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## ***Response to Sandhu 2001. "Fixed visions and visionaries"***

# **Crucial Distinctions: Process and Product**

[Wayne Tyson](#)

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I believe that Sandhu (2001) is seriously misreading Holling (1999). Holling's sculpting analogy concerned the process, not the product. This lack of precision is a problem with metaphorical writing, and I don't pretend to be so wise as to understand the phenomenon. However, I will attempt to both defend and clarify Holling, at least as I interpret his point. I do this not to nitpick (an example of a metaphorical word intended to illuminate rather than obscure), but because the distinction is far from trivial. It is, in fact, crucial.

Of course, Sandhu is right when he says that "... vision is something that is, and should be, constantly changing." However, this statement is not in conflict with Holling's point, because it *is* Holling's point! Holling was trying to explain why he did not want a fixed vision or stare, but rather a broad, inclusive state of mind open to the unexpected, the dissonant, the challenging view. He may not have used language of universal clarity, but it is the difference between poetry and mere reportage, or, to freely paraphrase Paracelsus, to open the Book of Nature and listen to the quiet passages in the symphony. (See how wedded we are to metaphor?)

Understanding ecosystems requires more, much more, than mere counting. Albert Einstein had an aphorism posted on the wall of his Princeton office that read something like this: "Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts." I prefer this version: "Not all that is counted counts, and not all that counts is counted." Both statements are valid, but there is a crucial distinction in their meaning.

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## **RESPONSES TO THIS ARTICLE**

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## **LITERATURE CITED**

**Holling, C. S.** 1999. Visions: a personal essay. *Conservation Ecology* 3(1): 12. [online] URL: <http://www.consecol.org/Journal/vol3/iss1/art12>

**Sandhu, J. S.** 2001. Fixed visions and visionaries. Response to Wayne Tyson (2000). "God, nature, and interpretation." *Conservation Ecology* 5(1): r1. [online] URL: <http://www.consecol.org/Journal/vol5/iss1/resp1>

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### **Address of Correspondent:**

Wayne Tyson  
P.O. Box 34069  
San Diego, California, 92163 USA  
Phone: (619) 280-2553

[landrest@utm.net](mailto:landrest@utm.net)

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