

NAESS: Yes. Look at this (holding up a tiny flower). If you took the forms and the symmetries and made them into a painting, you might win first prize in any competition.

S.B.: I have relatives in England who take endless delight in climbing the same mountains in Wales and the same hills near their home.

NAESS: That's right. A hill is never the same in a repetitious way! The development of sensitivity toward the good things of which there are enough is the true goal of education. Not that we need to limit our goals. I'm not for the simple life, except in the sense of a life simple in means but rich in goals and values. I have tremendous ambition. Only the best is good enough for me. I like richness, and I feel richer than the richest person when I'm in my cottage in the country with water I've carried from a certain well and with wood I've gathered. When you take a helicopter to the summit of a mountain, the view looks like a postcard, and, if there's a restaurant on top, you might complain that the food is not properly made. But if you struggle up from the bottom, you have this deep feeling of satisfaction, and even the sandwiches mixed with ski wax and sand taste fantastic.



4 RECOVERY FROM WESTERN CIVILIZATION

Chellis Glendinning

IN WESTERN CULTURE, WE live with chronic anxiety, anger, and a sense that something essential is missing from our lives, that we exist without a soul. What could be wrong with us?

I believe Western culture is suffering from "Original Trauma," caused by the systemic removal of our lives from nature, from natural cycles, from the life force itself. This removal began slowly with the introduction of agriculture (about three hundred generations ago) and has grown to crisis proportions in technological society (which began only about five generations ago). With it comes the traumatic loss of a sense of belonging on the Earth.

Some of the symptoms of psychological distress displayed by our culture and government are the recognized symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder: hyperreactions; inappropriate outbursts of anger; psychic numbing; constriction of the emotions; and loss of a sense of control over our destiny.

Behaviors like these are surely troublesome, but we have to come to accept them as normal. We have become accustomed to people acting out their feelings about childhood neglect and abuse both in their personal lives and in public life. But what if such behavior is not normal at all? What if it is a desperate expression of coping by people who find themselves in an extreme situation?

If so, what is that extreme situation? It's our homelessness. It's our alienation from the only home we will ever have, from the Earth.

In his brilliant book, *Nature and Madness* (Sierra Club Books, 1982), the ecologist Paul Shepard talks about the psychology of hunter/gatherer culture and compares it to agricultural psychology. In hunter/gatherer society, survival is dependent on particular psychological qualities: openness, attunement, spon-

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taneity, solidarity with other people, wonderment and appreciation. Survival is dependent on the sense of communication with other people, made possible by a secure and supple sense of boundaries. It is also dependent on the ability to heal, which in hunter/gatherer cultures often involves a natural psychotherapeutic process including ceremony, communion with the natural world, herbs, and nonordinary states of consciousness. As Shepard points out:

The logic of man's domination of nature, the zealous control of things organic, the fear of the body's natural processes and their analogies in nature, the haunting sense of fall from affinity with nature, are the relentless expressions of subterranean disaster whose roots lie deep in our culture and deep in our personal psyches.

It was not always so. While foible and weakness may always have been human, those shadows of fear were not. Our minds, like our bodies, are programmed by the circumstances of a vanished world, a world in which we create a culture in the freedom of small group self-determination, an environment infinitely rich in totemic nature, abundant in material resources, in lives socially participatory and richly ceremonial.

The erosion of those things is history. In our modern struggle to cope with epidemics of dementia, posthistorical societies reveal all the desperate, autistic rationalizations, projections, obsessions and other symptoms of the clinical diagnosis of schizophrenia and paranoia. The rage to conquer nature is a kind of madness.

Madness always signifies flaws of childhood. What civilization does to nature it does by corrupting its children, ravaging their ontogeny. Fear of the natural world is the fear of separation prolonged past its time.

Natural childbirth is a first step toward a recovery of harmony with the world. But what is a natural infancy, or childhood, or adolescence? Only as we recover them does the life of the planet and its endangered species have a chance.

In another marvelous book, *The Continuum Concept* (Addison-Wesley, 1975), anthropology writer Jean Liedloff compares the child rearing practices of hunter/gatherers to our child rearing—and again, we are amazed at the contrast. In hunter/gatherer cultures there were no distinctions between work and play, no separate rooms, no disconnection of experience. Infants were with adults *all the time*, constantly being touched and held. They slept with people, they were always in someone's arms. A sense of connectedness and security that we can only imagine was built into their lives from the beginning.

These books helped me to see that the very issues that we in the technological West are struggling with—personal boundaries, community, a sense of belonging, how to heal personal wounds and address archetypal issues—the issues that we just can't make sense of, that we have to go through incredibly

painful processes of unraveling in order to heal, these are the very qualities that were the daily reality in the lives of hunter/gatherers.

One result of the introduction of agriculture was the loss of these qualities. And what follows losses like these? Often, it's the addictive process: a reaction to a loss of satisfaction of our primary needs. This process is a rather ingenious attempt by the organism to satisfy primary needs with secondary sources. But of course, secondary sources will never work because they don't really satisfy and we become obsessed with them.

So here we are in this technological culture and we are absolutely awash in a sea of addictions: romantic love, sex, shopping, drugs, alcohol, self-destruction, fast cars, abuse of other people, and on and on. We know that people who have severe addiction problems are often people who were neglected or abused by people who were neglected or abused, and the problem spirals back further and further to previous generations but there's little talk about how it all got started.

I look at these addictions as symptoms crying out for us to look deeper. I believe that the central addiction of Western society is what I call *Techno-Addiction*—an addiction both to a mechanistic way of seeing the world and to specific machines such as computers, television sets and missiles. Uprooted from our home in nature, uprooted from natural cycles, separated from other creatures, we feel lost and terrified. This is something that happened over a long period of time. Slowly, as our physical reality became less wild and more technological, we needed to create a new psychic context for ourselves. But since we did this out of terror, we ended up dreaming a dream of a world that fit our desperate needs; we ended up dreaming a dream of a world in which we humans had complete control. We created techno-utopia.

I have been talking the language of trauma and addiction. Now I want to talk about recovery. I think the ultimate goal of recovery is to refind our place in nature.

The first step is to break through denial about this predicament. The second step is to feel, to come alive, to come out from under the deadening of the machines and the mechanistic worldview. In this step, the first layer of feelings that most people go through is frustration—very deep, painful, and real—about their current lives. Subsequently, people encounter the neglect, regimentations, and assaults that many of us experienced growing up in a society that was trying to make us all into machines. But this is the point in therapy where most people stop.

The next layer of feelings is crucial. It is our feelings about the loss of our relationship to the natural world—both as we remove ourselves from it into cities and as we witness the natural world being destroyed. How many people have ever both deeply and consciously felt this loss?

When we begin to heal the wounding, what arises is the sense of connectedness. What happens is the return of the things that we've lost: a more solid sense of ourselves, a sense of connectedness to our deeper selves, to other people, to the world, to the animals, and a deeper communication with soul, body, and Earth. When we have these feelings, the imagination comes in touch with our deeper selves, and we reconnect to our long-lost souls. We come back to Earth.

As we in Western technological culture go through this process, we need to integrate into our lives a new philosophy that reflects the wisdom of what we are learning in our recovery and the wisdom of the kind of cultures that all humans once enjoyed—earth-based, ecological, and indigenous.



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GARY SNYDER AND THE PRACTICE OF THE WILD

Jack Turner

FOR THE PAST FORTY years, Gary Snyder has pursued a radical vision which integrates Zen Buddhism, American Indian practices, ecological thinking and wilderness values. The vision has informed his poetry, shaped the cause of Deep Ecology, and produced a distinctive answer to the eternal question of what it is to live a human life.

He was born in 1930 and raised near Puget Sound in Washington. His early interest in nature led him to climb Mount St. Helens when he was fifteen years old. At seventeen he had reached the summit of many of the northwest's major snow peaks. He joined the Mazamas Climbing Club and the Wilderness Society, beginning an association with mountaineering and wilderness that continues to the present.

Snyder graduated from Reed College in 1951 with a major in literature and anthropology. After briefly studying linguistics at Indiana University he completed three years of graduate work in Asian languages at the University of California at Berkeley. He also worked on the docks in San Francisco, read Buddhist philosophy, wrote poetry, and became a founding father of the Beat Generation.

After Snyder and Jack Kerouac climbed Matterhorn Peak in the northern Sierra Nevada, Kerouac used Snyder as the model for Japhy Ryder, the itinerant mountain-climbing poet of *Dharma Bums* (1958), a man who took his Zen practice beyond the confines of formal study. "The secret of this kind of climbing," said Japhy in a tone that might be reminiscent of Snyder's, "is like Zen. Don't think. Just dance along. It's the easiest thing in the world, actually easier than walking on flat ground." For contemporary American life in the

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