

Mother Earth and Her Community

To a more beautiful world without polarization

Wim Bonis

See the fire upon the hill! It's your life burning still
Can you hear the call of the wild wind
Come on! Come on! Do you wanna be the one
Who can laugh and sing in the sun
Or do you wanna be the one who holds the gun?
(...)

Hey! Come on! Come on! Won't you join in the celebration!

*Sally Oldfield, Celebration*¹

In January 2017 I wrote a blog, entitled *An old, dying Empire versus a rising Earth Community*.² It was a direct reaction to the election of Donald Trump as president of the US, which I qualified as a populist and patriotic backlash movement, not limited to the US, but happening in other countries as well – a backlash from the unmistakable trend of human civilization moving in the direction of an Earth Community. The overall message was positive, but I also pointed out that we had to be patient.

Nearly four years later, in the current period (in November/December 2020) we have all been witnessing how Trump kept refusing to acknowledge the fact that he had lost the elections. He kept repeating publicly through his many tweets that he had actually won them and kept spreading stories about a widespread

fraud with the counting of the votes and about the Democrats having stolen the election from him. It's important to know that months before the elections he was already spreading these stories, when no one had voted yet. It was all part of a plan, because he knew in advance that he would not be able to deal with loss. Although not a shred of evidence of fraud had appeared since the actual voting took place, nevertheless Trump managed to trigger a lot of collective anger in his followers who also copied his words almost literally in their slogans.

It was another manifestation of the irresistible urge in populist minds to polarize, create havoc and confusion, to divert the public attention from the real issues by creating conflict and struggle. It has told me that unfortunately we have to have more patience. While rereading my blog from 2017 I was surprised that the message had not aged very much: I still haven't lost my faith in the rising Earth Community. It is good, I think, to have another good look at the ins and outs of this phenomenon.

Two different worldviews

During our life we all receive an enormous amount of information and knowledge about what our life is about, or supposed to be about: during our upbringing, and then later through school, university, through books, news sources, and nowadays increasingly also through internet sites and social media. As many traditional explanations have gradually fallen away since the 1960s, we must all try to construct our own worldview from all these diverse sources. No wonder this results in nearly as many different worldviews as there are people on the planet. And this also results in everyone experiencing the world around them in their own personal way. As the famous Indian spiritual writer Deepak Chopra has put it, in his book *Metahuman*: 'We need to realize that no one lives in the same reality. Everyone's version is personal. A hundred people viewing a glorious sunset in Hawaii are actually seeing a hundred different

sunsets.’³ Of course we must not ignore the fact that these individual differences exist. But to clarify the matter where we have arrived in the Western world in 2020, we are helped a lot when we realize that all these individual differences can be grouped under the headings of two major worldviews that represent entirely different ways of being in the world.

First, there is a *polarized worldview* that is born from the conviction that the centre of who we are resides in the brain, more particular in the left hemisphere. People with a polarized worldview identify themselves with the ego. They value abstract thinking and objective distance over actual sensing, feeling and participation: they are driven by a sense of separation and independence. Yet they also like to identify themselves and other people as members of particular groups. They are almost exclusively human-oriented and focus on making distinctions and creating divisions. They strongly identify with their nationality and with erecting artificial borders to protect it; and, more in general, with the division into national states, in which the people in power strive to protect the welfare and culture of their inhabitants on a national scale (and probably a little beyond that, if the national economy benefits from it). People with a polarized worldview imagine that they can observe the world from without. Although they imagine themselves to be able to observe (and judge) the world from the outside-in, their worldview is primarily born in a (suburban) indoor world. They think they can control the world in a top-down way, through exerting *power-over* other (groups of) people and over the rest of nature. To them the surrounding landscape, the natural world, is not much more than a background for their lives. Their vertical sense of power-over also expresses itself horizontally in a Darwinian urge to struggle with other groups of people. A polarized worldview is a *polarizing* worldview as well.

Second, there is also a *global worldview* which is born from the conviction that the center of who we are resides in the heart, and even a deeper in the womb region, also called the hara center. People

with a global worldview value actual sensing, feeling and participation over abstract thinking and keeping an objective distance to everything. It originates on a very local, intimate and individual, level of day-to-day living – and always remains connected to it – but it simultaneously reaches out on a planetary level and even further. It gradually grows from the inside-out, through ongoing contact with the outdoor world, and gives people the courage to stand alone and pioneer into the unknown if necessary. People with a global worldview feel at home in the surrounding natural world and feel themselves to be first and foremost members of the Earth Community, which includes not just ourselves but also all the animals, plants, the ground beneath our feet, hills, mountains, rivers, the sky above us – in fact, the entire landscape in which we and all the other living beings are embedded. Therefore people with a (potential) global worldview do not identify with specific human groups, with nationality and the sentiments that are connected to this. In the Earth Community only natural boundaries exist, like those between land and water, earth and sky. People with a global worldview know that every human being possesses an inner power, which manifests itself in open and trustful relationships, and in natural bottom-up ways of organization.

Historically the polarized worldview has already existed for a relatively long time, going back to the first formation of city states, which marked the beginning of ‘Western civilization’ about 6000 years ago.⁴ And we can see in the world today that it is still very much alive, as shown by the many interhuman conflicts and wars that we are still confronted with: they are all expressions of a psychological reality within us – the sense of separation that I mentioned earlier. Not many people realize, however, that the global worldview – and with it, the idea about being members of an Earth Community – has even much older roots that go back into prehistory, and is therefore rooted much deeper in what makes us human. In our individual lives the polarized worldview goes back to our childhood

days, to the time when our ego started to develop itself. But we are all born with an open worldview that potentially will grow into a global and even universal one, if it gets the chance to do so. But unfortunately when the ego develops, this innate growth process is usually blocked, for a while at least – and from the undeveloped ego level the polarized worldview is constructed.

Although historically and individually the roots of the global worldview reach deeper, it is a fact that in the Western world many people are still stuck in a polarized worldview. No one is completely free from it, including myself. Therefore it makes sense to take the polarized worldview as a point of departure: how do we get in touch again with the very roots of our global worldview, from a position that denies its very existence? How do we convince people with a polarized worldview that they are also part of the Earth Community – and always have been? A good starting point is trying to see everything in perspective, both on a historical and individual level.

Central to my argument here is the fact that the seeds for a global worldview were already present among our prehistoric ancestors and that they already felt part of an Earth Community. Despite a millennia-long patriarchal rule in the Western world, which was largely driven by the polarized worldview, the ancient wisdom of the Earth Community has managed to survive among indigenous cultures all over the world. We're fortunate that this ancient wisdom is increasingly welcomed by people in the modern world, who realize that in taking it at heart and newly acknowledging our role as members of the Earth Community on a collective scale, our only hope for a sustainable future exists. To make this possible we must – as Charles Eisenstein has been advocating in his books, articles and talks – leave 'the old story', 'the Story of Separation' that has guided the Western world for thousands of years, behind us. And simultaneously, we must welcome and familiarize ourselves with 'the new and ancient story', 'the Story of Interbeing', in which ancient wisdom and modern scientific insights are connected with

each other. In Eisenstein's view, at this very moment we are still 'in between stories'.⁵ We are in an unprecedented, challenging situation and it demands a lot of courage to face it fully with an open mind. Understandably it can also be experienced as quite threatening and drive people to cling to the old story – the 'security' of its familiar ideas and its acquired privileges – as long as they can.



Europe seen from outer space at night © NASA

Dealing with the populist backlash

As pointed out at the start, at the moment there is a a backlash on a worldwide scale that we have to deal with – and as the presidential election in 2020 in the US has shown us, it is not over yet. Populist politicians refuse to give up the old story, and powered by the imagined 'security' of their polarized worldview, even blow it up to enormous proportions, largely because they feel threatened by the

irreversible rise of the open, global worldview. They raise their voices, get more militant and try to assemble an army of dedicated followers. They are part of a counter movement, which seeks confrontation with anyone who dares to come too near them, driven by its irresistible, dualistic urge to struggle with other groups of people and to try to defeat them. We are witnessing that populists increasingly cling to ever more absurd and dangerous conspiracy theories.

As understandable as it is, that people do not have the courage to face the situation that the world is in at the moment, it is equally understandable that many people do not want to be associated with populism and prefer to have a global worldview. But then we should be aware of the fact that the seeds for populism and the polarized worldview are present in some ideas about life that are still quite widespread. As long as we are convinced, for instance, that the essence of who we are resides in our brain, and that our brain produces our consciousness and power of reason, quite paradoxically we are making ourselves also susceptible to the unreasonable ideas of populism and to a polarized worldview. As said earlier, the global worldview can only grow from the heart and the hara center, and is founded on actual sensing, feeling and participation rather than on abstract thinking and keeping an objective distance. As scientific research has shown (which for instance has been discussed by Joseph Chilton Pearce), the electro-magnetic field that extends from a harmoniously functioning heart, manifesting itself as a beautiful torus, resonates directly with the similarly shaped, harmonious field that radiates from Mother Earth.⁶ In other words, there is a deep connection between the two, and that connection is so incredibly important!

To be in touch with the feelings of the heart and to open ourselves to the global worldview, the ‘thought chatter’ in our head must be silenced as much as possible.⁷ As long as we are still caught in the dimension of (rational and objective) thinking and consider it to

represent the person who we truly are, we remain disconnected from the feelings and intuitions of the heart and are still driven primarily by sense of separation – and polarization. Even Albert Einstein realized this when he said: ‘The intuitive mind is a sacred gift. And the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honors the servant and has forgotten the gift.’ From the level of the undeveloped ego we look down on and are very suspicious of our feelings and intuitions, and more specifically of the so-called ‘gut feelings’, which are then considered a threat to our rational thinking. But when we dare to identify with the heart and have as the center of our being (which indeed takes a lot of courage), these same ‘gut feelings’ are valued very positively – as important expressions our deepest interconnected self that should be treasured, and should be listened to.

Another dilemma is: ‘How do we get rid of our hatred of enemies once and for all?’ Although it was relatively easy to create enemies, it is very hard to free yourself from stereotype labels that you have already stuck onto other human groups. It is also pretty easy to get drawn into the polarized worldviews of populists if you haven’t found time or energy yet to fully outgrow your egocentric drives and reopen the growth process towards a more heart based global worldview – if you still feel somewhat lost and overwhelmed among all the information that we receive through the diverse sources around us. And who is completely free from egocentric drives? Hopefully you still have access then to the wisdom that whispers in your ear that you must let the populists roar, let them rage, because – unfortunately for them – we have arrived at a time in history in which it is not all about winning fights and going for glorious victories anymore.

The powerful poem ‘Leave them alone’ by Irish poet Patrick Kavanagh reflects this state of mind very well:

*There is nothing happening that you hate
That's really worthwhile slamming;
Be patient. If you only wait
You'll see time gently damning*

*Newspaper bedlamites who raised
Each day the devil's howl,
Versifiers who had seized
The poet's begging bowl;*

*The whole hysterical show
The hour apotheosized
Into a cul-de-sac will go
And be not even despised.*

The Beatles gave in their song 'Let it be' a similar advice:

*When I find myself in times of trouble
Mother Mary comes to me
Speaking words of wisdom
Let it be*

So we have to trust time that she will take care of the process of 'gently damning' whatever we hate. The Beatles added something very important to the attitude of letting a troubled situation be as it is: we are never alone in these times of trouble, as we are always supported by the invisible presence of Mother Mary. In this I hear a Christianized survival from what I have called *the Goddess heritage* (and to which we come back below).

Artificial boundaries

As said, the polarized worldview is focused on making artificial divisions, on separating us as much as possible from the world

around us. On a state level it has created borders between countries – sometimes emphasized and marked by the erection of material walls –, which are also believed to mark different kinds of cultures and peoples that should be separated as much as possible from each other. But within states it has created other divisions built on the principle of ‘us against them’. In the presidential election in US – and in particular in the election in 2020 – the Democrats and Republicans often felt so strongly opposed to each other that they considered each other absolute enemies with whom they did not share one single idea – often guided by totally unrealistic ideas about life and the world.

The artificial boundaries that generate a sense of separation also have an important time dimension. Different human groups often feel separated from each other because they have connected their identity with a different history or a slightly different interpretation of the same history. Representatives of these different groups try to avoid a direct face-to-face confrontation with their ‘opponents’ as much as possible, to keep the boundary between each other intact. When these representatives do end up at one table and look at each other face-to-face, they are usually struggling to defend their own position, while at the same time witnessing another flesh-and-blood human being sitting across from them, who – if they dare to admit it to themselves – turns out not to be very different from them.

The artificial boundaries also exist in the scientific world. Since the period of the Enlightenment not only science increasingly replaced religion as the major source to explain life, during the centuries scientific disciplines split off into more and more specializations, with also new boundaries between them. Scientific specializations do not just give a lot of freedom and space to specific kinds of research, but the disciplinary boundaries also protect carefully built-up expertise from interference by ‘unqualified’ scientists from other disciplines or by ‘lay people’, who are assumed not to possess the necessary expertise. The Dutch herbalist Anne

Leeftang, who for many years has been expanding her expertise by getting involved in several ecological projects, observed – in reaction to a scientist who only researched glaciers in Spitsbergen – the following with regard to scientific specialization: ‘Although I understand it because this is how science works, I kept thinking: but what should I do with it? Who is going to be the translator of this specialized science to the general, scientific picture? And of science to practice?’⁸ Fortunately nowadays there is a lot of boundary crossing between the scientific disciplines by interdisciplinary research, but boundary crossing from outside the scientific community by *non-scientists* is definitely not yet appreciated by most scientists: generally speaking, ‘lay people’ are still expected not to talk or write about scientific matters, and to leave it to the experts.

To come back to the US presidential election and the refusal of many Republicans to accept their loss: I think many people were still unaware that their resentment and anger, their ongoing attempts to demonize the Democrats and their urge to keep on fighting them, was an expression of their longing to stick to the old familiar story of egocentrism, capitalism and the market economy. It was a desperate attempt to deny or even ignore the paradigm change that is happening on a worldwide scale – which includes the rediscovery that primarily we are interconnected beings, members of the Earth Community. I am convinced that all the individual fights between people, all the collective interhuman conflicts – whether about gender, race, climate or religion – and the wars between countries, are continually fed by our egocentrism and hatred, because we have lost our sense of embeddedness in the landscape around us – in *the more-than-human world*, as David Abram has called it. Conflicts and wars are a sign that have lost our way within the strict boundaries of the human world and everything that we created within that context. In this sense our situation can feel like too many rats living close together in too small a space: they are bound to start fighting with each other. But there is an important difference as well. In this

respect we can ask ourselves, like the Persian poet Rumi has done a long time ago: ‘Why do you stay in prison when the door is wide open?’⁹

Therefore it is good for our psychological and spiritual health, to cross our artificially created boundaries on a regular basis, and in the long run on a permanent basis. Historians, for instance, should not limit their research to consulting other respected historians, and get themselves not only acquainted with prehistoric research, but they should also expand their knowledge in fields like mythology and psychology. Philosophers should not stick to the ideas offered by the classical philosophers from Plato and Aristotle to Kant and Hegel or even to more recent ones like Sartre and Foucault, but they should expand the very idea of what philosophy is actually about, take notice of other modern thinkers outside their field. Republicans should not just listen and agree with other ‘fellow’ Republicans – or Democrats to other ‘fellow’ Democrats – but should open their minds to the ideas in other party circles, and also investigate fields outside politics. And so on. For all of us it is healthy to let the artificial boundaries dissolve by getting to know and respect people with completely different backgrounds, and different ideas – even if it is just by reading their books or watching them talk on a screen. And, of course, we should not forget to listen to our own inner voice, take its messages seriously, and also allow our worldview to be enriched by our own experiences in the world around us. This is the way to open ourselves to a global worldview.

Natural boundaries

As already indicated, besides artificial boundaries there are also natural ones. Natural boundaries are not meant to be closed-off and function as absolute divisions between different areas or fields. They are alive and open to outside influences – like the skin on our body, the banks of a river or the boundary between the earth and the sky – and function primarily as a living connection. The membrane of the

cell can serve as an example on how the natural boundaries function, as explained by biologist Bruce Lipton in his book *The Biology of Belief*.¹⁰ He has shown that the ‘brain’ of the cell is not resident in the genes – as is still argued by many mainstream materialistic scientists – but in the membrane. According to him, in the default state this membrane is open, a point of connection between life inside and outside the cell: the membrane allows influences from the environment into the cell, and it is this openness that makes the process of growth possible. Lipton has argued that the growth process stops as soon as the membrane closes itself off – to keep out harmful influences from the environment. When the membrane closes itself off, the fight-or-flight response is generated. He has emphasized that it is very important to be aware of the fact that the open state of the membrane is the default state and that the closed-off state is the exception, and is meant to be limited to emergencies.

Importantly, Lipton has pointed out that the situation at the cell level also happens on the larger level of organs and organisms. Our skin is like the membrane of the cell, meant to be in the default position of being open to influences from the environment. This openness is affecting all the different human fields: it opens the way to cultural openness, gender openness, racial openness, religious openness, and so on. Because the emphasis lies on our openness, according to Lipton, we are all born to grow, and the fight-or-flight response is also the exception in our interhuman relationships. When we are in a constant fight-or-flight modus – as has happened to a lot of people in our modern world, in particular to people with a polarized worldview –, we have turned the exception into the rule: we are in a constant state of closed-off emergency, and thereby we have simultaneously stopped our growth process.

We can learn from this that nature intends to let us grow, not just biologically, but also psychologically and spiritually. And to make that possible, we have to cherish a sense of openness – of receptivity, cooperation, empathy and kindness. In fact, it means developing all

the ‘soft’ qualities that we have come to associate with the feminine. It also means leaving the time of a heroic, masculine approach to life behind us – the approach that was focused on confronting and conquering the world by force. This happens spontaneously as soon as we have managed to reopen our heart and mind, and thereby rediscover the more feminine path, which is actually a very human path that acknowledges the essential fragility of our being. By exposing our vulnerability we show something of our authentic nature, and it needs an incredible amount of courage to do that. It is a question of *daring to be vulnerable*, as has been suggested by the popular American ‘shame researcher’ Brené Brown. According to her, real courage cannot exist without exposing and expressing our vulnerability.¹¹ It is the only way to build real relationships; to feel truly at home in the world and fully participate in it.

The connection that Lipton has made between the cells and the larger organs and organisms fits in with the idea of a natural world that is also ‘vertically’ structured in an open way. In this regard Arthur Koestler has proposed that the natural world is organized in a holarchical way: he has argued that on every level life consists of holons, which are both whole in themselves and part of a larger whole.¹² We can see that the cell with its open membrane is functioning like a holon, and cells are part of an organ, another whole that is part of an organism, yet another whole that part of a community, and so on. Of course we can also descend further down into the micro world beyond the cell. The beautiful thing is that this reality of the holarchical organization of the natural world shows that principle of *diversity and inclusion* is already present in every organism like our own body, and only needs to be extended to the context in which we live our lives – to our society and the more-than-human world – to help us creating a better world. This is of course what the Earth Community has always been about, and is still about: a natural expression of our deepest roots.

Living within the larger body of the landscape

In the Earth Community the context of the surrounding landscape has always played – and continues to play – a central role. Our prehistoric ancestors realized that it was immeasurably large, that they were an extricable part of it and that their lives fully depended on it. Therefore it was considered Sacred. Although they had no idea yet of the age of our planet, they knew that the landscape had been present for a very long time before they had come to inhabit it and that it would continue to be there for a very long time as well after they have gone. To them the landscape was permanent compared to their temporary presence in it. Our ancestors considered the surrounding landscape both *a given* and *a inexhaustible giver* – which provided them with air to breathe, water to drink, plants and animals to nourish them. In this sense the landscape truly was a living being to them, and not an *It*, a lifeless thing. To them it was a local manifestation of *Mother Earth*, a living being who also cared for them spiritually and for whom they felt a deep reverence.

And we can still experience the landscape in this way. In this respect Lynn Barron talks about *the Unknown She* and emphasizes that this doesn't mean it is actually female: 'It isn't a gender, it is neither masculine or feminine, but for some reason you want to say 'She'. It is a *feeling* state, and feeling is a female quality. You can't think or put words around it. It stays in the formless realm. For example, you feel as if you're enveloped by presence. There is such intimacy, as if you have been embraced.'¹³ But feeling is also, as I have pointed out earlier, primarily a quality of the heart and the hara center – which both women and men possess.

I have already written quite extensively about the power and the meaning of the Sacred Landscape in my article *The Rediscovery of the Landscape*.¹⁴ In it I have shown that for our prehistoric ancestors the Sacred quality was present everywhere in the landscape they inhabited, and in some places they experienced the Sacred dimension more intensely: those places became the specially selected Sacred

places, places of power, in their spiritual experience. Although today we still depend as much on the surrounding landscape as our ancestors once did, generally speaking most people in the Western world seem to have lost the ancient awareness of being embedded in a Sacred Landscape, and also what it means to deeply belong to it. For millennia human beings have bitterly fought conflicts and wars, often in remote areas in which they apparently did not notice or feel the presence of the magnificent landscapes around them – and to which in their ignorance they caused tremendous damage. Unfortunately, this is still continuing today. The soldiers have so strongly focused themselves on finding and fighting the enemy, that in their hostile mindset apparently they have blocked their sensitivity to the presence and the power of the surrounding landscape, of the more-than-human world.



Africa seen from outer space © NASA

Of course we can never close ourselves off completely from the presence and the power of the surrounding landscape. Even when we are living in an urbanized environment, in a town or city, we are still embedded in it. When we are discussing the problems in our society, from collective economic or political ones to the more personal psychological ones, we often seem to forget that this larger context is always present as well. Under all circumstances we keep living our lives under the influence of the earth cycles of night and day and the seasons, and we keep feeding our bodies with water and food. We cannot even escape the force of gravity for too long, as has been shown by the astronauts who have paid visits to the space stations circling our planet.

The Motherland and the Fatherland

Elsewhere I have referred to the very interesting book that Valerie Andrews has written about the powerful relation between human beings and the land they are living in – between us and Mother Earth. But in the light of the recent presidential elections in the US, her ideas come back in my mind. She has argued, in *A Passion for This Earth*, that we are transformed by Her through a continual exchange of energies. Andrews has illustrated this by referring to a story told by Laurence Durrell. In one of his books he had written about a group of Chinese immigrants who came to San Francisco in the 1940s. This group had ceased to look like ‘homegrown Chinese within a few generations.’ He reckoned that this had happened not so much by intermarriage, but by the power of the land itself. In other words, the immigrants were transformed largely by just living within the context of another landscape.¹⁵ This is a very interesting observation: through the power of the local landscape Mother Earth Herself had taken care of the integration process!

As is well-known, new settling groups of people have been a prominent part of the history of the US. With the exception of the Native American population, the country has largely been populated

with people coming from abroad. But sadly in this country the power of landscapes, and the way it deeply influences the lives and outlook of people, has largely been ignored since the European colonists settled in the New World a few centuries ago. The power of the landscape still does its work of course – like with the Chinese immigrants mentioned above –, but because of this ignorance most European colonists never managed to fully settle in it. Andrews has observed in this respect that: 'Part of the problem is that America became a nation long before it had a chance to know itself as *a land*.'¹⁶ America as a nation is the kind of America that Donald Trump wanted to make great again – a nation built and still dominated by the ideas brought along by the colonizing 'white men'. Thereby they completely ignored the fact that long before that the US as a nation came into being, it had been a land – a living land that was inhabited by the indigenous Native Americans, who had always known it as such.

Here we see the difference between experiencing the country in which we are living as *a Fatherland* or as *a Motherland*. Alfred Korzybski famously stated in 1931 that 'the map is not the territory'. In a similar sense, we should be aware of the fact that the Fatherland is not the Motherland, and that we should not confuse the two. A nation refers to experiencing oneself as belonging to a Fatherland – an abstract patriarchal idea that is symbolized by artificial borders around it, a flag, an anthem, and many institutions to protect it. The institutions of the Fatherland are concerned with social affairs, in which the prosperity and the wellbeing of people are the central focus, and in particular of a relatively small group of privileged people. It is closely connected to the idea of private landownership – that has been with us in the Western world for a few millennia, ever since the rise of the first city states.

The land that Andrews refers to is the Motherland, the actual landscape in which all living beings, including ourselves, are embedded; land we do not own, but which in a certain sense owns

us. It is a land to which we belong with our whole being, in a much more intimate way than we can ever belong to a Fatherland. The Motherland does not just include the human world, but also the natural world of plants, animals, rivers, skies, hills and mountains – the more-than-human world. She lives and renews Herself through continual change, the cycles of winter and summer, of night and day. The Motherland has natural boundaries, like between land and sea, but has no artificial borders and border patrols.

We must never forget that before the shift to patriarchy and the rise of the first city states in all human societies the land was considered primarily a Motherland. That's why the people in these societies did not only feel they belonged to the landscape in their direct environment, but they already felt part of the larger Earth Community as well. When ideas about the Fatherland started to determine the way we experience the country in which we live our lives, the Motherland was more or less ignored and reduced to a mere background for the world of human affairs. We should realize that the Fatherland is a good breeding ground for the polarized worldview: the urge for dualistic struggles with other human groups, rests on a denial of the presence of the Motherland.

The Sacred Landscape as the non-anthropomorphic Goddess

The Motherland also involved a completely different notion of the Sacred dimension of life than the one we have inherited from the Judeo-Christian heritage. Our distant ancestors were not familiar yet with the 'indoor religions', but experienced an intense form of 'outdoor spirituality'. They felt completely included in the surrounding landscape, embraced and cared for by a gigantic invisible Matrix or Womb, in which they could grow to maturity. Therefore the oldest spiritual heritage of our ancestors has been a Goddess heritage; and we must acknowledge that in this heritage originally the Goddess was not yet shaped in human form, but was essentially non-anthropomorphic.

When we think of God, we tend to depict this deity in male form, and when think of a Goddess, the name usually suggests a female form. And indeed, when we consult the myths in which a Goddess plays a central role or pay a visit to an archaeological museum and look at the Goddess figurines and statues, the Goddess is usually represented as a female figure. In other words, the deities look like human beings, have a human form: they are anthropomorphic. Well, my research and personal experience has convinced me that the Goddess originally was – and essentially still is – a non-anthropomorphic presence. And this has everything to do with the experience of ‘outdoor spirituality’ and the nature of the Sacred Landscape – the large, immeasurable body that surrounds us everywhere and our own smaller body being a part of it.¹⁷



Asia seen from outer space © NASA

We could say – paraphrasing the Bible – that ‘In the Beginning was the Landscape’, but we could even specify it to ‘In the Beginning *She* was the living Sacred Landscape’: She was one with the whole of the surrounding landscape that the people lived in – a whole with a visible and invisible dimension that was always moving in cycles: from night to day to night, from winter to summer to winter, and so on. Unlike scientists today who study the natural world or specific features of it, our early ancestors could not project themselves outside of the Sacred Landscape, to observe it from without.

In a book by Wendy Garling on the influence of the (sacred) feminine in the life of the Buddha, I came across the following description of the non-anthropomorphic essence of the Goddess heritage: ‘The term *goddess* in these contexts generally refers to *yakshis*, or feminine guardian spirits that inhabit the natural world according to this ancient, earth-based people. *Yakshis* were most closely associated with trees and forests, although they may appear in any number of settings, including rivers, lakes, mountains, cremation grounds, shrines and human dwellings.’¹⁸ This Goddess worship through the landscape, and its specific features, must have lasted a long time before it fired the imagination to create the Goddess in human shape. Although Goddess figurines have already been created in the Paleolithic, this did not mean that she disappeared as a non-anthropomorphic presence in the natural world. In Celtic culture of prehistoric Europe until the arrival of the Romans the Goddess still was experienced in the natural world as a non-anthropomorphic presence. Essentially, She has always been one with her creation.

Anne Baring and Jules Cashford have pointed out that within the Goddess heritage there is room for both the feminine and the masculine: the Gods are included in it as well. The Goddess was identified with *zoe* and the God with *bios*. *Zoe* referred to the timeless whole of animated nature, encompassing all cycles of life,

the invisible and timeless World soul, and *bios* referred to her manifestations in the world of time. The Gods, like the grains and the fruits, were these temporary manifestations, born out of the Womb of the Goddess.¹⁹ So the Goddess heritage consisted of an immaterial, invisible dimension and a visible, tangible one: the materially manifested natural world. Claudio Naranjo has also emphasized this dual Goddess quality: ‘Since remote antiquity the Goddess seems to have personified both nature and more than nature, something transcending the visible world as well. Through Her association with the moon, with its monthly cycle of expansion and contraction, She seemed to reflect not just the menstrual cycle and the cycle of seasonal regeneration of the plant world, but also the mystery of permanence beyond transformation: that is, beyond the cycle of life and death.’²⁰

We might actually wonder whether the term *anthropomorphism* is the correct term with regard to the Goddess heritage. Elisabet Sahtouris rejects the criticism of scientists that representing nature by a Goddess figure is a form of anthropomorphism, of projection of human images onto the natural world. Her response is that the way scientists understand the world in mechanical terms is in fact an extreme, secondhand form of anthropomorphism that she has called *mechanomorphism*, because mechanisms are produced by humans.²¹ In her view, by considering planet earth a Goddess one expresses the important reality that we are dealing here with a living being – a larger living being of which we as humans are a part, in the same way as our own cells are part of our being.²² In this respect Stephen Harrod Buhner has remarked that: ‘*Gaia* as a concept immediately confronts the idea of humans as detached observers, as independent minds, and it immediately connects each of us personally to a *feeling* sense of the world. Once something is personified – Women, Plants, Jews, Dolphins, Blacks, Mountains, or Bacteria – it is more difficult to treat it as a thing.’²³

Dieter Duhm has argued, in his book *The Sacred Matrix*, that we shouldn't think anthropomorphically, 'that we should not project life processes that we know from humans onto other living beings and especially not onto 'dead' matter.' He is convinced that the roles are actually the other way around: we should understand that we are *cosmomorphic* beings, 'that the same movements of life occur in us in an analogous way as they do in all the other things in the universe. We are – just like the oceans, the rocks, the plants and the animals – a part of a 'holomovement' which encompasses and permeates everything that exists in an infinite ladder of scales and energy levels.'²⁴ As we are primarily part of Mother Earth, we could also say that we are *geomorphic beings*: first there was an all-encompassing consciousness, there were cycles, sexes, and so on, and eventually we – just like all the other living beings – were formed in the matrix of the existing earthly patterns. It was not God who has created us in His image, as the Bible has told us, but Mother Earth who has created us in Her image. This helps to explain the tremendous influence the surrounding landscape exerts on us.

It's interesting to take notice of the fact that after the rise of the Reformation in the Western world public attention returned to the landscape. When the Protestant authorities had rejected the worship of the Catholic saints in the 16th century as false idol worship, inspiring the believers to waves of violence directed at the statues of the saints, there were only few ways left open to express their worship: one was through the medium of music (e.g. Bach) and the other was through the landscape. It took a few centuries before in to the Romantic age painters, poets and travelers were rediscovering the power of the landscape. Painters chose to paint impressive outdoor landscapes (like Constable, Turner), poets (like Wordsworth) wrote lyrically about the beauty and mysterious power of the landscape and travelers were driven to visit certain landscapes, like the spectacular mountainous areas of the Alps.

Unfortunately this has not triggered a widespread return of the Sacred Landscape experience: it remained limited to a relatively small group of well-to-do – mostly male – Romantics, who did reach a relatively large audience but could not generate a significant collective change in this respect. Nowadays the ecological crisis is showing us that we're not there yet and that something more has to happen to collectively rediscover the Sacred quality of the landscape. The something more that has to happen is a radical change in our consciousness.

Conscious nature

For our distant ancestors the Sacred Landscape was not only alive but also conscious of our presence in it: in their view, there was always a reciprocal relationship between the landscape and the people living within its context.²⁵ The conviction of our ancestors that the landscape is conscious of our human presence has managed to survive in the culture of still living indigenous peoples. David Abram wrote the following about it, in his book *The Spell of the Sensuous*: 'Aboriginal peoples tend to consider the visible entities around them – the rocks, persons, leaves – as crystallizations of conscious awareness, while the invisible medium *between* such entities is experienced as what Westerners would call 'the unconscious', the creative but unseen realm from which such conscious forms arise.'²⁶ The creative but unseen realm is the gigantic invisible Matrix or Womb, which I have mentioned earlier.

Abram argued, elsewhere in the same book, that originally, before the rise of the written word, there existed a 'reciprocal perception' – an idea he has borrowed from the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty – between the people and the more-than-human world around them. They 'read' the landscape around them like a book, and listened to its voices. When we learned to write and to read books, we lost this capacity to read the landscape: 'Only as the written text began to speak would the voices of the forest, and of the

river, begin to fade. And only then would language loosen the ancient association with the invisible breath, the spirit sever itself from the wind, the psyche disassociate itself from the envisioning air. The air, once the very medium of expressing interchange, would become an increasingly empty and unnoticed phenomenon, displaced by the new medium of the written word.’²⁷

The oral indigenous cultures around the world managed to keep this capacity to read the natural world, this reciprocal perception, alive, as has also been observed by former ecological activist Paul Kingsnorth, in his book *Savage Gods*. He argues that according to these cultures: ‘The field is full of language. Everything is speaking to everything else. (...) All nature is language – but none of it is written down.’²⁸ As a young man Kingsnorth had had an extraordinary experience during his stay among the Lani tribe in New Guinea. When he accompanied some men of the tribe during a forest walk, he experienced that they stopped and sang a song of thanks directed to the forest. He says that he carried this song, in a language unknown to him, twenty years with him ‘until I was really ready to hear it.’²⁹

The American environmental biologist Robin Wall Kimmerer, has also argued that a reciprocal relationship between humans and the natural environment was central in the worldview of our ancestors and still is among indigenous peoples. As reported by her friend the writer Elisabeth Gilbert in her book *Big Magic*, Kimmerer always tries to make her students aware of this reciprocity, by first asking them: ‘Do you love nature?’ When all of them raise their hands, she then asks a second question: ‘Do you believe that nature loves you in return?’ And all the hands go down again. Gilbert explains: ‘These earnest young world-savers honestly believe that the living earth is indifferent to them.’ (...) ‘Our ancestors always operated with a sense of being in a reciprocal emotional relationship with their physical surroundings. Whether they felt that they were being rewarded by Mother Nature or punished by her, at least they

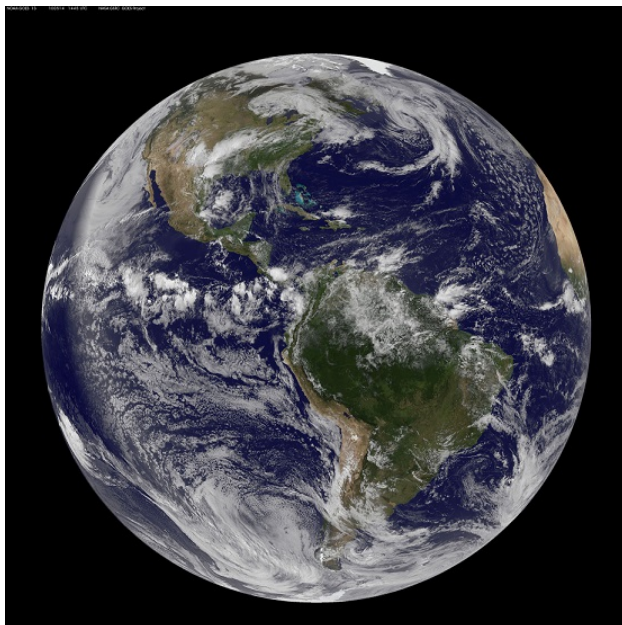
were engaged in a constant *conversation* with her. Robin believes that modern people have lost that sense of conversation – lost that awareness of the earth communicating with *us* just as much as we are communicating with *it*.’ By posing the questions to her students Kimmerer shows them that ‘before she can teach these students to heal the world, she has to teach them how to heal *their notions of themselves in the world*.’³⁰

Landownership and the gift economy

An element that we have not talked about yet, but one that is very important within the context of the Earth Community, is the way we think about landownership. The idea of private property is closely connected to the development of the Western world, from its first small scaled rise about 6000 years ago to the planetary scale of today. Gradually and increasingly we lost sight of the fact that private landownership is not the only way to relate to the land. Only after the European colonists were confronted with the indigenous people in ‘the New World’, Western people were reminded again that there exists a completely different and much older way to relate to the land that also it had been the way among our prehistoric ancestors. But it took a few centuries to recognize it as such and even longer to understand its full meaning.

I’m referring here of course to the sense of belonging to the Motherland that I have discussed earlier. This indigenous sense of belonging means that the land is only capable of owning itself and that we live our lives completely embedded in and dependent on its larger body; that the land that can never be subject to buying and selling. In this sense of belonging *invasion* and *theft* are alien concepts. As said, the Motherland was a conscious, living entity with whom we had a reciprocal relationship: She was both a given that existed long before we settled in it and a giver of gifts for which we felt a deep reverence and gratitude. The living land was an inextricably part of the gift economy, the kind of economy that has

preceded the market economy with which we are all familiar today. This gift economy has played an important role in the creating of the ancient Earth Community, and it needs to play an important role again in the newly rising Earth Community. This means that the very idea of private property, of privately owning plots of land, on which we have built the market economy, must be questioned thoroughly.



America seen from outer space © NASA

A lot has been written about the importance of the gift economy, from Marcel Mauss at the start of the 20th century until more recently by researchers like Genevieve Vaughan, Lewis Hyde and Charles Eisenstein.³¹ Robin Wall Kimmerer has also put the gift central in her writing and teaching. She has shown that a gift economy is not something of the distant past but that gift giving is still a basic quality of the natural world. Like all her predecessors who have written about gift giving, she has emphasized that we should never

become the owner of a gift: 'We are showered everyday with gifts, but they are not meant for us to keep. Their life is in their movement, in the inhale and the exhale of our shared breath. Our work and our joy is to pass along the gift and to trust that what we put out in the universe will always come back.'³² With regard to the US context, she discovered for herself that as she increasingly came to understand of the importance of the earth as a giver of gifts, she also started realizing that the nationalistic sentiments in the US have no relation at all to the actual country: 'As I grew to understand the gifts of the earth, I couldn't understand how 'love of country' could omit recognition of the actual country itself.'³³

In other words, this 'love of country' is all about the Fatherland, in which landownership and the national borders are very important; and which has also diminished our contact with the living landscape, our sense of being embedded in the more-than-human world. Understanding the earth as a giver of gifts means experiencing the surrounding landscape as the Motherland; it means equating the earth with Mother Earth. By harmonizing with Her from our heart and hara center – and experiencing our small organism to be an inextricable part of Her larger organism – we know once again that like Her we are also primarily givers of gifts.

The revival of the Earth Community

As said, in the actual territory, in the Motherland, the artificial national borders have no meaning: we are members of the Earth Community. Writers like Thomas Berry, Joanna Macy and David Korten have shown that, despite the backlash into polarization and populism that we have discussed above, all over the planet there are signs that we are moving in the direction of all becoming members of an Earth Community.³⁴ They acknowledge that this is not altogether something new but more a kind of revival, as a lot of inspiration for it is found in indigenous cultures. New Zealand Philosopher in Geography Amba Sepie has pointed out in her very interesting

doctoral thesis *Tracing the Motherline* that there are two processes that must be activated and brought to completion to transform the ‘westernized worldview’ and to turn the Earth Community into a reality: *decolonization* and *re-indigenization*.³⁵

The story of colonization of the world by European settlers since the first Europeans crossed over to ‘the New World’ is well-known: many books and articles have been written about it. The insight of Valerie Andrews that the US was a nation before it was a land, quoted above, has not remained limited to the US and mirrors the reality of the colonization process all around the world. The colonizers had taken a blueprint with them from where they had come – including ideas about history, religion, private property, and so on – and projected it like a map on the territory in which they settled. With some exceptions to the rule, most of them did not take any notice of the actual territory, of the surrounding landscape in which they had settled, not of its power and also not of the indigenous peoples who had built a rich tradition with regard to living in the context of the local landscape. They thought it was enough to introduce their own worldview in the new environment without taking the indigenous worldview seriously. On that basis they started to build the new nations. And only in our time, after a few centuries, we finally start realizing that we have not only forgotten to genuinely acquaint ourselves with the living land itself, the landscape, but by projecting the Western blue-print on it with its ideas about private property we have also done a lot of harm and destruction to it that we still need to restore.

This is where the process of re-indigenization, that Sepie talks about in her thesis, comes in. In her view ‘westernized’ people have lost their indigenous roots, and to provide themselves with a future they must be re-indigenize their worldview. To get inspiration for this an incredible amount of wisdom that the *Earth Elders* have handed down to us can be consulted. She quotes a lot of examples, which show that indigenous cultures all over the world have

cherished similar ideas about their relationship with the land. Important is that being indigenous – or native – is not a quality that necessarily must be connected to the place we are born in, but can also be acquired by new settlers, by immigrants. As Robin Wall Kimmerer has said in this respect: ‘For all of us, becoming indigenous to a place means living as if your children’s future mattered, to take care of the land as if our lives, both material and spiritual, depended on it.’³⁶ She has also pointed out that in the indigenous worldview a place is always an *animated place*, in which everything – humans, animals, plants, rivers, mountains, and so – is conscious. Therefore to become indigenous or native to it, to feel truly at home in it, we must be in communion with all the inhabitants: ‘we must learn to speak its language’, and ‘learn the grammar of animacy’.³⁷ In other words: in the indigenous worldview a landscape is always an animated landscape, a place in which everything and everyone communicates reciprocally with each other, a Sacred Landscape.

Of course we should have taken the Earth Elders seriously a long time ago, because it would have prevented a lot of damage. But as we were then still driven by the colonial mindset, it is not so strange we were not able to hear their message. But now we can! We can decolonize and re-indigenize our worldview and behaviour. And in fact, we are left with no other alternative, if we are serious about wanting to transform the modern Western world into a sustainable one, with a future. To newly experience the surrounding landscape as a potentially Sacred Landscape, it is an absolute requirement to disempower the polarized worldview, and to open up once again to a global worldview – whose emphasis is simultaneously on improving the quality of life in our local environment and on a planetary level. This is what becoming and being a member of the Earth Community is all about.

Coming home

To people who think the Earth Community is an unrealistic concept, a kind of utopia far removed from reality, I can say: it is what the astronauts have seen when they looked at Mother Earth from outer space. We can all look at the many pictures they have taken during their journeys: pictures of a beautiful world with only natural, fluid boundaries, a large harmonious whole, a balanced body, our home. And just like with our own body: who can tell just by looking at it from the outside that it is not powered by a living spirit within?

The minds of the astronauts were permanently transformed by the imagery of our planet as a living organism with only natural boundaries. They took their new vision with them when they descended back to their lives on earth and continued to apply it in their daily lives. In this respect the Dutch astronaut André Kuipers has pointed out that there is a universal longing to experience a connection with where you come from and belong to: ‘And in our case that is the earth. In outer space you find out that we are preeminently Earthlings! Paradoxically I feel even more connected to the earth when I am not there for a short while. As soon as I have landed, I search the smell, the sounds, and the beauty of nature, so that I come home – on this planet and in myself.’³⁸

Kuipers and the other astronauts embody the wisdom of the famous lines of T.S. Eliot:

*We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time*³⁹

Let us follow in their footsteps! Let us become aware of the fact that, as Duane Elgin has stated, ‘who we are depends directly on where we are.’⁴⁰ Let us, as Charles Eisenstein has argued, move collectively

in the direction of ‘the more beautiful world our hearts know is possible’, a world without unnecessary polarization!⁴¹

Leiden, December 2020



The coast of Devon, England, near Dawlish (my own photo)

Notes

¹ This song is from the album *Celebration*, Bronze Records, 1980. After 40 years this album by Sally Oldfield, a sister of the more famous Mike Oldfield, is still well worth listening to. The words are still relevant today, and her voice is incredibly beautiful. Listen to it on YouTube!

² See: <https://leidenlawblog.nl/articles/an-old-dying-empire-versus-a-rising-earth-community>

³ Deepak Chopra, *Metahuman. Unleashing your Infinite Potential*, Penguin, 2020, p.59-60.

⁴ See in this respect: Steve Taylor, *The Fall. The Insanity of the Ego in Human History and the Dawning of a New Era*, O Books, 2005.

⁵ See the website of Charles Eisenstein for information on his books, articles, talks, interviews, and so on: <https://charleseisenstein.org>. Eisenstein shares all his thought openly on his website, including the content of his books.

⁶ Joseph Chilton Pearce, *The Heart-Mind Matrix. How the Heart Can Teach the Mind New Ways to Think*, Inner Traditions, 2012; Joseph Chilton Pearce, *The Biology of Transcendence. A Blueprint of the Human Spirit*, Park Street Press, 2004.

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- ⁷ I borrowed the term ‘thought chatter’ from Steve Taylor: Steve Taylor, *Back to Sanity. Healing the Madness of our Minds*, Hay House, 2012.
- ⁸ Froukje Jansen en Annick de Witt, *Duurzaamheid van binnenuit. Hoe een nieuw, bruisend bewustzijn de wereld verandert*, Prometheus/Bert Bakker, 2015, p. 136.
- ⁹ Quoted in: Deepak Chopra, *Metahuman. Unleashing your Infinite Potential*, Penguin, 2020, p. 194.
- ¹⁰ Bruce Lipton, *The Biology of Belief. Unleashing the Power of Consciousness, Matter and Miracles*, Mountain of Love/Elite Books, 2005.
- ¹¹ For instance: Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly. How the Courage to be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent and Lead*, Penguin Life, 2015; Brené Brown, *The Gifts of Imperfection. Let Go of Who You Think You’re Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are*, Hazelden Publishing, 2010; Brené Brown, *dare to lead. Brave work. Tough conversations. Whole hearts*, Random House, 2018.
- ¹² Arthur Koestler, *De menselijke tweespalt*, Van Gorcum, 1981.
- ¹³ Hilary Hart (editor), *The Unknown She. Eight Faces of an Emerging Consciousness*, The Golden Sufi Center, 2004. P. 177-178.
- ¹⁴ This article can be downloaded from my website: <https://eng.wimbonis.nl/articles/>
- ¹⁵ Valerie Andrews, *A Passion for This Earth. Exploring a New Partnership of Man, Woman & Nature*, HarperSanFrancisco, 1990, p. 4-5.
- ¹⁶ Valerie Andrews, *A Passion for This Earth. Exploring a New Partnership of Man, Woman & Nature*, HarperSanFrancisco, 1990, p. 20.
- ¹⁷ For more about outdoor spirituality, indoor religions and the non-anthropomorphic origin of the Goddess heritage, see my article *The Rediscovery of the Landscape*, downloadable from my website.
- ¹⁸ Wendy Garling, *Stars at Dawn. Forgotten Stories of Women in the Buddha’s Life*, Shambala, 2016, p. 12-13.
- ¹⁹ Anne Baring and Jules Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess. Evolution of an Image*, Penguin, 1991.
- ²⁰ Claudio Naranjo, *Healing Civilization*, Rose Press/Gateway books and tapes, 2010, p. 36.
- ²¹ Elisabet Sahtouris, *Gaia danst! De weg van chaos naar kosmos*, Uitgeverij Kosmos, 1990, p. 27.
- ²² Elisabet Sahtouris, *Gaia danst! De weg van chaos naar kosmos*, Uitgeverij Kosmos, 1990, p. 20.
- ²³ Stephen Harrod Buhner, *Plant Intelligence and the Imaginal Realm. Beyond the Door of Perception into the Dreaming of Earth*, Bear & Company, 2014, p. 151.
- ²⁴ Dieter Duhm, *The Sacred Matrix. From the Matrix of Violence to the Matrix of Life. The Foundation for a New Civilizations*, Verlag Meiga, 2007, p. 47.
- ²⁵ Western people who are still convinced that consciousness is merely a product of the brain and its cells – who follow the still dominant view of materialistic science which considers matter the basics of life – of course find it impossible to accept this.
- ²⁶ David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous. Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*, Vintage Books, 1997, p. 227

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- ²⁷ David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous. Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*, Vintage Books, 1997, p. 254.
- ²⁸ Paul Kingsnorth, *Savage Gods*, Little Toller, 2019, p. 123.
- ²⁹ Paul Kingsnorth, *Savage Gods*, Little Toller, 2019, p. 22-23
- ³⁰ Elisabeth Gilbert, *Big Magic, Creative Living Beyond Fear*, Bloomsbury, 2016, p. 201-203.
- ³¹ Marcel Mauss, *The Gift – the Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, Routledge, 1990 (original publication. 1923/24). Lewis Hyde, *The Gift. Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property*, Vintage Books, 1983; Genevieve Vaughn, *For-Giving. A Feminist Criticism of Exchange*, Plain View Press, 1997; Genevieve Vaughn, *Homo Donans. For a Maternal Economy*, Vanda ePublishing, 2016; Charles Eisenstein, *Sacred Economics, Money, Gift & Society in an Age of Transition*, North Atlantic Books, 2011.
- ³² Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass. Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*, Milkweed editions, 2013, p. 104.
- ³³ Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass. Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*, Milkweed editions, 2013, p. 112.
- ³⁴ Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*, Sierra Books Club, 1990; Thomas Berry, *The Great Work*, Random House, 2000; Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone, *Active Hope. How to Face the Mess without Going Crazy*, New World Library 2012; David C. Korten, *The Great Turning. From Empire to Earth Community*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2006. I owe a lot to these writers: they have been a continuous source of inspiration to me.
- ³⁵ Amba Jessica Sepie, *Tracing the Motherline. Earth Elders, Decolonising Worldview, and Planetary Futurity*, Doctoral Thesis, College of Science, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand, 2018. This thesis can be downloaded from the Internet.
- ³⁶ Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass. Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*, Milkweed editions, 2013, p. 9.
- ³⁷ Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass. Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*, Milkweed editions, 2013, p. 48, 58.
- ³⁸ Froukje Jansen en Annick de Witt, *Duurzaamheid van binnenuit. Hoe een nieuw, bruwend bewustzijn de wereld verandert*, Prometheus/Bert Bakker, 2015, p. 8.
- ³⁹ From: T.S. Eliot, 'Little Gidding', *Four Quartets*, first published in 1941.
- ⁴⁰ Duane Elgin, *Het Levende Universum. Waar zijn we? Wie zijn we? Waar gaan we naar toe?*, Ankh Hermes, 2010. (Dutch translation of his book *The Living Universe*.)
- ⁴¹ Charles Eisenstein, *The More Beautiful World Our Hearts Know is Possible*, North Atlantic Books, 2013. The subtitle of this article was of course inspired by him.