

## How Does GAIA Teach?

### E. Christopher Mare – Antioch University Seattle Collaborative Inquiry Project – Autumn 1999

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Mostly by wise example: She demonstrates for us the kind of conditions in which Life thrives; She shows us the processes by which Life continually renews itself; She shows us how the four elementals can be combined to produce myriad forms; She shows us the kind of interdependent relationships that organisms can create with one another to benefit each other's existence; She offers her fruits freely to all creatures; She demonstrates the wisdom of reciprocal, homeotelic behavior; Gaia is Mother Nature --- we can learn from Gaia by watching our own mother; She shows us the process of evolution that perpetuates and continually complexifies Life, a process we are already participating in.

She teaches mostly passively, in silence, for her way is peaceful, but occasionally she will assert herself with a stern lesson when an organism (or modified living system) has transgressed her rules. Gaia is my *real* mother.

#### How Do We Learn from Her?

The best way to learn from Gaia is to go to a place where Gaia has been undisturbed, sit quietly there and *look and listen* for what she may present. Live an honest loving life and Gaia will make herself known; it doesn't take much effort.

A great way to learn from Gaia is by GARDENING: a gardener will learn to observe the cycles of the seasons as well as the cycles of a day – these are metaphors for all life-cycles, including the individual lives of human beings. A gardener will learn to prepare fertile soil, choose potent seeds, provide the conditions for life to germinate and sprout, nurture young seedlings providing them with the nutrients they need to grow, create niches for individuals and assemblies of individuals, wait patiently for the flowers for they surely will only appear when they are ready, enjoy the beauty of it all, be grateful for the fruits that ripen, return what is not used back to the earth, gather the best seeds to repeat the process anew – gardening is a metaphor for all life projects that can be undertaken by humans.

Humans can also learn from Gaia by maintaining ancient traditions that have co-evolved with Her to honor Her; by reestablishing a connection with our roots; by honoring our ancestors; by being thankful for the gifts she gives us; by sitting beneath a tree; by walking barefoot on the grass; by meditating at the sea shore; by celebrating the seasons; by observing the behavior of animals and forming loving relationships with them; we can learn from Gaia by modeling Her behavior and building human systems that mimic the patterns, structure, and processes of Her natural systems; we can form tribes of families of clans and live in close communion with our people; we can drum and howl at the moon; we can ingest Gaian power tools that can lift the veil of our ignorance; we can make passionate, orgasmic love with one another; we can strive for optimal wellness by taking good care of our bodies; and, we can build human settlements that are nestled within larger Gaian systems so that Gaian processes and wisdom can be revealed during the routine habits of our everyday life.

### How Do We Pass It On?

It is said that you can't change an organism; all you can do is modify its context and let the organism adjust and change itself on its own. In that sense, Gaian wisdom cannot be preached but must be experienced directly. Those who have experienced and understand Gaian wisdom must pass it on by example, by creating a life-style that reflects this wisdom, so that others can see that it is possible and even beneficial to use Gaia as the ultimate example. When our actions are in accord with natural Gaian rhythms, cycles, and patterns we are able to harmonize ourselves with principles greater than ourselves, and so participate directly with Gaia in her evolutionary efforts, and so extend our purposes and effects beyond our limited life-spans.

And we can write, but that is only effective if the reader is able to 'feel' what we are saying deeply enough so that they want to internalize our message and adjust their life-styles on their own; intellectual reasoning-rambling or supplications or admonishments to change will not work. Still the message needs to get out.

### Eventual Path

This specific collaborative inquiry is part of a larger inquiry that has been in process for some time now; once initiated, the inquiry can never end. The next immediate step I will take on this collaborative path of inquiry is to design a Master's degree that will enable me to explore, in-depth, Gaian principles and processes. During the unfolding of this degree, I will arrange my lifestyle in accord with the understanding I have already gained in this extended inquiry. I will nestle myself within the larger living systems of which I am a part and practice homeotelic behavior with my community so that I and my

suprasystems can thrive. I will study Gaian principles and processes thoroughly, committedly, so that when I write about my experiences, perceptions, and understandings I may be able to influence a reader by touching them deeply, arousing in them a desire to change and reconnect with their Gaian roots. I will continue to design, create, and implement models of Gaian wisdom so that others can witness their efficacy and beauty, and so desire to adjust their own lifestyles so as to be able to participate in this enchanting, alluring beauty. And, as part of this ongoing, ever-deepening process, I will continue to shed the anti-Gaian attitudes, behavior, and presuppositions that were ingrained in my early development by the anti-Gaian culture I was born into. To accomplish this, I will probably be silent for awhile, as I find a quiet, peaceful place to absorb Gaian wisdom and immerse myself in the extensive, in-depth study that will produce a respectable Master's degree that I and Gaia can be proud of. That's the best thing I can do right now to help my Earth Mother.