

the ecological imperative to love all creatures great and small

A one-page mini-manifesto by Dennis Rivers and uncounted zillions of ecological kindred spirits – 2018 revision

Most people accept that life, to at least some degree, depends on love, because we recognize that babies need food, shelter and affection, which they cannot arrange for themselves in the absence of loving parents and kin. But the idea that we have a need to care for the entire web of life and people, well known to many native peoples, is only beginning to be explored in Western countries.

The emergence of industrial society and its long-lived toxic by-products, from pesticides to leaking nuclear waste tanks, has fundamentally changed our relationship to the natural world, the ground on which we stand. For eons, wrecking the planet has been beyond human reach. But our impact on the Web of Life is now so large that I am drawn to the conclusion that complex life will only continue on Planet Earth if we care for all people as our beloved kin, and all creatures as if they were our beloved children.

A consensus is gradually emerging that there will only be higher forms of life (life beyond insects and bacteria) if we work now to preserve places where that life might unfold, and learn to transform and redirect our profit-driven manias and nuclear-armed antagonisms. (If you doubt that we humans are in the grip of a destructive mania, please do an Internet search for aerial photos of the gigantic Alberta tar sands mining sites. No life, human or otherwise, will flourish on these poisoned lands for eons to come. Or a search for “agent orange birth defects Vietnam.”)

There are no more wild places on Earth, untouched by humans. Among many examples, the fallout from our nuclear tests and accidents is now everywhere on Planet Earth. The entire Earth has become our garden, to love and nurture or to exploit and ruin, as we see fit, or don't see at

all. It seems overwhelmingly clear to me that since we have wounded the entire world, we must now care for the entire world, if we want the world of life, and our own lives, to continue.

For a while we were dazzled by the mind-boggling powers delivered into our hands by industrialization. Now we are beginning to contemplate the mind-boggling responsibilities that come with such enormous power. Will we rise to the occasion and meet this crisis with an

heroic love for all creatures great and small? Or will we follow most other species into the silence of extinction, taking a large part of the Web of Life with us?

From the point of view articulated by the eco-philosopher Joanna Macy and her “Work that Reconnects”, one could say that *all the life of the future, endangered by our technology today, needs our love and care for today's Web of Life, from which it will be born.*

To which I would only add, given the ongoing global crises of the obliteration of the countryside, chronic war, and an epidemic of police violence, that life appears to be calling us toward something like a global conversion experience. This conversion, which many writers have called *The Great Turning*, will be **from** the power to dominate, exploit, injure and kill, **to** the power to cooperate, nurture, mend, and create the new. Perhaps this moment arrives on every planet where lifeforms evolve extremely powerful tools. It has certainly arrived here! May we, each in our own way, answer this beautiful call to conversion, and join with others in mending the world.



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