

Eye to Eye

It's your first trip out, into the hills, past the old cabin. Your father and his father before him had told, seemingly countless times, of their own "adventures" in those hills. Now it'll be your turn to start the stories. Your gear is ready--good warm boots and a heavy coat, several ham sandwiches, and the family rifle with plenty of ammunition. All that's needed is a good night's rest. It'll be an early start. And now you dream.

As the sun rises over the hill, the crisp image of the morning's frost hangs in the air and from the brush. You continue over each hill, your eyes navigating your feet through and over the deep ruts of the road. The old cabin is not far off now.

The sound comes from your left. You stand there, still, your eyes now searching the horizon. It's a "pronghorned, bull elk." It stands there, still, its eyes watching yours, not more than twenty yards away. In that place, the elk and you share in the sound of heart beats, and in the sight of frozen breath suspended in the air.

You pull out your rifle. Without so much as a flinch, the elk allows you to draw a bead on him. Eye to eye and with a steady aim, the trigger is pulled.

The sound of the heart beats is stilled with the pierce of that bullet. The elk lay there, among the frost covered brush. The meat will go a long way. And you have your first story to tell around the dinner table this winter.

As you approach, you raise your arm and give thanks to your "brother." You had taken a sweat bath a couple days before, "a hot one," and, in prayer, had asked for a good hunt for your family. Your words were of respect for the Elk. And then, the

night before you met eye to eye, the Elk had come to you. In your dream, the Elk spoke to you:

"You are to hunt only that which you need,
and use all that you hunt.

Never take too much.

and never boast about the hunt.

Respect the Animal peoples,
and they will respect you,

give of their bodies to you.

Show respect."

This is what your "brother" had given to you.

As the meat is cut from the bone, songs of thanks are sung. With care the meat is wrapped and brought back home. In the days ahead, a hind quarter will be given to your grandparents, a section to that family down the road "down on their luck," and some placed in the freezer, to be distributed to all coming to the next community-wide pow wow dinner. The meat is given to those in need, especially the elders and children, without thought of receiving something in return, without praise or "a pat on the back." What was given freely by the Elk is now shared with those in need.

* * * * *

Welcome.¹ Let's take a moment before we get started with our talk today and take a look about us. See the wondrous life?-- that great blue heron standing there, dignified, seemingly motionless; those two ospreys, circling high above, an eye on the bass far below; that expanse of yellow water lily, home to so many--mallards, minnows and muskrats, snapping turtles, green frogs, dragonflies and crayfish. The wonders that we now enjoy are the

¹For additional background, see Carson 1962, Foreman 1991, Nash 1982, and Devall and Sessions 1985. The text of the speech was influenced by the words of Dave Foreman.

result of an ongoing process which began three-and-a-half-billion-years ago. Life is developing, expanding, blossoming, and diversifying, filling every niche with unique manifestations of itself, intertwining in complex and a global interrelationship. But today this diversity of more than 30 million species faces radical and unprecedented change. Never before--not even during the mass extinction of the dinosaurs at the end of the Cretaceous era 65 million years ago--has there been such a high rate of extinction as we are now witnessing, such a drastic reduction in the planet's biological diversity.

It is as if the human civilization has declared war on all the life around it. Today we see the wholesale devastation of tropical rain forests and temperate-zone old-growth forests, rapidly accelerating desertification, uncontrolled commercial fishing, and annihilation of large mammals like whales, elephants, and tigers owing to habitat destruction and poaching. Prominent biologists say that the Earth could lose one-quarter to one-third of *all* species within forty years. With the extinction of this diversity of species, comes the destruction of the natural ecosystems upon which they and all of us depend. Our activities are now beginning to have a fundamental effect upon the entire life-support apparatus of the planet--upsetting the world's climate; poisoning the oceans; destroying the atmospheric ozone layer that protects us from excessive ultraviolet radiation; changing the CO₂ ratio in the atmosphere and causing the "greenhouse effect"; and spreading acid rain, radioactive fallout, pesticides, and industrial contamination throughout the biosphere.

This destruction is the result of us, our egocentric perception that the natural world is some how our own "smorgasbord table, continually replenished by a magic kitchen hidden somewhere in the background." We continue to consume, in ever greater quantities, without regard to the sources of the replenishment, nor to the disposal of our growing amounts of waste. It is as if the table was set for our pleasure and our pleasure alone. It is as if we have some divine mandate to pave, conquer, control, develop, and use every square inch of this planet. We follow the narrow vision of the world as handed down from

Louisiana-Pacific, General Motors, McDonald-Douglas, and Exxon. Our's is a natural world ruled by MBAs.

In this view, wilderness may have no use at all, other than being opened up for further resource development. For some it may hold value only because it protects watersheds for downstream use by agriculture, industry, and homes. For others it's a good place to revive ourselves and "commune with nature" after a long week in the office working over our computer terminals. And for others, wilderness may have value only because it preserves vital natural resources, to be extracted by future generations. There may be some unknown plant living in the wilds that holds the cure for cancer.

But all these views are short sighted and destructive. There is another way to think about our relationship to the natural world. It is an insight pioneered by the nineteenth-century conservationist and mountaineer John Muir, and later by the science of ecology. This is the idea that all things are connected and interrelated, and that human beings are merely one of the millions of species that have been shaped by the process of evolution over three-and-a-half billion years. We are apart of nature and not a part from it. According to this view, all living beings have the same right to be here--all have the same rights! No one species in somehow afforded exclusive rights to dominate and control others.

We are, after all, Animals--living beings of flesh and blood, heart and passion. The oceans of the Earth flow through our veins, the winds of the sky fill our lungs, the very bedrock of the planet makes up our bones. We are alive, not as machines, mindless cogs in an industrial world. When a chain saw slices into the heartwood of a two-thousand-year-old Redwood, it's slicing into our guts. When a bulldozer rips through the Indonesian rain forest, it's ripping into our sides. When a Japanese whaler fires an exploding harpoon into a great whale, our hearts are blown to bits. We are the land, the land is us. When we die, we shouldn't be pickled and put away in a lead box. We should be placed out in the wilderness, rejoining the food chain, being "recycled into weasel, vulture, worm, and mold."

Wilderness has value simply because it *is*. Because it is the real world, the flow of life, the repository of that three-and-a-half billion years of evolution. A Grizzly Bear snuffling along a creek in Yellowstone National Park with her two cubs has just as much right to life as any human has, and is far more important ecologically. All things have intrinsic value, inherent worth. Their value is not determined by what they will ring up on the cash register of the gross national product, or by whether or not they are *good*. They are good because they exist.

Even more important than the individual wild creature is the wild community--the wilderness, the stream of life unimpeded by human manipulation. The preservation of wilderness is not simply a question of balancing competing special-interest groups, arriving at a proper mix of uses on our public lands. It is an ethical and moral matter. Human beings have stepped beyond the bounds; we are destroying the very process of life. The conservationist Aldo Leopold perhaps stated this ethic best in his *A Sand County Almanac* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949), "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise."

Clearly, in such a time of crisis, the conservation battle is not one of merely protecting outdoor recreation opportunities, not a matter of aesthetics, not "wise use" of natural resources. It is a battle for life itself, for the continued flow of evolution. We are at our most important juncture since we came out of the trees six million years ago. It is our decision, ours today, whether Earth continues to be a marvelously living, diverse oasis in the blackness of space, or life ceases all together.

It is up to us to challenge the government and the people with a vision of Big Wilderness, "a vision of humans living modestly in a community that also includes bears and rattlesnakes and salmon and oaks and sagebrush and mosquitoes and algae and streams and rocks and clouds."

We should demand that roads be closed and clearcuts rehabilitated, that dams be torn down, that Wolves, Grizzlies, Cougars, River Otters, Bison, Elk, Pronghorn, Big Sheep, Caribou, and other extirpated species be reintroduced to their native habitats.

We must envision and propose the restoration of biological wildernesses of several million acres in all of America's ecosystems, with corridors between them for the transmission of genetic variability. Wilderness is the arena for evolution, and there must be enough of it for natural forces to have free rein.

It is time for courage. There are many forms of courage. It takes courage to not allow your children to become addicted to television. It takes courage to say no more growth in your community. It takes courage to write letters to your local newspaper. It takes courage to stand up at a public hearing and speak. It takes courage to live a lower-impact life. It takes courage to say that the wild is more important than jobs.

And it takes courage to put your body between the machine and the wilderness, to stand before the chain saw or the bulldozer. In 1848, Henry David Thoreau went to jail for refusing, as a protest against the Mexican War, to pay his poll tax. When Ralph Waldo Emerson came to bail him out, Emerson said, "Henry, what are you doing in there?" Thoreau quietly replied, "Ralph, what are you doing out there?"

In this insane world where short-term greed rules over long-term life, those of us with a land ethic must face the mad machine. We must stand before it as 19-year-old Oregon Earth First! activist did when she climbed eighty feet up into an ancient Douglas-fir to keep it from being cut down; as Wyoming guide and outfitter did when he pulled up survey stakes along a proposed gas-exploration road in prime Elk habitat. Both put their lives in jeopardy, both went to jail. Both were proud of what they did. Both are heroes of the Earth, as are hundreds of others who have demonstrated courage in defense of the wild.

This defense is not an arrogant defense, of Lord Man protecting helpless Bambies. We are not the caretakers of the garden. But rather we are members, among a magnitude of other members, of that garden. We must humbly join with the Earth, becoming the rain forest, the desert, the mountain, the wilderness, all in defense of ourselves. It is through becoming part of the wild that we find a courage far greater than each of us could muster, a union that gives us boldness to stand against hostile humanism and

religion, against the machine, against the dollar, against jail, against extinction for what is sacred and right: "the Great Dance of Life."

As Henry David Thoreau stated, "In wildness is the preservation of the world."

Extensions

The First Give Away

There are four brothers..²

"Let's see who will live the longest,
 who will be the most successful,
 gain honors," they say.

"We'll worship in four different ways," they say....

One brother goes out.

He prays to the Sun,
 each morning..

Every morning at sunrise,
 he's up,

 makes offerings to the Sun..

This is what the first brother does.....

The second brother goes out.

He fasts and thirsts..

He stays out for one,

 for two,

 for three,

 for four days at a time.

Then he returns to the camp.

He goes out again,

 to fast and thirst,

 to give of himself.

²This story is still told today by the Crow people. For a similar account of this narrative, see Lowie 1918:244-54.

This is what the second brother does....
The third brother goes out.
He builds sweat lodges,
 calls men of importance to come into the lodge.
They sweat together,
 they pray together.
He does this,
 that is what the third brother does....
The last brother goes out.
This man gives feasts to his clan uncles and aunts,
 he gives gifts to them..
Whenever he sees his clan uncles and aunts,
 he does this,
 men and women of his father's mother's clan..
He may kill a buffalo or a deer,
 he feeds them.
That is what the fourth brother does.....
The first brother,
 the one who prays with the Sun,
 he becomes prominent.
But this brother soon dies...
The second brother,
 the man who fasted in those hills,
 he too becomes famous.
He too soon dies....
The man who gave sweat baths,
 this brother becomes a chief.
He lives to a pretty good age,
 then dies....

The fourth brother,
 the one who feasted and gave gifts to his clan uncles and
 aunts,
 this man is a great chief,.

with many honors...
He lives to such a great age,
 when he moves his skin tears...
His deeds were the greatest....
Since then,
 the people have honored their clan uncles and aunts....

* * * * *

Among the Crow people, the initiation and maintenance of all relationships, and, in fact, the social and spiritual status of an individual are based upon reciprocity and measured in terms of what is given. Simply put, the more an individual gives away to others, the greater the acknowledged status of that individual. But the giving is "of the heart," of *diakaashe*, "sincerity," and not out of self-interest or anticipated gain. You give in deference and in appreciation.

At each significant juncture in your life, be it your naming ceremony, a birthday, a school graduation, a successful return from military service, an election to the tribal council, you perform an *ammaakee*, a give-away. Valuable gifts such as Pendleton blankets and horses, expressions of one's *diakaashe*, are given to all those relatives who have helped you reach this important stature. And those kinsmen most important to you are your clan uncles and aunts, the men and women of your father's mother's clan. One does not accomplish an honor solely because of his or her own abilities, but only as a result of the varied assistance of these kinsmen. Their assistance includes the constant offering of prayer for you, the singing of praise songs on your behalf at public events, the offering of sound advice and guidance, and, perhaps, some monetary assistance, and, most vital, the giving of an "Indian name" to you, a name that will protect you all your life. Gifts are given and exchanged.

The more that is exchanged and given away among all one's relatives, the greater the integration with those kinsmen, and the greater acknowledged status one acquires. To simply

accumulate material possessions, in and of itself, is not a mark of social and spiritual gain and status.

* * * * *

"A penny given is a penny earned."

Community

For the Crow people, a pivotal metaphor in their world view is expressed in their term for clan, *ashammaleaxia*. Literally meaning, "as driftwood lodges," the term signifies a social unit made up of several matrilineally-related extended families. As you watch the swift waters from a river's bank, a lesson is offered. Individual pieces of driftwood can be seen making their way down the river. Most do not make it without being submerged under an eddy or bashed up against a rock. Those pieces of driftwood that do survive the swift currents of the river are those that lodge themselves together on the river's bank.

As a solitary Crow individual, to try to make it in the swift currents of life, currents full of potential adversaries at every juncture, is an impossibility. Only by depending upon each other, by a lodging together of social and of spiritual kinsmen, will each individual survive and prosper. The clan is one such lodging together. Throughout life, the individual seeks to maintain and to initiate anew an extensive web of family ties, ties both with human kinsmen, clan uncles and aunts, for example, and with spiritual kinsmen, a guardian spirit. Kinship is to be found and nurtured among all the "peoples," be they human, animal, bird, plant or spirit. All are part of the lodging of the driftwood.

* * * * *

"The Earth and myself are of one mind."
So spoke Chief Joseph (1840-1904) of the Nez Perce.

* * * * *

To give the sign for *unshat-qn*, you move your hand, palm down, out from your eyes toward the eyes of the "person" you are addressing, be it "a human or an animal." All eyes are on the same level! *Unshat-qn* is the Coeur d'Alene Indian expression for equality among all things.

* * * * *

"Divinity is the enfolding and unfolding of everything that is. Divinity is in all things in such a way that all things are in divinity."

So wrote the German Catholic Cardinal and mathematician, Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464).

* * * * *

Christ is the image of the invisible God; born before all created things. In him everything in heaven and on earth was created, not only things visible but also the invisible orders of thrones, sovereignties, authorities, and powers; the whole universe has been created through him and for him. And he exists before everything, and all things are held together in him. (Colossians 1:15-18)

* * * * *

"All that is in God is God.... In God, no creature is more noble than the other.... Ignorant people falsely imagine that God created all things.... God is in all things. The more divinity is in things, the more divinity is outside of things."

So wrote Meister Eckhart.

* * * * *

Shii hozho--"in me there is beauty."

Shaa hozho--"from me beauty radiates." (Navajo)

* * * * *

"O Lady!
 We receive but what we give.
 And in our life alone does Nature live.
 Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud!"
 The words of Samuel Taylor Coleridge from "Ode to
 Dejection."

* * * * *

"The bear has a soul like ours, and his soul talks to mine in
 my sleep and tells me what to do."
 So spoke Bear With White Paw.

* * * * *

Go and ask the cattle,... to give you instruction. (Job
 12:7,8)

* * * * *

"All ethics so far evolved rest upon a single premise: that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts.... The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land.... In short, a land ethic changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow-members, and also respect for the community as such.... A system of conservation based solely on economic self-interest is hopelessly lopsided. It tends to ignore, and thus eventually to eliminate, many elements in the land community that lack commercial value, but that are (as far as we know) essential to its healthy functioning.... A land, ethic, then, reflects the existence of an ecological conscience, and this in turn reflects a conviction of individual responsibility for the health of the land. Health is the

capacity of the land for self-renewal. Conservation is our effort to understand and preserve that capacity."

So wrote the American naturalist Aldo Leopold in *A Sand County Almanac* (1966).

The Hunt

And the buffalos came cascading over the butte, onto the rocks below and onto each other. The hunters above had directed the stampede, and now the women below gather the meat and skins, that which is accessible, that which was given. The night before, the medicine man had offered prayers and spoke with the Buffalo people.

* * * * *

Buffalo-jump hunting involved the coordinated stampeding of a herd over a high bluff, crippling and killing large numbers of bison. It also involved prayers. Buffalo-jump sites are found primarily on the northern Plains (Montana and Wyoming) and in no other areas of North America. Buffalo-jump hunting was practiced by Paleo-Indians (10,000 B.C. to 1600 A.D.) in conjunction with the more prevalent arroyo/corral trap method as well as individual hunting. Some jumps were used as infrequently as once every twenty-five years. Paleo-Indians were a nomadic, pre-horse people who sparsely populated the area. Buffalo-jump hunting was not practiced by the peoples we often associate with the Plains, e.g., Cheyenne, Crow, Lakota, who were found east of the Mississippi river and were sedentary-horticulturally oriented while the jump method was being practiced.

There were over 350 different indigenous tribal/language groups in North America, representing a diversity of ecological adaptations, e.g., urban-sedentary, horticultural-farming, fishing, gatherer-hunter, hunter, nomadic. The North American Indian spans a history of more than 20,000 years with a population of over 1,000,000 at the time of Euro-American contact. The "buffalo-

jump hunting" method was practiced in a limited area by relatively few people prior to the flowering of Plains Indian culture.³

* * * * *

No, do not ask anxiously, "What are we to eat? What are we to drink? What shall we wear?" All these are things for the heathen to run after, not you, because your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. Set your mind on God's kingdom and his justice before everything else, and all the rest will come to you as well. (Matthew 6:31-33)

* * * * *

It's a rough road we're traveling this day; some would say, there's no road at all. We're in the high mesa-country, open to the sky and the winds. Not much in the way of trees, mostly sagebrush and rock. The rough edge is still, though a woodchuck darts from its perch as we pass. Even the clouds seem suspended, motionless. Then the left wheel of our 4x4 hits a rock, and there's motion. We travel on for some time.

Suddenly, you slam on the brakes and jump from the pick-up, rifle in hand, lifted from its rack. The rifle is aimed to the sky and the trigger pulled. The sound echoes in the silence. The bullet whisks past the eagle. And you say to your partner, "The Eagle chose not to be shot, not to give itself this day!"

With your right hand lifted from the steering wheel, raised to the sky and the flight of the bird, we drive on.

Wildness

"We did not think of the great open plains, the beautiful rolling hills, the winding streams with tangled growth, as 'wild.' Only to the white man was nature a 'wilderness' and only to him was the

³See Frison 1978.

land 'infested' with 'wild' animals and 'savage' people. To us it was tame. Earth was bountiful and we were surrounded with the blessings of the Great Mystery. Not until the hairy man from the east came and with brutal frenzy heaped injustices upon us and the families we loved was it 'wild' for us. When the very animals of the forest began fleeing from his approach, then it was that for us the 'Wild West' began."

So wrote Luther Standing Bear in *Land of the Spotted Eagle* (1933).

* * * * *

"History means disrespect for the ancestors."

So echoed the voice of the Lakota leader, Sitting Bull (1831-1890).

* * * * *

There are no wild beasts, no wilderness, other than when we fail to give thanks. And then who is the wild beast?