

# ClearCut -The Wages of Dominion

And God blessed them and said unto them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, and rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and every creature that crawls upon the earth." Gen 1:28

**The Invitation.** The first thing to happen in **ClearCut** after the burly, big-hearted men with chainsaws and peavey poles leave; after what is left of the trimmings and underbrush is bulldozed into slash piles and the topsoil compacted under the tracks of very big machines; after the last logging truck is heading down the mountain to fill great ships headed for China and Korea and Japan; after Bird has flown, and Animal has fled...

After all that, *but just before* departing Spirit takes refuge in our unconscious and the great silence of buried shame settles like morning hoarfrost over the violated land... The first thing to happen, if you are lucky enough to be present in such a moment, is a glimmer of recognition. A recognition of something deep inside.

Even before the overpowering grief at the loss of life darkens your heart; before the evidence of our mindless methods of extraction, our greed, and the heedless squandering of our natural resources registers on your consciousness; before the anger at the destruction of the biodiversity out of which we have evolved wells up into your throat; and before the sinking feeling that we are out on an evolutionary limb, busy sawing it off behind us; before the sense of a species racing towards its own extinction makes your skin crawl...

Before all that, if you are sitting on an old stump amid such a spectacle with nothing better to do, nowhere to go, no message to convey, or evidence to collect - merely absorbing in the depths of your soul-body the immensity of the silence surrounding you – it may come as a shock that

the first thing to happen is a furtive implication of complicity, and with it an intimation of great beauty.

As the early morning mists rise out of **ClearCut** to rejoin the sky, the scene resembles a battlefield, littered with body parts, blood, and the bilious spilling innards of steaming corpses, hollow-eyed soldiers scavenging among the smoking ruins. Dark visions of apocalypse arise in the mind, the book of Revelation.

It may be hard to not look away, but I invite you to climb up and join me here on this stump, to look a little deeper. If we love life, and if we wish to discover a source of hope, it is important to know who we as a species have become. To know that, we must look clear-eyed at what we have done. Stay with the feelings that arise, especially the grief, and the rage that may ensue. Weep your heart out, and let the tears cleanse your grief.

I envision this **ClearCut** exhibition as a guided meditation, a journey through despair at our current human condition to recognition of our personal complicity in the fatal human character flaw of dominion. We then pay a brief visit to the waystation of guilt and blame before tuning in to an urgent message our mother, the living planet Gaia has been trying to deliver to us for generations: that the evolution of consciousness must continue beyond dominion into *communion* if She – if we – are to continue receiving the gift of life and passing that gift along to our children and grandchildren.

Do not underestimate the enormity, or the difficulty, of this shift. Please do not underestimate its importance.

I invite you to join in this meditation and to focus on its message with me. It is not my message; it is our loving mother Gaia speaking. Speaking directly to us through many stern voices today, in many languages, shaking us to wake up. They are all saying the same thing: “despair is the enemy, not others.”

This ancient Cedar stump has a voice too, but it is as soft as a ghost, as gentle as a mother, and achieves its authority only in our stillness, in our ability to be attentive to its meaning.

My first inkling that there was a problem came in 1963 when as a young student I was assigned Rachel Carson's newly published **Silent Spring**. From a personal perspective, this quickening has been a long time coming, one consciousness at a time; however, from a geologic perspective, it is but a blink of God's eye, like a large school of fishes suddenly swarming in the sea. Despite Greta Thunberg's raw voice of simple deep truth now echoing down the corrupted halls of power, the all-important tipping point of radical global policy change still seems a long way off. Meanwhile, the opportunity to intervene vanishes with the speed of combustion. Now is the time to unify. With the fishes, we must swarm.

Many such prophetic voices over the years are infusions of inspiration to this present moment, delivering to us the wisdom and the energy required to pick up whatever tools that lie at hand, invent those that aren't, and get busy. We've gotten pretty good at making tools; we've gotten pretty good at using these tools to manipulate our environment to our liking.

Problem is, all our tools have been too long in the service of dominion. Our science now underscores the prophecies with mountains of data - we *know* what the problem is. We even *know* what to do about it. But all the knowledge and all the tools in the world are useless without the public will to use them. A critical shift in species-consciousness is required to put all our present knowledge and tools, as well as those yet to be created, in the service of the Source of Life, in the service of community.

It becomes a question of amplifying and spreading Gaia's message, of mobilizing the intention and the will to evolve while ignoring and bypassing those who would stand in the way. The time for lonesome

prophecy is past. It has become urgent to muster mass consensus – now - to reach critical mass. We must swarm.

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**The Meditation – I.** We're sitting together eight feet or so above the ground on a giant stump in **ClearCut**. Until yesterday it was a magnificent Western Red Cedar growing in place for sixteen hundred years, surrounded as far as anyone could map by a diversity of flora and fauna exceeded only in tropical rainforests. A full sixteen feet across, we could square dance up here. Sap still oozes from its cambium like a congealing scream. Breathe in its intense heady aroma as it mingles with the fumes of compacted mud giving up its fetid oxygen. Stay alert to the wind luffing in your ears, for sometimes it carries messages.

Scientists have only recently begun to discover the infinite complexity and interdependence of all the species that can no longer survive under these new conditions surrounding us. Except for an occasional lonely frog croaking from the rain puddles that fill the tracks left by big machines, all is silence. Sit with me on this stump. Be still for a while. Breathe deeply. Open, as wide as you are able, and remember who you are.

Maybe you've been to war. Maybe you've been a logger. Maybe you've built a back porch or a deck or a closet of this very cedar, or maybe like me you only read newspapers or think toilet paper and a hot shower are two of the greatest creations of human civilization. Maybe, like me, you fill your tank, stock your fridge, watch your mutual funds, and stare at the news – transfixed in horror – and cast your ballot.

Maybe, like me, you rail at Big Oil, the food conglomerates, the capitalists of Wall Street and their puppet politicians, while taking pains to separate yourself from them by recycling your plastic baggies, riding your bike to work, signing petitions, and donating to a democrat.

It's not enough, of course. Forgive me, but I am speaking here about the recognition of complicity in species supremacy. Unseen, shielded from consciousness by busyness, distraction, and righteous indignation, the evil of dominion that justifies this **ClearCut** has been with us all along, slinking around in the subsoil of consciousness even before Eve ate the apple. We've been struggling with this original crime of species hegemony in our art and philosophy and politics for hundreds of generations. Ironically, our origin story tells us that this dominion is God-given. We mistook it for license, and daily deepen its resultant wounding. Personal lifestyle changes are of course necessary, but we need to go a little deeper. Surrounded by **ClearCut**, it is not a stretch to recognize who we as a species have become, what we as a species have done, and that it is *precisely* our assertion of dominion that has brought us to this end. From this stump we can look out at the human condition and the natural environment in which we are trying to live our lives today and grasp at a visceral level that perhaps we have reached (or passed) the point of no return. Accepting as God-given our privilege of species supremacy has given us the needed cover for our crime while, hidden in plain sight, the damages of dominion add up behind our denial.

*Noone* is accountable. But here, sitting on this stump in **ClearCut** the blinders fall away, the undeniable truth of dominion - in all its manifestations and implications - reveals itself to be the very thing that has created the culture within which we live, and has made us what we as a species have become. *All* are responsible.

Dominion has also made me what I am. I am stunned into a condition of aesthetic arrest by the simple beauty of this understanding. The spiritual numbness slowly begins to tingle with feeling. Chills run up my spine. The once familiar sensation of being alive begins to flow through me again.

Spirit, having long ago been banished from our knowing, resides now only in our unconscious where she can no longer interfere with our science or our technology. But she intrudes in the night, secretly trysting with our higher, more primitive selves, stirring furtive yearnings and vague memories of abandon as she lures us into her dance in the moonlight.

A jealous lover, exiled Spirit has surreptitiously repaid us with unassuageable guilt around which our hearts have hardened. Compassion congeals into detachment. Through the ages we have sought relief, absolution, and escape from the clutches of guilt's frigid grasp. Our continued complicity in the great crime of human supremacy has infused our culture with content and our religions with hypocrisy for thousands of years. Our headlong pursuit of the conquest of nature continues, unabated. A fool's errand, a mockery of the divine, as we pivot helplessly in the wind on a spire of arrogance.

But now – here - sitting on this stump amid a vast cultural wasteland, we can no longer conceal from ourselves the truth of who we have become. Clear-eyed in the undeniable face of the evidence, as we open to this brutal verdict and the message carried on the wind, and open to Spirit herself yearning to reconnect in our hearts, we begin to experience something new.

Something we haven't felt perhaps in years, something beyond data. Things begin to make sense on a longer wave, on a level way below the short-wave gyrations of the mind, and – surprise! - we experience a surge of irrepressible life force rising in our central nervous system, barely detectable at first, but gaining strength as we nourish it and come to cherish its presence – the same mysterious force that converts a seed into a sprout. That can raise the sap 300 feet from the roots to the topmost needle of this very cedar. The same force that joins a bee to its swarm in search of nectar. Spirit arouses.

In the face of the reality before us, **ClearCut** is not metaphor, it is the reality of our approach to *all* our extraction needs. So too has it become the reality of our politics, our economics, and even at times, of our love lives. Dominion rules. And now, in the presence of Spirit, it becomes starkly and undeniably clear just where that has taken us.

We have become numb in the face of no more frontier for expansion, of dwindling resources to exploit, of no more pure thing to despoil. The species we have evolved in partnership with now plunge into extinction in droves. The spine-chilling implication of **ClearCut** slowly sinks in - what we now face is the *probability of endgame*. We can no longer deny what we as a species have done.

Planetary bird population is down 30% since 1970 alone. “80% of biomass of insects has disappeared in 30 years. (The Guardian: Sunday Feb 10th, 2019, *Plummeting Insect Numbers 'threaten collapse of nature'*) Take a drive in the country of a summer's eve and compare windshields to when you were a child! What happened to the whippoorwills, or the Night Hawks that filled the summer skies of our youth?

It is now critical, while standing in witness to this mass extinction of species, to pause - no, to stop - and look around. Horrified, it is difficult to take stock, to achieve a dispassionate and informed vision of who we are. But the precise coordinates of our current position must be known if we are to arrive at clarity about where we wish to go.

The current state of the world presents worthy cause for great rage. Rage is inevitable if we experience deeply the loss. Rage, dismay, and repressed guilt about our complicity commingle in this moment of recognition. Addled, our brains want to flee to distraction for cover. Resist please the urge to pick up that cell phone!

Our deeply internalized habits of dominion conspire with the brain's attempt to seduce us away from the horrific effects of our collective

behavior. But if we choose to continue in guilt and its denial – rage - indefinitely and take up residence in blame we are simply perpetuating and reinforcing an ancient lie, a lie that has separated us from Spirit for millennia. The lie that *it all belongs to us, not vice versa*; the lie that it is all here to serve us, not vice versa; or the lie that it is someone else, not us.

We not only miss the beauty of this great truth of complicity, but in perpetuating this lie we further separate ourselves from our own species, declaring war in our hearts against those others we identify as responsible, and elevating ourselves via blame and hatred above the rest of our kind. As if it weren't us! How complicit of us to so cleverly by-pass entirely the opportunity for responsibility embedded in the recognition of our complicity.

Just because I didn't wield the chainsaw; just because I didn't oversee the Forest Service that administered the logging contracts; just because I didn't own the land or the extraction companies pocketing the immense profits doesn't mean I haven't benefitted in every way from **ClearCut**.

Just because I didn't pass the laws or finance the slave expeditions; or just because it was my ancestors, not me who fought the wars, dispossessed the natives and plundered the resources of the planet, does not mean I haven't benefited in every possible way from those who did! And continue to benefit every minute of every day that I am alive. Does not absolve me from responsibility.

I exist as a creature of our shared history. I live a lifestyle in a culture created by and defined by our species domination and by personal privilege. The face of our shared identity today is the reddened face of Brett Kavanaugh at his Senate confirmation hearing – indignant self-righteous outrage - spitting apoplectic invective in response to the challenge to our entitlement. That's my face too. Can you go there with me?



“But I would have done it all so differently!” my innocent, superior self wants to cry out. Sure I would, as if I’m not a human suffering from the same delusion of entitlement as the rest of my species. Did I somehow evolve past my brethren to become a new sub-species superior to them? There it is again, that supremacy-seeking ego ever seeking the easy way out. I can no longer rest smugly on my illusory cloud of self-satisfaction while life on earth devolves from **ClearCut** to extinction.

Admittedly, I am a white, Anglo-Saxon, protestant male with an outsized cross to bear. Other’s experience will differ, but I daresay the long tendrils of dominion infect the subsoil of our culture like the fungal mycorrhizal networks that connect all the trees in a forest and may be discovered holding sway over our behavior and our thoughts in unsuspected places within, regardless of our personal history, if one only looks.

Our claim of dominion has separated us from our Source, has separated us from our tree brethren, from our animal allies, from the bird angels whose heart-wrenching calls fade from hearing. And from the root microbes that digest our food for us in our guts. And finally, from Spirit.

Thus separated and alone, we awaken to face endgame. King of the hill, as the hill crumbles beneath us and our legs turn viscous. If there is any hope at all, it is no longer *them* who must be held responsible. Nor even *we*. It is *I*.

Yikes.

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**The Meditation – II.** This recognition of deep complicity in the crime of dominion arrives with a shock, like an acupuncture needle mainlining the central meridian - unexpected, clandestine even, and most likely misunderstood in its import.

Stay with me awhile longer on this stump as we open our hearts to the implications of this carnage. Let the tension in your shoulders be swept away by the breeze. Relax the muscles in your jaw, suspend your disbelief for a spell. Gently close your eyes, gather yourself and stay within, stay open. Breathe deeply. There is some work that needs to be done.

We are not bad people. Unless you are determined to follow the old storyline and burn in a mythical eternal hell, guilt is not a terminal condition; rather, it is an omen calling our attention to a needed course correction. It is guidance from St. Peter, pointing the direction. It is Gaia herself calling to us to *wake up!* Our world is on fire.

If we remain still and not look away, if we resist the impulse to flee **ClearCut** with the other creatures; if we stay present and open our hearts wide to the emotional power of the reality of the pervasive **ClearCut** in which we live; if we allow ourselves to absorb slowly into our deepest being the silence of the emptiness that we ourselves have created until we too become empty, just as the forest itself that so recently surrounded us has emptied of all life -- the forest that was eradicated from the earth in less than a day after twelve thousand years of becoming what it only yesterday still was -- a living, evolving biota resplendent with millions of extraordinarily beautiful, diverse, and interdependent life forms - now reduced, in the blink of a bookkeeper's eye, to nothing...

Nothing. No thing here. Empty of thing. Not even the me that I formerly knew. Nor you. Sunyata.

Rest here awhile, before your mental horizon darkens with the storm of accumulated shame and guilt. If we can go to zero before we become immobilized by overflowing rage; if we can get to empty before we are deafened by the recrimination of a million helpless voices howling in rebellion and resistance; if resolute in our urgency and intention; and if we

can defy the mind's imperative to scurry away into distraction from the implications of our complicity...

Then here, in that most sacred of spaces, in the stillness, in the silence of the evidence and the absence of all things - in **ClearCut** - with full knowledge that the solution can only be initiated from within, we just may catch a glimpse of once-hidden opportunities. Opportunities for healing, of indeed, great beauty. Perhaps even, hope. God knows our need.

I am sitting on such a stump with you, and this exhibition is my reflection on what we have done, who we have become, and just where we might go with that.

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**The Exhibition.** I first experienced **ClearCut** out of the corner of my eye, rushing through the endless miles of wasted lands in my eagerness to get to the vestigial patch of **Old Growth** that surrounds the west side of Mount Olympus in the National Park. As I sped past, I would briefly glance sideways with grief, then anger – rage even - as my mind rushed in to make meaning of the absent forest which is our planet. But when my mind attempts to create meaning unaided by heart's wisdom, which is its wont, mind just makes excuses, looking around for scapegoats. Mind alone makes use of every opportunity to protect me from the implications of my intuition.

I was then not yet ready for this meditation. I needed first to connect with Spirit in the primaeval rain forest, to witness and experience her firsthand, to have my heart opened by her radiant presence, to prepare myself by connecting to what once was before I was ready to accept what now is.

Mind unaided by Spirit sees only the implication of guilt in complicity and wants no part of it. Seeing only guilt ahead, it preempts complicity by telling me to turn down my thermostat, plant my garden, and join a march

in the streets. Take up residence in the great complaint, and I can stand apart from (that is, above) those I deem responsible for our plight. But separation via moral superiority is only a continuation of the crime, another version of dominion. A liberal palliative against the pain of apparent complicity. Forgive them for they know not what they do. Forgive *me*, for I do.

After mounting the exhibition entitled *Entering Old Growth – Meditations on the Ancient Rain Forest of the Pacific Northwest*, the ClearCuts that surround the Olympic National Park like a besieging army kept calling me back. The relative puniness of the remaining few acres of Old Growth compared to the vast immensity of planetary denudation made me question the validity of my spiritual experience in the big trees. Was it all delusion? Was I kidding myself? I stayed away from the Peninsula for a time, watched way too much cable news, wondering how long we had left. Is all indeed lost? What was I missing? Filled with doubt, I needed to know the truth of the matter.

So I returned to **ClearCut**.

Looking for clarity, I climbed an old logging road to the top of a shorn-naked mountain and there, in a protected cove alee of the peak, scrambled up on this very Cedar stump. It was a windless and unusually sunny fall day in late October, balmy even, and I could take my shirt off and bask in the warmth. Twenty-some miles to the west rolled the great Pacific onto the sands of Kalaloch Beach. Twenty-some miles to the east rose the Mount Olympus Ridge, almost totally bereft now of its 12,000-year-old glacial caps. To the north and south I looked down over great valleys once covered by ancient forest, now converted into a patchwork quilt of tree farm and **ClearCut**.

Periodically a raven's call echoed mournfully up the canyon walls – mournful, intimate - speaking directly to me somehow in an ancient language only my heart could understand.

This little corner of the once great Pacific Northwest Temperate Rain Forest is but the final chapter in the story of the destruction of the Old Growth Climax Virgin Forest of the continental US. It is one story, repeating everywhere on our westward conquest.

We started with the Chestnuts and other hardwoods of the Northeast, then the Longneedle pines of the Carolinas and across the entire South, and when they were all gone we headed west through Ohio and along the northern tier of states mowing down everything that grew in our path. Up went our homes and farms and cities behind the delusional curtain of endless bounty. Until we hit the Pacific. As late as the 1970's and '80's 500 truckloads of Old Growth logs still made their way *every day* down the treacherous logging roads that had been bulldozed into the mountainsides surrounding Mt. Olympus.

Then, just as the logging gangs began closing in on the very last of the virgin forest in the continental United States, in the summer of 1968 Gaia spoke - through the call of a Spotted Owl - to a young wildlife biologist grad student named Eric Forsman. Forsman was tending a lonely fire tower on a summer job for the Forest Service deep in Oregon's Willamette National Forest.

He loved to sit out on the porch of his remote cabin in the evening, witness to the vast transformation of day into night, listening to the wilderness come alive with night noise as the dusk softened into darkness. The owl hooted several times from his perch in a tree at the edge of the little clearing. Then Forsman - in response to some inner inspiration - hooted back. Little was known about the Spotted Owl at the time, for it lived only

in the interior depths of the Old Growth and was rarely sighted, never studied.

The owl returned the call. For a while they carried on a chat, hooting back and forth to each other. Then an extraordinary thing happened. The curious owl flew down from its perch and landed on the porch railing directly in front of him, its head cocked in an inquisitive owl-eyed stare. Forsman fell instantly into a lifelong enchantment, resolving on the spot to make this reclusive Raptor his life's work.

As the relationship of the Spotted Owl's habitat requirements to Old Growth became known over the succeeding thirty years, the logging penetration into the Olympic Peninsula began to encounter obstacles. Inspired by Edward Abbey's *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, the Earth Firsters drove some nails into the big trees, laid down in front of a few bulldozers, and blew up a couple of sawmills. The rest is history.

I grew up in Wisconsin, spent most of my summers in the north country and never once realized it wasn't wilderness. Never realized I was in a tree farm - not much more than a cornfield really - not in a real forest. It wasn't until I walked among the big trees of the Olympic National Park – a symbolic remnant of Old Growth saved from the chain saws at the very last minute by the spotted owl, a biologist named Forsman, and an army of ecologists and botanists and activists – that I began to realize the immensity of our transgression.

I stayed on that mountain top all day that lazy lovely autumn day, shooting an occasional panorama (image #5255), not needing, not wanting to move. Changes in the sky were noted, two Grouse jets from the Base on Whidbey Island entertained me with their pursuit/avoidance maneuvers for a bit before disappearing to the north. I had no epiphanies that day, no deep thoughts or emotional breakthroughs. But somehow, slowly over the course of the afternoon I became convinced that I had much to learn from

prowling **ClearCut**. In hindsight, I think it was the raven reaching a subliminal portion of my being.

Before the evening chill took hold, I headed back down to my camp. Since that day I have explored hundreds of **ClearCuts** - some overgrown with invasives, some replanted with nursery stock, some fresh - puzzling out my feelings and thoughts around this example of our practice of dominion. Immersed in its devastation, **ClearCut** reveals to me that beneath the heavy sadness - way before and under and after and over the grief and rage of loss - if I can only sit still enough, long enough, lies the truth of human dominion, the recognition of my own deep complicity therein, and a way forward.

Sit on this stump. Seek it out wherever it shows itself to you and make yourself comfortable. Take a thermos of coffee or hot chocolate against the chill, it'll take a while. It could be anywhere, anytime. It may be in an office, a museum, a city street, an airport, or a lonely night at home. Do like Eric Forsman and search out some solitude for yourself and feel the magic inside you as evening thrills into night. Such zones of abrupt and vast transition are readily available, in almost any context. You don't need to sit cross-legged on a Cedar stump with your hands in gyan mudra, though it may help.

The first and most important thing to happen in **ClearCut** is the recognition that *this is who we are*, and *this is what we have done*. I am this too. You are this too. Like it or not, this is who *we* have become. Stay with that, *I beg of you*. The implications of this great truth have shaken my foundations to the point of crumbling. There is no aspect of my life free of the crime we as a species have committed and continue to commit daily. I stand in the line-up and can no longer exempt myself from the community of exploiters and looters.

Armed with my white privilege I stand on the shoulders of all racists; entitled by my gender I share pay grades and business opportunities with my brethren misogynists; buttressed by my retirement accounts I am sustained by all capitalists and exploiters of men and earth; protected by the military, the CIA, and legions of special forces around the world I live in the illusion of safety in a secure environment; coddled by my Social Security and Medicare I rest easier against vicissitude. The world is my oyster, at your expense. Am I anything at all without all that? Who then, or what, am I?

I am only me, a minute bundle of mysterious life energy in a constant interchange with other bundles of life energy. Together over time, with input from the sun, all these little bundles of life energy have self-organized into incomprehensibly complex synergistic systems of mutual support, giving and taking, giving and taking all the sustenance we need – throbbing to the heartbeat of the great Gaia in an evolving and sustaining symphony of life on earth.

Until, that is, we make that initial move towards dominion. Until we take more than we need so that we can become something that we are not – until we become more important than another. Until we can gain control, aggrandizing property, energy, and subservience in the process. Until we are taking only, giving nothing in return.

But truth – deep, foundational truth, even (especially?) truth that threatens our very identity like the truth of complicity in dominion - carries with it seeds of both survival, freedom, and great beauty. Carries with it the freedom from old stories that once masked our denial and our collusion, stories that no longer serve us. Carries with it the beauty of possibility, of a new architecture for our lives. As with many crisis moments of vast and abrupt transition, **ClearCut** presents to us the opportunity to outgrow a fatal character flaw.



For if it is I who have done this, I no longer have anyone else to blame. I can no longer objectify my guilt outwards onto the Republicans, the Capitalists, the System, the One Percent. It is hard to overstate the overwhelming relief that accompanies this revelation. The lie that gave rise to this original demonization of the other – the lie of entitlement - is unmasked as simply self-serving denial, and I can unburden myself of this duplicity by coming out of my hermitage and rejoining humanity. I only wonder what took me so long.

In that vast moment of emptiness, we come to recognize how everything - *everything!* - in our current culture and lifestyle - no matter how green we have gone, no matter our level of activism, no matter how small our personal carbon footprint - depends upon our cultural history of limitless resource extraction, genocide, and drive for dominion over others, over everything that is not ourselves.

The forces of dominion that now animate our economics, our politics, our educational systems, our religions, and even infiltrate our families and our love lives have been deeply internalized and can continue to survive only so long as they continue to manifest from within. So within we must go. The story of my generation has been the story of coming into awareness of those forces and the ever-so-painful attempt at extrication therefrom.

But we cannot allow all the justifiable grief and rage at the crime, with all its ensuing guilt and blame to capture us in its intoxication and harden into story. For if we do, we will entrap ourselves into a spiritless cell of superiority, cynicism, despair, and powerlessness. We just can't get at the root of the problem through blame.

Nor can we get at the root of the problem through guilt. But not to worry, blame and guilt are but a way stations on this meditation, not the destination. If we persevere, there is a secret side door to the unease of complicity that reveals itself to the steadfast.

**The Pathway of Making Things Right.** That door is remorse. Stay with me here. When I take full ownership of what I have done and who I have become, contrition floods into my emotional body like an injection of pure Spirit. I feel so acutely the suffering of Gaia and become so filled with sorrow for all that has been lost and for my role in so mindlessly accepting the benefits of this great crime, that an ancient sense of separation that I hardly knew was there anymore begins to loosen within me. My lofty perch of judgement from on high becomes uncomfortable, and over time I awaken into being *part of*, no longer *above*, or *better than*, everything and everyone that is not me. I becomes we. Me becomes us. When I look out, I see me; when I look in, I see you. I hear the drumbeat of Her heart and I can feel the music begin, softly. I catch a glimpse of the swarm and I feel the impulse to move with it.

“The first thing to happen in **ClearCut**...”

This is no small thing. This is not a mere difference in degree, but, I would assert, a fundamental next step in the evolution of consciousness. For I can now come out of my hermitage and rejoin my species. After such a long exile, I can now step back into the circle dance of life celebrating itself and become the glowing, living, breathing manifestation of life itself that I am. Finally, after all these eons, I can step back into myself.

Imagine that! Isolation, alienation, and separation, like the morning mists in ClearCut, simply evaporate. The same breath of life that animates every worm and every whale and every leaf on every tree floods in to animate me. And you! Breathe it in, deeply. Spirit revives, she arises to sing again, to dance again. What a tragedy it would be to allow such miracles of creation as you and me to numb out on a soulless desert of despair, to ultimately devolve into radioactive dirt.

“But not so fast, what about the crime?” you growl, in doubt.

We don't have time for blame. It is a distraction, and those who continue in dominion become irrelevant, their platforms collapsing of their own weight. We can understand them for we have been them. But we must avoid the temptation of wasting our time and energy by engaging them head-on. That is a trap and is an old game – their game which we cannot win because they have all the guns. Rather, we must simply ignore their barriers and adroitly aikido-swarm around and past them, quickly. Bury them with love and kindness. The meek shall inherit the earth.

The visceral acceptance of the truth of my complicity, in uniting me in the confederacy of my fellows, in uniting me in the league of life itself on earth, is the necessary preparation – a hazing ritual, if you will - for what follows. The depth of my remorse and contrition is a passageway that blows away the denial clouding my mind. In so doing, it clears a path forward to clarity in my identity, to the capacity for compassion, and ultimately, to forgiveness. My tears wash my soul-body and cleanse my mind, preparing me for action.

This passage out of denial and blame and into the lucid realm of remorse and forgiveness is a most powerful generator. Lucidity is a clairvoyant state of communion with the Great Mystery, producing the resolve, the strength, and the energy required to set foot on the path of making things right. With high hopes and in the highest of spirits, no less.

*The path of making things right.* Imagine what that might look like. For yourself, for us as a country, for us as a species.

This journey of the complicit into community is not for the faint-hearted. The outcome cannot be assured. If we continue to seek blame for the human condition and the state of our planet in everyone but ourselves, we are led only to guilt, and will continue to walk the path of cold depression and despair. We can only conclude that mankind is irredeemably corrupt

and on an ineluctable path towards extinction. Good riddance, the planet will be much better off without us.

I have walked that path and have shared that journey with many of my contemporaries. We've been a glum lot for some time now. It hasn't helped a bit.

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**Forgiveness.** So it is with relief to experience that with the recognition and deep acceptance of complicity - with full-member status in humanity and as an atom in the organism of Gaia - comes the need and capacity for forgiveness.

If becoming human has meant life becoming aware of itself, and with that awareness we have been lured by our own projection of God down a path of dominion, and as a result of that dominion we have become separated from what we have become conscious of, for God's sakes can we not recognize the error of our ways and forgive ourselves our complicity?

Lucidity reveals that without forgiveness we can only remain imprisoned in our cell of arrogance with no further movement. So let us then get on with the business of forgiving ourselves and each other and set out on the *path of making things right*.

Can we accept the reality of who we are, what we have become, and what we have done? Can we link arms in the need for atonement and begin the hard and joyous work of making reparations? It's not them, it's you and me that did this! And (sermon to self) it's you and I who need to let go of the enervating grip our alienation and recrimination and depression holds us in and pick up the tools that we have learned so well how to use and get busy! The ancient Jews of the Cabala had an expression for it: "Tikkun Olam," repair of the world.

It's all hands on deck - the sirens are sounding all around us - and we need to be healing ourselves and forming the connections and alliances necessary to swarm - to manifest radical policy change, stat. We know what we must do; we simply need to amass the will to do it.

Who and what we have become are simply stories we tell ourselves and each other. These stories are hugely contagious, like the flu, and must be recreated and shared in every place we gather. Each new insight of truth becomes broadcast instantaneously across the broadband network of human consciousness as we join forces in the business of reparation and re-engineering. As environmental justice becomes a cultural passion we share. As we swarm.

What would it take, for instance, to lure away from Silicon Valley enough of that high-level engineering intelligence that has been so busy creating the alternate digital reality of social media to create a fusion jet engine? Hah? Is that too fanciful to imagine? Whatever happened to fusion research anyway?

In another moment of great peril not so long ago, we gathered enough brainpower together in the Manhattan Project to create a tool of enormous destruction, the atom bomb. Can we not muster the resources to create a comparable tool in the service of community? We walked on the moon with only the most rudimentary computer power. Even more fundamentally, our slaves attained their freedom, women enfranchised themselves, and gay couples now marry.

We have frequently accomplished the unimaginable. But then we imagined it, and it was made manifest. Outside of the sun, the human imagination is the most powerful force on earth. Imagine now the possibility of a thousand other such things we have the potential to manifest in our pursuit of reparations on the *path of making things right*.

Grandiosity, you say? Our need, I aver, is such that anything less is wholly inadequate. We have twelve years, we're told by our scientists, (now eleven) to turn this thing around or experience catastrophic, irreversible planetary warming. Recent studies of Oceanic heat absorption make even that prediction optimistic.

Naivete, you say? Not ready to swarm? Not ready to give up the familiar comfort of gloomy depression? Got a better idea? Just watch. Look around. Come alive and join the fun. Get out in **ClearCut**, wherever you can find it, get beyond the blame and guilt and just sit there for a while. See what happens. It is hard upon us. What are we gonna do?

In full consciousness of our rightful place on earth can we not now climb down together from this stump and rejoin the biosphere of life itself? Can we not link arms with the ever-growing numbers already on the path and with them, join in the dance of restoration and sustainability? It worked with the Condors. The policy implications of this question are more than enormous, they are truly transformative.

Doubts persist. Can we really become something different? Can a human being change? Trapped in a prison of supremacy, no. But freed from denial, we can go anywhere we want or need to. To assert that humankind can no longer evolve is to deny what we once were but are no longer, to deny our very past and everything that has made us what we now are. It is the very short-sighted, self-serving attitude of ossified superiority that exists to keep us imprisoned. It is the very prison of impotence itself preventing us from taking responsibility for our lives. Let go of our precious entitlement, and we gain the world.

Yes, the evolution of consciousness can continue, must continue for survival. But it can't if we're stuck in guilt and/or blame. A bit of ritual may be in order at this point. So, the last thing to occur in the metaphor - and the reality - of **ClearCut** is the funeral.

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**The Funeral.** The subtle, sibilant wind of the departing souls in **ClearCut** leaves a howling silence, a void not yet filled with interpolation or with the compulsive but vain search for story and for meaning. It feels a lot like creation itself, or at least a reminder of creation, once taken for granted, then lost, now reemerging.

We must now bury the dead. With respect, with dignity, and with sorrow for the victims of the great crime we have committed. With deep remorse, compassion, and a prayer for atonement in our hearts, we acknowledge who we have become, and we forgive ourselves and each other our habits of dominion. With newly-enriched love of life – all life! – we look for ways to nourish and to cherish all its wondrous manifestations.

Of course we cannot expect the habit of many generations to simply disappear all at once. Backsliding into self-centeredness is common, to be sure. Evolution is a process, and we turn to each other for support in the swarm, and we persist. We trust the Spirit of Gaia will supply all the determination, energy, and strength needed to persevere. Perhaps even, to succeed.

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**The Choice.** As members of a learning planet, we now set about the process of relinquishing our entitlement (no mean feat) and taking up our rightful place in a biosphere in which all species have their essential roles in an evolving, symbiotic system imperfectly designed but still hard at work to better sustain the needs of all species. We join with those who came before us and with our heroic fellows – pioneers already on the path of making things right - and dedicate our lives to the reparation of everything that lies broken at our feet.

From something, to nothing. In the blink of a geological eye there is a zone of transition as vast as our imagination in between. It can pass unnoticed, hidden from view, or it can transform our planet. We can wake up, or we can die out.

It is precisely the vastness, the suddenness, and yes, the horror of that transition that has the power to shock us out of our old stories and our old habits of thought and being. It is within that zone of transition – in **ClearCut** - where we can first experience, then bear witness to the possibilities inherent in emptiness.

If a little fear is required to get our attention, maybe a little horror is required to act. Stay with it. Watch where dominion is in play, and when we discover it at work in ourselves, we simply do something a little differently. Watch what happens. Repeat. Witness the miracle of evolution at work.

When we discover it coming at us from others, we simply turn sideways to it and watch it pass. Immerse yourself in the transition moment, wherever and whenever you can find it – life is full of them – and I beg of you, for the sake of your grandchildren and mine, to hold it close to your heart and ride that moment like the dragon of survival that it is.

Let's swarm.