

A Short Dance

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Imagine holding your hands in front of your chest - as if to illustrate a length or distance. Between these hands our lives flash like the ephemeral dance of a mayfly. One hand indicates our beginning, while the other signals the end - the space in between may be all we ever have. If you're like me you may not know exactly who to thank for this short dance, nevertheless, it's good to be here.

Besides just "being here now," what else is important? Well, other life, that's what. All life. That includes every lichen, redwood, beaver, bear, and bobcat. Each has as much "right" to be here as me or anyone else. Life's choreography is a display as rich and varied as anything we could ever invent or imagine. Like the turning, whirling dance of Shiva, each living being has a magical presence that is wondrously hypnotic. Yet, our modern, artificial existence blinds us to the real beauty of life. Bankrupt ideologies and social systems separate us ever further from the wonder of this, our organic heritage.

For me, the complexity and vibrancy of living things is a collection of verse as sacred as any Bible or Veda. From the ashes of burnt stars rose this wonderfully indescribable phenomenon that has graced our planet for over three billion years. Unmolested, life's breathtaking diversity, beauty, and abundance reigned for a thousand million generations.

Until now. Now, with a sadness so deep and profound that it defies description, I am forced to witness the desecration of the very evolutionary fabric that binds us all. Nature, on every corner of the globe, is being crushed by the asphalt glacier of human greed and ignorance. All of us have watched it. Our techno-industrial society's relentless conquest of the natural world is taking its toll. From shopping malls and housing tracts, to patchwork clear-cuts and strip mines, our globe's fragile network of ecosystems is being severed forever. The ecological losses that have occurred over the last decade alone read like a wartime body count. More than just numbers, imagine what it really means to lose an eagle, a forest, or an entire species. Gone, lost forever. And with it too our own sense of freedom and aliveness - the very essence of our being.

Every whale, elk, and snail darter has a right to compete for its existence free of artificial interference. Our cultural ethic must be to preserve and protect - not to pillage and pilfer at greed's whim. It's an outrage that our collective consciousness, as a species, allows us to degrade any life, let alone sweep it aside with cavalier abandon for sport or profit. The dance of life is too special, too sacred, to be debased and destroyed by such arrogance.

These are desperate times. Do we console and comfort ourselves with technological hallucinations and imagery while organic evolution is killed? Or do we act before the close of hands at the end of our own short lives?

Compromise, platitudes, and promises mean nothing to living organisms and beauty. The answer is much deeper. Immerse yourself in nature and you will emerge with the vision necessary to guard that most sacred of dances. Touch the heart of wilderness and you will know the universe, you will know life, and you will know the answer.