



### **EXTRACT 2 – The living spirit of nature**

I am *mana*, the sacred universal force that Melanesians see bringing vitality to people, animals, plants and objects. On Turtle Island I am the *Wakan tanka* of the peoples of Dakota, *orenda* of the Iroquois, *manitou* of the Algonquian people.

I am also the *viriditas* described by the twelfth-century German philosopher Hildegard von Bingen, a concept of the creative power of life drawn from the Latin words for “green” and “truth”.

I am her vision of freshness, vitality, fertility, fecundity, fruitfulness, verdure and growth, of nature-given spiritual and physical health.

I am her “most honoured Greening Force”, who “lights up, in shining serenity, within a wheel that earthly excellence fails to comprehend”.\*

I am *nommo*, the magical and spiritual energy that West Africans traditionally understand to animate human beings and which finds its expression through your spoken word, the sound of your drums, the laughter of your throat, your poems and your songs.

I am the living spirit of nature *as it emerges in you*, filtered by the collective mind of the human species. I am the collective realisation by humankind of the fact that you belong

to nature, that nature manifests itself within you, and I am the collective understanding of humankind that this belonging to a wider web of organic being is of great importance.

I am also the human grasping of the multi-dimensional interconnectedness of this organic web of life and of the fact that, despite a bewildering complexity that is well nigh impossible for the human brain to chart and comprehend, this interconnectedness represents harmony.

I am therefore the human understanding that you are manifestations of an intrinsically harmonious cosmic nature. From the mightiest macrocosm to the most humble microcosm, our universe is structured with pattern. The relationship between the diameter of a circle and its circumference remains the same, whether the circle is a billion miles wide or too small to be registered by the human eye. Cells divide, crystals form, fractals spiral and repeat with expanding or evolving symmetry.

There is a *rightness* here, a rightness which underlies the structure of every galaxy, the shaping of every cloud, which is present within every leaf of every plant, every cell of every animal, every electric pulse within the human brain.

I am a sense of that rightness. Furthermore, this ability of the human mind to sense rightness *is itself part of the rightness*.

It is important to understand that although this *sense* of rightness is a human quality, the *rightness* itself does not originate in the human mind or in human culture. And anything which is created by humanity without drawing on this sense of rightness is liable to act as an impediment to rightness, whatever claims are made to the contrary.

As Mercury and Hermes I am direct communication with rightness, a conduit, a direct path. I am that *unmediated* understanding of right and wrong which is independent of all law and dogma laid down by human beings. I am your sense of natural justice and of natural harmony. I am the *gnosis* in your heart.

I am the sense of connection that completely bypasses organised religion and all the cumbersome rules and rituals it serves up to the uninspired. I am the inner shining of universal truth rather than the outer light-show of particular convention.

I am the human inebriation with the poetry of the harmonious living cosmos.

When I am Khidr, in the Muslim world, I stand in contrast to Moses, with whom I embarked on that famous journey to the rock. Moses is a prophet charged with revealing a *shari'a* or religious law. But, as Khidr, I discover a secret mystic truth, a *haqiqa*, which is superior to *shari'a*. I am Moses' spiritual guide and I represent the esoteric, which is freed from the deadening exoteric superficiality of literal religion.

Among Sufis, an *Uwaisi* is one who takes "the third path" to spiritual knowledge which provides direct access to *ghayb*, the mysterious unseen. Like the great medieval

Andalusian master Ibn 'Arabī, such a person has not been initiated by humans but by the mantle of Khidr. An Uwaisi has received direct illumination.

When you allow this illumination to shine right through you, it scorches away the shadows not just of the inferior laws imposed on you from external human society, but also the unlit parts of your own character.

With all my talk of fertility and life energy, you might imagine that the raw, vital, instinctive force of human physical existence naturally manifests the essence of humanity. From this perspective, anything you feel the urge to do, any behaviour which appeals to you on an unthinking level, would be acceptable.

And yet, that is clearly no way for a human being to live! Without the magical rightness of nommo, you are little more than a zombie.

Just as I am your consciousness of human belonging to organic nature, so I am also your consciousness of the nature of humanity and your consciousness that the nature of humanity embraces consciousness.

Although human beings are animals, they have, like all animals, their own characteristics. And a main characteristic of human beings is that you do not behave merely according to instinct – or maybe, perhaps, that your instinct is not to behave merely in a biologically pre-determined fashion.

To try and embrace nature within yourselves while ignoring the element of consciousness is in fact to wilfully deny your own nature. An innate sense of rightness forms part of human nature and must be fully expressed and acted upon by anyone who would fulfil their whole human potential.

The Ancient Hebrews made an important distinction between legitimate and illegitimate prophecy. They took no notice of any “prophet” who went into a trance and could not afterwards remember what he had said while in that state, as to them he had made himself absent from his own body and allowed any kind of vileness and untruth to emerge. They only took seriously a prophet who remained in control of his own mind throughout the process, who consciously used his full humanity and did not sink down to a level that was less than that.

The Indigenous Australian everywhen, which as we have seen is known as *Jukurra* by the Warlpiri people, is an all-embracing concept that provides rules for living, a moral code, as well as rules for interacting with the natural environment.

This is the universal sacred law, natural law, the sumak kawsay, the *right way to live* that is whispered to us at twilight by the green-clad Fair Folk and which maintains the harmony of humanity with birds, beasts, rivers, mountains and the fabric of being.

Yes, we must always remember that we are part of nature. But we must also always remember that we are human and we must participate in nature with the consciousness that is proper to our humanity.

So it is that when I ride out as St George, I slay the dragon.

For Christians, the image represents the victory of their religion over pagan ways, but as ever they have wilfully misunderstood.

*“Yes, I am St George, and I’m the Green Man  
And I will fight evil wherever I can.”*

These lines from the Northamptonshire Mummers Play, collected by the poet John Clare, sum it up nicely.

For the Ancient Egyptians, “to do green things” meant doing good, while “to do red things” meant doing evil. I do not represent nature “red in tooth and claw”, the mere physicality of life, but nature as greenness, as *viriditas*, as a physicality inspired by principle, by structure, by symbiosis, by harmony, by rightness.

Mercurial gods are known for fighting dragons and evil spirits, often using their staff as a weapon. Even as Khidr I am known to fight dragons or help others to do so. And don’t forget the Armenian connection between John the Baptist, or Surb Karapet, and dragon-slaying Vahagn.

The dragon is your fear, your insecurity, your jealousy, your self-importance, your weakness, your selfishness, your confinement within a purely individual reality.

I bring you the inspiration to slay that dragon and discover the freedom and empowerment of participating in the natural rightness of the universe.

\* Hildegard von Bingen, *Causae et Curae*

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