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When a kid dies on cocaine, the question isn't "Where did he get it?" It's
"Why did he want it?"

These words were written by Hal Crowther, a columnist for The Spectator, a North Carolina regional weekly paper. I like Crowther's column, its beautifully written, and I have hopes that he is working his way toward outright support of an environmental ethics which borders on the radical. It is clear that he has not surrendered his mind to the money-makers or to the proposition that "the business of America is business". Shoddy practises and profiteering offend him.

The point in the column quoted from is that the drug problem is not going to go away when a few pushers are put in jail. The real problem is in how the drug customer perceives the world. The subject was the recent death of famed basketball star, Len Bias, from a cocaine overdose. Why did Len Bias want cocaine just at the moment when the lords of basketball had awarded him a contract for millions and the religious priesthood of the sportsworld had placed him on a pedestal where throngs worship? "He had everything, didn't he? What more could he want?"

An answer to this builds itself in my mind, and I am going to use it to introduce some commentary on the human role in the world. My explanation goes like this: A lot of bright and talented kids are so overwhelmed with the emptiness and hypocrisy of modern life, the lack of meaning in a money-obsessed society, the dishonesty that pervades just about everything, that they have lost respect for society and for themselves, and so they do some very dumb or very bad things. "What does it matter? We are being lied to by just about everybody from the very top down. There is nothing to do about it so. . . what the hell. . .? We have not given these kids a world that attracts them, enchants them, lures them, challenges them and offers them lives of meaning and purpose.

Now suppose that we could turn the clock back a few years and capture Len Bias and his contemporaries for an afternoon. And suppose that this were early enough in their lives that they had not yet come to distrust everybody and everything. Could we get across a message that would provide a defense to the temptations of the drug culture? Could we describe for them a world they would thrill to be a part of, that would engage their minds and hearts and make them want to belong to it, to participate in it? Is it possible that we could make an entrancing world actual for them, alive, real?

And the answer is "Yes!" The world is enchanting, lovely beyond description, filled with music and poetry and love, wonder and awe, constant amazement, a diversity of delight for sight and smell and hearing, touch and taste. "It's there, all around you! It really is! It is only a matter of making the story clear and believable.

How would one get started with a young man or a young woman trying to give him or her this new perception of the world? I would start out with Brian Swimme's new book The Universe is a Green Dragon, which relates a conversation between an elder wise man and a youth. The youth might have been Len Bias. Swimme got the idea for the book while talking to Thomas Berry, and he used the context of CFRSL #37 where an elder talked about life with a fourteen year old girl on a summer afternoon. But Green Dragon is uniquely the work of a brilliant scientist/teacher/writer. It is currently being placed on the BOMC alternate list. The magazine "New Options" has nominated it for its annual Book Award. (Bear & Co. Press, Santa Fe, NM 87504-2860, \$8.95.)

The wise man is called Thomas "to honor Thomas Berry, and the cosmological tradition he celebrates, stretching back from Erich Jantsch, and Teilhard de Chardin through Thomas

Aquinas to Plato. The idea is to present the new creation story in the form of a conversation." And the idea is to convey to the youth the stunning magnificence and the glory of the universe and particularly the fact that the youth is present to it, part of it, a member, a needed participant, especially in our time when creation is being despoiled. Love is shown to be the critical binder that holds it together. Allurement and gravity are two aspects of the force that unites it. The conversation covers the microphysics and the celestial spaces, examines the seas, the land, life, fire, and wind. And if it were taught well, (I picture it so) our young people would go to supper at home that night with new ideas about themselves and how to perceive the world.

I want you to glance at the night sky and see the cosmic dynamic of allurement intuitively. The night sky continuously utters a single word, and that is allure-ment. This will have to be learned, then forgotten, then known. Because you were raised in the modern anthropocentric period, you have hardly ever looked at the night sky, let alone understood that the night sky speaks to you of the central dynamic of the cosmos.

In the same way you can come to establish yourself in a relationship with the mountains so that to glance at them is to be reminded of the cosmic dynamic of memory. The mountains and the rocks shout ceaselessly: REMEMBER! Whenever water rushes over your body, it brings into your presence the reality of cosmic sensitivity and our destiny as the mind and heart of the universe. When the wind blows coolly in your face, you are feeling the activity of generosity, reminded of the great joy and destiny of celebration. And whenever you feel sunlight on your arms you are reminded of that great cosmic flame, the unseen shaping of which permeates you and connects you to the embryogenesis of the Earth.

We need a new human in a new Earth, creating and entering new relationships with the primary realities of the universe. In the most obvious meaning, all our diffi-culty as a species on this planet stems from our false relationships with winds, seas, life, sunlight and land. It's not that we're bad; we've simply been trying to live outside our true relationships with these primordial cosmic presences.

The book could be a new catechism, a text for Sunday school.

ECOLOGY - THE SPIRITUAL IMPERATIVE

Haloween weekend... October 31st, November 2st and 2nd ...Camp New Hope
Peter Borrelli Margot Adler
Speeches -- Discussions -- Music -- Dance -- Ceremony -- Celebration
Write CFRSL

August 21
7:30 p.m.
At the Center
Philosopher Don VanDeVeer of the NC State Philosophy and Religion Depart-ment will lead a discussion on Experimentation on Animals. Prof. VanDer-Veer is a specialist on medical ethics and has recently completed a book with Christine Pierce on environmental ethics, People Penguins and Plastic Trees. He describes himself as a "moderate" on animal rights. The dis-cussion ought to be a lively one.

November
At the Center
Professor Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen, Professor of Economics, Vanderbilt University and author of The Entropy Law and the Economic Process.

September 27
Philadelphia
E.F. Schumacher annual lectures. Wendell Berry -- Kathryn Waller.
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