

NATURE

I walk along and I set aside a stone that might be uncomfortable for someone. I pick up a fallen thing. I bring along with me a light of regard for all that I see, and I see the beauty and wonderful splendor that exists in all things. I ask of my High Mind that I should be able to put that harmony into my hand so that all the Consciousnesses of nature, when they feel me coming, will smile.

a walking meditation

Westerners generally become vegetarians for one of two reasons: they are either worried about their health or they are motivated by moral considerations. Although we will begin by discussing both from a typically Western perspective, the East has metaphysical views about meat-eating that shed a surprising light on the nature of Nature. We will end by attempting to understand that perspective.

In the last fifteen to twenty years there have been two prominent books--Eating for Life by Nathaniel Altman and Diet for a New America by John Robbins¹--that have been severely critical about the way Americans eat. Specifically, they present strong a case against the eating of meat of any kind (the information quoted below is from these two books). The intention of the following section is not to convince anyone that eating vegetarian is the way to go. I have been a vegetarian for twenty years, but I'm more than happy to be around people who do not so choose. The following discussion is offered as an *introduction* to another topic the East has very unusual ideas about, that of Nature.

¹ John Robbins was the heir to the Baskin-Robbins ice-cream empire. He walked away from his inheritance in favor of living an ecologically sound life.

The life of an animal being farmed for its meat is not usually a particularly pleasant one. Because factory farmers are primarily interested in profits, they expend little worry about whether their animals are living in inhumane conditions, or are in pain, or are diseased. For example, chicken farms raise many hundreds of thousands of chickens in an area the size of a football field. The animals are housed in individual wire cages barely large enough for each occupant; the birds are not allowed to exercise (on many chicken ranches, their feet will never touch the ground); and due to their close quarters and unhealthy situation a fair portion of them become diseased over the course of their short life.

An anomaly within the meat producing industry? Consider the production of veal. Veal is a polite term for *baby calf that has been starved of iron* (the characteristic, whitish color of veal meat is due to this lack of iron). According to Diet for a New America (I'll refer to this book as DfNA from here on), baby calves are taken from their mothers almost immediately after birth (waiting might allow the calf to suckle; this is not allowed because suckling might injure the mother's teats, hence affecting her milk producing capabilities, and will definitely promote bonding between the cow and her calf--a big problem when the calf is removed). The calves are shipped to auctions within days of their birth where they are bought by veal producing factories. Once bought and transported to their new homes, they are placed in 22 inch wide by 54 inch high stalls where they will spend the rest of their lives (it is important that they get no exercise because exercise will produce muscle which, in turn, will diminish the tenderness of the flesh). They are kept in the dark to counter restlessness (in fact, many are blind by the time they are slaughtered). They are not able to wash themselves due to the cramped quarters; neither are they able to lie down as a cow normally would. The animals are starved of iron (in fact, their stalls have no nails in them because nails have iron in them and the calves so crave iron that they will chew on anything made of it), thus producing their milky white flesh; their "special feed" diet consists of U.S. government *skim* milk which is wholly devoid of any trace of iron. Calves that are able to withstand this abhorrent treatment are slaughtered in approximately four months (they will weigh between 300 and 350 pounds). The less hardy will die earlier due to their situation or, more often, due to disease. The animals are, in short, given no support as living creatures: no love, no companionship, little appropriate nourishment (appropriate from the stand point of the calves), not even the right to lick themselves clean.

This is not a situation for which humans should be proud.

One of the biggest problems a financially successful meat producer faces is loss of animals to disease. As such, the industry has long used antibiotics to keep animals at least seemingly healthy until they can be killed. The problems with this practice are two fold.

To begin with, the more we use antibiotics (millions of pounds are used annually on livestock), the better chance we have of cultivating strains of bacteria that are antibiotic resistant. The scenario is simple: In a typical population of bacteria, there will be a few virulent bacteria-types that can't be killed by antibiotics along with a majority that aren't so dangerous and can be killed by antibiotics. As long as the bacteria that are not resistant to antibiotics are alive and well, the few mutant strains that are genetically resistant will have to compete and, hence, will be held in check by the presence of all the other strains in the community. When antibiotics are used, the non-resistant strains are killed leaving the resistant strains with a clear field to proliferate.² Case in point: In 1960 there were 13 strains of staphylococci bacteria resistant to penicillin; today there are well over 100 (according to DfNA, there were 91 in 1988).

The second problem is more immediate to humans. Eating meat not only presents the possibility of ingesting antibiotic-resistant bacteria from the animal, it also raises the specter of eating meat laced with antibiotic residue.³ As even small amounts of antibiotic residue are consumed, the body becomes more and more accustomed to having trace antibiotics within the system. The consequence, according to some, is that the effectiveness of antibiotic treatments, should they be required, are diminished.

There are other fun problems the meat industry has created in its production of meat for human consumption. For instance, it is not unusual for farms to pump cows full

² The same problem exists when pesticides are used to control crop-eating insects. Insects that are resistant are not killed by the pesticide while other insects--in some cases, natural enemies of the real culprits--are killed off. This leaves the pesticide-resistant insects with no competition and a wide-open field for proliferate. To counter the new threat, more powerful pesticides are produced. These are designed to kill the culprit insects. Unfortunately, there will be some mutants within that population that are not so affected and the cycle will start all over again.

³ According to John Robbins in DfNA, a cattleman (Herb Silverman) said the following about the high level of drugs fed to cattle today: "It's not good. Instead of improving husbandry practices, which would make the animals healthier, we just shoot 'em up with drugs. It's cheaper that way, and because this a competitive business I've got to do it, too. But in the meantime the general public is catching on, and getting afraid of residues in the meat. And I'll tell you something. I don't blame them."

of female hormones (specifically estrogen) to make them grow faster. If you are into black humor, it is mildly amusing to note that men whose macho image dictates that they eat lots of red meat are consequentially ingesting fair amounts of female hormones in the process. Another effect, one that is not so amusing, is the problem of premature sexual development in some adolescents. There have been cases of five and six year old children developing enlarged breasts, etc. The doctor cited in DfNA believes the problem, "is related to local whole milk in the infant group. At a later age (the culprit is) . . . consumption of (estrogen laden) whole milk, poultry, and beef . . . When we take our patients off meat and fresh milk, their symptoms usually regress."

There have also been reports of meat packing companies injecting their cattle with steroids to make them grow bigger. Although diethylstilbestrol, known as DES, has been outlawed as a carcinogen for years (one-quarter-of-a-hundred-millionth of an ounce, administered daily, was enough to develop cancer in laboratory animals), DfNA claims that many factory farms still use it illegally. Even if that is untrue, the problems inherent in steroid use still exist. Factory farms today inject their livestock with alternate growth drugs that have the same effect as DES and that have many of the same ingredients. In a way, little has changed even with all the warning about possible health risks to the public.⁴

Probably the single biggest reason Americans are moving away from eating red meat has to do with cancer. Twenty-five or so years ago researchers noticed that Seventh Day Adventists had a considerably lower incidence of colon and breast cancer. What was different about their diets? They don't eat red meat. Subsequent studies have concluded that eating red meat is linked to the production of cancer in the body.⁵

⁴ According to a 1973 memorandum from the Director of Veterinary Research of the Food and Drug Administration (as quoted from Eating for Life), "there is a total of nineteen separate animal drugs used in meat-producing animals which are suspected of causing cancer; twenty-three separate animal drugs the residues of which could be a human hazard because of 'possible super sensitivity, acute toxicity, and the development of resistant strains of bacteria.' There are seventeen animal drugs that leave toxic residues if abused or not withdrawn properly, five pesticides which, if abused, could lead to toxic residues in tissues as a result of contamination of the environment, and five specialized drugs which if abused would lead to potent residues having a possible physiological effect on human beings." Although the report is old, the situation has not changed much in the last thirty or so years due to the presence of a powerful meat lobby.

⁵ Interesting point: There are some researchers who now believe that although red meat is a major contributor to heart disease, the eating of *chicken* is the real cancer producing culprit. I'm not sure if this has to do with the fact that chicken production is notorious for producing diseased chickens (due to the farming approach used in raising chickens for food), or due to the almost non-existent food inspection process within the chicken industry (Reagonomics eliminated enormous numbers of inspectors in an attempt to "get the

Studies have since shown this correlation in other related areas. For instance, countries with high meat intakes ALWAYS have correspondingly high rates of colon cancer whereas countries with low meat intake have low rates; women who eat meat daily have four times the chance of developing breast cancer than do women who eat meat only once a week; and men who eat meats, cheeses, eggs and milk daily have over three-and-a-half times the chance of producing prostate cancer than do men who eat those items only sparingly.⁶

Another problem that arises is with pesticides. DDT, for instance, was banned long ago as a carcinogen (among other things, it causes sterility in males). Unfortunately, the EPA reports that DDT contamination of our agricultural land has not decreased markedly since then. Why? Because DDT is a very long-lived compound; once in the environment, it is almost impossible to remove.

Animals that eat grains grown on land that has been heavily sprayed with pesticide (and that is most of the agricultural land in the U.S.) are inadvertently making pesticides like DDT a part of themselves. The insidious thing about DDT is that it stores itself in fat cells. That means that as cows, for instance, eat hay even minutely laden with DDT, the pesticide accumulates in the animal's body over time. If the cow is a milk producer, the milk and the associated dairy products made from that milk (cheese, etc.) will have DDT in it. Animals that are raised for beef are no better off. What this means is that eating "normally" produced meat or dairy products (i.e., non-organic) will, sooner or later, increase the accumulated DDT level in your body. It will happen slowly, but it will happen.

Hard to believe? A recent E.P.A. study showed that mother's milk from almost all women (99%) tested across the United States had DDT in it. The Environmental Defense Leagues estimated that there is, on the average, a gram and a half of DDT in every

government off the people's back"--According to [Eating for Life](#), a typical poultry inspector is expected to examine upwards of 11,000 chickens in an hour--it isn't surprising that in 1996, it was estimated that 1 out of every 4 chickens marketed had salmonella), or whether the red-meat scare has simply pushed more people toward chicken. Whatever the case, some current thinking suggests that chickens may pose at least as big a problem as does red meat.

⁶ As can be seen from that last statistic, it isn't just meat that is causing a cancer problem. It also seems to be related to the eating of dairy products (eggs, cheese, milk). Eating a healthy diet obviously requires some education; reading [Eating for Life](#) is a good idea even if you have no interest in becoming a vegetarian.

American (that comes to approximately 20 tons cumulatively⁷). And that's just DDT. Agent Orange is a carcinogenic defoliant used during the Vietnam war. Two of the active ingredients in Agent Orange (2,4-D and 2,4,5-T) are currently being sprayed as a pesticide on land used to grow grain for livestock. Yet these two toxins are just the tip of the chemical iceberg. As put by DfNA: "Recent studies indicate that of all the toxic chemical residues in the American diet, almost all, 95% to 99%, come from meat, fish, dairy products and eggs.⁸ If you want to include pesticides in your diet, these are the foods to eat. Fortunately, you can overwhelmingly reduce your intake of these poisons by eating low on the food chain, and not choosing foods of animal origin."

Put another way, according to DfNA the diseases that can commonly be prevented, that are consistently improved, and that in some cases can be cured with a vegetarian diet are: strokes, kidney stone, prostate cancer, cervical cancer, diabetes, peptic ulcers, hiatal hernias, gallstones, irritable colon syndrome, heart disease, breast cancer, pancreatic cancer, stomach cancer, hypoglycemia, constipation, diverticulosis, hypertension, salmonellosis, osteoporosis, colon cancer, ovarian cancer, endometrial cancer, kidney disease, hemorrhoids, obesity, asthma, and trichinosis.⁹

People who are trying to steer clear of meat often switch to seafood thinking that fish and crustaceans are fairly safe. That isn't necessarily the situation.

The problem of water pollution is unbelievable in the U.S. today:

--The Great Lakes are laden with heavy metals;

--Fertilizers from farming and chemical pollutants from factories dumping their waste into rivers have badly polluted our waterways;

--We have habitually treated the ocean as a dumping ground, completely ignoring any adverse consequences that might come from that policy.¹⁰

⁷ Over 2.2 million tons of DDT were used world-wide before its ban.

⁸ "But", you say, "the government inspects our food." True, but due to financial constraints the governmental agency responsible for testing tests only *one animal per quarter million* for toxic chemical residue.

⁹ The number one cause of death in the United States is heart disease. Someone has a heart attack in the U.S. every 25 seconds while someone dies every 45 seconds (males have a 50% chance of dying as the consequence of a heart attack). Reducing consumption of meat, dairy products, and eggs by 50% reduces one's chances of having a heart attack by 45%. Completely cutting those items out of one's diet reduces one's chances of having a heart attack by 90%. The risk of a heart attack death for a total vegetarian male is 4%.

¹⁰ Example: Thirty to forty years ago the Navy dumped 4,000 barrels of radioactive nuclear waste twenty miles out of San Francisco harbor. I don't know what they thought they were doing--if they thought that

The fish don't die immediately from this kind of contamination, but they do often become diseased or cancerous as a consequence. Fishermen complain, but when they catch a fish with big ulcers on it do they throw the fish back and call it a loss or cut the ulcer out and sell what is left? The answer obviously depends upon the fisherman in question, but often the fish gets sold (an interesting spiral back to the factory farming mess: two-thirds of the fish caught in U.S. in 1972 were fed to livestock).

There are other reasons one might be put off by American's meat eating habits. For instance, there is the incredible waste.

Considering that 80% of the corn and 95% of the oats grown in the United States are fed to livestock, and that an acre can produce 20,000 pounds of potatoes but the equivalent of only 165 pounds of beef, one begins to wonder about things like *world hunger*. A baby dies of starvation in the world every 2 seconds. World wide, 60,000,000 people will starve this year. What is incredible is that if Americans reduced their meat intake by just 10%, the amount of grain saved could feed that 60,000,000 (this assumes the food could be delivered where it was needed).

On top of that, it takes 25 gallons of water to produce one pound of wheat while requiring 2500 gallons of water to produce one pound of meat (this includes the water used in the slaughtering process).¹¹ If the government weren't subsidizing the water American farmers use in growing grains for cattle, a pound of beef would cost \$89. And this says nothing about topsoil loss due to farming that is done on behalf of the livestock industry (4,000,000 acres of topsoil are lost annually; 85% of the U.S. topsoil loss is directly related to the raising of livestock).

Add to that the pesky problem of the cutting down of South American rain forests to make room for cattle ranches that exist solely to produce and sell beef to fast food

somehow the ocean's salt water would not dissolve the containers in relatively short order--but divers came upon the situation a number of years later, and guess what? Many of the containers are leaking.

¹¹ Something to contemplate: A vegetarian who washes his or her car weekly in a drought is wreaking less havoc on the water shortage than is a once-a-week steak eater who never washes his or her car, ever, assuming both live in a corn-producing area.

companies in the United States, and the All-American hamburger begins to lose its luster.¹²

The last conventional argument for vegetarianism comes from the animal rights people. The two main arguments are: "Humans don't have the right to kill other animals just because they've acquired a taste for animal flesh," and "How can anyone think of themselves as a compassionate individual while simultaneously supporting (consciously or unconsciously) a treatment of farm animals that is cruel and selfish." It is a fairly emotional response to the question of eating meat, but there are people who hold it.

There are several argument that have been used in the past *against vegetarianism*. They are:

Belief: Humans are, quite simply, carnivores.

Response: Certainly, humans are able to digest meat, but does that mean they are inherently carnivores? Not likely.

How so? All carnivores have two main physical characteristics that support their eating habits. Specifically:

--Carnivores don't have grinding teeth: Think about it. The carnivores you know (dogs and cats) don't really chew their food. I remember a collie I had when I was a kid. I'd give him a big piece of meat and he'd go *gulp gulp* and it would be gone. I'd give him a little piece of bread and it would take him five minutes to deal with it. He'd try his best to chew, and he'd chew and chew and chew, then he'd swallow it, get it caught in his

¹² For those of you who don't know, rain forests house most of the biological diversity on the planet (ten acres of South American rain forest have more species on it than are found in the whole of Europe). It is from this biological caldron that most of the drugs humans depend upon to fight disease have been discovered. Destroying rain forest is like throwing potential medical discoveries right down the drain. In addition, by burning rain forests we are not only adding enormous amounts of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere, we are tinkering dangerously with our weather (the rain forest is a major player in dictating weather patterns). This, coupled with the possibility of global warming, could be a BIG problem for future generations.

What is tragic about the destruction of the rain forests in South America, aside from what has already been said, is that burning rain forest for farming solves nothing. Rain forest soil is suited only for the cyclic nature of the rain forest. It isn't good for much else. The topsoil is so thin that it can sustain farming for only a few years before turning into desert. Once a desert, the land is no longer able to support even a rain forest and *all* is lost.

throat, and cough it up. His eating habits were fitted to swallowing food whole, not chewing.

Look at human teeth. We have grinders--lots of them--at the back of the mouth. We have only two teeth that could in any way be construed as rippers (the eye teeth), and their existence isn't particularly surprising in as much as there are non-meat foods that require a certain amount of ripping and shearing to eat (carrots, for instance).

--Carnivores have extremely short digestive tracts: Why do you suppose? Because an animal that eats raw meat must digest it quickly before it turns poisonous due to putrefaction. A very short digestive tract allows the animal to deal with the decaying food rapidly.¹³

The human digestive tract is, on average, between twenty-five and thirty feet long. In other words, it is not the digestive tract of a carnivore.

"So what," you say. "Humans can digest meat quite nicely, thank you."

That seems to be the case, at least on the surface, but there may be more too it. To see how, consider the following story:

I overheard an interesting conversation the other day. A girl was talking about a guy she'd met who was a vegetarian. As I passed out of earshot, I heard her exclaim with amazement, "He doesn't even drink milk."

It was as if she thought he had stepped completely beyond the bounds of rational behavior, and it struck me as being terribly funny. After all, milk is baby food. It's designed to kick-start a new-born into rapid growth (it also allows the mother to pass antibodies to the baby). What's more, the kind of milk people buy at their local supermarket is baby food for *cows* ("animals that have four stomachs, will double their size in 47 days, and are destined to weight 300 pounds within a year," as expressed by DfNA). Something like 85% of the people in the world over the age of three no longer have the enzyme (lactase) required to digest milk. So although it is tasty (it's sweet) and goes great with cookies, most people are at least mildly allergic to it. What that means is that if you know a milk drinker who commonly has a runny nose in the morning, there is a good chance that individual is suffering from a milk allergy.

¹³ Have you ever wondered why meat is aged? Animal muscle is soft while the animal is alive. When the animal dies, the muscles harden (rigor mortis). They stay in that state until they have sufficient time to decompose. Then, and only then, do they soften again. Aged meat is just meat that has been given time to decompose to the point where it has softened.

Drinking milk is not going to kill the person. His or her body *will* accommodate drinking milk with only slight protestation (a runny nose). But simply because the body is willing to put up with it, that doesn't mean milk drinking is something that is good for that body. On the contrary, it only means that the body is able to *accommodate* the situation.

The same is true of meat. The body will accommodate meat eating--people do it all the time without keeling over dead on the spot--but that doesn't mean humans are inherently carnivores. It just means the body is willing to put up with the insult, at least temporarily.¹⁴

Belief: You can't get all the essential amino acids without eating meat (one of the meat industries favorite arguments).

Response: That simply isn't true. It has been shown that plants can supply all the necessary amino acids needed by a human body, and what plants don't supply the body seems able to generate on its own.

Belief: Some claim that a vegetarian diet decreases body weight and makes for physical wimps.¹⁵

Response: According to Eating for Life:

-- In a series of fifteen national cycling events held in Great Britain in 1963, a vegetarian cyclist, Ronald Murgatroid, won all 15 fifteen events (even though vegetarians were a small percent of the total number of contestants). For five years he won the Best All-Around Veteran Championship.

¹⁴ "Indeed, "temporarily" may be the optimal word here, given the seeming connection between meat eating and cancer.

¹⁵ A lot of people think that eating vegetarian is going to decrease muscle mass whereas eating meat will allow one to get bigger. When I was a kid, my football coach wanted me to bulk up (I was a wide receiver and, hence, didn't need to be a monster; nevertheless, the coach wanted me bigger). During the summer between my junior and senior year, my meals ran as follows: for breakfast I ate two breakfast steaks or five to six pieces of bacon, five or six eggs, five or six pieces of toast and a malt. For lunch I had two large hamburgers with French fries or potato chips and two large malts; for dinner I had a plate of meat, a plate of potatoes, a plate of vegetable, and a glass of milk; and at twelve midnight I'd go up to Bob's Big Boy (it was a drive-in when I was a kid) and have two Big Boy hamburgers, a coke, and an order of fries. I did this every day that entire summer, and I gained a total of five pounds.

The moral of the story: Eating meat is not necessarily going to put weight on you; eating vegetarian in a sane, regulated way is not necessarily going to make you lose weight.

--Vegetarian Murray Rose was the youngest triple gold medal winner in the Olympic Games history winning the 400- and 1500-meter free style and the 1500-meter marathon at the '56 Olympics in Melbourne Australia. He retained the 400-meter title four years later in the 1960 Olympics . . .

--Vegetarian weight lifter Alexander Macpherson Anderson twice pulled a fully loaded, twenty-two and a half ton electric tram 100 yards up an incline . . . and on various occasions used his teeth to pull four Sun newspaper delivery trucks, five passenger automobiles hitched together, and a double decker bus.

--Vegetarian Alan M. Jones, captain in the U.S. Marine Corp., performed 27,000 sit ups setting a world record in August, 1974; swam 500 miles on the Snake and Columbia Rivers in eleven days in June, 1975; skipped roped 100,000 times in 23 hours in October, 1975; swam a total of 127,000 yards in 161 hours at the University of Oregon Olympic pool without sleep in November, 1975. He did all this after overcoming polio as a child.

In addition, Diet for a New America lists the following athletes as vegetarians: Edwin Moses (undefeated in 8 years in the 400 meter hurdles), Dave Scott (four time winner of the Ironman Triathlon and only man to win the event more than twice), Sixto Linares (world record holder for the 24 hour triathlon--4.8 miles of swimming, 185 miles of cycling, 52.5 miles of running), Stan Price (world record holder in the bench press), Paavo Nurmi (20 world records in distance running and 9 Olympic medals), Andreas Cahling (Winner of Mr. International body building championships), Pierreo Verot (world's record for downhill endurance skiing), and Ridgely Abele (8 time National Champion in Karate, including U.S. Karate Assoc. World Championships).

Bottom Line: Vegetarians can do quite nicely if they are careful. But if *you* decide to change over, don't go out, buy a stalk of broccoli, bring it home and eat it raw. That's not the way to go. Get a good vegetarian cookbook, follow the recipes for a while, then start improvising. Once you get the hang of it, you'll find you can do spectacular things with vegetarian cooking.

The preceding has been a presentation of some of the arguments that have led many Americans away from meat eating and toward vegetarianism. To these we are about to add some thoughts that are both novel and typically Eastern.

To begin with: If *thought* is, as Eastern metaphysicians claim, an energy form that has substance and can affect matter, imagine what it would be like to eat food that has been soaked in thoughtforms of misery, pain, and fear. Given the way livestock are treated on meat producing factory farms, that is exactly what consumers are doing when they eat red meat or chicken. Animals in this context are viewed as a commodity. Their care is limited to whatever it takes to keep them alive, make them big, minimize cost and maximize profits. The feedlots where they are fattened are unsanitary and crowded, and the slaughter houses permeated with fear. EFL states:

Just as our bodies are made ill during times of intense rage or pain, so do those of livestock animals. Just before and during the agony of being slaughtered, large quantities of adrenaline are forced through the entire body, thus "pain poisoning" the entire carcass. Even the meat industry acknowledges that pre-slaughter psychological stress produces physical changes in the carcass.

This addresses chemical changes in the animal; it does not address changes in the atoms of the animal on a more subtle level. As far as Eastern metaphysics is concerned, atoms absorb experience. That is, experience impresses a tone around physical atoms. Modern science would not agree with this idea; as far as physicists are concerned, for instance, one hydrogen atom is the same as any other hydrogen atom.

The East says, "Not so." The hydrogen atoms that were used in the atomic bomb are fundamentally different from other hydrogen atoms. Why? Because each has its own history of experience; each has been associated with specific actions for which the other was not present.

If this is accurate-to-life, you literally paint the places of your life with the tone and content of your thoughts,¹⁶ and it doesn't stop with humans. Animals do not have the

¹⁶ There is an interesting bit of whimsy associated with this idea. According to tradition, when a chela has moved in ways that are not as they should be, the atoms of the chela's body are soaked with the tone of those actions (if you will remember, the karmic response to a failure on the part of a chela is considerably

power of thought as do humans, but intense fear or pain does generate thought that has astral substance. The flesh of animals that have been abused--and all animals that are grown for food fall into this category--is saturated with the heaviness of their situation.

Making that a part of one's body by eating the poor beasts will not be noticed by most, but for those who are more sensitive inwardly, the heaviness becomes evident in meditation. There was a reason that the Mystery School candidates abstained from eating meat. In a meditative sense, it pulls one down. Metaphorically, it is like swallowing a stone. And it is no joy for the animal, either.

Aside from the physical problems encountered by incorporating atoms covered with the thoughtforms of fear and pain into one's own body, there are other reasons why the Eastern metaphysical views suggest abstention from eating animals. From this view, life exists to allow Consciousness the opportunity to animate bodies, experience, and grow. If that be true, then every animal form is a vehicle for experience. Certainly, the Beings animating animals like dogs and cats and cows have not evolved to the point of Beings animating human form, but they are experiencing, learning and growing in ways that are appropriate for their particular stage of evolution. Thus, depriving an Awareness of its vehicle to experience--even if the Awareness is on the level of lower animal form (let's face it, fish aren't real high on the list) is simply not considered to be an appropriate thing to do.

Even people who are sympathetic to the plight of animals wonder about another related question. Specifically, if one does not want to do harm to Awarenesses that are experiencing through bodies, what does one do about eating plants. After all, plants support experiencing Consciousness, don't they?

This needs to be examined.

more intense than would otherwise be the case). In some cases, if the miscue is great enough, the chela will have to wait until he or she has shed those atoms before being able to continue. It takes seven years for the atoms of the body to completely recycle (that's right, the atoms in your body today are completely different than the atoms you had in your body seven years ago). That means it takes seven years before the chela can completely purify the self and continue on his or her path.

For those of you who know anything about the secret societies of Renaissance Europe, you will know that a lot of the nursery rhymes and folklore at the time had double meanings. I bring this to your attention here because there is a curious bit of superstition from that time that can be summarized as: break a mirror and have seven years bad luck. There are some who believe that the double meaning here is: break the "mirror of the self" with inappropriate action and you will need to wait seven years before the tone of that action can wash away from you.

In taking the life of an animal like a cow, you are depriving a fairly highly evolved Consciousness of one of the very few embodiments it has to experience through. But if you will remember, the view we have been examining maintains that the kind of Awareness that experiences through plant forms does so as a kind of oversoul. That is, it is not unusual for a single Awareness to animate hundreds of millions of plant forms at the same time. Although it is not considered appropriate to take any life without thoughtful respect and a giving of gratitude, the taking of a plant form for food is not like the taking of an animal for food; the two situations are simply not believed to be the same.

Looking at this a little more deeply, it should be noticed that plants are geared to produce enormous quantities of themselves. A single stalk of wheat has the seed capacity to produce hundreds of its kind, and the time it takes for the growing to take place is very short. By contrast, a cow produces only one or two calves per pregnancy and the gestation period for a cow is something like eight months.

Additionally, plants have the unusual characteristic of being able to take sunlight and turn it into chemical energy. Animals don't do this. Part of the plant kingdom's duty, as far as this view is concerned, is to use this energy-converting ability to produce food by which higher orders of life are sustained, and that is exactly what they do. Eating plants and the eating animals are as different as night is to day.¹⁷

There is another intellectual quandary that pops up mainly from people who are put off by the idea of vegetarianism. "Look at nature," they will say. "Predators are designed to kill other animals for food. What's so unusual about one animal eating another?"

There is an interesting metaphysical twist to this that isn't often considered within the West--the possibility that *humankind* is responsible for the state of our planet's biological and psychological evolution as it stands today.

According to the Eastern view we have been examining, the real purpose of human endeavor is to learn to be responsible within the context of *existence in matter*. At

¹⁷ There is a Biblical quote that reads, "God gave man dominion over the animals." The passage could have been interpreted as an admonishment to treat animals as one's children (the word "dominion" comes from the Latin *dominae*; *dominae* means father). It is unfortunate that it has instead been interpreted as a justification to treat animals in whatever way the whim of man dictates.

our stage of development, we are doing this by learning to deal with *thought* as a living thing. If that be true, humans are the ones that set the thought-tone for this evolution. And the lesser kingdoms? They learn from their contact with the more highly ordered forms of Awareness (humankind), but their real duty is to support the efforts of that higher kingdom. All of the kingdoms of Nature do this by reflecting back at humankind the *state* of humankind.

Nature acts like a mirror that allows humanity to see where it is within its state of evolution. What that means is that when there is no longer harm in humankind--when humans no longer have the tendency toward violence--there will no longer be a need for violence in nature and, hence, violence will no longer *be* in nature.

It is not easy to over emphasize this idea. *Nature reflects humanity*. If there is anger in humans, there will be anger in nature. If there is guile in humans, you will find guile in nature. If there is violence in humans, you will find violence in nature. When humans evolve to the point when these things are no longer a part of the way they deal with life, Nature will have evolved into something entirely different from what it is today.¹⁸

A corollary of this is the belief that when a particular Being comes to a point where there is no longer harm in that Being, there will no longer be the necessity for nature and nature's creatures to react harmfully toward that Being--there will no longer be the necessity to reflect harm at that Being.

According to some, this tradition was a major part of the Mystery School teachings, not to mention a central theme within some of the more severe Mystery School tests. There is a place in England, for instance, that is dome shaped. In the top of the structure are millions and millions of bees. According to legend, Mystery School initiations took place there (actually, they were initiations of the Lesser Mysteries). The initiate would sit in that place, go into meditation, then the bees would swarm.

The test for the initiate was to have become so completely harmonious that he or she could sit within the considerable franticness of the swarming bees and not be moved to fear or protectiveness. If the initiate passed the test, he or she would simply stand up and walk out of the structure. But if the initiate had any bit of harm or fear within the

¹⁸ . . . and the Lion will lay down with the Lamb . . .

self, the bees would sense the disharmony and would attack, possibly killing the person. Only if the initiate had become completely harmless would the bees not act aggressively.

There are other places around the world that were supposed to be devoted to the initiation of Beings who had moved ahead of the stream of humanity in this sense. For instance, it is believed by some that one of the main temples in ancient Egypt--most probably the Temple of Ptah at Memphis--had a small secondary temple (exactly where it was has been lost to history). The temple was said to be an initiatory place for the Greater Mysteries. If you will remember, the Greater Mysteries were supposedly concerned with fairly serious stuff: initiations in which Beings moved into the inner worlds to deal with powerful thoughtforms, etc. Being an initiate of the Greater Mysteries was not supposed to be a *feel good* experience (though there surely was a goodness of feeling for those who were involved). It was deadly serious.

One of the initiatory places of the Greater Mysteries was supposed to have been this little temple built on the shore of the Nile. It was constructed in an odd way, being circular with a diameter of somewhere around eighty feet. There was a great stone door that was never closed, and there were big areas cut out of the wall at ground level that allowed passage between the inside and outside of the structure. In the middle of the room was a three-and-a-half foot high platform.

The room was rarely used, but when an initiate was ready he or she would enter just before the Nile would rise. Once in, the individual would plant himself or herself on the platform and go into meditation. While in their meditation, they would cleanse any residual darkness that might be within them and make their final commitment to harmlessness. The meditation would take three days. When the Being was ready--was completely, totally harmless--the Nile would have risen and the room would have a foot of water covering its floor.

As the water entered, so too would crocodiles. When the initiate came out of his or her meditation, the individual would find crocs all around. The test? When the initiate was ready, he or she would step off the platform into the midst of the crocodiles, and walk out of the temple.

If there was the slightest tone of fear or ability to do harm left in that Being, the crocodiles would sense that and would respond to the initiate as they would any human (read this "any meal"). But if the Being was absolutely harmless, there would be no necessity for nature to reflect harm in that way and the crocodiles would not become aggressive. In fact, there are even stories of Beings who so deeply loved that they would

sit down in the water with the animals and commune with them for a time before leaving. Due to the benevolence of the human, the creatures would have become for a time harmless themselves.

Did places like this exist in the ancient world? The one in England still exists; the one in Egypt is gone (assuming it ever existed).

Were they actually used for these kinds of initiations? Who's to say.

The reason these have been brought up here is to point out a part of Eastern metaphysics that is accepted in the East: *that humans set the tone for Nature*. What you find in Nature is a reflection of the states of mind that exist now in humans. As humans change, Nature will change. And as this happens for the better, the creatures of Nature will slowly lose the ability and necessity to harm.¹⁸

Before closing, there is one last thing that should be mentioned concerning Nature: As was discussed in an earlier section, Eastern metaphysics maintains that there is a kind of parallel evolution going on within the Nature kingdoms. Specifically, it is believed that there exist Awarenesses in Nature that are quite pure and evolved in their own right, but not in the way humans are evolved (i.e., they have not immersed themselves as deeply into matter as have humans, hence their purity). These Awarenesses are called Devas.

For example, trees, being a more highly evolved form than mere plants, are believed to be animated by Devic forms while whole forests are overseen by great Consciousnesses that are also Devic in nature (these Beings are sometimes called *nature spirits*).

Going into the forest can be a very pleasurable experience. Part of the reason why, from this perspective, is because in going into the forest you are coming in contact with these great, benevolent Beings.

¹⁸ Minor point: I don't want you going out thinking benevolent thoughts for two or three days, then approach a rattlesnake thinking it isn't going to strike because you have become harmless. Initiates of the Mystery School were traditionally believed to be Beings who had spent many lives and great efforts, and had had enormous trials in coming to a point where they could attempt these severe tests. We aren't talking about average people; we are talking about highly evolved human beings.

In other words, when you are in a forest, you are not alone . . . even if you ignore the animals. A forest is alive. And with that thought, I direct you back to the walking meditation quoted at the beginning of this chapter:

I walk along and I set aside a stone that might be uncomfortable for someone. I pick up a fallen thing. I bring along with me a light of regard for all that I see, and I see the beautiful and wonderful splendor that exists in all things. I ask of my High Mind that I should be able to put that harmony into my hand so that all the Consciousnesses of Nature, when they feel me coming, will smile.