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July 23, 2009: What Do We Need?

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Title: What Do We Need?

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7/23/2009—What do we need to build a healthy civilization? By healthy here I mean one in which human life flourishes and one that is environmentally sustainable. Bernd Heinrich, the insect physiologist, answers that question in his book, *Summer World*. He writes, “We need two things: clear vision and also a spiritual imperative so that we will focus on the ultimate ecology, not the proximate economy.” (New York Times Book Review, 5/31/2009, review by Elizabeth Royte) Clear vision is what our virtual summer world lacks. We falsely imagine that we can have bananas from Central America and coffee from Africa in the amounts we consume, forever. This is simply not sustainable. The spiritual imperative should come as an unwelcome reminder that religion does matter. Heinrich undoubtedly does not mean one of the organized religions when he writes “spiritual”. But he does mean the sense of the holy that is beyond the demands of self-interest. Now, the destruction of the rain forest becomes a sin against nature rather than just a cost. For a secularist to have such a sense, you need Hallowed Secularism.