

MAN ALONE

“We Indians think of the earth and the whole universe as a never-ending circle, and in this circle man is just another animal. The buffalo and the coyote are our brothers, the birds, our cousins. Even the tiniest ant, even a louse, even the smallest flower you can find—they are all relatives.”

Jenny Leading Cloud
White River Sioux

We, modern Man, walked out of the circle.

How can we deny our relatedness to all that lives? We cannot act as if we owned the place to do with what we want. That is not how a planetary ecosystem works. We **are** part of it, whether we like it or not. An ecosystem is not something you can resign from. It's like the head saying "I am better, more spiritual, than the body," and then proceed to abuse, reshape, pollute the body. When the body dies, the head dies.

We have done exactly that! And because we cannot see that what we are doing can only lead to our own extinction, we pretend that everything is fine. Progress. More and bigger. An economy that must "grow" every year.

Even a moment's thought should convince us that in a closed ecosystem, there is no *more*. The only way to live in a sustainable world is to live within our means. Anything more is stolen from our neighbors.

We are now engaged in trying to secure control over the oil of the world, so that, never mind other people's needs for oil, we at least will be allowed to continue our profligate way of life another year, another month. But oil is not the issue: it is the burning of oil and coal that is making what we now call Climate Change. Every scientific report tells of possibly irreversible changes coming much faster than we had thought (hoped). Glaciers are melting faster than we thought even a few years ago. The atmosphere is getting warmer, the seas are warmer, and even a few degrees has far-reaching consequences.

A few countries are doing something. Sweden decided it will be totally free from fossil fuels by 2015, only a few years from now. But Sweden does not contribute much to the problem. The United States, with 4% of the world's population, causes at least 25% of the pollution of the atmosphere. But American auto makers do not make small cars that sip fuel. It will take ten, or more, years to switch an enormous industry over to economic transportation.

My guess is that the American economy will be unable to change as rapidly as it needs to. We are bankrupt. It is not going to be a smooth change, but a crash.

I look at the way we live, the way we were taught to consume, when I consider our way of life: throwing away last year's electronic gadget, throwing away food, destroying forests that took a hundred and more years to grow, I cannot see this culture change in a few years. We, Americans, are going to get the greatest shock of our lives when we have to learn to live without cars, without electricity, without supermarkets, without manufactured food.

Don't be so pessimistic, I hear you say.

There is always hope, the saying says..

Needing so desperately to see through rose-colored glasses is polyanna. What is needed is seeing clearly. Accepting what is, ready to adapt — something Man does exceptionally well — to changed circumstances, even if it is we who changed the circumstances.

Almost half a century ago I was fortunate to get to know a small group of people who lived in a sustainable world that had been very little changed for thousands of years. Some call them Stone Age People; they are not, of course. But their way of life, nomads, hunter/gatherers, is ancient. They still know themselves securely within the circle.

When I knew them they lived very simple lives. So simple that we could not imagine living that simply. They owned nothing, certainly not the land they lived on.

That used to be true for all indigenous people. The idea of owning land was unimaginable before we stepped out of the circle.

The people I knew lived in the deep jungle. They were nomads. Their houses were the simplest structures, made from bamboo that grew all around them. They had no chiefs, no leaders. No laws, no police, no jails. They knew their environment intimately. They could find food all around. They did not 'work' when foraging through the day—not work 'in the sweat of their brow' certainly. Wandering here and there they knew to find an edible root, some fruit, leaves. Occasionally they hunted (with blow pipes and poison darts) but never more than they could eat, of course. They did not grow rice, or corn, or potatoes, there was enough starchy food to be found in the ground. They lived in the tropics, wore hardly any clothes. They bathed in streams. Made little fires for cooking and sitting around in the evening—not a bonfire as we would make, but three sticks glowing. They sang all day long. Little songs, mostly without words, just the joy of being alive bubbling up. And, amazingly, two or three people, each making what seemed random sounds, made a harmony.

Peter Matthiessen, famous travel writer, met a similar group of people in Africa, an encounter he describes in his book *The Tree Where Man Was Born*. He and a friend, and some bearers, met five pygmies, 'shorter than the bow they carried'. They had hunted, and were carrying slabs of meat seemingly as big as themselves. They smiled. Peter Matthiessen could not help but smile, 'a smile that travelled all around my head', he writes. And as they mumble simple greetings, one group to another, he writes: 'The encounter in the sunny wood is much too simple, too beautiful to be real, yet it is more real than anything I have known in a long time. I feel a warm flood of relief, as if I had been away all my life and had come home again—I want to embrace them all'.

Yes, that is how I felt also when I first met the group of aborigines in Southeast Asia. As if I had come upon people who still knew what it is to be human. These little people were as all of us had been for the first hundred thousand years, before we became civilized and stepped out of the circle.

Man has changed in the last ten thousand years. Perhaps not physically, biologically; our DNA is probably the same. But we have become different people, and we have changed the planet beyond recognition. We have changed the face of the earth. Where there were immense forests, now there are deserts. We have moved mountains, connected oceans that were not connected. We have covered large areas of land with asphalt and concrete, with monstrous buildings rising to the clouds. We have been, and are, the cause of the extinction of a million species of plants and animals.

Our very nature is different. We have become fierce, violent, greedy beasts, thinking ourselves the masters of this planet. We have forgotten that once we knew ourselves to be in the circle of all Life—our forgetting has changed us.

We are convinced that we have improved, changed for the better, because we have immensely increased our ability to control Nature, control our fellow human, control ourselves.

We pride ourselves to have made our own world, ignoring the planetary ecosystem.

We knew always, and still know, that mono-culture (planting acres and acres of one plant) depletes the soil, but we have convinced ourselves that pumping chemicals and poisons into the earth allows us to continue. Why? Do we think it is more economical? More efficient?

No, and no.

There are many more of us today. Many multiples more. Some people live longer than we ever did before, as if the length of a life span has anything to do with the quality of life. We have conquered some age-old illnesses and gained new ones. We have developed sciences of hygiene and healing that amaze us, although that knowledge is locked onto systems that today are obviously created for the benefit of the providers rather than the receivers of these marvels.

We have spread all over the earth, appropriated all arable and most scenic land for our various uses. We have become very good at destroying existing ecosystems and replacing them with cities, roads, structures, and an endless number and kind of artifacts. (artifact is a man-made object).

In our haste to expand and take over we have eradicated habitats, causing the extinction of uncounted species of plant and animal life. Almost casually we have destroyed most indigenous cultures of this planet. As if that were not enough meddling, we have and continue to mix up ecosystems world-wide, by moving plants and animals from their places of origin (their unique 'niches' in the ecosystem) to places of our choosing. That almost always threatens and extinguishes native species, forces the local ecology to become fragile. And our unstoppable wanderlust sees to it that species we do not move by design, get moved by accident.

We build great cities. Enormous metropolises, many millions of humans clumped together. Today, 2006, half of the world's six and a half billion (that is six and a half thousand million) people live in cities.

These changes we have made to the planet look exactly like a cancer: uncontrollable growth of cells that eat, and so kill, their host.

We pride ourselves on having laws, man-made rules that usually have absolutely nothing to do with Nature's laws and the laws of ecology. Because our laws are unnatural, we must enforce them, forcefully. We created elaborate hierarchies and types of enforcers, penalties, and prisons.

Our will be done.

The richest and most powerful nation on earth has more people locked away than any other.

We have endlessly refined our ability to kill. We have invented ways to kill plants, animals, and our fellow humans, that were unthinkable even a few generations ago.

We have invented ways to wipe out whole societies from a distance.

We are proud of our progress. Electric light, flying machines, automobiles, endless gadgets, cyber space (which is not a space at all but a network of copper and glass wires, circling the planet). And now that we have come to the Age of Information, where everyone has access to all knowledge all the time, we are drowning in misinformation, misrepresentation and fluff.

Our pride makes it unthinkable to reflect on who we are, where we are going.

We talk about *sustainable*. Isn't it obvious that any system based on **more** is **unsustainable**?

Our thinking is wrong. We must stop thinking MORE. We must (again) get used to the idea of living within our means.

But, you say, we live infinitely better than our grandparents did.

In what way? More machines, gadgets, more food (and more obesity), better medical care (for some people). Better perhaps, unsustainable certainly.

We, who pride ourselves on using reason, left reason behind.

Scientists have warned us for years that oil, the energy that allows our profligacy, is running out. Maybe not today or tomorrow, but soon.

Other scientists have warned us about global warming, and its resulting climate change. That is obviously happening, although some governments deny it (they probably don't really deny it, but they want some time to grab as much oil producing territory as they can now so that if and when oil gets scarce we have first dibs).

Our contemporaneous thinking is firmly fixed on technology—*we can do anything our minds think up!*

But our modern minds do not understand that we are part of an ecology.

Man is not alone!

Probably ten- or twelve thousand years ago we invented agriculture. Rather than constantly moving around someone thought of a way to stay put. Agriculture probably began when someone thought of 'improving' a grain by artificially improving the size of some grass seed heads. Domesticating (taming) plants led to domesticating (taming) animals. Being able to grow food more abundantly than Nature provided. That led to pacing off territory and claiming we *owned* it.

Ownership led to hierarchies: I above others, men above women, rich above poor.

And during that great changing it occurred to the domesticated humans that they were better than the rest of creation. Didn't we have the smarts to change plants and animals. And eventually, inevitably, some of us were thought to be better than—certainly more powerful than—other humans.

And so we left the circle.

We learned that we could make nature do our will, if we just had enough power and will. Technology gave us the power, our will got honed by success.

It took time. In the beginning of the last century the majority of humanity still thought of themselves as part of all creation. Many indigenous peoples still thought themselves unbreakably related to their 'land' for instance. They did not think real estate, to be bought and sold. People all over the world felt a relatedness to the soil that supported them. In many languages the word *mother* or *earth mother* was used for land.

Until a few generations ago only westerners thought of land as property.

Today that seems to be the world culture.

Thinking ourselves better than other humans explained slavery by saying (believing?) that slaves were not quite human—although it must have been obvious that they were just as human as their masters, because they interbred. Elsewhere another way of thinking of slaves was as the spoils of war. In those cultures slaves were not inferior, but unfortunate; it was not unusual for slave women to marry and freely choose to stay with the people who had captured them.

If indeed the aborigines I knew, and the ones I read about, were content, reasonably well fed, joyful, and had not changed much in many thousands of years, then what happened to make us as we are: warlike, aggressive, lonely?

What made us choose to be tamed?

That is the question that haunts me.

Evolution is not teleological: it is not a change over time according to a preexisting plan, or toward a certain goal. Evolution does not follow a blue print. As I understand it, Nature allows endless individual variations in the process of reproduction. Many of these mutations are minor, some are outrageous and do not survive.

But small changes made over time make big differences.

From my point of view, the diversity of species is awesome. The mechanisms that are our bodies, are miraculously. It is obvious that life and environment are intimately related: what we now call an ecology, or ecosystem, the circle of earlier cultures. *Everything is related to everything* in an ecosystem: a multi-dimensional web. The planetary ecology is made up of a myriad of local ecologies.

From human and human-like bones, found here and there, we have learned that at one time, 30-40,000 years ago, there were more than one kind of humans. We don't know what happened, but only one kind survived. Now there is only one human species, albeit with different shapes, skin color, kind of hair, etc. One of the parameters of a species is that individuals can interbreed. Over the last few thousand years we have interbred every race (as we call it) with every other; therefore we must be one species, *homo sapiens*.

This is what one dictionary says about the meaning of our species' name:

"The genus *Homo* is believed to have existed for at least two million years, and modern humans (*H. sapiens sapiens*) first appeared in the Upper Paleolithic. Among several extinct species are *H. habilis*, *H. erectus*, and *H. neanderthalensis*.

HOMO: ORIGIN Latin, 'man.'

"sapient |ˈsāpēənt| |,seɪpiənt| |,səpiəntli| |,seɪpɪənt| adjective

1 formal wise, or attempting to appear wise.

• (chiefly in science fiction) intelligent : *sapient life forms*.

2 of or relating to the human species (*Homo sapiens*) : *our sapient ancestors of 40,000 years ago*.

noun

a human of the species *Homo sapiens*.

DERIVATIVES

sapience |,seɪpiəns| |,səpiəns| noun

sapiently |,seɪpiəntli| |,səpiəntli| adverb

ORIGIN late Middle English : from Old French, or from Latin *sapient-* 'being wise,' from the verb *sapere*."

ORIGIN Latin, literally 'wise man.'

A species that is working hard to radically change the planet, and so, possibly, extinguishing itself, is *wise*?

For a few billion years all the earlier beings that eventually made Man were part of our close-knit ecosystem. I imagine the big change—we stepped out of the circle— came when Man figured out how to interfere in the random mutations that occur naturally, and improved a grass to become grain. Not only produced grains that were more abundant than the original, easier to harvest, with more nutrition, but, most important, the man-made grain was fertile. Of the latest creations of Man, Genetically Manipulated species, some are sterile—but that may be on purpose, so that farmers are forced to *buy* new seeds each year, instead of saving a few seeds for next year's planting. In a globalized culture we have made it possible to 'patent' species of animals and plants.

The first hundred thousand (or, some say million) years Man was nomadic, in order not to deplete the earth of the foods he needed for survival. Obviously he knew not to hunt more than he could eat (or preserve) and not to take all of a plant, so that it could grow back for tomorrow. Needless to say, there were few of us.

But agricultural indigenous peoples until recently still considered themselves part of the circle. Perhaps a privileged part of the circle, but they still retained a feeling of kinship with some if not all other Life.

The civilized west has broken the remaining ties with the Wild.

Taming became an obsession. We no longer allowed a certain percentage of our crop to be eaten by insects and other pests, we eradicate *all* competition (try to, anyway)-=.

We eradicated large predators, for sport, and then by destruction of habitat, which now is the greatest threat to remaining wild species: the systematic, worldwide destruction of habitat.

There are very few wild humans left, although of course ten, twelve thousand years ago, all men were wild.

Wild men are different. For instance, they learn from the first day of life to be responsible for themselves. Of course mothers care for and defend their babies, but at a very young age, toddlers are left to learn by themselves. In all the indigenous and aboriginal cultures I know children are cherished for themselves; children experience that they are loved by everyone in a village, or larger area. Children grow up feeling a part of a whole, but responsible for themselves.

In contrast, we teach our children, from early on, that they are unique individuals, and that being loved is something that needs to be earned. We, modern civilized people, feel that we must see to it that all the right ideas, concepts, words, needs, behaviors, manners, values are imprinted in our children. That takes time and it takes a great deal of imprinting. Which, in turn, makes growing children think that their parents, or other authority figures (teachers, police) are responsible for them.

Wild people have no such ideas.

Evidently, it is very difficult for modern man to accept that earlier humans, and most non-western indigenous people, have and had very different growing-up experiences. And so, also very different points of view. I call them different realities. I make a distinction between reality and What Is, only as

a way to explain the different views that exist about the world.

I use What Is to mean the planet, the weather, the wilderness, ocean, all things not (yet) touched by Man. In What Is, it is impossible to ask the question, "if nobody heard or saw a tree falling in the forest, did it happen?" What Is is not a human-centered reality.

Reality is what we have been told, and therefore believe to be true. For instance, the belief that humans are quintessentially different from animals, that because of this superiority we own this planet and can do with it what we want. And, for instance, the idea that if a human is not aware it does not happen!

People from other cultures have different realities. Children growing up in an indigenous society (in the last century) grow up with the reality that they are part of the village, or their extended family (not only mother and father, but grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and all others married into their large family). Those children have a strong feeling of *belonging*, which gives a security westerners don't know.

Westerners grow up with the idea that we are, each of us, unique, and on our own, we have to fight to survive. We talk about the world as a jungle—I assure you no jungle is as chaotic and dangerous as a western society.

Modern man thinks highly of himself: *See what we have accomplished! We have conquered Nature, made dams, dug canals through continents, moved mountains. We have covered over the earth in asphalt and concrete. Our buildings reach up in the clouds. We grow food a thousand acres at a time, with tons of pesticides and artificial fertilizer, even genetically manipulated genes—we have created plants that never were! Our medical knowledge is so great that we can transplant organs from a dead body to a sick one, and give the patient a few more years to live. We fly through the air, at speeds unimaginable; important people hurry in their own planes around the world in a day. Scientists with telescopes are unraveling the mysteries of the universe. All that and much more, doesn't that prove that we, homo sapiens in the 21st century, are superior beings?*

Are we, when our great deeds are destroying the planetary ecology? For what purpose? Is the ability to build tall buildings a measure of greatness? Keeping a body alive when it is time to die, is that an accomplishment? Are these great accomplishments available to all people or just a few? And, is it not true that our waste of energies is changing the planet that is our only home? Is it not obvious that a system that is based on 'growth' is unsustainable?

Is Man happy, or even content?

No. At best we are proud. It has been called arrogant.

We see ourselves far above, distinct from other Life. Seeing ourselves unique. We, humans, have intelligence, technology, language, a soul—take your pick, any one or all will do. We say to all Life, *we'll go it alone*. We know what we want, and we have the power to do it. That in itself should be proof that we are the highest form of life. The best. The most. The owners of the planet!

We built a whole world for and by Man Alone. We have rewritten history, or rather, the only history is that of Man Alone, all other Life is background, of no import.

That is what we tell our children from the first day.

This is what we constantly remind each other of: WE ARE BETTER THAN everything and anything else on this planet and probably in the universe.

It has become something unquestionable: our main and biggest axiom, underlying our world, the world we created on top of, but separate from, the planet.

Being apart from everything else alive, makes all other life just 'things'. To be tolerated, or eradicated, to be used, or abused. Thrown away, worthless.

Domesticated is to be enslaved.

The conviction that we are something special makes it possible to do with the earth as we please. We think we own it, we can sell it, dig it up, change it, steal treasures from the inside of the earth. Land is but property, real estate. Soil and water are but resources, to be used, trashed, abused if it pleases us.

We think so highly of ourselves that we do not need to consider consequences. If we, in our rush to live like kings, want to pollute the air, who is going to stop us? Pollute water with our industries? Others can clean it up. We *own* the planet! Property we can do with what we want.

By seeing ourselves as better than all other life, we see distinctions.

Our awareness has become seeing distinctions. The world around us has become an immense collection of things; the world of Man an uneasy mass of human differences. Some of us are more important than others of us. Within our species we see a hierarchy. Man above women; white above non-white.

It takes a severe blindness to remain convinced of one's *better-than*.

We, who created a whole world, create abstractions at will. Money, power over, lies loudly proclaimed — distinctions. We have broken the world up in pieces and can no longer see the whole.

Ego, I, self, most apart of all. Each wrapped up in its own imaginary boundaries.

Man Alone.

Most of us have lost (thrown away) knowing, even seeing the Whole. But some of us have had brief experiences of a reality that glowed with a radiance that could not be denied. Suddenly we saw, we really saw, the Whole.

I did. It is now obvious to me that I am part of that radiant, magical Whole.

Albert Hoffman, genius chemist, in his intense little book "Insight Outlook," mentions that the first feeling of **belonging** occurred when he was but a young boy. In the book I found this quote: "Reality is as magical as the magical is real," (Ernst Juenger, in Sicilian Letters to the Man of the Moon).

But our culture, our society, denies magic, and so denies those mystical feelings of being one-with that never were rare. We still have those, but are not allowed to accept the magic, or even remember it.

In truth, we, humans, cannot be alone. We were never made to be alone, although our current culture forces us to think it. Our deepest yearning is for community, oneness with at least one other, preferably with a community of others that we experience as who/what *we belong to*.

Our man-made world is based on a million man-made rules, that deny, even suppress, memories of the magical, radiant Whole. We learn only distinctions, differences, things against a background.

In our man-made world, the Self is supreme—how can we maintain that Self and be one-with? We cannot.

By isolating ourselves from all that is natural, we also separate ourselves from our bodies, our physical selves. We are raised to think that we always and everywhere must wear clothes; elimination is 'dirty'. In the circle, elimination is what we give back to the earth, fertilizer.

Civilized humans give nothing back, Nature is theq resource. We give back only trash.

Bodily functions are suspect; bodily needs are to be controlled by Will.

Sex— relief from the rigors of a man-made world.

Sex— uppermost in our minds, but not to be talked about.

Sex— hemmed around with rules and morality.

Sex— a caricature of what it is in the Circle: now bloated, forced into forms it never had.

Man Alone!

Science is the tool (and the religion) of Man Alone. Science, the myth killer, leaves us without morals and ethics, and without history. For morality we make laws, then endless refinements and changes. Without history we cannot but repeat our mistakes, again and again.

We created a science flowering from matter, 'things' that have no intrinsic value, no relatedness to anything else except other things, and our human whims. Science limits us to five senses, denying we might have any other.

Science breeds technologies. We invented machines that DO for us. Machines that feed on energy (electric energy), generated by burning coal, later oil, giving us energy in an abundance never dreamt of.

But we never considered that the enormous amount of energies we have used were not ours to take. Where is the equation that shows the true cost?

A few thousand years ago the cost was measured in lives. Imagine a scene in Egypt, then. A pharaoh is dying, or contemplating his inevitable death. He designs a structure, to stand the ages: a four-sided pyramid. Huge blocks of stone have to be brought from some distance. Slaves can do that. If it takes the lives of a thousand slaves to move one block of stone, then it takes a thousand lives. If it takes many thousands of slaves to move the blocks of stone up the structure, then many thousands of slaves will be used.

The Panama Canal required the lives of what was it? 10,000, 30,000 men dead from yellow fever? But the canal was built, saving ships thousands of miles they no longer have to sail around the point of South America. Man changes the world he owns. At the time, the cost of a few thousand lives were probably thought well worth it..

A hundred and more dams we built in the U.S, and elsewhere. Fewer lives lost in the building, but enormous amounts of stone and concrete moved, this time with machines that used coal and oil to replace slave power.

Doesn't this prove Man's power?

Yes indeed. Always forgetting that there is a limit to slaves, as there is to coal and oil. *Even the slaves and the energy they represent were part of the whole, the circle.*

Man Alone is a constant work of maintenance, and since no natural ecology maintains our man-made world, we have to plan it, pay for it, find the resources to do it.. Continually reminding us of our separation from the circle. We built and now must maintain an elaborate shell, which hides everything that is natural from our eye and nose.

Food comes from a factory, wrapped in plastic (made from oil), hiding its living origin. Milk in a square paper bottle, bought at a store. Meats (we eat only muscle meats) hygienically packaged, weighed, priced, and sealed in plastic, makes it easy to forget that it is animal we eat.

Our bodily functions hidden behind the bathroom door.

Sickness hidden behind uniforms, each organ its own specialist, sealed buildings.

Wastes buried.

Sex regulated by age and gender, by race, by social contract.

Nature cut up and controlled: groomed lawns, flower beds, parks crisscrossed with paths, zoos. What is left of the wild is preserved—unless, of course, we need thousand year old trees to build houses that may last fifty years for an exploding population..

And then?

Am I belaboring 'separation' too much? Yet it is the most enormous leap a species has ever made: to separate itself from the planet on, within, of, and where it has evolved.

There is no question that homo sapiens, as we call ourselves, evolved from other species over ages, millions of earth's circling of its sun. Ninety-nine point whatever percent of our DNA is identical to that of chimpanzees. There is no question that we are made of the stuff of this planet, the same chemicals, the same molecules, cells. All the principles of how our bodies function are identical to the functioning of all other mammalian species, and recognizably similar to the functioning of all other kinds of Life.

Of course I know that people who have always believed themselves to be essentially different from any other creation find it hard, if not impossible, to think that we might once have known ourselves part of All That Is.

It has been equally difficult, impossible at first, for people who knew themselves part of the circle, to imagine that they might step out of that intimate bond.

As millions of others, I was raised in two cultures, two different realities.

My parents were western scientists who knew we, humans, were essentially different from animals, I was educated in western universities.

But the people around me knew that they and plants and animals were in the same world. They felt an intimate relationship with the earth, the dirt under our feet, with rain and wind, storms, floods and earthquakes an unbreakable part of What Is.

I was outside and part of the circle.

For too long I lived a double life. There were two me's; every now and then I woke up in shock to discover the other.

In mid-life I got to know some very primitive people, Aborigines they were called, in Southeast Asia. For them the idea that we might be totally different from all other Life was unthinkable, laughable!

I saw how that one, single difference in how they thought of themselves made them relate entirely differently to their environment. They could not imagine doing harm to the earth, or even change what and how things grew. The idea of ownership was foreign to them. To fight anything or anyone was out of balance, and therefore sick-making. Food and shelter were where they found it. 'Working' for money is for slaves.

Ever since that time, now many decades ago, I slid more and more to knowing that I truly belong in the circle. A knowing that is now so deeply rooted that I cannot feel different.

Now, the idea of *not* being a part, an integral part of All That is, is unthinkable.

Now I experience our man-made world as a foreign country, loud, noisy, brash, and always dangerous.

When a bulldozer pushes over and then crushes a tree, I feel it in my bones. The thoughtless

killing of all Life on an acre of land, which is what bulldozers do here, literally takes my breath away.

To me, bulldozers have become a symbol for Man Alone's War on Terra, the Earth that formed us and gives us Life.

When I first heard the word 'bulldozer', it had to be explained to me. It was shortly after World War II. I was living in the Netherlands then, my mind filled with scientific theories and formulae I had to understand and memorize for my next exam at the university. I heard that bulldozers were part of the American Marshall Plan, meant to rebuild war-damaged areas of Europe. These machines would be used to rebuild dykes that hold sea water from flooding the land that lies below sea level. Over the ages the Dutch developed complex systems of dykes, canals and pumps (the famous windmills of Holland) to keep these lands dry and fertile. The man who mentioned the word 'bulldozer', also told me that the engineers who were to use these big machines feared that they would be too heavy to use on sand, particularly wet sand. I remember him telling me that there had been a lively exchange between the engineers and some officials of the Marshall Plan, urging the Americans to, please, send smaller, lighter machines.

The bulldozers that were sent—the largest made—bogged down in mud and sand.

A few years later, we lived in Suriname. The United States, generous with grants to developing countries, had sent some bulldozers to clear tropical jungle for development. A local engineer called me one day and said he wanted to show me three of these bulldozers, only a few weeks after they had arrived. We drove until the end of the road, then were taken by a small train a few miles further into the bush. There I was shown three enormous machines, hanging at odd angles into the soft floor of the jungle. All but one of them had been partially dismantled: the tracks were gone—stolen, my friend said. Only one was whole.

So, these were bulldozers! I had never imagined anything so immense.

The engineer explained that a few people had been taught to drive these machines, but somehow their instruction had omitted maintenance. These machines have to be oiled, and cleaned, parts must be checked daily. These three had run dry, and their great power, without maintenance, had stopped them nose down in soft mulch. It would have taken another bulldozer, perhaps two, to remove these carcasses. That was not possible, so they were left to be stripped, or rusted and eventually disintegrated.

The seemingly endless power we, humans, can create for our use has its frailties.

Then, more years later, I was in Malaysia. I travelled a road through the mountains to get to the place where I would park the car and walk to see my friends, the Aborigines, living deep in the jungle. A mountain road was blocked. A sharp curve had slid down into a steep ravine. The road had to be rebuilt. A *small* bulldozer was used to move rocks and debris, and then cut a new, firm road bed. I was forced to wait more than an hour until they cleared enough of the road to continue. Later, I told the Aborigines about this machine that *does the work of a hundred men!*

I think I had expected them to marvel at this evidence of Modern Man's power of inventiveness,

but instead they said, *what do those hundred men do now?*

Again many years later. Now I live in Hawai'i, have lived here for many years. I live on the poor side of this island, the side of the island where it rains more and we have no white beaches (we have black beaches, new lava), and therefore fewer tourists, and because of that less infrastructure. Suddenly this part of the island is 'discovered'. Planeloads of speculators land, buying up land and building 'spec houses'. Hurry, hurry; the price of land doubles every six months. The land here is relatively recent lava rock, perhaps a hundred years cooled. Not much grows on it yet. The only trees that grow are either those that can force their taproot into a crack and eventually make the crack a little wider, or the kind of tree that has surface roots, reaching hundreds of feet in all directions, to find enough nutrient and water. And between trees a thick cover of tenacious ferns and sedges that can find enough water and nutrient even on rock. In another hundred years all that becomes soil.

But it seems that the cheapest way to build is to get a bulldozer and 'clear' all, or the front part, of a rectangular acre lot.

For the first time I saw a very large bulldozer in action. Close up! The noise alone is overwhelming. The sheer force of this tank-like monster is almost unbelievable. Hundred foot trees are not cut, but pushed over, then crushed under the threads of this thing. For our lava rock, modern Man has made a refinement: a 'ripper', a six (or more?) foot iron tooth that literally rips the lava. As it is driven into the lava rock by the sheer weight of the dozer, then slowly dragged through the black rock, steam shoots up around the wound, rock screaming and screeching. Then it is cross-ripped. Breaking rock into huge chunks, which then get broken into smaller rocks by further ripping and driving back and forth. The land is left ripped, scarred, rough. Utterly bare of green. A rectangular scar on tortured land.

A thousand men would be hard put to cause that much destruction in a day.

Real estate agents say, Now *you* can decide where you want a tree to grow...! Without reminding the buyer that, even in the tropics, it will take a life time for a tree to grow. By the time the tree is grown the owner is either dead, or has long sold the place.

How is it possible that no one protests, complains, rebels?

The noise, sometimes all around, is mind-destroying.

But no, we protest the song of a minuscule frog.

Man Alone married to unnatural machines. A thoughtless tool to smash the earth. Thoughtless, as all our destructions, without ever considering consequences (it is already evident that this 'clearing' is disturbing the very fragile water ecology of this area). Ruthless. Completely outside of the circle.

Until my shaken soul remembers our winter storms: thunder reverberating for hours, echoing through the mountains, a continuous rumble reminding of Nature's power. Lightning horizontal flashes filling the dark from end to end. And the eternal ocean all around this island! The noise of

crashing waves swallowing even the screech of ripping lava.

The mountains, the thunder, the ocean—they **are** the circle.

The Hawaiian word for horizon is *pō‘ailani* — *po‘ai* is round, all around; *lani* is sky. True: on an island the sky-ocean line is all around in a circle!

Man Alone.

Wherever we look there is Man's heavy hand: no paths but straight roads, connecting enormous buildings. In Nature there are no straight lines. Huge stretches of land flattened, asphalted; whole cities rising out of ancient swamps. Land cleared and planted in rows of all the same plants. Man, the great master of nature. Wild animals are put in zoos to remind us of our mastery. (Species on the endangered list, are 'saved' in zoos). Today an international meeting to discuss 'Sustainable Harvesting of Whales.' *Harvesting*, a word from our man-made world; another way of emphasizing our mastery over all beings. We tolerate wildness if it can be harvested.

Where for ages we had eaten what grew around us, we now distance ourselves from what grows: food is made in factories, colored, hermetically sealed in plastic. Animals grown for slaughter, out of sight; meat colored, sealed airtight. We have broken our bonds with seasons, strawberries are available the year 'round, anywhere in the world. Flowers are for decoration, trees for shade.

From the first day of life we are conditioned (brainwashed) to think of ourselves as special and singular (both concepts unnatural). Each baby in its own box. Its own bed, its own room.

Our bodies to be hidden behind clothes and custom; nudity is titillating.

It is no longer Nature that determines how we live, not the availability of food, shelter, water, good schools, roads... *We* decide where we want to live, and how. We move to sunny climes on condition that we air-condition our houses, our cars. In the mountains a house must be centrally heated. We build roads so that we can live 'in the country', tamed, of course. Sterilized, trimmed, made picture perfect.

Water comes in pipes, waste goes out in thicker pipes. Human and animal waste, which, in the circle is fertilizer, in the man-made world is hygienically disposed of, untouched by human hands.

Sex—as eating, is a natural function—is hidden behind morals, laws and chemicals. Sex has become something other than a natural hunger, now it is a tease: sex appeal, but don't touch! As food is bought in stores, wrapped in plastic, so too Sex must be sanitized and safe. Is it any wonder that Man Alone's world is a world of rape and sexual abuse?

Make no mistake, in the man-made world, it is Man who makes the rules, and there are thousands, millions, written and unwritten. But our rules have little or nothing to do with the natural flow and interaction of Life. Man-made morality, ethics, ideas, religion. And, because they are not natural, they must be enforced.

The natural ecology of a planet is a dynamic balance, a web of relationships. Everything is related to everything else: an ever changing, adapting harmony.

Harmony is not to be found in laws..

Having lost any intimate relationship with the rhythm of the natural world, we seek diversion. Entertainment must be our biggest industry (after weapons, perhaps). The TV is on all day, or the radio, or the little machine that whispers music in our ears, or the cell phone that is also a camera and also whatever else is packed in a small gadget. We are so insulated from What Is that we cannot bear

to be alone.

We drown our alienation in drink or drugs.

'Addicts', another modern invention. The impulse to escape an unbearable artificial world by any means whatsoever. Society says: suppress, put away! An illness, a crime. We do not see that not everyone can be tamed. Some always rebel.

When we made food in factories, sterilizing it for longer shelf life, we had to add sugar, salt and fat. Half of all humans in 'civilized' areas, is obese, some grossly so. Most humans rarely have enough to eat, many are starving.

It is we, totally and utterly disconnected from any natural law or need, who have made a man-made world all the reality we are allowed to know. Our man-made world is a lonely one. We are on our own.

Consciously, or unconsciously we yearn for community, but where to find community in an artificial reality?

We think we have conquered Nature once and for all, but of course that is an illusion. Our man-made world is an illusion.

Nature has been pummeled and boxed in, squeezed and smashed, but of course it is still there. The planet is still there. We may think we own it, but we don't. Not really.

We pretend to have forgotten, but Nature owns us!

What we call the Middle East is probably the part of the planet where Man first left the circle ten thousand years ago: they burned all their trees, making a desert. From there come the religions of Moses, Jesus and Mohammed, and the countless religions, all claiming to come from one or more of them. Of course they have many beliefs in common, one of these is that they fix our separation from the circle in a God far away, not of this earth. A God who created this planet and all that is on it, and then created Man in His likeness, some say to 'manage'—which we interpret as 'own'—the entire planet, *our* planet.

Believers all affirm there is only the one God, although they are continually fighting to the death about which One is *the* One.

I spent half my life looking for this faraway God. He is worshipped in most western, or westernized countries. Everyone told me about Him, and everyone had a different story. In Christian countries this faraway God was mostly a Sunday god. He was unknowable, but everyone had her or his own ideas about him. I talked to clerics in and without one of the many different uniforms. I joined, I attended, I listened and read, but somehow words and people got in the way. I understood, perhaps, but that was not enough. I needed to feel a touch, the finger of God reaching out to my finger. That happened once or twice, but then words, people, gatherings of people, rules got in the way. Do I pray to, or through, and what do I pray? Ask for favors? That seemed presumptuous. Reaffirm the wonder? Lose myself in the act of...?

And then I met the aborigines, for whom the divine was all around them, in them, in everything; a living presence, always, in their smiles, the little tunes they voiced.

Before the faraway God, humans had known Spirit, of course. Who, with eyes and ears and heart, can deny Spirit? The spirit of growth, the spirit of rocks. The spirit of life-giving springs. Humans always knew that the many spirits were all expressions of one Spirit.

But, to all, everywhere, Spirit, or the many, was/were of earth.

Right here, in me, in that tree, and always in the very ground that supports us (in all the meanings of the word *support*).

The faraway God, is said to be more god than all the other gods.

The faraway God tells his followers to bring the Word to the heathen: convert the infidels. Missionaries conquered much of the world for their churches. Followed traders, who conquered the world again. And always, after missionaries and traders, came the armies.

Faraway God is said to have demanded the erasure of all unbelieving cultures, which was successfully accomplished (with only a few isolated spots left) in the late twentieth century..

Faraway God, said a long, long time ago: Thou Shalt Not Kill. We never quite accepted that. Even the priests said we could (even should) kill if it were for the glory of our particular interpreta-

tion of the faraway God. Our man-made world today is torn, on the point of exploding, from the apparently unlimited violence between different children of what all agree is the One God.

Today there are a thousand ways to speak to, pray to, worship this faraway God. Priests of this group of believers proclaim this dogma, not to be questioned. Priests of a neighboring group proclaim a different dogma, not to be questioned on penalty of being hanged, quartered, burned at the stake.

In the name of the faraway God we have been able to invent a thousand ways to torture and kill our fellow man.

Before, humans felt the miraculous depth of their feelings of belonging. They felt an unnameable quality in rocks, the sun, the wind, and the marvel of plants and animals eating each other—and always being closely, intimately related. The god of life-giving food! The bear spirit, the spirit of coyote. The spirit of the mouse. The great snake spirit. Once, we thanked the deer for giving his life to support ours.

Now, with the faraway God, we kill for sport.

Ancient groups of people all had stories of 'the beginning'. what believers in the faraway God call Creation Myths. Different cultures have different creation myths, many of them whimsical, casual, full of miraculous mistakes, but all of them human-centered. But none of the aboriginal and indigenous stories I have heard or read, says that we are so different that we can step out of the circle. Our seeds may have come from the stars, as some Native Americans tell in their stories, but we are an integral part of all Life on this planet. We are the same stuff.

'Spirit' is felt, in our skin, our soul. It is not a belief, but an experience. I touch a tree and its spirit resonates in something inside me. Plants talk to me; when I just look at a plant, I know what its essence is. I know its sap stops a sinus headache. A poultice of the well-chewed leaves of another plant draws out dirt and infection. I know that deep inside, as all humans know deep inside, and I know that these knowings work.

Today I am thinking of the truly gruesome things we do and have done to each other and to the planet. And yet we talk about spirit, and God. What to say?

I am really quite sure that I belong to this planet. That is not a statement of faith, I have experienced it. Dimensions of the circle. When my cells are like the cells of any other organism of this planet, would it not follow that the spirit of the earthly circle is also in me?

God-fearing Man Alone.

We live in a very strange man-made world, intrinsically different from the natural world. We know almost nothing from immediate experience any more, but more of us know more about far away

places and events than any human before.

Wild humans and indigenous people experienced weather and pain, they knew family and neighbors, plants and animals from daily contact. Personal, direct.

In our man-made world we know what we learn in school, which is what other people have written about their worlds. We have daily (many times daily) 'news'. News is information about politics and disasters—wars are both disasters and politics, waged in our name. What we know is words and pictures.

How can we see wholes where what is presented is nothing but pieces that don't fit? Fit, not only with what we were told yesterday, or what another news channel says, but also fit into a world where Man is but part of a planet that used to have herds of bison, that had wild tigers and elephants, owls, frogs, jungle vines and forests. News is about humans, human pain, human victory on the battle- or sports field. News feeds on death, accidental or intentional. A hint of cruelty thrown in from time to time; a flash of a body part flying through the air: anything that says *violence*.

Random violence is called crime, government sponsored violence is war; the difference never very clear.

Even our entertainment is violent sports, violent games. We train our offspring early, and then we say *this is who we are*. We tell our offspring (and ourselves) that we are born aggressive, raised in loud and boisterous homes, riding and soon driving crazy loud and lethal machines. Preparation for life, we say. Life is a fight, we are taught: competition, the ruthless survive. Buy cheap, sell dear. Does not matter what, how, nobody cares.

I was raised far away, another place, another time. We had no news, we knew very little about politics and so it was not important. In school I learned capitals and rivers—but the countries changed names and borders, the rivers were dammed. My friends and I entertained ourselves in honest dirt, with sticks and stones, and listening to ancient stories. But apparently every life in our separated world must have a War.

I was thrust into learning meaningless hatred and cruelty that almost destroyed me: is *that* who we are? Easier to think only white people are crazy. Until, of course, I learned of horrors in Africa, Asia. Maybe cruelty, violence and torture really are the nature of man? Prejudice, hatred are our basic nature?

No, I cannot accept that. Wild people were never that. We could not have survived the first hundred thousand years if we had been.

The war in which I first learned about man's inhumanity to man, is half a century behind me, but memories still stalk my nights; the scars still throb. But I swallow my stories, because nobody wants to hear them, and compared to today's news they are nothing new.

A few of us rebel at torture of prisoners, but, hey, look around: it happens. Leaders lie? So what, they've always lied, haven't they? They must have reasons, and anyway, we are too busy working two jobs to make payments. We can make a picture tell a thousand lies.

Big words: democracy, the economy, freedom, liberty. When repeated often enough they achieve a kind of stale taste, like apple pie bought tightly wrapped and packaged, made in a factory with unpronounceable chemicals.

Democracy is what we have and nobody else has, so it must be good, the only way.

The economy is the stock market, whatever that is.

Freedom, liberty, sure... something good, whatever.

Our rights, yeah, our rights are our rights.

We should be proud; happiness for all.

In the end, politics, news, entertainment, corporations, scandals, all blur into the plastic our world is wrapped in.

Heard a phrase: Contemporary Global Culture. Ha!

What culture? Odds and ends, cobbled together scraps from everywhere.

The New Age! Secrets of Hawaiian Spirituality! \$1500 weekend workshop: Introduction to Peruvian Shamanism! New miracle chemical that eats calories! State Department advisory: don't travel to the following fifteen countries... Tomorrow's gadget today: a phone that you can take into your bath! (All sentences with exclamations!)

Here's what Global Contemporary Culture is and has been for centuries: slavery, colonies, empires, weapons of mass destruction only for the super rich, the elite.

What we used to call wisdom is the collection of scraps we stole from the people we eradicated.

Once, long ages ago, when we lived in the circle, we had dignity, the dignity of being. We knew the earth as we know our own body—the earth *was* our body and we were the earth. Plants we ate and plants for healing. Clean, clean water, pure as blood. Children learned self-sufficiency and we learned patience, the patience of earth's rhythms. In the evening we sat around little fires; almost no smoke, a little light, a little warmth. Telling stories, or maybe just sitting, mesmerized by a small flame.

Did you know you need three sticks to keep a little fire going? Not one, not two, but three. (I'm talking about sticks, not logs).

Inside the circle you look around you where you are. Wherever you are, there is food, shelter, and others of the circle.

Our greatest skill was to learn from where we were in the circle. We blended in snow, surviving. We laughed in sun and wind, surviving. Mountains showed us humility and awe. Rivers brought life, cleanliness, and swept away. The wind, rainbows bound.

Man Alone has forgotten small, modest.
We make bonfires, burn a forest.
Do you have a permit from the fire department? The neighbors complain. .

Outside the circle, we learn to haze, to hate, humiliate.
Humility is weakness: Man Alone is never weak.
We learn prejudices, pre-judgments based on nothing.
God forbid, compassion.

Wars and more wars. Incomprehensible, inhuman suffering we bring on ourselves. Cities incinerated, mutilated masses. Generations gone: ethnic cleansing—evil wrapped in simple words. Endless fights for what? Just under the surface of flapping flags and slogans, always ego, greed, idiot idols. Wars fought with weapons that never were except in our unnatural minds. The earth itself shredded, torn apart.

Frying foe and 'collateral damage', mostly the latter.
More millions killed than were ever recorded; only the victors count.
In a few centuries of accelerated hubris we went from spears to atom bombs.
Half of all scientists invent new ways to kill and destroy.

No, no... NO!
Wrong, false.

STOP!

Man Alone has long forgotten to look around and find food and shelter where he is, because where he is, is never where he wants to be. He yearns for another, others, but cannot tolerate others that he cannot control. Controlled others are disposable. Property.

But his hunger is not for property (although he is told it is for more).

Poor Man alone.

This man-made world of ours is a rickety structure, a house of cards, because we do not know how to create a working ecology. Ecologies are not designed, not planned, not made. They grow. Ecologies are complex: everything—absolutely everything—related to everything else. More complex is more stable. A dynamic harmony, always changing, always balanced.

Our man-made world is the opposite: the rules of man-made Law are unrelated to anything real. Laws are straight lines. Nature has NO straight lines.

We make systems designed for eternity, but circumstances are never eternal. Things change; we are caught unprepared.

We say we plan and design to make things easy. And the easier we make it, the harder we have to work to afford the ease.

We don't see wholes, so we design endless parts, all different, none related. Every idea materialized: spikes of tangled things pointing here, there, everywhere.

We created a world with an infinity of things and no place for a living soul.

The natural world has energies that balance, that create a dynamic harmony. Predators and prey balance each other, need each other! Animals eat plants; some animals eat other animals, but never overeat, because then they don't eat tomorrow. The first law of harmony must be the survival of species, not the survival of individuals. Individuals are important only until they can reproduce themselves in order to assure the survival of the species.

One species cannot be more important than another, all species need each other.

In Nature there is no boss. (Lion King a human fiction).

Our man-made world is a world of soulless, endless wars, because there are bosses, leaders, rulers who follow paths that are born in their heads, and so we make the opposite of harmony.

The boss may turn out to be a virus.

Sick Man alone.

Geologists who studied the planet's layers of rocks, named Eras, Periods, Sub-periods, Epochs, and Ages. Most of the names were formed around a central kind of rock, found in a certain period, or an abundance of fossils that characterized another. They made a clock of names.

The latest of these Ages until recently was called the Holocene, meaning, 'current,' or 'new' geological age. Ages are counted in millions of years; the Holocene began 0,01 million years ago (that is 10,000 years). The Holocene also is referred to as the latest post-glacial period in the earth's long history: years after the last of many Ice Ages.

Very recently Paul Crutzen, a Nobel Prize winning scientist, suggested a new name for today: **Anthropocene**: the Age in which Man, anthropos, is effecting the planet. One species of trillions effecting the life of a planet! Some propose the Anthropocene to have begun in the late 18th Century when Watts improved the first steam engine; others say Anthropocene must be dated much earlier when Man in the Middle East and elsewhere deforested enormous stretches of land, creating what are now deserts.

Lately the consequences of Man's doings have become ever more visible: Global Warming, now called Climate Change. There is no question that Anthropocene is here. What a staggering thought! Man, who is—even in his billions—but a very, very small fraction of all Life on this planet, to have an impact on the planet? And the impact is destruction.

When we separated ourselves from all other Life, our hubris (arrogance) changed the planet.

Probably all civilizations are unsustainable. We now know that all earlier empires destroyed their immediate environment, which then caused their collapse. Empires crashed when they had depleted the environment they relied on (someone calculated that it took an average of 200 years to deplete an environment). And then, empires (civilizations) attempted to stretch their life time by conquering more environment.

A global civilization depletes the globe.

Man Alone

Does it not behoove us to take stock? Is what we have created in place of the natural world 'better'? Or, a more reasonable question to ask would be, How long can this go on? Obviously this wanton widespread extinction, eradication, destruction is not sustainable.

Just when we thought that Modern Man had tamed the entire planet—almost all the landscape we see is cut, shaped, and planted to make it to our taste; almost all humans on earth now want automobiles, cell phones, antibiotics and coca cola—we come upon a slight glitch: Global Warming, which now manifests as Climate Change. The fossil fuels we burned to create our world on top of a world, changed the atmosphere: it protects us less from the fierce energy of the sun. More heat melts ice, raises the temperature and the level of the oceans. We're not even sure yet what consequences even a slight warming will produce. But at first we thought we have a century to study, now it seems that the effects of even a few degrees Centigrade may switch on major changes in decades, not centuries.

Can we reverse this trend?

It has been calculated that the level of the ocean may rise as much as a meter (three feet). Remember that almost all the enormous cities we have spawned are at current sea level, and half the world's population lives in cities.

Anthropocene; the Age of Man is going to be a short age.

Man Alone: a cancer: multiplying beyond balance while depleting the planet.

It is hard work to create, harder to maintain our man-made world. It requires all of our efforts to build and then maintain a world at odds with the planet's ecosystem. At the edges of our world it is only too obvious that the natural world is always there to absorb, forget and forgive the non-sense that is civilization. Our fight to control Nature is never won, cannot be won.

Even in the center of our man-made world there are cracks. We, each of us, have to work for our food and shelter, of course, but that work is becoming more and more abstract. Consider the thousands that work with money, other thousands that work with something we call education, The millions that work to entertain us, to keep us awake and aware only of our man-made world. Other millions who govern, millions who fight our wars. Does any of that have much to do with food and shelter?

No, it serves only to maintain the man-made world.

They say it is greed that drives us. Lust for oil, for power. Or even money—and money makes money, evermore.

Perhaps what drives us is a hidden yearning to come home into the circle...

Long ago, when we lived within the circle gathering and hunting food was not work. It was the adventure of being alive. We made our own shelter with what we found at hand. We maintained our natural world by caring for it.

But thinking ourselves better we must control. Caring becomes liking, rather than taking care of. When we lived in the circle it was obvious that we must see to it that the harmony of the whole was not broken (at least not stretched too much). Out of the circle we *love* dramatic sunsets and the view from our window, but can we see the whole?

Our science kills myths—leaving us without morals, without history. We substitute laws for morality, then endlessly refine and change. Without history we cannot but repeat our mistakes, again and again. But we need science to create and maintain the man-made world.

Some science seeks the secrets of the universe, when and where and how it began, how it works. Curiosity? Yes, and perhaps gain if we can make a technology around it. Or a weapon. How we can make more plants grow on a smaller piece of land. How to breed a better dog, a fatter pig, rice with more protein. How to control humans.

Much of science is ultimately to control.

Some scientists, convinced of the extraordinary uniqueness of Man, seek the secrets of our being. Early success curing common infectious diseases made us daring to fight all ill health. New chemistry made possible control of pain, which in turn made possible more invasive surgery: exchanging organs, adding and removing tissue, and other wonders. Modern medicine is on a crusade to eradicate death.

Life has come to mean individual life span—which leads to disagreement of when it begins, and to tampering with its end. We excel in what we call extending life at both ends: prolonging a life span, and miraculous births of organisms barely formed.

Life, all Life, affirms being.

Life does not begin, nor end.

Life is not the span of my life, or yours—it is the whole of all living beings, which includes birth and death and birth again and death and on and on.

In the tapestry of all Life, life spans are but threads. The threads may change the color of the endless whole, change the pattern at times, but no span is more than a simple, single thread, born from previous threads, making the next threads. .

Occasionally there are a few shiny threads in the tapestry among dark ones. Striving to be a shiny thread usually makes knots, crimps the weave, destroys the harmony. The occasional shine that stands out is in the thread, not the striving.

The tapestry is the circle, the whole, the ecosystem of the planet.

(And as an image, "tapestry" is ancient but limited. The ecosystem is a multi-dimensional weave of all the many shapes and functions of Life, and includes the loom, and the machinery of the loom, the succession of weavers, and the space that holds the loom. And, and, and...)

All our science, all our measurements and computer models, cannot put Humpty Dumprty back together again. But, science says, we can create a better egg! Once we scientists understand the mechanics of what makes an egg, and once we can measure all the chemicals and the forces that give it that form, then we can do better. We've cloned plants forever (that's what cuttings are). After all, we

have successfully cloned animals in a lab. But, somehow, clones don't live long; one wonders.

What we call science is one way of acquiring knowledge: observation and extrapolation, I was taught. Science has rules, limits, if we acquire knowledge outside those limits, *it isn't science*.

But it is still knowledge!

People who are in the circle know volumes about the world around them. Of course, otherwise they would not have survived so long. But they were not scientists. They had other ways of observing and extrapolating, a knowledge that was passed from father to son, mother to daughter. And because people in the circle have a different orientation, a different point of view, their knowledge and how they get it, is different. What they use their knowledge for, is different.

Many peoples in the circle don't name a newborn right away. Perhaps because you never know whether a baby will survive, *life is dangerous for your health*, as we used to say. But there was also another reason naming was postponed. A name should 'fit' and it takes time, years, to know what a new person's talents and temper are. It takes time for a new person's true nature to become evident.

In our outside-of-the-circle world a name (and a number) is given at birth to keep track of it, to give it an identity, but what kind of identity is that?

In the circle it takes time to understand an identity.

Outside the circle we have created an elaborate system of what we call 'education,' designed to prepare people for life in our civilization. Inborn character is often less important than the ambitions and needs of parents. (I know that I struggled at least half of my life span to discover and then to be who I was meant to be. What a waste!)

No, Man Alone cannot survive unless he sees himself part of the circle again. It is that simple.

Of course it is not at all simple.

Pride prohibits admitting a mistake on such a scale.

And there is an understandable abhorrence of 'going back'—for too long our motto has been *Forward. Progress.*

Almost seven billion people—that is 6,920,000,000 people.

Half of them in cities. The other half have to work hard to support the city half.

At least half of all humans—and probably considerably more than half—live lives of slavery, hunger, discontent. They live in the slums that surround cities, in cardboard hovels, along muddy, sewage-filled paths. No, or inadequate water. More than half have no, or very limited access to any kind of health care. They make do with food that is garbage.

Statistics that measure average income have become meaningless because the distance between rich and poor is growing exponentially. More and poorer poor, few and much richer rich.

The United Nations estimates that 24,000 children die each DAY from hunger. The U.N also estimates that twelve million refugees live in temporary, and utterly inadequate camps. That is today, 2006. Next year will be a magnitude worse.

Those of us who are educated and have access to the internet—do we even know any more why wars are waged? Do we care?

Those of us who eat well, have solid houses, adequate clothes, cars, and ride airplanes, do we know how the majority of humans live? Do we care?

Man Alone should feel burdened by the anguish, destruction and extinction that is on his head. Does he?

Some say they want to create a better world?

Why do we think it is up to us to 'create' a world at all? We've always had a world that allowed us to live. Not as we live today, but sustainably over long periods of time. Why did we leave that world? What made us step out of the circle?

I have known people and peoples all over the world to whom it never occurred that they could or should better themselves. Aborigines in the jungle, islands in the Pacific ocean, isolated tribes in the Philippines, farmers in Korea. Some of them even knew that white people had things they didn't, that there were airplanes and marvels of technology, but they laughed at that. *Let them enjoy it*, they said, *we have our trees and our rivers and good food, and we are FREE!*

None of these lucky people were poor, as we would classify them. They might not have had any money, or television sets, or antibiotics, but they were content.

Where does ambition come from? The desire to have more, be more?

I don't know. I don't understand.

The people I knew who were content, knew perfectly well that accidents happen, disasters happen. God's Will, or fate, or karma. Something one has to live with, allow for. Now and then there might even be some bad people who did awful things. That too happens.

The aborigines told me that I was only the third outsider who had taken an interest in them, and had gotten to know them, *but you needn't worry. The other two died unpleasant deaths: one was eaten by a tiger, the other fell off a cliff and was impaled on a bamboo, it took him a long time to die*, and they nodded assent. (The other two were probably agitators who had tried to make trouble some time earlier). *You don't have to worry, because you don't want anything from us.*

There was nothing wrong with the original world we lived in for a hundred thousand years. But we discovered hubris (a Greek word that means arrogance). Was that it? We were inflated with our own specialness, and so had to create a world in OUR image. Was that it?

What a mess **Man Alone** made.

Our species has an amazing ability to adapt, we can survive almost everywhere, thanks to our ability to imagine ways to get around difficulties. We live almost in all of the earth's different climates, conditions, soils. Man learned to survive in the bitter cold of the Arctic, and in hot, dry deserts. We can live at high altitudes where the air is thin, and in steamy jungles down below. We can survive on a diet of blood, meat and milk, and on an all vegetable diet.

The little houses on tall stilts the Aborigines make of bamboo that grows all around them, an igloo made with blocks of snow, mud plastered houses all over the world, tipis made with animal skins—all these are marvels of inventive use of available resources.

We have a perhaps unique capacity to imagine.

Adaptation to extreme climates, and to high altitude, was to some extent biological, but it was also made possible by inventive use of our imagination. We were very good at creating shelter out of available materials, and finding ways to cover ourselves.

And developing weapons—that must be our true genius.

It stands to reason that our inventive talents were used to develop more efficient weapons.

Moving out of the circle perhaps came when we began to kill more than we could eat. And, of course, sooner or later we killed our fellow man. That, to me, seems a BIG step, and a fatal one.

Yes, I am simplifying, probably over-simplifying. Man's cultural evolutions (there were many) must have been multi-faceted, many-dimensional, and multi-directional.

And now, here we are. Six and a half billion people, many of them on the threshold of tasting the riches they have so far only imagined, or seen in western movies. Climate Change is with us to stay. Energy, obviously, is no longer unlimited. Water soon won't be enough for a civilized standard of living. Undeclared wars are raging, killing thousands, millions of people. And the reality of what is going on is only very slowly and hesitantly penetrating the din of propaganda and entertainment.

A house of cards, about to collapse.

Scientists warned us years ago that we did not know what we were doing; we had better be careful; we ought to think ahead: what consequences might our actions have? But, drunk with our successes, we barged on. There was no tomorrow. Our children, and grandchildren will pay the bills.

The bills are due *now*.

Obviously, we forgot to watch what we were doing yesterday, and the day before. Climate Change is here, and progressing more rapidly than cautious scientists calculated one, two, even twenty years ago. We find it hard to believe that the planet's climate can change radically.

Just as large populations are approaching an almost western way of life—it isn't fair!

The first people who will be threatened are the inhabitants of low-lying islands, coral atolls in the Pacific Ocean, who already notice the level of the sea. And when the highest point of your island is 6 feet (2 meters) above current levels, a few inches make a difference!

And yet the people of the west will tumble the farthest. We are the ones who think we 'own' the world, and that world will be taken out from under our feet.

Our so-called civilization is obviously not sustainable.

We are addicted to oil, a president says. No, we are addicted to an incredibly wasteful way of life, overeating, overspending, over-buying and over-throwing-away. We are addicted to expecting ever MORE—an obvious impossibility.

We changed ourselves over the last few centuries. Not for the better. Almost certainly no animals *torture* so systematically and deliberately individuals of their own species. That is a uniquely human trait,

Humans were never like that

We would not have survived for at least 100,000 years if we had been as violent, ruthless, self-centered as we are today, thinking ourselves above all other beings, blinded by our own illusions.

Our current civilization conditions (brainwashes) us to see ourselves as separate from All That Is, with all the consequences of that illusion. We learn to think it normal to live in an entirely artificial environments.

Man Alone among the wreckage

For many years I tried to imagine what happened to the first people to make us what we have become. How could we have changed so much? Inventing not only cultures and religions, but ideas about *who* we are. We made ourselves into monsters, why?

In my own life I grew in a calm, rich culture, then was dumped into war, and from then on lived in many worlds, most of them unrecognizable even from my short perspective, but all the time knowing, of course, that my perspective is too short. I recognized that there must have been a movement, a great stream that carried us from a few nomads who smiled to teeming masses living like rats in modern megalopolises. Our species has not improved over time.

There were movements in the last century that seemed large to us, but compared to that force that carries us along, they were eddies around the edges. New and different religions, politics, spirituality, nations and empires birthed and died, boundaries changed, languages disappeared and others born. Ideologies, isms. Socialism, communism (socialism extreme), fascism, existentialism, fundamentalism, terrorism, eastern gurus in western culture, the Reverend Jones in Guyana, the Rajneeshis, capitalism, globalization, Neocons. But none of those movements explain the changes in us—they are symptoms of something gone wrong. We, humans, are so lost that we strike out left and right, losing sense of direction, losing any sense of community. Today's extremes are symptoms of Man lost—forgotten who he is.

I began to simplify my thinking. Not trying to find the thread that brought us where we are, but trying to be where the aborigines were and looking forward. What is it that early people (we, some time ago) had that was unique, cannot be found today?

The first thing that occurred to me—a real epiphany—was that all earlier people (including the indigenous people I know) had a close, unbreakable bond to the land, the earth. At the head of this essay I quote a Native American: I could have quoted any of many speakers for earlier people. They all thought of themselves as part of All There Is. They revered the land, the soil, the earth that supports us, and from which we have grown.

The one thing they had that we no longer have is that connection to the earth. We stepped out of the circle and lost our soul.

Only the soulless can destroy themselves.

People ask, What do you propose we do? What can we DO?

I have no idea. I don't know, and it is not up to me to know.

The whole point of this essay is to argue that it is not up to homo sapiens to create his own reality. Reality grows from the complex interactions of a planetary ecosystem. We are NOT the boss; the world we created apart from the natural world does not work and does great harm to the planet..

Oh, I am certain that we can and will adapt to a world without electricity, without telephones, airplanes, without chemical and electronic medicine. Just imagine what we can and will invent from within the circle—when we have learned that we cannot wreck our planet any more by overuse, over-everything!

It is not unthinkable that in the near future our own thoughtless folly brings on the crash of what we call civilization. A number of nations have access to nuclear arsenals. It seems obvious that one, and then another, will start throwing their bombs around, unaware of Climate Change progressing ever more rapidly.

Chaos, the fertile womb of potential.

Whether we want it or not, we may be thrown back to how we were before. And *that was not a bad way to be!* If nothing else, I know from my own experience that Wild Man was happier than Man Alone.

One way or another we MUST step back into the circle.
That is the only way homo sapiens is going to survive.



"A human being is part of a whole, called by us the 'Universe,' a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings, as something separated from the rest—a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circles of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty."

Albert Einstein

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