

## Retreating from Western Culture

The global Western culture of capitalism profits from its willingness to harm others for self-benefit and ignoring the suffering it causes. Everyone who lives within this culture participates in this great harm. The culture of capitalism entangles and immerses us in omnicide. Nobody can stop or reform capitalism or Western culture. Nobody can forcefully resist capitalism as it owns the governments that willingly use their violence to protect capitalism and private ownership. Legal efforts will buy us time until the elite change the rules.

Only a collapse of capitalism from within will save us from the future it has planned for us. Yet a collapse opens to a longterm violent chaos fueled by the dying culture's belief in the survival of the fittest. Those on a sacred path have the challenge of knowing how to respond to these dystopian scenarios.

The path of the sacred Earth Interbeing offers a way forward – learning how to live on Earth with other beings. It begins with removing how we individually harm the Earth Interbeing. We cannot know how to live as Earth Interbeings in mutually beneficial ways while we still harm the Earth Interbeing. We also must weed out Western culture's conditioned wrong views and beliefs about how the world works that distort our perceptions and behaviors.

When we view our lives through Western eyes, we cannot imagine another way of living. Until we uproot our conditioned views, beliefs, and behaviors, the way forward to further life on Earth will remain invisible to us. Before we start coming up with the grand plan to replace Western capitalism, we need to stop thinking and acting like a Western capitalist.

In the first steps of the sacred path, we opened to our sacredness and knowing ourselves as Earth, steps that we will forever deepen on the path. In this next step, we remove our wrong views and how we harm the Earth and life by retreating from Western culture.

Retreating from Western culture does not mean moving to Tibet. We stay in place and in relationship with those closest to us but distance ourselves from the ways Western culture influences our thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors.

We know what we cannot change. Most of us cannot change Wall Street, the military, foreign and domestic dictators, billionaires, and the list goes on. Yet, we can change ourselves and influence those within our close network. The Western culture keeps us distracted from changing ourselves by keeping us focused on what we cannot change, a complete waste of time. The path depends upon us focusing on what we can change to further life on Earth. We have the most power to change ourselves.

Individually distancing from the ways Western culture harms will not change Western culture. Yet, by doing so we can claim our moral position and stand in solidarity with those harmed. It liberates us from complicity with harming. Some significant ways include,

- Reducing our exposure to online news media to reduce our emotional turmoil and save time.
- Avoid corporately-produced entertainment and other online distractions. These addictive products simply pour our lifetime and energy down the drain.
- Constantly reduce our consumption and what goes into the landfill. Reuse, recycle, refurbish, repair, reduce, and all the other r's. Want what we have.
- Travel less by car and by air. Love and explore our place where the sacred planted us.

- Reduce factory farmed meat consumption and ultra-processed foods by half. Take control over what we put into our mouths.

Our distancing will have little effect upon Western culture, but we have a choice whether we want to remain complicit in omnicide. Retreating from what harms heals us.

Reducing political engagement on the global and national scale goes back to knowing what we can change and influence. We do not live in a democracy but rather a capitalist oligarchy. We have no voice in decision-making processes through which corporate money flows. To play the game of national or global politics keeps us entangled with the willingness to harm and ignoring the suffering we cause.

Once we start retreating from the harmful ways of Western culture capitalism, we will constantly discover other deeper and ever more challenging ways to reduce the hold harming for self-benefit has upon us. The willingness to distance ourselves from the harmful culture depends upon our resolve to further life on Earth, our steadfastness to change how we live, and a strong self-discipline.

We know the steep difficulties of changing habits, especially addictive ones. Thus, we expect setbacks, but we know we have the grit and resilience required to bounce back. Our collective reluctance to change looms as the greatest barrier to furthering life on Earth.

Retreating from Western culture furthers life on Earth. Nobody will give us a reward for doing so. Neither can we expect the encouragement from those not on this path. Our need for approval and support from our social group will challenge our resolve more than any other obstacle. Yet we remain humble and do not make demands upon others to do as we do. Refraining from engaging with our group in activities that keep us complicit with the omnicultural Western culture does not mean we have to distance ourselves from our friends and family. On the contrary, the path calls upon us to deepen our relationships with everyone in ways that reflect our values.<sup>1</sup>

Transforming ourselves to live in ways that further life on Earth depends on our willingness to change, thus the reason why this practice sits near the beginning of the path of the sacred Earth Interbeing. Until we have the willingness to change ourselves to reduce how we harm ourselves, others, life and the Earth, we do not have a path. We have Western culture. Act now and become part of the solution or remain part of the problem and pay later.

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<sup>1</sup> **Common values of furthering life on Earth (work in progress):** loving awareness of the sacred and the sacredness of all life, reverent contentment and wonder for arising experience, surrendering to the sacred knowing of how to further life on Earth, compassion, harmoniously interacting with others by knowing the sacred equality, unity, and interdependence of life on Earth, of life, equitable sharing of the Earth commons, acting in valued ways that further life on Earth, and restoring and renewing our balance with Earth to preserve our mutual wellbeing, life, and the sacred. By living in these ways, we deepen our loving awareness of the sacred and sacredness of all life.