

SEIZING AN ALTERNATIVE

Toward an Ecological Civilization

June 4-7, 2015

**Section VII: Reimagining and Reinventing
the Wisdom Traditions: World Loyalty
Track 5: Thinking Independently
in the Tradition of Classical Greece**
Donald A. Crosby, organizer



Thinking Independently in the Tradition of Classical Greece, Summary **By Donald A. Crosby**

This track included fifteen presentations, the titles and abstracts for which are attached below. The presentations were varied, but the requisite bases of reference to Greek and Roman as well as more recent philosophy; the pertinent resources of Whitehead's thought—pro or con in its particular details; multiple causes of and relevant philosophical approaches to the current ecological crisis; and the firsthand critical and creative thinking of the presenters, were all touched upon. The discussions were extremely lively and filled with trenchant philosophical critiques, agreements, disagreements, and insights. All the participants came away with deeper understanding of diverse philosophical ways of thinking about nature, our place as humans within nature, and our current responsibilities to nature in a time of ecological crisis. We were also made more deeply aware of the snare of long established and assumed anthropocentric ways of thinking and acting, and of the grave dangers to the earth and its creatures and environments posed by them.

Some sense of the rich array of themes addressed and discussed in the track is suggested by the following topics:

- Whitehead and Past and Present Philosophers
- Whitehead's Philosophy as Resource for Environmental Thought and Action
- Ecological Interdependencies
- Deep Ecology
- Beauty's Erotic Lure
- Panpsychism
- Evolutionary Emergentism
- Sacredness of Nature

- Desacralization of the Natural World
- God and the World
- Process Polytheism
- Panentheism
- Rationalism and Empiricism
- Aesthetics and Ethics
- Tragic Beauty
- Surprising Capacities and Abilities of Nonhuman Animals
- Role of Virtues in Nonhuman Animal behavior
- Relevance of Eastern and South Asian Intellectual and Religious traditions
- Relations of Wisdom and Love
- Radical Process Immanentalism
- Religious Naturalism
- Whitehead and Past and Present Philosophers
- Whitehead's Philosophy as Resource for Environmental Thought and Action

Discussion of topics such as these has helped each of us participants in this track to be more acutely aware of the impending ecological crisis and of the need for philosophers to think deeply about it and about how to respond constructively to it. We have become more alert to our responsibility to teach, speak, write, communicate, and act responsibly in relation to this crisis, drawing on the resources of philosophy—and of Whitehead's richly suggestive philosophical writings in particular—in relevant and creative ways as we do so. We may not all draw specifically or continuously on every aspect of Whitehead's philosophy in doing so, but we will endeavor to honor his philosophical acumen, innovative spirit, and manifest concern for the wellbeing of the earth and its creatures in our own ecological philosophizing.

Members of the track have discussed ways in which we might seek to disseminate its papers for a wider audience. We have talked about preparing an anthology, submission of some or all of the papers to professional journals, internet postings, blogs, and the like. No decision has yet been made about these or other possibilities, but in the meantime we have agreed to distribute written copies of the presented papers to one another as members of the track. In these ways and with continuing personal communications we shall endeavor to keep our conversation with one another and others going.