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## Editorial Postscript

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## Editorial Postscript

### Cover Page Footnote

My thanks to all the reviewers, past and present, who take/took time from their work and lives to read, comment, and assist authors in achieving greater lucidity, coherence, and legibility.

## Editorial Postscript

Prior to receiving Michael Cohen’s manuscript, and throughout the review process, a team of five IJE reviewers asked the questions below (same set or paraphrased) in several emails. To Mr. Cohen’s credit he indefatigably produced several versions of the original manuscript responding to our queries, and in the end compromising on a format that satisfied most of our publishing requirements. A “legacy paper” allows a known author such as Mr. Cohen a greater degree of stylistic expression and phenomenological/epistemological freedom. Although a couple of reviewers may not be, understandably so, wholly satisfied,\* I believe that a good number of readers may find common ground with Mr. Cohen’s descriptions and personal sensibilities (experiences). ~George Conesa on behalf of some of the IJE reviewers of Mr. Cohen’s article.

- 1) What is “Pristine Truth”?
- 2) How can this construct be operationalized toward empirical aims?
- 3) Is this construct new or is it already expressed in ideas found in philosophy (Eastern or Western) or in traditional indigenous wisdom?
- 4) How does one apply “Pristine Truth” to ecopsychological practices?
- 5) How does one implement “Pristine Truth” in education?
- 6) How does one implement “Pristine Truth” in a clinical setting?
- 7) How can (by what methods) a counselor, educator, outdoor adventurer, or clinician quantify “Pristine Truth”—its presence or absence?
- 8) How does the construct “Pristine Truth” make “ecopsychology” a science? Art? Religion?
- 9) What is the relationship between “Pristine Truth,” “nature,” or “naturalness”?
- 10) How/When did you realize the value of “Pristine Truth”?

**Note on Copy Editing:** Most of the original manuscript, except for minor formatting, was left “as is,” verbatim, so that Mr. Cohen’s telling of his experiences was not unduly misconstrued. Also, any deviation from his voice might have been perceived as an attempt to fractionalize his ideas of “Pristine Truth.”



### \*Dissenting Reviewer’s Comments

A few of us had great difficulty in understanding Mr. Cohen, for example, as he declared:

This article accomplishes amazing things because it's rooted in the undeniable Pristine Truth that “You are reading these words here and now.”

It made no sense to us -- its relevance to other ideas presented in the article -- but it might make sense to others. The author’s judgement that “*This article accomplishes amazing things ...*” struck us as lacking personal and academic modesty because, ultimately, it is up to critical readers to make that determination.

Some passages are rendered into italics by the editors in order to more easily locate and make salient core definitions that are central to an understanding of Mr. Cohen’s perspectives. We also compiled a list (last) of the many instances where his construct “Pristine Truth” was named and

defined. When these descriptions were read *in-toto* and side-by-side, it appeared to a few of us that several were tautologies, that they were logically inconsistent, and idiosyncratically interpreted or described. Tautological phrasings aside, Mr. Cohen's definitions are open to scrutable counter arguments that might actually undermine his positions (opinions). We present three counter arguments that summarize our misgivings.

### Three Counter Arguments

**ONE.** Accepting as he does the ever-changing aspects of the natural world and by his very (and correct) inclusion of humans as being integral to “nature,” then, like any number of other species that exceed their numbers and detrimentally impinge upon the ecological carrying capacity of their environments, humanity's overpopulation and uncontrolled consumption, cause and have caused the ultimate destruction of entire ecosystems—the planet. Ironically, as natural processes, are well within an all-inclusive definition of “Pristine Truth” (with important caveats made, for example, with regard to deontological ethics exemplified by Deep Ecology—see Devall's article in this issue). Natural history, from deep time to the present, is replete with examples of boom-and-bust periods – a naturally occurring and ongoing dynamic (Petersen, 1972; Holling, 1973; Orgel, 1973; Orgel, 1994).

In sum, it is a scientific fact that uncountable species in the past and present, from cyanobacteria making possible increased levels of oxygen in the atmosphere that subsequently killed off most anaerobic life (“the great oxidation event”—Hodgskiss, et al., 2019), to the cyclical events of locust swarms (Hugh, 1996), and the boom and bust of species interactions (cicadas and birds--Koenig & Liebhold, 2005), among many more examples, readily leads us to follow Mr. Cohen's postulates to the logical and real inevitability that “destruction,” across the whole of nature, is integral to “Pristine Truth.”

That humans do so on a planetary scale becomes almost a “Pristine Truth” moot point—or principal theorem. It is perhaps for this reason that any number of ecological philosophies, correctively so, end up in *deontological ethics*—a human invention. To use an analogy, Buddhist insight, by itself, might, without the Dharma, be perceived as nihilistic (Morrison, 1999).

**TWO.** The personalization of “nature” as an “entity” that communicates or as an “essence,” is an enduring platonic-anthropocentric feature that has plagued ecopsychology (philosophy and psychology) as a whole. The guru-like presentation of these experiences and suppositions, implies, at least, that one person has a more direct access to “nature” than others, and that only by practicing their techniques are other less enlightened folks able to achieve similar “connections.” “Love” might be ‘an answer,’ but as a byproduct of shifting sentimental associations and projections, it is quite difficult to employ as a credible measure of the sort of “connection” Mr. Cohen describes. Placing great emphasis on “love” excludes many kinds of activities that take place outdoors or in natural places where folks are, for example, engaged in scientific work, exercising, procuring food, or in any other type of activity that might be termed “practical.” On these accounts, Mr. Cohen's descriptions make for “ecopsychological” practices more akin to religion than actual naturally intrinsic *ecosemiosis*.

**THREE.** Not heeding the fact that natural processes are uncountable and that human psychology is complex and varies moment to moment, it is very difficult to accept any description of “nature connection” that does not address the fluid nature of activities that change in time and place as well as internally—*endosemiotically*. If these dynamics are challenging for behavioral and social scientist to track within, between individuals, and in larger groups, surely, they would be even more so when tracking the dynamics between an individual or group of individuals and the entire unbounded menagerie folks call “nature.” Mr. Cohen, and he is not alone in this, ignores or glosses over relevant psychological and sociological factors such as individual differences (age, sex, gender, nationality, ethnic background, cohort effects, inherent biases, etc.) making it challenging to evaluate the degree to which different people *interpret nature*. Mr. Cohen’s personal experiences are made into a fits-all mold or prescription for participating in nature authentically. David Abram’s (1997, 2010) just-so stories are in a similar vein. It seems to us that lacking ecological and psychological scientific knowledge handicaps an individual from making deeper connections. Words like “sensibility,” “love,” “intuition,” “connections” are poorly sketched ‘constructs’ that make for an ungrounded epistemological state: bizarre syncretism; modern-day *mageries*.

(We invite Mr. Cohen to address the above points in a future edition of IJE, if he so chooses.)

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## “Pristine Truth” Descriptions Employed by Mr. Cohen in This Article

**Pristine Truth:** 1) The self-correcting properties of natural processes (i.e., “nature”); ... 2) “The essence of how Nature works and how it helped me recognize its remedy for Earth Misery that I’ve applied and validated for 57 years and counting. Since it’s an ultimate truth, I’ll describe it right here and you can be the judge by repeating what I did for yourself and trust your own experience; This article is Pristine Truth creating itself with you here, as Nature has with me. It works because it consistently creates attraction moments that let Nature teach us how to stop our abusive war with Nature’s flow around and through us, and increase well-being; 3) This instant, Pristine Truth is attracting (->) your life to read further; 4) This article accomplishes amazing things because it’s rooted in the undeniable Pristine Truth that “You are reading these words here and now.” ; 5) To achieve this article’s Pristine Truth goal, I interview myself here as being a personification of Nature that Nature has taught me to be over my past, reasonable and authentic years “in the woods.” In this way, as an Earth avatar, I help others live their great trustable Pristine Truth and its beneficial effects that you can use to evaluate it; 6) I and others call Nature and I additionally call Pristine Truth in my work; 7) We will discover what happens as my interview with me progresses and you can be the best judge of its value because you are reading it and involved in it as it is growing right now. Since its words here are creating each Pristine Truth that follows them, I don’t know its outcomes any better than you do based on your education and life experiences; 8) What I do know is that, via Pristine Truth, my senses have registered their origins in Nature’s flow and I urge you to do the same by visiting a natural area and see if you can sense or feel Pristine Truth moment there as you read this.; 9) Pristine Truth that flows around and through you and everything else. This makes you and all things always connected and part of me and vice-versa; 10) Your society has placed many names on me like nature, natural world, environment, ecosystem, higher power, spirit and now Pristine Truth. However, I was born nameless. In fact, it is only you and the rest of humanity that has the ability to produce and attach names to me or anything as you have just done. This gift of yours did not appear until some 13 or more billion years after the Big Bang non-verbally orgasmed me, Nature, into being matter; 11) Pristine Truth attraction moments are its web strands or web loves, its unifying glue; 12) I know this for sure because I’m conscious of what I’m attracted to attach to, that’s how I know it, just as I know I’m attached to you now so your Pristine Truth ideas and words strengthen and support me; 13) The Pristine Truth is that the stress from that separation is what today produces our increasing Earth misery; 14) Folks are sensing and reading about what their/your life wordlessly loves to green switch right here in this Pristine Truth; 15) It’s our inner child and Pristine Truth in action when you want all things to help you; 16) What was and is needed is a single commonly understood term for each Pristine Truth of Nature’s flow so that word remedies our present destructive outcomes. Then all that is additionally required is funding to promote that tool; 17) I used the term “Pristine Truth” to help stop our society’s ongoing prejudice against nature. I define that prejudice as “An unreasonable, pre-judging attitude that is, due to bonding, unusually resistant to sensible influence” and was asked by the National Audubon Society to write my book “Prejudice Against Nature about it.; 18) Pristine Truth is classic. It consists of all the various 54-sense attractions I and others have first-hand experienced these past 57 years since my original Grand Canyon epiphany. It is authentic because any space-time moment includes, unites and makes available all things past, present and future so they can be instantly applied or updated to restore their original unity.”