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Plenary VII The Voice of the Non Nuclear Weapon States and Civil Society

Becoming Earth Compatible – Dawn of a Global Consciousness

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Wild Geese

You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting –
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.

Mary Oliver

We are today at a crossroad – one path leads to the collapse, the other one to the breakthrough. We need a new global consciousness, new planetary ethics for the breakthrough.

When I heard Mary Oliver's poem for the first time I felt some irritation – "you do not have to be good." Why not to be good? But then I found in this beautiful

collection of words most of the ingredients for a global consciousness, for planetary ethics.

Awe

“Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain are moving across the landscapes, over the prairies and the deep trees, the mountains and the rivers.”

Here is the sun, this stunning fusion reactor in safe distance to Earth. It sends all the energy within three quarters of an hour that the world population needs during one year. The sunlight that warms our skin today in the university garden was produced 10 million years ago. It found its way to the sun’s surface, inch by inch, and arrived here after a traveling time of 8 minutes.

Earth – the perfect ball. It has exactly the right size so that the water doesn’t disperse into the universe thanks to the gravity. And it has developed this thin skin of life, the atmosphere, only about 5 miles, a distance we can walk in 1 ½ to 2 hours. Water, animals, plants, the fact that we can eat and digest, that we can sleep and speak and love, the healing mechanisms start as soon as I cut my finger – what an abundance of miracles. The more I feel the deep awe for life, for Earth, for all its miracles and for the sun’s generosity, the more I ask myself: How can I take better care of life? What are my next concrete steps to become Earth compatible?

Empathy and Solidarity

“Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.”

On my walk from L. A. to Boston I experienced so much hospitality. There was Don, with his big white Cowboy hat in Oklahoma. He stopped his big car, opened the window: “What are you doing here?” “I walk from L. A. to Boston.” “What for?” “For clean energy – to keep this wonderful planet inhabitable.” “You are the first I meet who walks the talk.” He opens his wallet and gives me a 100 \$-bill.” And off he is. Or I want to pay my salad in a small restaurant in Fort Sumner, NM. The lady takes the bill and puts it onto a needle where all the paid bills are. “Somebody who walks from L. A. to Fort Sumner doesn’t have to pay here.” Or Corry stops – it’s 40 °C, over 100 °F in Virginia. She brings a big cup of cool spring water. “I thought you must be very thirsty. Take that!” And in addition she gave me a plastic bag with ice cubes and a towel; so I could cool my face once in a while.

We have a completely distorted view of the world and of humankind. We read the free daily newspapers that are full of crimes and all kind of awful stories. And when I walk through the USA for 7 ½ months I meet almost only helpful, hospitable, interested people. They don't make headlines.

With the new ethics there will much empathy and solidarity, not only for those who live today but also with all those who will follow us, all the coming generations. The solar system has only half time; so many more people will come during the next 3 to 5 billion years. There is a marvelous book written by Jeremy Rifkin – “The Empathic Civilization”. He describes this upcoming period of empathy, solidarity, and cooperation.

The Joy of Diversity

“...calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting – over and over and over announcing your place in the family of things.”

We are happy already today about the diversity of the international cuisine. We enjoy Chinese food, Italian food, Swiss “Rösti”. The same could be true about religions and cultural beliefs. This morning the ceremony shared by members of several world religions touched me deeply and left me very hopeful. The joy about differences and the mutual interest for the other will be an important part of the new consciousness.

The respect for animals, for their habitat, for old trees

Yes, the family of things. All the family members will be respected. There will be a completely different attitude towards animals and their habitat, also for beautiful old trees. We will also realize: Eating animals is not Earth compatible. It needs 10 to 15 times more water and energy to produce meat calories compared to plant calories. What a waste and what a potential at the same time!

Enthusiasm and Humor

“You do not have to walk on your knees for a hundred miles through the desert repenting. You only have to let the soft animal of your body love what it loves.”

In order to become Earth compatible we don't have to walk around in dust and ashes. If we find our source of enthusiasm – it comes from ancient Greek and means: to be in God, to be connected with the Divine – and if we enjoy humor we feel alive and we have energy. During my walks I experience again and again the twinkle of the universe – funny encounters, puns, joyful surprises. A man in Austria said when he heard that I walk to Jerusalem: “You must be a big sinner that you make such a long pilgrimage.” And another one asked: “Did they steal you the bike?”

Confidence

We can achieve nuclear abolition. We can achieve a 100 % renewable energy system thanks to the sun and to energy efficiency. We can achieve a 100 % organic agriculture. We can achieve 0 \$ military budgets. It needs a miracle and I believe in it.

“...the world offers itself to your imagination...”

Hans Peter Dürr, our dear IPPNW ally, nuclear physicist and former director of the Max Planck Institute of Physics in Munich, published recently a wonderful new book “Warum es ums Ganze geht” (Why it Concerns the Whole Thing) . There he not only writes, that he as a nuclear physicist is 100 % opposed to the use of nuclear power: We are not allowed to implement a technology that can cause damage of such a magnitude that we cannot take responsibility anymore for it; independently of the risk probability numbers that have been calculated. If the risk is not 0, forget it. He also encourages us: Quantum physics teaches us: What we thought is solid, is in motion, in development. So what's true today will be different tomorrow according to the laws of chaos theory. If somebody had told me in 1988, the Berlin wall will be torn down one year later I wouldn't have believed it. If somebody had claimed in 1989, Nelson Mandela will be freed in 1990 and afterwards a deep societal change without bloodshed will happen in South Africa, I would have experienced such a vision as naive. We can also expect a huge quantum leap of consciousness that will enable us to mitigate all the existential threats we are facing today.

And Dürr's second point: Everything is connected. If one individual changes, the whole system changes. On our solar boat trip we had sea maps with arrows, arrows for the wind, arrows for the current. They showed the wind direction and the wind force. All of us are such arrows. If we take a flight, our arrow points towards collapse, if we take the tram from the market square to the boat restaurant in Kleinhüningen, our arrow points towards the breakthrough. The more we choose earth compatible actions the higher are the chances that the miracle happens. Big parts of industry and politics are still on a suicide path and

in the strong grip of financial interests. Now it depends on all of us, on all individuals whether we realize the breakthrough or whether we end in the ultimate catastrophe that dispels our species from this planet.

We are not alone in all that. There is a astonishing phenomenon – the crop circles. These amazing geometric patterns in wheat fields of South England and in other places cannot be explained. But they give us a hunch that there may be forces we don't know that want to help us – for them it may be too early that the experiment “Homo sapiens” ends at such an early stage of development.