

Collapse of the Biosphere and the Ecology Ethic: Earth is a Living Organism

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Our one shared living biosphere is collapsing and dying. Continued being depends urgently upon reconnecting with nature through global embrace of an ecology ethic whose individual affirmative outcomes for natural ecosystems are sufficient in sum to sustain global nature. A primary ethical measure of a person is the degree to which their lifestyle positively or negatively impacts nature.

“Ecology is the meaning of life. Truth, justice, equity, and sustainability are the ideals whereby ecology is maintained.” – Dr. Glen Barry

“A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.” – Aldo Leopold, The Land Ethic, A Sand County Almanac.

“To cherish what remains of the Earth and to foster its renewal is our only legitimate hope of survival.” – Wendell Berry

“To the question: Wilderness, who needs it? Doc would say: Because we like the taste of freedom, comrades.” – Edward Abbey, The Monkey Wrench Gang

Earth Meanders

Let's start from the self-evident premise that [Earth is a living organism](#). Like cells aggregating to tissues, and onward into organisms and populations; species and ecosystems are the lower level parts of the biosphere in sum. Old forests, natural waterways, oceans, soils, wetlands, and the atmosphere are the organs that together constitute a living Earth.

Big old trees in large, connected, and ecologically intact old-growth forests stabilize global climate and power the biosphere, making Earth habitable. Water is the elixir of life without which organic life is not possible. Soils take millennia to accumulate, providing the basis for plants, food growth, and ultimately wildlife and humanity. Wetlands and oceans, the atmosphere and climate, together constitute the environment needed by all life.

Such natural ecosystems – and the cyclic homeostasis of their interactions – provide the basis for all life and are thus godlike and worthy of veneration. Modern lifestyles have forsaken the ethical framework necessary to perpetuate 3.5 billion years of natural evolution.

Ancient flows of energy and nutrients between air, land, water and ocean ecosystems – that maintain our one shared biosphere – are ending. Earth is being killed by human industrial growth caused ecosystem loss, abrupt climate change, over-population, nationalistic perma-war, and inequity and injustice. [Global biosphere collapse, the end of being, is upon us.](#)

Ecologists have been warning of global ecosystem collapse and abrupt climate change for decades. So many of the “natural disasters” we see in the daily news are in fact symptoms of this decline. However, much nature remains, and lag times when natural loss inevitably collapses the whole are unknown. And Earth is amazingly tough and regenerative (but not infinitely so). There may be a brief window of opportunity to [transition together to global ecological sustainability](#), otherwise together we face [biosphere collapse](#) and the end of being.

But it will require a revolutionary change in mindset – an “ecology ethic” which will be herein defined – to be nearly universally accepted. And fast.

A habitable global environment depends critically upon [maintaining broadly distributed natural ecosystems](#) as the context for human endeavors. Thus the foremost tenant of an ecology ethic is to maintain all the ecological parts in order that their sum – the biosphere which makes our and all life’s very existence possible – remains intact. This over-riding ecological necessity must guide all individual choices.

Together we must commit to the radical, science-based social change necessary to sustain Earth and all her life. This will certainly require a shared ecology ethic which universally values and enhances nature – the plants, wildlife, and ecological processes that make life possible – and that fosters individual-based community actions on behalf of natural ecosystems that are adequate to avoid biosphere collapse.

Humans are one species within a web of ecological relationships. The trees, animals, sky, and land you see is what there is to reality. We must stop killing other species, and ensure that all species have large expanses of habitats to meet their needs, as concurrently by securing the needs of all species, the well-being of the global whole is met by the presence of these large intact wildlife habitats.

Earth’s carrying capacity has been exceeded and we are in ecological overshoot. Merging climate, food, water, ocean, soil, justice, equity, and old-growth forest crises destroy ecosystems and threaten to pull down our one shared biosphere. All life not just humans have intrinsic worth. All are part of the web that together constitutes the living Earth. Human activities that threaten the whole by destroying the parts will need to be restrained.

[Ecology is the meaning of life.](#) Truth, justice, equity, and sustainability are the ideals whereby ecology is maintained. Universal embrace of an ecology ethic before the biosphere collapses is all that really matters.

Ecology Ethics

In general an ecology ethic requires a profound shift in global consciousness to re-embrace our oneness with nature. Recognition of global ecology ethics begins with deep reflection upon and acceptance of ecological and other truths. Ecological truth exists. We need clean water to survive, land can only support so many people, we are all one human species, and there are no invisible ghosts in the sky ruling over us – just the nature from which we have

evolved.

All we have is each other, kindred species, ecosystems and the biosphere.

Humanity is one species – separated by religious, class and tribal myths – yet utterly dependent upon ecosystem habitats. Love of other peoples and species, and of nature, truth, justice, and equity, are the only lasting basis for global ecological sustainability.

The ethical measure of a person is the degree to which they serve these ecological truths in their daily actions. An ethical ecological life requires living within nature without destroying it, and given historical environmental decline, that one is actually contributing to the regeneration of nature. A global ecology ethic also critically includes a sense of enoughness. There are limits to personal consumption in order that all basic needs of humans and other species are met, and that the biosphere thus remains intact.

Many years ago I wrote: “God is truth. Truth is Earth. Thus Earth is God.” I was trying to communicate that sacredness aligns with truthfulness, and that the most truthful of all observations is that we need nature. Moving beyond belief in ghosts in the sky that judge us as our primary moral center, humanity would be well served by ethics that embraces the spirituality found within nature.

Aldo Leopold’s classic Land Ethic was foundational in reemergence in Western society of knowledge long known by indigenous peoples of how to avoid destroying your habitat. Yet it must be expanded to better serve the needs of the entire global ecological system through maintenance of all natural ecosystems in a manner that stresses freedom, fairness, and justice.

The ecology ethic is about [individual actions that maintain and restore ecosystems](#). Each of us is best judged by the balance sheet of whether our cumulative actions serve or destroy nature. Whether the sum total of humanity’s ecological balance sheet remains within the bounds of the scientific requirements for maintaining the biosphere will determine whether together we avoid global ecosystem collapse (and much excruciating pain including the rise of authoritarian demagoguery and other widespread suffering).

An individual’s ecological ethicalness is determined by whether the impacts of their existence positively impact natural ecosystems or not. Whether your sum impact upon ecology is positive or negative determines whether you are part of the disease or the cure afflicting your home.

An act is right to the extent that it increases the well-being of nature. And it is wrong, even evil, if nature is diminished. It follows that a crucial measure of the ethicalness of each human being is whether in sum your actions increase the welfare of natural ecosystems or not.

Only widespread embrace of such an ecology ethic can now save Earth and humanity.

Ecology Ethics and Personal Action

What does this notion of embracing an ecology ethic personally mean in practice? It starts with the impacts of your lifestyle and daily decisions upon natural ecosystems. There are so many things that you can avoid or limit in order to reduce your environmental impact, and

that you can do to protect and allow natural ecosystems to expand and heal. And it doesn't require you to become a saint, just that you act to limit the totality of your impact upon Earth.

There are so many positive steps one can and must take if we are all to survive and thrive. Limit yourself to one child. Sell your car. Return to the land to produce food and restore ecosystems. Eat less or no meat, and local organic foods. Travel via air infrequently if at all. Protect and restore old forests, make love and share, revolt by embracing green liberty. And reject over-consumption as the meaning of life, instead valuing fairness, truth, and nature.

Bear witness to ecocide, highlight ecosystem collapse, propose and implement sufficient ecological science-based solutions. Favor deep experience, community, nature, and learning over more stuff. Consume only as much individually as is [fairly available universally for all](#). Know [how much is enough](#) and how to share. Embrace the here and now of the living Earth, to which you – like all naturally evolved animals – are an integral part, and return to upon death.

Such an ecology ethic in action is the new categorical imperative if together we are to avoid abrupt climate change and global ecological collapse. We need to embrace this change personally as we vociferously persuade others, as if our lives depend upon it, to do so as well. It does.

[Go back to the land](#), returning to nature to once again make her your home.

Society's Way Back to Nature

Protection and restoration of large, enveloping natural ecosystems is the penultimate task of all remaining time. It is critical for human survival and well-being that our population centers remain surrounded by lush natural and semi-natural ecosystems. That is, humans can only live sustainably within a sea of nature. We are at risk of fragmenting and surrounding nature with our works.

Life is all about [green liberty](#) – maintaining our environment and all life's well-being as we remain radically free. Centuries of advancement in human rights and welfare are at risk as climate and ecosystem collapse are met with authoritarianism.

Specific ecological policy actions required to remain free and ensure nature remains the context for humanity can only be based upon the individual ecology ethic of us all multiplied by billions as we come together to return to nature. There are multitudes of actions that society must take as a whole if Earth is to remain habitable.

The threats posed by global climate and ecosystem collapse are leading more than ever to the need to end our current state of perma-war and [descent into authoritarianism](#). We must [stop glorifying war murders](#) and their perpetrators, and demobilize globally in order to address the far greater threat of abrupt climate change and ecosystem collapse

Stopping the violence waged upon natural systems will require [urgent measures to reduce human fertility](#). We have our incentives all wrong in terms of family size. There must be real advantages granted to individuals that have one child, and real incremental costs imposed for each additional birth, in order that families internalize the burden their growth places upon our shared habitat. Educating all children equally and free contraception are essential as well.

Greater fairness in wealth distribution (not equality, some who work hard and are smart will have more, but much reduced extremes) including a universal basic income to ensure all basic human needs are met is a must. The festering wound of abject poverty for billions as several individuals control half of Earth's wealth will never allow for global ecological sustainability.

We will require substantial resources to control the run-away growth machine consuming natural being. The magnitude of financing required can only come from making peace and dismantling the war industry, and by greater equity in the sharing of Earth's bounty. Massive diplomacy through re-invigorated international institutions is required to find and make the necessary compromises required to demobilize the war machine and to divert costs of war-making into nature, people, and community making.

Only through ending war and greater sharing can Earth's salvation become reality.



Make Love Not War

With the proceeds from the ill-gotten Congressional-Military-Industrial complex, a massive sustained program of green peace can be waged. Massive employment programs to rebuild natural ecosystems and [transition our agriculture to a sustainable basis](#) can be launched. Science, art, and education that nurture our soil, wetlands, oceans, waters, forests, and air can be given the human and other resources they demand.

[Abrupt climate change looms](#). Our shared atmosphere has been so polluted that burning will have to stop. All burning. Now. This will require substantial reduction in energy demand through efficiency, sharing, and living more simply. Failure to do so will destroy the biosphere and end being. Each of us are called upon to dramatically reduce our use of automobiles and airplanes, to grow and eat higher quality and more ethical food, and to live in smaller homes. And in so doing our personal ecological balance sheet will be much improved.

Commit Yourself to Ecological Truth

Workable solutions to climate change and broad-based environmental decline exist – including ending fossil fuels, protecting and restoring ecosystem, [making love not war](#), [reducing population and inequity](#), and [establishing a steady state economy](#) – but it is not going to be easy. There are no easy answers to avoid global ecosystem collapse. Yet the longer we wait, the more limited our options, and the increased possibility that it is too late and our end days are full of [tremendous horrors of our own making](#).

Collectively taking the actions required to sustain the biosphere will require [free thinking and commitment to the truth](#). Numerous societal forces such as organized religion, intersectionality, nationalism, and economic class enslave humanity and murder people, species and Earth for elite profit, absent gods, prejudice, and nanny nations. Resisting [god pollution](#) and other societal myths is a requirement for re-embracing all that is natural, decent, and good.

We need to quickly change our ways personally and societally to embrace an ecology ethic, which includes a nature based spirituality. We are all one human family, entirely dependent

upon ecosystems, kindred species, and each other for life and well-being. The establishment of ritual to encapsulate spirituality found in the natural world is the natural and truthful way to experience and serve the divine.

Gaia - the Earth System - is god-like and the giver of all life, the mother's womb from which all life flows, a loving but firm nurturer, that provides as long as her rules - and duties of her children - are recognized and respected. Gaia is spirituality that matters, because it is based upon truthful observation, not ancient and irrelevant god myths. Worshiping Earth and her life speaks to the challenges of ecocide, collapsing ecosystems, justice and equity, and truthfully sustaining global ecology, her peoples, and all life.

Truth, love, life, nature, and ecology are the only bases of a meaningful, knowledge based ethics and spirituality that liberate rather than control, that create not destroy.

[Abrupt climate change and ecosystem collapse are a global ecological emergency](#) that threatens all lives very survival, thus resistance to such ecocide is self-defense. If we are to be sustained, Earth's family will one day soon rise up all at once and end war, poverty, injustice, and abuse of children, women and Earth; to embrace a future of green liberty.

It is time for the whole world to come together in Earth Revolution based upon a shared ecology ethic to achieve sustained ecosystems, global human rights, lasting peace, and economic fairness. This is the very definition of justice.

As long as together we pull breath there is hope we can sustain Earth, but realistically the state of ecosystems and the biosphere is grim and worsening. We act courageously and resolutely based upon the requisite ecologically ethical conduct and our combined knowledge or we face final global ecological collapse.

The meaning of life is sustained ecology, radical freedom, free-thinking, truth and justice, and loving all life like kin. Everyone, the whole human family, will be green and free. And enjoy decent lives as we and all species live forever in global ecological grace.

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