LOREN EISELEY'S RELIGIOUS PILGRIMAGE

By Harvey Potthoff

Loren Corey Eiseley
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Dr. Potthoff served as minister of the Christ Methodist Church in Denver from 1936 through 1952. He was named Professor of Christian Theology at the Iliff School of Theology in 1952, a position from which he retired in May 1981.

In the fall of 1981, Harvey Potthoff came to Nebraska Wesleyan University and served as the Mattingly Distinguished Visiting Professor of Religion until his retirement in the spring of 1992. He initiated the annual Mattingly Symposium to link Wesleyan with the community and the church. He has taught courses and Seminars on Aging, Dying and Death in Religious Perspective and Science and Religion to hundreds of students and community members; they have come to know Dr. Potthoff as a man of profound insight, wise counsel and gentle humor.

Dr. Potthoff has written articles for scholarly journals, curriculum materials and position papers for the church, as well as eight books, including *God and the Celebration of Life* (1969), *A Whole Person in a Whole World* (1972), and *Loneliness: Understanding and Dealing With It* (1976).

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Loren Eiseley wrote, "Ironically, I who profess no religion find the whole of my life to be a religious pilgrimage." (*All the Strange Hours*, p. 141). It is interesting to note that apart from several articles, such as those which appeared in the March 1984 issue of *Zygon* (a Journal of Religion and Science), relatively little has been done by way of examining Eiseley's work from the perspective of religious thought. At least, I am not aware of any extensive work designed to explore religious themes or interests, or perspectives in Eiseley's writings. This, then, is a modest attempt to take a few steps in that direction.

Eiseley wrote "I who profess no religion..." What could he have meant by that? He belonged to no religious organization. Gale Christianson writes, "He claimed to have attended church only once during his childhood, although it was an experience he never forgot. Melvina Corey took her grandson to an evangelical tent service during which he remembered being stuck with a pin wielded by a restless youth in the row behind him." (Gale Christianson, *Fox at the Wood's Edge*, Henry Holt and Company, 1990, p. 25). In adulthood Eiseley

accompanied guests or other friends to church on occasion, but he and Mabel were not church-goers. Writing to Lila Wyman Graves he said, "I have no philosophy except the belief that the universe is indifferent and blind... Why should I, who believe that at the moment of my death I am as utterly obliterated as the torn leaf or the crushed ant, be troubled by something out of reach when the years are passing and there is so much that is 'sensible' to be attained and enjoyed?" (Christianson, p. 80)

What, then, might Eiseley have meant when he referred to his whole life being a religious pilgrimage? Perhaps there are suggestions in the comments of some other scientists who made no formal religious professions, who found little or no meaning in the doctrinal and liturgical symbols of institutional religion, and yet spoke of religion as being a matter of great importance. So, Julian Huxley wrote:

> I feel that any such religion of the future must have as its basis the consciousness of sanctity in existence - in common things, in events of human life, in the gradually-comprehended interlocking whole revealed to the human desire for knowledge, in the benedictions of beauty and love, in the catharsis, the sacred purging, of the moral drama in which character is pitted against fate and even deepest tragedy may uplift the mind.
>
> (*Religion Without Revelation*, p. 168)

So, George Wald, biologist, said "I think of myself as a deeply religious person. But my religion is that of one scientist. It is wholly secular. It contains no supernatural elements. Nature is enough for me."

Einstein spoke of "cosmic religious feeling...which knows no dogma and no God conceived in man's image...I maintain that the cosmic religious feeling is the strongest and noblest motive for scientific research...What a deep conviction of the rationality of the

universe and what a yearning to understand...Kepler and Newton must have had to enable them to spend years of solitary labor in disentangling the principles of celestial mechanics" (*Ideas and Opinions* quoted in *Quantum Questions*, Ken Wilber, editor, p. 102-103).

It is my judgement that there is indeed a spirituality, a religious quality of outlook and style marked by a sense of sanctity in existence, a reverence for life, a yearning to know, a sense of awe and wonder in the presence of nature's mysteries. All this we find in Eiseley. With this understanding of spirituality and religion we might well perceive his life and work as a religious pilgrimage. He wrote:

> I am not formally religious. But I am deeply aware that life has a spiritual dimension that is not ultimately reducible to physical terms. In our civilization Christ is the symbol of this spiritual dimension of Man - the being with the impulse to choose, to choose well, to love.
>
> (Article "I Too Would Go Out To The Manger," *Redbook*, December 1968.)
>
> I believe in Christ in every man who dies to contribute to a life beyond the individual from the iron boot of the extending collective state. I believe in Christ when I believe man has unknowingly, cast up great great evolutionary portents - capacities and powers of which...few men have knowledge.
>
> (*Reader's Digest*, March 1962, "Our Path Leads Upward". p. 43-46)

In reflection on the human experience Eiseley used the imagery of journey, caravan, pilgrimage. The spirituality to which he bore witness was not static or linked to dogma...it had to do with the qualitative experience of a person on the move... "the prowlings of one mind which sought to explore, to understand and to enjoy the miracles of this world, both in and out of science...Forward and backward I have gone, and for me it has been an immense journey."

(*Immense Journey*, p. 12-13)

The remainder of what I bring to you will be largely quotations from Eiseley on three themes — quotations which seem to me to reflect attitudes and feelings essentially religious in character. The three themes are: Nature, the Human Being, Intimations of Otherness.

I. Concerning Nature

As a scientist Eiseley was committed to a study of Nature: natural structures, processes, creations. He found the natural world to be vast, dynamic, diversified, inter-related, inter-dependant, evolutionary. Nature gambles, but with constantly new and altering dice.

Eiseley struggled to find a definition of Nature. In *The Lost Notebooks of Loren Eiseley* we find this passage:

> Behind all religions lies nature, It lurks equally behind the buried cults of Neanderthal man, in Cro-Magnon hunting, and in the question of Job and in the answering voice from the whirlwind. In the end, it is the name for man's attempt to define and delimit his world, whether seen or unseen. He knows that it is a reality which was before him and will be after him. He may define it as that which is or include that which may be. It is an otherness of which he is a part. He may be a professed atheist, but he must still account for the fleeting particles that appear and vanish in his perfected cyclotrons of modern physics. He may see behind nature a divinity which rules it, or he may regard nature itself as a somewhat nebulous and indefinable divinity. Man knows he springs from nature and not nature from him. This is very old and primitive knowledge, a genuine scientific observation of the foretime. Beyond that point man, as the "thinking reed," the memory beast, and the anticipator of things to come, has devised hundreds of cosmogonies and interpretations of nature. There are the religious, so also, though somewhat differently formulated, are the theories and philosophies of science, All involve nature, No word bears a heavier, more ancient, or more diverse array of meaning. Of all words none is more important, none more elusive, for the term implies not alone all that is or may come to be. Behind it lurks the regularities and the chaos of the world. And Behind that further mystery, the shadow substance that only the mind of man has had the peculiar power to summon up from the beginning, the form beyond all matter, the shape of divinity itself. Man as atheist may turn upon and rend his own mind and say that this shadow is an illusion that is specifically his own, or as a scientific agnostic, he can draw an imaginary line beyond which he forces himself not to pass. He will adhere to the tangible, but he will still be forced to speak of the "unknowable," of "final causes," even if he proclaims such phrases as barren and of no concern to science. But in his mind he will still be forced to acknowledge a line he has drawn, a definition of nature he has arbitrarily proclaimed, a human limit that may or may not coincide with reality. Man may, by now, be a highly sophisticated student of the pitfalls of semantics, a student of comparative religions, or an astrophysicist probing the mathematical abstraction of time and space. Nevertheless, it is still nature that concerns him as it concerned the Neanderthal. It is the vessel that contains man and in which he finally sinks to rest when his sun vanishes forever. It is all, absolutely all, that he knows, or can know. He has never succeeded in defining it to his satisfaction and perhaps he never will.

In another place we find these words: "the shifting, unseen potential we call nature has left to man but one observable dictum, to

grow." (*The Star Thrower*, p. 221)

Erich Fromm, psychiatrist, has written that all persons need a "frame of orientation and devotion." Human beings need a map of meaning on which to locate themselves, find their identity, achieve meaning. Fromm believed that a major function of religion is in providing a frame of orientation and devotion. Nature was Eiseley's frame of orientation — his map of meaning. Eiseley sought for the meaning of his own life in the search for the meaning of all life, and the meaning of all life in the matrix of all nature.

In Nature life and death, being and becoming are interrelated. Thus, in Eiseley we find eloquent affirmation of life, and a brooding concern with death.

In Nature he discerned a "darker side" but also an ethic of life and a song of life. So it was in the judgement of the birds as they witnessed the raven taking the life of the nestling.

> When I awoke, dimly aware of some commotion and outcry in the clearing, the light was slanting down through the pines in such a way that the glade was lit like some vast cathedral. I could see the dust motes of wood pollen in the long shafts of light, and there on the extended branch sat an enormous raven with a red and squirming nestling in his beak.
>
> The sound that awoke me was the outraged cries of the nestling's parents, who flew helplessly in circles about the clearing, The sleek black monster was indifferent to them. He gulped, whetted his beak on the dead branch a moment, and sat still. Up to that point the little tragedy had followed the usual pattern. But suddenly, out of all that area of woodland, a soft sound of complaint began to rise. Into the glade fluttered small birds of half a dozen varieties drawn by the anguished outcries of the tiny parents.
>
> No one dared to attack the raven. But they cried there in some instinctive common misery, the bereaved and unbereaved. The glade filled with their soft rustling and their cries. They fluttered as though to point their wings at the murderer. There was a dim intangible ethic he had violated, that they knew. He was a bird of death. And he, the murderer, the black bird at the heart of life, sat on there, glistening in the common light, formidable, unmoving, unperturbed, untouchable.
>
> The sighing died. It was then I saw the judgement. It was the judgement of life against death. I will never see it again so forcefully presented. I will never hear it again in notes so tragically prolonged. For in the midst of protest, they forgot the violence. There, in that clearing, the crystal note of a song sparrow lifted hesitantly in the hush. And finally, after painful fluttering, another took the song, and then another, the song passing from one bird to another, doubtfully at first, as though some evil thing were being slowly forgotten, Till suddenly they took heart and sang from many throats joyously together as birds are known to sing. They sang because life is sweet and sunlight beautiful. They sang under the brooding shadow of the raven. In simple truth they had forgotten the raven, for they were the singers of life, and not of death.
>
> (*The Star Thrower*, p. 33-34)

The natural will to live, the struggle to live found eloquent expression in Eiseley's writings:

> I have seen a tree root burst a rock face on a mountain or slowly wrench aside the gateway of a forgotten city. This is a very cunning feat, which men take too readily for granted. Life, like the inanimate, will take the long way round to circumvent barrenness. A kind of desperate will resides even in a root. It will perform the evasive tactics of an army, slowly inching its way through crevices and hoarding energy

until someday it swells and a living tree upheaves the heaviest mausoleum.

(*The Unexpected Universe*, p. 227)

In the nature Eiseley saw something is born of every ending.

On that brief journey the wasp may well trip over the body of its own true mother - if this was her last burrow, a tomb for life and a tomb for death. Here the generations do not recognize each other; it remains only to tear open the doorway and rush upward into the sun. The dead past, its husks, its withered wings are cast aside, scrambled over, in the frantic moment of resurrection.

(*All the Strange Hours*, p. 243)

Eiseley, who was a master in the use of metaphor, perceived the human experience as "journey" or as "pilgrimage" — journey or pilgrimage within the realm of changing, evolving Nature.

Nowhere do we find Eiseley arguing for the existence of a transcendent God on the basis of design or direction in nature. Nowhere do we find him suggesting that nature is planned as traditional theism or deism affirm. Yet there is a sense of sanctity in existence:

There is a terrifying aspect of the infinity of the universe, but there also comes to one - as he looks at the tiniest organism - ...an ability to sense in the world and through its particular objects, - people, the landscape, a sunset or whatever - a feeling of awe, some feeling between more perspective men and the universe, with its lurking potential, its power.

(*Psychology Today*, "A Conversation," 1970)

For many of us the Biblical bush still burns, and there is a deep mystery in the heart of a simple seed.

(*The Firmament of Time*, p. 8)

II. Concerning the Human Being

The Scotch clergyman, Ian McLarcn, once said, "Be kind to every person you meet; he is having a hard time."

Loren Eiseley knew much about, and thought much about, and wrestled with life's "hard times." Some of those hard times could be traced back to the nature of Nature — incredibly vast in space and time, involving suffering and loss and conflict and death. Some of the hard times could be traced to the pain of early experiences and disappointments along the way. Some could be traced to inner struggles, inner conflicts, tides of the spirit. Some could be traced to the frustrations which seem to be a part of every human being's journey. He referred to the human being as "the cosmic orphan" (*Saturday Review*, p. 16. 2/23/74). He wrote:

We have come from the dark wood of the past, and our bodies carry the scars and unhealed wounds of that transition. Our minds are haunted by night terrors that arise from the subterranean domain of racial and private memories... we inhabit a spiritual twilight on this planet.

(*The Unexpected Universe*, p. 195)

In the face of the pain, loneliness, frustrations of the human journey Eiseley affirmed the reality of the human spirit - and the hope which springs from that spirit. He perceived in the human being the capacity for awe and wonder and curiosity. He saw the capacity for aspiration after "some dawn he seeks beyond the horizon." (*The Night Country*, p. 149) Eiseley perceived in the human being the capacity for transcendence— the capacity to relate to life other than human life, to find meaning in a self-transcending frame of orientation.

(Humanity) suffers from a nostalgia for which there is no remedy upon earth except as is to be found in the enlightenment of the spirit - some ability to have a perceptive rather

than exploitive relationship with his fellow creature.

(*The Invisible Pyramid*, p. 146)

Eiseley perceived the wonder of the human spirit in the capacity of humankind to see itself on an uncompleted journey through time, linking past, present, future. He saw the wonder of the human spirit in the capacity for empathy and the capacity of humans "to love, not just their own species, but life in all its shapes and forms. This empathy with all the interknit life is the highest spiritual expression I know?" (*Redbook*, December 1968, "I Too Would Go Out To The Manger.")

He saw the wonder of the human spirit in the capacity to reach for the unattained. He wrote:

> Man in contemplation reveals something that is characteristic of no other form of life known to us: He suffers because of what he is, and wishes to become something else. The moment we cease to hunger to be otherwise, our soul is dead. Long ago we began that hunger: Long ago we painted on the walls of caverns and buried the revered dead...When we fail to wish any longer to be otherwise that what we are, we will have ceased to evolve.
>
> (*Darwin and the Mysterious Mr. X*)

He saw the pain and ecstasy of the human spirit in the struggle between good and evil, in the self-creation which is born of decision-making. Drawing on *Moby Dick*, Eiseley distinguished the Ishmael and Ahab ways of looking at the universe. (*The Star Thrower*, p. 198) He wrote:

> Man is the only being capable of calculated evil. Man is the only being who is free to choose, free to select the path he will tread. Because of this freedom of choice he has the power both for incredible good and incredible evil. The struggle between the two powers is represented by the tremendous drama of the Christian mythology - the fall, the redemption. All too often I am aware of "the fall", of the unlovely, the cruel, the dark-cave aspect of man's nature...
>
> If man, by virtue of his freedoms, is infinitely corruptible, he is also perfectible. He is capable of magnificently courageous actions. In his most noble and outstanding moments he is capable of hurling his own life away, in the name of his very reverence for the dignity of life.
>
> We are, each of us, alone in the end - alone with our freedom. Over and above genetic and cultural influences, we are true, unique creations, created by our own choices, And for each of us there is a final moment of life when the rest of the world fades away, when we come to face ourselves. And we ask: Did I choose well or ill? Did I make myself in the image of my ethical ideal?
>
> (*Redbook*, December 1968, "I Too Would Go Out To The Manger")

There were hours when Eiseley was deeply saddened by what he felt to be the mistaken choices and commitments made by human beings, the failure to be grasped by the larger vision, the hopes which lure human beings toward growth and deepening of spirit. And yet his call came:

> Let us, then, who have come this long way through time, be willing to assume the risks of the uncompleted journey...Man's road is to be sought beyond himself. No man there is who can tell the whole tale.
>
> (*Saturday Review*, 2/23/74, p.19)

I take it as part of my scientific creed not to define man totally in terms of the past, even though that past contains wonder as well as shame...Man is always partly of the future; he has power to take himself beyond the nature that he knows...although I am an evolutionist, concerned with time past, I believe in time future...It is with desire that the

journey goes on, and the desire and the roadway are not outside but within our hearts.

(Readers Digest, March 1962, "Our Path Leads Upward", p.45)

III. INTIMATIONS OF OTHERNESS

In this section of my remarks I am moving into territory concerning which I claim no expertise and about which I can only conjecture. It might be this way or that. After writing a theological treatise Augustine said "I write these things not because I understand the subject, but to refrain from silence." He knew that he didn't know, but he also was certain that there were some questions, some issues, to be addressed. It would not do just to pass by as though they were not there.

I have pondered Eiseley's words "all my life has been a religious pilgrimage." I do not know what he meant by that. But along the way he wrote words which might provide some clue, and so I should like to share some reflections on some clues. In this I have been stimulated by an essay by Richard Wentz, professor of religious studies at Arizona State University. The essay deals with the thought of Eiseley and is entitled "The Contemplation of Otherness." (*Zygon*, September 1985) The image or metaphor of "otherness" in Eiseley's work is what I should like to reflect on a few minutes.

Over and over in Eiseley's writings one gets the impression of a highly sensitive human being on a search — a quest for something undefined — an "otherness."

> Since boyhood I have been charmed by the unexpected and the beautiful. This is what led me originally into science, but now I felt instinctively that something more was needed - though what I needed verged on a miracle.

> My whole life had been unconsciously a search, and the search had not been restricted to the bones and stones of my visible profession...All I needed to do was to set <u>forth</u> either mentally or physically, but to where escaped me.
>
> (*The Unexpected Universe*, p. 197)

While the far reaches of the search may not have been clear to Eiseley, there can be little doubt as to how he proposed to live, this day, this hour, this relationship, this encounter. He brought an openness to the moment. So much of his writing has to do with memories of experiences - yes, of encounters - which had revelatory meaning for him. What might have left many persons unmoved, with no particular sense of significance, sent Eiseley into reflections and contemplations relating to the deepest issues of life and death.

Eiseley's life style involved the art of reciprocity. What ever or whomever he was encountering, <u>he received gratefully and gave graciously</u>. Ben Howard has written of "Loren Eiseley and the State of Grace." He writes:

> I am speaking of Eiseley's gift for evoking in one or two pages, the spiritual condition of man in a state of grace... The spiritual state he reported and so persuasively dramatized in his essays, occurred within the precincts of the present moment, where, however fleetingly, the self could escape its confines and the mind could exercise what Eiseley called "the lonely magnificent power of humanity, the most enormous extension of vision into other lives..."
>
> Such is the saving grace in Eiseley's reported experiences, the unmerited bounty which is the fruit of faith rather than conscious will. To those experiences Eiseley brought a skeptical, secular intelligence, but he also brought the readiness of faith, where the occasion was an eye-to-eye meeting with a fox cub, or the miraculous revival of a frozen catfish, or and encounter with a "star thrower", or an

experience he described as "The Most Perfect Day In The World".

(*Prairie Schooner*, Fall 1987, p. 58-59)

Eiseley brought what Buber would have called an "I - Thou" stance to every relationship. Eiseley also saw the moment in a larger context, in an encompassing matrix of eventfulness and meaning. We have said that Nature was his frame of orientation. Of Nature Eiseley wrote: "...(Man) knows that it is a reality which was before him and will be after him...It is an otherness of which he is part." (*The Lost Notebooks*, p. 153)

Eiseley believed that we can learn much about the various forms of "otherness" which human beings encounter and are encountered by. He seems to have brought a fundamental faith and affirmation to each new "other." But he also had a deep sense of mystery. There is much we do know now. Perhaps there is much we cannot know. There is no virtue in claiming to know more than we do. Of any "ultimate" otherness that may be, we cannot know. Yet, one cannot well act as though this is a non-issue. So there are those who in the face of mystery would turn to metaphor. Lewis Thomas said, "We are a spectacular, splendid manifestation of life. We have language and we can build metaphors as skillfully and precisely as ribosomes make proteins." (*The Medusa and the Snail*, 1979). Eiseley turned to metaphor; indeed "otherness" became a metaphor related to questions of ultimate order and meaning. His metaphors emerged out of his studies, but also out of contemplation, out of what he regarded as revelatory experiences, out of the mystical dimension of his own nature and experience.

> It is a commonplace of all religious thought, even the most primitive, that the man seeking visions and insight must go apart from his fellows and live for a time in the wilderness. If he is of the proper sort, he will return with a message. It may not be a message from the God he set out to seek, but even if he has failed in the particular, he will have had a vision or seen a marvel, and these are always worth listening to and thinking about...One must seek, then, what only the solitary approach can give - a natural revelation.
>
> (*The Immense Journey*, p. 163-164)

I believe that it was out of his search for a more ultimate otherness that Eiseley wrote in 1959, "I was trying to give birth to a different self whose only expression lies again in the deply religious words of Pascal 'You would not seek me had you not found me.'" (*The Firmament of Time*). It was after this that he turned again to the language of metaphor:

> But beyond lies the great darkness of the ultimate Dreamer, who dreamed the light and the galaxies...Man partakes of that ultimate wonder and creativeness...He (Man) came because he is at heart a listener and a searcher for some transcendent realm beyond himself...This he has worshipped by many names.
>
> (*The Unexpected Universe*, p. 55)

In another passage Eiseley uses the image of "The Player."

> Only one thing knows, I have said suddenly, feeling the wind and how it blew there in the desert where I had fought silently for life, "the Player, and he plays on all the corners of the world. Watching the percentages, But you can inch him over now and then."
>
> (*All The Strange Hours*, p. 205)
>
> Like the toad in my shirt we were in the hands of God, but we could not feel him; he was beyond us totally and terribly beyond our limited senses.
>
> (*All The Strange Hours*, p. 57)

Confrontation with "the more ultimate other" seemingly brought to Eiseley the sense of mystery, but also the will to say "Yes." There are times when Eiseley seems to be groping for a langauge appropriate for a Whole which is more than the sum of the parts...immanent in

all things, yet transcending them...a Whole which permeates and enfolds the seeming polarities of nature and human experience: life and death, being and becoming, solitude and relatedness, growth and diminishment, pain and pleasure, relaxation and struggle, giving and receiving, the abiding and the changing. He speaks of being "entwined in one great whole" — a whole which pervades all parts and yet is more than the sum of the parts...an otherness which is ever within and beyond.

I am suggesting that Eiseley sensed a dimension of Nature which cannot be explored by science alone, which is approached in contemplation, in what he called "natural revelation," in the mystic sense, in experiences of intimate reciprocity — a dimension of reality which calls forth the language of metaphor and poetry, and elicits a vision of hope.

Eiseley's invitation, then, is to respond to the larger vision in being human and becoming more fully human; in contributing to the evolving whole of which we are a part.

I close with lines from Loren Eiseley's poem "The Bats."

I well remember when a fallen leaf
bounced up and hissed at me.
It was just a bat
downed in the autumn rainstorm,
Helpess because
it needed to climb upward on some tree
and could not take to air from where it lay.
Still it had spat
at my descending foot
and saved itself
for in the end
I gathered it
safe in the dry fold of a magazine
and placed it

where its small twilight world
could be reentered on a tattered wing
that always fell
through darkness
then reversed its fall
to climb secretive on the wings of night.

Eiseley goes on to speak of matters bordering on the theological:

All, all are part
of a factured theology that God implants
within such brains as ours and leaves
the question open how to salvage
these bits and pieces of
the natural world that is not natural
but a queer event created
in minds still queerer.
So we poke and pry
into the atom's heart, triangulate
all visible stars
but still we cannot find
the serene center, but only void, void
and across the light-years,
only the crackle of
intolerable flames
in the heart's darkness, as in spiral nebulae and suns
that shine invisible unless their light should touch
beyond the galaxies such eyes as ours.

He closes with a poetic prayer:

Oh God Forgive us doubts,
within the fallen fractionated world of night's creating bring
all brown leaves to the universal leaf,
all tigers, yellow-eyed
to where the tiger is,

and to men in torment bring
the single face that has not come again
in all Jerusalems's years.
Bring at last dark to the unstirred dark that was
before creation, bring
light to its beginnings,
bring all things
back to what reigned before creation was.
This is the search of man, this is the pity found
within the protest of an autumn leaf that hissed and beat
against my footstep on a sidewalk long ago
in the poor environs of a prairie town.

Bring us then to where the heart of man may rest
before the torrent of the universal fall
diverged its particles-
these eyes that shine
unwinking in the night and then are gone,
the teeth that tear
because there is no other hope for them
in present nature;
bring us to
the uncreated Adam;
bring us back
beyond the light-years
into the light that was
before this curving light that never ceases
upon itself to run, but above all
bring us
to where bats, leaves, and men no longer know themselves
the solitary occupants of night
but rather

the tenants of a Garden that must be because
minds of His mind conceived of it although
they choose to call it universal myth,
thus naming on the night
what was
before inception.
Return the apple
to the shaken bough
while each of us,
serpent and Eve and Adam and the creatures,
gaze steadily upon its timeless surface as it was
before one bite was taken.
Give us
not night
but peace,
the peace that long ago was said to pass
beyond our human understanding.
Give it to all your creatures,
for we too are a part of them as they of us
entwined in one great whole that cannot keep
the mind from terror so long as one lost leaf
upon the pavement struggles within its solitude to rise.
(*Notes of An Alchemist*)

The following books by Loren Eiseley have been quoted in this paper. The underlining of words and passages from Eiseley's work has been done by the author of this paper to lend emphasis.

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