

## CLIMATE CHANGE CHRONICLE 19

### On Becoming Earthlings

Frequently in these chronicles I have referred to us humans as “earthlings.” In this chronicle I’d like to discuss the term “earthlings” in more detail.

(I know...the term “earthlings” may remind you of those 1940-50 horror movies where two-headed monsters from outer space roam through communities zapping people with their eyes and turning them into quivering mounds of flesh. But go with me on this one.)

The term “earthlings” helps us realize that we humans are a unique species that has come from Earth through the process of evolution. Modern science teaches us we have inherited our human life and consciousness from Earth. Earth, in turn, has inherited its life and consciousness from a living, conscious universe. Thus we as a human species are all “related” in some way or another to other living/conscious life forms.

This relationship is manifest through different types of communications. We humans communicate through language. But other species or entities relate to us and each other through their own unique form of communication.

When our dog is at the door whining we know it wants to go outside and do its thing. Or when it is whining in the kitchen next to its food dish it is communicating to us that it is hungry.

In Peter Wohlleben’s wonderful book *The Hidden life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate* he gives us a striking example of non-verbal communications. His description of how trees communicate with one another is also an indication of how trees can communicate with us.

Nobel Prize winner Barbara McClintock in her study of maize discovered the “jumping genes.” This finding illustrates how genes compensate for one another. She also described the need to have “*a feel for the organism*”. For example the gardener, the garden, and the soil are interconnected in an exquisite feedback loop. When the gardener plants the seed in the soil, the seed is influenced by chemical information from the moisture in the soil, the planter’s breath, the perspiration from hands and so forth. This information serves as a stressor on the plant and certain genes in the plant somehow compensate (jump) to adapt to the changes.

One of the most dramatic examples of communication in the universe comes from the “Non Locality Principle” in quantum physics. In 1964 John Bell (no doubt a relative) successfully demonstrated his theory about the ability of divided cells to instantly communicate with one another. This occurs even when they are in different parts of the universe. (Einstein, who believed no communication can occur beyond the speed of light, thought this to be impossible. He dismissed this theory as “spooky actions at a distance”. )

So there are a wide range of examples of communications that do not require language. Perhaps one of the best examples comes out of our own experience.

We go to the doctor with various symptoms of disease or illness. The doctor may use various tests but then he asks us about our lifestyle. After we describe what we are doing and not doing, the doctor says, "Your body is sending you a message." We know exactly what the doctor means.

This discovery of our shared existence as earthlings is not something new. It has been recognized for centuries in Buddhism and Hinduism. This phenomenon is referred to as darsana. Poet Gary Snyder has given a naturalistic meaning to [darśana](#):

*It's a gift; it's like there's a moment in which the thing is ready to let you see it. In India, this is called darshan. Darshan means getting a view, and if the clouds blow away, as they did once for me, and you get a view of the Himalayas from the foothills, an Indian person would say, 'Ah, the Himalayas are giving you their darshana'; they're letting you have their view.*

*This comfortable, really deep way of getting a sense of something takes time. It doesn't show itself to you right away. It isn't even necessary to know the names of things the way a botanist would. It's more important to be aware of the 'suchness' of the thing; its reality. It's also a source of a certain kind of inspiration for creativity. I see it in the work of Georgia O'Keeffe..."*

In a climate changing world we all need this inspiration for creativity. We can discover it or find it awakening within us in different ways. But it is important to note that this is not something that we create to help us deal with a climate changing world. It is something that already exists within us. It is part of our inheritance as earthlings.

We discover our own darsana in different ways. We may discover it within us through a communication from music, poetry, literature, other people or inspiration from the natural world.

As I've noted in previous chronicles the awareness that I am an earthling has come from my two sources. One is my experience working with Indigenous cultures in the Arctic. The second is an insight I received from Thomas Berry.

One day I told Tom that people in the Arctic often see the beauty of Earth as a dimension of their human spirituality. I asked him if he had ever written something on an earth-based spirituality. He said that he hadn't. I was surprised. But then he said "*I have written something you might find interesting on the spirituality of Earth.*" I finally got it. The spirituality of Earth is not something outside of us that we bring in. It is something already within us that we can discover and express.

Teilhard de Chardin put it this way: "*We are not human beings on a spiritual journey. We are spiritual beings on a human journey*".

As we earthlings discover this reality within us we must activate it. We have a responsibility to care for Earth, our Greater Self. As the doctor might say to us in this climate changing world, "*You have to listen to what your Greater Self is telling you.*"

**Mike Bell, [www.comoxvalleyclimatechangenetwork.ca](http://www.comoxvalleyclimatechangenetwork.ca)**

***If you or your friends wish to receive these chronicles weekly in your emails you can sign up in the chronicles section on our website above.***