

Some Personal Closing Thoughts

To hear the sounds of the earth crying... it is not just a metaphysical concept for me. It was not so before I started creating this work, and it is much less so now....

The oneness of all, the oneness among myself, my child, the Earth and all of life-- at last--are organic aspects of my life experience. In moments of deep introspection, which the work I am writing now so encourages and inspires, I could really feel the pain for so much destruction -- so many wars today on our planet, and crime, homelessness, toxic waste, environmental and social illnesses, disintegration, and annihilation of nature itself, with a fury and a hatred-- such cold harshness moved and justified by greed. And it is indeed so sad... to hear the sounds of the earth and all the born and unborn babies crying. What did we do to our home? what home are we going to pass on to our children? And I could feel the pain of life for all the destruction we are witnessing today-- such fear and violence, such lack of compassion...We do not cherish life anymore, not as a planet, collectively... Those who do, usually more traditional people, tend to be mostly poor and disenfranchised because to care for the planet does not "pay off" in material nor economic terms. On the contrary, it may place one so far apart from, and sometimes against, mainstream culture and society that one becomes marginal, if not marginated.

And I am also deeply aware, at a personal level, of the numbness and apathy that comes out of the fear of knowing all the horror that takes place today in *our* lives. Because not only environmental pollution, for example, or atomic warfare, and the rising fundamentalisms and warring nationalisms, affect us all, but so does the extinction from the face of the Earth, for ever, of the wild horse, the lions, the rhinoceros, the pristine lakes and rivers, so many birds, eagles, the insects and crystals being ripped apart from their mountain refuges... the indigenous peoples who survived from ancient times with such dignity, to be wiped out of the Earth (at least culturally

speaking, and often physically as well) so that we might have a mahogany cabinet, a teak desk, redwood floors... and the people in Africa starving and dying of AIDS, and South America with its poverty, corruption and oppression... monoculture, planetary imperialism... Unemployment, wars... Injustice...everywhere.

And I read so many statistics about what is really happening to our people all over the planet and to our environment, and I am aware of my own coping mechanisms to deal with that-- denial, attempting to forget and minimize, becoming numb, apathy rooted in despair...

A major defense I am aware of using is being a "researcher"... I dissociate... I stop feeling, to such an extent that it even makes me doubt what I myself say and know... I write. And while I write, for a moment, with my "professional distance", I stop feeling, I stop fearing, I almost stop hoping... and the conscious part in me grabs hold of people such as Randy Hayes, or the Hopis, and many others that I met during the course of the journey that was ground for this work, who live gracefully and wholeheartedly in their daily lives and yet are aware, all the time, that our planetary situation is a *deadly serious* matter. I realize that there is really nothing to "prove", in spite of what the contemporary myth in the dominant ideology of sciences insists upon--that I do not need to convince anyone, nor "prove myself right"... with the exception, probably, of myself.

That this *is* real, what I am writing about is real, it is deadly serious, scary and challenging, truly relevant,... awesome... that I find it hard to believe it all the time because I live within a society that denies it most of--if not all-- the time... and my sociologist peers outstandingly so. But so do so most people in my surroundings... just like myself.

I need to claim the right to simply believe in what I write, that which I know and which I know also as an objective reality-- unfortunately grounded in so much empirical data and the experiences of so many people whom I met and I know and read about and respect so much....

Here I am writing about the near catastrophic planetary situation we are facing today, wanting to call attention to it and point out some viable options and avenues for action, recognize some amazing people who are putting their lives on the line for consciousness, truth and justice for all, that I find myself dissociating from my emotions, wavering often between empowerment, hope and apathy, numbness...

The magnitude of the factors involved in our planetary transformation is so monumental... And, trained as a sociologist, I was taught to divide, to simplify, "focus", my study of social phenomena...But what, when I know that it is not only impossible to separate an interconnected reality but also wrong? That that same approach of "divide and conquer" brought us to our planetary situation today, where technology has been separated from values, ethics and religion; where religion itself is quite dissociated from universal morals; where love is usually involved in a clearly marked difference between those who belong to the circle of "loved" vis a vis the "others", where nature is dissociated from life and becomes another commodity for tourism, decoration or supply of resources... where the world has become, indeed, truly disenchanting and people are very very unhappy, increasingly lonely and insecure... angry... scared... where the youth have no positive goals nor encouraging future and cannot find role models it yearns to emulate and to learn from ... We are becoming so used to the *normalization of horror*, albeit inadvertently, that events that in the past were marked for ever in the recorded mythology of humanity for their horror such as the killing of one's children, the abandonment of vulnerable people— such as children, widows and elderly-- by one's own society, are becoming such daily occurrences that we may feel the horror for a few passing minutes and then on we go to our next numbing moment...

Here I found myself writing about the destruction of the environment just because of pure simple greed of corporations and our dominant world views, and the ignorance of most of us who inadvertently support it-- our habits-- and about the

collapse of the paradigm of "growth for the sake of growth" that does not manage to secure basic survival needs for all people on Earth, and the killing and total abuse of traditional indigenous people who were living their lives quietly, without asking anything from us and taking care of the environment for all of us... I myself forget, at times, to hear the sound of the Earth crying... which I can easily find in my own silence, in my own inner depths... It is indeed not "out there", it is right here, in me--in all of us. It is a spirit of compassion for life itself, for each person who is suffering, each being, in whose personal circumstances I am selfishly grateful not to be.

So, a spiritual perspective that simply recognizes that we are all interconnected, the belief that it can be experienced with a quiet state of mind, is not theory for me, not a "New Age" insight or fad... it is just a very simple metaphysical reality, grounded both in deep inalienable experience and in rational knowledge as well... And when we can bridge that inner space of quiet and interconnect with other real people who also know about and respect it, then we become increasingly empowered, validated, and willing and able to act.

A paradigmatic dominance is not only a "consensual worldview"--it is a powerful oppression, constriction, mechanism and tool that defines, almost imperceptibly, all of our thoughts, beliefs about the World, the Cosmos and ourselves, our goals and life aspirations, our mere relationship with our Self. Since the beginning of a personally deepdiscovery of and communion with Nature in Mexico, in 1981, I am constantly and progressively becoming aware of the numerous layers of what seems like a sort of indoctrination that defined each one of my actions, day by day... my thoughts, my emotions... my mere construction of reality...

When I first arrived in Berkeley in 1975, I met local people talking about the connection between aerosol sprays and the depletion of the ozone; and about poly-saturated fats and heart attacks. I mocked those people as folkloric curiosities, and had many funny stories about the "weird" Berkelytes when traveling around the world... My

ignorance then , in spite of my extended sociological studies and training, was not only saddening but dangerous... my mocking humor grounded in a denial so deep, and so shared by mainstream society that I had no inkling of it... only to find out today that "even scientists" agree about the disastrous levels and effects of ozone depletion, and of poly-saturated fats for health and well being... and, unfortunately, the list of examples goes on and on.

Rather than finding it hard to understand why so many people are engaged today in what used to be called "alternative" worldviews and approaches I find it rather interesting why and how it is that sociologists do not study more the mechanisms of collective denial and inertia that seem to be so characteristic of social systems-- even to the point of self destruction. How is it that we still hold on to our *utopian* models of materialistic, capitalistic, consumeristic and industrial societies in spite of all odds?-- when unemployment, family collapse, homelessness, environmental illnesses, discontent and social disintegration are becoming such a horrifying daily reality? What is this social mechanism that leads us to believe in what is false, even when it costs us our lives and those of our loved ones? How come it is "unscientific", "unprofessional", as a sociologists, to talk about hope and despair, and horror, and danger, and just pure and simple caring and love?!?...

These are the questions I, among many others, find myself thinking about. For a long while I monitored myself, hearing in my mind the paradigmatic dogma that I successfully internalized that none of this belongs to a sociological discourse and I was therefore just paralyzed and mute, as I could not escape nor "go around" these questions. Today, I have no doubt that these are the basic questions that sociologists need to deal with-- our global situation, our future possibilities, the hope for ourselves and our children collectively, human communication and true caring, simple, universal justice. In the past, many of these issues and realms have been said to belong to the realm of utopias-- for the ideas they proposed or often for their failure to take root in manifest

reality as lasting social forms. Yet, periodically, they keep coming up into social consciousness. One could thus wonder whether this insistence may not be the expression of a deep social need, a fundamental human chord, that is still struggling to be manifested, inevitably part of human nature from the beginnings of time... But, in a way, even that philosophical discourse is not necessary and, worst than that, perhaps not even timely. Today, as many people in this work are commenting, it seems that we have indeed reached a crucial juncture in human history, in which the stress on the life-support systems of the planet is so intense, the threats of massive or global annihilation so real and the evidence for the interconnectedness of all-- beyond nations or even species--so undisputable that it is becoming rather obvious that the survival of each and any one of us is deeply associated with the survival and integrity of all, including the natural environment. *Salvation*, to borrow a religious term, *is collective* -- an old human insight that needs to be incorporated today in our social policies and planning, in all our theories of consciousness, human nature, and so forth.

It is really no surprise, then, that this insight appeared to have come to many of us, like myself, who were intent on looking only for "objective" and "rational" perspectives and solutions for the human and environmental dilemma of our time as a simple *revelation*. As a simple truth, as a transformational experience-- returning us to that basic human simplicity that sees the whole beyond the parts--which many of us could only identify as the "unscientific" and "irrational" realm of the *spiritual*. So, in many ways, the planetary transformation that I am trying to allude to in this work is about basic human caring and justice, love and hope for all of life--all together, of course. Yet by no means I am attempting to imply that these are the main mechanisms that will carry it out, or that it will happen spontaneously-- as many of the above revelations or insights did. On the contrary, the "case" of the Rainforest Action Network as well as Randy Hayes' work are strong indications of the complexity and difficulties inherent in such a transformation.

Again and again I could see Randy Hayes facing some monumental challenge, even when not knowing how to tackle it, but knowing it needed to be done. And we grasped some of his own journey, extending over decades as he is trying to manifest in reality the simple truth that *all of life is interconnected*, and Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s insight that "an injustice anywhere is an injustice everywhere." We could witness Randy's own growth and expansion: from local work with Hopis and other traditional people, to planetary work which started with a focus on the world's rainforests and increasingly expanded into even more basic (economic) planetary issues that affect all people on this globe-- all the while deepening the cross cultural communication and dialogue and honoring life, all life, *inherently*. It is far from easy and far from clear at this point in time how can we carry out the necessary planetary transformation without divisionism, hatred, wars and force. We have been taught by human experience and by history that these are the main social change mechanisms of humanity. Yet, hopefully, as Randy Hayes said, the strategies of the past may not necessarily be those of tomorrow. The strategies of the past did not work, or at least they are not working anymore, as the disenchanted youth faces of masked-horror or sheer-violence suggest... or the few viable alternatives of individual, alienated, success offered within the ongoing greed paradigm... or the repeated rising nationalisms and fundamentalisms, hunger, starvation, crime, destruction of Nature... and so much human induced injustice everywhere...

To transform from the materialistic industrial "growth for the sake of growth" paradigm to the emerging one of sharing and caring, mutual respect and universal justice will not be easy nor, in most likelihood, will we personally see it happen. It will possibly take decades, or centuries, to unfold. It will involve serious dedicated and committed activism, life-styles' transformations, shifts in consciousness and values, different social perspectives and priorities, overcoming nationalisms as divisive (vis a vis diverse) factors, environmental "C.P.R." (Conservation, Preservation, Restoration), a fundamental planetary economic redistribution, and some type of

spiritual, or just simply human, caring, recognition that all of life and all of us are truly interconnected as planetary beings and that the division between "self" and "others" have some practical uses and advantages but are truly, at a deeper ontological and metaphysical reality, just theoretical constructs. As like Doug Boyd said if there is hunger somewhere on the planet then we have hunger. If a species is becoming extinct, it is truly happening to us, and so forth.

Yes, indeed, this is no easy task. But neither was the transition from feudalism to industrialism and capitalism, nor-- to that effect-- any serious comprehensive social change. Yet, to recognize the issue, to embrace the real challenge, seems to me to be an important and crucial first step. And it definitely has great value in empowering each of us caring and concerned individuals who alone may be feel totally powerless and thus become numb, while together-- as all the activists and planetary searchers I have interviewed through the years point out-- we are powerful.

May this work be just one more step into recognizing our common concerns in our times and recognizing each other in our humanity-- our social systems, our fears, our anxieties, our grief, our visions for the future, and our hopes. That, to me, would be a very important sociological contribution.