



## Going home <sup>1</sup>

For hundreds of thousands of years humans lived and died in nature. Our remote ancestors were “*weapons-toting...brainy...naked ape[s]*”<sup>2</sup> who dwelt in harmony with the Earth and took it for granted that nature was alive. It’s only three hundred years ago that scientists and philosophers like Galileo, Descartes and Newton drove the intellectual revolution that changed the way mankind saw the world.



“The notion of an organic, living, and spiritual universe was replaced by that of the world as a machine.”<sup>3</sup>

Influenced by this theory scientists began to view all biological organisms as inanimate - products of blind chance and the mechanisms of evolution. Such mechanistic habits of thought underlie the structures of our society and influence not only scientists but also economists, businessmen, bureaucrats and politicians. It is a worldview that believes that no animal or plant has a life, or purpose, or value of its own - that all exist only to be exploited in the name of progress and profit. Today - mankind has forgotten that nature is alive.

“The mechanistic theory of nature...has led to our present crisis”<sup>4</sup>

Economic growth and progress are the drivers of the Industrial Age and tragically under this regime we have become alienated from the Earth. The result has been the desecration of this “*wonderful world.*”<sup>5</sup> Civilisation is killing the planet – we are killing the planet.

“There is no time to be lost...because man has now acquired the power of...destroying all life on this planet.”<sup>6</sup>

The priority for humanity should not be yet more powerful weapons or computers. All our hi-tech gadgets do not enrich us – they serve only to take us further from the natural world that was once our home. No - our urgent task is to rebuild our relationship with the Earth. Thankfully, many of us still experience a strong empathy with our pets or sit enraptured by animals in wildlife documentaries. It’s this private emotional engagement that could hopefully provide the starting point of a spiritual movement “*back to the Earth.*”<sup>7</sup>

“We need to love and respect the Earth”<sup>8</sup>

Rather than preserving an artificial separateness we need to remember our interconnectedness and recognise that “*man is an integral part of nature.*”<sup>6</sup> Our remote ancestors perceived this reality and had no difficulty in feeling communion with the Earth. We

need to learn once again listen to her wisdom because she *“communicates the most sacred of mysteries.”*<sup>9</sup> We need to rediscover our ancestral intimacy with the Earth - remember that we are simply *“naked apes”*<sup>2</sup> and live once again within *“the community of living things.”*<sup>8</sup>

**“Turning from the world’s present state and direction...look for guidance [from] the spirituality within Nature.”**<sup>10</sup>

The objectivity of science has de-spiritualised nature and in the process we have forgotten numinosity - the spirit of things. We need to learn again to listen to the quiet voice of the Earth and remember the reality of the non-material, or spiritual world. That inside all things, forgotten and ignored, is *“the soul of objects.”*<sup>11</sup>

**“Matter is the tangible exterior of things, and spirit the non-visible interior.”**<sup>11</sup>

What’s now required is a *“paradigm shift”*<sup>12</sup> - a radical change in our way of thinking<sup>13</sup> from the mechanistic worldview of Descartes and Newton to a more holistic and ecological conceptual framework. A viewpoint that sees the world as *“an integrated whole”* in which all things are *“interconnected and interdependent.”*<sup>3</sup> To heal our *“wounded relationship with nature”*<sup>11</sup> by rediscovering a sense of connectedness and belonging to the Earth.

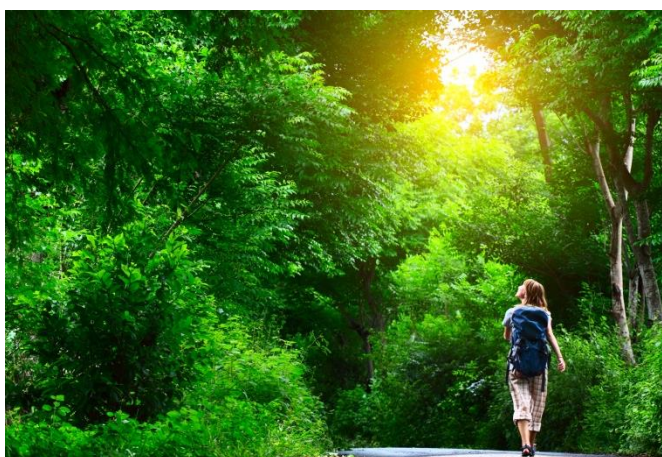
**“Return to a sense of kinship with all beings.”**<sup>14</sup>

**“The time has come when we will listen or we will die.”**<sup>9</sup>



In our myopic dedication to materialism the Earth has been “depreciated...exploited and abused.”<sup>11</sup> Mankind has degraded and polluted the land, air and water. Now our hubris threatens to bring doom upon ourselves and all life. Any hope of salvation lies in changing the perceptual foundations of civilization – that you and I change.

“The time has come to lower our voices and cease imposing our mechanistic patterns on the biological processes of the Earth... and begin quite humbly to follow the guidance of the larger community on which all life depends.”<sup>9</sup>



The time has come to change from the mechanistic to an ecological paradigm. For too long we have been enamoured with the industrial world and now, after a long absence, we need to “find our way back home.”<sup>10</sup>

*Don*

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