

Awakening the Spiritual and Mental Ecology



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Deep Ecology is rooted in a perception of reality that goes beyond the scientific framework to an intuitive awareness of the oneness of all life, the interdependence of its multiple manifestations and its cycles of change and transformation. When the concept of the human spirit is understood in this sense, its mode of consciousness in which the individual feels connected to the cosmos as a whole, it becomes clear that ecological awareness is truly spiritual. Indeed the idea of the individual being linked to the cosmos is expressed in the Latin root of the word religion, religare (to bind strongly), as well as the Sanskrit yoga, which means union. – Fritjof Capra

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That which we commonly refer to as “self” is but a microcosmic holographic echo of the grand complexity of our macrocosmic reality. In this tiny little corner of reality where we perpetually insist on carving out a space for ego, we can experience the interconnected, mutually dependent facets of our mental processes as they seek to find balance and harmony with all of the other facets of our mind. Can this be considered the ecology of the psyche? To some extent, yes. Just as the natural harmony of the planet is dependent on all of its parts working together in a balanced manner, a unified mind functions efficiently and healthily when it acts in harmony with its self and the body that contains it. Somehow along the course of time, the human mind/ego convinced itself that it was separate from this unified universal whole and, in doing so, has pushed the planet into extreme unbalance. To return to a place of balance is to understand the natural world as an interdependent whole and to understand our own minds in the same way and see that there is no separation between our minds and the world. By ferreting out the places where we are not in alignment with this ecological we can live healthy, balanced lives.

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Michael Divine created the image
 "Awakening to Beauty,"
 see inside front cover.

As an artist, I have been granted a path whereby I can, for better or worse, spend a fair bit of time gazing inwards. One specifically long and heavy winter comes to mind in which I had immersed myself in this exploration of mental states. In doing so, my appreciation for the natural beauty of my surroundings had taken a back seat. The long rainy Southern California winter, with its skeletons of trees and skies blanketed with grey, had helped me turn inwards. Yet, as spring swept in and the clouds lifted, a slew of purple, yellow and white wildflowers sprang up across the fields where I lived and, in the freshness of the sun, they danced and sparkled. Their bright blooms had a similar awakening effect on my own mind; acting as a mirror to my mental blossomings. After months of diving through the inner mental chasms--addressing what needed to be addressed, hoping to create a more unified and whole mental state--the winds changed, the sky cleared and the beauty of the world looked me in the eye.

Coming up for a breath of fresh air from the deep sea diving called "working on our shit" can be like taking our first breath. Oh, we say, this is what it's like to breathe. This is what it's like to see beauty. This is what it's like to be connected. We tend to miss the mountains, the trees, the flowers, and the whole realm of natural phenomena when we are submersed in that underworld of mental spelunking. In fact, we tend to miss this dance of interconnectedness most of the time. With our lives of appointments, schedules and entertainment, we have, it seems, done everything we can to distract ourselves from the really raw truth that we are totally disconnected to ourselves and our world. When we lift our heads, taking note of all the rising and falling patterns of life, we can witness the interconnectedness--this vast system of checks and balances that is the netting of both our inner and external worlds. This is to discover the ecology of our human mind and how much a microcosm it is of the world around us. From the dirt beneath our feet to the stars in the sky, all of these interdependent bits and pieces and the identities we attach

to them make up our concept of a place in time and space. Similarly, each of our ideas and identities form an inner world and the sense of I that inhabits it. When our mental storms clear and the clouds break, perhaps, in that awakening, there is some sense of enlightenment.

However, winter doesn't become spring simply by the snap of a finger, Rome wasn't built in a day and, likewise, our minds generally don't just instantaneously awaken. Even for those who claim instant enlightenment the seeds were already planted, intention was set, etc. So to try to live a harmonic, ecologically balanced life we need to take many small steps to get there and examine all of our intentions, our actions, and the echoes of those actions all along the way. If we are lucky then, during that process, we may begin to notice just how interconnected life is. Then, we can have a functioning inner ecosystem in which all of the parts and pieces are working together in a healthy and balanced manner. Nature has presented us with countless tools to help us work with this process. From the wisdom of our own bodies, accessed through meditation, yoga, tai chi, and other activities to psychedelic tools to the oceans of wisdom contained within our minds and in the interplay of our world: everything we need is here already, it simply takes awakening to the possibilities and actively engaging in the transformative process. •