

Making the Sea Change: From Chaos and Inertia to Creativity

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(PCSR: Psychotherapists and Counsellors for Social responsibility)

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My talk today is about how we find a place within ourselves to take action from - for riding out as the hero so often causes more problems. The first half is a series of reflections on the state of inertia – how does it come about, and how do we find a way through it? Then I will move on to talk about the image of The Fool as a different place to take action from.

The recent tsunami, albeit an act of nature, felt like the gods are shaking and waking us up to the realities of global warming, urging us to make a sea change. We are reminded that we are fragile beings on the skin of a giant who erupts out of our control. The wave that followed felt of archetypal proportions, flooding land, people and psyche. I'm sure thousands of people have had tidal wave dreams; these dreams evoke fears of breakdown, loss of self, as well as yearnings to dissolve in the ocean of life. If things are out of balance and we fail to listen, then nature – both inner and outer - will simply rise up and drown us in what has been kept out. Old structures are dissolved in seconds, everything is turned upside down to make way for a new order.

Many warnings are coming to us now, both dramatic and subtle. Estimates vary about how much time we have left before global warming becomes irreversible – some suggest as little as ten years. We may have another 50 years left of fossil fuels. Nobody knows for sure. But we do know that we are facing serious destabilisation of the global climate, a major energy crisis, a mass extinction of species, as well as many other changes that I'm sure people here today are aware of.

When we hear the many news stories about ecological change, we are again and again reminded that our whole earth community is affected – everything is interconnected and interdependent.

One of the stories that affected me recently was of Inuit mothers whose breast milk has high levels of PCBs. These pollutants move to colder climates and become more concentrated as they move up the food chain. The fat of sea mammals is loaded with a variety of long-lived toxic chemicals which are then passed onto humans. As a result, Inuit mothers are being advised not to breast feed their babies. Mother's milk and the groundwater of the earth, both are contaminated. There is no pristine wilderness left. We are all affected physically and emotionally from our earliest experience. Making the sea change is complex. It's a paradigm shift, to do with how we relate to ourselves, each other and the rest of the earth community. Industrial Growth Society elevates humans to the top of the hierarchy of life, treating the rest of life as a resource to be used for our benefit, as an object without feeling or soul.

This hierarchy echoes throughout our human communities and internal worlds. In our long journey towards modernity, those peoples and qualities associated with the "dark past" of wild nature have been oppressed. White, middle class, urban-dwelling intellectuals sit at the top, while women, black peoples and working classes are still carrying the projection of being "closer to nature". We see the same splitting within our internal worlds where intuition and instinct, powers often associated with nature and the feminine, are to be reined in, if not burnt at the stake. We see it in the running of corporations, in political policies, and in spiritual paths offering liberation through transcendence of the body. There is a deep fear of the wild, of being taken over by the world of the senses and instincts, or of things that science cannot explain. Perhaps the war on terror is an attempt to eliminate fear once and for all.

Making the sea change is welcoming back that which has been dominated, oppressed and disrespected – peoples, animals, land, as well as qualities within ourselves.

In the face of this our changes are slow and small. Inertia is rife. As a therapist I believe that change springs from listening attentively to where we are, listening with ears, eyes, body, heart, imagination. So my talk today starts with listening to our inertia, trying to understand how it happens, to see whether this brings change.

1) Inertia can happen when what we are facing is too big to comprehend

Fears of an approaching apocalypse can make people freeze, like rabbits in headlights, unable to think or act. When something is too painful or complex to think about, it's easy to go into denial. "It won't happen" or "They'll find a cure" or "People have always made pronouncements about the end of the world....". We split off and repress feelings like guilt, powerlessness, rage or pain, when they get unbearable. We see this very clearly in family patterns around abuse. Silence reigns and woe betide those who speak of the unmentionable – people get very angry and upset with them. Those systems will only crumble when people are brave enough to stand up and tell the truth and they may well feel they are going mad in the process. They imagine it's the end of the world. But apocalypse comes from the Greek, meaning "revelation, an uncovering of what has been hidden".

The psychotherapy community is not immune from this silence, possibly because our work has a history of being so split off from politics.

Psychoanalyst Hanna Segal writes about *silence and the nuclear threat* in the 1980's. She says:

“Psychoanalysts have a specific contribution to make. We are acquainted with the psychic mechanisms of denial, projection, magical thinking. We should be able to contribute something to overcome apathy and self-deception in ourselves and others. When the Nazi phenomenon was staring us in the face, the psychoanalytic community outside Germany was largely silent. This must not be repeated. Mandelstam said, “Silence is the real crime against humanity”. We psychoanalysts who believe in the power of words and the therapeutic affect of verbalizing truth must not be silent”.

2) The other side of inertia, taking action, can all too easily turn into being the hero going off to fight battles, to save the world

If the hero isn't mindful, he is fuelled by rights and wrongs, 'shoulds' and 'shouldn'ts'. He easily creates 'the other' as the enemy. People around the hero can feel judged and accused. His wonderful, active and forceful energy

gets things done, but he is in danger of turning into that old patriarch, a judgmental and rigid ruler, interested in winning - and possibly humiliating the enemy. It's the road to burn-out. We are straight back into the old paradigm of domination and oppression. This Old King has no time for the qualities of slowness, pondering, feeling, dreaminess.

For anyone who is not familiar with 'Lord of the Rings', Bush is wearing Frodo's ring of power in this image. Frodo, a down to earth Hobbit, is the only one capable of withstanding the dark powers enveloping the world. He goes on a long journey to destroy the ringbut the ring is still with us – the problem is of ego and power.

If the hero is informed by something greater than him/herself, then the journey towards sustainability becomes one that can **nourish** the soul, rather than yet another tiring battle to fight. The hero learns to *relate* to his inertia. It becomes a two-way, mutual helping process, where the sea change for the planet is at the same time a personal sea change. Aboriginal educator and activist Lilla Watson acknowledges this when she says,

"If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time....But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."

This is Ecopsychology: the simultaneous weaving together of the journey towards personal and planetary well-being.

3) Inertia is deepened by the distractions of consumer culture

We're living in the midst of a giant eating problem. Our increasingly busy and driven lifestyles can be a way to block thinking and feeling. We become disconnected, then, from our bodies. Trouble begins when becoming environmentally responsible means giving up, being 'good', being deprived. It's a bit like when a GP tells a compulsive eater to diet; for many this is like red rag to a bull, the mere thought of no treats triggers a binge. Dieting doesn't work when it's a regime imposed on the body, ignoring feelings of hunger and fullness. It can also make a person fatter because their whole internal ecosystem becomes disrupted.

a) Listening to, and distinguishing between, the variety of different hungers can be hard when eating has served as a palliative. A river of

unfamiliar feelings are unblocked which can feel unbearable. But continuing to listen to all parts of one's being, body and psyche, brings change. It's about relinquishing control, exploring and getting to know the ecosystem bound within my skin. This process is about reconnecting to feelings, reconnecting with the body. As Mary Oliver says in her poem, *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.

The question is, though, is this process transferable from the safety of the therapy relationship into consumer culture? What of our collective hungers? Yearning for community, yearning for the wild, yearning for home, for ancestors, for elders? An important part of the recovery process is that feelings are included.

b) Joanna Macy and John Seed are environmental activists who understand the burn out in activism if feelings are not acknowledged along the way. Heroes who go out to save the world must have hope. But what about their despair? They facilitate Deep Ecology workshops using creative experiential exercises as well as discussion for people to collectively express grief, rage, despair about what is happening to the planet. As activists, they found their work to be empowered when they could acknowledge their feelings, allowing space for The wounded hero.

b) In the 1970's a wave of feminist consciousness raising groups enabled women to bring together personal and political, enabling social change for women. In the last decade I was a member of an Ecopsychology group, (a small group of PCSR), bringing together personal, political and ecological. I arrived to the group feeling as if I was a therapist on board the Titanic, practicing in a small room where no-one was mentioning the looming disaster. It felt mad at times. The group was a place where we could feel safe to admit our worst fears, as well as our vulnerable visions; to see the links between the big picture and our work as therapists. But it was also a place where we could laugh, eat and share our lives. Community groups provide a vital container within which we make connections between global and local, as well as connections of the heart. Could we see a wave of green cr groups?

Could GP's benefit from making links between personal and planetary well-being? Could teachers include these kinds of insights within personal/social religious education?

4) Inertia is made worse by disconnection

Turning a blind eye is easy in this society. Most of us are disconnected from the origins of things we use and eat, or where our rubbish goes. And many people are disconnected from their land of origin, or the land of their ancestors. Our lives are no longer intimately connected with the lives of other creatures, plants, landscapes or with the daily rhythms of nature. We are taught that we are separate.

How possible is it for us, now, to listen to and trust the body of the earth?

Animals could sense the coming of the tsunami waves and fled to higher ground. But humans no longer watch the animals. Even the knowledge that the sea suddenly goes out a long way before the wave comes is enough. The 10yr old girl who remembered this from her geography class saved a whole beach full of people. And some humans CAN feel what is coming.

We are still finely tuned, wild creatures if we allow ourselves to stretch deeper and beyond our skins. Listening to everyone who shares our home and garden makes for change within ourselves. Making sure that the hedgehog, the birds and the insects all have homes means entering into and learning about their lives. Then it's no longer possible to use weed-killer, to neaten the ivy, to remove all the dead wood for it's obvious that we kill our friends, their homes and eventually the poison returns to us. We are witnessing the sixth mass extinction of species, and any way in which we can create wildlife habitats will help. It has now become law that farmers must leave wild a strip around every field, encouraging more wildlife to inhabit agricultural land.

Not knowing where things go makes it easier to get rid of things. Last year I was staying in India in a temple on the side of a mountain in the Himalayas. The only way they had to dispose of plastic was to burn it or bury it. It made me feel sick in my body to witness this burning in the exquisite mountain woods. The solution was simple: buy no plastic. Plastic bags were banned for you could see what happened to the guts of animals when they accidentally ate the bags. Some died as a result.

Reconnecting to the origins of all that is in our lives helps to bring back compassion. The documentary that revealed the conditions of workers in cocoa plantations brought pressure to bear on the chocolate industry. Gap and Nike have been shamed by revelations of using child labour and working conditions in factories in the Far East.

Closer to home, if we had regular footage about the inhumane methods of industrial farming I'm sure the meat industry would suffer. If information speaks to our bodies we can FEEL the suffering of others, there is a sense of disgust and compassion. I will never forget the time a friend told me that milk contains 8% pus from the infected udders of cows. Regular milk was hard to drink after that! Information is not forthcoming in an age where corporations seek to hide. The onus is still on us, as individuals, to investigate and be awake to what goes into body, soul and the land.....the question is, WHY NOT eat local organic food?

5) Inertia happens when we live with myths which no longer make sense

A powerful myth of modernity is about how much progress we western humans have made. As we head towards ecological disaster, this myth is being exploded. Changing lifestyles challenges those myths. I experienced this in a small way when my partner and I decided to give up our car.

I need to preface this by saying that we can only do this because we live near a tube in London, and I am a keen cyclist.

I imagined it would be hard to give up what used to feel like an extra room almost, my safe and instant vehicle. Driving feels powerful, having a nice car is cool. Public transport seems expensive and time consuming as well as inconvenient - and for women unsafe. Most importantly, perhaps, having a car carries with it the notion of FREEDOM – a very potent and manipulated concept in western society.

At first it felt like a deprivation and really inconvenient. But after a while I realised that I had gained time to read and ponder on buses and tubes. I had liberated one possession to look after, and my bank balance looked healthier. It was also much more enjoyable to travel in the open air on my bike and I felt fitter. In fact, it felt liberating, rather than a restriction of my freedom.

What I hadn't expected was such a strong reaction amongst my friends and colleagues. Everyone suddenly expressed their guilt that they weren't doing this too. It was quite hard to talk about freely.

On a deeper level, cars and bikes carry very different images. Arriving on my bike is sometimes less than glamorous and takes me back to adolescence. I realised that having a car is one of the rites of passage into adulthood. Giving it up felt like going backwards, losing an object of power, like being a child again in the passenger seat.

The psychological aspects of taking these kinds of actions may account for why so many people cannot make the shifts required. There are images, stereotypes, associated with downshifting, which run counter to modernity. It is not yet cool to be green. If you don't feel like you belong to this tribe, it's hard to make the changes. In order for the majority to make this sea-change it must somehow become re-associated with modernity. To pollute must become as uncool as it is to smoke.

The best thing about giving up our car is feeling empowered, that I am acting more in accordance with my beliefs – even if there are many other ways in which I don't. Flying is one of the most destructive things we do as individuals (to live within your eco-footprint you are allowed one long haul flight every 20 yrs) - and this is something I find hard to relinquish. Taking action changes psyche, says the Norwegian eco-philosopher, Sigmund Kvaloy:

“Some Greens say that we can and should start by changing ourselves first, and through that get ready to change the system. But this is still building on the view of a human being as a soul separated from the body and the environment. Instead of observing from a safe river-bank, you should step into the river, be grabbed by the current, and forced to learn how to swim. It's then that you have a chance of being shaken so that you are changed, and through that you change the system. That's when you learn to accept that nothing is permanent, that everything is time, and that time is creativity. Only then will initiative and responsibility replace passivity”.
(Kvaloy 1990)

5) What about Inertia and Therapy – Do Therapists need to Make a Sea Change?

There is a great deal to be said about the greening of therapy practice and theory. I will just touch on a few things here.

Psychotherapy is PART of making the sea change in many ways. It reconnects people to their emotions, instincts and intuition. It also reconnects us to our personal origins, re-integrating what has been repressed. It helps us to see how our past informs our present, rather than seeing it as something to be got away from. Hopefully, if the process is a helpful one, it enables people to be more compassionate, and to unlock their own gifts so that they can be more fully themselves in the world. Some therapies reconnect us to our bodies.

However, psychotherapy has grown up in urban environments and is very human centred. Harold Searles writes in 1960:

“The nonhuman environment is...considered entirely irrelevant to human personality development, and to the development of psychiatric illness, as though human life were lived out in a vacuum – as though the human race were alone in the universe, pursuing individual and collective destinies in a homogeneous matrix of nothingness, a background devoid of form, colour and substance”.

a) Take attachment and loss, for example. Ecopsychology recognises that we make attachments with our WHOLE environment and these relationships shape our psychic development along with human relationships. Conversely, we experience loss in relationship to the rest of life: loss of wild places; loss of species and our relationship with them; loss of such basic things like clean air, water, soil; loss of childhood places, to name a few. These attachments and losses exist in their own right. They do not have to be symbolic of human attachment and loss.

It's a two way relationship. When grieving, nature consoles. Many humans who have been so badly treated by other humans can only recover through connecting with the other-than-human world first. “Healing Fields” by Jenny Grut describes moving therapy work with victims of torture and asylum

seekers on allotments in London, where therapy sessions take place on the land while digging, weeding and planting.

Does our new attachment to technology replace our relationship with wild nature? What becomes of our inner worlds as a result?

b) Psychotherapy suggests that we project ourselves onto and into humans in order to re-discover parts of ourselves. Ecopsychology suggests that we project ourselves into and onto ALL that is around us to realise ourselves. We are what we eat, breathe, and surround ourselves with. We realise ourselves through our connection with the rest of life. Jung was a psychotherapist who grew up in rural Switzerland; he wrote extensively about his own connection with inner and outer nature. He describes here how his relationship with stone reveals and connects him to the eternal part of himself:

At such times (of brooding on God etc) it was strangely reassuring and calming to sit on my stone. Somehow it would free me of all my doubts. Whenever I thought that I was the stone, the conflict ceased. "The stone has no uncertainties, no urge to communicate, and is eternally the same for thousands of years," I would think, "while I am only a passing phenomenon which bursts into all kinds of emotions, like a flame that flares up quickly and then goes out." I was but the sum of my emotions, and the "Other" in me was the timeless imperishable stone. (MDR P59.)

It is easy to forget that we are all stardust.

c) If we are shaped by our WHOLE environment, it follows that what we call the Self will be made up of, and interwoven with, the rest of the earth community.

Jeannette Armstrong, a woman from the Native American tradition by the name of the Okanagan writes:

"We survive within our skin inside the rest of our vast selves.... Okanagans teach that our flesh, blood and bones, are Earth-body; in all cycles in which the earth moves, so does our body..... Our word for body literally means 'the land-dreaming capacity' "

(Roszak p320-1)

d) We also internalize cultural attitudes towards the rest of nature, towards the earth. Like racism and sexism, anthropocentrism shapes our internal world dynamics. People distrust parts of themselves which appear “closer to nature”. But of course the real way we therapists learn about this is to jump in the river and make the changes within our own lives. Then we notice how the ecological comes through dreams, through bodily symptoms, through relationships. Then it becomes more apparent in our work and it’s possible to make the links.

I want to stop and take stock here. I’ve been talking about ways in which inertia creeps over us, and ways to recover from that state of denial, ways in which we can make changes within our lives.
But is this really enough?

6) Inertia is affected by the big picture....

Even if we were to make the UK live within it’s footprint, even Europe, we still have the **USA, 4% of world’s population, responsible for 25% of greenhouse gas emissions.** With India and China joining us in our consumer lifestyles we have a small window to make an enormous change. Even if we do achieve world wide sustainability, we still only have ONE EARTH which can support a limited population of humans.

Part of our Myth of Progress is that technology brings us Freedom. Now we see the shadow of our technological progress looming large, as our freedoms are challenged on many levels.

If there’s one thing that drives me into inertia it’s when I open up and look at the big picture. My small changes seem trifling.

The question is, what is really going to make a difference?

James Lovelock, famous for Gaia Theory, says that we must convert to nuclear power, and fast. But I cannot agree at all. For me this is simply using the equivalent of orthodox medicine – we may cure the symptoms temporarily but meanwhile producing waste that is toxic for thousands of years.

Small changes can grow large if enough people join in, creating a flip-over effect. And the small changes are still important because in making them I shift my own inertia and learn. They affect my heart. They connect me to others on the same journey. For me, this is where big change might really happen – between us, in a way that may not be expected.

If we listen to inertia and *allow the chaos to be*, and we allow the unconscious to inform our conscious doings, then perhaps we have a chance of being creative, of finding solutions that we couldn't imagine at the outset of the journey, the kind that appear in visions. I'm tempted to change the subtitle here: **From Inertia through chaos to creativity.**

The FOOL

So at this point I'm taking quite a surprising direction...to talk about the image, or archetype, of The Fool who embodies this energy of leaping into the creative unknown. Most people will have come across the Fool in the plays of Shakespeare or in the Tarot cards, and his image lives on as the joker in today's playing cards. Like the hero, the Fool embodies action, but he does not ride out in battle. I think the Fool gives us a new way forward in this time of ecological crisis, for he steps out of inertia with openness and a willingness to listen.

Since the Fool could be either male or female, I'm going to interchange 'he' and 'she'.

Parsival is this kind of hero, at the start of his journey seeking the Holy Grail. He has been brought up by his mother in a lonely forest, to prevent him from following in the footsteps of his father. Ignorant of the world, Parsival grows up a "guileless fool" who goes on a long journey eventually reaching a place of compassion, where he is able to ask the old King Amfortas, "What Ails Thee?"

The Fool appears in Shakespeare, for example in the play of King Lear. He is the only person who can get through to Lear in his most tragic time. Lear is the epitome of the broken down Old King whose ego rules. The only way to make Lear see his folly is for The Fool to speak in riddles, the language of the unconscious. The Fool symbolizes the forces of chaos and license, while the king represents those of law and order.

The Fool appears in the Tarot cards. He is the number 0 as well as number 22, the beginning and the end of a journey of individuation through the archetypes of the major arcana.

The Fool fearlessly begins the journey into the unknown. To do this, she does not regard the world she knows as firm and fixed. She has a seemingly reckless disregard for obstacles. She sets off with gay abandon with the

innocence of a child coming into the world, full of trust, alive, playful and completely open to whatever comes her way in the present moment. This openness invites synchronicity. The Fool is the energy in all of us that is seeking to become full individuals, which carries vital, fresh inspiration without judgement.

He holds in his left hand a white rose, symbol of purity and spirituality. In his right he holds his material possessions. His journey is a weaving together of the material and spiritual.

This image is double edged, she is carefree: in stepping off the cliff will she fly or does she not see the danger coming?

The Fool's friend is his dog, his animal instincts, close to the earth. He is in touch with intuition and instinct, welcoming the surprises life has to offer.

The Fool remains in packs of cards as the joker, the wild card who can pop up at any time and stand in for any other card.

The Fool is sometimes depicted with an animal skin on; he is a child of nature.

Those in the throes of convention look at the unconventional, non-conformist personality and think "What a fool". They don't understand the Fool's actions. But The Fool has roots in tradition as one who is closest to the spirit world. In many tribal cultures, those born with strange and unusual character traits were held in awe. Shamans were people who could see visions and go on journeys. Those with physical differences had experience and knowledge that the average person could not understand. The Fool is close to God. Her number zero is a circle which represents both emptiness, the VOID, and infinity, the place of chaos, pre-creation, containing all possibilities yet not manifesting anything.

[\(http://www.marydelave.com/\)](http://www.marydelave.com/)

Artist Cecil Collins writes:

"Our society has rejected the Fool(because) they are frightened and disturbed by (him), because he is the child of life, and not of abstract virtue. The Fool is purity of consciousness. This purity is a cosmic folly that is utterly detached from what most of the world

thinks worth doing; it is detached from the deadening edifice of clever ambitions, of power”. “The Saint, the Artist, the Poet, and the Fool, are one. They are the eternal virginity of spirit, which in the dark winter of the world, continually proclaims the existence of a new life,.” Cecil Collins, *The Vision of the Fool and Other Writings*, pg. 81, paperback ed. (*Vision of the Fool*)

The Fool represents the irrepressible Vital Spirit, overflowing its banks, roaring across the landscape, and carving new pathways where it will.

In other cultures, and within our history, the Fool has been given a ritual place within society. The Saturnalia, or Festival of Fools, was a Roman holiday lasting seven days during which restrictions were relaxed and the social order inverted. Class distinctions were abolished. Masters served their slaves. It was a time of reversal of the normal, chaos before rebirth, and therefore of fertility. In this way the law of the old year was broken down and the new year welcomed in afresh. Eventually this ritual became absorbed in the celebration of Christs masse.

<http://peterconrad.tripod.com/seasons/christmas/saturnalia.html>

When a culture ceases to honour this energy, it will find a wilder way to emerge. Ecotherapist Howard Clinebell writes:

“Like all repressed memories, repressed wildness continues to haunt our ‘civilized’ lives. As these energies accumulate, they may eventually produce wild, irrational and often violently destructive mental processes or behaviour. This destructiveness may be turned inward on ourselves in masochism, irrational (perhaps psychotic) ideation, or potentially suicidal depression. Or the repressed energies may be directed outward at civilized society” (Clinebell Ecotherapy P30)

What of the fool in relation to sea change?

“When the time comes, as it always does, when the old rules, conceptual structures, prejudices and beliefs are no longer adequate to the challenges at hand, then a Divine Maniac is needed. He or she lives in a private world, and so is not bound by the shared conventions, preconceptions or norms of the society. The Gods - or Chance - select the Fool who will become the saviour who will transform society. She is elevated as leader for a short time (for only so much madness can be tolerated), and must undergo many

transformations before, with luck, she rejuvenates the world.”

(The Pythagorean Tarot by: John Opsopaus)

Jung describes how he consciously submitted to an experience of ‘stepping of the cliff’ just after his famous break with Freud. He struggled with feeling foolish, but what followed was a deep change in his life. He simply stopped, not knowing what to do next and said to himself,

“Since I know nothing at all, I shall simply do whatever occurs to me”.

He then describes:

‘Thus I consciously submitted to the unconscious. The first thing that came to the surface was a childhood memory from perhaps my tenth or eleventh year. At that time I had a spell of playing passionately with building blocks..... This moment was a turning point in my fate,it was a painfully humiliating experience to realise that there was nothing to be done except play childish games.Naturally I ...asked myself, ‘Now really, what are you about? You are building a small townas if it were a rite’ I had no answer to my question, only the inner certainty that I was on my way to discovering my own myth. For the building game was only a beginning. It released a stream of fantasies which I later carefully wrote down.....this sort of thing has been consistent with me and any time in my later life when I came up against a blank wall I painted a picture or hewed stone. Each such experience proved to be a rite of passage for the ideas and works that followed hard on it.’ (MDR P)

The Fool is not interested in saving the world. She is simply being herself, one step at a time. One of the most potent places we have left to reconnect to this place inside ourselves is by spending time outdoors, in wild places. It brings us back to simple pleasures. It’s a place in which we can fall apart and come back together.

It’s about reconnecting to a powerful source of inspiration; we learn from the organic way in which ecosystems relate. It’s about re-encountering the mysteries of life. And wrestling with nature is the only place where we can encounter a power more than ourselves. It puts us in our place, it helps us find our place. Without this we cannot and do not know ourselves.

D H Lawrence:

When we get out of the glass bottles of our ego
 and when we escape like squirrels turning in the
 cages of our personality
 and get into the forest again,
 we shall shiver with cold and fright
 but things will happen to us
 so that we don't know ourselves.
 Cool, unlying life will rush in,
 and passion will make our bodies taut with power,
 we shall stamp our feet with new power
 and old things will fall down
 we shall laugh, and institutions will curl up like
 burnt paper

To quote Jung again:

“Walking in the woods, lying on the grass, taking a bathe in the sea, are from the outside; entering the unconscious, entering yourself through dreams, is touching nature from the inside and this is the same thing. Things are put right again.” (MDR)

The hero tries to solve problems of the world by conscious methods alone. The Fool starts out with a different attitude, of openness, of being in touch with body, earth and unconscious, in the moment.

Jungian analyst David Tacey writes that consciousness may be a work against nature, but individuation – that is allowing one’s conscious journey to be informed by the unconscious – is a work with nature.

Activism and the Fool

Often those who dare to take action are called foolish or naïve to think that what they do will change things. Yet it often this down to earth, acting from instinct, yet informed by vision that really makes for radical change. For these people are radically in touch. Combined with compassion and persistence makes for the visionaries of life, like Ghandi.

So I will finish by acknowledging two environmental activists of our time. Both are heroines but neither act from the place of a driven hero (or so it seems to me!)

Both seem to embody the Fool's instinctive and visionary stepping into action – but both will have drawn on far more than the Fool to achieve what they have done.

And both may have been considered foolish by others for their actions and vision, yet neither were afraid of this.

Julia "Butterfly" Hill who lived on a 200-foot-tall ancient redwood tree named Luna from December 10, 1997 to December 18, 1999, north of San Francisco. She says, **"Here I can be the voice and face of this tree, and for the whole forest that can't speak for itself."**

Julia and several earlier Luna tree sitters occupied the old-growth giant to keep it, and nearby trees, from being cut down by landowner The Pacific Lumber Company, which agreed to save the area in exchange for her exit from the tree and \$50,000 -- which went towards university science research.

Wangari Maathai founded the green belt movement in Kenya in 1977. The group has planted more than 30 million trees across Africa, primarily by village women, in attempt to stop the massive deforestation of the continent.

In using forests to combat drought and ensure biodiversity, activists like Wangari make an essential link between environmentalism and peace, by ensuring humans stay within the productive limits of their supporting ecosystems.

Armed conflicts bring death and misery to millions of people in scores of countries around the world every day. Since 1989 the number of civil wars has tripled. Many of those conflicts are over limited resources or diminishing land, driven by over-exploitation of natural resources.

When forests that have housed and protected indigenous populations for thousands of years are cut down, natural borders and buffers between people disappear. Sources of livelihood become scarce. Severe drought and ecosystem collapses bring competition and war.

Wangari was beaten, harassed, and thrown in jail many times for her efforts to protect the environment. Throughout her struggles, she has used the power of non-violence and creative resistance to advocate for democracy and foil crimes against the planet.

Wangari Maathi has just won the Nobel Peace Prize. (quoted from Greenpeace website)

She says, **“We must clothe the earth in her green dress again”**.

There's a danger when talking about people like this that they get elevated onto plinths. And we throw mud at our leaders who don't get it right. I hope they can simply inspire us today to step out fearlessly and find our own visions today.

Ee cummings:

i thank You God for most this amazing
day: for the leaping greenly spirits of trees
and a blue true dream of sky; and for everything
which is natural which is infinite which is yes