"Human Intercourse"
"Intercourse with Nature" and "Intercourse with the Other"

This overview has been produced partially in support of the proposed

Introduction
"Intercourse with the Other"
"Human Intercourse" and "Intercourse with Nature"

Introduction

Human intercourse has been considered, from a wide variety of angles, by several disciplines, including literary studies, sociology, linguistics and philosophy. Recent work in the fields of intellectual history, historical semantics, the history of philosophy and the history of civilization can be seen as providing a set of complementary approaches for investigating the history of human intercourse.

To the extent that intercourse by humans requires an Other with which to engage, the table presented in the following section on "Intercourse with the Other" provides a tentative schema within which to indicate various forms of encounter. This notably includes links on to the subsequent section combining citations regarding "Human Intercourse" and "Intercourse with Nature".

The original intention was to identify citations regarding modes of "intercourse with the divine", as a complement to these citations on "human intercourse" and "intercourse with nature". Although many relevant citations are to be found in the literature on mysticism, the most insightful do not necessarily use the term "intercourse" -- although this is indeed a very common metaphor in some mystical poetry. The project was therefore generalized to include intercourse with various forms of "other" -- distinct from purely "human intercourse" and from "intercourse with nature". Since this is a larger challenge, the focus in the table below is on identifying domains in which such distinct forms of intercourse are to be found -- without seeking supporting citations.

It is especially relevant to note that what is essential to any of the forms of intercourse to which pointers are offered (notably in the table) is the subjective dimension of the experience. Its nature may be questioned, denied, or reframed within a preferred explanatory framework, but this may do little to change the potentially transformative learning consequences of that intercourse.

"Intercourse with the Other"

The challenge is to identify the forms of "other" with which people believe they may be obliged to enter into some form of intercourse, typically framed as dialogue. It is appropriate to note that:

- the 1st Interdisciplinary Conference on "The Other" (University of Alberta, 2002) focused only on literature, linguistics, folklore, language teaching, and translation
- a distinct "ETO" series, the International Conference on "Engaging The Other" (Dearborn MI, 2006 and 2007) proposes a universal, cross-cultural perspective to promote wider public dialogue about images of "Us and Them".

Links are provided below to some definitions of other and the associated notion of othering. Aspects of "The Other" may also be explored in terms of analytical psychology's concept of the Shadow, following Carl Gustav Jung [more].

A strong point to be made is that many of the cells in the table are (to some people) associated with existentially challenging forms of intercourse -- whether framed as "Malevolent" or "Benevolent". The principal point to be made is that there are distinct constituencies that attach significance to the modes of intercourse associated with each cell in the table -- perhaps with little regard to the others. The left hand column endeavours to cluster these modes in a useful way. The contents of the table are very tentative.

The intention is to highlight abnormal forms of intercourse offering an existential challenge to habitual ways of being -- and
possibly to transformative learning. Clearly some would prefer to redistribute items within the table:

- to exclude some modes as altogether inappropriate;
- to merge the "Neutral" with the "Benevolent", especially to the extent that the latter is understood to be "transcendental" -- and that experience of the "Malevolent" is held to be a (possibly illusory) consequence of failing to comprehend this;
- to frame the "Malevolent" positively and the "Benevolent" negatively.

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<tr>
<th>Forms of intercourse with the Other</th>
<th>&quot;Malevolent&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;Benevolent&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;Neutral&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mode of intercourse</strong></td>
<td>Perceived as destructive, repellent or threatening</td>
<td>Perceived as constructive, attractive or enhancing</td>
<td>(Transcendental)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer</td>
<td>false deities (of other religions)</td>
<td>divinity of preferred faith (God, Allah, etc)</td>
<td>Tao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communion, ritual Mysticism</td>
<td>&quot;wrathful deities&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;peaceful deities&quot;</td>
<td>gnosticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>infidels (believers of other faiths)</td>
<td>community of the faithful (Ummah)</td>
<td>pantheism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esotericism, occult</td>
<td>&quot;black magic&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;white magic&quot;</td>
<td>agnosticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possession (Shamanic Exorcism, Mediumship, Channelling)</td>
<td>demons</td>
<td>angels / saints</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilgrimage (spirit of place)</td>
<td>&quot;bad place&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;holy place&quot;</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Alien encounter</td>
<td>abduction (by UFOs)</td>
<td>(channelled) advice</td>
<td>xenoanthropology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superstition, risk management, gambling</td>
<td>auspicious circumstances, &quot;bad luck&quot;</td>
<td>auspicious circumstances, &quot;good luck&quot;</td>
<td>SETI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management of: threat, opposition, vigilance, security</td>
<td>enemies, terrorists, criminals, bandits</td>
<td>competition, negotiation, peace-making</td>
<td>uncertainty (principle)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme sport</td>
<td>violent sport</td>
<td>challenging sport</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbol, emblem, fetish, memorial</td>
<td>warning, threat, constraint</td>
<td>care (Red Cross/Crescent), hope, spiritual integration</td>
<td>Tao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secrecy</td>
<td>&quot;dirty secrets&quot;</td>
<td>incommunicable secrets</td>
<td>&quot;unsaid&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inhabitual experience</td>
<td>double bind (&quot;catch 22&quot;), &quot;kafkaesque&quot;</td>
<td>serendipity</td>
<td>paradox, surreal, coincidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>destructive brainwashing, indoctrination</td>
<td>education, learning</td>
<td>anomaly research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>deprived, significantly challenged (mentally, physically, etc)</td>
<td>wealthy, significantly endowed (mentally, physically, etc)</td>
<td>detachment, indifference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>deprived (&quot;ethical impurity&quot;, &quot;spiritual impurity&quot;, significantly challenged (morally, etc)</td>
<td>significantly endowed (charisma, etc)</td>
<td>avoidance</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mortality, death, accident, tragedy, near-death experience</td>
<td>fatal</td>
<td>banality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research (notably on non-human scales, &quot;supernatural&quot;)</td>
<td>irresponsible science (&quot;Dr Strangelove&quot;)</td>
<td>responsible science (&quot;Albert Schweitzer&quot;)</td>
<td>unknown, unexplained</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>incompatible modes of knowing</td>
<td>complementary modes of knowing</td>
<td>very large or very small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing (otherwise)</td>
<td>unacceptable, dangerous, outdated modes of knowing</td>
<td>ignorance, derangement</td>
<td>dreaming, psychedelic experience</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ignorance, derangement</td>
<td>insight, wisdom, revelation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animals</td>
<td>dangerous wild animals, pests (mosquitos, flies, slugs, etc)</td>
<td>talking to pets, etc</td>
<td>hands-on nature parks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plants</td>
<td>poisonous foodstuffs, weeds</td>
<td>talking to plants, etc</td>
<td>botanical gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercourse with Nature</td>
<td>hurricanes, floods, landslides, lightning, wildfire, sandstorms</td>
<td>idyllic settings</td>
<td>communion with nature, wilderness area, spiritual ecology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Human Intercourse&quot;</td>
<td>hostility, antipathy, enmity, xenophobia, perversions, cruelty, torture, bestiality, necrophilia</td>
<td>empathy, friendship, affinity, loving, intimacy, tenderness, emotional looping</td>
<td>detachment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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"Human Intercourse" and "Intercourse with Nature"

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<td>Bahá’í</td>
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Physicians of the medieval East attached great importance to **intercourse with nature**. To relieve physical and mental fatigue, they recommended that their patients walk in the garden and inhale the scents of flowers and herbs. Today, this is called aromatherapy. Patients were also advised to listen to the singing of birds and the bubbling of a brook or fountain, or to look at a picturesque landscape.

**Simon L. Altmann, *The New Enemies of Rationalism* (2003):**

Once this new view of Hume's causality is taken, enormously important ideas follow that fundamentally clarify rational thinking. The principles of causality, sufficient reason, and regularity or continuity are no longer enshrined in some realm of metaphysical principles: they are the result of our **intercourse with nature** (or at least such nature as we can perceive by means of our rational and perceptive systems). But the nature that has moulded such principles in our rational system is entirely macroscopic.

No wonder that when the microworld is studied, absurd results arise if principles that have been tailored in a different environment are still applied without careful 'editing'.


But the more ancient Greeks (whose writings have perished) held a more prudent mean, between the arrogance of dogmatism, and the despair of skepticism; and though too frequently intermingling complaints and indignation at the difficulty of inquiry, and the obscurity of things, and champing, as it were, the bit, have still persisted in pressing their point, and pursuing their **intercourse with nature**: thinking, as it seems, that the better method was not to dispute upon the very point of the possibility of any thing being known, but to put it to the test of experience. Yet they themselves, by only employing the power of the understanding, have not adopted a fixed rule, but have laid their whole stress upon intense meditation, and a continual exercise and perpetual agitation of the mind.


It is a perception of reality that can be discovered in the earliest records of civilization and that has been cultivated for several millennia by every one of the great religious traditions of humanity's past. Its enduring achievements in law, the fine arts, and the civilizing of **human intercourse** are what give substance and meaning to history. In one form or another its promptings are a daily influence in the lives of most people on earth and, as events around the world today dramatically show, the longings it awakens are both inextinguishable and incalculably potent.

**Tala Bar, *Beauty and the Beast* (2005):**

The people taking part in the ritual took animals' shape to symbolize the various forces of Nature, but it was a dress-up appearance: no woman actually mated with an animal but with its human representative. But it is quite possible that during the act, the people involved would identify deeply with the symbols they represented. This coupling of humans with Nature was not only physical or sexual, but also a spiritual mating, expressing humans' mental **intercourse with nature**.

**Madeleine Bunting, *Engagement with Nature: We need an attentiveness to nature to understand our humanity. Guardian, 30 July 2007***

It doesn't quite fit to call it "nature writing", because what makes these books so compelling -- and important -- is that they put centre stage the interconnections between nature and human beings....The point is that nature is no longer something to be studied from a position of scientific detachment, but an experience, a relationship in which human beings are as much a part of nature as any so called wildlife... "a really significant element in ascribing beauty to a thing lies not within itself but in the quality of our attention to it" (Mark Cocker)... We need the attentiveness to nature to understand our humanity, and of how we fit, as just one species, into a vast reach of space and time.

Theology and science, it must be said, will not mingle much better than oil and water, and your devout scientist and devout Nature student lives in two separate compartments of his being at different times. **Intercourse with nature** -- I mean intellectual intercourse, not merely the emotional intercourse of the sailor or explorer or farmer-- tends to beget a habit of mind the farthest possible removed from the myth-making, the vision-seeing, the voice-hearing habit and temper. In all matters relating to the visible, concrete universe it substitutes broad daylight for twilight; it supplants fear with curiosity; it overthrows superstition with fact; it blights credulity with the frost of skepticism.

In **intercourse with Nature** you are dealing with things at first hand, and you get a rule, a standard, that serves you through life. You are dealing with primal sanities, primal honesties, primal attractions...

**Contrariness; Nerves And Common Sense**, 1925:

If we combat another man's resistance, it only increases his tension. No matter how wrong he may be, and how right we are, meeting resistance with resistance only breeds trouble. Two minds can act and react upon one another in that way until they come to a lock which not only makes lasting enemies of those who should have been and could be always friends, but the contention locks up strain in each man's brain which can never be removed without pain, and a new awakening to the common sense of **human intercourse**... In dealing with the contrary minded, the "contrary method" works so long as it is not discovered; and the danger of its being discovered is always imminent. The upright, direct method is according to the honorable laws of **human intercourse**, and brings always better results in the end, even though there may be some immediate failures in the process.

Allen Carlson, *Heyd and Newman on the aesthetic appreciation of nature*

It may well be that **all sorts** of other perspectives, garnered through one's personal **intercourse with nature** and structured by non-scientific aspects on one's culture may be more "fruitful" in generating aesthetic pleasure, insight or depth (Aesthetic Appreciation and the Many Stories about Nature. *British Journal of Aesthetics* 41 (2001) pp. 125-37).

Warren Colman, *Tyannical Omnipotence in the Archetypal Father* (Journal of Analytical Psychology, 2000, 45):

This kind of archetypal characterization is also prevalent in those who are worried by the increasing domination of science and technology in the modern world. The significance of the name in the 'Gaia' hypothesis speaks for itself. It is also interesting that the growing awareness of the many ecological threats to our planet has coincided with the development of feminism. Technology may then be seen as a tool of masculine domination in which **intercourse with nature** has become rape and plunder and the wounded earth cries out against the damage being done to her. Such fantasies and anxieties are clearly represented in the spate of 'apocalypse' style movies of the 1980s and early 1990s.


Over the five discourses, we learn that the true adept abandons 'human intercourse' and instead opts to only have intercourse with the spirits of the air, water, earth and fire. The count claims that many children have come forth as a result of such encounters.


Nature love as Emerson knew it, and as Wordsworth knew it, and as any of the choice spirits of our time has known it, has distinctly a religious value ... [it has that because] in **intercourse with nature** you are dealing with things at first hand, and you get a rule, a standard, that serves you through life. You are dealing with primal sanities, primal honesties, primal attraction, you are touching at least the hem of the garment with which the infinite is clothed.

**Albert Einstein**:

Nature has given us many blessings. If you hold a good **intercourse with nature**, it would teach you how to live.

**Ralph Waldo Emerson**:

And we have records of the brilliant society that Edinburgh boasted in the first decade of this century. Such societies are possible only in great cities, and are the compensation which these can make to their dwellers for depriving them of the free **intercourse with nature**. Every scholar is surrounded by wiser men than he - if they cannot write as well. (*The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* - Volume VII - Society and Solitude, 1870)

**Jud Evans, Categories and Sets**:
I ask simply this - is the toll in human lives and misery that the negative aspect of abstractionism engenders worth it? Would we not be better informing our schoolchildren, perhaps during their language or sociology lessons, that whilst the use of abstractions is an essential part of being human, we should see them for what they are - as essential tools, verbal shortcuts, periphrastic avoidance strategies, to aid human intercourse, and that we should not be lulled into a false sense that these human ideas of descriptive summation [the engrossment of complicated concepts in a few simple abstractions]

**Eric Gans, *La mondialisation* (Chronicles of Love and Resentment, 227, 3 February 2001):**

Rousseau is the patron of those who increasingly communicate about the evils of increased communication. For Rousseau, human intercourse inevitably spreads the contagion of mimetic desire, generating the vanity and oppression endemic to "society." His political solution for the modern world reflects this mistrust of exchange. One seeks in vain in *The Social Contract* any reference to debate or dialogue, even in the legislative system, which devolves upon a--singular or collective--"legislator," just as sovereignty is the province of the "sovereign" who expresses the "general will."


Human Settlements have grown and developed in the twentieth century as a direct consequence of the industrial enterprise of the 18th and 19th centuries, leading to the unregulated growth of urban agglomerations. In this process towns and cities have changed in nature to become showcases for technological advance, generally at the cost of civilised human intercourse. An important consequence of this has been the unchecked exploitation of natural resources resulting in a global environmental crisis which threatens the survival of the human race.

**Ben Goertz, *Subself Dynamics* (From Complexity to Creativity: Computational Models of Evolutionary, Autopoietic and Cognitive Dynamics, Plenum Press, 1997):**

From this analysis one might conclude that it is only possible to enter into an I-You relationship with another intelligence -- and not with an inanimate object, say, a flower, or a personal computer. But this would be mistaken. The external world also possesses an emergent, self-unfolding structure that can be grasped as a whole. Buber recognizes this in his passage on Goethe:

> How beautiful and legitimate the full I of Goethe sounds! It is the I of pure intercourse with nature. Nature yields to it and speaks ceaselessly with it; she reveals her mysteries to it and yet does not betray her mystery. It believes in her and says to the role: "So it is You" -- and at once shares the same actuality with the rose.

Nature reveals its mysteries to Goethe -- i.e., he paid it careful enough attention to get to know it as an It; as a dynamic, structured, changing system full of intricate details. And this effort was repaid by a glimpse at the whole, by a view of nature as You.

This sort of experience, reported by Goethe, was commonplace in many past cultures. Communion with nature as a You was, in "primitive" cultures, understood as communion with God. This experience came almost automatically to individuals who lived in nature every day, and who were raised to relate to nature as a thinking being rather than as an inert physical "environment." This is the sad aspect of current political disputes about environmental issues. Businessmen are asked to respect nature on abstract moral grounds. But such respect can never be genuine, because it comes out of an I-It relationship with nature, rather than an I-You relationship. Having lost the I-You relationship with nature, we have, as a society, lost our fundamental motivation for preserving and nurturing the natural world.

**Nadine Gordimer, *Living through that ’last resort.’ - protection of human rights* (UN Chronicle, Winter 1998):**

Everyone who ponders the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* inevitably will give particular attention to those articles that pertain to circumstances with which he or she is personally involved.... Article 26 is fundamental to Article 19: its Clauses 1 and 2 - "Everyone has the right to education", and "Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality". Freedom of expression is an empty phrase unless education equips every individual with freedom of the word, the ability to read and write. No other form of expression, oral or visual, can compensate for deprivation of these basic skills in human intercourse, understanding and the development of the intellect. Although the right to literacy surely is implied in Article 26, it is not specifically named; I believe it ought to be. This Article brings the hope of justice to the millions excluded--by ignorance, writer is no fault of their own - from participation and benefit in the making of our world.

**Mark Harris, *Sexuality is a Rock: The World of Human Intercourse is a Hard Place* (Ruminations on the Report of the Theological Committee of the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church), 2003:**

My sense is the Report confuses sexuality, as a general fact of the human condition, with human sexual intercourse (a specific form of human intercourse), which can be (but may not be) a gift. All forms of human intercourse are relational (intercourse...
being the operant concept here), and all forms of human intercourse are intentional (human being the operant concept.) We humans are to be distinguished in part by the intentionality of our intercourse - our relationships. We do not always exercise that intentionality, but when we do there arise all sorts of moral questions. Included among them are all the questions about gift giving.

We give or receive in rather specific ways in sexual intercourse, just as we do in other forms of intercourse, and we often force or take with ways just as specific. And it is here, in the relational questions about giving and receiving, forcing and taking, that we begin to develop rules of behavior, moral constructs and begin to wonder about God's affirmation of particular actions.

And what we are talking about here is relational behavior. human intercourse in all its forms is a hard place. It is a hard place in which to make universal claims for moral right and wrong. One person's murder is another's justifiable homicide. One person's loving care is another's smothering control. One person's delight in taking command of intercourse is another's coerced shame.

Elizabeth Johann, *What We Can Learn from History: The Present Role of Commons in Managing the Environment*. (Presented at "Building the European Commons: From Open Fields to Open Source," European Regional Meeting of the International Association for the Study of Common Property (IASC), Brescia, 2006):

The structure of commons is still evident and can be illustrated by the following strong points: social fairness, considerable reduction of the misuse of power by adequate internal rules, economic principles, which importance are increasingly recognized namely concerning the priority of subsistence compared to profitability, and the priority of local influencing factors compared to global ones. The model is based on the participatory intercourse with nature and makes harmful impacts more difficult.


Kolakowski undertakes a philosophy of culture which extends to all realms of human intercourse--intellectual, artistic, scientific, and emotional. *(Anglican Theological Review)*

Piotr Kropotkin, *Fields, Factories and Workshops Tomorrow* (1912):

Humanity perceives that there is no advantage for the community in riveting a human being for all his life to a given spot, in a workshop or a mine; no gain in depriving him of such work as would bring him into free intercourse with nature, make of him a conscious part of the grand whole, a partner in the highest enjoyments of science and art, of free work and creation.


However, thinking of nature solely or chiefly as an aesthetic scene to be observed is unnecessarily limiting. Regarding natural phenomena as material for detached, pictorial observation overlooks the aesthetic features revealed only through our active intercourse with nature. In what follows, I outline an active aesthetic of nature appreciation in particular, a series of physical responses to nature which yield a spectrum of aesthetic possibilities. Our active relationship toward nature is expressible by the relevant prepositions, as action can be in or into nature, against or with nature.

Charles Lane, *Life in the Woods* *(The Dial, April 1844)*:

Every sense in the primitive forester's frame is integrally preserved. He holds an immediate intercourse with nature herself, or at least by his unerring senses and the undeviating objects in nature, he is enabled intuitively to read off the living volume as it lies open and unpolluted before him. By mere sight and smell, he is at once inducted into a knowledge of the essential properties of plants, and can without experience, foretell their operations on the human system, as unerringly as the native sheep can select its suitable food, or the untamed wood-dove, can without schooling, essay a winged journey

**Quotations M-Z**

*Karl Marx*:

Marx noted that humans must carry on a continuous intercourse with nature or perish. This intercourse not only alters nature but alters humans too. Under capitalism alienation of humans from their labor and from nature is one in the same. The system turns labor and nature into commodities, exploiting both... Capitalism is taking us to the brink of a world-wide crisis of agriculture that will threaten tens of millions with starvation. The growing "metabolic rift" as Marx called the intercourse between society and nature, is a basic contradiction that capitalism can't overcome. Human survival depends upon overcoming this rift. *(John Bachtell, *Life in the balance: Capitalism at war with nature and humanity*, 2002)*

Marx defines production with respect to the intercourse with nature and other human beings (Marx, 1978a, pp. 149-150).

Marxism not only posits significant social change as men make their history, but Marx insists that man himself, literally his physical senses, is subject to alteration. In his intercourse with nature, man changes nature and himself. Marx writes, "The
human intercourse today is the result of centuries of limitation. In written media, it's fairly easy to conceal one's identity, say,
when sending a message (anonymity); fairly hard for that message to be intercepted (security); fairly hard to misrepresent the creator of the message (authentication); and pretty hard to make unauthorized copies which are impossible to differentiate from the original (intellectual property protection). Social and legal expectations have long been based on these realities. Yet such expectations are being shattered online, meaning that people must take significant steps to preserve anonymity, security, et al.

Friedrich Schiller, On Matthiison's Poems (Translated by John Sigerson, Poet of Freedom Volume II):

Through his intimate intercourse with nature and with classical models, his spirit has been nourished, his taste purified, and his moral grace preserved; his poems are alive with a cheerful, genuine humanity, and the beautiful images of nature are flawlessly reflected in the becalmed clarity of his mind, as in a mirror-smooth pool of water. In every one of his works, we observe a discrimination, a sense of what is fitting, an internal rigor, an unfailing quest for the maximum of beauty. He has already accomplished much, and we might hope, that he has yet to reach his limits.

Marion M Scott, Beethoven the Musician (Beethoven)

To Beethoven himself it appeared that he realized his true being only in music and in the intercourse with nature which was for him an entrance into the unseen world.

Christopher M. Stahnke (NETFUTURE: Technology and Human Responsibility for the Future, April 1996):

There is a natural tension between us and our environment. It is erotic. A good example is a garden, to what degree is it an artifact? I say the garden is the archetypal "natural" way for man to relate to his environment; it is a kind of intercourse with nature that is not unlike love-making. In the sexual act (ideally) we delight in our partner's pleasure and our own, arriving at a miraculous blend of the two. Distinctions break down. To what degree does our current technology enable us to have a playful give and take with our world? I suggest that it leads us to live increasingly in our heads, in fantasies.

Rudolf Steiner, The Balance in the World and Man, Lucifer and Ahriman (1914):

The Greeks had nothing like theology in our modern sense, but were very much closer to the wisdom of Nature and the manifestations of Nature. They approached the wisdom of Nature without theology, and questions and riddles pressed in upon them. Now the breathing process is much more intimately connected with Nature than is the nerve-process. That is why the Greek had such a living feeling of being led on to wisdom by the Sphinx. It is quite different in the modern age when theology has come upon the scene. Man no longer believes that direct intercourse with nature brings him near to the Divine Wisdom of the world, but he sets out to study, to approach it via the nerve-process, not via the breathing and the blood. The search for wisdom has become a nerve-process; modern theology is a nerve-proc

Henry David Thoreau:

How important is a constant intercourse with nature and the contemplation of natural phenomena to the preservation of moral and intellectual health! The discipline of the schools or of business can never impart such serenity to the mind. The philosopher contemplates human affairs as calmly and from as great a remoteness as he does natural phenomena. The ethical philosopher needs the discipline of the natural philosopher. He approaches the study of mankind with great advantages who is accustomed to the study of nature. (Journal 6 May 1851)

The Indian's intercourse with nature is at least such as admits of the greatest independence of each. If he is somewhat of a stranger in her midst, the gardener is too much of a familiar. (Reflections on the Indians and White Settlement From A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, 'Sunday' section, 1849; also Ann Woodlief. Emerson and Thoreau as American Prophets of Eco-wisdom, 1990)

Intercourse with nature was even more necessary to Thoreau than intercourse with books. Intercourse with human beings he thought he did not need, but he was always tramping off to the village for a chat. (The Cambridge History of English and American Literature in 18 Volumes (1907-21). XVI. Early National Literature, Part II; Later National Literature, Part I. X. Thoreau. § 9. Walden.)

After having some business dealings with men, I am occasionally chagrined, and feel as if I had done some wrong, and it is hard to forget the ugly circumstance. I see that such intercourse long continued would make one thoroughly prosaic, hard, and coarse. But the longest intercourse with nature, though in her rudest moods, does not thus harden and make coarse. A hard insensible man whom we liken to a rock is indeed much harder than a rock. From hard, coarse, insensible men with whom I have no sympathy, I go to commune with the rocks, whose hearts are comparatively soft. (1853)

In human intercourse the tragedy begins, not when there is misunderstanding about words, but when silence is not understood.

Paul Tillich, Nature and Sacrament (The Protestant Era):
From the point of view of the magical interpretation of nature, any reality whatsoever may be holy…. To the prophets the holy is primarily a demand. Nothing can be holy apart from the fulfillment of the law. Holiness and purity are brought together. The "unclean" is eliminated from the idea of the holy. To the extent to which this process takes place the original sacramental interpretation of nature disappears. The holy is now transformed into an unconditional demand, transcending any given reality. Nature as such is deprived of its sacred character and becomes profane. Immediate intercourse with nature no longer possesses religious significance. Ritualistic demands are transformed into ethical (and utilitarian) demands. Nevertheless, the sacramental attitude does not lose its power. Indeed, it can never entirely vanish from the consciousness.


Brentano has all the advantage that comes with historical continuity. His doctrine of immanent objectivity goes back to Aristotle and the Schoolmen, and the classification of psychical acts into ideas, judgments, and phenomena of love and hate goes back to Descartes. More than this: he can claim kinship with every psychologist, of whatever school, who has approached his subject from the technically 'empirical' standpoint. For the 'empirical' psychologist means to take mind as he finds it; and like the rest of the world, who are not psychologists, he finds it in use; he finds it actively at work in man's intercourse with nature and with his fellow-man, as well as in his discourse with himself.


Leo Tolstoy, *Life in the Army* (Resurrection, XIII):

Then he had felt the importance of, and had need of intercourse with, nature, and with those who had lived and thought and felt before him -- philosophers and poets.

Vincent van Gogh:

What life I think best, oh, without the least shadow of a doubt it is a life consisting of long years of intercourse with nature in the country… One should start with the conviction that one is in need of intercourse with nature, with the conviction that one cannot lose one's way by taking this road, and that one's course will be straight (Letter from Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh Drenthe, c. 29-2 Oct-Nov 1883)

Thorstein Veblen, *The Divine Right of Nations (The Vested Interests and the Common Man, 1919):

This sinister fact is patent, that the great war has arisen out of a fateful entanglement of national pretensions. And it is a fact scarcely less patent that this fateful status quo ante arose out of the ordinary run of that system of law and custom which has governed human intercourse among civilized nations in our time. The underlying principles of this system of law and custom have continued to govern human intercourse under a new order of material circumstances which has come into effect since these principles were first installed. These enlightened principles that go to make up the modern point of view as regards law and morals are of the eighteenth century, whereas the new order in industry is of the twentieth, and between these two dates lies an interval of unexampled change in the material conditions of life.

Satomi Watanabe, *My Expectation toward the Nature Interface from the Viewpoint of a Natural Environment Formation* (WIN Newsletter):

"Coexistence with Nature" is often discussed these days. In order to attain coexistence with nature, we need to adapt, improve on and innovate human nature toward coexistence. We need to start by improving our capacity for intercourse with nature through continuous communication with nature. We have to create a "naturalistic environment," which will prompt the human being to communicate with nature and to nourish the human sensibility and mind toward coexistence.


... one of the core ideas of the process of European integration has been to conceive of Europe as a community which does not only condition discourse among states but also spills over to the peoples of these states and thus seeks to influence relations among individuals. Take, for example, the classical provisions for free movement of workers. On the one hand they have a de-humanizing element in treating workers as 'factors of production' on par with goods, services and capital. But they are also part of a matrix which prohibits, for example, discrimination on grounds of nationality, and encourages generally a rich network of transnational social transactions. They may thus also be seen as intended not simply to create the optimal conditions for the free movement of factors of production in the Common Market. They also serve, echoing Hermann Cohen, to remove nationality and state affiliation of the individual, so divisive in the past, as the principal referent for transnational human intercourse.
Kenneth Westhues, *The Humanists: From Lineage to Dynasty* (Keynote address at the Eighth Annual Meeting of the Association for Humanist Sociology, Hartford, 1983):

Crucial though they are, these facts of life are not obvious to children nor even to adults. Most people experience too little difference in the course of growing up to recognize the creative power of human intercourse. There is too much constancy in most biographies, and too little self-initiated change. No student answers these questions without gaining a better grasp of how his or her biography connects with history, thus a deeper recognition that very little in our world, least of all our own identities, is understood except as a product of indeterminate, willful human intercourse. Hegel argued in effect that there is nothing in our experience but process, nothing but an intangibility in human intercourse striving to realize itself.


At this stage, religion (magic), art and science were not differentiated. Lacking the means to gain real power over their environment, early humans attempted to obtain their ends by means of magical intercourse with nature, and thus subject it to their will. The attitude of early humans to their spirit-gods and fetishes was quite practical.

William Wordsworth [*intercourse with nature*] ****

In his intercourse with the divine spirit, Wordsworth reports: "I felt, and nothing else; I did not judge / I never thought of judging" ([Prelude] [1805] XI, pp. 237-238).

For Wordsworth, too, virtue is a passion which one feels in the limbs, and which is often renovated and re-impassioned by intercourse with that spirit which "rolls through all things"

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