

ClearCut – The Wages of Dominion

A Guided Meditation

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.”

The first thing to happen in ClearCut, after the burly, big-hearted men with chainsaws leave, after Animal has fled and Bird has flown; the first thing to happen, even 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 faint glimmer of recognition. A recognition of complicity.

In this vast silence, in the abrupt and total absence of a biota 12,000 years in the making - a day in the taking; in this dramatic example of Dominion, and in the emptiness in the pit of my stomach, I sense, vaguely at first, that I too am somehow responsible. That after a lifetime of struggle I can no longer stand outside my culture in a stance of moral rectitude and blame others for this ecocide. In the face of such brutal evidence a question worms its way through my crumbling bulwark of denial: what exactly is my role in all this?

Spend enough time in such a place of emptiness and the picture clears. We are high on a shorn-naked mountain in the middle of the Olympics, looking out over hundreds of miles of a patchwork quilt of tree farm and *ClearCut*. Climb up and sit with me on this stump, which until yesterday was a towering 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 the smell mingles with the fumes of compacted mud giving up its fetid oxygen. Bereft of life, we are now alone. Stay alert to the luffing of the breeze in your ears, for sometimes it carries messages.

This ancient Cedar has a message for us too, but its voice 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. If we love life - our life and *all* 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 and further, how I personally have benefitted from that behavior.

From this vantage we can examine the old stories we have told ourselves and perhaps view the question of our own individual role a little more objectively...

Just because I didn't wield the chainsaws; just because I didn't own the land or the extraction companies pocketing the immense profits doesn't mean I haven't benefitted from those who did. Just because I didn't own any slaves; or because it was my ancestors, not me who fought the wars, stole the land, dispossessed the natives, and plundered the resources of the planet, does not mean I haven't benefited in every way from those who did! And continue to benefit every minute of every day that I am alive. Does not absolve me from responsibility. Let that sink in a while.

Then from this vantage we can look out on our broader cultural landscape, and through a clarified lens examine how the current state of our politics, our economics, our science - even our families and love lives - have been infected and become sickened by the same mindset that justifies this ClearCut.

This is what we have done. This is what we do.

This is now who we as a species have become. I am this too. I begin to see how deeply I exist as a creature of our shared history, a history with an overarching plotline drenched in the monstrous lie of Dominion. A history that continues as if *it all belongs to us, not vice versa*. The lie that *it is all here to serve us, not vice versa*. The lie that *it is all ours for the taking*.

Despite my modest attempts at a reduced carbon footprint and greener personal behavior - still - I live a lifestyle in a culture created by and defined by species hegemony, pursuit of personal privilege, and a primatal posture of entitlement. Dominion has made me what I am.

This thrust of supremacy 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 that evolved in symbiosis with this ancient forest that no longer exists so they too can no longer exist. Has separated us from ourselves. And finally, from Spirit.

Thus separated and alone, buttressed by the illusion of refined intelligence and technological and scientific prowess, 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.

We are not bad people. Unless determined to follow the old storyline and burn in a mythical eternal hell, guilt is not a terminal condition; rather, it is a cairn on the trail informing us of a needed course correction, beckoning us to try a new route. It is our mother, the living planet Gaia herself calling to us to *wake up!* Our world is on fire.

The story of my generation has been the story of our response to that wake-up call, of coming into awareness of the lie of entitlement working in our lives, and the ever-so-painful attempt at extrication therefrom.

Fortunately, guilt and blame are but waystations in this meditation, not the destination. We press on to the discovery of an urgent message our mother Gaia has been trying to deliver to us for generations: that the evolution of human 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.

There is a little more work that needs to be done. If we persevere, there is a secret side door to the unease of complicity that reveals itself to the steadfast.

That door is remorse. Stay with me here. When I stop blaming everyone else - the greedy capitalists, the politicians who enable them, and the one percent - when I take full ownership of what *I* have done and who *I* have become, a small chemical valve opens within, and contrition floods into my emotional body like an injection of pure Spirit, instantly occupying the space so long held by loathing, outrage, and blame.

Contrition is an elixir, initiating a nuclear surge of irrepressible life force rising in our central nervous systems, barely detectable at first, but gaining strength as we nourish it and come to cherish its presence. It is the very force that converts a seed into a sprout. That can raise 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.

As a participating member of the human species I feel acutely the suffering of Gaia. I become so filled with sorrow for all that has been lost, for the “age of extinctions” we have caused, and for the wrong in which I have been complicit, that an ancient sense of separation - that I hardly knew was there anymore - begins to loosen within me.

Fear relaxes its grip a little. My lofty perch of judgement becomes uncomfortable, and over time I awaken into being *part of*, not *above*, or *better than*, everything and everyone that is not me. I catch a glimpse of the swarm and I feel the impulse to move with it.

This may be a subtle thing indeed, but it 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 begin the descent from my lofty perch of judgement 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!

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: it is only the depth of my contrition that finally and for all time blows away the denial, confusion, and doubt clouding my mind.

In so doing, it clears a passageway forward to 1) clarity in my identity, 2) the capacity for connection and compassion, and ultimately 3), forgiveness. My tears bathe my soul-body with love and cleanse my mind of fear, 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 Spirit, producing the resolve, strength, wisdom, and energy required to set foot on *the path of making things right*. With high hopes no less, and in the highest of spirits.

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

Having forgiven ourselves and each other, and 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 just and 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.

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

We have frequently accomplished what was once unimaginable. But then we imagined it, and it was made manifest. Think of the atom bomb, walking on the moon, abolition. Think of women's suffrage, gay marriage. 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*. How about a fusion jet engine, for starters?

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. We do not further empower it with battle; rather, giving it no energy, we swarm around it, and get on with our business on the path. We immerse ourselves in the transition moment, wherever and whenever we find it – life is full of them – and for the sake of our children and grandchildren, we hold it close to our hearts and ride that moment like the dragon of survival that it is.

Let us swarm.