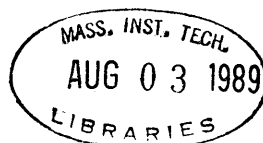
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ABSTRACT

The concept of nature as "totally other" -- the man-nature dualism -- is a basic presupposition of the Modern worldview. It is an obstacle to planning for environmental sustainability. In the framework of this worldview solutions to the environmental crisis are monistic strategies that at best bridge man and nature. These strategies, in addressing only the outer reality of the environmental crisis, which is the dichotomy between rational/sensory man and nature, undermine diversity through uniformity thereby fuelling the crisis of identity. The crisis of identity reinforces the man-nature dichotomy by dissociating man from the context of the ill-effects of his own action. Therefore a strategy framed in the modern worldview that purports to be a curative solution of the environmental crisis is not necessarily a preventive one, which it must be if it is to achieve environmental sustainability.

The Traditional worldview provides a holistic conceptual framework to know and act toward preventing the environmental crisis. It addresses both, the outer reality and the inner reality of the environmental crisis, which is the dichotomy between rational/sensory man and intellectual man or the Self -- another way of defining the crisis of identity. The dichotomy between man and nature, in this view, is not "bridged" by treating subject-object relationships, but "dissolved" by knowing their unifying principle, which is the Self. This requires the recognition of the intellectual domain in addition to the sensory and rational domains of knowledge.

The Recognition and adoption of the knowledge structure offered by the traditional worldview today potentially provides, not only a more encompassing conceptual framework for dealing with the environmental crisis, but also tools for enabling a sustainable society.

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To D

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## INTRODUCTION

Resolving the dichotomy between man and nature is the central objective of environmental planners interested in environmental sustainability. The options open to them today continue to be framed as one or a combination of two conventional themes: "Man's adaptation to nature"; "Man's adaptation of nature to man". Underlying these themes is the conventional definition of nature by environmental planners as "totally other" than man. The concept of nature as "totally other" -- the man-nature dualism -- is a basic presupposition of the Modern worldview.

In this thesis I argue that the obstacle to environmental sustainability lies precisely in viewing man and nature as dichotomous -- a view which leads to monistic solutions of the environmental crisis that at best bridge the two. If the problem is in the worldview that perceives man and nature as dichotomous, I suggest that a sustainable solution must be in a worldview that dissolves the dichotomy between man and nature and not merely bridges it. The Traditional worldview provides a conceptual framework to do so.

In contrast to the Modern worldview which perceives nature as "totally other" to man, the Traditional worldview subsumes nature in the intellectual status of man. The intellectual status according to Tradition<sup>1</sup> is man's true "nature". Nature is not

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<sup>1</sup>By "Tradition" I refer to a metaphysical interpretation of Traditional doctrines by a school of philosophers, some of whom are Rene Guenon, Ananda Coomaraswamy, Fritjof Schuon, Sayyed

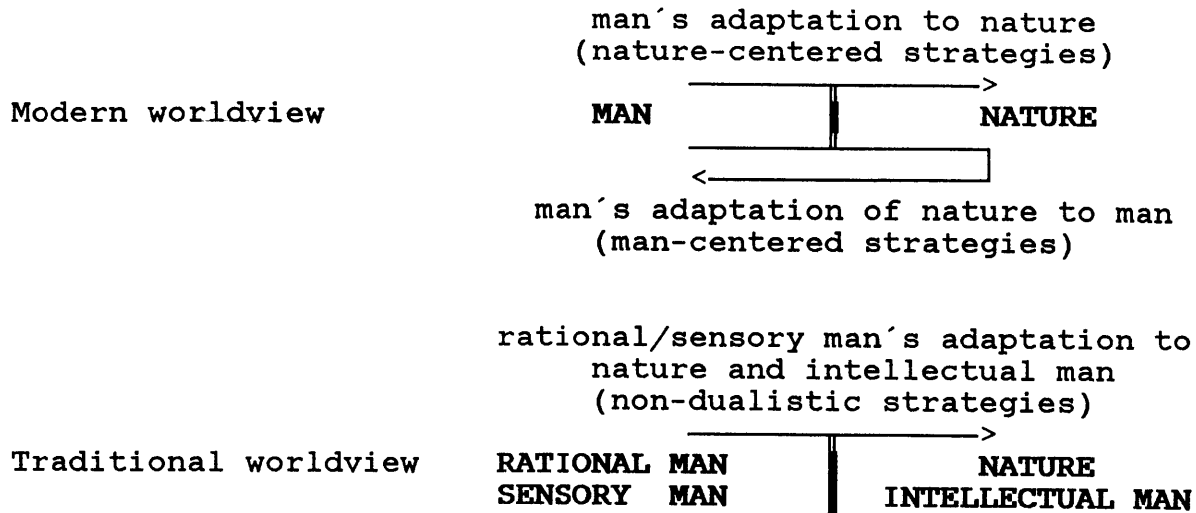
"totally other", but a higher level of realization within Man.

Intellectual knowledge is to know the object in all its dimensions -- a perfection that is considered achievable in the Traditional worldview. Its faculty, the intellect, is the person, the complete Self. If the intellectual status is the complete Self, sensory and rational domains, which Tradition considers lower forms of knowledge, are partial dimensions of the Self. "Man" and "Nature" are but two aspects of the "Self" -- rational & sensory man on one hand, and intellectual man & nature or the other.

The Traditional worldview therefore, does not deny a dualism between man and nature, but instead provides a structure of knowledge to overcome it. For example from within this worldview the above themes, "man's adaptation to nature" and "man's adaptation of nature to man", read as: "Rational & sensory man's adaptation to nature & intellectual man"; and "Rational & sensory man's adaptation of nature & intellectual man to rational & sensory man". In the Traditional worldview only the first option exists because in Tradition, rational & sensory man conforms to his intellectual Self.

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Hossein Nasr, Gai Eaton, and E.F. Schumacher. This school provides doctrinal evidence to the effect that the intellectual status of Being is the 'essence' that unites major traditions now associated with religions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, but not necessarily restricted by them.



From the Traditional worldview not one, but two dichotomies are evident in the man-nature dualism. One is between nature and rational & sensory man which perpetuates the conventional environmental crisis. The other is between rational & sensory man and intellectual man which perpetuates the crisis of identity. Environmental planning action in the modern worldview is based on the analysis of the first context alone. This often perpetuates the crisis of identity, irrespective of whether the 'theme' is man's adaptation to nature or man's adaptation of nature to man.

For a preventive solution to the environmental crisis, which is to treat the cause, I see the need for a planning framework to include in its analysis the effects of human action on the whole of Nature -- intellectual man and nature. Human action the undisputed immediate cause of the environmental crisis has effects in both the outer reality of the environmental crisis (nature) and the inner reality of the environmental crisis

(intellectual man). To include intellectual man in the context affected by human action is to unite cause and effect of human action.

The questions are: Will such a holistic perception of the environmental crisis lead to action that overcomes the man-nature dualism? And can an environmental planner do this in the Modern worldview? In this thesis I contend that the basic presuppositions and assumptions of the Modern worldview are constraining factors in achieving environmental sustainability because the knowledge structure that this worldview legitimizes does not allow such a holistic perception of the environmental crisis.

On the other hand does Tradition with the assumption of a knowable total reality provide a more holistic planning framework to resolve the man-nature dualism? Is it opposed to the present dominant worldview prevalent in the field of environmental planning or does it add a possible dimension to it?

#### **A. The Essence of Two Worldviews**

In the same way that a bridge is intended to unite the banks of a river without actually bringing them together, so too environmental planners through the faculties of sense and reason attempt to resolve the dichotomy between man and nature. This dichotomy effectively translates into two planning frameworks: Development, centered on man; and environment, centered on nature. The need for a broader planning framework to encompass



both banks leads to bridges. They link specific qualities of either bank and vary by their origin because planners are drawn toward one or the other sides by intention or circumstance. At some future date bridges will span all the infinite qualities; the inter-connectedness will be knowable and complete. Until then however, planners accept a partial view of fragments of either bank. There are qualities which are unconnected, and qualities diluted for bridges serve to equalize. Resolutions of the man-nature dualism is characterized by compromises. This is the monism that environmental planners aim to achieve in the sensory and rational domains of knowledge.<sup>2</sup>

The alternative of Tradition recognizes that the river banks are one and the same at the source, and it is through this source which is the unifying principle that one 'knows' the other bank. Knowing the principle, in this view, is to understand diversity. And understanding diversity is to sustain it. Tolerance and compromise of diversity through bridge construction alone, in this view, is to remain ignorant of the true meaning of diversity. Progress is not only a network of bridges, visible in its completeness to a future generation while the present learns to 'live with' the dichotomy, but each person dissolving the

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<sup>2</sup>Frithjof Schuon cites an analogy that appropriately pictures this approach and form of progress in 'knowing': "...like that of a man trying to draw the geometrical point by setting out to make it as small as possible, or seeking to attain to absolute perfection on some created level and denying on the one hand the necessary imperfection of that level, and on the other the transcendence of pure perfection." Spiritual Perspectives and Human Facts, pp.13.

dichotomy through knowledge of the unifying principle. This is as possible, in today's dualistic terms, in undeveloped as in developed regions. This is non-duality, the essence of the Traditional worldview -- The realization of the principle "in which all opposition of contraries [dualisms] even of being and not-being, is resolved; its 'worlds' and 'gods' are levels of reference and symbolic entities which are neither places nor individuals but states of being."<sup>3</sup>

#### **B. The Purpose of this Thesis**

The purpose of this thesis is twofold:

- \* The first is to show that there are a variety of traditions which appear diverse in form, but are, in fact, unified in their essence, which is an absolute principle that informs action in relative domains. An understanding of this principle could provide a unity that sustains a diversity and appropriateness to place of not only inanimate nature, animate nature (excluding man), but human nature as well.
- \* The second is to show that studying traditional doctrines on their own terms, that is in their total worldview rather than from within the knowledge structure of the modern worldview provides a more relevant perception of their applicability in today's context. As it often happens

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<sup>3</sup> Ananda Coomaraswamy, "The Vedanta and Western Tradition" in The American Scholar, Spring 1939, No 2, pp 227.

a modern perception of tradition restricts their applicability to that of their 'form' derived from discursive empirical and rational studies within the Modern worldview.

### C. The Question

Does a planner, who perceives the environmental crisis as a dichotomy between man and nature, resolve it by

\* 'Bridging' rational/sensory man and nature through either

- regulating man's actions and/or

- rationalizing and man-aging nature

because these aspects of man and nature are the only ones 'knowable' to the planner in the Modern worldview? [monistic approaches]

OR

\* Rational/sensory man 'realizing' nature through his intellectuality, thereby better informing his rationality because intellectuality of man is 'knowable' in the Traditional worldview? [non-dualistic approaches]

## SECTION I

### THE CONTEXT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS

#### A. Introduction

The Environmental crisis is in 'Nature'. However, 'Nature' is more than the context of the environmental crisis as it is conventionally perceived in planning frameworks. Conventionally nature is defined to include everything other than man. This is merely its outer manifested context. Its inner reality is the person -- the 'nature' of man, which is intellectual man as distinct from rational or sensory man. The inner reality of the environmental crisis then, is one of identity. Diversity as Tradition sees it is a requirement of all of Nature. In inanimate nature it is geological, in animate nature other than man it is biological, in human nature it is intellectual.<sup>4</sup> In this section I frame the environmental crisis to include both the context of nature and intellectual man.

#### B. The Outer Reality of the Environmental Crisis

The planet -- the maximum, practically conceivable resource base -- is fast approaching its finite carrying capacity. The two major dimensions of this multifaceted problem are, first depletion of the earth's resources including land, air, water, minerals, and second the accumulation of pollution which

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<sup>4</sup>E.F. Schumacher, "Level of Being", in A Guide for the Perplexed, pp 24-35

Arthur Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being NY 1960.

threatens not only the quality of the air, land, and water but which also over time threatens their life carrying and protective capacity. Everyday human actions contribute to depletion and pollution. This then suggests that the context of the environmental crisis that must concern the planner, however local his action is intended to be, is global. This however is merely the outer reality of the environmental crisis.

Environmental planners refer to this outer reality of the crisis as the only context of the environmental crisis -- a crisis in the natural world surrounding man. In doing so they presuppose a dualism between man and nature which corresponds with the two planning frameworks: One in the context of development; the other in the context of the environment. Consequently crises are identified with one or the other context depending on the 'object' that is seen to be most affected. If it is man it is a development crisis; if nature it is an environmental crisis. Recently their causal relationship has been emphasized.

Environment and development are not separate challenges; they are inexorably linked. Development cannot subsist upon a deteriorating environmental resource base; the environment cannot be protected when growth leaves out of account the costs of environmental destruction. They are linked in a complex system of cause and effect... Air pollution and acidification kill forests and lakes...agriculture lies at the root of land, water, and forest degradation.<sup>5</sup>

Ignoring these links between environment and development, in the past, has increased the dichotomy between man and nature.

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<sup>5</sup> WCED, (1987) Our Common Future pp 37

Solutions to the environmental crisis advocate the reduction of this dichotomy through action based on more comprehensive analytical frameworks.

What is required is a new approach in which all nations aim at a type of development that integrates production with resource conservation and enhancement.... The international economy must speed up world growth while respecting the environmental constraints.<sup>6</sup>

or

[What is required in place of a 'world system of economy' are] local communities inspired by a shared concern for the bioregion, for 'letting be' the plants and native animals of that place. [They] can make decisions concerning individual and communal actions which respect the integrity of natural processes in that place.<sup>7</sup>

Typically new approaches surmount the apparent oppositions between man and nature by reducing one to fit the planning framework of the other: A broader framework of development suggests managing the environment along the lines of its principle -- the indefinite progress of man; A broader framework of environment suggests development on the lines of its principle -- the preservation of nature. These broader frameworks in themselves maintain no opposition between man and nature. In order to do this however, they need to reduce one to the other, or suppress one while preserving the other. They end up being further polarized around their own principles (Fig. 1). A Planner, in choosing a wider development or environment framework

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<sup>6</sup>WCED, (1987) Our Common Future pp 39.

<sup>7</sup>Bill Devall, Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered, pp

is in effect compromising between these principles (Fig.1 - 'a', 'a+b', 'a+c'). For example a planner must suppress or compromise in order to bridge 'development' framed within the immediate spatial and temporal context of a collective or nation-state, and the 'environment' in the global and long-term context of nature. Such as between the revival of tropical forests, as delicate global ecosystems with their own bio-rhythms and social forestry to serve the immediate needs of local populations and a nation's industry.

At one extreme, today Deep Ecologists following in the footsteps of John Muir, a pioneer of the wilderness preservation movement are nature centered:

Muir battled against the conversion of forest ecosystems into managed 'tree farms'. He advocated wilderness protection as a vital necessity for preserving at least some areas where Nature could remain flowing and free.<sup>8</sup>

At the other extreme are people-centered reactions:

Environmental problems impinge far more directly on the lives of the poor... Increasingly the international conservation elite is using the philosophical, moral and scientific arguments used by Deep Ecologists in advancing their wilderness crusade.... A movement culturally rooted in American conservation history, its wholesale transfer can only result in the social uprooting of human populations in other parts of the globe.<sup>9</sup>

In the middle

...an analysis might lead to some forests being cleared for intensive cultivation, other for livestock; some forestland might be managed for increased timber production or agroforestry use and some left intact for watershed protection, recreation, or species

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<sup>8</sup> Bill Devall, Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered, pp 47-48.

<sup>9</sup> Ramachandra Guha, "Deep Ecology or Deep Wilderness", pp 4.

conservation.<sup>10</sup>

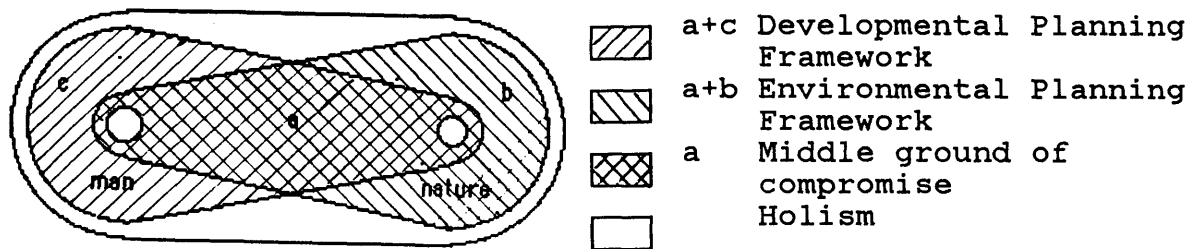


Fig 1. Monistic Approaches to the Environmental Crisis

### C. Monistic Approaches to Resolving the Man-Nature Dualism

Both moves towards the creation of more holistic planning frameworks centered on each principle, man or nature, are evident in environmentalism today.<sup>11</sup> I classify them in a conventional mode as ecocentrics and technocentrics.<sup>12</sup> To the extent that both attempt to bridge the dichotomy between man and nature through the construction of a more encompassing framework, while standing in their own territory, their solutions are in effect monisms: environmental monisms or developmental monisms.

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<sup>10</sup> WCED, Our Common Future, pp 136.

<sup>11</sup> I include planners who see the environmental crisis, however partially, and in some way act towards treating it as environmentalists. Planners who do not see the environmental crisis as an issue, comprise those centered around man alone. In the same way 'eco-fundamentalists' are centered around nature.

<sup>12</sup> The terms ecocentric and technocentric were coined by T. O'Riordan, 1981 Environmentalism, London: Pion. David Pepper adopts the same terminology to classify ideological themes or lines of thought of environmentalists, The Roots of Modern Environmentalism, London: Croom Helm, 1984.



The frameworks advocated by the ecocentrics are environmental monisms -- development is reduced to the principle of the environment which is nature preservation. This view incorporates man and nature in a single ecosystem characterized by holism and inter-connectedness. This ecosystem is understood mechanistically by some through cause-effect relationships or organically by others through interactive relationships. Both call for a bio-ethic in place of a human ethic, advocating that 'nature be respected for its own sake above and beyond its usefulness to man'. This view, while in itself maintains no absolute opposition between man and nature, needs to suppress the principle of development, man's indefinite progress.

Limits to Growth, is an example of a mechanistic systems approach. It attempted a rationally scientific model of a world system of physical, economic and social relationships. They advocated zero economic growth in order to avert an eco-catastrophe.<sup>13</sup>

James Lovelock's 'Gaia' is an example of the organic systems approach. He projects the earth as a living organism, self-regulating and self-renewing. "Gaia [the living earth] is not purposefully antihuman, but as long as we continue to change the global environment against her preferences, we encourage our replacement with a more environmentally seemly species."<sup>14</sup>

The frameworks advocated by the technocentrics, on the other hand are developmental monisms -- environment is reduced to the principle of development which is man's progress. This view encompasses nature within a broader paradigm of development. Man

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<sup>13</sup> Meadows et al. (1972) Limits to Growth,

<sup>14</sup> James Lovelock, (1988) The Ages of Gaia: A Biography of Our Living Earth, NY: W. W. Norton and Company, pp 236.

controls nature and the ill-effects of development through new approaches that encompass the causes of these ill-effects or 'build in' methods to treat those effects. While this view maintains no absolute opposition between man and nature, it preserves the progress of man while suppressing the principle of environment, nature preservation.

The concept of Ecodevelopment is technocentric. "Rather than postulating zero growth, ecodevelopment is an invitation to look for other modes of growth, in terms both of aims and means, by striving to exploit the cultural contributions of the peoples concerned and transform the various elements in their environment into useful resources."<sup>15</sup>

Environmental management is also centered around the principles of development. It aims to efficiently "clean up after the mess made by necessary modern industrial processes, the abandonment or amelioration of which would be regarded as a reversion to some form of primitive barbarism. In conflicts between the demands of economic man and environment where the interests of the two were not reconcilable through management economic man would win the day."<sup>16</sup>

There are many dangers in compromising on principles of either planning framework, but the most dangerous is their reduction to a lowest common denominator in order to make the compromise. By which I mean the extraction of qualities in man and nature that subject themselves to a common framework of analysis which is usually rationally determined (scientifically or politically). Besides, environmental monism or developmental

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<sup>15</sup> Ignacy Sachs, (1987) "Ecodevelopment: the concept, the application and the stakes" in Development and Planning, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp 29.

<sup>16</sup> David Pepper (1984), The Roots of Modern Environmentalism, London: Croom Helm.

monism each finds itself obliged to attribute to the principle which it retains the most essential properties of the one it suppresses. With environmental problems spanning across cultures, this becomes a cause for further global uniformity as reflected in the following two contrasting visions:

If large parts of the world are to avert economic, social, and environmental catastrophes, it is essential that global economic growth be revitalized. In practical terms, this means more rapid economic growth in both industrial and developing countries, freer market access for the products of developing countries, lower interest rates, greater technology transfer, and significantly larger capital flows, both concessional and commercial.<sup>17</sup>

or

If we are lucky we may eventually arrive at a world of relatively mutually tolerant small societies attuned to their local natural region, and united overall by a profound respect and love for the mind and nature of the universe. I can imagine further virtues in a world sponsoring societies with matrilineal descent, free-form marriage, 'natural credit' economies, far less population, and much more wilderness.<sup>18</sup> Supporters of Deep Ecology have consistently called for [a universally applicable] decentralized, non-hierarchical, fully democratic social structures.<sup>19</sup>

This is an indication of the broadening of both frameworks of development and environment to eventually encompass a common ground -- the globe (Fig.1).

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<sup>17</sup> WCED, (1987) Our Common Future (emphasis mine)

<sup>18</sup> Gary Snyder, "Buddhism and the possibilities of a Planetary Culture". (emphasis mine)

<sup>19</sup> George Sessions, "A Postscript" (emphasis mine)

#### D. The Inner Reality of the Environmental Crisis

Uniformity is a false form of unity.<sup>20</sup> Though uniformity is furthered by the environmental crisis, it was initiated earlier by 'development' problems. In the context of development it stemmed from surmounting the apparent opposition between indigenous tradition and modernity seen as a dualism, by suppressing one while preserving the other. Reaction to this suppression erupt in a number of forms. For example communalism and religious dogmatism where tradition is suppressed. These are crises in the 'nature' of man -- the person -- as a self-conscious or intellectual being. This 'person' is the 'inner' reality of the environmental crisis. It is referred to by some authors as the crisis of identity.

Writing with a concern for the death of traditional art, Ananda Coomaraswamy wrote "Man was reduced [with industrialism] to a 'thing' technologically determined. The result is that Man's 'identity' which he enjoyed in a traditional society was supplanted by 'material and ethical equality' in an industrial society."

Theodore Rozak calls it the 'manifesto of the person', the 'sovereign right to self-discovery'. "That all people are created to be persons and that persons come first before all collective fictions" and "... there stands an appetite for personal recognition, for the recognition of each of us as a special and significant event in the universe, a center of delicate sensibilities and radical originalists." <sup>21</sup>

More recently Paul Watchel writes "...In the modern world we must make an identity for ourselves; we do not inherit one. We have outgrown traditions that assign

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<sup>20</sup> Rene Guenon, "Uniformity against Unity" Reign of Quantity: The Signs of Our Times, pp 63-69.

<sup>21</sup> Person Planet: The Creative Disintegration of Industrial Society, NY: Anchor Books, 1974 pp 4.

one's way of life, one's station and one's loyalties at birth ... in many ways this is liberating, but makes identity something we must achieve." <sup>2 2</sup>

Man's nature cannot take uniformity just as nature cannot.<sup>2 3</sup>

Monistic approaches to solving the environmental crisis intend global unity by uniformity that perpetuates the crisis of identity. For a preventive solution to the environmental crisis I see the need to combine the two contexts of the crisis -- the inner reality and the outer reality. For its context is as much in intellectual man as it is in nature.

#### E. Conclusion

The outer reality of the environmental crisis highlights the need for a global planning context and the inner reality of the crisis defines the planning context as the person. One draws environmental planning solutions towards a unity and the other calls for diversity. In a monistic approach this unity takes the form of uniformity which is opposed to diversity.

There is a need to resolve the dualism between man and nature. However I do not see monism, adopted by planning today as

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<sup>2 2</sup> The Poverty of Affluence: A Psychological Portrait of the American way of Life, Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1989 pp 99.

<sup>2 3</sup> "The essence of ecology's reconstruction message can be summed up in a word 'diversity'. From an ecological viewpoint, balance and harmony in nature, in society, and by inference, in behavior is achieved not by mechanical standardization, but precisely by the opposite, organic differentiation." Murray Bookchin, "Ecology and Evolutionary Thought" in Notes for the Future: An Alternative History of the Past Decade, Robin Clarke (ed), London: Thames and Hudson, 1975.

a way. In a monistic system by reducing one to the other it is never possible to escape from dualism. What it amounts to is the preservation of one while suppressing the other. As I see it a dualism exists between rational/sensory man and nature, but it does not exist between intellectual man and nature.

The advantage of citing the context of the crisis in this manner is that it lays the ground for a planning framework based on the theory of 'non-duality' as an alternative to today's conventional monistic solutions. The question is, can this context -- the outer and inner reality (particularly the latter) be perceived by a planner in the modern worldview? In the next section I introduce two worldviews: One which presupposes dualism between man and nature and looks to monism as an alternative -- the Modern worldview; and the other which presupposes a knowable unifying principle through a structure of knowledge termed non-duality -- The traditional worldview.

## SECTION II

### WORLDVIEWS AND THE REALITY OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS

#### A. Introduction

In order to 'cure' the ill-effects of an action environmental planners may treat effects. However, if the objective is to 'prevent' ill-effects they treat the cause of that action. Even though there is no dispute over the fact that the immediate cause of the environmental crisis is human action, there is much dispute over the determinants of this action. Lynn White likened the search for causes to the peeling of the proverbial onion: there is always a deeper cause.<sup>24</sup> Until recently (60s and 70s) there was little argument that the facilitator of human action that precipitates the crisis was modern technology and affluence.<sup>25</sup> The search for causes concentrated on the conditions that bred these facilitators. Of late (80s) however, evidence is provided to show that lack of modern technology and poverty also degrade the environment.

Environmental stress has often been seen as the result of rising living standards of the relatively affluent. But poverty itself pollutes the environment. Those who are poor and hungry will often destroy their immediate environment in order to survive: They will cut down forests; their livestock will overgraze grasslands; they will overuse marginal land; and in growing numbers

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<sup>24</sup>Lynn White, "Continuing the Conversation" in Western Man and Environmental Ethics: Attitudes toward Nature and Technology, Ian Barbour (ed).

<sup>25</sup>Lewis Moncrief, "The Cultural Basis of our Environmental Crisis" in Ibid.

they will crowd into congested cities.<sup>26</sup>

It appears difficult to trace a cause. Most planning strategies toward sustainability therefore, aim to modify the facilitators of human action through environmentally benign technology, provision of basic needs, redistribution etc.

The flaw in coping with environment/development challenges is governments' failure to ensure that their policies prevent degradation...much of their work has of necessity been after-the-fact repair of damage: reforestation, reclaiming desert lands, re. ... The ability to anticipate and prevent environmental damage requires that the ecological dimensions of policy be considered at the same time as other dimensions.<sup>27</sup>

As I see it environmental sustainability requires preventive planning action contingent on the identification of the cause of the crisis. The identification of cause is dependent on the knowledge of the reality of the crisis.

Planners relate knowledge to action in the public domain.<sup>28</sup> There are many kinds of knowledge that lead to action. What differentiates them is not only the object, but the way in which the object is looked at. The two objects that are the context of the environmental crisis, as I defined it in the previous Section are: the global context, its outer reality, not merely as inter-nations, which implies bi- or multi-lateral 'representations', but as a context of infinite realities; and the person, its inner

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<sup>26</sup> WCED, Our Common Future.

<sup>27</sup> WCED Our Common Future,

<sup>28</sup> "At the most basic level planning is an attempt to relate scientific and technical knowledge to action in the public domain". John Friedmann, 1987, pp 48.



reality, not merely as an 'average' individual, but as a unique self-conscious being. In this section I am concerned with the validation of the knowledge of this context and the perception of the cause of the environmental crisis.

I adopt a hierarchical categorization of knowledge<sup>29</sup> by the faculties: The senses, reason, and intellect provide sensory,<sup>30</sup> rational, and intellectual knowledge respectively. Intellectual knowledge, as explained earlier, refers to 'knowledge for understanding' in its purest form. Sensory and rational knowledge are 'knowledge for manipulation'.<sup>31</sup> I see this hierarchy meaningful in the objective understanding of any context: the senses being the most subjective and the intellect the least so. Based on this hierarchy of knowledge there are two worldviews within which an environmental planner can operate: The Modern and the Traditional. These worldviews serve as frameworks for action.

## **B. The Modern Worldview and the Environmental Crisis**

The Modern worldview does not recognize a principle higher than reason. Action and change take place in contingent domains

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<sup>29</sup> There are other classifications of knowledge. I chose this classification, based on the terms of the Traditional school.

<sup>30</sup> This domain of knowledge is also referred to as 'sentimental' or 'empirical'; the former emphasizes emotions, and the latter refutes established theory in favor of the 'sensory' experience. Sense informs reason, unlike the rational domain where reason informs sense (with regard to a particular action).

<sup>31</sup> E.F. Schumacher, A Guide for the Perplexed.

of knowledge<sup>3 2</sup> that carry their own principles. Thus causes or causal chains of the environmental crisis that are perceived this worldview and cited in the literature represent various views often pointing in different directions -- economic, political, political economics, scientific, technological, sociological, religious, and so on. They represent partial views of partial realities, perceiving man, nature, and the man-nature relationship from their own domains and guided by their own principles. I cite a few controversial examples:

From the perspective of theology, Lynn White made the argument that the root of the environmental crisis is the Judeo-Christian tradition.<sup>3 3</sup> 'Man and nature are two things and man is master'. Christianity 'bears a huge burden of guilt' for the adverse effects of its creation -- modern science and technology. The solution that White proposed is the rejection of modern science and a reinterpretation of the man-nature relationship.

Critics of White's thesis have argued that Genesis authorizes stewardship and not domination. The negative interpretation -- nature exists for man to modify and transform as he pleases -- became a popular development ideology. The positive interpretation is Conservation and Perfection. A solution lies, not in reverting to the sacredness of nature as suggested by White which is anti-science, but in modern science.<sup>3 4</sup>

The religious philosophical view of Deep Ecology<sup>3 5</sup> holds that the cause is the basic tenets of

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<sup>3 2</sup>This is true for both rational and radical practice. " ... Knowledge for planning is inherently ephemeral ..." John Friedmann, 1987, pp 394.

<sup>3 3</sup>Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis" in Science, 10 March, Vol. 55 1967. John Black, 1970, Dominion of Man, makes a similar argument.

<sup>3 4</sup>John Passmore, Man's Responsibility for Nature

<sup>3 5</sup>Deep Ecology is a term coined by Arne Naess in 1973 in an article "The Shallow and the Deep, Long Range Ecology Movements", The philosophy of the movement is provided by Bill Devall and

the modern worldview itself. The deep ecologist's solution is the rejoining of man and nature through the development of two 'ultimate norms' or 'intuitions' -- self realization and biocentric equality. They emphasize preservation of wilderness, dramatic reductions in population, and direct 'experiential action' on the lines of their norms. Deep ecology represents one of the many forms of the modern worldview that informs knowledge through action or reason through sentiment.<sup>36</sup>

A political economic view of the root of the crisis is the power imbalances in the global economy. Within it there are at least two differing views: The radical Greens see it as the over-production and over-consumption in the North at the cost of the basic needs of the South. The Brandt Commission on the other hand sees it as under production, an industrial recession in the North not providing the South with the industrial goods for their basic needs.<sup>37</sup>

Without a unifying higher principle, actions in these contingent domains are often in conflict. Another way of stating this is that the knower identifies only partially with the object of knowledge and frames action in this partial reality. This often conflicts with actions framed in other partial realities. For example:

It is increasingly clear that countries are capable of enlightened conservation policies within their own national territories, while contributing to

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George Sessions in Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered, 1985.

<sup>36</sup> Deep Ecology is reminiscent of the reaction of Christianity against naturalism or rationalism divorced from intellectualism which Nasr puts as follows: "In emphasizing man as a will rather than an intelligence, Christianity has emphasized the pull of faith and love over knowledge and certitude." Sayyed Hossein Nasr, The Encounter of Man and Nature, pp 55.

<sup>37</sup> Michael Redclift, Development and the Environmental Crisis,

environmental degradation outside these frontiers.<sup>38</sup>

... while this [new] technology offers the potential for slowing the dangerously rapid consumption of finite resources, it also entails high risks, including new forms of pollution...

Emerging technologies offer the promise of higher productivity, increased efficiency, and decreased pollution, but many bring risks of new toxic chemicals and wastes and of major accidents of a type and scale beyond present coping mechanisms.<sup>39</sup>

These perspectives of the environmental crisis share the basic presupposition of the Modern worldview -- a dualism between man and nature as subject and object of action -- and assume that the only legitimate way of knowing a cause is through an analysis of the effect by the rational and sensory faculties. The immediate effect of human actions, the context of the environmental crisis, however, is seen only in its 'outer' reality. Its 'inner' reality is excluded by environmental planners from the definition of immediate ill-effects. This restriction on perception of the effects of action constrains the perception of a cause.

Therefore in the modern worldview rational environmental planners choose between irreconcilable alternatives<sup>40</sup>. In doing this they express their belief in 'indefinite or absolute

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<sup>38</sup> Michael Redclift, Development and the Environmental Crisis, pp 128

<sup>39</sup> WCED Our Common Future

<sup>40</sup> "...planners [have] to live with the uneasy contradictions, which are inevitable in their work". Judith Innes de Neufville (1986) "Usable Planning Theory: An agenda for Research and Education" in Strategic Perspectives on Planning Practice, Barry Checkoway (ed), Lexington Books.

progress<sup>41</sup> of knowing the context of the environmental crisis. It is assumed that in the 'future' knowledge will be more complete than the 'present' and corresponding 'more developed' and 'less developed' regions.<sup>42</sup>

..the world is objectively knowable through the instruments of positive science....there is an unbroken line of evolution between the physical or natural world and the human or socio-cultural world....One or two generations (or centuries) hence we will know a great deal more about the world and how it works..

There are two corollaries to this concept of indefinite progress in knowing the context of the crisis. They are particularly noticeable in environmental movements. The first is to use 'indigenous' reason empirically defined, historically or experientially, within a local geographic or cultural-specific context. Man and nature are considered knowable through reason within a specific context. This is evident in planning initiatives such as appropriate technology movements and reductionist approaches to planning<sup>43</sup>.

The second corollary is to consider the planner's reasoning faculty as an inadequate mode of objective knowledge. Man and

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<sup>41</sup>This term is used by Rene Guenon in East and West.

According to Guenon this concept of progress was referred to by the Enlightenment philosophers as 'intellectual progress' to mean increasing reasoning power. The word 'intellectual' though is not in the same sense as used in Tradition

<sup>42</sup>John Friedmann, speaking of the Enlightenment tradition in Planning in Friedmann, 1987 pp 41.

<sup>43</sup>Huston Smith categorizes reductionists opposed to phenomenologists, as objective empiricists who reduce phenomena to a manifestation or expression. "Introduction" to F.Schuon, Transcendent Unity of Religions

nature are knowable only through sense and intuition but hardly through reason except as each individual or a culture makes it out to be. Phenomenological and interpretive approaches to planning are examples of this 'intersubjectivity' where the central objective is the understanding of particular phenomenon in their own terms and contexts.<sup>44</sup>

Methods for planners to acquire knowledge of the context of the crisis may change, but the insufficiency of today's knowledge when compared to tomorrow persists.

And so, just at the point when our need for knowledge is greatest, we stand ignorant before events whose long-term implications we can scarcely grasp.<sup>45</sup>

In addition planners seek this sufficiency in the sensory and rational domains. This is the Modern view -- 'indefinite progress' that denies the intellectual domain of knowledge, the possibility of complete knowledge today.

There is much written on the limited scope of reason as a mode of knowledge that stems from the human faculty of the mind. Particularly its nature to operate in terms of apparently irreconcilable alternatives as man and nature or as black and white, and its partial views of partial realities.<sup>46</sup> To the extent that these alternatives are real on the level of sensory

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<sup>44</sup>Judith Innes de Neufville, (??) "Knowledge and Action: Making the Link" (??) pp. 86-92

<sup>45</sup>John Friedmann, 1987, pp 416.

<sup>46</sup>This is particularly in environmental literature that is anti-technocentric or anti-westerncentric, and of the free-will ideologies such as the romantics, transcendentalists, and phenomenologists. It also dominates religious writings.

experience they are not false, so that man is sensed and reasoned as man, and nature as nature. However, are these alternatives irreconcilable or are they unified in principle? Is a total view of a total reality possible?

### C. The Traditional Worldview and the Environmental Crisis

The second framework for action is the Traditional worldview that recognizes a higher principle. Action from knowledge in contingent domains being merely a transitory and momentary modification of the environment cannot carry its principles and reason within itself.<sup>47</sup> It must depend on a principle in a higher domain. This is the realm of the Intellect or unchanging knowledge -- that essentially consists in the complete identification of the knower and the object of knowledge. The traditional worldview holds that there is a progressive hierarchy of knowledge -- the sensory, the rational and the intellectual, with the higher levels encompassing and comprehending the lower levels. Development relies on the knowledge acquired through the higher faculties which are more complete, objective and 'universal' informing the lower faculties which are seen as more partial and subjective.

Tradition validates another altogether different concept of progress in knowing that does not have an indefinite quality. In this form relative 'progresses' may take place in particular domains, but is not assumed absolute as it may very well be

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<sup>47</sup> Rene Guenon, Crisis in the Modern World

accompanied by regress in another domain. Progress is only as far as the advancement of the individual from ignorance to rational, and from rational to intellectual knowledge. This is a structure of knowledge toward perfection of knowing the object. It cannot be obtained in the rational domain because of the inherent limitations to the faculties of sense and reason which make knowledge individualistic and relative. The rational domain is not rejected, but overcome. "The [seeker of intellectual knowledge] visualizes a higher power of cognition: though nourished by reason in its preliminary stages, it finally transcends reason."<sup>48</sup> This knowledge can only be attained in the Intellectual domain.<sup>49</sup> In this view of progress man everywhere and at all time is the same more-than-sensory, more-than-rational, self-aware being. He is aware of realities beyond the reach of the mind. This 'person' is the inner context of the environmental crisis. The person's has a potential completeness

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<sup>48</sup> Betty Heimann (1964) Facets of Indian Thought, London: George Allen & Unwin.

"To reject partial knowledge as is offered by our natural faculties [sense and reason] is a kind of self-mutilation; but to suppose that truth [intellectual knowledge] in its totality can be encompassed by these faculties is idolatry." Gai Eaton, (1977) King of the Castle: Choice and Responsibility in the Modern World, London: The Bodley Head, pp 155.

<sup>49</sup> "Higher grades of significance and Levels of Being cannot be recognized without faith and the help of the higher abilities of the inner man. When these higher abilities are not brought into action -- either because they are lacking or because an absence of faith leaves them unutilized -- there is a lack of adaequatio on the part of the knower, which produces the effect that nothing of any higher significance or Level of Being can be known by him." E. F. Schumacher, A Guide for the Perplexed, London: Abacus. pp 61



today as it does tomorrow or in 'less developed' as in 'more developed' regions.

From within the Traditional worldview the cause of the crisis is the absence of the realm of intellectual knowledge from informing human action. The hierarchy of knowledge in the traditional worldview -- sensory, rational, and intellectual (with appropriate sub-categories) legitimates several levels of meanings and forms that are appropriate to time and place and most of all appropriate to a level of consciousness and of being. The dichotomy or the mismatch in the level of being and the level of consciousness, which is the crisis of identity, leads to 'uninformed' action which is the cause of the environmental crisis. The solution therefore in the traditional worldview is

the rediscovery of true metaphysics [intellectual knowledge]... which has done justice to the relation between man and nature, that a hierarchy of knowledge can be again asserted and a symbolic science of nature reestablished which will effectively complement the quantitative sciences of today.<sup>50</sup>

The 'inner' reality of the environmental crisis is referred to as the esoteric dimension in Tradition -- the inner dimension of man's nature. The exoteric on the other hand refers to the 'outer' reality of the crisis -- the outer individual and nature.

While the exoteric dimension is the diversity of form, the esoteric dimension is the unifying principle in this diversity developed in tradition as the concept of the Self. The Self is

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<sup>50</sup> Sayyed Hossein Nasr, The Encounter of Man and Nature, pp 75.

the supra-individual or the supra-rational person employing the faculty of the intellect to inform reason (rational thought) and bodily senses (empirical thought). The intellect or intellectual intuition enables the knower to identify with that to be known. It is believed to be the 'essential' quality that defines the man. Schumacher describes it as the quality that puts man above mineral, plant, and animals which represent sequentially his own development from passivity to activity, effect to cause, necessity to freedom, and multiplicity to unity.<sup>51</sup> Thus intellectual knowledge is essentially Self-realization. Development is to increasingly turn inwards in order to know the Self, which is assumed by Tradition to pre-exist in every being, and only needs to be revealed. Development in tradition is the unfolding of the Self.

To know the Self is to know the unifying principle, which is the cause and the effect. The 'inner' reality of the crisis is both the effect and the cause. To know the effect prior to action leads to informed action. In Tradition subject and object are only temporary dichotomies created in the process of expanding the Self. They are united through a common cause prior to action, and action seeks to re-unite them.

"Only the working of life can be causally explained; that the existence of a chain of causes presumes the logically prior possibility of the existence -- in other words presumes a first cause, which cannot be thought of as one amongst other mediate causes, whether

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<sup>51</sup> E.F. Schumacher, Guide for the Perplexed,

in place or time".<sup>52</sup>

The presupposition of a unifying principle or a single cause leads to a different planning solution that is not in action but in knowledge.

#### D. Conclusion

I see the difference between the worldviews as the presence of the intellectual domain in the traditional worldview or its absence in the modern worldview. They can therefore be transubstantiated, by which I mean that the modern can become the traditional with the addition of the intellectual domain. I do not imply a simplistic imposition of another layer of thought, but a realm of principle that encompasses and permeates the rational and sensory orders, conceptually transforming them.

By posing the difference between the worldviews as I have done I avoid the use of a method that typically looks for the truth of the 'form' in order to assess the truth of the 'idea' (lower informing the higher) and sees tradition as a 'return' to that 'form' that existed in the past: historical constructs such as a primitive society, naturalism, oppressive social hierarchies, etc. The truth in an 'idea' is not necessarily obvious and analyzable in 'form'. It can be misleading in the absence of the total context and particularly so when referring to the esoteric.

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<sup>52</sup> Ananda Coomaraswamy, "Vedanta and Western Tradition" in American Scholar, pp 237-238

The environmental crisis is therefore real, though not equally real, in both worldviews: It can be sensed and rationalized equally in the modern and traditional worldviews. However it can be intellectualized only in the broader framework of the traditional worldview. In other words its reality is more completely identified in the traditional worldview, which adds the dimension of the inner reality.

Traditions translate this knowledge of 'inner' reality of the crisis or the esoteric into action in various exoteric ways. And even though the esoteric is the quality that unites all traditions, it can be understood in the totality of any one tradition. "The authentically esoteric is always contained within a total and integral tradition."<sup>53</sup> Therefore in the next section I explore the Hindu Tradition through one of its doctrines, the Vedanta that best reveals the concept of the esoteric or the Self and the theory of Non-duality to overcome dualism.

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<sup>53</sup> Sayyed Hossein Nasr, Knowledge and the Sacred, pp 77

## SECTION III

### THE VEDANTA AS AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE ESSENCE OF TRADITION<sup>54</sup>

#### A. The Vedanta

The Vedanta is one of six branches<sup>55</sup> that share the same orthodoxy derived from the Vedas, and together exposit the doctrine of non-duality. It is based on the Upanishads which form the last portion of the vedic texts and, in fact, Vedanta is another word for the Upanishads meaning 'Veda's ends' (Veda - anta) both as the 'latter part' and as its 'ultimate significance'. It is said that the Upanishads are 'the final and supreme goal of the whole of traditional knowledge, the Vedas detached from all the more or less specialized and contingent applications to which it may give rise in various spheres.'<sup>56</sup> The Vedanta is also known as Atmavidya, the doctrine of the Knowledge of the true 'Self' or 'spiritual essence' or as Advaita 'non-duality'.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> For this section I have relied on works by Rene Guenon, Ananda Coomaraswamy, Frithjoj Schuon, Betty Heimann, and S. Radhakrishnan.

<sup>55</sup> The six branches, darshanas are Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Sankhya, Yoga, Mimamsa, and Vedanta.

<sup>56</sup> Rene Guenon, Introduction to the Study of the Hindu Doctrine, pp 277

<sup>57</sup> Ananda Coomaraswamy, "Vedanta and Western Tradition" in American Scholar, pp 224

## B. The Essence of the Vedanta and Development

The Vedanta affirms that man is possessed of and is himself that one thing which when it is known all things are known; man is unaware of this hidden treasure within himself because he has inherited an ignorance which he mistakenly identifies with himself; the technique [of development] is therefore not the conveyance of information but the education of latent knowledge.<sup>58</sup>

The principle of development is the expansion of the knower to encompass an infinite reality which is Brahman, the Supreme Identity or Universal Being. Nothing is outside Brahman because that is limiting it. It is total Reality, without duality, being beyond determination. The knower is the expanding or unfolding 'Self<sup>59</sup>' or Atman. In the famous phrase that brings out the essence of non-duality, "That art Thou", Atman is Brahman.

Brahman embodies two principles: Purusha and Prakriti. Purusha is the essential or active principle of all things. It determines the development of the possibilities of Prakriti which is the substantial or passive principle. Purusha is the unity in the multiplicity of Brahman, unaffected by the forms of Prakriti. Prakriti is the multiplicity in the unity of Brahman. It is like the distinctions among objects under a single source of light. The distinctions between the objects are not the difference in the light but the differences in their reflecting power. The

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<sup>58</sup> Ananda Coomaraswamy, "Vedanta and Western Tradition" in American Scholar, pp 232

<sup>59</sup> The Self cannot be associated with the individual or 'ego'. Rene Guenon defines the Self as the principle by which all states of being exist, each in its own domain. He refers to it as the personality as opposed to individuality which is the ego. Man and his Becoming: According to the Vedanta,

principle of light in its unity is Purusha. The source, the rays, and the objects in their multiplicity that manifest the light are Prakriti.

Thus Purusha is manifested by Prakriti in three places: in the source; in the rays; and the reflection off the object. They represent three states of individual existence or conceptions of Atman<sup>60</sup>. The reflection is Atman as Jivatman or 'living soul'. Its individual reflection is unique to itself but is contingent on its superficial characteristics, its relative position, as well as on the source and ray. In other words it is wholly determined. The ray is Atman as 'universal spirit'. It is not contingent on any of the objects which it plays a part in determining, but in itself continues to be determined by the source. The third is Paramatman or the source itself, at which point it 'knows' Brahman. Whereas the first is of the individual order, being particular, the two latter are of the universal order being free of particularization. Atman is itself immutable and merely develops possibilities which it inherently contains by passing from effect (a totally determined condition) to cause (the determining condition).

Jivatman, Atman, and Paramatman, the states of individual existence are subjects of development (subjects). The object of development is referred to as states of universal existence

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<sup>60</sup> "The Atman is impartite, but it is apparently divided and identified into variety by the differing forms of its vehicles, mouse or man.." Ananda Coomaraswamy, The Vedanta and Western Tradition, pp 233.

(context). The sequence of contexts is defined in terms that parallel the subject. That is to say that each context is a certain range of possibilities. It is one among many contexts in which a being is born (not to be taken literally as explained later) and dies; the sequence being organized on similar principles as the sequence of states of individual existence in each context. This is a concept of 'to each as per capabilities' and 'to each a context'.

Development, therefore is the reciprocal influence of subject and its context in the direction of Brahman where subject and context are one in a total reality<sup>6 1</sup>. Until then, in the manifested state, the object is always wider than the grasping abilities of the faculties of the subject.

#### **B.1. States of Universal Existence -- The Context of Development**

Excluding the unmanifested context of Atman in Brahman there are three contexts. They are produced by the principle of Prakriti and reflect the different orders of the active principle of Purusha. The lowest is the unproductive production<sup>6 2</sup> (the 'objects' in the above analogy) consisting of the five substantial or sensible elements -- ether, air, fire, water, and earth -- and the eleven instruments: knowledge, jnana (ears,

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<sup>6 1</sup>Ananda Coomaraswamy refers to alternative Indian formulations of this such as 'knower of the field' and the 'field'; 'self' and 'Self'.

<sup>6 2</sup>This term is used by Rene Guenon to mean determined and cannot determine. It differs from the productive production which is determined but can also determine.



skin, eyes, tongue, and nose); action, karma (excretion, generation, hands, feet, and voice); and the receptive and discriminative mental faculty or outward sense, manas, (the reflected light in the analogy). This is the stage of gross manifestation.

The two higher contexts are stages of productive productions. The stage after gross manifestation is subtle manifestation defined by the intellect (the 'ray' in the above analogy manifested by the medium which links the unproductive production, with the source); individual consciousness or egoism, the mental faculty now capable of inward sense (ahankara); and the five essential determinations of the sensible elements and the instruments of knowledge -- auditive, tangible, visible, sapid, and olfactory. The last manifested stage is that of formless manifestation. Its content is primarily the higher intellect, Buddhi (the source of light in the above analogy) that determines the two conditions of formal manifestation.

In this hierarchical structure, the higher is the principle of the lower. Prakriti under the active organizing principle of Purusha gives rise to an ordered multiplicity, a hierarchy, of determined contexts.

Subjects participate in each of these contexts in varying degrees. It is recognized that subjects have different capabilities and therefore are aware of different conditions of

existence<sup>63</sup>. The immediate goal of development is for the subject to 'know' or 'realize' the context it is in. This is when knowledge and being are one -- it can happen in any context.

## B.2. States of Individual Existence -- The Subject of Development

The states of individual existence (subject) that parallel the universal states (context) are as follows: The first is known as the condition of Vaishnavara -- the waking state. It knows only the sensible world of gross manifestation, employing the five faculties of knowledge, five of action, and the mental faculty in its 'manipulative' role of the real world. Jivatman as 'living soul' is its principle<sup>64</sup>. The second is the condition of Tajjasa -- the dream state. It knows the ideal world composed of the imperceivable elements that determine the sensible world -- the auditive, tangible, visible, sapid, and olfactory. The outward faculties, while continuing to exist, turn inward in order to determine an ideal world, rather than being determined by a real world as in the last state. Atman as 'universal spirit' is its principle<sup>65</sup>.

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<sup>63</sup> "When viewing the whole of universal manifestation ... the very multiplicity of its degrees and of its modes 'Existence is unique'..." Rene Guenon, Man and his Becoming: According to the Vedanta.

<sup>64</sup> Radhakrishnan refers to this state as 'the bodily self, that enjoys the gross things'. Philosophy of the Upanishads, pp 35

<sup>65</sup> Radhakrishnan refers to this state as 'the empirical stage that enjoys subtle things and fashions for itself a new world of forms with the material of the waking experience.' Philosophy of the Upanishads, pp 35

The third subject is the condition of Prajna -- the state of deep sleep. This is the state of integral knowledge where the subject fully identifies with its particular context. One can say that it is the final stage of any one context. Its instrument is total consciousness (Chit) and its realization of Being (Sat). Its principle is Paramatman as a oneness of Sat, Chit, and Ananda (Beatitude)<sup>66</sup>. The fourth and final stage is Turiya. It is the final subject in the final context. It is oneness with the unmanifested, with Brahman itself<sup>67</sup>.

Development can be pictured as a series of spirals, embodying sequentially gross, subtle, and formless manifestations, the tip of one linked to the base of the next, as parts of a larger spiral. Each spiral represents in itself a sequence of states of individual existence: Vaishnavara (waking), Tajasa (dreaming), and Prajna (deep sleep). The final inconceivable tip of the whole larger spiral, the unmanifested state of universal existence coincides with the individual state of Turiya.

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<sup>66</sup>Radhakrishnan refers to this state as 'the intellectual self that is temporarily one with Brahman and enjoys bliss .. The oppositions are, so to say, lost in this pure object-less knowing subject condition.' Philosophy of the Upanishads, pp 36

<sup>67</sup>Radhakrishnan calls this 'the intuitive self .. that which is not conscious of the subjective, nor that which is conscious of the objective, nor...' (it is expressed in negative terms to show that it cannot be determined). Philosophy of the Upanishads, pp 36

### C. The 'Natural' Order -- Application of the Vedanta to Contingent Domains

Dharma, translated variously as law, norm, order, or justice, derives from a root meaning 'to sustain'.<sup>68</sup> It is the principle that links action to knowledge or the 'nature' of beings to sustain a universal order. It takes the form of a social hierarchy which is the idea of Caste.

The idea and practice of Caste is an application of metaphysical principles outlined in the Vedanta to contingent context.<sup>69</sup> It is an order designed for the attainment of intellectual knowledge or Self-realization. It results in a 'vocationally integrated society' that is based on proportionate or natural equality (opposed to arithmetical equality which is the lower informing the higher), distributing to each according to his own nature.<sup>70</sup>

The social hierarchy corresponds with the hierarchy of

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<sup>68</sup> Ananda Coomaraswamy, Religious Basis, pp 7

<sup>69</sup> "Caste is not considered as a momentary historico-social institution, but as a permanent cosmic law". Betty Heimann, Facets of Indian Thought, pp 78.

<sup>70</sup> Critics of the caste system have been classified into two categories: the religious and the modernist. The first, besides often being mistaken in their actual assessment of relevant facts, have not been open to traditional metaphysics and have sought to reform what they saw as abuses, not by 'returning' but by 'substituting'. The second sought to impose arithmetical equality in place of proportionate equality (seen by them as inequality) as a basis of western political and economic theories. -- see Frithjof Schuon's Castes and Races or Language of the Self.

It may be mentioned that Gandhi who was professedly against untouchability, was not against the Caste system.

universal states of existence. They are forms that manifest Purusha as a cosmic organism<sup>71</sup>: Brahmana is the head; Kshatriya is the arms; Vaishya is the trunk; and the Sudra the feet. They vary by their immediate purpose in life, which is defined by the context. However they are all equal by their ultimate end which is Self-realization.

The Brahmana, the teacher, is contemplation, guided by the faculty of the intellect toward attainment of liberation is the immediate purpose in life (moksa). The next three castes are ruled by action, guided by the principle of inward sense. For the Kshatriya, the ruler, the fulfillment of duty (dharma, in the sense of duty) is the immediate purpose in life. For the Vaisya, the merchant and the artisan, action is oriented to the pursuit of values (artha). For the Sudra, the worker, the objective of action is the satisfaction of desires (kama).

Each in achieving the perfection of their objective (dharma in the sense of the sustaining principle) through knowing their respective contexts, pass through the three states of individual existence.<sup>72</sup> The means of the sudra being the most determined is

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<sup>71</sup> "...a living organism in which an existing order preserves a recognizable identity and produces order from order." Ananda Coomaraswamy, The Religious Basis of the Forms of Indian Society, pp 1.

<sup>72</sup> "... all these human categories are found again in some way, even if it be quite indirect or wholly symbolical, not only within each of the [castes] but also in every man. There is likewise a certain analogy between castes and ages in the sense that the lower types are found again in certain aspects of childhood while the passionate and active type is represented by the adult and the contemplative and serene type of the aged". Frithjof Schuon, Castes and Races, pp 33

the most subjective. The brahmana on the other hand, is the least determined and the most objective.

Therefore "beings inhabit different cosmoses according to the reality on which they are centered, and it is impossible for the lower to understand the higher".<sup>73</sup> It is assumed by the Hindu tradition under their contingent circumstances that heredity was the most natural method of allocation of dharma. That "by a natural law, the individual ego is always or nearly always born into its own befitting environment".<sup>74</sup>

Society in this structure is an enlarged 'Self' with groups representing and perfecting the various faculties. The analogy of a series of connected spirals forming one large spiral, can be applied here: Society is the large spiral that embodies individuals and groups in their own spirals; each in their contexts and confined to the ingenuity of using their possibilities according to their ability. Thus there is always the presence of the unity of the principle in society just as it is present in diversity of individual beings. This sustains and transmits a natural order that cannot otherwise be the responsibility of isolated individual mortals 'doing their own

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<sup>73</sup> Frithjof Schuon, Castes and Races, pp 33.

<sup>74</sup> Ananda Coomaraswamy adds "If they were wrong on this point, then it remains for others to discover some better way of achieving the same ends. I do not say that this is impossible; but it can hardly be denied that the Brahmanical caste system is the nearest approach that has yet been made toward a society where there shall be no attempt to realize a competitive equality, but where all interests are regarded as identical." "What has India Contributed to Human Welfare?" in The Athenaeum, Oct 2, 1915. pp 7.

thing'. In real terms, as Ananda Coomaraswamy puts it "the older idealist can remember his youth and can make provisions for the interests and actions of spiritual immaturity".<sup>75</sup>

## Conclusion

Development in the Vedanta is marked by: transformations from one context to another when new faculties are 'awakened'; and perfection of individual faculties within any one context<sup>76</sup>. At the awakening in a new context the previous perception, marked by a duality, becomes an illusion, a lower reality (maya) and is surmounted by non-duality. When Atman realizes Brahman, all manifestation is maya. Thus the subject perfects and transforms towards a more complete non-dualistic Self.<sup>77</sup>

Development in the Vedanta is not understood as evolution or as 'indefinite progress' which is considered a move toward manifestation, and self-assertion. Instead development is involution from the individual and manifested self to the unmanifested Self, which is Self-realization. This is the destruction of 'gross' characteristics of individuality (even in

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<sup>75</sup> Ananda Coomaraswamy, "What has India Contributed to Human Welfare?" in The Athenaeum, Oct 2, 1915 pp 4.

<sup>76</sup> Perfection of the individual faculties is seen as the self becoming the Self or The 'knower of the field' becoming the 'field'. In metaphysics this is the concept of 'rebirth' which is often mistakenly taken literally in religion.

<sup>77</sup> "He as a subject, draws as many objects as possible into his range, in order to accumulate more than his own limited subjective capacities. The perfected subject becomes the receptacle for all objects." Betty Heimann, Facets of Indian Thought, pp 55.

the realm of gross manifestation because this context has the stages of dreaming and deep sleep) and a transformation toward a universality or the 'person'. Schumacher terms it the transition from 'manipulative knowledge' to 'knowledge of understanding'.

Three principles in the Vedanta are important for environmental sustainability or resolution of the man-nature dualism:

\* Through unity in multiplicity, both in the whole and in each part, and through the 'non-duality' of a single cause, the Hindu doctrine avoids the problems of dualism. "Hinduism does not lose sight of unity; it has a tendency to see unity in diversity in each element of this diversity".<sup>78</sup> The essential identity of the Self (Purusha) is not altered by particular and contingent, substantial modifications (Prakriti). Man, animals, and plant are of the same essence.<sup>79</sup> In other words, all beings are equal by their final end.

\* To know the Self (Atman) is to know the context (Prakriti) or to know the context one must know the Self, which is the essence or essential identity.<sup>80</sup> This is to

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<sup>78</sup> Frithjof Schuon, Spiritual Perspectives, pp 68.

<sup>79</sup> Betty Heimann, "Indian Biology" in Facets of Indian Thought, pp 39.

<sup>80</sup> "All things in the Self and the Self in All."



know diversity as it is to know unity.<sup>81</sup> By restricting the subject of development to the 'Self' and the object of development to a 'unfolding' of all the possibilities of its essential identity, that is by encouraging involution rather than evolution, development is more adaptable (not indifferent, but more independent of substantial modifications) to contexts (time and place).

\* To act in any contingent domain the higher principle informs the lower. Starting from consequences is illogical. The intellect (Buddhi) informs inward sense (ahankara) and outward sense (manas). This is to say that intellectual knowledge informs rational knowledge and sensory knowledge.. By the creation of natural hierarchies that translate into a societal structure based on proportionate rather than competitive equality, the Hindu doctrines maintain the principle of the greater informing the lesser, higher forms of knowledge guiding action. 'No use can be convicted of irrationality of a custom unless its metaphysics can first be shown to be at fault'<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> This diversity extends into epistemology as well. "The West has gone through many stages or forms of knowledge which are more or less independent among themselves .. Each of these attitudes has been accepted as the foremost for one period or another... India on the other hand, has never thought in distinct independent steps, but in radiations from a productive center. All of them are simultaneously valid and all can equally be traced back to their common nucleus [intellectual knowledge]." Betty Heimann pp 64

<sup>82</sup> Ananda Coomaraswamy, The Religious Basis of the Forms of Indian Society, pp 2

The Hindu doctrine describes Atman as made up of 'Being', 'Consciousness', and 'Bliss' (Sat, Chit, and Ananda). Its view is that the Being who knows or realizes (subject of development) all its own possibilities (context of development) transcends Being. It is assumed that subject and context are merely instrumental creations in a temporary and relative sphere for bringing about change in pursuit of the higher Self. In the pre- or post-empirical stages the common substance from which subject and object emanate include both possibilities.<sup>83</sup> Thus the goal of every action is to rediscover the unity that existed before the action.<sup>84</sup>

The dichotomy between man and nature is not bridged by treating only specific subject-object relationships, but also by tracing the single cause that is the 'Self'. This respect for 'uniqueness' of existence in Hinduism that defies generalizing is explained by Guenon as follows:

...By reaching things in their essence, we 'realize them, in all the force of that word, as states or modalities of our own being; and if the idea, in the measure in which it is true and adequate, shares in the nature of the thing, it is because conversely, the thing itself shares also in the nature of the idea. Fundamentally there are not two separate and radically different worlds, as modern philosophy suggests when it qualifies them with the names of 'subjective' and 'objective', but ... existence is unique and all that

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<sup>83</sup> "Empirical actuality is only a transitory phase, the middle stage between pre- and post-empirical indistinct unity." Betty Heimann, pp 60.

<sup>84</sup> "All effects, both subjects and objects, are potentially contained in the great reservoir of primary Matter before and after, their actual manifestation. Prakriti is their common efficient and material cause." Betty Heimann, pp 59.

it contains is but a manifestation, in multiple modes, of one and the same principle, which is Universal Being.<sup>85</sup>

Hinduism solves the problem of dichotomies by creating a natural order of beings that parallel the natural growth in knowledge or consciousness of beings. So that there is always present the higher principle to inform the lower. The natural system is a macrocosm modelled on the microcosm that resembles a conscious living organism -- a 'Self' in which nature and man are not apart but structured in a way that the contemplative or intellectual is always prior to the rational and empirical.

Traditional doctrines such as the Vedanta are accumulated wisdom. They embody the essence and not substance of historical events that cannot be verified in relative and contingent domains. In fact it is pointless providing evidence on the substance of doctrines if one is applying them in their essence. And it is precisely their essence that, I suggest, is relevant to planning for environmental sustainability.

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<sup>85</sup> Rene Guenon, Introduction to the Study of Hindu Doctrines, pp 245.

## CONCLUSION

In planning for environmental sustainability there is a need to resolve the man-nature dualism, but it cannot be done with strategies framed in the modern worldview. In the framework of the modern worldview planning action, at best bridges man and nature through strategies that either enforce man's adaptation to nature or man's adaptation of nature to man. I have shown that these strategies, in addressing partial realities of the environmental crisis, undermine diversity through uniformity that is inevitable in the process of "bridging". Uniformity adversely affects, not only geological and biological diversity in nature other than man, but also the intellectual nature of man which is self-consciousness or identity. In other words these strategies fuel the crisis of identity in man. I have shown that the crisis of identity reinforces the man-nature dichotomy by dissociating man from the context of the ill-effects of his own action. Therefore a strategy framed in the modern worldview that purports to be a curative solution of the environmental crisis is not necessarily a preventive one. If a solution to the environmental crisis is to be sustainable it must be preventive.

For a solution of the environmental crisis to be preventive, I have shown that, it must unite cause and effect of human action. In order to unite cause and effect, first one must perceive them in their total reality and second one must have the conceptual tools to unite them. The definition, in the modern worldview, of man as a rational and sensory being and nature as

"totally other" than man results in a partial view of the cause and effect of the environmental crisis. The cause in this view lies in a sequence of events that lead up to rational or sensory man's action, that results in ill-effects in the context of nature. Solutions therefore bridge cause and effect as rational or sensory man and nature outside of man.

Man is however, more than a rational or sensory being, and I have shown that the cause of the crisis lies in the fact that his actions are not informed by a deeper consciousness of the context of its effects. The deeper consciousness, we have seen derives from man's intellectual status. In other words the dissociation between man's action and his consciousness of their ill-effects is nothing but a dichotomy between rational or sensory man and his intellectual self. Therefore to unite cause and effect we need to address not only the dichotomy between rational or sensory man and nature, but also the dichotomy between rational or sensory man and intellectual man. This requires a non-dualistic framework such as the one offered by the traditional worldview.

While intellectual knowledge is invalidated in the modern worldview, on which much of planning for sustainability is based, it is an integral part of the traditional worldview in addition to the rational and sensory domains. In contrast therefore, to the modern worldview, the traditional worldview offers a framework in which it is possible, not only to bridge, but to dissolve the man-nature dualism.

In this view environmental sustainability is the realization of nature in the intellectual status of man. The intellectual status is the complete Self -- the actor that knows the effects of his action because he identifies with the context of those effects. In other words the Self as the cause of an action is also the consequence of that action. The dichotomy between man and nature is not "bridged" by treating subject-object relationships, but "dissolved" by knowing their unifying principle, which is the Self.

The Vedanta is but one example of a Tradition in its essence. There is scholarly evidence to show that there are other Traditions that provide a similar perception of reality, equally relevant to planners interested in applying the traditional worldview to develop an alternative framework for dealing with the environmental crisis. These Traditions are associated with religions, but not restricted to them, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. They take many "forms" but are the same in essence.

The various forms that are specially suited to different mental conditions and different circumstances of time and place are merely expressions of one and the same truth; but this fundamental unity beneath apparent multiplicity can be grasped only by those who are able to take up a standpoint which is purely intellectual.<sup>86</sup>

Recognizing this intellectual status of man is thus, fundamental to devising a framework for planning action that is not only global in its scope, but embodies diversity in its essence.

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<sup>86</sup> Rene Guenon, Crisis in the Modern World, pp. 44

## POSTSCRIPT

In this thesis I have framed the environmental crisis as comprising two levels of reality -- the outer and the inner. The more commonly perceived outer reality is conventionally treated by environmental planners through bridging the dichotomy between man and nature. In emphasizing the less recognized aspect of the crisis -- the inner reality, I have argued that to attain environmental sustainability we need to go beyond merely bridging the man-nature dichotomy toward dissolving the dualism itself. As an approach toward a conceptual framework that allows for dissolving this dualism I explored the alternative worldview of Tradition which validates a knowledge structure in which both realities of the environmental crisis are perceivable. Recognition and adoption of such a knowledge structure in today's planning context could potentially provide, not only a more encompassing conceptual framework for dealing with the environmental crisis, but also tools for enabling a sustainable society.

How would this holistic perception of the environmental crisis translate into preventive action in the contemporary context? In other words, how would a planner relate intellectual, rather than rational or sensory, knowledge to action in the public domain in order to achieve environmental sustainability? At this stage I do not intend to provide definitive answers to these questions, but merely to point to a direction.

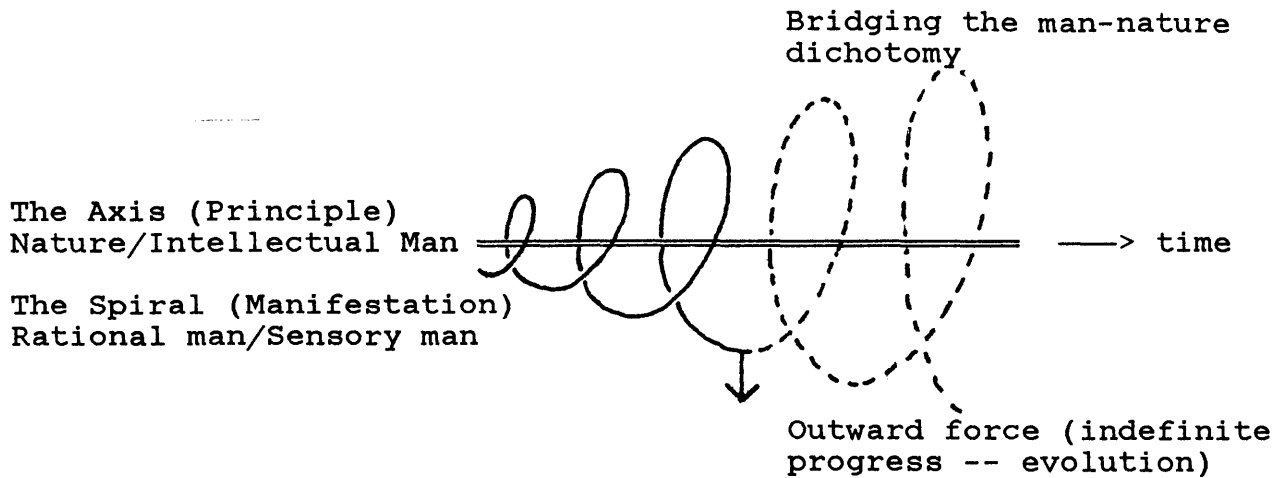


Fig.2 (a) Planning in The Modern Worldview

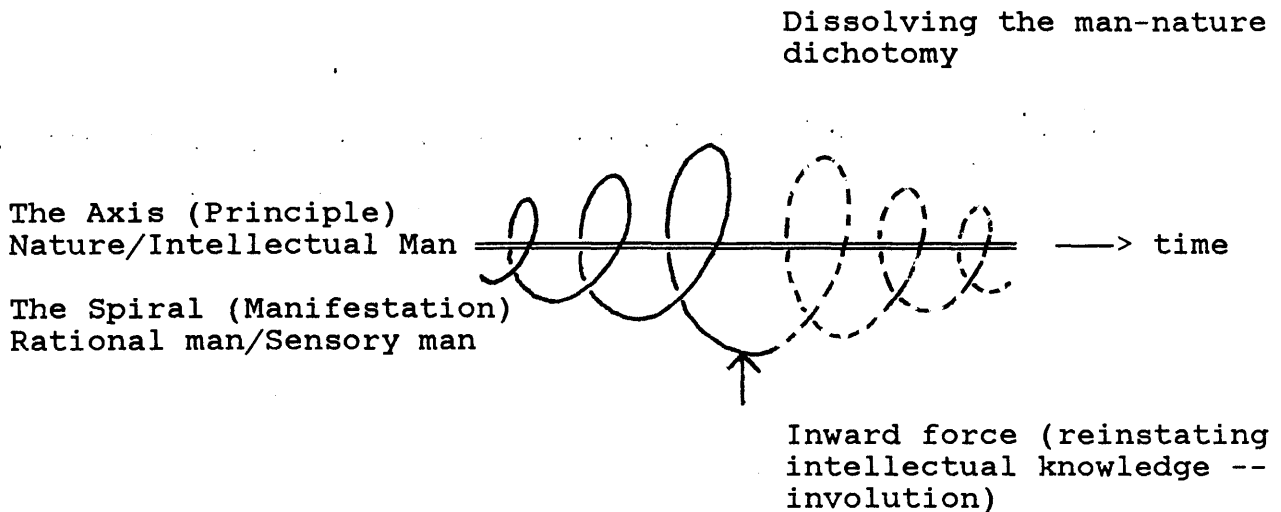


Fig.2 (b) Planning in the Traditional Worldview

The public domain that concerns a planner interested in environmental sustainability is not a spatially and temporally bounded one with specific subject-object relationships, such as those defined by political, economic, and social systems, but an infinite one. Re-instating the realm of intellectual knowledge, in order to perceive this "infinite" public domain in which man



and nature are not apart, is the switch from the modern worldview to one of Tradition. It is like applying a force to a spiral growing outward so as to turn it in toward its axis -- a switch from development as evolution to involution; from bridging the man-nature dichotomy towards dissolving it; from chasing the goal of indefinite progress to the unfolding of the Self (Fig.2). This is to say that planning addresses the inner reality of the environmental crisis by instituting a unity of Being and Knowledge -- the "essence" of Tradition.

Action, therefore figuratively speaking, is not to reverse the process of development or slow it down, but to return to the axis, which is the essence of Tradition, along an alternative path. This implies that the immediate task for the planner is to seek to re-instate this principle through recognition of the domain of intellectual knowledge.

From the perspective of the modern worldview, the realm of intellectual knowledge and the ability to dissolve the man-nature dichotomy in order to achieve sustainability, is based on an alternative belief system. It is based on the belief in the existence of an ultimate or absolute reality and the assumption that this reality is knowable. Given this and the fact that conventional planning institutions operate in the dominant modern worldview, the only way of gaining evidence as to the effectiveness of the traditional worldview is to apply it through alternative institutions.

It would have to be institutions that transcend spatial and

temporal boundaries -- boundaries that are limited to the dualistic nature of sense and reason, such as political and economic, and social. This eliminates the State and the Market whose operational natures are limited to perpetuating dualisms, making them mechanisms that are opposed to diversity. Social movements today come closest to serving as vehicles for achieving environmental sustainability.

These movements however still require a mechanism that is not merely a sensory or rational nature-conscious retaliation to development which eventually perpetuates a dichotomy between environment and development. Instead it must be a mechanism that serves to re-instate the principle of unity of Being and Knowledge. This requires further clarification. I want to make a distinction between the movement that I suggest and the conventional bottom-up approaches which characterize social movements today. At the risk of simplifying the objectives of these conventional movements, I would say that they do not call for modification in the long-term goals of development but merely in the means and immediate objective, such as empowerment and distributing benefits. Which is to say that they seek new paths to achieving indefinite progress that continue to move outward (Fig.2). If the movement that I suggest must avoid the trap of dualisms in planning and development such as top-down versus bottom-up, centralized versus decentralized, deductive versus inductive and so on, the required mechanism must serve as a consciousness-raising process for actors involved at all levels

of development. In other words it must serve to institute an alternative education.

The essence of Tradition -- the principle rather than the manifest form -- provides this mechanism. It dissolves dualisms in development as well as transcends spatial and temporal boundaries. The essence of Tradition is not recognized as a unifying principle because the Modern worldview does not validate the intellectual realm of knowledge which attains to it. It is in this sense that the traditional worldview becomes central to movements such as these.

Today since Tradition continues to be associated with religion. Religion can be made a positive tool for institutionalizing this mechanism. I say "made" because it requires a modification of the modern perception of religion which typically sees it in "form" and not in "essence". Religion at its intellectual level takes as its basis the essence of Tradition. The absence of this realm, not being validated in the modern worldview of development, reduces religion to its ritual and dogmatic aspects; which is to limit it to the spatial and temporal domains of sense and reason. Today there is a search for unity amongst religions in order to prevent them from becoming negative forces in development. However, the unity being sought by religious movements, through "mutual understanding rather than understanding of the total integrity of a Tradition"<sup>87</sup> results in dilution of principles, reflecting the loss of intellectual

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<sup>87</sup> Sayyed Hossein Nasr, Knowledge and the Sacred, pp 280-308

knowledge. On the other hand

Tradition studies religion from the point of view which distinguishes between principle and manifestation, essence and form.... The different religions are like so many languages speaking of that unique Truth as it manifests itself in different worlds according to its inner archetypal possibilities, but the syntax of these languages is not the same.<sup>88</sup>

Tradition sees the unity of religions in the principle. Thus reinstating the domain of intellectual knowledge can serve to unite religions, as well as to institutionalize the essence of Tradition in a global society.

The difference in planning action between the modern and traditional worldviews, in the contemporary context, is that in the former a planner designs mechanisms to bridge a dichotomy in a particular sphere of life, whereas in the latter he employs the mechanism of Tradition in order to dissolve the dichotomy. Which is to say that the planner, in tracing the path of development as a return to the axis of the spiral takes a point of departure at a much more fundamental level (Fig.2). In doing this he is informed by intellectual knowledge acquired from Traditions possibly through the institution of religion.

For example if deforestation for the purpose of constructing a dam to generate electricity is objected to for ecological, economic, social, political, or any other spatially and temporally defined reason, alternatives are sought at a level that provide electricity through other means -- thermal, nuclear, solar, or an "appropriate" invention. Electricity serves as the

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

lowest common denominator in framing the man nature dichotomy. Solutions are not sought at a level that explores an alternative life that could generate significantly different "indigenous" means that are genuinely appropriate to both the outer and inner reality of the environmental crisis. In other words diversity requires a point of departure that is infinitely more fundamental than electricity.

The alternative sources of electricity is an example of applying rational and sensory knowledge that is solely concerned with the indefinite or relative aspect of the world which the Hindus in the Vedanta refer to as maya or the gross manifested state of being. If man's intelligence is made so that he can know with certainty an absolute reality as Traditions contend, then he is not restricted to the indefinite domain of adapting a technology in order to reduce the dichotomy between man and nature. Instead he is provided with a tool to design action at a much more basic point of departure so that man and nature are never apart in the means of living.

Traditional "forms" that served to sustain life in this holistic reality, such as the sciences of ayurveda, alchemy, astrology, etc. and social values such as proportionate equality of caste, continue to exist in partial realities. Their application in this form is constrained, first by competition with modern sciences, and modern values such as equality, democracy, etc. which prove more immediately "effective" and "desirable" in today's life. In comparison to these modern

sciences and values, traditional sciences and values appear primitive and oppressive. Second, traditional sciences and values are dangerous in the absence of their holistic framework. Attempts to apply them have resulted in pseudo-sciences, dogmatism, and extremism.

There appears no way of proving that traditional sciences and values will indeed be more sustainable in the absence of the holistic conditions in which they initially developed. Therefore now that modern living is environmentally non-sustainable, a planner cannot turn to these sciences and social values in search of appropriate solutions without first re-instating the "essence" of Tradition.

There are many barriers today to the realization of the potential diversity of the traditional worldview. The root of these barriers are the assumptions and presupposition of dualisms in the modern worldview such as nature as "totally other" than man, that have come to be institutionalized in processes of development. Therefore if a planner's objective is environmental sustainability, he needs to de-institutionalize these basic assumptions and presuppositions of the modern worldview and re-institutionalize the domain of intellectual knowledge. This will have to be a movement in civil society adopting a non-dualistic worldview such as the one offered by Tradition.

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