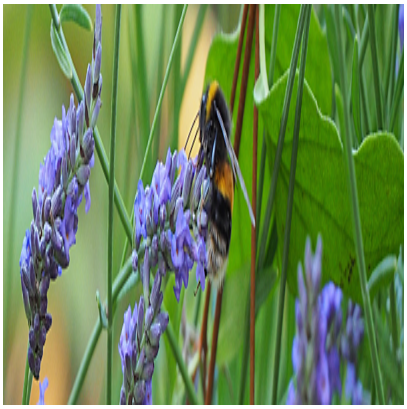


Animating spirits

Description

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A wander through the woods and fields is an excellent way to get in touch with the divine â?? if you are a pantheist. Pantheism affirms â??the animating spirit of natureâ?• (193), and that â??God is the unified totality of all things.â?• Pantheism is one of several systems of thought and belief that aligns with a sublime respect for and even adoration of nature. Pantheism is in the company of contemporary Polytheism and Paganism. Itâ??s also present as people talk about digital technology.

Nature reigns supreme, but digital networks ride its coat tails. In a book *The Digital God*, psychologist William Indick enthuses about various transformations in religious sensibility brought about by digital culture, in particular the multi-sensory modes of interaction provided by networked computers:

> â??The personalization, perceptualization, and sensualization of the experience of God may even lead a reversal back to premonotheistic spiritualities â?? polytheism, pantheism, paganism â?? resurgences of which have already been observed in Europe and Americaâ?• (35).

Super-sensory perception

Ostensibly this is a claim about the freedom of individuals to find their own spiritual home, aided by the liberating and democratising power of the Internet. But the language elides readily into the pantheistic tropes of uniting, melding and connecting:

> â??As digital media, cognition, and perception continue to meld into one integrated system, the doo rs of perception will open wide.â?•

Simulation plays a part: â??The virtual reality of multisensory digital simulation will give us the power to create our own spiritual perception, as vivid as any dream, and as visceral as any real world sensory experience.â?•

Sharing and communion also come into play: â??The power of the internet will allow us to share our spiritual images, our dreams of God, with everyone around the world, in a truly universal church, experienced as a communal dream.â?• This digitally enhanced revival de-privileges conventional organised religion.

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Indick stops short of attributing this divine connectivity to electronic networks and the Internet of all things, but he does endorse a transition to a blissful state of transcendence: â??In due time, we will devise simulators that will bypass our conscious mode of perception, tapping directly into our unconscious awareness, the dark hidden space within, in which spiritual perception is not inhibited, and is ready to be retrieved and enhanced. The digitally fueled inward journey into the kingdom of mind will at last reveal the truth of Jesusâ?? proverb: â??The kingdom of God is within'â?• (35-36).

Hive minds

The narrative is familiar and accords with other ambiguous alignments of the digital world with philosophy and religion via the singularity, super-sensible hive minds, mind-melds and other techno-utopianisms.

From my point of view, digital pantheism provides a further example, if we needed it, that the digital world and the world of nature are not so far apart â?? at least in the way some people, for some of the time, talk about them.

References

- Indick, William. 2015. *The Digital God: How Technology Will Reshape Spirituality*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland
- Levine, Michael P. 1994. *Pantheism: A Non-Theistic Concept of Deity*. London: Routledge
- Sprigge, T.L.S. 1997. Pantheism. *The Monist*, (80) 2, 191-217.

Note

- The first image is of the dome at the crossing of Santiago de Compostela, Spain. The second is a bee in Derbyshire.



Category

1. Nature

Tags

1. spirituality

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