



Music of the Wild

Heaven is under our feet as well as over our heads.
– Henry David Thoreau

As brilliant silvery light reflects from the Lamar River, the lone black wolf struggles to cross the unusually fast moving high water, finally disappearing behind the waving yellow-green cottonwoods into the blue-gray sagebrush. The speckled black wolf is then seen heading back up into the lodgepole pine forest below Specimen Ridge in the grand Lamar Valley, a jewel in Yellowstone National Park. A herd of pronghorn antelope, the second fastest land mammal in the world after the cheetah, is running through the valley with their young, whose horns have barely surfaced. Across the wide dark green expanse of the valley beyond the river is a long line of peaceful bison, punctuated by the rollicking jumping of the new red dogs, or baby bison, who run circles around their mothers.

The beauty of nature evokes a natural intuitive reverence, an awe of the boundless spirit in all forms of life, and inspires a growing desire to learn more about the interdependence binding all beings into a unity on Planet Earth. Nature is replete with infinite potentiality and regenerates all who seek her refuge. How can we better understand how all life is connected, from the largest galaxies to the smallest microorganisms, such as those in the yellowish-red

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bacterial mat surrounding the deep turquoise blue of Yellowstone's Grand Prismatic Spring?

Kathleen Raine, one of the poets of the Perennial Philosophy, wrote, "We can love our world, we experience everything as a kind of unending dialogue, and not with sentient beings only but with sun and mountains and trees and stones. They tell us those things that constitute our wisdom better than the mere measurement of scientific experiment."¹ She said that by losing a sense of awe, we lose a part of ourselves that exists in the tree, the river, and elements. To know consciousness and nature as inseparable is to recover the lost consciousness of wholeness.

Caring and protecting nature with its myriad life forms is a part of the human response to immersion in nature, as well as the rational conclusion from living in today's world. Sustainability is a crucial principle by which to live, and we are learning more about the ways to ensure that future generations will inherit their natural birthright.

We have only to look at the near extermination of the wolves in the 48 states of America to see how predatory humans can be. Between 1870 and 1930, wolf extermination was public policy; the last wolf in Yellowstone was killed in 1926. With the passage of the Endangered Species Act in 1973, wolves were protected. In 1995-96 wolves were reintroduced into Yellowstone from Canada. They have made a comeback and about fifteen packs exist currently in the protected zone of Yellowstone National Park. The history of the bison tells a similar story. Out of the estimated thirty million original bison, only one thousand roamed America around the late 1800s following the construction of the first transnational train route that brought hunters and trappers westward who shot bison for trade and sport.

What can we do to help promote the healing of nature, and how do we better learn to live a balanced life in harmony with the natural order? The Dalai Lama said that scientists should educate society on global studies about the environment. These ideas should be taught to children in school. Rather than throw out technology, he advised working more intelligently with new progress, taking care to avoid negative side effects for the environment. Speaking about the cause and effect relations between phenomena and the interdependence of all life, he said that "the correct understanding of the subtlest level of interdependence – that of the interdependence of things and conceptual constructions – has more to do with maintaining the balance of the outer and the inner world, and with the purification of the inner world."² While the unwise use of intelligence led to excesses, perhaps by cultivating a deeper awareness of the sentience of beings, we will see the necessity of purifying a motivation to become

increasingly compassionate, which in turn will influence mankind to live more ethically.

Brooke Medicine Eagle of the Northern Plains Indian medicine path wrote about what she realized on her vision quest: “We know how to do something; we know how to make something, how to exert effort; but we need to allow, to be receptive, listen to the Earth, find the Universal knowledge and ancient truths within ourselves, to surrender and serve. Each of us must find that balance, heal ourselves, become whole.”³ In doing so, we unfold our full potential and create a more abundant life for all. She said when Native Americans seek the vision quest, they not only try to heal and fulfill individual potential, but also try to “learn to use that potential to serve all our relations: the two-leggeds, the four-leggeds, the wingeds, those that crawl upon the Earth, and the Mother Earth herself.” We may evolve new patterns of living in harmony with the environment by rediscovering ancient truths at the heart of diverse cultural traditions. Thus, by living to restore balance we may contribute to and create world culture.

The path of becoming whole, of developing inner potentialities and offering them in service of humanity and nature, can be inspired by scientists, philosophers, sages, mystics and poets from traditions around the world and from all time. Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote of the experience of deep music, a harmony of being, indeed of an idyllic paradise, the spirit of an age of gold, in the poem, “Epipsychidion”:

And every motion, odour, beam, and tone,
With that deep music is in unison;
Which is a soul within the soul – they seem
Like echoes of an antenatal dream.

Gerry Lewin,
IWC Board Member

¹ Raine, Kathleen. “The Underlying Order: Nature and the Imagination.” *Seeing God Everywhere: Essays on Nature and the Sacred*. Ed. Barry McDonald. Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2003. 171-190.

² Gyatso, Tenzin, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama. “Tibetan Buddhist Perspective on Spirit in Nature.” *Seeing God Everywhere: Essays on Nature and the Sacred*. Ed. Barry McDonald. Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2003. 17-27.

³ Medicine Eagle, Brooke. “The Rainbow Bridge.” *Sisters of the Earth*. Ed. Lorraine Anderson. New York: Vintage Books, 2003. 386-392