

Introduction

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Welcome to Issue 23-2 of the *Trumpeter*, the first of two special issues devoted to the life and work of Paul Shepard.

Our intention in these special issues is both to illustrate Shepard's personal influence and the continuing importance of his work to explorations into human psychology and communities. Shepard died in July 1996, and new generations of philosophers need to be aware of his seminal work.

In the first issue, we begin with a poem written as a tribute to Shepard by Sam Moon, followed by a photobiography of Shepard with comments by Flo Shepard and Kathryn Morton and a bibliography of Shepard's work. This essay introduces our readers to life of Paul Shepard, philosopher and activist.

The essays in these issues were written by people who knew Paul or were significantly influenced by him, including Joe Meeker, Bernie Krause, Jorge Conseca-Sevilla, Eugene Halton, and others. This issue concludes with previously unpublished essays by Shepard, "The Biological Bases of Bear Mythology and Ceremonialism" and "Confessions of a Whistle-Blower" in which he explains the development of his own thoughts.

The second special issue of the *Trumpeter* will include essays that are both critical of some aspects of Shepard's theories and the continuing relevance of his work. This issue includes Frederic L. Bender's essay "On the Importance of Paul Shepard's Call for Post-Historic Primitivism and Paleolithic Counter-Revolution against Modernity" and Eugene Halton's "Eden Inverted: On the Wild Self and the Contraction of Consciousness" in which he explores the patterns of modernity that contributed to widespread immaturity in contemporary societies.

As Bender points out, “we live today on a planet undergoing abrupt non-linear change”—global warming. After some 8000 years of socio-cultural development based on burgeoning agriculture in a period of relative ecological continuity, this non-linear shift has the potential to upset all of our expectations of “normal futures.” The human species will adapt, not because we want to adapt, but because we must adapt.

Recurring periods of global climate change over thousands of years have provided periods when the human enterprise diminished and flora and fauna restored and reordered into new patterns of ecosystems. During the periods when the collective human enterprise is decreased, frequently called Dark Ages, various human communities developed new ways of thinking, innovation, new patterns of social organization. During the twenty-first century and beyond, humans have the opportunity to learn from our Pleistocene ancestors methods adapting, socially, politically, and ecologically, to global warming.

Paul Shepard focused his life work on the adaptations of humans in hunter-gather societies. The cultures of these societies were and are focused on kinship, ceremonialism, adaptation, and intimate relations with wild nature.

Shepard provides us a view of the interpenetration of mankind in the landscape and asserts that the social forces of modern society have constrained humans and encouraged what he called “preadolescent immaturity.”

In *Coming Home to the Pleistocene*, Shepard wrote that

We have been corrupted not only by the domestication but by the conventions of nature esthetics. The corporate world has drawn our attention away from wildness with parcels of wilderness that restrict the random play of genes, establish a dichotomy of places and banish wild forms to the enclaves where they may be encountered by audiences while the business of domesticating and denuding the planet proceeds. The savage DNA is being isolated and protected as esthetic relicts, like the vestiges of tribal peoples. The ecological relationships and religious insights of wild cultures, whose social organizations represents exotic or vestigial stages in ‘Our history’ or ‘our evolution,’ are translated into museum dioramas. My wildness, according to this agenda, can be experienced only on reservations called wilderness, but cannot be lived in ordinary life.¹

We are pleased to present this selection of essays and narratives that explore the depth and relevance of Paul Shepard’s contribution to human ecology and human development, and contribute to our collective dialogue on our present condition. Perhaps as Shepard

suggests, appropriate adaptive strategies may be discovered in a sort of re-paleolithization of cultures.

References

Chew, Sing. 2007. *The Recurring Dark Ages: Ecological Stress, Climate Changes, and System Transformation*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press.

Shepard, Paul. 1998. *Coming Home to the Pleistocene*. Washington, DC: Island Press.

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MTC

¹ Shepard, 1998, p. 145.