

may claim his right to defend his livelihood from predation; the hunt saboteur claims the right of the fox to life. Yet, necessarily anthropocentric (the fox has no notion of this right fought on his behalf), the authority of that territory is sourced in human judgement.

From the spiritual perspective of my religion, all life is sacred and equally so. While valuing one life to the detriment of another can be necessarily a part of life's prioritizing, too often such decisions are based on greed and selfishness, on unnecessary personal gratification, most often pompously disguised for the sake of pacification and coercion.

As a Pagan and a priest, however, I would not be protesting the killing of a rabbit in a pharmaceutical lab, a calf in the meat industry, or an innocent citizen in some foreign war on the ethical grounds that life is sacred. Life *is* sacred. The Pagan animistic vision perceives all the world to be imbued with life energy. Where that energy flows, it forms patterns of spirit, each eddy and current finding its own identity, its individual journey, its intention of flow; the cohesion of its being, we might call its "soul" or "consciousness," albeit perhaps far removed from anything we might humanly perceive. As the soul journeys, upon its way it leaves footprints: trails of its creativity, of its physicality and mortality. Every body of water, of bones, fur, or feathers, of bark and sap, every mountain and breath of wind, is an expression of spirit, utterly sacred.

But the argument is brittle. Because I see all life as sacred creativity, I may believe it is wrong to kill unnecessarily; yet any person of any other belief could very easily and quickly disagree.

Where is the universal ethic? Using religious ethics of any tradition—even my own—is of no more use than political or cultural values; another rational argument can just tear it apart.

Abandoning religious tenets, the secular base of rights, legalities, and instinct, the quest brings us to personal responsibility upon yet another tack: sustainable relationship is a concept increasingly raised.

Most often presented in terms of cause and effect, this perspective declares that if we behave in a certain way we have more chance of maintaining the tenability of a situation. With reference to environmentalism, the ideas most widely used are human-centred; we must not destroy the rainforests because in doing so we would negatively affect our own survival through global warming and loss of natural resources for medicine and technologies. Where human behaviour is addressed to ensure the survival of a penguin or sticky green beetle, the logic may be just as strong, but the argument less persuasive. Reflected on a personal level, we can clearly see the self-interest: care for your partner or she might walk out on you, taking the house and the kids.

In sustainable relationship, the word *sustainable* is the one usually emphasized and, as a result, it argues logic; like any consequentialist perspective, someone else can always take the same facts and manipulate them to back another view. Enlightened self-interest may be a powerful motivation for ethical behaviour, but finding agreement is hard, for political, social, local, and personal priorities are just too diverse. In the end, a judgement is inevitable. We see it in poignant and painful decisions about damming rivers, allocating medical funding, and the custody of children.

Even where the logic is flawless, it seems to me that we are simply returning to a fear-based, metareligious standpoint, where the powers of nature will overwhelm us (human, superhuman, nonhuman) if we continue doing wrong. Gaia becomes a modern Yahweh, threatening to annihilate humanity if we don't behave, if we don't do what we're told. In this way, governments and protest groups are using science instead of divine judgement to guide or control our behaviour through fear of consequences.

That may reflect a passive and reactive human mentality, the more objective logical view stating simply that human mismanagement may lead to human extinction without need for any concept of a punitive higher force. However, that fearful reaction is a strong part of our psyche; an instinct within us seeks out the one in charge—the parent, boss, or deity, the one who holds the power and the culpability: the ape higher up the tree. We need someone to take responsibility for what has been done.

My argument is that fear is never a tenable motivation for ethical behaviour. Regardless of any good intention, clarity of vision, or caring, if fear is involved on any level, the guidance is flawed. As human beings, we are forever seeking ways to sneak away from fear by using the escapism of drugs and alcohol, or through the stupefying power of screen entertainment. We are always finding ways to rebel and to cheat the fear-inducing authority. Indeed, beating the fear is more important than following the rules or erasing the cause of the fear; immediate relief is the primary focus.

This is particularly true when the cause seems too big for one person's actions to make a difference, either positively or negatively. We know it is illegal to avoid paying taxes, and most would agree that taxes are an efficient way of collecting funds for general social services; however, the majority would also cheat the system at any glint of an opportunity, simply because in doing so we gain a moment's increase in ease.

Socrates, much of whose philosophy lies so fundamentally beneath modern Western society, when judged to be against the Athenian state with his constant questioning of ethics, chose to accept the punishment meted out to him, drinking the hemlock rather than escaping. In clear contrast, few in our society of pathological comfort are willing to live by an ethical standard if it means making an effort; a good number would jump at the chance of beating an authority or winning a little coup on the side.

Any utilitarian basis for behaviour is always going to be complicated with the fear of possible effects, prioritizing judgements, localized self-interest, and denied culpability. Not many of us have Socrates's integrity.

I have laid out a number of solutions and guidelines for ethical behaviour, all of which are in active play, all of which are failing. I return to the question: is it possible to have a code of ethics that is inclusive, universal, and effective?

In Paganism, particularly in Pagan spiritualities based on the oral tradition, the emphasis on the uniqueness of the individual is paramount. Each situation, in its distinct location, witnessed by the spirits of place, the gods, the powers of nature, the elements, the ancestors, sliding through a unique moment in time, further adds to the context within which that individual's action might be judged. It might seem that this is hardly the place to find a broad-spectrum code of ethics. However, simply because diversity is such an integral part of the philosophy of the tradition, this is exactly what we do find.

On what basis does the Pagan make his choices?

What are his defining ethics?

At this point, I speak from my own tradition of Paganism: Druidry, within which there is no stated code of ethics. At the heart of its teachings, instead, lies a powerful word: *honour*. For those who first encounter it, the word is pretty hard to grasp; in time, perhaps, we come to feel we understand its guidance, but the deeper we get into our studies, the more elusive its core truth once more becomes. Like love, it is a part of the mysteries and, as such, as a label on the outside of the spiritual box its usefulness is almost notional.

I risk here a simple explanation in this context. Our behaviour expresses clearly our attitude to nature within and around us. There

is only honour in our interaction with those around us—and with ourselves—when we recognize the essence, the spirit or life energy.

Thus, relationship is the word emphasized in “sustainable relationship.” In Pagan Druidry, relationship is paramount; it is relationship based on the acknowledgement of spirit.

Within that animistic vision of reality, where every part of creation shimmers with life, a current of energy flows with its own purpose, so giving individual identity—as oak tree, river otter, easterly wind—no spirit is isolated. Energy isn’t held inside boxes of flesh or bark or stone. Naturally, continually, spirit touches spirit. Our human insecurity encourages us to be separate, to hold in tight and be safe, yet a deeper craving is for connection. The animistic teaching simply guides us to wake to the way that we are ever touching and touched, each one of us naturally integrated into the web of life. Myriad golden threads hum with the sacred song of life; it is a magical vision. As a simple, prosaic scientific perspective, it offers the individual a profound sense of belonging, of acceptance. On a social level, it is an attitude that instills a quiet strength, confidence, and cooperation within a culture.

In religious terminology, perceiving the spirit wakes us to the sacred nature of life. However, if that language cannot be translated from the jargon, it is valueless beyond the bounds of that religious perspective. Spirit is not some ethereal meta-angelic entity; it is simply the power of life, energy held temporarily within a cohesive, coherent form. We need no metaphor or mythology (though many may love the poetry of such), for the idea in itself is awe-inspiring enough.

Nor do we need some psychic vision to perceive the energy of spirit. We see it in the glint of a young girl’s eye. We feel it in the vibrance of a blackbird’s song, in the kick of a hare’s dash, the leaves of a tree bathing in sunshine. We are usually just too busy, preoccupied, or apathetic to notice.

The words *animism*, *pantheism*, and *polytheism* carry with them connotations of primitive society, yet this is simply residue of the mili-

tant arrogance of political Christianity and Islam. As natural spiritual philosophies and perspectives of life, the essential tenets of these ideas have evolved with human thought, while not losing their fundamental principles. Sourced in human awe at the powers of nature, scientific discovery only goes to deepen the profound respect for nature that is integral to these traditions. Rooted in the value of ecosystems, localism, diversity, natural balance, an understanding of the cycles, of influence and impact, of decay and regeneration, the principles of these philosophies are acutely pertinent to human society today. They address issues of sufficiency and sustainability, of respect for nature, community, and culture; they question all that is based on greed and unnecessary consumption and growth.

Poignantly, the significant value of relationship that evolves from this perspective is that behaviour is no longer motivated by fear. The quest is not to store up supplies and favours (with neighbours or superbeings) in case that ever-perceived threat does collapse into fact; the Pagan Druid is seeking ways to deepen and strengthen his every relationship, better understanding the currents, tides and eddies of nature’s energy, so enabling him to live more effectively in harmony—in both winter and summer, with birthing and dying, growth and decay. Not pushing against the flow, he learns to ride it, finding inspiration in the challenge of life on calm or wild rivers, ecstasy of attunement to the high seas and deep water. He finds freedom, an inner serenity, beyond friction.

While we are conventionally taught that our actions inevitably have effects that we must deal with, either by ducking the negative or grabbing the positive, the Druid is not anticipating feedback resulting from his behaviour. Making decisions based on the wider vision of integral connection, he accepts responsibility for the impact of behaviour, yet his personal gain is entirely based on the sense of immediate internal satisfaction that comes of walking in perfect harmony.

A term I use for interaction based on this wakefulness both to spirit and the web of connection is “sacred relationship,” and I see it as fundamental to Druidic and Pagan vision, and to the issue of ethics. It brings us back to three issues raised here already: consent, empathy, and sustainability. These, however, are now no longer the focus in the search for a solution; instead, they are the effects of sacred relationship, the successful result. How?

When we are open to perceiving our own life energy, we cannot help but feel our true state of health and well-being. Our ego, fed on insecurity, may allow us a dram of self-delusion temporarily; if it persists, it is a measure of how little we are truly open, and as our general culture is one of escapism and denial, it is not surprising that to open is considered difficult, dangerous, and strange. It can be hard to face our own truth after a lifetime’s conditioning. It can take a lifetime of small steps to reach a place where we feel ourselves completely. It is a poignant responsibility to teach our children not to shy away and hide their truth.

Awake to ourselves, feeling our own honesty in its brilliance and tenderness, with our feet upon the ground, our perception of others’ truth and lies rises equally. We see others for who they are beneath the guise they try to present; we see their shimmering, trembling spirit, the ebb and flow of their desire and their fear. We see what nourishes and strengthens. So are we better able to use consent as a guide for behaviour.

In the same way, seeing another’s soul or intention more clearly, the purpose as the current of the spirit energy, our ability to empathize increases. As we learn to glide high winds, to raft white water, in harmony, spirit to spirit, so can we step into the flow of another soul for a moment, with our minds, sensing the quality of the currents and pressures, allowing us to journey for a while in peace, in pace beside them.

In acutely seeing the spirit and flow of another soul, our ability to behave appropriately is also increased. We can communicate in a way that touches the other, the level of relevance and respect reflecting in the efficacy of the interaction. By holding a stronger focus on the relationship than on the yield and profit, the sustainability of the relationship is always going to be better, both parties honouring each other in the balance of harmony.

The issue of sustainable relationship is further improved, because the key flaw in human-based ethics, the individual’s selfish/survival instinct, is put into the wider perspective of the whole web of spirit. Our consciousness of the broad picture is increased simply by perceiving the essence, the life energy or spirit.

Certainty is something that we have always sought in terms of the decisions we make about our behaviour and about the ethics of what we do. Prevarication and doubt undermine instinctive reactions as much as they allow other consequentialist arguments to break up our own rationale. However, seeking moral certainty on a personal level is not based on causality or blind faith in Paganism, nor through discipline, rules and restraints, denial and dictates. Moral certainty is found through positively-motivated sources, in awareness of connection, acceptance, and belonging based on good relationship; it is found in and reflects back into enthusiasm for life and active presence. It is about opting in, not opting out.

In Pagan terms, moral certainty is a principle utterly rooted in the wisdom of the ancestors and the songs of the earth. In other words, it consciously seeks out all we have learned as a species, living between our forefathers and our descendants, living in the valleys and hills of our homelands, in relationship with the earth that feeds us, the skies and the seas, and distilling that understanding into one vision: honour.

To then transfer the individual vision effectively into a social value is essential if we are to initiate the changes needed to create a tenable future for humanity. Yet the only way that this can be done is through the action of individuals. So how does the Pagan behave? The nature of the oral tradition requires that he “walks his talk.” The value of any mysticism or philosophy is only discovered if it is lived. That is why Levinas spoke of ethics as the only valid school of philosophy; only through ethics do we move beyond self-focused pondering and into arenas of interaction.

To lay out a list of rules here that a Pagan would aim to follow would be anathema, and in contradiction to all I have expressed. All I can give with any validity are examples of how Pagans (within the context of how I have defined modern Paganism) might affirm their values, expressing the inspiration they have sourced in sacred relationships as a part of ongoing honourable interaction.

Fully perceiving a landscape, the spirits that populate that place, those we see as trees, plants, and grasses, insects and animals, birds, winds, water courses, rocks and mud, human beings, and so much more, and those perhaps we can't see, as air spirits, ancestors, the Pagan wholly engages with that place. He also has a more acute perception of how places differ, not only physically, but energetically; by more poignantly feeling the particular and distinct beauty, the power and the fragility of a place, the Pagan honours, stepping more gently, respectfully, making no unnecessary impact. He is not likely to drop litter, to break branches or knock the heads of the flowers, nor to create noise or light pollution needlessly—not because of some legislation or social law, but simply because it would be disrespectful to those affected, seen and unseen. Nor would he vandalize property, deface buildings or damage walls, without good reason and clearly communicated intent (e.g., objection to forest clear-cutting sprayed over the timber company's machinery).

The acceptance of cultural diversity is a further result of acknowledging local spirits of place, for amongst those spirits are a community's tribal ancestry. The stories of a place, still humming in the wind, in memories and mythologies, in the cut of a field or the placing of a building, tell the history of all that has lived in that locality. Understanding the twisted roads of history helps us to accept the present, guiding us as to how to respond. So would a Pagan study the old stories, the past, in order to evaluate what would be ethical and appropriate behaviour now. Celebrating the depth of cultural language and tradition in his own community, the Pagan celebrates and honours the differences he encounters in others, too.

Honouring individuality, of course, comes from this perception of spirit, also. Acknowledging the important influences of landscapes and ancestry, along with the inimitable blend of physical elements and chemicals, as well as each individual's singular life experience, every person is expected to be idiosyncratically unique. The restrictions of convention are not entertained by the Pagan. Freedom of personal expression, of soul-truth, is perceived as glorious. All that might hold that freedom in check should be clear and wakeful consciousness of the web, of energy touching energy, and of integrated connectivity that allows a vision broader than self-centric greed and protectionism.

One of the key taboos in our Western culture is still about sex and sexuality. Gender identity to the Pagan is an essential part of personal creativity, and if that leads to transvestism or transsexuality there would be no judgement, but instead a celebration of a soul's true expression. As the spirit is considered more important than the physical body, the issue of sexuality is irrelevant; whether the lovers are of different genders or not matters not a jot to the Pagan. A Pagan would honour the tenderness of a person who over-asserts his or her sexuality due to needs of (majority or minority) group identity in order to protect his

or her own fearful soul, for such behavior is sad to witness. However, Pagans make no judgement on those who express their sexual identities purely as celebration.

Honesty to oneself and to others is always valued more highly than keeping to the rules (of government or society). So while infidelity would be considered unethical to the Pagan, consensual polyamory is likely to be easily accepted. In the same way, the social expectations about having a partner, having children, and so on, are equally dismissed as imposed restrictions and potentially irrelevant to the individual.

The distinction between personal sacred relationship and political relationship is important in Paganism, too, returning to the issue of authority raised earlier in the essay. In political circumstances, our relationships are far from spirit to spirit; instead, we are communicating, directly or indirectly, with an abstract. We might perceive that abstract to have more or less power than ourselves, but either way we respond accordingly without seeing distinct individuals. We rant and complain and hurl abuse at government, officialdom, and authority: whoever we feel is in control. If an individual representing that abstract authority does come before us, we use him as a target, a tangible front for the untouchable power behind, not reaching to touch his spirit, but attacking the authority behind. In the same way, if we feel we have enough power not to have to care about individuals, we might abuse the workers, the voters, the consumers, the taxpayers: in short, the faceless masses.

Political relationship is ineffective communication and dishonourable interaction. It is untenable, mercenary, and capricious. Changes might be made, but not on account of any positive motivation; the impetus for change in the underdog is fear of the authority's power, and in the authority itself, the impetus is simply fear of losing that power. Behaviour based on political relationship is never in line with Pagan ethics.

By honouring the web of connection, we might acknowledge the power of an abstract, but decisions and communication are ethically made only through personal and sacred relationship. Only in this way can we be sure that those decisions, that behaviour, is life affirming and honourable.

We can see here a reflection in the Pagan understanding of deity—for deity in Paganism is not about authority, neither as monotheistic dictatorship nor as polytheistic oligarchy. The gods are powers of nature, wind, earth, sea, and thunder, energies about which we build understanding. We don't submit, cowering in fear; we stand in our own strength and laugh, sharing the energy of who we are, with profound respect (without which the natural world easily kills) but also with joy, confidence, and dignity, connecting and cooperating.

The stronger our relationships with the gods become, and the stronger our ability to live in harmony with the flow of nature, the more confidence we gain, the more strength to share and laugh and stand in our stillness. In consequence, too, not only do we feel more able to express our own truth in freedom, but our vision of the web of spirit grows clearer, allowing us a broad perspective that we might see the effects of our actions, shimmering across the web.

Pagan ethics relating to the food industry can be meticulous. In Britain, the majority of Pagans are vegetarian or vegan, and those who do support dairy or meat farming do so without blinkers, buying only free-range and organic products. I myself am vegan, as my own ethical standard does not allow me to invest in what seems to me flagrant abuse of other creatures. While my code does not declare the killing of animals to always be wrong, to kill unnecessarily is beyond my ability to accept.

The social habituation of Western culture that celebrates the slaughter of calves but not puppies is to me an expression of a blinkered lack of ethics. Peter Singer's statement that all creatures deserve equal consideration is entirely Pagan; the Pagan would take it further, to include

forests, landscapes, and the earth itself. The riposte to “Where do we draw the line?” is one that reflects lack of understanding in the questioner, for there is no line—there is only relationship. If a line is drawn it simply marks the limitation of our human perception.

With an animistic vision, it is possible to reach the spirit that flows in each item that we touch. In an apple, we can feel the energy of the tree: vibrant, sweet, and tempting us to eat. In nuts, seeds, and grains, we are aware of the intention to reproduce. Processed foods with chemical additives make no sense to the Pagan, ethically or spiritually.

The animist feels the environment, too, the specific web of an ecosystem from which the food has come. To buy genetically modified crops, or agroindustrial crops sprayed with environmental toxins developed by companies that are polluting landscapes and water courses, using animal testing, and abusing their workforce is to the Pagan as unethical as eating battery-farmed eggs. Thus, organic food become the ethical choice: food grown on small farms, on local farms, or in one’s own garden.

Human slavery is rife, notably in cocoa, coffee, sugar, and cotton industries, and companies that promote the horrors of this abuse of humanity with pitiful trade agreements, child labour, and inhumane conditions are all avoided by the wakeful Pagan.

Killing for food is ethically dubious; killing for beauty is beyond tolerance. The Pagan would be ethically unable to buy any toiletries, from lipstick to shampoo, that had been tested on animals or contained animal products. The pharmaceutical industry is one of the dirtiest in the world, in terms of ethics, and the Pagan would carefully have to weigh up priorities before taking any drugs forged by these companies. Petrochemical companies, the car industry, electrical appliances—all these the Pagan would think twice about supporting, always looking to find the most renewable, recyclable, low-consumption alternatives.

As he honours the spirit of others around him, so does the Pagan honour his own health and well-being. Here, ethics are about step-

ping beyond the self-destructive habits that our secular society considers acceptable, from drugs and alcohol to overeating and apathy. The Pagan will celebrate his own body as an expression of his creativity, regardless of how others might judge it. As he takes responsibility for his own living, so would the Pagan take responsibility for his own dying, retaining the right to end his life if he should choose, though ever-conscious of the web of relationships to which he is connected. He honours that others have that same right, most usually when disease makes living too painful to bear. Once again, ethical decisions are based on acknowledging the pure spirit of life.

What causes us to fail to make ethical choices is often lack of information or understanding, and an important part of the Pagan’s spiritual journey, therefore, is education. Conscious choice is critical, and so is continual learning. We must keep our minds open to watching, questioning, engaging, ever-seeking understanding. The Pagan ethic here is based on the responsibility of the individual to be aware and act appropriately.

As a parent, the Pagan doesn’t delegate responsibility for his child’s education, but takes care that the child is in environments that nurture her growing vision, allowing her the confidence and self-esteem to express her own truth and creativity. For me, that means home education, ensuring that my son has opportunities to explore and discover in his own way, following personal interests in his own time, at his own pace, unbattered by the culture of competitive bullying.

Beyond our own direct actions, what could be more important than to bring up our children as human beings who are awake and responsible, who will care for this earth and bring beauty to others?

Finding this animistic vision of shimmering spirit, of life energy in everything, is an integral part of the journey of the Pagan. As a tradition that was originally only practised by a priesthood, the proposition studying the deep mysteries rather than simply living as a part of the faith community is greater than usual in spiritual and religious

denominations. Perhaps also common to most Paganisms, the seeker does not have a priest whose role it is to act as medium between himself and the gods or the divine: he is expected to make that connection himself, creating a relationship that is personal, often very private and intimate.

For some, seeing the energy of spirit is instinctive; for some, it has been nurtured by parents and life experience. However, for most people living in a secular consumerist world, "the Pagan vision" is hard to grasp as an intellectual concept, let alone as a way of life. It requires the breaking down of inner barriers of belief and internalized social judgement. Slowly, confidence grows in our own perspective, independent and idiosyncratic, without the need for others' approval or acceptance.

The Pagan vision requires us to open ourselves in trust to the natural world. In this way, we see a parallel with the trust required within a monist faith like Christianity, where the adherent is asked to have faith in God. For the Pagan, however, the sense of deity or the divine is not existent beyond creation: the divine is the flow of nature, both within us and around us. Furthermore, where the God in question is described as caring, loving, and just, finding faith might be a good deal easier than for the Pagan who is all too aware that the currents of nature are far from merciful, devoid of justice, and fully red in tooth and claw. What he opens to is not some loving parental figure, some benevolent authority; he opens to truth, to himself, to the wonder of life, growth, love . . . and death, anger, decay: it can be as brutal as beautiful. Yet in his opening, he utterly affirms his own soul freedom, together with the power of his connectedness through those golden threads of energy into the web of spirit. For a moment, perhaps extending into the timeless, he finds his perfect place in the universe.

The very action of opening oneself to vision is in tune with the mysticism of every religious and spiritual tradition; it is where we come together. Regardless of cultural diversity, there is always that

craving within some human beings to lose themselves into a higher, broader, depthless energy, to merge, breaking through the limitations of mortality and the conscious self into an eternal boundlessness. That energy may be understood to be a deity, a universal force, or nature itself; in Paganism, it is the latter. Shattering the coherent and cohesive form of our minds, our identity, we become a part of everything there is—rain, mist, leaves, wind, flowers, dew, cat, beetle, light and darkness—and in doing so, we sense more profoundly the nature of all creation.

This mysticism integral to the entire philosophy of Paganism distinguishes it from other traditions. Pagans do not reach to deity beyond life, but directly and more powerfully into life's essence. Released from our own limitations, truly touching and breathing spirit, we become one with that energy, experiencing its own soul-intention, flowing through the myriad currents of its creativity and its physicality. Most often the gateway into this mystical "oneness" is intensely intimate: it may simply be me and a drop of newly fallen rain, me and a rose that is bursting with life; me and a dying crow, silent at the road's edge; me in the moonlight, like water meeting water. In touching the spirit of another being, the "me" touches all life, and touches life itself.

Emerging from the pool of completeness, our wonder is only greater. In the act of dissolving, our ability to make sacred relationship is deepened. Our ethics grow stronger.

Sacred relationship, then, is the key. How we achieve that depth of connection is a part of the path we walk within the tradition, a part of our quest for motivation, inspiration, and peace, reaching for more effective and profound communication and understanding.

Each individual walks that path in her own way, in her own time. We each have our own gait: running, striding, and stumbling; meticulous, broad, watching, listening; too eager or too cautious; reaching

for expectations and finding surprises, revelations. Diversity of practice and experience is an essential layer of the foundations we share, the earth beneath our feet: clay, sand, chalk, mud, and stone. Diversity expressed as wakeful individuality, integrally woven into a conscious connection with everything, is the heart of Paganism.

As a spirituality that is effectively an extremely broad spectrum of ideas, sourced in myriad landscapes, climates, and histories, what holds it together beneath that one word is this focus on connectedness, relationship, and belonging. The effect of such a spiritual practice is a natural code of ethics shared, a code that is based simply on the power of true relationship.

Pagan ethics are not sourced in an authority, codified by humanity, nor attributed to a superhuman force or deity. They have emerged, as Druidry and other nature-based, indigenous Paganisms around the whole world, out of the simple yet respectful interaction between the human mind and the environment. Responding out of wonder, our ancestors learned, as we learn now, that living in harmony with the currents of nature brings peace and abundance; reacting out of fear, casting up defences, and laying down laws produces only a people chained to their ignorance and barricades.

The ethics that will inspire and guide humanity into the future must be those that have evolved from the oldest religions and spiritualities. Born of a desire to understand, not to dominate, of exquisitely nourishing relationship, they encourage within each soul all that they most desire: freedom within belonging, peace within creativity.

Ethics are the study and practice of how we as human beings will best survive and thrive. Only by honouring the sanctity of relationship itself can we hope to do so. With love and respect, with wonder and the vision that comes from touching the web of spirit, with honour, we can live life to the full, awake.

Note

1. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." Genesis 1:26, King James Version.