

ECOLOGY

This is a last of what is getting to be a three part long story. The first was called Control, meant to be about people and our need to control nature and ourselves. The second part was Chaos, the thing we most want to control. This part I call Ecology, although of course all three parts are about ecology, and chaos, and control.

It is kind of gloomy outside. I've been thinking--oh, I don't mean just now, I think often. What I call thinking is sort of juggling things I know around to make sense of something I don't know. That's the only way I learn. Much of what I call thinking goes on outside, when I am gardening, or observing the animals. And "gardening" to me does not mean making flower beds, but rather walking around, talking with plants and trees. I do very little weeding, "weeds" are as much part of what I call the garden as plants with vivid colors in bloom or leaf. So, the thinking I do when I commune with Life all around me is rare solving a problem, rather it is finding some clarity in all the different knowings I have. When I look at the clouds to see whether I need to water plants. So, thinking to me means learning to pay attention to how an unknown fits into a larger almost known. Paying attention to what is connected to a new or unknown.

An example. I have wondered, for instance, about our roosters. In Asian countries I have seen cock fights; those roosters were fierce, mean. The roosters here are mellow. They never fight with their spurs, they will fly breast to breast for a few seconds, then walk away. The hens are a lot more aggressive than the roosters. Do the roosters here lack testosterone? Obviously enough, there is a regular wave of new chicks. I have looked on the internet--currently the source of all facts--but have not found much about the basic nature of male chickens. I do know that in cock-fights the owners "massage" their fighting cocks before a fight, blow in their ears, or in the beak, and do other things I probably don't see, to make the beast more fierce. Violence then is a matter of training? Hmm, interesting that it is Man who thought of training other beasts to be fierce fighters.

Well, yes, people must learn to kill. That does not come naturally. Some children learn early if they live in a dangerous neighborhood, where fighting is what one does. I grew up in a culture where people did not fight each other, that was considered gross, animal-like. The culture valued, almost above anything else, tolerance, a smiling acceptance of differences. Or, more accurately, that kind of tolerance was considered the quality that characterized one as a true Malay. The opposite qualities, rude, loud, inconsiderate, were assigned to Chinese and "Europeans" (white people). I had to learn to fight when I first attended a "white" school.

I do a lot of "wondering." For instance, for now six years I have wondered about the reaction of the American people to the horror of 9/11. I was unprepared for the hyper-emotional feelings of being attacked, invaded, hurt by an unknown force, and therefore easily talked into a war of revenge. I saw the same movies, over and over again: the planes hitting the buildings, fire, then the buildings elegantly crumbling into their own footprint. Even a third building, that was not hit, crumbled the same way. I remember thinking "where are the fighter planes?" Surely a city like New York must have more than one air base near enough to send up fighter planes. And wondered how the buildings collapsed so neatly. Remembered a movie I saw of a hotel in Las Vegas that was demolished so that they could put up a bigger and better hotel. The man explained how

complicated it was to place explosives just so, and activate them in a certain sequence. With the twin towers of the World Trade Center, the impact of a plane, almost full of fuel, did the same thing? And I remembered that the same buildings had been attacked a few years earlier by some people who had driven a truck loaded with explosives in the underground garage. Those men were captured, tried and sentenced. I remembered that also not long before two American embassies had been attacked in East Africa, and a small boat with explosives had hit a warship in the Persian Gulf only a few months earlier. But nobody else seemed to have had the same thoughts, all everyone talked about, on TV and in my neighborhood, was the deaths, the idea of using a plane to attack (weren't there Kamikaze flyers in WWII?). There was a long time that I could not talk with anyone, as if it was un-American to not feel the intense feelings of revenge, kill, kill whoever did this to us.

Just finished reading a book that gave me, now at this late date, a little more insight in America's reaction to the horror of 9/11. *Small Wonder* by Barbara Kingsolver, a wonderful writer I admire greatly. I could feel her agony, many feelings actually, some I could not feel, but obviously a great shock. In those essays she talks a lot about the number of deaths -- although what we finally learned was that the number of people actually killed in and around the Twin Towers is less than the number of people killed in auto accidents in New York State in one year. And many of those deaths were fire fighters who came to rescue people.

I still wonder other things that I have not heard or read discussed very much. Why the World Trade Center, for instance. If the purpose of the crazy nineteen had been killing people, as we were told, they could have chosen any of the thousands of high rise apartment buildings. But they chose the WTC. A symbol of how others see America. A nation of trade, a nation that invented globalization, free markets everywhere. A nation that outsourced its manufacturing genius that made it the richest in the world.

I also wondered, and still wonder, what makes people do terrorist things. Our Media and our leaders tell us it is because they are religious extremists--but these nineteen were not religious at all, it turns out. Or, we say, "they are mad at us because we are free." They obviously knew how to use the freedom they had and ours. No, obviously, that does not answer my wondering at all.

My strange kind of thinking.

Recently, following a thread, came upon yet another story bemoaning a failing educational system. Read several of these after school started around Labor Day. My thought about "education" is that schools are designed to be the expression of a culture, they were started to teach young folk what we adults wanted them to know about what we held dear. We (the culture) never hid that school is mandatory. We talk about that as if it is a great feat of civilization. It seems obvious that it is a great feat of conditioning, brain washing, control. Isn't that why Indian children were kidnapped to be put in schools where we could teach them our language, history, and rules. Today, schools serve a second function: it keeps children busy while both parents are working.

In America, in our so-called pop culture, intellect is not one of the ideas we hold dear. All intelligent Americans (and who isn't?) learned early on to hide how smart they are. Clever just does not play. The culture pays intellect, but not too much--not as much as we pay clever businessmen, and of course risk takers. So, in a culture that is overtly anti-intellectual, how can we expect an educational system to be other than anti-intellectual? Now, with a new law, schools must see to it that their charges memorize facts, because the culture sees facts as necessary for surviving in this strange world. In real life everybody learns how to do a job by doing it. There

probably are fewer facts now that mean much any more in the 21st century. Geography? It changes. History? Every generation rewrites history. Math? Yes, parts of it are useful in some jobs, but each job requires a different kind of counting and making statistics, accounts, plans.

Educators say, frequently, that education is preparing students for jobs. But the generation of teachers lives in a different world than the world the kids live in, and will live in. The faster a culture changes, the greater the gap between generations.

The article that brought all this up records what the writer and "my friend" (who is also a teacher and has been for 40 years, but never named), talk about, namely the "dumbing down" of students now. Compared to 40 years ago, I presume. They, the author and his friend, blame TV, games played on TVs, computers and those little gadgets kids live with. Oh, and cell phones. And the music they listen to, and the movies they see, and the internet. The usual.

I too think TV an abomination, junk food for the mind. But it is what's happening, man. I am way too old to understand this world. I don't understand, for instance, how we-the-people have allowed this imaginary world to own us so completely. But, again, that is what is.

In other words, if it is true that kids do not do as well in school as the educators want them to do, does not that mean that there is something wrong with what we teach? Not how we teach.

My own idea is that an emphasis on "teaching" is not useful. I was lucky that from the beginning I was in a system that believed that schools were to help kids **learn**. Teachers were trained to stimulate us to find our own way to discover the world. We were rarely asked to memorize a list of things, facts, dates. That came later when I had to pass the final exams -- by then I was experienced in figuring out the best way to do things, for instance, memorizing.

If schools (and governments) are an expression of the culture--not the other way 'round--, then if the culture is dumbed down education is dumbed down also. We all know by now that modern food processing is bad for our health. Eating junk food -- and how can we not? -- favors obesity, diabetes, heart diseases. Modern life is bad for the mind.

In my kind of wide thinking, it is not important to consider who started it. Chicken and egg. If you want you can separate numbers, facts, from the process, but for my thinking that does not add anything. I try to think as I understand nature to BE. Nobody designed or made a river. Rivers follow natural givens. The word "law" I reserve for the rules we make, not the regularities I rely on in Nature. The spinning of our planet is a given. Gravity is such a given. Probably there are scientists hard at work trying to own gravity, change it, use it. Fire is a given. It has several attributes, always and in all circumstances. It is hot, it gives light, and is hungry for more of itself. I really like all these givens for what they are. I have no need to change any of them, I don't have to memorize anything nor do I have to interpret anything; nature is very good at reminding me if I forget. I have not the slightest desire or need to "own" any givens, control them. I can't anyway.

I have a great need to think wide. I want to know not just one fact, but how it fits in with other facts. And I tend to jump -- just a warning. So, I'm thinking of humans, as a species, as a whole. What, who are we. Westerners assume that our way of life, our values, our culture is the best, the future. As nobody seems to question that capitalism, including our kind that I think of as Brutal Capitalism, is the only way to the future. We also assume that sooner or later all humans will see the truth and be part of this culture. I've been lucky to have lived in other cultures, so I know the western culture is not the only one. But it is a powerful one that can and does powerfully force non-believers and newcomers into its folds. And, except for some resistance here and there, it seems that really all humans want more food, more clothes, towns, cities, cars, planes, fast foods and money. The culture of MORE is conquering the world. It is also deeply scarring the planet,

and without doubt affecting and effecting many things we must share, like the atmosphere, wind, and temperature; how much sunlight gets through to us here, and what kind of sunlight it is. I can see that. I can also see us, humans, swept up in this tsunami of modern "more."

But my wide thinking includes the planet itself. How is the planet taking this? Well, the planet is beginning to give us some feedback, what we call climate change, a consequence (one of the consequences?) of global warming. Probably leading to a rise of the levels of the ocean; not today, but perhaps tomorrow. Half of all humans nowadays lives in cities, some of them the size of countries. Many of the biggest of the cities lie at current sea level. Is the half of all of us who lives in cities safe? Are we happy?

The hugely inflated number of us there are today, as well as what we can "do" with all the energy we are taking from the earth, is making very rapid changes in Life on this planet. It is estimated that half of all mammal species we know will disappear in the not far future. No more polar bears, tigers, elephants, cougars, species of rodents. Birds do not fare much better. These of course are projections, intelligent guesses. In the same category is something I have seen expressed in different numbers but the the same thought, that of the six to eight thousand languages humans speak now, less than a hundred will exist at the end of this century.

In other words, humans are cleaning out the planet, getting rid of all the life forms we don't value, and we are getting rid of all cultures that do not fit into ours. We are digging ever deeper to get the "resources" for making energy, scraping and flattening mountains, managing rivers, building buildings. We are getting the planet ready for sole occupancy: humans, and the few animals we need for food, or as pets, the few plants we need for food, or because we like their color or their smell. We don't need Nature, we will design the scenery, we will decide who lives, who we can do without.

And we will also keep the whole thing going?

Making a world is a lot of work, and it requires maintenance. We're not doing well about maintenance. We build a road, a bridge, and then go on to the next project. But the road attracts traffic, more traffic that has to cross the bridge that was not quite designed for that much traffic. Oops, we forgot to check. Making a world requires infinite fine tuning. Not much fine tuning can be done because we got rid of all the people (or plants and animals) that did the cleaning up, recycling, rebuilding, checking, the millions of species we thought we did not need.

Ecologies are a way to think about a complex system of many kinds of elements, many kinds of functions, endless connections between the elements: everything is connected to everything else. An ecology is what the planet is. There are as many ecologies, or wholes, as I care to look at as a system. A body is an ecology; a family is, a city, a country, a climate zone, a valley, a forest. Two things I have learned about ecologies. One is that an ecology, any ecology, exists to continue existing -- as life lives to continue life. Ecologies do that by balancing, keeping, maintaining an harmonic balance. Not fixed of course, always changing, but always trying to keep the fluctuations within manageable limits. Think of the scales the blindfolded lady, Justice, holds in her hand. But not just two balancing each other, but a hundred thousand dishes. Or, think an orchestra, many voices, tones, making a harmony, If one instrument is off, or too loud, or the flautist had to take a breath so that the flute did not sound for a second, the music does not quite sound the same. And if the orchestra is badly out of tune, or uneven, it makes noise rather than music. But an orchestra always aspires to the dynamic balance that is an ecology.

The other thing I learned -- and this is very important for all of us to know -- is that In an ecol-

ogy the more variety there is, the safer the whole is. (The "purpose" of an ecology is to survive). The more species in an ecology, the more stable it is. Island ecologies are more fragile than continental ecologies. If the people of Easter Island had lived on a larger island, or an island not so isolated, cutting the many trees might not have destroyed their island ecology. Today, Easter Island is a part of a larger ecology, we have boats and planes to change what was an isolated ecology to being part of a larger one, and *therefore more sustainable*.

Why then is Man busy simplifying the ecology of the world? We are busy making the total ecology (the planetary ecology) more fragile. That may not be our intention, but here we are dealing with natural givens, not our man-made laws. A simpler ecology is a more fragile one. Our control is aimed at making a chaos simpler -- forgetting, or ignoring, that that makes an ecology more fragile.

I learned to see ecologies. Something like a spider web but infinitely more complex. A third dimensional spider web is hard to imagine; but imagine a four or five dimensional spider web where everything is connected to everything else--and no spider! The multi-dimensional web is a self-contained something like an organism. This complex web has no spider (no maker) but it is how the universe IS. As Life is part of matter-energy, so ecologies are how life-matter-energy manifest.

Somewhere in our species' history someone began to think of one species, or one individual, as more important than the whole. Perhaps hunters? Hunting big animals, predators, they forgot that predators and prey are intimately connected? If a predator kills more deer than he can eat, the deer population will diminish, and the predator will starve. If we kill predators, we cause an increase in prey: deer invading suburbs. In the planetary ecology everything is connected to everything else. A stable ecology--and that means rich, complex, a great variety of species--needs tigers and grazers, owls and mice, sheep and wolves; perhaps occasionally a wolff. The planetary ecology needs all and everyone it can get. The more differences the better. Mono-culture is bad agriculture, it destroys the earth. Mono-anything is death. Life thrives only i chaos. In fact, probably Life cannot exist in a controlled situation.

Our culture tells us to distinguish differences that can be felt, counted, named, categorized. And perhaps we assume that if we add up all these things we get a whole. No. A forest is something more than a bunch of trees. It may be hard to grasp as a oneness, but important for us to relearn at this time. Primitive man always knew the whole, he knew we are part of nature, of All. Indigenous people knew it. Western man has swung all the way to the side of seeing "things" rather than wholes. Half a century ago physicists were madly searching for the "smallest indivisible particle" so that then the whole universe could be understood as combinations of those indivisible particles. Today scientists have learned that if you look for the smallest indivisible particle you are going to find an endless number of kinds of them, but it can never add up to a universe. Now scientists see the whole, with a mathematic I can no longer follow, but I understand at least part of the new concepts.

I think of it as seeing in two ways, as a reality of things and a reality of wholes. Two truths. **No truth can replace another**. Different ways of seeing, two truths. It is obvious that we in the west see the truth of things, endless numbers of named things. I believe that it is urgent, now, today, to relearn to see the truth of the Whole. The whole of where we live, what we do, where we go; family, friends, animals and plants that are in our life. Eventually the truth of the whole of the

planet. All truths, of course, but the larger truths are harder to put in our heads, harder to "see."

Wholes are not pieces strung together, a forest is not known by the number or kind of trees. A forest is a whole, with trees, and undergrowth, and sun, wind, rain, vines that climb, mushrooms that grow on rotten leaves, bacteria and mice, and a million life forms and substances and light and air and water that make up an ecology. The forest is a whole.

When I can see the Whole, I know that I am *in* that whole, inextricably.

As a child I learned seeing a world of things, each thing with a name, a category. And it was assumed that all these things together make a whole. I was very lucky because at the same time I also learned, from the people around me, to see wholes. A person was not just an individual, but from a certain village, belonging to a group of other individuals, and the larger truth was more important than the smaller truth of his or her individuality. Later, very primitive people showed me their whole truth, seeing the Whole, the large whole of the jungle. Could be extended to the whole of the planet. The whole I now see when I am outside among and part of the wild trees, vines, plants, animals around me, is not the sum of its parts, but it is a Oneness.. Hard to explain in words--words belong to our man-made world.

All Life on the planet is (in, part of) the planetary ecology, everything related to everything. The planetary ecology has billions of identifiable things that can be given names -- trees, soil, atmosphere, animals of a million kinds and sizes, humans, plants, funguses, bacteria, viruses. The planetary ecology. What all ecologies, small and large, "do" is maintain a balance. In the human organism (a form of a small but not any less complex ecology) the sudden growth of a population of bacteria, we call disease, infection. Our body has a miraculous ability to sense where and what is happening, and "sends" white blood cells to the location of the infection. Not only white blood cells, but what we now call our immune system, which has all kinds of ways to restore a manageable balance. What we call health is an ecology in balance, harmony.

The planetary ecology must of course have its version of immune system; several systems probably. And so it must be "aware" of the sudden explosion of humans on the planet and the damage they have been able to do in a fraction of a moment in geological time. Ecologists have called the immune system an "intelligence." There are other intelligences, for instance, the complex process of eating, extracting the nutrients the body needs from food, in the stomach one process, another process in the small and large intestines. A liver that deals with toxins, kidneys that process waste fluids. Or something as simple as "seeing." Not simple at all, of course. It is not our eyes that see, we see in our brains. The eyes are just lenses, adjustable for distance and brightness, passing through filtered light waves to centers in the brain where they are interpreted, most of the information discarded so that we only are aware of what we need (or want) to see. Hearing is not in the ear, but through the ear. And all the time the brain, or the center where information from outside as well as inside the body is passed through nerves to where all this information is processed, sorted, acted upon. Only a little of that information we are made aware of. Similar kind of processes, in magnitudes immensely greater than our simple brains, must be going on in ecologies. If my immune system is a marvel of intelligence then surely the defenses of the planetary ecology must have mega-intelligences to deal with imbalances, disturbances.

Survival.

I use the word intelligence here not in the sense of being intelligent, but rather a complex dynamic system of responses to stimuli. It does not mean smart. Our immune system makes choices. It can make a number of different kinds of responses, it can make a fever or a chill, a local swelling, it can send more blood to a certain spot where the fight is going on (red and puffy skin), blood can coagulate and thereby close a wound, and immediately, instantaneously, the torn

skin begins to grow at a faster than normal rate to close a wound. I am certain that the intelligence of an ecology is equally able to make choices, adaptations of actions, and healing. Our immune system can learn. That does not mean there is a will behind it. The "purpose" of life, and a living ecology is survival. Don't think mechanisms, machines, a computer program. The intelligence of an ecology is alive, it is an aspect of Life.

And Life, I am sure, is part of what we call the universe. That is another story.

What happens when an ecology gets badly out of balance? It falls apart, it does not survive. Deserts used to be vast forests, broken when (probably humans) deforested or perhaps burned them. Forests attract rain clouds, an element in the survival of forests. They break the movement of air, wind. They temper (absorb) the sun's fiercest bright and hot rays. Deserts are hot in the sun, cold at night; forests make less extreme temperatures. Deserts are dry, nothing much grows (fragile), forests are rich, varied (stable).

I live on an island that is a huge volcano, parts of it active. On the little area we occupy there is very little soil yet. Ground is lava that is not old enough to have crumbled, but old enough for some plants and trees to have found cracks in the lava; the roots then make other cracks. When the plants die it makes mulch, insects and micro-organisms hasten decay. Some soil forms after a few hundred years. Eventually a tree grows. Trees make shade, other plants like shade. A lava desert is black, very hot during the day. I am seeing every day that in areas of what I call my "garden" (does not look like an English garden at all) where I sometimes trim-- driveway, a place where I sit, a path-- nothing much grows except some grasses, and other kinds of very tough plants. Then, where I made a pile of grass and things I had pulled up around a Cycad that was swallowed by ferns, almost immediately sprouted a mini-forest of weeds. The next year a tree began to grow. If the pile of old leaves provides enough nutrients the tree will grow strong enough perhaps to find a crack in the lava and grow tall and big. In parts where I don't interfere there are dense clumps of almost jungle. Trees, vines, orchids. One of my sons studied agriculture; he frequently comments that our trees and plants are "much too close." Yes, but they thrive. I think they thrive because we have lots of rain and sun, and what one plant takes out of the ground another puts back in. It is dense and jungle-like *because* the plants grow close together, and the atmosphere is damp and warm. Lava, when it finally breaks down is fertile. We must learn to think "whole." Trees, and plants, don't only need soil, they need sun, warmth, water (either as ground water or rain), they need shade perhaps, they need neighbors!

If you have ever had an aquarium you know that you cannot just have a fish in water. There has to be a water plant, some rocks, sand, air pumped into the water, the fish needs to be fed. And if you don't scrape the algae that make the water murky, the ecology of tank-water-fish gets out of balance. The fish dies, the water smells rotten. A mini-ecology died.

Our society-- or, as the Dutch word says, a living-together-- is badly out of balance. The average income of an American family of four is \$50,000 a year, I read a few days ago. The Average family lives well, they work hard to live well. That fifty thousand comes to about \$34 spendable income per person per day. The Hyper-Rich in America have incomes several thousand times \$34. One percent of all Americans own half of the wealth of America (land, houses, cars, businesses, rights, money in the bank). There are many such statistics, all difficult to read because statistics prove what one wants to prove. Seeing an income distribution in a number of countries makes clear that the US is way on top with an enormous gap between rich and poor. Sweden, among the countries in the list I saw (Google "income distribution US") has the smallest gap: the rich earn only twice as much as the poor.

Now, seeing through a wider wide-angle lens. Ours is a planet where now one species is not

only at the top of the food chain, it owns the food chain. There are 6.7 billion (thousand million) individuals of this species—the population grew like a cancer in the last few hundred years—but still this number is of course a tiny percentage of all life forms on this planet. Yet these few individuals can change, and have changed, the planet. As a consequence of several kinds of thoughtless and ruthless human actions, each day a thousand species are extinguished. Gone. Half of the planet's rain forests have been destroyed. The atmosphere has been fouled. The imbalance in the planetary ecology is... what word is there?

What would you do if you were driving a car and saw that you're driving full speed to a chasm? Stop the car, wouldn't you? But we are not convinced yet that we are speeding in the wrong direction. We believe leaders who assure us that this is the way to go.

WAKE UP, wake up, wake up...

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We, modern man, think ourselves separate from the planet, the earth, the rest of Life. We created a world on top of the planet that tries to ignore, sidestep, the laws and regularities of the planet. We "use" the planet. And, somehow, our leaders continue to convince us that there is no end to what we can plunder.

We may think we are not a part of Nature, but of course we cannot not be. We can put chemicals and batteries and metal bones in, or attached to, our organic bodies, but the essence of what we are is always that we are part of Nature. We, and our works, are interwoven in the All of the planet. The one great ecology of the earth must include our plastic and other invented materials; even our invented ideas must be part of the All. Our man-made world cannot be other than a part of the planetary ecology.

My immune system reacts the same to a wound from a bullet from someone else's gun, or a gun I aim at myself. If I cut myself, or someone else cuts me, the immune system immediately reacts. The planetary ecology reacts to destruction caused by a foreign object falling onto the earth from space the same as to human-caused destruction. The present sickness of the earth is reacted to by the intelligence of the planetary ecology's "immune system" regardless of who or what caused the sickness.

How does our immune system react to a sickness?

First with pain and fever.

What comes to mind is the enormous natural disasters that strike the world everywhere -- tsunamis, earth quakes, monsoon and hurricane storms, too much water here, too little elsewhere, fires and floods. And the fever is the "extremes" that we experience. Not only extremes of nature, but extremes in our beliefs and behaviors. Extreme Islam, Christianity, extreme capitalism, extreme riches, extreme starvation, extreme wars, extreme torture.

Our immune system attacks micro organisms that it finds at the place of trauma. How does a planetary intelligence deal with what agents it finds at the points of imbalance?

How about new and ever more exotic diseases that spread rapidly to become epidemics? I remember discussions with a group of physicians at the beginning of what now is the HIV epidemic. In the early eighties it was known that HIV attacks and disorients the human immune system. I argued that we should, obviously, find ways to strengthen the immune system. The physicians did not agree, they were locked into the model of attacking the attacker virus with drugs. Always more potent and therefore poisonous drugs. I cannot help but think that we did not learn much in

twenty years. HIV is still spreading like wild fire-- what we learned is to keep people alive longer, at enormous cost.

What would a world ecology's intelligence do to restore an ecological balance? How about dumbing down humans -- if humans are diagnosed as being the inventors of ever more powerful ways to destroy the earth and its life forms?

How do we deal with people who disturb human societies. In America we put people in prison. We have the doubtful distinction of having more people in prison than any other "civilized" country. But obviously our putting people away does not work well at all. We keep adding prisons because we find more people we want to put away. Although Americans are perhaps 4% of the world's population, we have 20% of the world's prisoners. Obviously, it seems to me, building walls to separate the bad guys from the good guys does not work. But we don't want to know that, we go on building walls.

Other people have learned that what works much better is to re-educate, rehabilitate people who once made trouble.

How would the planetary ecology's intelligence deal with people who cause wounds? Perhaps by making more and more people aware of consequences, and reminding them of wholes rather than differences.

We knew that for many thousands of years, before we became civilized, tamed, thinking ourselves apart from all other Life forms and before thinking we were the boss. Perhaps it is also the planetary intelligence that is beating me to make this speech. I am much too old to worry about the future; I have used up my future. But I am driven to say, Wake up, people, we are not who and what you think. We are an integral part of All That Is, we are part of the great complex that is our planet. The planet feeds us, gives us shelter, gives us meaning, perhaps grandeur. What do we give back? In an ecology everything is related to everything. The connection from the planet to us, is also a connection from us to the planet.

Early Man, primitive man, knew that. That is how we survived for at least a hundred and fifty thousand years. It is only in the last perhaps ten thousand years that we have blown our egos up, pretending that we are masters of this planet.

We cannot eat more than is good for us, we cannot destroy what should not be destroyed. A civilization, a culture, that is based on the principle of MORE is truly insane. The smallest child of any surviving primitive tribe knows that

WHAT THERE IS IS ALL THERE IS

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Early this morning, before I was fully awake perhaps, I had this image: a wide, slow moving river. Deceptive, because underneath the surface there is a powerful current of course. In the river one of those floating mats of debris, tree stumps, vines, plants, and on that mat armies of ants scurrying here and there, fighting each other, fighting other life. The floating mat of stuff changes shape, twirls slowly, all the time moving with the river.

Some particularly smart ants work to steer the floating mat to one or another shore. They succeed to get where the river has eddies, whirlpools pushing water upstream, back to the past.

The mat breaks apart.

When an ecology breaks, like the breakup of the floating mat in the river, chaos. Pieces of what was the mat float away. New ecologies grow. This time perhaps without smart ants to steer their

world into eddies that flow the wrong way.

And in the end, the one thing that may bring us back to the planet's path is what I call "unconditional love." Love is a word I distrust because it is so over- and misused. But that feeling of belonging is quality we had when we were primitive and lived in a sustainable world for all those eons. Some peoples have retained that ancient kind of love, in the jungles, deserts and ice fields of this world. Unconditional love has nothing to do with what we call "in love." It simply means accepting that others are as we are, we share faults and talents in a shared place. Unconditional love has little to do with liking, or approving what others are or do. What it means is that we are aware that we need each other, we are part of each other and part of the whole. We accept each other as part of a family, the village, none better than another, none worse. Somewhere along our way from then to now, we lost this, as we lost other qualities and wisdoms in our haste to get power.

Unconditional love knows that the men we contemptuously call terrorists must have reasons to do what they do. I want to understand what those reasons are, I want to uncover their humanity. Talk as long as it takes; force never.

Perhaps, how we have become is just a stage: greedy, half-formed, thoughtless, crude and cruel. Scientists have determined that we began being human (not sapient yet) maybe one hundred and fifty thousand years ago. Followed a long, sometimes leisurely, often stormy, time of growing up. Slowly spreading out, but, until now, always only a few of us. Perhaps now our species is in its adolescence. Not yet adult, but in that awkward time of too much fertility, too much testosterone, much too much blind experimenting; too many of us, waging endless wars, torturing each other, messing up the planet that feeds and shelters us. A stage? If we and the planet survive our *Sturm und Drang* we may be what we once were: curious children crying and singing, laughing, sleeping, knowing ourselves in the arms of the planet. If we mature, we may have added a new-found lust for living and loving -- ourselves, each other, all fellow beings, and the whole that is the planet..

The red orchid has stopped blooming. But probably it will bloom again until old age. I know only too well that orchids do not always like where I stick them, and they let me know by not growing, or growing slowly, never blooming. When one does particularly well, as this red one, then I feel I have worked with, cooperated with a moody plant. I have been sensitive to the larger whole, the ecology we are both part of. Thank you, friend. We share the same space, close together. One family, one huge ecology.