



# Chapter One

## The Earthly Dance of Interconnection

### Moving Earth and Flowing Flesh

At any moment, you are much more than you probably imagine yourself to be, since you are an earthbody. An earthbody isn't "yours," it's the world's. Despite cultural biases, you don't "have" this body. You are part of a dynamic process that we might call "earthbodying," if we weren't so used to referring to ourselves with nouns. Earthbodies are sensual, perceptual and feeling conductors through which richer meaning flows than we can grasp intellectually. The world to which I referred is also not properly a noun, but more a verb, a process, too. The currents moving through these bodies are dynamic processes. Both the unfolding of the world and our bodies happens within a sensual richness that weaves diverse energies. We build machines that monitor all sorts of physical inputs and often believe this is a model of what our perceiving bodies tell us. Our senses, however, are not mere sensors. The senses infiltrate and are infiltrated by each perceptual experience saturated with layers and layers of significance. While you have been reading this first paragraph, the imagined image of a robed Socrates speaking a few thousand years ago, the shifting of the clouds overhead, or the expanse of a night sky, the collapse of a city in an earthquake, or of a building under the implosive impact of a highjacked jetliner, the memory of a relative who spoke to you of strange thoughts, the longing for a distant love might have been part of the interconnected reverberations of the words for you. Many of these layers of sense are personal to you and but many are shared by the conjurings of my words and the sense of the objects to which I refer. Many of the primary meanings of even seemingly unrelated terms, however, are the senses of things taught to you by natural beings, whether of flow from water, solidity from rock, flight from birds. Words enmeshed speak a meshing world. No expressions are simple or static.

We shape the world since it is indeterminate and fluctuating as it flows forth. The world shapes us since we are indeterminate and fluctuating as we flow forth. We are only a node in a vast field of energies and meanings. Perceiving is an art. We take in the world more or less gracefully, more or less expressively, and more

or less sensitively. There is a minimum we gain through perception in order to function in an environment. However, there is an unreachable maximum that our body gleans and dreams from the world. This book will explore our bodies as a place of enlacement among varied forces, some in our control, some not. There are no bodies for us without the other bodies with which we're interwoven. There are no bodies without the world of which they are a resonance. These ongoing currents comprise earthbodies.

In our modern sophistication, we believe that we know that our experience of motion is relative to a frame of reference. We are smug in the knowledge that although the earth rotates at great speed, we can't feel it, given that everything is moving at the same speed. Our intellectual constructions afford us a taken-for-granted security that allows us to discount other strange feelings. Yet, experience is richer and less stable than the apparent rational lawfulness of existence, if we pay attention to nuances. The abstract and general notion never fully fits the particular, except insofar as vital parts of its identity are discounted. Cultures, personal rites of passage, and even moments of a lively spirit alter our sense of things radically, let alone altered states of experience in illness, in war, during catastrophes, in moments of ecstasy, in inspiration, or love. After my neighborhood has fallen beneath bombs or I am rescued from drowning by the bravery of a swimmer plunging into the icy river or I see a Van Gogh painting, something may shift in the meaning of the world. The everyday experience fluctuates just as much, if we hearken to it. The power of the words you are reading, if they move you, very much funnel a deep and enlivening movement of the total earth through your being. The pouring rain, the blowing branches, the speeding cars, the soaring birds, the jostling crowds don't stand against an utterly still backdrop and stable foundation. All this movement infuses the world and draws from the world. The world rocks, and rolls. It is a high meditative art to experience absolute quiet, stillness and stability. Without this effort, and even within it, we are always impelled by myriad trajectories crisscrossing through us from the world.

Earthbodies are of a flesh that moves with this movement of the world. Earthbodies insinuate themselves into this larger rhythm in order to be alive and add back to the larger mix their own distinctive rhythms. The image on the cover of this book is meant to represent a key notion about earthbodies. It is Matisse's famous painting, *The Dance*. As the women swirl around, forming a circle moving over the earth, the earth itself can be seen to be both a stage and yet itself a swirling circle; their steps, their motion, and their hearts echo and resonate to the motion of the circling earth beneath them, and yet are grounded—balanced—in the plane of this motion. Whether Matisse intended it or not, this image can be seen to say something about the nature of bodies in all cultures and natural settings on this globe, although always inflected differently given the locale: there is no living creature, that is unmoved by what goes on around them. This sentient responsiveness only occurs because flesh of all kinds are moving vectors within the world in a kind of circulation among things that is their real body. The marrow of things is fluid and always becoming within and through everything else as fluid.

We “are moved”—feel, think, and desire—because the whirling, spinning dance of the earth moves through the body. Its kinetic energy and centrifugal force are central to our sense of existence. The fact that gravity is the outcome of a never-ending movement is easily understandable in rational terms. However, in the depths and nuances of our earthbodies, we live the force of meanings that are logically at odds with each other. In our bones is both stillness and motion, security and restlessness. On an immediate level, we feel as though the earth is still. On a deeper level, we feel held by an embracing earth. It actively holds onto us, giving us the weight to walk, work, and love. This earth is not just inert, but a protector actively engaged with us. We also feel spun around as part of a movement of vitality. We have the feeling that life on this planet is irrepressibly lively, full of motion, since it resonates to a deeper sense of each person as part of a larger movement, a whirl, a dance whose rhythm is spun by the earth itself. The earth is also playmate. This is the ultimate source of our motivation.

This may sound fantastic to you because we have been taught to close our bodies, lock our knees, and brace ourselves for life and its tasks in such a way in our modern Western technological society that we fail to experience the pull, the tides, of the earth’s motion which stream through us. The seas are not the only tidal regions on the earth, the land tides are more subtle, and it requires an adjustment in our sensibilities—a fine tuning—to catch onto their movements and rhythms, but they are there. To open ourselves to this motion would require many changes in the ways we currently conceive ourselves, since these “normal” ideas are powerful tidal barriers which contain our natural movement and feelings of kinship with the deeper motion around us. If the jetties created by our identities as responsible adults in modern society were to be dismantled, vitality and new realms of meaning could be gained from joining these subtle yet swelling tides.

This motion of the Earth is not just “physical” motion. It’s not merely about static entities moving through a static and empty space. That is one way to see the world. The motion of the earth, like the motion of the dancers under the sky, is about a movement of identities and within identities. Motion in its fullest sense is a continual transformation that occurs within and among everything. There are areas of rest, where things can remain more stable if we carve out a controlled area in order to get certain things done. That doesn’t stop the underlying vitality of everything on the planet from entering an intercourse that gives rise to new forms, meanings, relationships, feelings, dreams, atmospheres, directions, expressions, shapes, possibilities, and even histories (yes, we can see how the past always changes, too!). If we can reveal the dance of the planet, we will see where the earth’s motion is material, but equally ideational, emotional, imaginative, spiritual, linguistic, communal, and natural. Each of these traditional dimensions is caught up in a host of other dimensions and “belongs” not to us, but to the infusing significance of the planet.

To see how it is that we are part of a dance with others, whether with our fellow human beings or with other types of beings, requires that we challenge the first barrier of our conceptual tradition: what seems logical or “the commonsensical.” Our understanding of what is logical or reasonable has long determined how

we think. We rely on “solid logic.” Matisse’s painting is not only a beautiful work of art but is also a powerful lesson about another logic. The lesson is contained in the structure of the dance. Within this canvas is portrayed the more open logic of the relation of lives and even inanimate beings on this planet in their rhythmic being. Matisse’s painted scene evokes the sense of the women dancing, circling, and being caught up in the swirling magic of the dance. Each woman follows her own steps, her own inner urgings, and the spirit of the moment as it feels to her uniquely. Yet, each is part of the spinning circular motion of the whole group.

At points, the circle of dancing women is not literally closed—hands have spread apart for this particular instant—yet fingers will find fingers again in the next moment and reclasp. Even isolated at this instant, however, the circle is unbroken because its shape, its form, is not comprised of an outline—a literally unbroken line—but rather is powerfully drawn by the vector of the interconnecting flow. The rhythm moving among the women also catches the power emanating from the earth and sky that asks to be rejoined. It offers itself by being sketched out among the women in a movement among them that flows and binds. Each woman is both separate in her own heartfelt celebration of her body and each is brought into unity with the swirling presence of all the women with the earth and sky.

This image of the dancing, celebratory women can teach us what it means to have a human body in a way that all the anatomical drawings will never begin to reveal. We have mistakenly understood our bodies through anatomy for several centuries, yet this gives us a distorted understanding of the body as fixed, the body as dead, in order to fathom its life. We can only understand the alive body through its liveliness, only understand the body’s deepest life through the life of the planet, which opens us up to our earthbodies.

One reason that the image in Matisse’s painting can lead us to a sense of our earthbodies is that it contains both a lesson in another logic and in the sense of relationship possible for moving, expressive human beings. We need to have a sense of these relationships and this other logic before we can even begin to sense the kind of bodies we are. The logic taught by these swirling women is not to be found in traditional texts of logic. Philosophers from Aristotle on have focused on *assertions* made about things and people as the locus of truth and logic. They tell us that the earth itself says nothing and “has” no truth. Only when things become “objects of predication” have they been seen to be involved in truth and logic. “Predication” as defined by philosophy, is the act of saying something about the relation of an isolated object in terms of another isolated object or property. It is seen as our crowning achievement as human beings. It gives us an analytical power that eventually leads us to be able to split atomic particles and send spaceships into the cosmos.

Yet, predication of this sort splits the event—the dance—into subject and object—into the dancer and the dance—a potentially dangerous doubling and splitting of reality that thinkers as diverse as Yeats and Nietzsche have noted with disgust. The starting point for our traditional logic is to observe entities seen in the denuded state of having been removed from the spell of the dance, once the circling

sense of existence has been vaporized by a quantitative reckoning, and once the linking through rhythm has been dispersed. Then, the dynamic quality of all things is to be reestablished rationally as “accidents” which befall things through “external relations.” The flow and the relatedness of Matisse’s dancing women, however, is neither “external” nor “accidental”: it is the heart of their being at this moment and essential to their sense of themselves and the world. This alternative logic will emerge only by exploring the sense of the body awakened to the vitality lodged within the rhythm that interconnects all living and nonliving beings into a type of song and poem, a story of an inexhaustible, never-ending odyssey. This other logic unlocks many other potential relationships for this earthbody on this planet.

Logic may well seem a silly thing to worry about in the face of global violence, governments out of touch with citizens, alienations from massive bureaucratic institutions, and the dying out of parts of the natural world. Yet, much frustration, lack of vitality, increasing anxiety, and spiritual dislocation comes from a short-circuit in the way we see ourselves. The flaw in logic concerns the way we think about our bodies and their relationship to world and to others, and is at the heart of why we don’t know ourselves. It is this lack of knowing, of feeling ourselves in this other way, as earthbodies, that leads to these current problems.

Sometimes we think we have created so many machines that they are crowding us out. Their presence and that of their by-products have come to take over the space which we humans, animals, and the natural world needed to thrive. However, the problem is not that our machines have pushed us aside, but rather the problem is that *we have ourselves become machines*. We take ourselves and make our bodies into machines by what we do to our senses and imaginations. Once our rhythm in an intertwined dance with others is broken and our place in a spiral with the planet lost, we are left to create a new relationship as a cog in a larger engineered scheme of existence. The vitality and moving interconnections appear only to those who can sense and imagine in a dancing way. The machine doesn’t feel the fluid motion, the rhythm, and belonging with others and can’t move in sync with it. Insofar as we fail to sense and feel these rhythms, we are machines stuck in a larger machine.

As we will explore in this book, the power of the mind as integrated within the body is greater than we usually believe. Even though we tend to overvalue the mind’s worth in other silly ways as an independent power, we still don’t seem to realize that the body/mind (as the Zen Buddhists call it) can create new realities. It does so, not out of itself, but in how it allows the transformation of the planet and other beings with which we can interweave in their identity. Through our attitudes, which are partly ideas, partly emotions, imagination, etc., we can allow changes in our experience. We can change the look, even the overall appearance, and the sense of things around us. We invented the machine, not as a separate tool, but as what we were to become and what our planet was to become—a factory containing more factories within it. Machines are separate from their environment in the sense that they are not in relation with them: machines grind in a certain direction that is their function. This is what makes them machines, this unswerving following of a set path of operation and function. Even self-regulating ones have

set options. As humans tend to become separate from interrelation with their environment, self-contained, and unswervingly functioning in set directions, we become another variety of machine. After we ourselves have become machines in so much of our daily life, then we hunger to create other machines to reinforce our set purposes, to thrill us with their efficiency, to keep us company. We like to have them join in our work as manageable partners, because we have entered their realm of efficiency, unswervingness, and indifference. Of course, the lust for the machine life and the actual proliferation of machines gives rise to other problems.

Exactly how we are machines can only be understood bit by bit. The first clue, however, is in looking at the dancing logic of Matisse's women and contrasting it with the common sense logic of a pervasive sense of rationality, the logic of yes or no, of true and false, of one or zero—the binary logic of the machine and the computer. We have become so accustomed to this logic that we are unaware of its sinister power. If our “objective” logic starts with the basic assumption that each entity has the property of being itself versus everything else in time and space, then it implies to us that out of these separate entities collected on the surface of the earth and throughout the cosmos, we must be the ones to articulate their relationships. These other “helpless” beings (driven by necessities external to them) are seen as locked in an indifference to each other, isolated from each other, and compelled into random, mechanical, and meaningless collisions with each other. We are the one thing from this vast collection that can stand back and measure all the others. Doing this, we believe we are the only truly free beings. We believe ourselves to be self-determining in a world locked in slavery to deterministic chains of cause and effect. This sense of our unique “human dignity” is the basis of much of our Western spirituality, religion, and moral thinking.

However, if there is a dancing connection of which we are already part and can witness, then we are breaking up this set of relations of which all beings are a part in order to step back and tear things apart and then put them back together according to ideas we deem sensible. We assume that the world is just a jumble, a chaos, because it doesn't seem to naturally fit our traditional logical categories. However, we might be missing the proper identities of the other beings in the world around us that are forged fragiley in the rhythm of dance, in the fluidity of transformations of which we are a small part. Not only that, but we may have other identities as part of this dance that we lose sight of when we break off its rhythm and disconnect. Not only that, but the answers we believe we arrive at independently from our special vantage point may have been insights first given to us by being part of the dance and interchange with our partners. Even worse, for all the human clarity we obtain from isolating ourselves and speaking from that vantage point, we may be losing some of the insight, meaning, and wisdom we had as dancers being infiltrated with different kinds of felt communications—ones which might still resonate in our earthbodies when we learn to listen and feel them. If we are tearing things apart in our misguided effort to see them better, this is a mean trick to impose on the planet and to play on ourselves. This is why we may call logic either “nurturing” or “diabolical”, depending on whether it is the logic of the

earth and sky or the logic of a certain kind of sorcery that calls itself “pure objectivity,” but may not be what it seems.

### Dancing versus Diabolical Logic

The logic with the sober face of “pure rationality” hides a diabolical grin. This latent intent is masked, however, by the platitudes that make up “common sense.” The “cardinal rule” of this logic—the “law of non-contradiction”—says that “*a* is *a*” and correlatively that “*a* is not *b*.” What could be more simple? What could be any more obviously true—*objectively* true? To put this in more concrete terms, I could say the first rule shows me that I am I—or that Popeye the sailor man is Popeye the sailor man, as he proudly sings. The second rule can remind me that I am not Popeye but rather that I am me, or that I am me and not that tree outside my window. This is the obvious sense that is at the heart of *binary* logic: yes or no, *a* or *b*, true or false. Psychologically, this is very reassuring, because our identity seems clear and distinct, given and identifiable. Whether personally or politically, I can think of my own interest and my own identity without worrying about how much I am caught up in your identity, whether as my friend or spouse or as a member of another ethnic, economic, or national group. I just am whomever I am, no matter what happens to you or to that group, and I am free to treat others in whatever way seems best or right to me.

It is the either/or—two value—system that drives our computers, becoming more and more the law of our world and the way we think about ourselves and life on this planet. We are told that we couldn’t think or make sense of the world or communicate without these simple logical rules. Although this is true in some aspects of our lives to some extent, it is also true that we couldn’t even feel who we are or what is our connection to the environment or what is our connection to other people without the counterbalancing ever-present *logic of inclusive ambiguity and depth*. If who I am is ambiguously tied up with all the beings around me, objects, creatures, and other people, then my identity and my welfare is enmeshed inextricably with theirs. It is not merely a matter of my choice as to how I choose to think or act towards others, because whatever I do changes who they are and who I am as part of a linked being with them. This *logic of care*<sup>1</sup> among beings precedes overt recognition and decisions about how to act towards other entities, creatures, or people. It is that force in life which is overwhelmingly compelling, but we ignore both its presence and its meaning. It is because of this logic of inclusive ambiguity that we first find ourselves always fascinated by the world around us, concerned enough about anything even to notice it, to want to do things to have an impact on the world and to obtain things from the world. Since we ourselves are caught up in the world, our identity, our flow of existence only moves through the world, from the world, and back through us; we are focused always on that world. From the baby’s first very unfocused stare that is nevertheless utterly captivated, taken with the world around it, sinking into an intensity of watching this play it feels drawn to enter, *because it starts to feel there is its life*. It is only because of this logic of inclusive ambiguity that we feel any urges, desires, or motivations to join and participate in the world. That is me—the world.

There was a film made in 1986, called *Silent Running*, about the fate of the last forest and natural ecosystems. It is not about the last forests and natural ecosystems on the planet, because in the film, they are no longer here, on Earth. They have been preserved within encased biospheres and sent into space until the earth can be detoxified enough that they might be brought back to flourish again on the planet. In a sense the biospheres are the last seeds of renewal for a sterile earth. One scientist, Freeman Lowell (played with an intense desperation by Bruce Dern), is fighting to make others see the importance of the existence of these plants and animals. The viewer senses that he is fighting a losing battle on behalf of their survival. The inhabitants of the earth who initially wanted to save the wildlife and animals have come to see themselves as beings who are self-sufficient and can do fine outside a connection to nature. Freeman's crewmates can't taste any difference between synthetic rations and the tasty meals that he cooks—an effort that just seems a bother for nothing. The peace of the brooks, the beauty of the flowers, the quiet of the small animals scurrying about the forest find no echoes, no resonance, in their rhythms, in their sense of being, or in their emotions. They see Freeman's soaring as he watches a bird soar or his own sense of blossoming with life and vitality as his plants and flowers blossom, but they just "don't get it." Their logic, their constructed world of barriers and distances from other such beings who have their own rhythms, rather than those the engineers have constructed along their own specifications for machines or the social engineers have designed for their human entertainment, is so great they can't experience what Freeman experiences. What is he talking about and feeling? They make fun of him and feel he is a fool. The crew, besides Freeman, is bored and has to spend its time gambling or racing their electric cars to try to fill their feelings of emptiness. They do not feel as though they are missing some essential part of their lives and have forgotten what these other beings meant to them. They cease to care about the fate of the last trees, plants, and animals, and don't want to invest time or effort in the project of preserving and restoring them to the planet. This is a perfectly logical and understandable position in a cost/benefit analysis under the sway of the diabolical logic that considers all entities as discrete. However, by contrast, within a logic of inclusive ambiguity, these supposed benefits makes no sense, since they miss a deeper issue.

In the binary system of thinking there is me and you, or me and it: we are juxtaposed as separable identities. As long as we are separable in space and time we are distinct entities. There may be external links which connect us—chains of cause and effect, like the fact that I need to take in air or water for the chemical reactions which go on inside me and sustain my functioning, but any element that can bring about that functioning can be substituted, obtained in some other way, and used for this purpose. It does not speak to me, it is not of me, and who I am and what my life means is not comprised by its identity. If we think this way, we may think that we have enjoyed these other beings—trees, animals, flowers, or whatever—but that they were just "out there" in a space with us, external to us, that there was "us and them." In the film, it is interesting that when the orders come from Earth to abandon the project, the command is to destroy the biodomes with



nuclear explosions. Why destroy these last trees, plants, flowers, animals, streams? Doesn't this betray an unconscious recognition? A recognition that in abandoning the other creatures of the planet and our tie to them a violence is already being committed? Is it that to, cut them off from us is to cut off part of us, and to let them remain—even light years away drifting in space—would be to allow a vital part of ourselves to drift with a tie still to us, even though unacknowledged as such? There would still be drifting in space a claim upon us, a voice from within us, needing a response? That would be painful, would be a burden—the burden of the violence overt and repressed that still haunts us on some level. So, instead make the violence overt and try to obliterate that part of ourselves that we can't deal with, can't fit into neat schemes of efficiency and consumption—Nuke them! declares the space agency. It is not surprising that from this point on, *Silent Running* degenerates into a blood-bath because the original distancing of humans from nature was a violent gesture, now fully consummated. Is our current relationship to nature that much different: for many, might not the voices of the natural world be light years away?

If we have so little connection to natural beings, then we can just substitute other enjoyable objects for them and still derive the same satisfaction from these substitutes. Why we could even just create artificial dogs or orchids that were holographic or biomechanical, if we wanted to be nostalgic about the particular kind of enjoyment they had provided us! Although, strictly speaking, most who use this logic define “pleasure” (and most aspects of reality) quantitatively, so whatever gives *as much* pleasure is substitutable without any discrimination among different and possibly irreplaceable qualities of pleasures. This is a utilitarian outcome based on diabolical logic.

This fantasy is pursued in Philip K. Dick's novel, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Simulated mechanical entities substitute for the animal, insect, and plant worlds, after they have died off. The people living in this twenty-first-century world work their whole lives to save enough money to at least afford an “electric animal,” which can give them some simulation of the companionship they used to have from real animals. It wasn't until most of the species of animate beings had become extinct that people realized that without the other creatures in the web of life they lacked a sense of belonging with the planet—a sense of soaring in the sky, of gliding on the winds, of romping across the fields, of bleating, of nuzzling, of boring into things, of propelling underwater, and a myriad of other sensations shared with what the Native American peoples called “the brothers and sisters of the fourlegs, the crawling world, and the flying world.” The Native American names recognized the kinship of all creatures in a world of many dimensions. Later, we will look more closely at how animals and other living beings are part of our bodies and the sinew of the earth.

Decker, the main character of the novel, comes to hate his electric sheep because it doesn't awake in him these same feelings, because these feelings were responses engendered by communicative relationships with these other beings, even though he, like others, hadn't noticed this at the time. Decker, suddenly realized one day that electric sheep or other biomechanical animals “had no ability to appreciate

the existence of another” (*ES*, 37). In appreciating the existence of the other, there is an openness to the other, a felt relationship set up between beings of differing species, and a recognition in the eyes, in the ears, in the nostrils, in the fears, the affections or dislikes, and in the excitements of the other creature. Then I see myself and feel myself through the rabbit’s scampering away or in the dog’s contentedly rubbing up against my thigh as it naps beside me on the couch. With this opening up of dimensions of mutuality among beings, the dancing logic of blurred boundaries and identities unfolds. There has to be a meeting—an encounter—among beings who have their own place within existence; then the creatures, including the human ones, get to venture out through the lines of connections among creatures to wander in other spaces, whether for the instant soaring above in the air as the bird flies overhead or feeling the airy playfulness in their chirping as they swoop around one another friskily. If we identify or create other creatures to be just enslaved functionaries of the human ego, we lose our ability to expand ourselves through these other creaturely realms in the flow of our kindred flesh with them.

The circle of the dance in which there is overlap of awareness and shared being in the open, earthbody logic, had been lost in this projected fictional future. Instead the rational logic of manipulating all entities, even other living ones, as if they were merely discrete units that can be utilized for certain functions, dominates. Decker is alone in his world as he realizes that there is a level of his own being that had been intertwined with the life of these animals, even if logically it didn’t make sense. Now, electric equivalents of animals that make the same noises or move the same way or behave similarly give only a display of what the animals were. Being surrounded by them allows his fellow citizens to *project* sentiments upon these simulations. Sentiments are generalized ideas of certain emotional states, but do not arise in response to a unique situation. With these android animals, there is no relationship, no deeper reciprocity, only the illusion of what had been an encounter with another. Instead, there is a programmed propulsive display, but this offers no mutuality or reciprocal relationship coming from these electronic creatures. The sheep will wag its tail not because it is glad to spot its human companion, but according to the inexorable grinding along of its self-propelled program. In thinking about this determinate display versus the free play of two beings responding to each other, Decker realizes his electric sheep is merely an example of what he calls “the tyranny of the object” and is disgusted by it (*ES*, 37).<sup>2</sup> It is a tyranny because it just pushes along indifferently, using repetition as a poor substitute for responsiveness and creativity. The interaction it invites is also only a mechanical repetition of a set number of events. To truly *encounter* another being is to retain the possibility of being surprised by them and of being called upon to be in some way different than one is accustomed to be. If it is a true meeting, either of the two may be thrown off its habitual response to be taken to some new possible interaction: the formerly vicious dog or horse suddenly responds to the gentle voice and touch of the person and expresses friendliness, or the formerly distrusting and cruel person is touched by the horse’s nuzzle or the dog’s wiggle and suddenly smiles and melts into affection. This is why the symbol of the dance is so appropriate: each step calls for responding to others and the environment. The

dance calls for each participant to be creative and to improvise the rhythm in an unfolding life to which all contribute in their own way.

Even in the presence of the quietest of our interlocutors in nature or of the most ethereal dancing partners, one still can be called to account and be given the chance to transform. A temper tantrum exploding in the hushed presence of a grove of redwood trees can suddenly be interrupted by the dawning sense of one's irrationality, pettiness, and impatience—maybe even intolerance—in the face of these mute presences whose towering quiet calm can be overwhelming, if heeded. Or, perhaps, one starts to cry with the pain of a personal loss in love or friendship on the beach. The ocean waves answer with their tales in their crashing, sighing, roaring rhythm about endless loss and gain being accepted with strength and the determination to endure. Feeling, seeing, and hearing this ocean song may change the tears into an accepting smile or nod of acceptance to flowing with change. It certainly has engendered this response for countless people throughout global history. For another example, many people struggling with their sorrows, anxieties, or ego concerns have found an inner peace suggested to them by the solid rocks placed in the sand in the eloquent Japanese Zen gardens, just as the rocks and stones sitting massively within an imposing mountain range whisper to the hiker or climber to resonate to their stillness, calm, and balance.

Whether in the dialogue with these quietest fellow beings around us or with our dog's licking of our face, while we sob in depression about the daily cares of consumer life we find ourselves brought back to more important and life-affirming feelings. We slip from our self-containment into a tide that flows from the supposed "other" beings around us all the time. Certainly, the worst conclusion of the either/or mentality of the diabolical logic is that often people even seem to have no experience that they are only a human being as caught up within the circulation of human feelings that washes among us all, from our smallest family circles to the largest global web. Yet, even the person most rigidly circumscribed in their function and conformist feelings can be shaken out of this role by even a quiet unwavering glance from another person, as when the dying Christmas in Faulkner's *Light in August* defeats the lynch mob by the intensity of his glare back at their blind hatred. They feel their objectification of him as a merely hated thing overcome by his regard:

For a long moment he looked up at them with peaceful and unfathomable and unbearable eyes. Then his face, body, all seemed to collapse . . . the man seemed to rise into their memories forever and ever. They are not to lose it, in whatever peaceful valleys, beside whatever and placid streams of old age, in the mirroring face of whatever children they will contemplate old disasters and newer hopes. *It will be there, musing, quiet, steadfast, not fading and not particularly threatening, but of itself alone serene, of itself alone triumphant.*<sup>3</sup>

The last look from Christmas as he dies from their brutality has pierced them in a way never to be undone, as described by Faulkner. This passage is so powerful that it is quoted at even greater length by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* (it is his

italicizing of the last sentence that I repeat here), when he is trying to describe the power of the look of another person. Even these characters, locked into themselves and not experiencing any connection to their victim, can be shaken. However, all of us all of the time are called out beyond ourselves, but like the lynch mob in this passage—who didn't encounter this man as a man until this climactic instant—we may not see the other person's or the other being's appeal to us when we are locked into ourselves.

The encounter with all levels of beings calls us to match our rhythms to larger ones or divergent ones. If attended to, the rhythm of encounter helps keep us from being trapped within a world in which we have not only treated all other beings as mere objects to be used, but in so doing have become trapped ourselves as merely a bounded, separated, and functioning object. Philip K. Dick suggests this when Decker becomes confused in chasing androids because he realizes most people have become androids themselves; they are just well-functioning mechanisms.

### **Addicted to Self-Laceration**

There is a problematic ethics that corresponds to the diabolical logic. In the logic of discrete entities to be approached from a distance and exploited for their use, we are led ethically to a utilitarian concern about "the environment": since we are "tied" to the world through chains of cause and effect, for our own well-being we should be concerned that we preserve those beings which are the causes of the effects that we need for the quality of our lives. For example, if we need oxygen to survive, to power our metabolic processes necessary for maintaining our own biochemistry, then we should be concerned with the demise of the rain forests because they might be essential in providing oxygen to the rest of the biosphere. However, this reasoning also presumes that if we could find other comparable sources of oxygen that would allow our continued, comparable functioning, then this would be equally suitable. If we could find a new chemical reaction that would be cheap and efficient, and not produce other unwanted side-products, then these oxygen creating and releasing manufacturing processes could substitute for this aspect of rain forests (there would be other functions too for which we would have to find equivalents). In an ethics of utility, there is nothing wrong with this. It is a matter of managing functions and attaining desired results.

However, this logic, and its resulting reasoning and ethics, dictates a certain sense of who we are. It is assumed that we are separable beings: that our minds are not different minds because they had barking, nuzzling moments of dogs become part of their own makeup; that our imaginations were not colored by the purple iris or white daisies outside our door that opened new creative possibilities; or that our capacity to remember was not lined with the soft light, bracing smell, and springy feel of pine trees that gave our memories new recesses and nuances. It assumes that our imaginations can still take the same flights without perhaps the crystalline visions of stars and deep night above us, or of myriad species of elaborately colored birds flitting about (or at least somewhere to which we can journey and experience

the encounter), or that human patience is not interconnected with the slow gaits of tortoises or the way in which a stalking lion or fox can wait silently and stealthily for its prey. As separable, each being has its own set of functions. It is a matter of manipulating from the outside the ways we can ensure the functioning that we desire. If the process entails that different beings intermingle and are transformed in who they are through their new interrelation, this is undetectable in utilitarian assessments. If we are like the women in Matisse's painting who become inseparable from the dance, changed by being part of it, this doesn't compute in utilitarian calculations.

What if the sweetness of the mountain air, or the dank richness of the early morning sea breeze on the dock, or the bracing smoky smell of logs on the fire on a cold, wintry night, allowed us to breath as fully alive beings who have a sense of meaningfully being located on this planet with myriad enriching qualities that infiltrate who we are? So, we can feel like we are buoyantly arising like mountains or flowing like oceans or fecund like the woods. Perhaps experiencing myriad qualities is as essential to the sense of "breathing in life" as breathing is for furnishing materials for oxidation? Perhaps the human mind can think certain thoughts or the human imagination can cast forth certain images or the human feeling can sense certain nuances of significance or the human passions can be drawn in certain compelling directions—or even the physical functioning can contribute to our sense of well-being—because they have drawn meaning and vitality from our being a part of other beings?

For a diabolical logic, this sounds like lunacy. We are what we are—*a* is *a*, a person is a person, and not a tree, flower, or bird. For this logic, our functioning is our functioning. We can think, feel, experience emotions, remember, imagine, intuit, and can be trained, engineered, and maintained by numerous strategies in these functions as long as we take care of ourselves. It is our doing. The founder of logic in our Western tradition is usually seen as Aristotle, who first proposed the rules of syllogistic logic,<sup>4</sup> outlined a system of classification to separate all the plants and animals in their distinctive species and class, and also offered what came to be the most famous traditional definition of human being as "the rational animal." Furthermore, rationality was seen to be a separate faculty of the soul—different from perceiving or moving or feeling emotion or imagining, etc. This kind of thinking has become our "common sense." We feel we are special and different as thinking beings. We believe that we have all these separate functions that some scientists even hope to "localize" as operations of different aspects of the mind tied to separable physical sites in the brain. So we see ourselves "thinking" like an automobile "moves." We see ourselves thinking as a higher-order combination of subordinate operations like sensing, as the automobile moves because of the sum of component functions like the spark plugs firing and valves opening and closing. This makes logical sense.

But what if we're giving ourselves too much credit? We could be seen to be arrogantly blind to the *interdependence* of all of our functioning within the functioning of the world and its myriad aspects. Do *we* really think? Where do our thoughts come from? Was Cezanne just crazy or was he rather sensitive to an interplay through his open body—his waiting hand, mind, and spirit—when he stated that he no longer

had the feeling that he was painting Mont Sainte-Victoire, but rather felt that the mountain was painting itself through him? Most cultures have felt that the earth speaks, that the wind speaks, the sun, moon, stars whisper to us, that animals, whether lion or deer or soaring birds bring us messages or at least are the living bearers of certain senses about the world that we can then come to recognize and put into human speech. It is interesting that the philosopher who currently has the largest public following in the United States, Richard Rorty, starts a recent book, *Solidarity, Irony, and Contingency*, with the statement that “only man speaks.”<sup>25</sup> For us, this seems obvious. For many peoples, this would seem crazy—the statement of a crazed group of people who could not sense what was around them. It isn’t accidental that Rorty’s conclusions lead to a sense that all we can do is express irony about the fact that we can’t really share our experience or know the world, and that the only thing we have in common is the experience of pain. This is what a Native American wise person would predict about a culture that thinks everything else is silent and dead, and they are alone and have to function from within themselves, self-propelled, and isolated. How can people who see the world in this way be left with anything other than the basic experience of pain, skepticism, and isolation?

To say that we are the thinking animals, as if thinking were some property, some performance that was solely our doing, is to claim that we are self-contained and self-sufficient in our functioning once certain external needs have been met. This way of thought led Descartes to solidify this idea even further with his declaration, “I think, therefore I am.” This has been taken as the bare bones of truth and self-identity for centuries for Western culture, to the extent that we now declare a person dead when there is no evident brain activity, when we seem sure that no thinking is occurring. It is interesting then to ponder the words of a miner who was interviewed by a health department official I knew about the miner’s claim about his “black-lung” disease. He spoke about the experience of having been trapped by a mine cave-in. He was pinned in a very small space with no light. After lying there for days, he confessed that although he knew that he was still thinking, he was no longer sure if he existed, if he still was alive, or if he was still the person he had been. His situation was drastically different than that of Descartes, who was sitting by the fire, at leisure for once in his life, wearing his dressing gown, and overlooking the city below him. Doesn’t thinking give us a security about our existence because of the context in which it occurs? Thinking thoughts is a different kind of guarantee of certainty, selfhood, having a foundation in life, when sitting in a comfy apartment than it is when lying in the dark at the bottom of a collapsed coal shaft. Is it a self-generated activity or one that arises from a certain environment within a set of relations? Perhaps human functioning and human characteristics move in certain ways or to certain degrees or with certain directions given the context. In a logic of discrete entities—of “yes or no” properties—there is not room for “more or less,” or for other entities somehow also being part of our activity, or expressing something about *themselves* in our thoughts, in our painting, or in this text.

Of course, once we have unleashed the cutting diabolic logic upon the world, like all other diabolical creations, it doesn’t just stop at some arbitrary point. So, in

considering the power of this logic to cut off a deeper link with the natural environment, we invoked the specter of the oppositional logic of “us” versus “them,” but this logic doesn’t stop there. Why even keep the “we” or “us” human beings? If all entities are discrete beings, then I am I and you are you, and the sense of “we” or “us” as enlaced in who we are together is also gone. Not only can I substitute for flowers or hedgehogs or oaks some other being that would function in the same way, I can substitute for you too any other entity that could function in a comparable way. Human beings become objects for one another and somehow the other people’s feelings are not part of my feelings, the other’s thoughts are not part of my thoughts. The fantasy of replacing troublesome partners with a robot or an android is appealing to many.

However, as we look out on others as obstacles or tools or even alluring objects to be possessed or collected or enjoyed, then we are using logical robot eyes like the mechanisms portrayed in *Westworld* or the original *Terminator* movie. In both these movies the director properly conveyed the sense that if there were humanoid machines, they would be confronted by the natural world, by animals, and even other humans as “sensory inputs” to be deciphered in their rational significance. The scene encountered would not *involve* the robot as part of it, as somehow being absorbed into and a part of its emerging meaning, the robot would in a distant and detached way survey the input logically and have to *decide* its meaning and import. We see in the movie that each of the robot’s perceptions shows up in its internal input screen as a spectacle of different possible, logically alternative meanings. For example, if the robot “sees” a man standing by a tree in front of it, a series of possible interpretations is generated at the bottom of the screen, say, for example, (1) potential enemy concealing a weapon, (2) a possible source of information when tortured or threatened, (3) a diversionary focus of interest distracting your attention, (4) an object inessential to achieving the mission, (5) a potential hostage to be used for bargaining, etc. The machine then keeps scanning and reasoning, until it decides on the logical explanation that seems to fit the most facts. Although this example focuses on the warlike interests of these two robots, the same type of vision could scan other “people objects” as possible buyers for a product, possible alluring sexual objects, possible suppliers of some service, possible votes in the upcoming election, and so on, in more everyday projects that color our vision. Notice, how the other person becomes meaningful mainly in light of how they fit into achieving a goal. We would have no immediate connection among us other than as objects of utility.

Of course, all of us experience this robot vision of others at times, and probably could approach chronically this level of distance and being cut off from an ambiguously inclusive identity with others insofar as we allow the constant brain-washing of society to carry us along as mere functionaries and consumers. Then, the way all beings, and certainly other people, immediately speak to our senses, emotions, imaginations, and intuitions in a way that is “under the skin” is lost in the alienating attitudes we assume and promote. The palpable interconnectedness starts to seem to be fantastic and unreal.

This is how we become machines at the price of our humanity. The most frightening example of this is how humans become the killing machines we call

“serial killers.” These people report feeling a great distance from the experience around them, as if they are watching themselves and others from afar. However, even these people can’t maintain indefinitely this life like the robots we described, because eventually this extreme detachment causes overwhelming anguish. They kill in an attempt to rejoin this reality that has become so distant that it seems unreachable. In killing, they get to experience the feelings of others: the horror and pain of their victims that becomes so palpable, so charged, it can jump the gap they’ve erected from others. So, at least there is still a sense something is missing, something that they are trying desperately to regain. Their detachment motivates and allows for their horrific actions. Another extreme example is the behavior of the SS troops in World War II: those troops assigned to mass slaughter, such as machine-gunning Jewish victims all day, had to be given alcohol constantly. This allowed them to numb the natural feelings of connection we all feel to other human and living beings that tears at our own feelings, because in killing others we are killing part of us. To keep sustaining such violation the SS troops had to have a means to block out these feelings.

The most chilling aspect of how this diabolical logic leads us to confront the world as separable from our own being and thus distant from our selves is not the extremes to which some people’s psyches are pushed, but rather the overall attitude of our society. In the book *Ceremony*, author Leslie Marmon Silko describes our modern American consumerist society as a “destroyer,” one which destroys “the feeling that people have for each other.” She says the nature of the destruction is to “gut human beings while they are still breathing, to hold the heart still beating so that the victim will never feel anything again. When they finish, you watch yourself from a distance and you can’t even cry.”<sup>6</sup> The knife that performs this surgery is the cutting blade of diabolic logic: me versus you; us versus them; us versus it; my plans versus my feelings. It rationally divides and opposes that which is one. Silko comments that when destroyers surround us, and “the sensations of living” have been silenced, then “only destruction is capable of arousing a sensation, the remains of something alive in them.” Our society as a whole may be approaching some milder form of the syndrome that plagues serial killers, when only violent sensations inflicted on others make them feel anything. Maybe only the suffering we cause others allows us as a society to break through our detachment and feel ourselves to be a part of the world around us.

The name “diabolical” logic is appropriate, given the older meanings of this term for being devilish. The Greek roots go back to references of slander, of denying or distorting something about someone that is manifest. The power to negate the palpable seems a most devilish power. Perhaps this logic denies what we feel in our bones, in our hearts, in our troubled dreams at night, and in fervent poetical visions of beauty: that we are connected, are not so separable from those people, animals, living beings, and things around us. In a brilliant scene in *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoyevsky has Ivan,—the tortured Karamazov brother who wants to believe in something life affirming, but can’t find it amidst the atrocities of this world,—confront the devil. It turns out that the devil is not a bad fellow. He is just the “spirit of negation.” He denies,



cuts off what could go together, and is that skeptical power that makes us lose ourselves. From this humble movement of separation comes much horror.

Throughout *The Brothers Karamazov*, characters feel compelled to deny their feelings and their sense of belonging. Dostoyevsky parallels this theme with that of self-laceration. Characters cut themselves. This is the final cut of the diabolical logic—the one we perform on ourselves, also on our own inner worlds. When Descartes says he is only his thinking, he also says I am not my body, I am not my senses, I am not my emotions, I am not my fantasies, etc. He cuts himself off from these dimensions of who he is and from any sense that his being is a being shared with other people, creatures, or things. This really is no different from the old man Karamazov’s “buffoonery”—when he takes pleasure in denigrating and violating everything he is. Then he glories in this debasement. He is distancing himself from his body-self caught up with others in sensual and passionate life. This becomes an object of derision. As mere object, it is not he any longer. Nor is it different from Sonia’s declaration that she will no longer be the vulnerable human being who is wracked with the pains and passions of being caught up in connection with other human beings. Sonia slams the door on her hand—keeping her pain internal and private. She has slammed closed the way to others and of others to her.

Given the either/or logic, we choose something at the price of relinquishing other aspects of reality, including, if necessary, our own reality. We cover this with the cynical resignation that “you can’t have everything.” Why this self-lacerating gloom? Why deny ourselves what we are within the circle of the dance? Perhaps *we need to be everything*, at least to some degree, because everything within us and without us dances with everything else in assuming its full vitality and reality.

## Earthbody Sense

To argue that our culture has long been missing a vital part of its own reality, that it has inflicted upon itself the damage of the diabolical logic, may seem counter-intuitive. We just said that perhaps we are denying that other humans, other living beings, and even inanimate beings are somehow a part of us, are present in the workings of our minds, our imaginations, our memories, our artistry, and in all our creative involvements with the world. They are ourselves as part of these processes. If that is the case, then how could it be that so many people do not experience this? They would adamantly claim their thinking and their feeling was solely their own doing and that their being a person was not tied up with the existence of mountains or trees or fish. They might admit that the existence or non-existence of other beings affects their well-being “from the outside,” as a matter of “external interactions,” but not that they would somehow lose a part of who they are without these other beings.

This declaration of self-subsistence assumes that the world is defined by certain tangible boundaries—ones that can be quantified and ordered by this either/or logic. It is felt that this is tied to seeing things as they are “objectively,” as being materialistic in a straightforward way, taking the physical aspect of things

as what can be counted (upon) as real. I would claim, however, that such logic is neither straightforward nor materialistic. Such a person would, of course, have answered to Cezanne that he was indeed crazy, that he is a person, a painter, and the mountain is a mountain, as anyone can see, and that only people paint paintings and not mountains. They might grant that Cezanne could feel as if the mountain were helping him paint, because humans can “make up” or imagine all sorts of things, but that what is real is easily provable and not just about what people think. It is a brute fact, one that can be held, and one that holds up against all kinds of opposition.

This is an interesting prejudice: that the firm—that which resists all kinds of attacks on it—is somehow what is real. However, there is no reason not to assert that what is very fragile, what is perhaps only fleeting and intermittent, is no less real. If we see that *the degree of meaning and vitality that something adds to our existence and our understanding might be the more appropriate standard of what is real*, this opens us up to a different realm of experience and a different logic. Let’s see what this means in terms of our relation to the other beings on the earth and within our own psyches.

For the moment, let’s assume that the ways in which other beings speak to us, the ways in which other beings take part in our own processes of understanding and expressing the world around us are very fragile, fleeting, and subtle. An experience may be very fragile and yet be the most palpable and dominant reality in any particular situation. For example, experiencing love between people or hate or excitement or boredom may be very fragile: a few words, a few actions, might transform a situation in a way that will never be recovered after those wonderful or horrible words are spoken or after the person or people do this or that. For example, in Arthur Miller’s play, *All My Sons*, after the protagonist’s son has discovered that his father did knowingly send defective aircraft parts overseas to the troops during the war, he will never respect his father or feel the same love for him that he had felt during his entire life in such a palpable way. It often happens that one incident or one misspoken phrase turns a political leader who has the faith of the people behind him into a distrusted also-ran; or a sports team is lifted by a play or even just a spirited gesture and suddenly finds the rhythm and the touch—beautiful, palpable, and even overwhelming to behold and experience, but ever so fragile. *Much of what is most real is most fragile*. It is most “real” in being palpable, meaningful, and dictating the kind of experience we have, whether with our friends, spouses, children, jobs, community, etc.

The only reason for defining the reality of the earth and its objects, beings, events, and relations exclusively in terms of how they can be seized and sized up in the common dimension of “brute thereness,” merely as physicalistic masses that resist other masses, is to try to make the world the most permanent, controllable, and stable place it can be. It is the attempt to gain control and shield oneself from change, from disappointment, and from the need to keep transforming oneself in time to the dance of the beings all around one. So, we can see a rock as just inertly there, a heavy, unmoving mass, or see a waterfall as just a certain mass of water molecules being displaced in space, or we can even see our neighbor as “really” just

three-quarters water, with tissues, bone, genetic material, and capable of certain functions. Or instead, as earthbodies, we could feel the stone whispering messages to us about being grounded and calm, heavy with taking to heart the stories around one, or the waterfall speaking of vitality and the peace of speeding along in a caress with the ground, or see in our neighbor's face the expressions of hundreds of people who have helped him or her be able to speak and to have joy, and also to be the recipient of the wonder of colors and sounds and loving kindness. These voices are not determinate, do not provide controllable identities, but rather they wander and have wide ranges of meaning and are indirect.

Like much of the world, in order to exist and thrive, the indirect voices, the silent gestures, and the playing expressions of the myriad beings, relations, and events require cooperation. So much of human and other life requires constant, delicate, and exhaustive cooperation, but we fail to notice it, except when suddenly someone causes great havoc and pain by not cooperating. To write this sentence took countless people: to create the language I'm using to express myself, to manufacture the computer I'm using (and all its components, the processes that made the components, the knowledge that led to all these processes and objects, etc.) or to generate the electricity I'm also using. Certainly, in some rather direct way, there are billions of beings who helped create the materials, the forces, the knowledge I'm using at this moment, from mitochondria in my cells that took up residence with other microscopic creatures to form those "cells" (which are communities) so "I" (another community) live, to the myriad creatures who created the oxygen I breathe, and to those that made the computer or even the myriad things that were included in the manufacturing—or even just the paint on the keyboard letters I'm striking, etc. However, again, even this sort of reasoning is focusing on the "physical," even if it is an attempt to see the wider sense of "cause and effect" relations. We still must also realize that these creatures, things, and events also have myriad meanings that were conveyed and converged in this moment of communication. There are so many aspects of what the world and dimensions of ourselves have come to mean that enter into every moment of life. They are not human creations from nothingness (only God could do that), despite our powerful history of articulation. We have also learned from myriad voices of the earth—from flowers, rocks, and birds. We can at any moment slow down, attend to nuances, and to the layers and webs of meaning. Then, we would start listening to what Bachelard called "the murmuring among things."

We can also choose not to hear any of these voices: then the world is just made up of physical masses in motion that collide with each other in certain generalizable ways. To hear these voices requires a different sort of ear than the ones we have cultivated by thinking that we humans are exclusively the "speaking animals." First, we would have to be willing to take the hands of all these beings and events and enter the circle of the dance, as we see the women doing in Matisse's dance. This means that we have to be open to their gestures, to hearken to them, to try to find ways to connect to them, and finally to find ways to pick up and join into their rhythms. This requires both ceasing certain ways of relating to the world that are

habitual for us and cultivating others that are new for the mainstream of our culture, but known in many other cultures, by artists and by other people who have discovered their earthbodies. (They, too, tend not to be heard by our bustling culture.)

First, we would have to cease encountering objects, events, creatures, and even other people within the habitual grid of determinate categories. Ordinarily, the object perceived is always a “whatever”—whether a “mountain” or a “waterfall” or “an old man in a home for the aged”—an object experienced as a certain type, usually also containing a value judgment of political, social, or economic import. Then we don’t have to encounter the particularity of the object of our experience or even of ourselves in the midst of having the experience. However, there are those among us, even among those raised in the Western Cartesian culture, who listen and sense differently. Rather than dismissing Mont Sainte-Victoire as just another mountain, Cezanne opened himself to another sort of sensual and spiritual experience—a sensually spiritual experience—by painting it over and over again for a decade. Steiglitz did the same through taking photographs of the same tree for fifty years. These artists were making obvious that one never really does know another being, despite the fact that we assume we do when we feel one tree is like any other tree or one dog is like any other dog or one friend is like any other friend. Instead, the artist knows that it takes great time, effort, and openness, cultivated gradually, to start to truly “hear,” “see,” or “feel” more of the inexhaustibility of possible communication with any other being. Only gradually, when one is open to the flow of the process of seeing or hearing or experiencing emotion or imagining, does one register just that particularly distinctive hue or just that unusual curve there or just that particular quality of quietness in the object or just that particular grace in that gesture of another living being—as well as only gradually do I experience in the process that, oh yes, I am such a creature who can distinguish the hush of slowing and quieting down from the hush of expectant waiting or who can feel the difference between the quiet joy of wonder from the moving joy of triumph, and that these are my emerging and possible sensitivities.

The recognition of the unending richness of the “simple, everyday” stuff of experience is one of the key dimensions of *ceremonial experience*. In our current American culture we tend to confuse ceremony with certain uniform, repeated, institutionalized, and public acts of social conformity. In some senses, ceremony has even come to indicate formalities that have become utterly meaningless—actions performed with no thought or particular intention other than sticking to proper form: “mere ceremony.” Yet, the deepest sense of ceremony is to mark the sacred, to indicate one is open to the messages of a larger, deeper sense of life and to give it reverence. In our culture, the sense of the sacred has usually been taken to be found in opposition to the earth and our bodies. However, if we return to being earthbodies, we will discover a different sense of the sacred and of the place of the ceremonial in our lives.

If we return to our earthbodies, it might be possible to live our entire lives in a ceremonial fashion. The ceremony marks this particular place, time, and interaction as full of meaning and full of the power to awaken us and that to which we relate. To be ceremonial is to commit oneself to paying unwavering attention out