

[PDF] Life Is A Miracle: An Essay Against Modern Superstition

Wendell Berry - pdf download free book



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Author: Wendell Berry
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Description:

As a poet, novelist, and farmer, Wendell Berry has worked and written in favor of tried and tested ways, rejecting the notion that the modern is always to be preferred over the old. Technology may have its uses, he has insisted in books like , but what matters more is the crafting of sound human communities and of self-reliant living. Religious faith lies at the heart of Berry's unapologetically old-fashioned program. Faith, which supposes that life is full of unpredictable mysteries, stands against

much of modern science, an opposition that Berry explores in *Life Is a Miracle*. Taking particular issue with entomologist E.O. Wilson's recent book, , which maintains the supremacy of scientific explanation over religious conjecture and supposes that science will one day be able to answer every question about the hows and whys of life, Berry revisits C.P. Snow's "two cultures" to observe that science and religion address different kinds of necessary questions. "Science cannot replace art or religion," he writes, "for the same reason that you cannot loosen a nut with a saw or cut a board in two with a wrench." Against science's "false specification and pretentious exactitude," Berry notes quietly that the more he observes his own little corner of the planet, a small Kentucky farm, the less patient he is with reductionist, materialist explanations of the way things work--for here, and everywhere, "life ... is unique, given to the world minute by minute, only once, never to be repeated."

Berry's slender essay offers a thoughtful repudiation of an increasingly technological--and, some would say, soulless--culture. --Gregory McNamee --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

From Publishers Weekly Living for almost 40 years on a family farm in Kentucky has led Berry to place a high value on local knowledge born of a long and affectionate engagement of the intellect and imagination with a particular place. To readers of his poems, novels (*Memory of Old Jack*, etc.) and essays (*The Unsettling of America*, etc.), it will be no surprise that in his latest essay collection, he argues cogently and passionately against the proposition E.O. Wilson puts forth in *Consilience*, that our best hope for preserving the biosphere lies in linking facts and fact-based theory across disciplines under the hegemony of the natural sciences. Though a conservationist, like Wilson, Berry strongly believes that the materialist prescription for what ails us ecologically, culturally and spiritually will simply bind us more tightly to the often destructive, profit-driven triad of science, technology and industry. It will also move us further away, avers Berry, from what he sees as the sense of propriety that calls on us to base our thoughts and actions on our inescapable interdependency with the planet's other life forms. Berry also opposes the belief underlying *Consilience*, that scientific analysis can ultimately explain everything: "to reduce the mystery and miracle of life to something that can be figured out is inevitably to enslave it, make property of it and put it up for sale." In opposition to this view, Berry proposes evaluating our behavior and work on how they affect "the health and durability of human and natural communities." To do that, he contends, we must go beyond Wilson's empirical knowledge to imaginative knowledge to knowing things "intimately, particularly, precisely, gratefully, reverently, and with affection." Agent, the Spieler Agency.

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