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Eco-centrism or Nature-centrism

Written by www.ttw.org.uk

For many years, those of us living in modern, industrialised societies have tended to think of humans as the most intelligent, competent species, superior in almost every way to other creatures, an attitude that justifies treating everything in nature as a resource. Short-term economic gain trumps responsible, long-term governance, accelerating climate change and biodiversity collapse.

Not every culture has thought this way - there are many people who live closer to nature such as the Māori people in New Zealand, Australian Aborigines and tribes living in the Amazon rainforest, who have always felt their connection to the natural world and see all of nature as an extension of family. This not only applies to animals, birds and insects but also the mountains and rivers.

Indigenous languages rarely have a separate word for ‘nature’, but tend to have one concept for all life which suggests the kinship they feel with every other being. This is not just a poetic, emotional or imaginary connection, but has a real basis in science in that we share a genetic foundation and code with every living being on Earth. We also share the same fundamental chemical elements found in rocks, such as carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, calcium and iron, and our bodies are about 60% water (newborns are nearer 80%), so our connection to watery elements of the planet is clear. One hopes that an understanding of all this will help us to feel our interconnectedness with the natural world to the point that in a sense we really are one world-wide organism and that by

damaging any part of it we are harming everything else – including ourselves.

We cannot continue to have a world-view that fails to recognise this. It's now very clear that many of our current ways of doing things have caused serious damage to the climate and to biodiversity, so things must change. But rather than feeling full of despair about what has gone wrong, think of this time as a period of transition to ways of being that could lead to a more inclusive society built on greater understanding and awareness of others, both human and more-than-human.

There are signs of this happening everywhere, for example there's an important, landmark Bill on 'Nature's Rights' currently going through Parliament (Oct 2026), which if passed into law will change the lawful status of nature from 'property, objects, or resources' into a legal subject with inherent, enforceable rights. Even big companies are beginning to include nature as 'members of the board', with people assigned to speak for nature's rights.

Changes like this are excellent to see, but what is most needed is a bone-deep mind-set in all of us that not only accepts a change in the law, but really feels our interconnectedness in the core of our being.

The environmental group, Transition Town Wellington (TTW), has already appointed someone to speak for nature when decisions are being made, and will be writing more about what this means in future articles.

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