

WEEK SEVEN

THINKING LIKE A MOUNTAIN
TOWARDS A COUNCIL OF ALL BEINGS

JOHN SEED JOANNA MACY PAT FLEMING ARNE NAESS
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Spirit of Love — Barbara Deming i

Invocation: We Ask for the Presence
of the Spirit of Gaia — John Seed 2

Introduction: "To Hear Within Ourselves the
Sound of the Earth Crying" — John Seed 5

Self Realization: An Ecological Approach to
Being in the World — Arne Naess 19

Oh, Lovely Rock — Robinson Jeffers 32

Beyond Anthropocentrism — John Seed 35

Gaia Meditations — John Seed and Joanna Macy 41

Evolutionary Remembering — John Seed and Pat Fleming 45

Passenger Pigeons — Robinson Jeffers 53

Our Life as Gaia — Joanna Macy 57

Chief Seattle's Message — Chief Seattle 67

Bestiary — Joanna Macy 74

The Council of All Beings — Pat Fleming and Joanna Macy 79

Testimony of Graham Innes — Graham Innes 91

Gatha for All Threatened Beings — Gary Snyder 96

Guidelines for a Council of All Beings Workshop
— Joanna Macy and Pat Fleming 97

Appendix: Sample Workshop Agendas 114

Suggested Readings 117

About the Authors 119

Publisher's Note — David H. Albert 121

Invocation
John Seed

We ask for the presence of the spirit of Gaia and pray that the breath of life continues to caress this planet home.

May we grow into true understanding — a deep understanding that inspires us to protect the tree on which we bloom, and the water, soil and atmosphere without which we have no existence.

May we turn inwards and stumble upon our true roots in the intertwining biology of this exquisite planet. May nourishment and power pulse through these roots, and fierce determination to continue the billion-year dance.

May love well up and burst forth from our hearts.

May there be a new dispensation of pure and powerful consciousness and the charter to witness and facilitate the healing of the tattered biosphere.

We ask for the presence of the spirit of Gaia to be with us here. To reveal to us all that we need to see, for our own highest good and for the highest good of all.

We call upon the spirit of evolution, the miraculous force that inspires rocks and dust to weave themselves into biology. You have stood by us for millions and billions of years — do not forsake us now. Empower us and awaken in us pure and dazzling creativity. You that can turn scales into feathers, seawater to blood, caterpillars to butterflies, metamorphose our species, awaken in us the powers that we need to survive the present crisis and evolve into more aeons of our solar journey.

Awaken in us a sense of who we truly are: tiny ephemeral blossoms on the Tree of Life. Make the purposes and destiny of that tree our own purpose and destiny.

Fill each of us with love for our true Self, which includes all of the creatures and plants and landscapes of the world. Fill us with a powerful urge for the well-being and continual unfolding of this Self.

May we speak in all human councils on behalf of the animals and plants and landscapes of the Earth.

May we shine with a pure inner passion that will spread rapidly through these leaden times.

May we all awaken to our true and only nature — none other than the nature of Gaia, this living planet Earth.

We call upon the power which sustains the planets in their orbits, that wheels our Milky Way in its 200-million-year spiral, to imbue our personalities and our relationships with harmony, endurance and joy. Fill us with a sense of immense time so that our brief, flickering lives may truly reflect the work of vast ages past and also the millions of years of evolution whose potential lies in our trembling hands.

O stars, lend us your burning passion.

O silence, give weight to our voice.

We ask for the presence of the spirit of Gaia.

Introduction:

"To Hear Within Ourselves
the Sound of the Earth Crying"

John Seed

Our planet is in danger. We all know that on some level of our consciousness. The accelerating ecological crisis which threatens the survival of life on earth is evident now not only to professional biologists, botanists, environmental scientists, but to all of us.

It is evident in the quality of air we breathe, in the food we eat, in the rivers in which we can no longer fish or swim, in the waste dumps leaching their toxins into our water supplies, in news reports about oil spills and acid rain and holes in our protective ozone layer. The tragic disasters of Bhopal, Chernobyl, the Rhine are no longer seen as isolated aberrations, but as part and parcel of a progressive contamination occurring on a steady, mounting, daily basis.

We read staggering statistics: twenty-two acres of rainforest demolished each minute, an area the size of a football field every second of every day. A million species of plants and animals will be extinct by the turn of the century, an average of a hundred a day. Dr. Mustafa Tolba, director-general of the United Nations Environment Program, says that the destruction of genetic material and environments has reached such a pitch that "we face, by the turn of the century, an environmental catastrophe as complete, as irreversible as any nuclear holocaust." These figures and extrapolations of the scientists, combined with the evidences we experience daily are both mind-boggling and numbing. They are so real as to test all our capacities of denial, almost impossible to integrate into the reality of the humdrum of our daily lives.

They took on reality for me when I first participated in actions to protect some of the remaining rainforests near my home in New South Wales, Australia. Then I was able to embody, to bring to life, my intellectual knowing in interaction with other beings — protesters, loggers, police, and with the trees and other inhabitants of these forests. There and then I was gripped with an intense, profound realization of the depth of the bonds that connect us to the Earth, how deep are our feelings for these connections. I knew then that I was no longer acting on behalf of myself or my human ideas, but on behalf of the Earth . . . on behalf of my larger self, that I was literally part of the rainforest defending herself.

I knew then, and I know now that these connections — and the knowing and feelings that stem from these connections — are in all of us. I know that we must tap them if we are to stop the destruction and allow the Earth to heal herself. We must find ways to bring forth such realizations in their truth and power in order to arouse and sustain us in defending life on Earth.

I pondered this challenge, seemingly thrown up by the rainforest herself, with Joanna Macy after participating in one of her "Despair and Empowerment" rituals in Australia. We walked and talked in the forests of the Nightcap Range near my home — the very forests that we had successfully defended some years before. Joanna's work over the years with people from all walks of life had convinced her that it was the destruction of our life-support systems that is the deepest and most pervasive source of anxiety in our time. It is not a hypothetical danger like nuclear war, for it is happening now . . . and people, as much as they would like to deny it, sense it, feel it, often on an inchoate level, in their bodies. The very enormity of the threat makes it harder to talk about it or confront it squarely.

Both of us had been inspired by the writings of Arne Naess, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at Oslo University, and we understood peoples' widespread though semiconscious awareness of the environmental peril in terms of the deep ecology perspective Naess articulates. We wondered if we could combine "Despair and Empowerment" work and deep ecology in ways that would awaken people's commitment and courage to act for our planet. From our discussions emerged "The Council of All Beings." It is a form of group work which prepares and allows people to "hear within themselves the sounds of the earth crying" a phrase borrowed from Vietnamese Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh, and to let other life forms speak through them. It is a form which permits us to experience consciously both the pain and the power of our interconnectedness with all life. Soon afterward, the first Council of All Beings took place in a rural setting outside of Sydney, Australia with forty humans participating, to the haunting earthy sounds of the aboriginal

didgeridoo. Pat Fleming was on hand to assist. Since that early March day in 1985 this form of group work or ritual has been shared by Joanna, Pat, myself, and others with a wide audience in Australia, North America and Europe. The Council of All Beings has been convened in forests, conference centers, schoolrooms and in churches as a central part of the liturgy. And it was written by people in far-flung places — I'm in Australia, Pat in England and Joanna in Tibet and then California. From letters and phone calls we have received from around the world, each experience has been profound and long-lasting.

The Council of All Beings, as we have come to use the phrase both in our work and in this book, refers to both a particular ritual enactment and also to a set of group processes and practices of which the ritual is a part. It is to share this form with a wider public that we make this book available. But first let me explain a bit more about the two streams which flow together here in this new form of group work.

DESPAIR AND EMPOWERMENT

One root of the Council of All Beings is the Despair and Empowerment work developed by Joanna Macy and many others in the Interhelp Network.¹ Many activists who rouse us to the fact that our survival is at stake decry public apathy. They often assume, mistakenly, that people do not change because they lack information and that the main job of activists is to provide the missing information. The experience of despairwork suggests that such numbness and apathy does not stem from ignorance or indifference; on the contrary, most of us are aware of the destruction of our planet at the deepest level. But we do not face it, do not integrate it for fear of experiencing the despair that such information provokes. We fear it may overwhelm us. Moreover, our society has constructed taboos against the communication and expression of such anguish.

This refusal of feeling takes a heavy toll on us, impoverishing both our emotional and our sensory lives. It also impedes our capacity to process and respond to information as we screen out or filter anxiety-provoking data. But such feedback is precisely what we need to adapt and survive.

Experience with group work has shown that this despair, grief and anger can be confronted, experienced and creatively channeled. Far from being crushed by it, new energy, creativity and empowerment can be released. Unblocking these feelings also opens us to experiencing our fundamental interconnectedness with all life. Often after such experiences, people come together to form ongoing support groups or join existing groups to take action on peace and/or environmental issues.

DEEP ECOLOGY

Ecological thinking . . . requires a kind of vision across boundaries. The epidermis of the skin is ecologically like a pond surface or a forest soil, not a shell so much as delicate interpenetration. It reveals the self ennobled and extended . . . as part of the landscape and the ecosystem, because the beauty and complexity of nature are continuous with ourselves . . . we must affirm that the world is a being, a part of our own body.²

The other root of the Council of All Beings, is a new philosophy of nature called "deep ecology."³ In contrast to reform environmentalism which attempts only to treat some of the symptoms of the environmental crisis, deep ecology questions the fundamental premises and values of contemporary civilization. Our technological culture has co-opted and absorbed all other criticism, so that parts may be questioned but not the whole, while deep ecology as a fountain of revolutionary thought subjects the core of our social existence and our thinking to piercing scrutiny. Deep ecology recognizes that nothing short of a total revolution in consciousness will be of lasting use in preserving the life-support systems of our planet.

Within the framework of deep ecology, and contrary to key assumptions of Judeo-Christian/Marxist/humanist tradition, humans are not to be viewed as the ultimate measure of value or as the crown of creation. We are but "a plain member" of the biotic community and our arrogance with respect to this community threatens not only ourselves but all of life. We must learn to "let beings be," to allow other species to follow their separate evolutionary destinies without dominating them. We must come to understand that life-forms do not constitute a pyramid with our species at the apex, but rather a circle where everything is connected to everything else. We must realize that the environment is not "out there," and that when we poison the air or the water or the soil, we poison ourselves because of the vast biological cycles within which we too are inextricably embedded. The themes of deep ecology echo the ancient earth wisdom of native peoples such as Chief Seattle (see page 67). They are further elaborated in this volume in "Beyond Anthropocentrism." (See page 35.)

The intellectual acceptance of these concepts is difficult, as our entire socialization in western societies goes against them. An analysis of the political, economic, social and cultural block to a full appreciation of deep ecology would require a book in itself! Furthermore, intellectual acceptance of these concepts is not enough; enormous energies are needed for change to take place on a fundamental level. As Arne Naess points out in his chapter on "Self Realization," this knowledge must permeate us and become part of our very identity. This is not to deny our identity as humans but rather, as Naess argues, to place this identity within its proper perspective, within the larger perspective of our "ecological Self." But while full intellectual acceptance of the truths offered by deep ecology might be extremely difficult to attain, through the power of ritual we may be able to capture a glimpse of the possibilities of Self which are open to us.

RITUALS FOR TRANSFORMATION

Deep ecology writer and philosopher Dolores LaChapelle in *Earth Wisdom* notes:

. . . rock flour produced by long-ago glaciers has taken about 25,000 years to become fertile soil; yet here in the United States we have lost half of this productive topsoil of our country in about 130 years. Merely throwing these statistics out to be absorbed by the rational brain does little good; but, a ritual setting with chanting and dancing can bring understanding to the older levels of the brain and empathy with the soil itself, as was done in past ages by ritual celebrations.⁴

As within our age and culture our sense of self has shrunk, as anthropocentric religions and science have come to dominate our consciousness, our culture has also lost its understanding of the importance of ritual.

Rituals affirming the interconnectedness of the human and nonhuman worlds exist in every primitive culture. The existence of these rituals attests to the fact that our sense of separation has ancient roots in our species. Their existence also suggests that effort is needed to maintain our union with the rest of nature. They also point to directions where we can search to recover the lost connection. Or, as Dolores LaChapelle puts it, "Ritual . . . facilitates interaction between mind-within-the-skull and mind-outside-the-skull, the environment." We find that though we may be able to discard some of the beliefs of the culture into which we emerged, changing the self imprinted onto us from the moment of birth requires work. Our self was molded by this culture, and tremendous energy is needed to effect substantial transformation.

According to the psychologist Jung, all of the major activities of native peoples were entered into with ceremonies or chants, which:

quite obviously have the psychological aim of canalizing libido into the necessary activity. Complex ceremonies of the Pueblo Indians show how much is needed to divert the libido from its

natural river-bed of everyday habit into some unaccustomed activity.⁵

All tribal cultures participate in such practices. As Gary Snyder says in "The Old Ways":

The shaman speaks for wild animals, the spirits of plants, the spirits of mountains, of watersheds. He or she sings for them. They sing through her . . . the whole society consults the non-human powers and allows some individuals to step totally out of their human roles to put on the mask, costume and mind of Bison, Bear, Squash, Corn or Pleiades; to re-enter the human circle in that form and by song, mime and dance, convey a greeting from the other realm.⁶

Jung believed that modern mind was quite mistaken in thinking that it can dispense with such ceremonies and remember and act effectively upon our interconnectedness by a mere decision of the will. Without recourse to a universally shared religious spirit which reaffirms this interconnectedness and without recourse to a belief in human centeredness, it is left to ritual and "affective experiences" to effect this transformation at a profound level of our being. In her book *Woman and Nature*, Susan Griffin expresses the possibilities of this transformation thus:

I love this bird, when I see the arc of her flight, I fly with her, enter her with my mind, leave myself, die for an instant, live in the body of this bird whom I cannot live without, as part of the body of the bird will enter my daughter's body, because I know I am made from this earth, as my mother's hands were made from this earth. . . . all that I know speaks to me through this earth and I long to tell you, you who are earth too, and listen as we speak to each other of what we know: the light is in us.⁷

EVOLUTIONARY REMEMBERING

There are many ways of evoking such change in our identity. Methods for inspiring the experience of deep ecology range from prayer to poetry, from wilderness vision quests to direct action in defense of the Earth to the ritual work described in this book. In the Council of All Beings, we channel the energies released by despair and empowerment and other rituals into facilitating a profound change to deeply ecological awareness. In our experience, "affective education" — learning from the heart and body, and the Council of All Beings is just one example — goes much deeper than the exchange of ideas because it is based on the premise that we already possess within us the knowledge we need, and what is necessary is to bring it to conscious awareness. The knowledge we require is embedded within us and needs to be awakened. In our mother's womb, our embryonic bodies recapitulate the evolution of cellular life on Earth. We can begin to feel the inner body-sense of amphibian, reptile and lower mammal because these earlier stages of our life are literally part of the ontogenetic development of our neurological system. Nonhuman memories can surface with particular intensity and authenticity when consciousness is altered by special patterns of breathing. Stanislav and Christina Grof have developed what they call "holotropic" breathing to permit subjects to recapture and resolve significant experiences surrounding their birth. They have found that the material which comes to light goes beyond the biographical and even the human realm to include phylogenetic sequences and episodes of conscious identification with other species and life-forms.

In the "Eco-Breath" workshops conducted in Australia, we have discovered that by employing such breathing rhythms in conjunction with strong intentions to transcend our solely human identification, the majority of participants experience remarkable identifications with nonhuman Nature. (See references to "Eco-Breath" work in the "Guidelines to the Council of All Beings Workshop," page 108.)

If we wish to reunite with nature, the first requirement is that we have the intention to reestablish this contact. We are descended from thousands of human generations who practiced rituals acknowledging our interconnectedness. Once we set the intention to end the separation we have created, the desired results come naturally from rituals that feel authentic to us. As some are already doing, we can begin to reclaim ancient rituals at the solstices and equinoxes affirming our connections to the changing cycles of the seasons. New rituals — enactments of our intentions — are open to all of us, regardless of our original traditions.

THE COUNCIL OF ALL BEINGS

In the Council of All Beings workshops, we participate in a series of processes that weave together three important themes: mourning, remembering and speaking from the perspective of other life-forms.

Deep ecology remains a concept without power to transform our awareness unless we allow ourselves to feel. The workshops provide a safe place to give voice to what we know is happening to our planet and to acknowledge the pain and begin to come to terms with it, to mourn our separation and our loss. Rage may also well up, and a passionate caring. When we stop repressing the pain, a sense of belonging and interconnectedness emerges.

There are many exercises which assist the remembering of our rootedness in nature. At each Council, we engage in several sensitizing activities shifting us away from our usual cerebral mode. Guided visualizations (see Gaia Meditation, page 41) make our four-and-one-half billion- year journey present and vivid. Body movements accompanying the evolutionary recapitulation (page 45) tap into our knowledge of previous stages of evolution embedded in our neurological systems. The Council culminates in shedding our human identity and speaking from the perspective of another life-form. The Council of All Beings narrative (page 79) is an example of the kind of interaction which can then take place. We take time alone to be chosen by a plant, animal or landscape feature that we will then represent at the Council. The structure created for the ritual councils allows for spontaneous expression. Creative suggestions for human action may emerge. Invocation of powers and knowledge of these other life-forms also empowers us.

RITUAL AND ACTION

The relationship between these rituals and the actions we take in defense of nature is complex. In spite of the conceptual dotted lines we superimpose, life is seamless and there is a continuity, flow and exchange between the inner and the outer.

These rituals are not in any way a substitute for other, more direct forms of action. Rather, the rituals prepare us and provide us with a larger context for action. When our strategies are formed and informed by a larger context than our narrow ego selves, when we realize we are acting not just from our own opinions or beliefs, but on behalf of a larger Self — the Earth — with the authority of more than four billion years of our planet's evolution behind us, then we are filled with new determination, courage and perseverance, less limited by self-doubt, narrow self- interest and discouragement. The apathy from which many of us suffer, the sense of paralysis, is a product of our shriveled sense of self. Working with the Council of All Beings, we have found that people experience a deepening identification with the Earth, a renewal of energy to struggle for the protection of wild Nature, and to work for peace.

Ritual also helps us be more aware of the ritualized character of virtually all nonviolent direct action, and thus helps us make these actions more powerful. While at times we may be defending a particular stand of trees or mountain ridge or stream, our defense is also symbolic in that we are making our defense in the name of all trees, all mountain ridges, all streams which need

defending, and we are asking all who understand these threats wherever they may be to stand with us. When we are attempting to protect nature against those who would destroy it, we are asking those who would destroy the earth to experience the same transformation which we have undergone, to remember who they really are, to step out of their self-limiting roles as police, politicians, developers, or consumers and act in defense of their larger Self-interest. It is the ritual character of nonviolent direct action which brings us closer to the universal realization, expressed by the feminist-pacifist writer Barbara Deming:

Spirit that hears each one of us,
Hears all that is –
Listens, listens, hears us out –
Inspire us now!
Our own pulse beats in every stranger's throat,
And also there within the flowered ground beneath our feet,
And—teach us to listen! –
We can hear it in water, wood, and even in stone.
We are earth of this earth, and we are bone of its bone.
This is a prayer I sing, for we have forgotten this and so
The earth is perishing.⁹

Once we have, to quote the poet Robinson Jeffers, "fallen in love outwards," once we have experienced the fierce joy of life that attends extending our identity into nature, once we realize that the nature within and the nature without are continuous, then we too may share and manifest the exquisite beauty and effortless grace associated with the natural world, as the testimony of Graham Innes (page 91) makes all so clear. When we hear the earth speak to us, we are transformed and come to understand our actions from a new perspective. As Dave Foreman, founder of the Earth First! movement, so exquisitely puts it:

Those machines, you know, they're made out of the Earth and therefore they can speak to me and I can hear them because they're made out of the Earth itself. And they hate, I can tell you they hate being used to destroy the Earth. And they say to me "Dave, we really don't want to be doing this—we're tired of being reduced; help us to oxidize."¹⁰

FOOTNOTES

1. Joanna Macy. *Despair and Personal Power in the Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia, PA: New Society, 1983).
2. Paul Shepard. "Ecology and Man," in P. Shepard & D. McKinley (eds.), *The Subversive Science* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1969).
3. Bill Devall and George Sessions. *Deep Ecology* (Layton, UT: Peregrine Smith Books, Utah 1985).
4. Dolores LaChapelle. *Earth Wisdom* (Silverton, CO: Finn Hill Arts, 1984).
5. C. G. Jung, "On Psychical Energy," in *Contributions to Analytical Psychology* (London, UK: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1928).
6. Gary Snyder. *The Old Ways* (San Francisco, CA: City Light Books, 1977).
7. Susan Griffin. *Woman and Nature* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1979).
8. Gary Snyder. "Wild, Sacred, Good Land" in *Resurgence*, No. 38 (May/June, 1983).
9. Barbara Deming. "Spirit of Love," in Jane Meyerding (ed.), *We Are All Part of One Another: A*

Barbara Deming Reader (Philadelphia, PA: New Society, 1984).

10. Jeni Kendell and Ed Buivids. Earth First (Sydney, Australia: Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 1987).

Self Realization:
An Ecological Approach
to Being in the World
Arne Naess

{This essay is excerpted from the Fourth Keith Roby Memorial Lecture in Community Science delivered at Murdoch University in Murdoch, Australia, March 12, 1986.}

For at least 2500 years, humankind has struggled with basic questions about who we are, what we are heading for, what kind of reality we are part of. Two thousand five hundred years is a short period in the lifetime of a species, and still less in the lifetime of the Earth, on whose surface we belong as mobile parts.

What I am going to say more or less in my own way, may roughly be condensed into the following six points:

1. We underestimate ourselves. I emphasize self. We tend to confuse it with the narrow ego.
2. Human nature is such that with sufficient all-sided maturity we cannot avoid "identifying" ourselves with all living beings, beautiful or ugly, big or small, sentient or not. I will elucidate my concept of identifying later.
3. Traditionally the maturity of the self develops through three stages — from ego to social self, and from social self to metaphysical self. In this conception of the process nature — our home, our immediate environment, where we belong as children, and our identification with living human beings — is largely ignored. I therefore tentatively introduce the concept of an ecological self. We may be in, of and for nature from our very beginning. Society and human relations are important, but our self is richer in its constitutive relations. These relations are not only relations we have with humans and the human community, but with the larger community of all living beings.
4. The joy and meaning of life is enhanced through increased self-realization, through the fulfillment of each being's potential. Whatever the differences between beings, increased self-realization implies broadening and deepening of the self.
5. Because of an inescapable process of identification with others, with growing maturity, the self is widened and deepened. We "see our self in others". Self-realization is hindered if the self-realization of others, with whom we identify, is hindered. Love of our self will labor to overcome this obstacle by assisting in the self-realization of others according to the formula "live and let live." Thus, all that can be achieved by altruism — the dutiful, moral consideration of others — can be achieved — and much more — through widening and deepening our self. Following Immanuel Kant's critique, we then act beautifully but neither morally nor immorally.
6. The challenge of today is to save the planet from further devastation which violates both the enlightened self-interest of humans and nonhumans, and decreases the potential of joyful existence for all.

The simplest answer to who or what I am is to point to my body, using my finger. But clearly I

cannot identify my self or even my ego with my body. For example, compare:

I know Mr. Smith, with My body knows Mr. Smith.
I like poetry. My body likes poetry
The only difference The only difference
between us is that between our bodies is that
you are a Presbyterian your body is Presbyterian
and I am a Baptist. whereas mine is Baptist.

In the above sentences we cannot substitute "my body" for "I" nor can we substitute "my mind" or "my mind and body" for "I." But this of course does not tell us what the ego or self is. Several thousand years of philosophical, psychological and social-psychological discourse has not brought us any stable conception of the "I," ego, or the self. In modern psychotherapy these notions play an indispensable role, but the practical goal of therapy does not necessitate philosophical clarification of the terms. For our purposes, it is important to remind ourselves what strange and marvelous phenomena we are dealing with. They are extremely close to each of us. Perhaps the very nearness of these objects of reflection and discourse adds to our difficulties. I shall only offer a single sentence resembling a definition of the ecological self. The ecological self of a person is that with which this person identifies.

This key sentence (rather than definition) about the self, shifts the burden of clarification from the term self to that of identification or more accurately, the process of identification.

What would be a paradigmatic situation of identification? It is a situation in which identification elicits intense empathy. My standard example has to do with a nonhuman being I met forty years ago. I looked through an old-fashioned microscope at the dramatic meeting of two drops of different chemicals. A flea jumped from a lemming strolling along the table and landed in the middle of the acid chemicals. To save it was impossible. It took many minutes for the flea to die. Its movements were dreadfully expressive. What I felt was, naturally, a painful compassion and empathy. But the empathy was not basic. What was basic was the process of identification, that "I see myself in the flea." If I was alienated from the flea, not seeing intuitively anything resembling myself, the death struggle would have left me indifferent. So there must be identification in order for there to be compassion and, among humans, solidarity.

One of the authors contributing admirably to clarification of the study of self is Erich Fromm:

The doctrine that love for oneself is identical with selfishness and an alternative to love for others has pervaded theology, philosophy, and popular thought; the same doctrine has been rationalized in scientific language in Freud's theory of narcissism. Freud's concept presupposes a fixed amount of libido. In the infant, all of the libido has the child's own person as its objective, the stage of primary narcissism as Freud calls it. During the individual's development, the libido is shifted from one's own person toward other objects. If a person is blocked in his object-relationships the libido is withdrawn from the objects and returned to his or her own person; this is called secondary narcissism. According to Freud, the more love I turn toward the outside world the less love is left for myself, and vice versa. He thus describes the phenomenon of love as an impoverishment of one's self-love because all libido is turned to an object outside oneself.¹

Fromm, however, disagrees with Freud's analysis. He concerned himself solely with love of humans, but as "ecosophers" we find the notions of "care, respect, responsibility, knowledge" applicable to living beings in the wide sense.

Love of others and love of ourselves are not alternatives. On the contrary, an attitude of love toward themselves will be found in all those who are capable of loving others. Love, in principle,

is indivisible as far as the connection between objects and one's own self is concerned. Genuine love is an expression of productiveness and implies care, respect, responsibility, and knowledge. It is not an effect in the sense of being effected by somebody, but an active striving for the growth and happiness of the loved person, rooted in one's own capacity to love.²

Fromm is very instructive about unselfishness— diametrically opposite to selfishness, but still based upon alienation and a narrow perception of self. What he says applies also to persons experiencing sacrifice of themselves.

The nature of unselfishness becomes particularly apparent in its effect on others and most frequently, in our culture, in the effect the "unselfish" mother has on her children. She believes that by her unselfishness her children will experience what it means to be loved and in turn to learn what it means to love. The effect of other unselfishness, however, does not at all correspond to her expectations. The children do not show the happiness of persons who are convinced that they are loved; they are anxious, tense, afraid of the mother's disapproval, and anxious to live up to her expectations. Usually, they are affected by their mother's hidden hostility against life, which they sense rather than recognize, and eventually become imbued with it themselves:

If one has a chance to study the effect of a mother with genuine self-love, one can see that there is nothing more conducive to giving a child the experience of what love, joy, and happiness are than being loved by a mother who loves herself.³

From the viewpoint of ecophilosophy, the point is this: We need environmental ethics, but when people feel they unselfishly give up, even sacrifice, their interest in order to show love for nature, this is probably in the long run a treacherous basis for ecology. Through broader identification, they may come to see their own interest served by environmental protection, through genuine self-love, love of a widened and deepened self.

As a student and admirer since 1930 of Gandhi's nonviolent direct action, I am inevitably influenced by his metaphysics which furnished him tremendously powerful motivation to keep on going until his death. His supreme aim, as he saw it, was not only India's political liberation. He led crusades against extreme poverty, caste suppression, and against terror in the name of religion. These crusades were necessary, but the liberation of the individual human being was his highest end. Hearing Gandhi's description of his ultimate goal may sound strange to many of us.

What I want to achieve— what I have been striving and pining to achieve these thirty years—is self-realization, to see God face to face, to attain Moksha (Liberation). I live and move and have my being in pursuit of that goal. All that I do by way of speaking and writing, and all my ventures in the political field, are directed to this same end.⁴

This sounds individualistic to the Western mind, a common misunderstanding. If the self Gandhi is speaking about were the ego or the "narrow" self (jiva) of egocentric interest, of narrow ego gratifications, why then work for the poor? For him it is the supreme or universal Self — the atman — that is to be realized. Paradoxically, it seems, he tries to reach self-realization through selfless action, that is, through reduction of the dominance of the narrow self or ego. Through the wider Self every living being is connected intimately, and from this intimacy follows the capacity of identification and as its natural consequences, the practice of nonviolence. No moralizing is necessary, just as we do not require moralizing to make us breathe. We need to cultivate our insight, to quote Gandhi again "The rock bottom foundation of the technique for achieving the

power of nonviolence is belief in the essential oneness of all life."

Historically we have seen how ecological preservation is nonviolent at its very core. Gandhi notes:

I believe in advaita (non-duality), I believe in the essential unity of man and, for that matter, of all that lives. Therefore I believe that if one man gains spirituality, the whole world gains with him and, if one man fails, the whole world fails to that extent.⁵

Some people might consider Gandhi extreme in his personal consideration for the self-realization of living beings other than humans. He traveled with a goat to satisfy his need for milk. This was part of a nonviolent witness against certain cruel features in the Hindu way of milking cows. Furthermore, some European companions who lived with Gandhi in his ashram were taken aback that he let snakes, scorpions and spiders move unhindered into their bedrooms—animals fulfilling their lives. He even prohibited people from having a stock of medicines against poisonous bites. He believed in the possibility of satisfactory coexistence and he proved right. There were no accidents. Ashram people would naturally look into their shoes for scorpions before putting them on. Even when moving over the floor in darkness one could easily avoid trampling on one's fellow beings. Thus, Gandhi recognized a basic, common right to live and blossom, to self-realization applicable to any being having interests or needs. Gandhi made manifest the internal relation between self-realization, nonviolence and what is sometimes called biospherical egalitarianism. In the environment in which I grew up, I heard that what is important in life is to be somebody — usually implying to outdo others, to be victorious in comparison of abilities. This conception of the meaning and goal of life is especially dangerous today in the context of vast international economic competition. The law of supply and demand of separate, isolatable "goods and services" independent of real needs, must not be made to reign over increasing areas of our lives. The ability to cooperate, to work with people, to make them feel good pays of course in a fiercely individualistic society, and high positions may require it. These virtues are often subordinated to the career, to the basic norms of narrow ego fulfillment, not to a self-realization worth the name. To identify self-realization with ego indicates a vast underestimation of the human self. According to a usual translation of Pali or Sanskrit, Buddha taught his disciples that the human mind should embrace all living things as a mother cares for her son, her only son. For some it is not meaningful or possible for a human self to embrace all living things, then the usual translation can remain. We ask only that your mind embrace all living beings, and that you maintain an intention to care, feel and act with compassion.

If the Sanskrit word *atman* is translated into English, it is instructive to note that this term has the basic meaning of self rather than mind or spirit, as you see in translations. The superiority of the translation using the word *self* stems from the consideration that if your self in the wide sense embraces another being, you need no moral exhortation to show care. You care for yourself without feeling any moral pressure to do it—unless you have succumbed to a neurosis of some kind, developed self-destructive tendencies, or hate yourself.

The Australian ecological feminist Patsy Hallen uses a formula close to that of Buddha: "we are here to embrace rather than conquer the world." Notice that the term *world* is used here rather than *living beings*. I suspect that our thinking need not proceed from the notion of living being to that of the world. If we can conceive of reality or the world we live in as alive in a wide, not easily defined sense then there will be no non-living beings to care for!

If "self-realization" today is associated with life-long narrow ego gratification, isn't it inaccurate to use this term for self-realization in the widely different sense of Gandhi, or less religiously loaded, as a term for the widening and deepening of the self so it embraces all life forms? Perhaps it is. But I think the very popularity of the term makes people listen for a moment and feel safe. In that moment the notion of a greater Self can be introduced, contending that if people equate

self-realization with narrow ego fulfillment, they seriously underestimate themselves. We are much greater, deeper, more generous and capable of dignity and joy than we think! A wealth of non-competitive joys is open to us!

I have another important reason for inviting people to think in terms of deepening and widening their selves, starting with narrow ego gratification as the crudest, but inescapable starting point. It has to do with the notion usually placed as the opposite of egoism, namely the notion of altruism. The Latin term ego has as its opposite the alter. Altruism implies that ego sacrifices its interest in favour of the other, the alter. The motivation is primarily that of duty; it is said that we ought to love others as strongly as we love our self.

What humankind is capable of loving from mere duty or more generally from moral exhortation is, unfortunately, very limited. From the Renaissance to the Second World War about four hundred cruel wars have been fought by Christian nations, usually for the flimsiest of reasons. It seems to me that in the future more emphasis has to be given to the conditions which naturally widen and deepen our self. With a sufficiently wide and deep sense of self, ego and alter as opposites are eliminated stage by stage as the distinctions are transcended.

Early in life, the social self is sufficiently developed so that we do not prefer to eat a big cake alone. We share the cake with our family and friends. We identify with these people sufficiently to see our joy in their joy, and to see our disappointment in theirs. Now is the time to share with all life on our maltreated earth by deepening our identification with all life-forms, with the ecosystems, and with Gaia, this fabulous, old planet of ours.

The philosopher Immanuel Kant introduced a pair of contrasting concepts which deserve extensive use in our effort to live harmoniously in, for and of nature: the concept of moral act and that of beautiful act. Moral acts are acts motivated by the intention to follow moral laws, at whatever cost, that is, to do our moral duty solely out of respect for that duty. Therefore, the supreme indication of our success in performing a pure, moral act is that we do it completely against our inclination, that we hate to do it, but are compelled by our respect for moral law. Kant was deeply awed by two phenomena, "the heaven with its stars above me and the moral law within me."

If we do something we should because of a moral law, but do it out of inclination and with pleasure—what then? If we do what is right because of positive inclination, then, according to Kant, we perform a beautiful act. My point is that in environmental affairs we should primarily try to influence people toward beautiful acts by finding ways to work on their inclinations rather than their morals. Unhappily, the extensive moralizing within the ecological movement has given the public the false impression that they are primarily asked to sacrifice, to show more responsibility, more concern, and better morals. As I see it we need the immense variety of sources of joy opened through increased sensitivity toward the richness and diversity of life, through the profound cherishing of free natural landscapes. We all can contribute to this individually, and it is also a question of politics, local and global. Part of the joy stems from the consciousness of our intimate relation to something bigger than our own ego, something which has endured for millions of years and is worth continued life for millions of years. The requisite care flows naturally if the self is widened and deepened so that protection of free nature is felt and conceived of as protection of our very selves.

We need the immense variety of sources of joy opened through increased sensitivity toward the richness and diversity of life, through the profound cherishing of free natural landscapes.

What I am suggesting is the supremacy of ecological ontology and a higher realism over environmental ethics as a means of invigorating the ecology movement in the years to come. If reality is experienced by the ecological Self, our behavior naturally and beautifully follows norms of strict environmental ethics. We certainly need to hear about our ethical shortcomings from time

to time, but we change more easily through encouragement and a deepened perception of reality and our own self, that is, through a deepened realism. How that is to be brought about is too large a question for me to deal with here. But it will clearly be more a question of community therapy than community science: we must find and develop therapies which heal our relations with the widest community, that of all living beings.

FOOTNOTES

1. Erich Fromm, "Selfishness, Self-love, and Self-interest," in *The Self: Explorations in Personal Growth*, edited by Clark E. Moustakas (New York, NY: Harper, 1956), page 58.
2. *Ibid.*, page 59.
- 3 Gandhi quotations are taken from Arne Naess, *Gandhi and Group Conflict* (Oslo, Norway: Universitetsforlaget, 1974), page 35 where the metaphysics of self-realization are treated more thoroughly in that work.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*

Oh, Lovely Rock

We stayed the night in the pathless gorge of Ventana
Creek, up the east fork.
The rock walls and the mountain ridges hung forest on
forest above our heads, maple and redwood,
Laurel, oak, madrone, up to the high and slender Santa
Lucian firs that stare up the cataracts
Of slide-rock to the star-color precipices.

We lay on gravel and
kept a little camp-fire for warmth.
Past midnight only two or three coals glowed red in the
cooling darkness; I laid a clutch of dead bay-leaves
On the ember ends and felted dry sticks across them and
lay down again. The revived flame
Lighted my sleeping son's face and his companion's, and
the vertical face of the great gorge-wall
Across the stream. Light leaves overhead danced in the
fire's breath, tree-trunks were seen: it was the rock wall
That fascinated my eyes and mind. Nothing strange: light-
gray diorite with two or three slanting seams in it,
Smooth-polished by the endless attrition of slides and
floods; no fern nor lichen, pure naked rock... as if I were
Seeing rock for the first time. As if I were seeing through
the flame-lit surface into the real and bodily
And living rock. Nothing strange . . . I cannot
Tell you how strange: the silent passion, the deep nobility
and childlike loveliness: this fate going on
Outside our fates. It is here in the mountain like a grave
smiling child. I shall die, and my boys
Will live and die, our world will go on through its rapid

agonies of change and discovery; this age will die,
 And wolves have howled in the snow around a new
 Bethlehem: this rock will be here, grave, earnest, not
 passive: the energies
 That are its atoms will still be bearing the whole mountain
 above: and I, many packed centuries ago,
 Felt its intense reality with love and wonder, this lonely
 rock.

— Robinson Jeffers

Beyond Anthropocentrism John Seed

But the time is not a strong prison either.
 A little scraping of the walls of dishonest contractor's
 concrete
 Through a shower of chips and sand makes freedom.
 Shake the dust from your hair. This mountain sea-coast
 is real
 For it reaches out far into the past and future;
 It is part of the great and timeless excellence of things.¹

"Anthropocentrism" or "homocentrism" means human chauvinism. Similar to sexism, but substitute "human race" for "man" and "all other species" for "woman." Human chauvinism, the idea that humans are the crown of creation, the source of all value, the measure of all things, is deeply embedded in our culture and consciousness.

And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, and upon all that moveth on the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hands they are delivered.²

When humans investigate and see through their layers of anthropocentric self-cherishing, a most profound change in consciousness begins to take place. Alienation subsides. The human is no longer an outsider, apart. Your humanness is then recognized as being merely the most recent stage of your existence, and as you stop identifying exclusively with this chapter, you start to get in touch with yourself as mammal, as vertebrate, as a species only recently emerged from the rainforest. As the fog of amnesia disperses, there is a transformation in your relationship to other species, and in your commitment to them.

What is described here should not be seen as merely intellectual. The intellect is one entry point to the process outlined, and the easiest one to communicate. For some people however, this change of perspective follows from actions on behalf of Mother Earth. "I am protecting the rainforest" develops to "I am part of the rainforest protecting myself. I am that part of the rainforest recently emerged into thinking." What a relief then! The thousands of years of imagined separation are over and we begin to recall our true nature. That is, the change is a spiritual one, thinking like a mountain,³ sometimes referred to as "deep ecology."

I am that part of the rainforest recently emerged into thinking.

As your memory improves, as the implications of evolution and ecology are internalized and replace the outmoded anthropocentric structures in your mind, there is an identification with all life. Then follows the realization that the distinction between "life" and "lifeless" is a human construct. Every atom in this body existed before organic life emerged 4000 million years ago. Remember our childhood as minerals, as lava, as rocks? Rocks contain the potentiality to weave themselves into such stuff as this. We are the rocks dancing. Why do we look down on them with such a condescending air? It is they that are the immortal part of us.⁴

If we embark upon such an inner voyage, we may find, upon returning to present day consensus reality, that our actions on behalf of the environment are purified and strengthened by the experience.

We have found a level of our being that moth, rust, nuclear holocaust or destruction of the rainforest gene pool do not corrupt. The commitment to save the world is not decreased by the new perspective, although the fear and anxiety which were part of our motivation start to dissipate and are replaced by a certain disinterestedness. We act because life is the only game in town, and actions from a disinterested, less attached consciousness may be more effective. Activists often don't have much time for meditation. The disinterested space we find here may be similar to meditation. Some teachers of meditation are embracing deep ecology⁵ and vice versa.⁶ Of all the species that have existed, it is estimated that less than one in a hundred exist today. The rest are extinct.

We are the rocks dancing.

As the environment changes, any species that is unable to adapt, to change, to evolve, is extinguished. All evolution takes place in this fashion. In this way an oxygen-starved fish, ancestor of yours and mine, commenced to colonize the land.

The human species is one of millions threatened by imminent extinction through nuclear war and other environmental changes. And while it is true that the "human nature" revealed by 12,000 years of written history does not offer much hope that we can change our warlike, greedy, ignorant ways, the vastly longer fossil history assures us that we can change. We are the fish, and the myriad other death-defying feats of flexibility which a study of evolution reveals to us. A certain confidence (in spite of our recent "humanity") is warranted. From this point of view, the threat of extinction appears as the invitation to change, to evolve. After a brief respite from the potter's hand, here we are back on the wheel again. The change that is required of us is not some new resistance to radiation, but a change in consciousness. Deep ecology is the search for a viable consciousness. Surely consciousness emerged and evolved according to the same laws as everything else. Molded by environmental pressures, the mind of our ancestors must time and again have been forced to transcend itself.

To survive our current environmental pressures, we must consciously remember our evolutionary and ecological inheritance. We must learn to "think like a mountain."

Threat of extinction is the potter's hand that molds all forms of life.

If we are to be open to evolving a new consciousness, we must fully face up to our impending extinction (the ultimate environmental pressure). This means acknowledging that part of us which shies away from the truth, hides in intoxication or busyness from the despair of the human, whose 4000-million-year race is run, whose organic life is a mere hair's breadth from finished.⁷ A

biocentric perspective, the realization that rocks will dance, and that roots go deeper than 4000 million years, may give us the courage to face despair and break through to a more viable consciousness, one that is sustainable and in harmony with life again.

Protecting something as wide as this planet is still an abstraction for many. Yet I see the day in our own lifetime that reverence for the natural systems — the oceans, the rainforests, the soil, the grasslands, and all other living things — will be so strong that no narrow ideology based upon politics or economics will overcome it.⁸

As Arne Naess, the "father" of deep ecology notes "The essence of deep ecology is to ask deeper questions. . . . We ask which society, which education, which form of religion is beneficial for all life on the planet as a whole."⁹

FOOTNOTES

1. From the poem "A Little Scraping," in the Selected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers (New York, NY: Random House, 1959).

2. Genesis 9:2.

3. "The forester ecologist Aldo Leopold underwent a dramatic conversion from the 'stewardship' shallow ecology resource management mentality of man-over-nature to announce that humans should see themselves as 'plain members' of the biotic community. After the conversion, Leopold saw steadily, and with shining clarity as he broke through the anthropocentric illusions of his time and began 'thinking like a mountain.' " George Sessions, "Spinoza, Perennial Philosophy and Deep Ecology" (unpublished, Sierra College, Rocklin, CA, 1979). See Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (London, UK: Oxford University Press, 1949).

4. Prominent physicists such as David Bohm (*Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, London, UK: Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1980) and biologists and philosophers such as Charles Birch and John B. Cobb Jr. (*The Liberation of Life*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981) would agree with Alfred North Whitehead that "a thoroughgoing evolutionary philosophy is inconsistent with materialism. The aboriginal stuff, or material from which a materialistic philosophy starts is incapable of evolution" (*Science and the Modern World*, New York, NY: Macmillan, 1925, page 133). Similar views to those of these authors on the interpenetration of all "matter" (better conceived as "events") are developed in Fritjof Capra's *The Tao of Physics* (Berkeley, CA: Shambhala Publications, 1975) while the sixth century B.C. Tao Te Ching itself tells us that "Tao" or "the implicate order" as Bohm might say, "is the source of the ten thousand things" (translator G. Feng and J. English, New York, NY: Vintage, 1972).

When one thinks like a mountain, one thinks
also like the black bear, so that honey dribbles
down your fur as you catch the bus to work.

5. "For Dogen Zenji, the others who are 'none other than myself' include mountains, rivers, and the great earth. When one thinks like a mountain, one thinks also like the black bear, so that honey dribbles down your fur as you catch the bus to work." Robert Aitken Roshi, Zen Buddhist teacher, "Gandhi, Dogen and Deep Ecology," in *The Mind of Clover: Essays in Zen Buddhist Ethics* (San Francisco, CA: North Point Press, 1984).