

What are "the ends of nature," its "over-all goals"?

"[T]he parts live not merely for their own sakes but for that of the whole. What does the whole get from the parts? Well, what do we get from our parts, our bodily cells and molecules? We get the sensory and emotional content of our experience. . . . To love is, at least, to participate in the life of another. It may be more than that, but we should not use the word for less. We love, then, our own cells, though without distinct consciousness, so far as the single cells are concerned. We have a vague sense of good and evil enjoyed by the parts of the body. Imagine [*sic!*] this vague sense flooded with the light of full consciousness and you have an analogy for the love of God.

"It is a well-known law that the value of experience as coming to us from the body depends upon the variety and intensity of activities which can be harmonized. We know that lack of variety and contrast kills interest; we also know that variety and contrast may in some cases confuse and disturb. Harmonious variety is essential to value. What is nature if not a wondrously varied pattern of forms? . . . [E]ssentially nature is harmonious, things fit together in an ecological web which naturalists admire the more they study it. The laws of nature articulate the harmony of nature. . . .

"Nature is a harmony in variety, ultimately for the enjoyment of the whole, but proximately for the enjoyment of each and every part, in proportion to its awareness of this harmony. Variety is in [time as well as in space]. That individuals and species die and others take their place is variety in time. Those who lament the passing of species want to limit the variety to be enjoyed by the whole. . . .

"But can God love us if [God] allows us to cease, while [God] lives on? The answer lies in a simple ambiguity in the word 'cease.' That our lives are finite in time as well as in space does not mean that at death we become nothing, or a mere corpse. For our past experiences are not cancelled out. The past is indestructible, ever-living. Persons who truly love those who have died feel this vividly, though they usually, thanks to the strange blinders worn by philosophers and theologians who have taught them no better, misconceive the nature of the feeling. The past reality of the person is not dead and cannot die. It 'lives forevermore,' in Whitehead's phrase. Where? How? In the Whole, whose appreciation is infinitely tenacious of every item

unendurable. That species do not last forever is even more obviously not an evil. Species other than man cannot know that they are temporary, and man can understand how his temporary existence can contribute to what is not temporary, the all-encompassing Whole. [Since Hartshorne speaks earlier in the same essay of "the races of rational beings which, according to all reasonable probability, people the great spaces" (75), he should have said, "Species other than rational . . . "]. . . .

"But should creatures live, while they live, by destroying others? Is this not vicious or cruel? We have granted that creatures should not live forever. How then are they to die? The only causes must be other creatures, either within, as parts, or without as members of the external environment. And what harm does it do a deer that it dies through the attack of a lion, rather than of old age? Old age is a dull mode of existence; if death generally came that way, then instead of the species being composed mostly of creatures enjoying the prime of life, it would be more largely composed of half-bored elders. The sum of intense enjoyment would be less, not more" (81 f.).