



Message to the Youth **Princess Irene of the Netherlands**

Human Nature relationship in the Anthropocene

We have put ourselves in the center of the world, we have created a situation where we determine the future of life on Earth: the Anthropocene.

Can you bow to the character of a tree; allow the breeze to caress you; share a silent moment with a flower; fly with a bird, let the sun shine within you? To see the other nature as Thou, deserving respect, the right to space, to individuality, to breathe. And will you allow to feel your emotions this evokes, and share these with nature: despair, sadness, joy or happiness? Where has the magic gone? The rituals? What are we still deeply grateful for?

Human intellect appears infinite: we have gained a vast amount of knowledge about nature, knowledge that constantly expands, owing to the work of scientists. But when tasked with the question how you can live as partner or participant with nature, we are embarking into a *different domain*: in that of actually listening in order to hear, looking to truly see, as well as feeling and experiencing, and to allow room for our innate intuition. We need to, as it were, blend in with nature, rather than observing her as an outsider. To that effect, we need to momentarily let go of factual knowledge and allow ourselves to completely open up. Only then can experience and knowledge meet and inspire one another. This can offer a unique and beautiful challenge.

When we address issues referring to a sustainable future, do we speak inclusively as the partner or participant of nature? And is the 'we', we refer to, only about humankind, or do our words also include the sun, the flower, the breeze, the cloud, the animal and the rock? Do you talk about biodiversity, or about the colour, the shape, and the nuances the same way as you would describe your partner?

I would like to invite you to join me on a fictional journey:

It is four o'clock in the morning; the fields are covered by fog, a golden full moon suspended low above it. One brightly shimmering star exudes hope about what light truly proffers. The trees are holding their breath. Silence prevails. A silence that speaks a far different language than human words. It is still dark and nature is filled with nightly secrets.

An hour later, and off you go, donned in boots and coat. Irresistible, all this life. You breathe it in. Dew drops abound, each pregnant with all the colours of the rainbow. The moist forest floor gives a little beneath your feet. The abundance of green is dizzying. You look up at the blue hue of the early morning sky and breathe it in. A tiny little fly hovers right in front of your nose, its delicate, translucent wings, spread out in full, catching the light. You open yourself up to that early bright light while burrowing your hands deep within the full lush moss. Forest star moss. Ah! To be just one stem of moss, without worries, without knowledge of the complex human world. You become the moss for a short moment and feel connected to both cosmos and Earth, and breathe it in. Then, continuing your way, you sense the trees, rooted patiently, throughout the seasons, always in the same spot. You become that tree for a moment, feel yourself reaching lengthways to the sky and down into the Earth; part of All. You detect movement and find yourself standing right next to a roe in all her glory. A fleeting moment of contact, then she is gone. The animal appropriates her

own space. Your legs then carry you further, up and into the mountains. You love the rough stones and rocks; feel the warmth of the early sun's rays upon their skins. You turn to the sun and greet her with open arms and an open heart. Light, it is part of you and you are a part of it. A power that illuminates and offers expansion to all life. You become the sun and you radiate your light towards the world. You are a human being, connected to heaven and Earth. You too, are a connecting link. You notice how the purple mountain pansy on your path brings a smile to your heart and you strongly feel the urge to pass that smile on; to the tree, the bird, the human being. To *exude* that love. You turn towards the valley and look down at the houses where men, women and children live with their pets and livestock.

What is your life about and how do you *want* to live, now aware of your own inner nature and that around you? Your awareness tells you there is a different way, there *has to be* a different way...
(This concludes the walk.)

Turning back offers little; going forward, however, yields plenty of hope and movement. I am not necessarily referring to potential, much needed technical solutions, although it is certainly tempting to think that they should, and could, offer solutions to all our problems. If we decided to follow that route, we would just be simply sticking our heads in the sand and continue consuming. Sadly, that would be a huge trap, and one which denies you the opportunity for your own potential contribution.

Once a group of visionary people recognized the need to protect nature, and in turn established nature conservation organisations. Today, our work includes the attempt to reverse pollution, procure clean energy and find ways to a sustainable future. These surely are Utopian times for technological minds.

But it is not enough. It will not be enough.

Because current efforts are primarily focused on the longevity of human comfort.

Because we forget: fixing the outside is merely band aid.

The most important thing is: we need to fix the inner. We need to change wanting to *only* fix the outside, vital as technical solutions are, to changing the inside, our attitudes, our inner-nature to be on part with the connection to all of nature.

It is incredibly difficult to reduce carbon dioxide emissions to 2% or 1.5%, and it is many more times more difficult for individuals to transform from consumer to participant, and partner. To change our ways to benefit all other lifeforms. And yet, when I meet and listen to youngsters, it is not unrealistic, for many find the idea of being a partner with nature quite natural, obvious even.

It starts at home. A commitment as Earth human, inhabitant of the Earth.

Sustainability from the inside out. And love, therein, is the motivating factor and the road sign.

The natural world asks you to be yourself; nature is not judgmental; she doesn't care what we do, but suffers from our actions nonetheless, without judging. In fact: nature allows you the space to be exactly who you are, a space which allows you to meet with truth, and allows you to completely be your true self. Nature is what we are!

The well-being of the Earth and that of humankind go hand in hand. Let us turn feelings of love and connection into purposeful power. Allow the flower to open her petals up within you, the patience of the tree to give you strength, the animal's

vigilance to keep you alert, the light of the sun to shine upon your fellow Earthlings in all their diversity, and the breeze to inspire you to let go of patterns that no longer serve you. In other words, allow nature to become your companion in life.

It requires courage to surrender to a road less travelled, one that leads from a colonist mindset, the sole interest of which lies in occupying and appropriating and forcing his will upon the world, to a road, a path, of exploration, where the traveler allows him or herself to feel moved by the world and hitherto discovers new insights; a person who can become receptive to the power that flows through all life. Only then can we talk about a cohesive connection. A living togetherness.

The search for connection with the Earth evokes a lifestyle *away* from material gain as the primary goal for life. For me, this connection with nature entails a step by step discovery what it's like to be human, to be the person I truly am.

A rough translation of the French philosopher Latour reads: 'the commitment to the Earth creates a new planetary solidarity between all that lives on this beautiful planet'.

I agree with him. Because the sad rift between people and nature will then *change* into one of respectful collaboration. Modesty through awareness; a renewed balance has ensued.

To move from consumerism and our destructive, usurping human motives -cut off from our inner nature and all life around us - towards *embracing* motives and a yearning for a holistic, *inclusive* sense of well-being, in a continuously and ever-growing deep relationship with nature and with our own inner nature serving as a compass.

Not surviving, but *living*.

That is sustainability from the inside out, an ecological lifestyle serving as our future vision.

And in this, love is the motive.

And so, is there a way to reverse the Anthropocene after all? And does it not already exist among us?

For you? For me? For all of us?

We *can* walk that path...