

Chapter Four

Our Relationship with Centering on Wholeness

Note: Indigenous wisdom has deeply informed the concepts and beliefs expressed below. Westerners owe Indigenous people much gratitude for preserving the knowledge of how to live on Earth with other beings in ways that all might thrive.

Sacred Wholeness at the Center

The incomprehensible and unknown, the unbounded and limitless, has many names: creator, spirit, the sacred, God, Alusi, Acintya, goddess, Io Matua Kore, thousands of names. Sacred love runs from the beginning through to the end. We know the sacred through the ordinary and yield to the sacred with great humility and devotion.

Wholeness of Creation Surrounding the Sacred

Creation centers on the sacred. Creation's majesty and complexity at every scale make creation incomprehensible yet open to us knowing its fundamental laws and limits, which we dare not transgress for fear of harm. The beautiful and meaningful creation yields to the sacred. We interact with creation with awe, respect, and love.

Fundamental Laws of Creation

Creation manifests the Creator. Creation continuously becomes.

The Creator moves creation through love. Creation seeks loving wholeness with the sacred.

All changes. What settles, unsettles. What increases, decreases.

Change emerges from the exchange of energies within relationships.

Physical laws and limits condition the material.

Moral laws bound relationships.

Creation seeks balance.

Wholeness of Earth Interbeing Surrounding Creation

The Earth and the Sun sustain life. We live within an interconnected, interdependent, interactive, and interrelated Earth Interbeing, a complexity beyond comprehension from which wholeness emerges. The whole has qualities that transcend those of its parts.

All beings have a place on Earth to live, places which other beings share. Beings offer their lives to other beings as food and become one another. All life shares the feelings of aliveness and the desire to be. We yearn to connect with each other, the Earth, and the Sun to become through mutual transformation. The Earth and life seek union, the Wholeness of Earth Interbeing. We have so much in common. We are family, kin.

Principle of Reciprocity within Wholeness of Earth Interbeing

Reciprocity, a fundamental principle of the Wholeness of Earth Interbeing, requires giving back in ways to rebalance the Earth Interbeing for what we take from it. The Wholeness of Earth Interbeing has evolved ways to balance the giving and taking to preserve its wholeness. Reciprocity renews wholeness and rebalances the imbalance caused by taking. Reciprocity brings to life our reverence for the gifts of sustenance and place, instilling within us the wisdom of how to live on Earth with other beings so all may become. Giving has greater value than taking as it deepens caring relationships.

Without reciprocity, life on Earth would eventually reach an extreme physical limit or moral boundary, creating conditions in which life would be difficult to survive. Westerners ignore our responsibilities to serve creation, imagining ourselves as more remarkable than the sacred creation. People cannot dominate creation but must yield to it and serve the Earth Interbeing. When people disregard morality and Earth limits, assuming unfettered dominion over the Earth and all life, the Earth Interbeing asserts its power against those who have violated its ways. In this struggle, people, all life, and the Earth suffer.

Taking and giving embody the underlying energy transformations of creation: I take food energy or what I need from the Earth, and I then give energy back to the Earth Interbeing. We do not have to give back the same gift, only a gift of some kindness. I take food from the plant beings and give it back to the soil to enrich it for the benefit of other growing beings. What we give furthers the well-being of our relations and gives rise to a circular gift economy. Without reciprocity, inequality arises through wealth accumulation.

The same principles apply within the realm of morality. The Wholeness of Earth Interbeing furthers the love of the Creator through our loving interrelationships. Interbeing holds all beings as a family with whom we interact with kindness and respect.

Interbeing lives within Earth limits and moral boundaries. Living the harmonious balance between extremes, the middle way sustains the Earth, life, community, and being.

Principle of Sharing within Wholeness of Earth Interbeing

Interbeing already shares the Earth. Presently, Westerners share the Earth with others unfairly but share it nonetheless. Beings have overlapping interdependencies, a material and socially structured reality through which all beings share the Earth and each other as food for our mutual survival. All beings have an equal right to a place on Earth and to eat, an acknowledged and protected equality of the Wholeness of Earth Interbeing. When all receive what they need to live in ways that sustain the Earth, the Earth Interbeing becomes.

Principle of Accountability within Wholeness of Earth Interbeing

Accountability regulates reciprocity and sharing. The Earth Interbeing endures if we stay within the limits and bounds of conditions that sustain and further life. When we take without giving back, we create an imbalance that moves the Earth Interbeing toward an extreme. When we exceed our share of the commons of Earth Interbeing, we degrade life and the Earth.

Because we can observe patterns and cycles, causes and effects, we know we have physical and moral limits for which we have accountability constraints we should fear to transgress. In taking from other beings and the Earth, we take only our fair share and minimize the harm we inflict upon the Earth and beings gifting us. Justice enforces these bounds and limits. An unbalanced Earth rebalances itself into different conditions where we may find it hard to survive.

By living the middle way between extremes, we seek to constantly restore and renew the balance by not taking too much or too little. We preserve this balance so that the Wholeness of Earth Interbeing may endure for generations.

Wholeness of Place Surrounding Wholeness of Earth Interbeing

All life lives in a place on Earth within the Wholeness of Earth Interbeing, a community of shared interbeing. Creation lies within the sacred, making all places sacred. Different species come together to

live within the conditions the place offers. Within a community of place, all beings have a home. We have loving feelings for our place and for all beings who share it with us, our relations. Within our place, we practice caring for the Wholeness of Earth Interbeing. Through interbeing, we interconnect, interdepend, interact, and interrelate with all the other human and non-human beings sharing our community of place.

The complexity of our place within Earth Interbeing goes beyond comprehension, yet we observe the place's patterns, cycles, and interconnections. We share the place and food with other beings as all beings have the right to have a place on Earth and food to live. We know each other as family because we interbe and live in the same place.

By devoting ourselves to caring for the Wholeness of Earth Interbeing, we hold ourselves accountable to adhere to our place's physical and moral limits by living the middle way between extremes. We gladly reciprocate for what we have received to preserve the place's balance to sustain conditions so that coming generations may enjoy our place.

Wholeness of People Living within Wholeness of Place

Like many other social species, people live in communities. People who center on wholeness want to join others of like-minded people to support each other's path and bring the ways of wholeness of Earth interbeing into the community. I, me, and mine transform into we, us, and ours.

Beginning such a whole community presents us with the challenges of learning how to relate with each other without a hierarchy and the Western willingness to harm others for self-benefit and then ignore the suffering caused. Unless we remain firmly resolved to yield to the majesty of Wholeness of Earth Interbeing, subtle Western influences will cause us to waver and seek self-benefit. If we remain aware of these dangers, we can take timely precautions by heeding the first signs of complicity regarding what harms and checking them in time.

Each of us in a whole community learns our responsibilities to refrain from imposing our will upon others and to resist others wanting to impose their will upon us. In community, we help each other decenter our species so we can clearly discern how we can move commonly toward wholeness with the Earth Interbeing. The whole community discovers shared values, experiments with how to make decisions, and finds ways to protect us from yielding to complicity with the omnicidal culture.

People have a long history of living together within a commons, an egalitarian community. Westerners have lost this knowledge and skill. Yet, Indigenous people today revitalize their customary traditions. Black people live food sovereignty through commoning urban farms. Small growers come together to form equipment cooperatives. These and other small, localized examples point toward Wholeness of Earth Interbeing. Change begins at the smallest scale.

Wholeness of Individuals

The Western culture continues to fragment into smaller parts and increase isolation. We yearn for what Wholeness of the Earth Interbeing offers – meaning, purpose, belonging, kindness, and caring for others and the Earth. Our species has never faced the dangers of extreme global warming, a peril that we have brought upon ourselves. For our love for the Earth, all life, our family, and life to come, we become whole and find ways to further wholeness. The great transformation begins with our personal metamorphosis.

Our changing depends upon living the ways of reciprocity, respect for limits and moral bounds, and helping the Earth Interbeing recover from what we have done to it. We no longer strive to lead, to

dominate, to own. Instead, we learn how to live within loving interbeing relationships. The future depends upon us overcoming our resistance to change and to make an effort to change ourselves. We do not seek wholeness but prepare for it.

However, our Western culturally conditioned habits, beliefs, and attitudes resist changing, especially true for those who benefit from privileges they have unjustly claimed. Western hierarchy and fragmentation divide us from each other and Earth Interbeing and make us feel powerless. Overcoming Western conditioning requires us to practice self-discipline and self-restriction to reduce our harmful ways of living step by step. At the same time, we practice living the ways that move us toward the balance and harmony of Earth Interbeing. Discipline restrains and retrains.

Breaking free of cultural conditioning depends upon setting a vision that transcends us, something greater than ourselves. By keeping our vision of the Wholeness of Earth Interbeing in mind, self-discipline does not collapse into a set of rules imposed from outside. Instead, it becomes the inherent rhythm of making our love for life and Earth meaningful. The universe moves from within.

For those brave souls willing to walk such a path, we know that we will only help build the bridge from the omnicultural culture to one of wholeness. We likely will not live to see the time when the Western culture dissolves into the wholeness of Earth Interbeing. Or we may never succeed. But at least we can live our own lives in wholeness. Such a joyous way to live!

The bright discernment of seeing from the perspective of wholeness differs from quantifying reality or dissecting the whole into parts. When grounded within the interbeing community of place, we see all beings and life forces constantly emerging from the ongoing creative flux. Interbeing continuously regenerates the balance and harmony of our Earth-place. We have the moral obligation to care for the well-being of this wholeness, an obligation that binds the Interbeing into a sacred whole with the Earth.

People have, for hundreds of thousands of years, lived in harmony and balance within the Earth Interbeing. The Wholeness of the Earth Interbeing does not harken us back to a golden Neolithic age. Still, it serves as the polar star that guides us to how to survive the 21st Century reality by learning how to share the Earth with other beings in ways that protect the Earth and all life. We connect, explore, experiment, and learn. What other choice do we have? Love for Earth and life runs from the end through to the beginning.

Recommended Readings

Leroy Little Bear, *Jagged Worldviews Colliding*, from *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*. UBC Press (2000).

Gregory Cajete, *Native Science*, Clear Light Publishers, Santa Fe NM (2000).

Eds. G. Van Horn, et al. *Kinship: Belonging in a World of Relations*. Center for Humans and Nature (2021). [A five volume set of essays on learning how to interbe.]

Study Questions

1. Why (or why not) do other beings have equality with people?
2. Why (or why not) do all beings have the right to have a place on Earth and food to live?
3. How do you connect the food you eat with another being and the place from where it comes?