

Awakening an Interest and Insight into Landscape with High School Students

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Each person is born at a particular location on the Earth. We could say that each human being comes from a state of Universality into the Particularity of a location, family, culture and time. The Education process needs to help the becoming person to find a relationship to all aspects of the particularity that they have been born into. Learning to know and love the landscape of which you are a part is an important, if not essential, ingredient of becoming yourself. In the work in the High school I have looked for ways of furthering this.

The Australian Continent was the last inhabited continent to yield to the enquiring European mind. The indigenous people of Australia have, according to them, always been here despite the theories of Archaeologists. Their Mythology provides in an exceptionally clear way, a description of the connection of people with their natural environment and how this connection is to be renewed and maintained. The landscape and the self become intertwined. The ritual life of the Aboriginal people was a constant reminder that what was around them was the creation of something that was reincarnated within them. This may come as some surprise when you observe a community of Aboriginal people. Animals may be quite cruelly treated, they are hunted etc. and the immediate environment may be sadly neglected. Of course, this image is exacerbated by loss of traditional life, the effects of alcohol and the general breakdown of health and lifestyle in many Aboriginal communities. However, I suspect we would need to re-examine many of our preconceptions of the «noble savage» idea of aboriginality. There certainly would not be any remnants of western romanticism in the lifestyle we would find. It was a lifestyle subject to strict ritual law which determined all aspects of the individual and community behaviour. The relationship to the environment and landscape was in the law and not built from individual expression in the way we would expect it from our culture. The individual aboriginal person finds their fulfilment in their devotion to the law, which governs the way the individual leads all aspects of his/her life.

This finds expression in this picture of *Don Jdungerai* preparing a kangaroo we had killed for cooking. Here as in all aspects of traditional life there is a ritualised way of doing it that must be strictly followed. Watching this man do this work was a lesson in devotion that was starkly different to the emotions of an idealistic young western person also watching. The initial horror that was felt by the young Westerner was calmed by the devotion shown by the Aboriginal man in carrying out his task.

What we as educators of young people today are faced with is how to awaken an individual caring and objective relationship to the landscape. The more we are able to awaken this the more will we be able to also legislate in a way which will honour the world around us.

