

# CELEBRATION: THE GARDEN OF HOPE

John Caddy

In Earth Journaling Online, I stress the celebration of the wild, of the natural Earth.

You might ask: How can I ignore the ecological disasters that human civilization . We should be screaming, not celebrating! Think of all the extinctions, ozone layer, global warming, all the sprawl, the deep ocean trawling, all the butterflies lost to Bt corn from Monsanto.

I can't ignore a thing. All true, all there. Each issue is capable of plunging one into an abyss of despair. That's the problem.

More and more people on Earth are city dwellers who know little of Nature, and what little they know they have learned to fear. This fear is called Biophobia (fear of the alive). It is a result of many things, among them:

- The media's incessant squalling *ala* Chicken Little, where rain showers are all storms and one inch of snow provokes Disaster Warnings;
- The growing sense among the mass of humanity that Nature is an entity that has turned on us, become malevolent, because of injuries civilization has inflicted.
  - The corollary belief that we deserve it, which is reinforced from many pulpits.
- Changes in weather patterns probably caused by global warming that are leading to disasters termed 'natural.'
- Fundamentalist versions of religions that teach that Earth is but a way-station on the path to Heaven, so what we do to Earth really doesn't matter. And so on.

My goal as an earth educator is to help provide ways to find hope—for all ages, but esp. for kids.

Systems theory and, more recently, Chaos and Complexity theory both suggest that fundamental changes are not imposed

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from the top. Instead, basic societal changes seem to be emergent properties of the system, and start low, spread, and work upward. Many societal structures that think they are still hierarchies have already, in fact, become network structures, in which there really is no top and bottom.

Let's take a leap. Consider for a moment the creative process and the making of art. Imagine, if you will, a window into the past: a campfire scene at dusk 100,000 years ago. People who look like us are doing things around the fire that seem oddly familiar. Some are dancing. After a bit, one starts speaking rhythmically; she claps in rhythm with her voice. Off to the side, a white-haired person is talking to a cluster of children. From gestures and voice, a story is being told. Awhile later, the whole group sings. Two of them tap hollow sections of logs, which are carved with patterns.

Why do they do these things? What is it for? Anthropologists might speak of 'reinforcing social bonds' and 'passing culture from adults to children.' Those are probably truths, but miss much. These people, using a language we don't recognize, are making art. Why?

I suggest that art has always been made from the same root motives:

- To celebrate life, to praise the fact of existence, to honor the beauty of the earth.
- To heal, through sharing both joy and suffering

The oldest artistic equation: Shared Pain Shrinks, Shared Joy Grows.

Of course, there have always been other motives as well, among them:

- To placate and complain to powers larger than human.
- To nourish the ego.
- To rock the boat, to express against the strictures of the elders.

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**Celebration is the garden of hope. A potent way to combat biophobia in children and reinforce their intuitive love for living things (biophilia) is to show them ways to release the ability to create that is already inside them. After nearly fifty years of helping others create poetry, I know that it's a process of helping people release abilities and motives they are born with. It is NOT, emphatically NOT, a matter of genetic determinism, where only geniuses get to make real art. That is nonsense, foolishness we inherited from European elite tradition long ago. We can all make art, and we all benefit from celebrating beauty and intricacy, laughter and surprise.**

**The dysfunctional way our culture tries to get us to celebrate, so we will consume products, is epitomized by the saccharine sentimentality found in giftshop 'art,' which is not. It is sadly also epitomized by the appropriation/theft of images of natural beauty by television commercials.**

**Despair is the Worm Ourobours. It circles endlessly, chewing on its tail, but goes nowhere. Don't be trapped there.**

**Yes, humans are doing great damage to ecosystems. No, it's not too late to help change that. Earth has enormous regenerative powers, which are largely ignored in environmental debate. The kind of change we need happens one person at a time. Engage the heart, and the mind will follow.**

**Nature has not died. Most of it is alive and beautiful. Love it and celebrate it. Share your celebration with others. Help them to renew their love.**

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