



## Chapter 12

# Spaceship Earth or Living Planet?

Our Christian forefathers had enormous effect on our current thinking. Even though that is beginning to change, we still have a hierarchical approach to life that sees the ‘dirt’ under our feet as the lowest form of existence. As part of the categorisation process that took many centuries to institute, life was accorded to only the top few categories, spirit to even fewer. This was very convenient as it meant that we did not have to follow any moral imperatives in our use of most other life forms on the Planet. Most of all, it gave us carte blanche in our use of the Earth herself. In this way, the Western human has turned most other beings into commodities ‘for the use thereof’ as instructed in Genesis. Thinking in this way not only permits activity that would not be acceptable otherwise, it disconnects humans from the consequences of their actions and elevates them above those outcomes. We have, in short, perpetuated the largest illusion of all time: that we are superior to all earthly things and therefore unaffected by them.

This is an attitude that most indigenous people consider laughable. It is actually extremely sad. We are destroying the very ground

beneath us and when it's gone we will die. As long as we don't blow it out of its orbit, however, it is more likely that we will be gone before it is. But I say 'it'. I should ideally be using the word 'she'. 'She' implies the ability for motherhood. It is certain that, were there no Earth, there would be no other life form associated with her. It is the atmospheric conditions that the Earth has generated that have made a womb-like environment for the growth of all life forms that flourish on her. But let's start out by throwing away our Genesis-based definitions of life and see what we have.

The Big Bang theory serves well as a starting point. Hot swirling gaseous substances twirling through space. A gradual solidification into matter followed by its eventual transmutation into many forms including single cells that eventually became animal, vegetable, fish and bird forms. Before that, minerals developed out of the swirling mass and it is out of those minerals that everything else came. We are made up of minerals, all of us. We are all composed of rock. Waitaha say that rock is the first ancestor. We are all the children of the rock that is the planet Earth. All! No matter what special family we come from: mammals, birds, fish, mountain, riverbed, grassland, or human. The piece of rock that you dig out of the ground to create the foundations for your house is your distant cousin. All come from and make up the body of the Earth itself.

Knowing this, it is myopic to believe that one offspring has consciousness and others do not. It is even more idiotic to assume that the mother herself is inanimate. This idea is born out of a recent human arrogance. Our scientific storytellers state so many things as fact. They can never be proved, no matter how advanced science becomes. The idea that animals do not understand us is one. The idea that nothing else feels emotionally is another. How do we know this? We don't. What's more, the evidence to the contrary is enormous. Most of it ignored or buried. We have cats and dogs that know when

their human companions are coming home, dogs that know when the phone is about to ring, horse whisperers and bee charmers, to name a few incidental proofs. We just find it too inconceivable, using our current authoritarian mind-sets, to contemplate the possibilities that we are not the only intelligent beings here. It would be so very inconvenient. Killing in an abattoir a herd of cattle that are related to us, that think, understand what's happening, as well as grieve, feel anger and humiliation would make for a very unattractive occupation. It's so much easier to pretend that they never knew what hit them.

Humans for millennia understood that all that exists has life, consciousness and understanding. They had feelings. Not necessarily like ours – everything is unique – but equal in their own way. They knew that this could be tapped into and communication initiated if the willingness was there and the language was known. This was not only the domain of the Shaman. It was as natural for all to talk to the trees and birds, as it was to speak to your neighbour. All people were capable of having relationships with individual other beings, or even groups, although it was the Shamans' job to maintain the diplomatic connection between the species archetypes on behalf of the community. Once the belief that other beings were somehow inferior became common thinking, these communications began to deteriorate. A similar trend occurred between men and women for the same reason. We only talk to equals. The very act of communication implies the ability of the beings involved to reciprocate, to understand. A time-honoured way to insult someone is to not speak to them. We say, "They are beneath me", designating a lower life form. This is our arrogance in action. I am sure if we were to listen closely to our own language we would see reflected in our words the many centuries of programming it has taken to instill this way of thinking into us. Words reflect concepts. Concept engenders

action. Action creates consequences. We have a world built on the philosophies of superiority based on religious indoctrination, and it's killing us. Not only that (though that would be bad enough), it's destroying many of our kindred: the other species and beings that share this Earth-womb with us.

Time to look again. Time to redo and renew our concepts by reaching into the basket or kete of ancestral knowledge that held the balance between us, and all our special neighbours. Time to re-establish a diplomatic relationship with them. As Shamans, it is our job to set up the embassies and open the lines of communication. Once this occurs, it will permit others to begin relating this way also. The world-view will have changed yet again. The experiment with arrogant superiority will be over. Peace can again be the predominant feeling between us. That does not imply the end of death. Death is just the stage before renewal, in the natural world. There is a huge difference between death by Nature and death by war. But peace is Nature's natural state. War was a creation of inequality.

Some years ago James Lovelock introduced the 'Gaia Principle' into our thinking as a scientific possibility. It states that the Earth is alive. Implicit within this is the indigenous thought that dates back to the beginning of time. Though Lovelock himself stops short of accepting Gaia as a conscious being in her own right, he laid the foundations for a return to a living world ideology. Many have extrapolated from that. Peter Russell in his book *The Awakening Earth* goes on to state the hypothesis that Gaia is actually awakening, much as a child's consciousness awakens into this reality from the age of 0–7 years. He believes that each species participates with her, as part of her body, in much the same way that our own organs cooperate in our own physical body, creating a community that is us. In this case, the human species represents Gaia's brain. As we wake up to our role in her being, coordinating with all the other parts of

her instead of destroying them as a cancer does, so she will become self-aware. The irony is that we do not scientifically or logically know whether she is already awake and aware or not. The Ancients of most cultures believed she always was. I agree with them. What may occur however, if we evolve in sufficient time, is that we as a species will become aware of our own role in her awareness and health, and stop trying to go it alone without the rest.

Whenever we develop a relationship with anyone, we must begin with conversation. It must be a two-way interaction in which we both speak, and listen. It requires openness, honesty, and a willingness to share. As well, it requires a desire to be interested in the world of the other. If these components are not present, then a lopsided relationship occurs that rarely survives. If need is the basis for this unequal relationship, then the giving partner eventually wears out, becoming exhausted or unwilling. Just as in human relationships, equality stabilises. Even in a mother and child relationship, if the offspring is dependent and taking from the mother for too long, the mother weakens and can become resentful. Before this occurs, children must grow up into adulthood and thus stand on their own feet. Once the offspring becomes independent, the relationship between the two can resolve into a friendship, if allowed to. If this stage is not reached, the dysfunctional one can become a drain on the whole community.

Our relationship with the Earth is no different. She has given us life. She has nourished and nurtured us and we have taken too much, refusing to give back and enter into a respectful alliance with her. We expect her to give and give until she dies. What's more, we are like the bird that pushes its sibling out of the nest in order to get all the food. We have destroyed many in our rush to over-indulge our neediness. If we are going to save the whole situation we are required to take responsibility for initiating a communication with

the Earth herself; to listen rather than demand. We need to do our part to restore the balance that we have destroyed through our unwillingness to grow up.

We also need to give her credit for knowing how this is best achieved for herself. Instead of the superior attitude that sees us believe we know best for all the others around us, we need to develop the humility that goes with equality. We have even denigrated humility, turning it into an act of obeisance, rather than a show of respect. Humility is the ultimate act of listening. It's an open willingness to learn from others. In the case of Gaia herself, who better to lead our attempts to heal her than she herself. To reconnect to the Web we are required to be teachable. We must leave behind our human arrogance, falling in step with All There Is. Everything has its own expertise.

In our self-created hierarchical world, we have given so much power away to those above us on the ladder of authority, that we have made ourselves ignorant of our own needs. The doctor knows what's wrong with us and what we require to heal. The counsellor knows how to run our lives for the better. The law tells us what is acceptable behaviour and what is a crime. We truly believe that if there were no authorities to order society, it would become a free-for-all. It's already a free-for-all! Listening to our own inner wisdom rather than someone else's ideas of what is best can't possibly make it any worse. Like Gaia, we know deep within us what heals and what hurts us. Allowing others that privilege is tantamount to taking it as a right for ourselves also. Even those who are well-meaning can destroy us: killing us with kindness, as it were. Conservationists have travelled that road in their rush to turn the destruction around. Using our thinking to decide what should grow on what landscape rather than listening with our heart is never the best policy. Just because something is not indigenous does not mean that it does

not belong there. I have heard our locals decry all kinds of things, from black swans who imported themselves from Australia, to gorse bush that was brought here with the Celtic settlers. Nobody stops to ask the Earth or the plant itself whether there is a reason for its existence here at this time. Nobody talks to the black swan to find out why it chose to come here. Once I was told, by a Department of Conservation Ranger whilst camping on a Banks Peninsula beach, near Christchurch, that even the Fantail, that exists deep in Maori legend was probably self-introduced from Australia. The Piwakawaka, as it is known in Aotearoa, has surely played its part in the much-loved stories of Maui. It's not on its own. The stilts, harrier hawks, and many more keep it good company in its migration in the mists of time. Somehow, we must withstand the temptation to 'know best'. Before committing to any action, we must call on those involved, human or otherwise, and be willing to hear their appropriate wisdom before taking action on their behalf.

At this point in the Earth's history, she has been extremely patient with us. She has borne enormous hardship at our hands, and yet she has retaliated little. Indeed, I was beginning to feel that she was becoming a victim of us until the tsunami showed me that she is no longer willing to allow us to run amok without consequence. She has got our attention. Let's make no mistake: she has the power to fling us from her like fleas from a dog's back. That she doesn't, gives us a clue that she still hopes for our eventual maturing. If we can cooperate with her process immediately, we may have a chance. To do that though, we have to swallow our pride and ask what she needs of us in assisting her, giving up the idea that anyone else might know on her behalf.

Our path and purpose is totally tied up in this benevolent being. Her existence allows for a whole range of experience that we could not have anywhere else. Every single part of her plays a part in

creating this reality. If we choose to turn our opportunity here into a nightmare, we have no one else to blame. It can just as easily become paradise, and to make it so, we have to change our beliefs. We cannot continue to view her as 'paradise lost'. The Christian mythology of doom and end-times is a luxury we can no longer afford. We were never thrown out of the garden. It was always here all along, everywhere around us. We simply allowed blinkers to be placed over our eyes and chose to believe the lies we were told. It has gone on far too long. Now it's time to begin to ask, and listen to, the 'earthly mother' rather than the 'heavenly father'. I have no doubt, if we are quick, she will show us a new way to love her. But we'd better not waste too much more time. Even her patience may run out!



*Let's take this opportunity to go on a journey and speak to the Goddess Gaia herself. We can find out what she wants from our species and from you personally as part of it. Settle into your usual comfortable space, relax and close your eyes. Breathe deeply and allow yourself to sink deeper into meditative state. When you are ready, ask the Goddess to appear to you. When she does, feel free to ask her anything you feel would help you to connect with her more deeply. Be prepared to sit and listen. She is very wise and knows the answers to all our questions. She is the mother of us all and loves each of us. Feel her love as you meet with her. Don't forget to cast a circle in the beginning and ground yourself at the end.*