

## **To Deepen our Relationship with Nature**

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### **Abstract**

**Healing for humans in our stressful society is hidden in the mythical magical wonder world of nature. There we can re-find our own roots, as we are children from nature. Our nature heritage is still somewhere stored in our own cells. Horticultural therapy, nature therapy and nature coaching all are good entrances to find our way back to our Ecological Self. As human beings we belong to this beautiful world. We only have to find our righteous position on planet earth. The full circle of the development of conscious awareness in human nature is a tool to define your path in creating a harmonious world . The author describes her own development from childhood and student to a professional earth educator in relation to nature. First strengthening her physical and mental performance and knowledge, she later discovered the importance of the emotional and spiritual connectedness with nature in life. Nature revealed herself as a teacher. The author gives a ' Five Step Flow of Communication with Nature' using all our senses including the sixth senses.**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The theme of the 11<sup>th</sup> IPPS was called 'Toward a new vision of nature'. The vision which I contributed to this event, is a very, very old vision, a 're-membered' old nature wisdom. In most modern societies we as human beings live in a sort of LAT relation with nature, Living Apart Together. Most of our time, nature is somewhere in the background. It delivers us our food, fuel and wood, is a good place for leisure and re-creation or is just a nice décor along the highway or a city walk. When we want to have some sort of a nurturing exchange between ourselves and nature, the partners in this LAT relation, we must invest in each other just as in human relationships. In this article, as an ecologist and Druïda<sup>1</sup> I will take you on a journey along the many ways we can make contact with nature and deepen our relationship with it, with her.

### **Invitation**

In this paper I invite you to review your own life and the life of others in the perspective of your work in horticulture, landscaping, therapy or whatever job you do working with nature and gardens. I ask you to evaluate your conscious awareness about

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nature and your relationship with it, with her. And I'll give you some tools to may be even better understand what your next step can be.

### **Here We Are, Children of Nature.....**

For me this 11th IPPS2012 People Plant symposium was all about becoming aware again of the deep interconnectedness of humans and nature. To 're-member', means to become a member once more. So as we 're-member', we re-join our nature family in a conscious manner. We are being a part of it, as we always have been. We only have to look at our whole body system: it is working naturally, without us being in charge. Every cell from conception to death knows what to do. It all regulates itself, as in a harmonious, whole and healed system.

In the history of mankind we have lived for a very long time close to nature, in nature. We were and still are 'human nature', looking for shelter, for food, for clothing and creating all kind of rituals to give meaning and thanks to all what happened around us. We created a kind of religion to help us understand and reaffirm our connectedness with the seasons and the good things of life.. The word religion is from '*re-ligare*', meaning a fresh, a renewed bond with the world, with god, the gods and goddesses and all the beauty in life. All of this we almost lost in the last centuries, as we moved further away from nature, at least collectively. I will show this in the following paragraphs.

### **The Full Circle of Human-Nature Development**

With our conscious mind we designed all kinds of tools to make life easier, for better or for worse. That's where culture comes in, and where we became more and more seemingly independent from nature. We have put nature aside and built our own artificial man made reality, created by specialists. And all the dirty, earthy work we drove to the background, we left it to the ground workers. We organised nature away from us...living apart together. And all those handy tools also became, in one way or another obstacles to live our life in conjunction with nature. But in this background she is still there, Mother Earth feeding us, holding us, nourishing us. And there is still so much knowledge inside of us, inside our collective memory from all those thousands of years living close to nature, being one with nature.

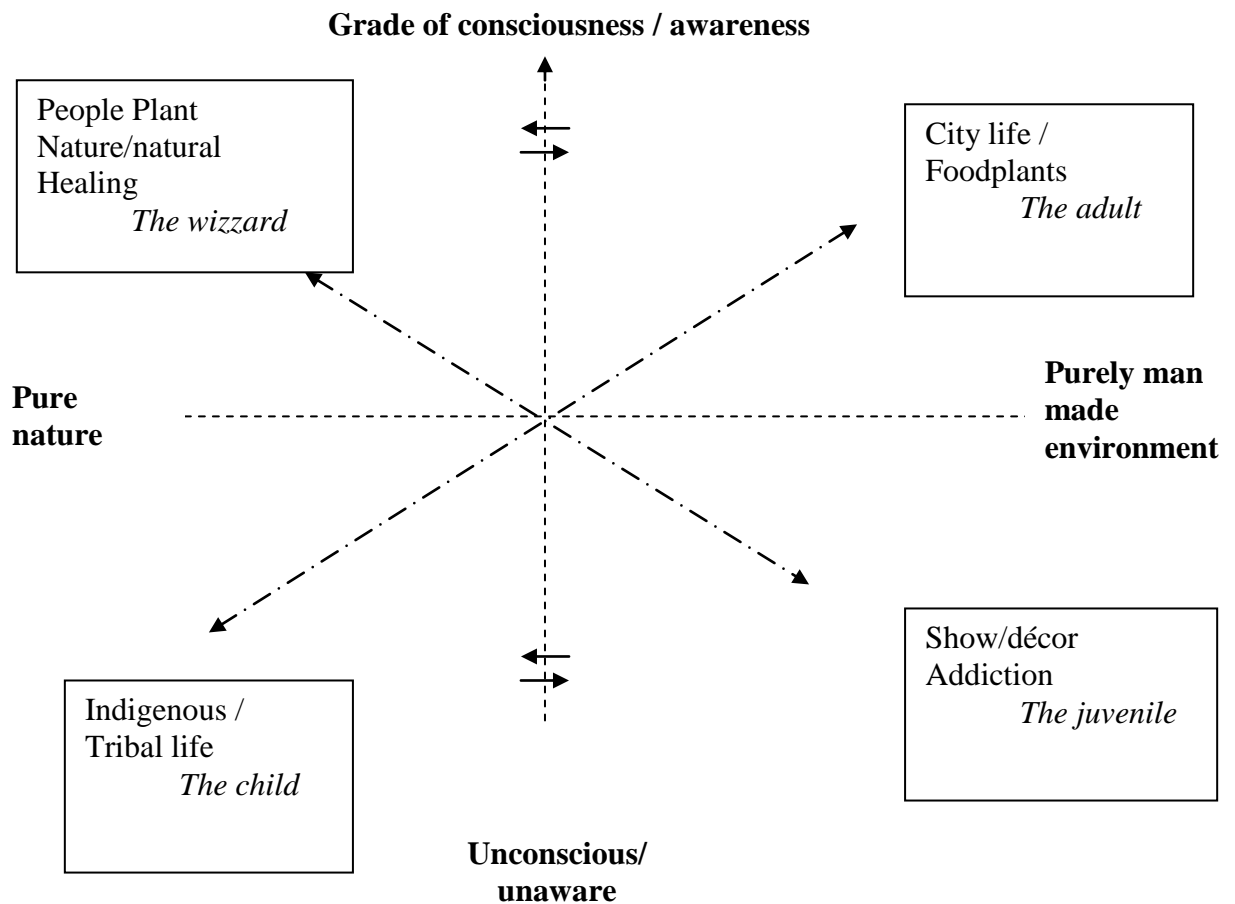


Diagram 1. The Development of Conscious Awareness in Human Nature

Looking at my own development and recognising this path of growth in many of the people I have worked with as an earth educator, I've noticed that as a young innocent child, we lived our nature as a natural being. Then while growing up we became dependent on our culture, our family, and our educational system, and more or less lost contact with this original state of being. This is the concern Joseph Cornell<sup>2</sup> shares in his book 'Sharing Nature with Children'. As a youngster there is not much space in our society to be aware of nature any more. We get involved in school and work, look for entertainment in pop music, movies, television, or computers. As we become adults we are called to become 'decent' members of our society, filling different roles. Some of us more or less reluctantly do so, but we develop addictions, like gaming, drugs or maybe over eating. Somewhere along this road a lot of people got stuck, landing in a personal or even communal crises. If we are lucky we become aware again of the value nature and our environment has for us. Look at diagram1 for this full circle of the development of conscious awareness in human nature.

### Questions

*Have you ever asked yourself, what the role of nature was in your life, when you were young?*

*Where was nature when you were a kid? And where were you? What kind of nature did you experience?*

*What is your natural heritage, looking at the traditions in your family and even your ancestors, in connection with nature? What did you learn at school about nature?*

*And how has this influenced your growing up and becoming an adult? What did you lose and what did you gain?*

### **Deep Ecology, Reconnecting with Nature**

The good news is that we always can refresh our connection with nature. Travelling back from our head to our heart, we may now (re)find our love for life, a love for and deeply felt connection with this still beautiful world. We can then become aware of this need to reconnect with nature, with the interconnectedness of all living beings, of all that is happening in our world, on our planet earth. The philosophy of Deep Ecology as articulated by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess very much resonates with me. Naess helped me understand our deep, deep interconnectedness with nature and all that is around us on earth, the living and non living world, the human and the more than human world. In our society we lost this 'earth literacy', this ability to know what's going on around us. We look on the rain radar, instead of looking outside. It is time to go to school again, the school of life, to relearn about nature inside and outside ourselves.

### **FORM AND FUNCTION VERSUS EMOTION AND MAGIC**

As a biologist I learned about the many physical ways nature shows herself to us, all those interesting, different relations between form and function that could be discerned, the many ways species relate and interact with each other and the environment. It's a fascinating, never ending ecological story. Years later I discovered that this was still a rather flat perception of a multidimensional world. As biologists we were just working in the fields of physicality and a sort of mental framework of naming and explaining; which species, mineral, chemical, or environmental issue caused which reaction in the world outside ourselves?<sup>3</sup>

Years later I became introduced to what I call the magical, mythical dimensions of our reality. When I found the Druid study of OBOD, the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids<sup>4</sup> on my path. Philip Carr-Gomm, the chief of this ancient old wisdom school, had just started to make this inner wisdom, these treasures, available to our modern society through written lessons.

### **The Emotional and Spiritual Reality**

A few years before I discovered this Druid study I became, what we now call, burned out<sup>5</sup>. I was plunged into my own emotionally dark reality. With the help of psychology I learned to listen to my own emotions and feelings about what was going on inside me, things that were a reaction to or a reflection of what was going on outside of me. Gestalt therapy<sup>6</sup> was the first step in helping me clean the mess. I had made in my life. I came to realize that I lived in a rather flat world of physics and mind.

And this emotional, psychic path brought me to my own deeper inner connections with nature. I experienced my inner world being touched by what comes from outside, with nature playing a healing role in this process. I learned that somehow the consciousness of nature, in the being of a tree, a plant, a lake or whatever I am interacting

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with, is also changed. My being, my appearance, my physical, emotional, or mental body interacts with the spirit of nature!

### **Ecopsychology**

Fundamentally it is our mind and our psyche that gives meaning to our surroundings. In my own search for a deeper earth connection, I learned to use my mind and my psyche consciously, to become aware which role the earth, nature and all her living and non living creatures, plays in my life day by day. I learned how the environment influences my psyche.

That's where ecopsychology comes in. Nature, or the absence of nature, forms our psyche from birth, and even before birth. Theodore Roszak started the study of ecopsychology in the early 1990's. It still is a rather new field of study not much incorporated in regular psychology. Ecopsychology includes the actual state and quality of the environment, the natural and the 'artificial' world, and how they influence our psyches. It incorporates the psychological stress caused by environmental degradation. These behavioural reactions are, of course, related to the way and the time in which you were raised. What did you experience as a child, as a youngster from nature? How well developed was earth literacy in your culture, your family, the school system, etcetera? How much care was given to nature? As I mentioned, not many of the regular psychological therapists include an awareness of the influence of nature or environmental issues on our psychic health. This IPPS symposium was a good start to make way for ecopsychology and natural healing.

### **Earth Education**

Over time<sup>7</sup> I have changed the way I teach environmental education. When I began teaching I spoke about the landscape, the birds, the plants, and environmental issues. Now I teach courses based on the experiences, the stories, and emotions of the participants themselves<sup>8</sup>. My job is to touch the hearts of people, to open up their fields of consciousness, to help them discover what's in it for them. My job is also to awaken the broad and multilayered field of relationships between humans and nature<sup>9</sup>. In companionship with other pioneers we developed a unique kind of earth education. The word education comes from '*e-ducere*' that means leading out inner wisdom of people (instead of pumping it in). We want people to discover what's already naturally inside themselves and how to give voice and shape to this inner wisdom in the outside world.

### **Four Realms of Awareness**

Given my own personal development in my relationship with nature, I'd like to introduce you to a very simple diagram. Diagram 2 gives us a quadrant of the four realms of awareness, classifying different kinds of experiences people can have with and in nature and in life of course. It shows us also the many fields in which we can acquire knowledge as we work with nature, with plants, animals, birds, the landscape, etcetera.

We can distinguish the physical, the emotional, the mental, and the spiritual fields. But we must remember that 'the map is not landscape' as the ecologist Gregory Bateson said.

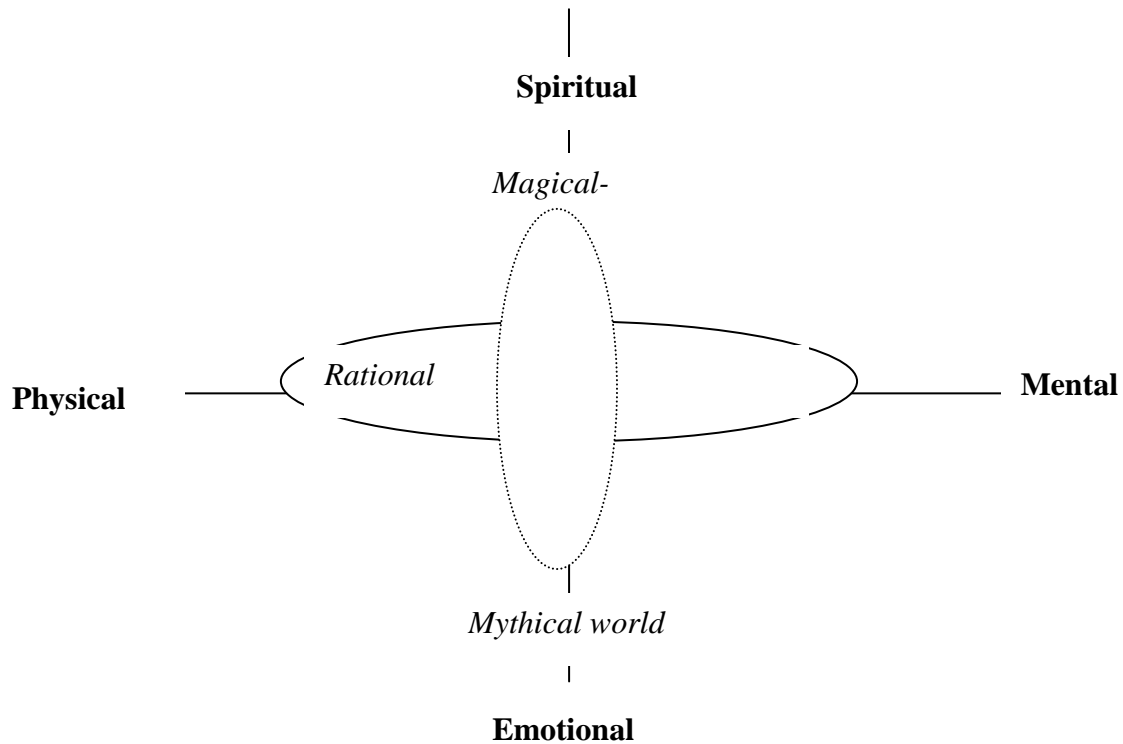


Diagram 2. The Four Realms of Awareness

### **Rationality and Emotions**

As human beings we are very familiar with the physical realm, we have to be - living on this planet. Horticulturalists work with the plants and trees, the soil, the water, and other physical aspects of the garden or the landscape. In our society in the last few hundred years we've gathered a lot of knowledge about the natural world. We've named every aspect of it, learned how it performs, what it needs to flourish, and how we can manipulate it. I call this the rational field of relationship with nature, the Physical-Mental plane.

In a right-angle on this physical-mental axis I place the magical, mythical world in the interaction with nature, the plants, the beings around us. Every garden, every surrounding, every detail arouses some emotions in us, whether we are aware of it or not. And it depends on our upbringing, culture and education and our psychical situation at that moment, what type of emotions and feelings come up. If we are willingly to embrace those bodily sensations, in the recognition that there is something / somebody outside of us, nature, the earth, a bird, a flower or a tree that causes this responses, then magic can come in!

#### **Question**

*I invite you to be silent so you can glimpse your own experiences with or working in the field of nature. Give them a score on diagram 2.*

### **FIVE STEP FLOW OF COMMUNICATION WITH NATURE**

In my work in Earth Education, I developed the 'Five Step Flow of Communication with Nature'. 1) grounding and being present 2) opening the senses and being aware 3)

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active sensing, listening and dialoguing with nature 4) finishing up and saying thanks and finally 5) closing and stepping further (Wuring, G. 2003 and 2008)

### **1. Grounding and Being Present**

My first step in connecting with nature is always to ground myself, reconnect with the earth, and become present. At the IPSS, 'symposium' literally means 'sitting together', I invited the participants to sit together and have an experience of their interconnectedness with the earth! Sitting is a very grounding thing to do. As we sit, we cultivate the connection between our bodies and the body of the earth. We become aware of the earth and the place we are seated. Can you also feel the earth under your feet? There is an old song: 'Mother I can feel you under my feet, mother I can feel your heart beat...' Song is one of the many ways in which we can express and evoke a connection with the earth. We sing and talk to the earth as a living, sensitive being with the capacity to receive the messages we are communicating.

#### Questions

*Do you 'talk' with the earth, with nature, and with the places around you?*

*Are there signs and messages coming back from them to you?*

*How do you receive this? Can you embrace this connection and the feelings you experience?*

*At this moment, what do you recognise? In what way are in touch with the earth? Where is your awareness? What is going on in your body, your feelings, your emotions, your mind, your spirit?*

### **2. Opening the Senses, Being Aware**

The second step is opening your senses for the earth, for nature. As you can see by answering the above questions we can already discern a few ways of being aware of our connection with the earth. We are aware of the physical space. We are aware of our emotions. We've activated our mental field by answering the questions above. By receiving the earth and nature as a living, animated being, we've activated our spiritual field. By using different senses we have different ways to reach those fields.

#### Question

*What senses do you use when becoming aware of the way you sit and touch the earth with your body?*

Maybe it is mostly kinaesthetic, feeling and registering the touch of your body with (the body of) the earth. Maybe you become aware of the pressure in your body and allow yourself to be heavy and sink more deeply into the earth, on your chair or cushion. Maybe you sink directly into this earth.

#### Questions

*Focus only on the fields that are touching between your body and the earth. How does she express herself to you? How do you receive her? Can you find words to describe this experience? What is going on in your body when you allow this feeling to go deeper, to go more broadly into your body? Where does it go? What happens on the way? And what does this give you? Distinguish the different feelings, sensations, emotions, and thoughts.*

*Maybe you feel impulses for action. But don't change anything at this moment. Just allow it and be there in this contact between you and the earth...*

Sitting, standing or walking of course, are all very grounding actions. Open your senses and become aware of what is outside yourself and how that activates your inside self. These are the first two steps to open up to and receive the earth in a very simple and delicate manner. By exploring the openings and the doorways we can open up, we can make contact with and receive the earth as well as ourselves. We must include all the opinions and interpretations we have of this exchange. A lot of people, when they first hug a tree for example, are confronted with all kinds of inner voices, saying them how weird they become, to go hugging trees!

### **3. Listening and Dialoguing**

And that's where the dialogue starts with nature, the third step can begin. Your whole being, with all her experiences, thoughts, wants and resistances, will meet the earth and nature. You sense your surrounding and the many ways the earth is manifesting herself to you, be it in a form of a chair, a cushion, the floor or the grass, pebbles in a riverbed, or maybe another person or a traffic lights. It depends upon where you choose to sit down to have this symposium with the earth! You might be on a branch or in the water, in mud or in fields of golden wheat.

#### **Question**

*Just imagine you are sitting on the grass, then on a branch of a tree, then in the water.... Notice how your body-mind system is responding to these different possibilities!*

### **4. Finishing up and Saying Thanks**

Just as in human conversations, there is a moment in the interaction and dialogue with nature that it becomes time to say goodbye. Time to be grate full for all the wisdom you got, the joy you felt, the insights that came and the discoveries you made. Just take some more time to listen carefully to the last things not yet spoken or heard. Know that the dialogue, the meeting with nature, or the tree, the flower, the lake, is ending. Is there still something to say, to be felt, or heard?

#### **Question**

*How do you say goodbye and thank you to nature in daily life... ?*

### **5. Closing the Conversation**

It is now time to step out of this conversation and go on with life, changed in this exchange....with nature.

## **MANY FORMS OF INTERCONNECTEDNESS WITH NATURE**

There are so many ways people can use to connect with the spirit of the earth and experience the way nature 'speaks' to us. Three simple ways to connect with nature are 1. Using nature as a mirror, 2. having a dialogue with nature and 3. co-creating with nature.

### **1. Nature as a Mirror**

In horticultural therapy, nature therapy and nature coaching, the garden and all the natural processes can be used as a mirror. The appearance of an aspect of a plant, a



flower, the season etcetera can help us realise what's going on in our own life system. The mirror of nature can help us to find answers to how things could have happened or how to solve our problems. Nature is showing us our own wounds, troubles, joys and beauty, as well as the ways to put it in another perspective. A lot of sayings and proverbs gives us a clue to this: 'Don't beat around the bush', 'Behind the clouds, the sun is always shining', or this one from John Muir 'When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world'.

For most western people nature and especially a garden is a safe mirror of the human psyche. We feel it won't judge us. It is just there. We can safely look and listen to nature 'over there'. You can ask yourself 'What is it showing me about myself? About my life? About my projects?' It is a wonderful therapeutic tool that can help us to take back our own projections about what is happening outside of ourselves. It all mirrors something living inside of us. My colleague Yoke de Wilde<sup>10</sup> for instance developed the FLOWer method ©, as a tool and compass for personal and organisational development based on the old wisdom of nature peoples and natural processes. This instrument mirrors the processes of our life in the stages of a seed, its growth, flowering and descent around mysterious middle.

#### Question

*Do you remember moments where nature showed you something about your own life?*

### **2. In Dialogue with Nature**

We can go one step further. When we step through the mirror and leave our projections behind we can walk in beauty and wonder as did Alice in Wonderland. We can get in touch with our eagerness and our curiosity as we meet the spirits of nature, the trees, the plants, the mountains, the lake, the landscape! We can listen to them with all of our senses to discover what they have to say about our world and theirs.

Here we go to the other axis of diagram 2, reaching the spiritual realm, the mystical mythical side of our interactions with nature. Especially in our western society this is the less well-known, less appreciated field of connecting humans and nature.

I know about Elisabeth Satourish, a Greece biologist, looking in her microscope finding herself walking in the cell structure of the plant.... Just being there and experiences what it is to be with or even be such things as mitochondria, the energy system of the cell.

#### Question

*Did you ever experience that nature or being in nature gave you insights, answers or even a feeling you did not expect? Did you wonder where it came from?*

### **3. Co Creating with Nature**

We can work with the energy field of the plants, trees, the landscape. Call it the deva's, the elves, the gnomes, the little people, or the unseen world. We can make contact with them for help to restore and harmonize the energy fields of a landscape or a bush area or our own garden. They can also help us heal the damage people cause by air- or earth pollution. It is similar to the way Hans Andeweg works with Ecotherapy or bio resonance therapy. Henk Kieft<sup>11</sup> gives also a very concrete farm experience where a serious problem (too much use of antibiotics) is being solved by intuitive contacts with cows.

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We can get in touch with the deva's of the plants to let them show us, what we can do or have to let go of, in order to co-create with nature. Findhorn started that way by growing giant cabbages. Permaculture also uses this co-creative tool. In rituals shamans use feathers or animal skins as powerful tools to transform their consciousness and awareness. Others use the branches of a tree as a staff or wand to open up energy fields so they can go in and do their magical work with nature. I know people who make contact with the clouds to ask for rain or drought!

#### Question

*Where should you place your work with horticulture and the horticultural therapy? Is it mirroring nature, being in dialogue with nature or co-creating with nature?*

#### **Body Work**

This dialogue phase is the most important step of course in the five step flow of communication with nature. One way to find our way back into nature and our own nature is through our body. It is through the rediscovery and conscious awareness of the use of our senses that we can (re-)connect and come in touch with the surrounding world. As children we use our senses unconsciously but naturally. Later on in life we often lose this connection with our body system, growing up in this civilised world. Then something happens that makes us aware again of the privileges our bodily sensations give to us, living in this rich world. There starts the process of relearning to trust our senses, to know where to open up or to restrict and to limit the influx and our own responses to all that is going on around us. Horticultural therapy offers many good experiential examples of this bodily reconnection of humans and nature.

#### **Sharpening the Senses**

For me this is all about sharpening the senses to become aware of the exchange between our inside and outside worlds. What is going on deep inside us? Can we bring that to the outside world? On the other hand, what is outside of us that we may allow in? What makes things come and go? Where do they go? Who or what in us decides, receives, reacts, rejects?

There is always some sort of information or energy that is being exchanged between us and nature. Some of this information and energy is familiar to us. We recognise it. We resonate with it. We join in. For example, as we look at a tree, we see a branch and we might be called to climb the tree and sit on the branch. Or maybe we are repelled by the tree because we think if we climb it we may appear foolish to others. We empower or enlarge those energies coming from the tree with our mind and emotions, with our actions and reactions.

#### **Reclaiming our Sixth Sense**

Most of us experience nature with the regular five senses. Other higher or invisible frequencies not otherwise perceived by our five normal senses are more foreign to us. We have to be (re-)informed about them. That is where the sixth sense comes in. Becoming aware of and recognising what's going on in this other field requires that we (re-)learn. We can decide to open up to these strange experiences in our body, emotions, or mind and become curious about them instead of rejecting them. I wrote (re-)inform and (re-)learn because most of us had this capacity to work with our sixth sense when we were young, but it got lost in our developmental growth. As children we played with the energy

bodies of plants, trees, landscapes. We played with sound, sight, a word... worlds meeting. These things called to us. Later on in life we can overcome our fear of being thought foolish for hugging or climbing a tree or sitting on its branch. We can feel a quiet peace in our body when the sudden whisper of the tree is calling us to another field of awareness. Maybe the tree gives us the insight that we must rest more from work. These are examples of nature being a mirror for us and being in dialogue with us.

### **THE MYTHICAL MAGICAL WORLD VIEW**

Deepak Chopra wrote in his early work about mythical or magical thinking being supplementary to our rational thinking. He was convinced that healing is hidden in this mythical / magical world! This helps me to stay open to all the non-ordinary stories people tell about their adventures with nature. My scientific background is always with me, listening on my shoulder, criticizing my experiences that don't match my regular knowledge. It closes me down to wondrous things that happen around me.

I believe every one of us has hidden and secret capacities, tools, and knowledge to reinforce magical mystical powers in our lives. I use the term sixth sense but there really are so many ways to come in contact with the unseen, hidden world around us. We must find which way suits us best to help us uncover what is inside us waiting to be rediscovered. We are all unique beings. Every tree, even every leaf is unique. We all have a special place in the ecological web of life. The human psyche is inexhaustible. I really believe in the co-creative forces available to us so that we may work together with nature in a myriad of ways.

It looks like using mythical, magical words and symbols is the only way to make more conscious the unseen energies working with us in nature. As long as we cannot put them in scientific models, we interpret them in this beautiful stories, talking about therapeutic horticulture and the optimal conditions to create a healing environment for clients.

### **Just Interpretation**

In a paper about shamanic wisdom I once read there is only one reality and that's the reality of the senses. For me this means that all the rest is about interpretation, giving meaning to the impulses that come from outside in. It was through anthroposophist phenomenology that I first learned to describe and place an object in space, time, and in relation with all that is around it so that the two of us can meet each other and become a new 'gestalt' together. There is a 'me' with all my thoughts, emotions, history and cultural background etcetera melting somehow with a tree or a plant, with her being, creating a new temporary body or living system. I call this our Ecological Self. This is not a steady being...life is a process! We are invited to transcend our ego self to become more open. to attune to Big Mind and Big Heart as the Buddhist monk Genpo Roshi Merzel invites us to do.

### **In Resonance with Nature**

All of this is part of deep ecology philosophy. Humankind with all its thoughts, feelings, emotions, actions, plans, buildings, etcetera, must be included in the interacting fields with nature. Arne Naess discerned shallow and the deep ecology. In most scientific ecological studies the human is merely thought to be the objective observer, not influencing the subject of observation. This is an example of shallow ecology. But even in the sciences, like quantum physics, we know that we all resonate and influence our

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surroundings. We influence reality with our thoughts, our feelings, our emotions, and our presence. We belong to this earth, are part of the earth. We are nature by nature, in constant interaction with and deeply connected to all other living and non-living beings.

### **Rediscovering Old Wisdom**

Our social and psychic awareness defines our relationship with nature as does our social and the cultural vision, We co-create the world we live in. Happily there is a growing awareness about the healthy influence of nature and horticulture on people. Although it looks like we don't know very much about what is going on between us human beings and nature, there are amazing fields of knowledge opening up for us at the moment. We are rediscovering old knowledge. Indigenous people are teaching us, reviving their history as well as ours in the process. Eastern health methods have been introduced to western medicine that helps to wake people up to their own inner knowledge.

We are discovering that all we need to know about this magical mystical working relationship with nature is still around. It might be inside of us, or maybe outside of us in our collective memory. Maybe it is directly sensed in the information exchange we have in the energetic field of nature<sup>12</sup>. We often immediately get the information we ask for. For millennia, all over the world, people went to nature for healing and insights, doing rituals and searching on quests. If only we could open ourselves up to those many forms of interconnectedness we had in earlier times. I believe and have experienced that this heritage is still stored in our unconsciousness, in our cell structure, in our body system.

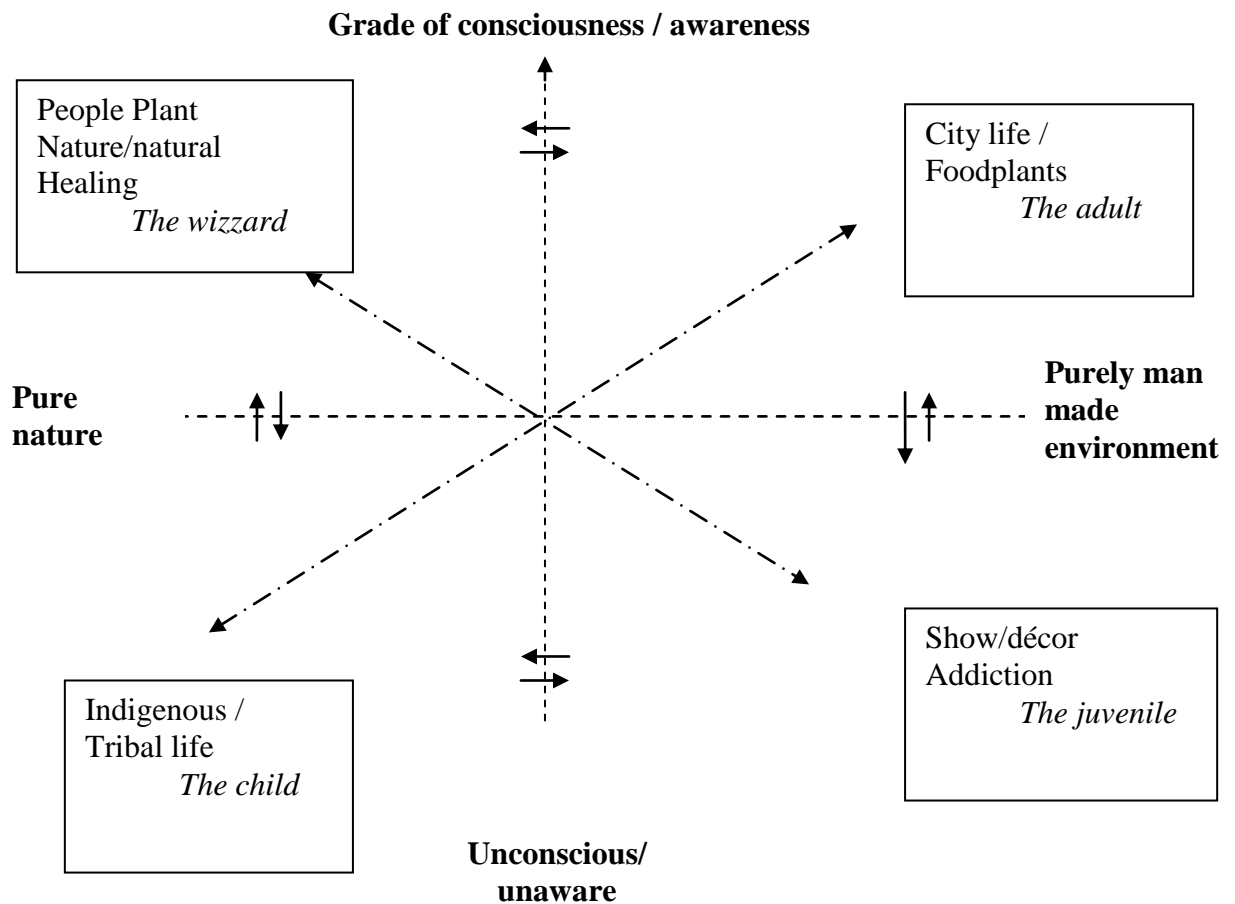


Diagram 1a. The Development of Conscious Awareness in Human Nature

### Practical Tools

There are many practical tools for accessing our ancient heritage: ecopsychology, shamanism, permaculture, Druidry, Wicca, therapeutic horticulture and other kinds of healing with nature. There is yoga, nature constellation work, zen, voice dialogue, dancing with nature, earth education. You name it... and you find it... working on all levels of existence reconnecting us with nature. Each tool offers another practical way to heal from the stress and worry of living in contemporary western society. It also offers us the chance to learn balance for living on this planet. Each tool, each mode, can inspire us to ask deep questions about the purpose of life and about our beliefs and motives in the exchange of energy with nature. This works on the physical as well the emotional, mental, and spiritual levels.

### Questions

*Is there a natural being or an experience you once had with nature that can help you now to reconnect more strongly with nature? If so, connect with it now... how does she speak to you, how is she dressed? What do you feel about it now?*

*Why is she here now, what does she want to show to you as you read this eco philosophical article!? Use your senses - smell, taste, feel, hear, see her answers, her questions, her magic!*

You can map and classify the adventures you just had in the above exercise...  
Look for diagram 1a or 2a.

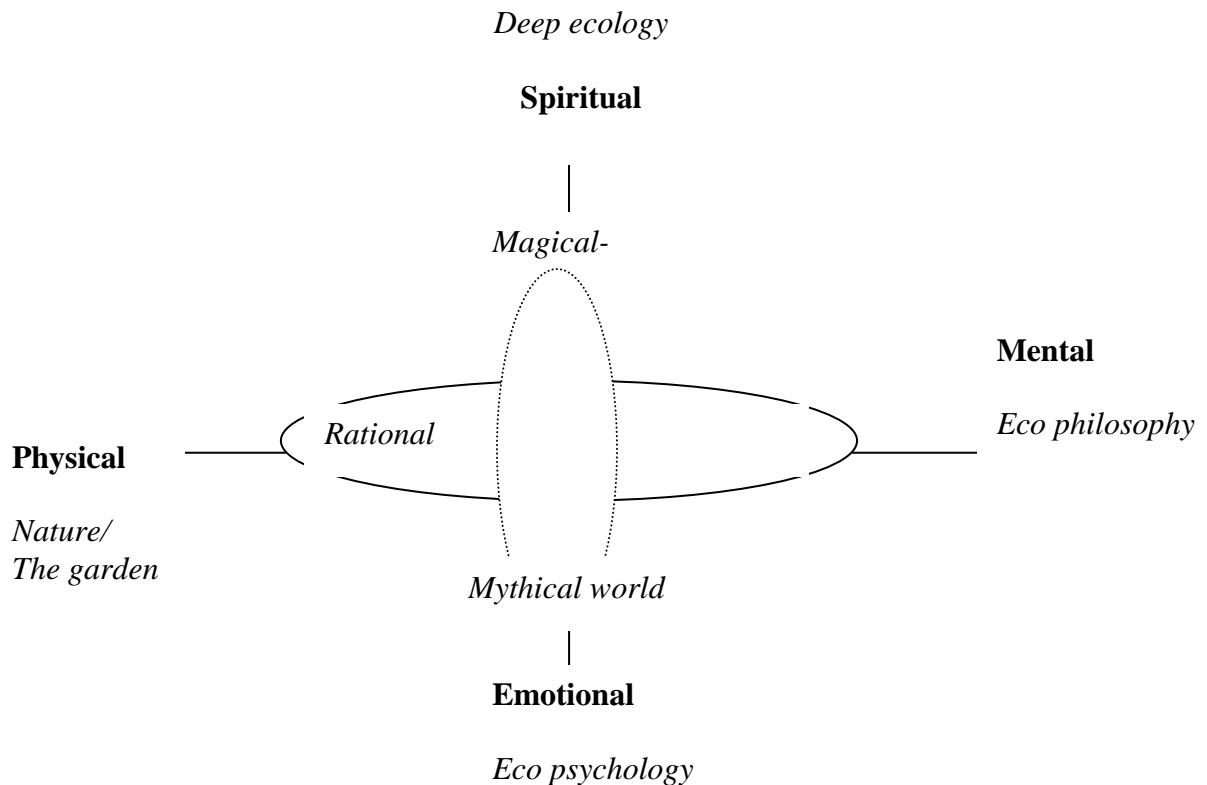


Diagram 2a. The Four Realms of Nature Awareness

#### Questions

*Is it on the physical, mental, emotional or spiritual level you had this meeting with nature, her energy or with nature beings? Were you in your childhood, in pure nature, in the people - plant space or more in city life it took place, or maybe even on a television screen?*

*Perhaps the meeting shows a bit of the way you are connected with nature and how you take your place in the ecosystem of deep ecology?*

*How do you co create with nature? How could you, with the help of others, reinforce the powers and capacities you have?*

Maybe you are horticulture designer, a bird watcher or somebody talking with the deva's of the place, a nature dancer working with the energies. We all have our special qualities. Life invites us to deepen this relationship with nature and take your proper place in the web of life as humans in a non-human world.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Just as we can say thank you to nature in our meeting with her, I want to say thanks for giving me this opportunity to share my experiences and wisdom that I gathered from nature and a lot of people around me! Special thanks to the organising committee of IPPS 2012. Annette Beerens and her staff, mixing science and spirituality in such a fine way, giving space for reflection, interaction and development on a deeper level of human consciousness. Arienne Henkelmans, thanks for inviting me to the IPPS and commenting on my paper Thanks to Anne Maria Palsdottir, who very much inspired me with her root stories from Iceland and stimulated me to rewrite my inter(n)active lecture at the IPPS2012 into this article. Thanks to Allysine Kiplinger<sup>13</sup>, my dear friend from Schumacher College 1992, who developed EcozoicTimes.com and who helped me so much with the language of this article. Thanks to my dear friend and soul mate in this spiritual journey Yoke de Wilde, to Margriet Appelmeik and all the other members of Reizende Aarde School (travelling Earth School) who really encouraged me to go on, on this pioneer journey. And of course nature herself, who always inspires me and gives me insights and new ideas and who fills me with trust that life goes on no matter what happens.

It is now time to close this conversation and go on with life as I said in this Five Step Flow of Communication with Nature. My hopes are that you have a heightened awareness of reconciliation and happiness in our partnership and oneness with nature, living together on our beautiful planet earth.

### **Final Questions**

*What did you get out of this paper? Is there any field of awareness where you could give more attention, in the interaction with nature? Is there anything you can do to develop or deepen your relationship with nature? When do you start?*

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<sup>1</sup> RUG, the state university of Groningen (1981) and OBOD, the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids (1996)

<sup>2</sup>, [www.sharingnature.com](http://www.sharingnature.com)

<sup>3</sup> The book of Ariel G. Loewy and Philip Siekevitz about Cell Structure and Function (1963, 1969 by Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc, is still on my bookshelf, although I never take it for a study any more. Maybe I should, because to my surprise I now found a little poetry on the first pages from Chung Tzu (third century b.c).

*The harmonious co-operation of all beings arose,  
not from the orders of a superior authority external to themselves,  
but from the fact that they were all parts in a hierarchy of wholes forming a cosmic  
pattern,  
and what they obeyed were the internal dictates of their own natures.*

And the Preface (1969) starts with the statement that the past two decades have witnessed an explosive release of insights into the molecular machinery of the cell. The writers are convinced that the cell is the “common denominator” of living systems. They are excited about all those developments and the crucial importance of the physical sciences to the study of living systems. This very much characterizes my introduction into the biology.

<sup>4</sup> [www.druidry.org](http://www.druidry.org)

<sup>5</sup> I really had overstrained myself much too much by only listening to the outside world. Encouraged in this by the scientific attitude of not becoming involved in the object of study. I only used my mind, translating into facts and figures what my senses had perceived. As a birdwatcher and flora researcher some instruments helped us to discern more details. Like a binocular, or a microscope, a weigh dish and all kind of chemical interventions that unravelled us the mysteries of life. And on top of that, as a gentle school girl I had only trained myself to listen to the lecturers and professors to copy what they wanted to know or gain from me, instead of developing a scientifically critical posture.

<sup>6</sup> Gestalt Therapy Verbatim by Fritz (Frederick S) Perls was the starter of the way out, and of my first explorations in the field of the dialogue with nature, to become more aware of the interaction between in and outside of myself as a living being.

<sup>7</sup> In that time (1982-1999) I worked on a Folk High School (at Allardsoog-Bakkeveen, in Friesland north part of the Netherlands), pioneering in the field of nature education on one of the first Nature and Environmental Education Centres, as an educator. In 1990 I was ‘called’ to the Deep Ecology course of Arne Naess on the Schumacher College in Devon, England ([www.schumachercollege.org.uk](http://www.schumachercollege.org.uk)). Later in 1997 I started my own business and practice Aerda, Bureau of Earth Education, and the Practice Man&Nature.

To deepen our relationship with nature, Gerwine Wuring, [www.aerda.nl](http://www.aerda.nl) Under embargo 06 September 2012



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<sup>8</sup> I was one of the first to develop Earth Education in Holland, with the help of all kinds of people, colleagues, students, scientist, searchers we formed a Network of Earth, Environment and Spirituality (1992 – 2008)

<sup>9</sup> In my practice, working with man and nature for the last 20 years as a biologist and ecologist, I created Traveling Earth School (2001-util now))([www.reizendeaardeschool.nl](http://www.reizendeaardeschool.nl)), inviting people to (re-)discover their own way to relate with nature again.

<sup>10</sup> [www.smaragd-coaching.nl](http://www.smaragd-coaching.nl)

<sup>11</sup> In his article on in this ISHS Acta Horticulturae magazine, page

<sup>12</sup> In Nature Constellation work, where nature and landscape are introduced in the systemic work of Bert Hellinger, oa Chris-Jan Leermakers and others, they call this the Knowing Field ( [www.sixth-sense-in-service.net](http://www.sixth-sense-in-service.net)). Masaru Emoto, learns us about the memory system of water in ‘The Hidden Messages in Water’ (April 2004 Eng., 2001 Jap.), [Beyond Words Publishing](http://Beyond Words Publishing)

<sup>13</sup> [www.ecozoictimes.com](http://www.ecozoictimes.com)