Chapter 2

Relationship as Teacher of Sustainability:
Post-Individualist Education

AVRAHAM COHEN, HEESOON BAI, AND SHAHAR RABI

In the face of destructive human presence, sustainability has become a prominent and central theme of the contemporary environmental and wellbeing discourse. Our chapter takes the current environmental and sociopolitical challenges humanity faces as our species' developmental issue precipitated by the bonding rupture between human beings and other beings. We propose that the sustainability discourse be taken in the direction of healing the wounds of bonding rupture and facilitating the evolution of human consciousness and development of a more mature identity. We posit that the latter is concomitant with overcoming materialistic individualism and moving towards the relational integration of self, community, and world. We make the case that these relational practices are intrinsic to evolving and developing sustainable humanity. In particular, this chapter shows, by way of narrative illustrations, how we may create teaching and learning environments in schools and other institutions that are conducive to experiencing and internalizing a relational sense of self.

Evidence for the destructive patterns of human presence on this planet is ample and unarguable (Gillis, 2014). The earth is under duress and in distress, and we humans with our current manner of presence are a major contributor to environmental problems (Merchant, 2005; Orr, 2004). Through misguided worldviews of modernity and its implications for human prospect, progress, and good life (Fromm, 1976), we humans have managed to disrupt and spoil delicate ecosystems, eradicate indigenous cultures, and have triggered a massive extinction of species in both the animal and plant worlds. Surely, we cannot go on with the current ways and patterns of human life on this planet without destroying our own nest, not to mention the rest of the biosphere. In the face of this growing realization, sustainability has become a prominent and central theme of the contemporary environmental and wellbeing discourse. This is a good thing.

We believe that the key question at the heart of sustainability as an environmental movement is: how do we conduct human life activities in ways that do not overstress and overwhelm the carrying capacities of the planet Earth? And sustainability as a practical or experimental philosophy asks this question: how do we change our selves and our consciousness so that we will not continue the legacy of destructive patterns of being and living? Our response, as will be shown, is that the change for sustainability has to be ontological. We need to become sustainable in all ways of our

being. Only such change will facilitate and lead to an interactional 'ripple effect' into the ecosystem, and back again to ourselves.

Specifically, the change we seek has to do with disrupting the damaging habit of *perceiving* Earth and its inhabitants as a resource base for creating material wealth and warehouse of consumer goods, and the human inhabitants as 'tools' whose main task is to provide the labour for producing consumer goods. For such a habit to drop, we need nothing less than a radical change to our understanding of who we and our fellow earth beings are as inhabitants of this planet, and what our relationships are to each other.

Moreover, we the authors of this chapter advance an understanding that all the pain and horror we witness today is the growing pain associated with humanity's developmental process that seems to be manifesting developmental arrest (Shepard, 1982). Our reading of the human history is that humanity has sustained a substantial measure of attachment wounding (Bowlby, 1988) at the collective level, particularly since we have entered the Industrial Age. This is an area of research that has been insufficiently explored. In this chapter, we will make a foray into questions arising from our speculations about our collective attachment issues.

In keeping with the interpretation we make above, we will propose that the sustainability discourse be taken in the direction of facilitating the evolution of human consciousness and development of a new and more mature identity for the human species. In short, we see the sustainability project as the collective process of 'growing up' through increasing immersion in an individual and collective healing process.

Our chapter makes a contribution to the field of sustainability education by showing how we may create teaching and learning environments that are conducive to our own healing, and to stimulating and fostering development of human consciousness. We propose a seamless practice of sustainability as a way of being and living.

Sustainability as Healing Work

In spite of vastly accumulating scientific understanding about the natural world and increasing material wealth, human life in these modern and postmodern centuries has experienced significant degrees of dehumanization, alienation, and anomy (Laing, 1967; Hillman, 1982; Jung, 2008). One of the most conspicuous signs of the stress and strain in our current civilization is the ever-increasing phenomenon of self-defeating and self-destructive behaviour. Prime examples are all forms of addiction. Alexander (2010) states that the lack or loss of social belonging and individual autonomy, all of which indicate decreased psychological integration, leads to a terrorizing sense of loss, alienation, emptiness, dislocation, and confusion. Individuals attempt to cope with or defend against this terrorizing sense by resorting to drugs and alcohol, and other forms of addictive patterns. All addictions can be seen as buffers against unbearable psychological pain. Alexander (2010) concludes: "To say that an addiction is 'adaptive' is not to imply that it is desirable, either for the person or for society, but only that, as a 'lesser evil,' it may buffer a person against the greater evil of unbearable dislocation" (p. 63).

In the same vein of understanding, many scholars specifically have commented that consumerism is a form of addiction (Kaza, 2005). Addiction moves in where there is a sense of lack, or emptiness. Lack is an existential phenomenon of discontent and a sense of something missing (Loy, 1996). Constantly driven by this gnawing sense of lack, humans search out one more thing that

will fill the existential emptiness. But this existential vacuum is not a material thing. This is the reason why the lacuna cannot be filled. The 'lack of' cannot be remedied by 'more of.'

Consumerism as addiction is a signal that something has gone wrong. As such, what we need not do is to turn the signal into a problem and try to get rid of the signal. That would be like shooting the messenger who brings us the bad news that requires our urgent attention and immediate action. Our reading of the dominant cultural patterns of consumerism and other addictive phenomena in our modern and postmodern periods is that of attachment rupture at the level of the collective psyche (Jordon, 2009). Humanity's attachment bonding to the larger matrix of our being, namely planet Earth (Nature), as well as to the human community, has been compromised. This is the legacy of the Industrial Revolution that we now see as the transitional period for humanity from the agricultural mode of living (Thompson, 1996/1998) based on the interdependence with the land and community to the industrial mode of production and consumption that sought to destroy such interdependency (Polanyi, 2001). As we know from research on human attachment (Ainsworth, 1978; Bowlby, 1988; Neufeld & Maté, 2005; Bretherton, 1992), compromised individual attachment history precipitates insecure bonding that tends to result in self and/or other destructive behaviour (Briere & Scott, 2008; Brady & Beck, 2012).

Contemporary research in neurobiology, neuropsychology, and psychotherapy have shown ways to address and heal attachment wounds (e.g., Hanson, 2009; Siegel, 2010). The basic idea behind healing the attachment wounds is creating relational environments in which afflicted individuals can experience intersubjectivity: that is, the experience of both being heard, seen, listened to, received, and being energetically "held." Within such environments, opportunity to experience what has been profoundly lacking, leading to experiencing resonance and human warmth will be possible. Warm and nurturing relational experience in a secure, safe, and trust-building relationship begins to re-build the missing ontological security and soothe humans who are experiencing existential anxiety. This kind of work is the norm in psychotherapeutic relationships. However, we can also look to our own classroom relational experience as a place of promise. Below, we sketch a narrative vignette to illustrate such possibility.

A Healing Work Vignette: Classroom as an Intersubjective Field

I am sitting in a graduate seminar with twenty graduate students. The year is 2012, and the seminar is taking place at my university's campus. My university has an international reputation as a solid academic institution, and attracts an increasing number of international students. Most of these students are doctoral students, with a few who are master's students, ranging in ages between mid-twenties to mid-forties. At this point, the class has been meeting for five weeks. The total duration of the course is three months, and the class meets fourteen times in total. We are just over one third of the way through our time together.

The subject matter of the seminar is the ethical core of scholarly work. I have explained to the group, on many occasions, that in order for us to be congruent with the topic of the seminar, we will have to be working on being congruent within ourselves, in our personal expression, and within our classroom community development process. I have been emphasizing that for us not to just talk endlessly about theories and perpetuate the usual theory and practice gap, we need to put our best theories into practice, which means living the practice and transforming ourselves thereby.

In my faculty, I am known for initiating students' transformative inner work as part of the process of classroom community development. So, students coming in are not likely to be surprised by what they will encounter in the class, at least in a general way. Of course, the details of what emerges is always a surprise, and, despite all the pre-knowledge and explanations I give at the outset, some students are still surprised by the particular process that I initiate in the class. Let me describe what the process is like and illustrate how it goes. The process in question is one that I attend to in every class that I teach.

Everyone arrives on time, as I am known for starting on time with whomever is present. I am not punitive at all towards those who may come late. Things do happen in students' lives: everything inclusively between birth (of babies) and death (of loved ones). When someone arrives late, at the earliest appropriate moment I greet her and give her the opportunity to say something to join in the group. This absence and presence is acknowledged in a way that fits the student, the group, and the moment.

I say to the group, "Let's take about seven minutes for personal reflection time." The group was quite animated with talking amongst themselves, but now goes quiet. People shift around and find their space and comfort. I am aware of my breathing, my heartbeat, a feeling of heat and pulse throughout my body, and a felt sense of the presence of others in the room.

I check the clock: it is just about seven minutes. I say, "Okay, let's come back now." Slowly, I see eyes opening. Some seem to be still in their inner world, and others are starting to look around. The atmosphere of the group seems 'soft,' and palpably so to me. I sit quietly for a moment. We seem to be taking each other in. I am about to initiate the next step in a process that is now a familiar part of the group's culture and practice. I look around the class silently, and briefly taking in each person. My attention is drawn to Wei, who seems to be sending little 'flickers' to me. "Wei, would you like to start?" You, dear reader, may well be wondering, "Start! Start what?" We are beginning our time together, not with a lecture, not with curriculum content. Rather, we are starting with the contents of the lives of the classroom community citizens--our beingness, subjectively and intersubjectively. I will narrate here a small section of this process and then elaborate on the underlying principles that are at play.

Wei begins. She speaks in a very clear voice and with inflections that suggest that English is not her first language. She is very fluent with the language and articulate in expressions. " My state during meditation was unsettled. It is more settled than when we first started the class. I feel physically good, although a little tired. I am continuing to struggle with the process of the dissolution of my relationship." She hesitates at this point. Her emotions are unspoken but a flushing on her face is a signal. Tears appear. The group is attentive and silent. Her close classmate, James, speaks, "I have been carrying you with me on and off for some time now. I want to say here in the group, that I am with you in a fairly constant way, even when I am not with you physically." Wei looks up in James' direction. The group seems to be entirely present and focused on this interaction. Wei speaks, "I am aware of your support for me, and from our whole group." She again hesitates slightly, takes a breath, and a few more tears run down her cheeks. In her presence, Wei seems to have a magnetic radiance in her present state of vulnerability and authenticity.

I see evidence of the strong attentiveness of the entire group. Now Janice speaks: "Is there anything that we might offer that will be helpful to you in being here today?" Wei says, "Thank you, Janice, for your support and kind offer. What I have received so far from the group will do me well. Thank you." The moment seems to have some resolution.

As is our custom, Wei now looks around, and chooses the next person: "Rob!" Rob begins, "I feel very present within myself and with all of you. I had a tremendously great feeling of aliveness as I rode in on my bicycle today. I felt the pulse of the city, and I had the 'delusion' (laughter emerges from the group) that the city's heartbeats and mine were one. I am glad to be here, and I'm looking forward to our class today. I am really excited about the material we have been reading about and discussing." Glancing around, Rob chooses the next person: "Patricia!"

Patricia speaks, with humour in her tone of voice: "Well, I think I am a lightweight compared to the two of you. My meditation was full of thoughts about grocery lists, kids' activities, and upon reflection, I can say that my connection to my body went unnoticed. However, in just saying all this to you all, I feel more present. Thank you." She looks around and calls out gently: "Samantha!"

Everyone is given an opportunity to check in and sharing their 'here and now' experience, including me. I serve multiple roles during this time, including being a teacher, a group member, and a facilitator of the group process. The group's issues that day also include the expression of some hurt, anger, and conflict between two of the members, and its resolution and repair. The process experience that we are having is aimed towards building community and development of the group's culture. This process of development is subjective, intersubjective, and intrasubjective, and has ripple effects on our lives outside the group, for all members.

What is described above includes a process known as 'deep democracy' (Mindell, 2002). The important idea here is the inclusion of all the voices, especially the voices of hurt, insecure, anxious, distressed, in short, suffering others. As well, other voices that are marginalized by culture, language, sexual preference, and so on are acknowledged and heard through this process orientation. Intent on achievement and success, schooling environments tend to ignore, marginalize, if not exclude, the suffering that is everywhere within and without us. But suffering does not go away by being ignored and marginalized. It shows up elsewhere in more hurtful ways when unattended to and cared for. Thus, pedagogically what we need to do is to lean into our suffering, embrace it, and learn to sit with it or in the midst of it. And it is here that having a community of support, such as we saw in the above vignette, is of tremendous value.

To suffer alone is one of the hardest things to bear for humans. We are not meant to be solitary individuals (Cohen & Bai, 2008). We are social animals. The intent of the community process, as in the vignette, is to provide a relational matrix that supports and provides healing possibility for the participants. It also turns out that, by creating a learning community where the members are more known to each other in a personal way than is usual in a classroom (Cohen, 2004), students are more relaxed and focused, secure, and would be able to more readily assimilate curriculum material. The above vignette illustrated a mindful, caring pedagogy.

Sustainability and Self-Cultivation

Sustaining that with which we feel no affinity or relationship, or about which we have no consciousness, is most unlikely. Therefore, education for sustainability is at its core education for connection, relationship, and consciousness. Such education will show by experience that humans are a part of the whole, and that this whole is truly indivisible. The indivisibility is not just an idea,

but is something that educators and students alike need to and can experience directly. Learning this is an ongoing life-giving and life-sustaining process.

Many world wisdom traditions have voiced in different ways, reflecting diverse worldviews or cultures, the understanding of the world being an interconnected unity and humans being an integral part of such unity. Buddhist philosophy, for instance, has articulated the understanding of dynamic interconnectivity of the phenomenal world in the doctrine of co-dependent arising and interpenetration (Macy, 1991). This process of re-connecting with the indivisibility or nonduality of human beings would be a necessary outcome of shifting out of the individualistic ontology that largely characterizes the ethos of contemporary culture. The shift is to joining more closely within oneself, recognizing one's inter-being with all others and with the other-than-human realm. Accompanying this shift is a gradual regaining of the 'original' state of nonduality within oneself (known as the *bodhicitta*—enlightened heart-mind—in Buddhism), thus overcoming the separation and alienation that have been inscribed into us through socialization and enculturation (Bai et al., 2009).

A key piece of recovery of our nondual nature is the ongoing process of inner work (Cohen, 2013) and self-cultivation (Carter, 2008). Carter, a Canadian philosopher who studies Japanese culture, philosophy, and arts, describes how various Japanese arts are 'do (道, literally meaning, *way*),' that is, ways of self-cultivation. In this tradition, the purpose of the art is the cultivation of the artist (Davey, 2007). The perfecting of the artist and the art are not two separate processes: they are one. Such a process with an increasingly mutual and integrated focus creates a human being who is an exemplar of richly integrated humanity. This idea of self-cultivation as a supreme aim of education was central to the three classical Asian thought systems: Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. These thought systems all postulate an original or aboriginal humanity that is in touch and in harmony with the cosmos, thereby being capable of acting with integrity and authenticity in promotion of flourishing for all beings. Recovery of this original humanity is the task of self-cultivation.

The challenge and difficulty of self-cultivation has to do with overcoming the conventional egoic states of consciousness that have been built into us from our earliest days of existence, and include socialization and enculturation that insidiously 'teach' us to be self-interested atomistic individuals who are engaged in a life oriented towards survival and 'winning.' Such teachings move human beings to lose sight and feel for their fundamental and irreducible interbeing with the world. What relentlessly drives this game is the raw sense--readily experienced in the form of fear, anxiety, and panic--that individual survival is at stake. We then fight, flee, or freeze: the three classic defense postures. Life becomes a permanent war zone. The battle for survival dominates. For those with personalities that work well, the problem is most challenging for the very reason that they are successful in the world. In other words, the personality structure that has worked for them also functions as a protective armouring against hurt while simultaneously functioning as a 'prison' that contains efforts to reach out into the world and to connect with other human beings.

The primary task of education that focuses on inner work and self-cultivation is unhooking our selves from unconsciousness and numbness. If we are to be free, we will need to free ourselves, as the lock that prevents us from being free is inside us and manifests there and in the intersubjective realms. Consequently, inner work (Cohen, 2013) that focuses on subjectivivity and its interaction with intersubjectivity becomes central.

Inner work is to loosen the hold of the survival level by waking us up to who we are, individually and collectively, in our authenticity and integrity. This can be done with combined

contemplative practices and psychological work that addresses the prevailing egoic structures as presently constituted in the body-mind consciousness. Such work is a process-oriented approach that identifies 'frozen' states and structures, and facilitates the process of warming them up, 'cooking' them, and witnessing and facilitating their return to fluidity, flexibility, and flow. Anything less is likely to be at best, a Band-Aid, and at worst, successful at momentarily quieting the distress symptoms of anxiety and fear. This latter has the effect of driving the dis-ease deeper into the unconscious. Eventually, distress and dis-ease will re-emerge in a more sinister way, through distressing body symptoms, diseases, relational problems, and world problems such as environmental destruction, violence, and war (Metzner, 1999).

Central to the systemic changes we are addressing are changes within small human groups. An essential component of such change is the changes within what could be called the inner community: the inner worlds of the educator and students. This change involves inner work practices (Cohen, 2013). What follows here is an example of such work that illustrates a process orientation of movement from a binary towards nondual perspective.

A Vignette of Inner Work

The person whom you will meet here, Akiko, was born in Japan. She immigrated to Canada with her family when she was a young child. Her father worked for a multi-national corporation in Japan, and took the opportunity to transfer here and to have his family live in North America. Akiko speaks flawless English as she has spoken it for most of her life. She is also fluent in her native tongue and is very aware of her cross-cultural influences. Akiko is a relatively new faculty at a major university, having completed her Ph.D. four years ago. She and I have been working together for 1 1/2 years. I work with her to facilitate her inner work. She came to see me when she realized that her knowledge of curriculum contents was not sufficient for dealings with students, many of whom came from foreign countries. The majority, however, are North American born students. Akiko began to see that what was going on in her classroom that affected their ability to participate in learning curriculum material and in dealing with various happenings in the classroom was a major factor in the environment. More importantly she began to realize that her own reactions in her inner world and in her position as classroom leader was compromised by her own reactivity. I will bring you into a small piece of her inner work that she shared with me.

Akiko: Okay. I am sitting quietly. I am paying attention to sensory experiences. I feel my legs on the cushion. I am adjusting my position to be as aligned as possible. I have a sense of a line from the top of my head dropping straight through my core and into the ground. I am aware of my breath. Ooh, I feel tension in my neck and shoulders. My head feels heavy. I don't feel so good. Ah, I have lost my awareness. Now it's back. My inner work coach constantly reminds me that practice is about awareness, not about getting it right! Hmmm, did I get that right?? I am amused! I am settling now; settling into my body. I still have thoughts. They seem to come and go.

I am ready to work now. I recall an incident in my class. I wonder if it even stood out at all for the students. Bob, a star halfback on the football team, when asked if he had any thoughts about a particular aspect of the week's assigned readings, responded: "Sorry, Professor, I was too busy this week learning the plays for Saturday's game. I could tell you about those plays." The class laughed. I laughed, too, but it was not a real laugh. I felt a

deep anger that this macho male was making light of our studies about social justice and education. I could feel the wound within me. I remembered some more of what I have been working on with my coach, namely: "we are in the most fortunate position of being paid to get feedback about who and what we are. This opens the door to immense growth personally and professionally." Okay, here I go-

I am hurt. I am deeply hurt. I am also angry. I am aware that my breath is very shallow. I take a deeper breath. I feel a little pain in my chest as I do this. I have a strange thought. "No wonder we attacked Pearl Harbour! These bullies need to be put in their place." I am shocked at my own simplistic, patronizing, and hostile thought. I do not want to have such a thought. It does not fit at all with my view of who I am. Memories of my dear grandfather suddenly arise. He was in the Japanese Army during WWII. He was no fan of what our country had done, but he also was no fan of the American soldiers that were part of the occupying forces. I have too many examples of his words about these soldiers and what they did embed in my deep memory to be able to forget them or even to be able have any objectivity about them. He was in many respects an endpoint of the Japanese Samurai tradition. Death on the battlefield was a honourable way to die. It was in the service of the daimyo, the shogun, and the emperor. I recognized how much I am an outcome of my culture. Bob IS the enemy. He deserves to be killed!

Suddenly, I feel myself as a warrior, a male warrior. I have a sword in my hand. My mind is perfectly calm. I am as clear as I could ever imagine. I see Bob. He is a warrior, also. He is a modern day warrior in a sports arena. I realize in a flash that Bob and I are not so different in our ways of being. He is overtly sanctioned to be a warrior. I am not. I am sanctioned to be a professor, a holder/dispenser of knowledge, and to be demure, a quiet Asian female. The relationship between Bob and me is set up to be adversarial. Of course, Bob does not know this, and up to this very moment, neither did I.

I realize that my relationship with Bob is based on the construction of my inner world; an inner world shaped by my self, my culture, my personal history, and my unconsciousness as an adult. My identity will change. The inner relationship with Bob will change. I already know, without knowing the details, that Bob is a symbol for me and serves as a trigger for my own pain--my pain of being what I am not, and what and who I am. I see that there is a huge growth potential for me. This is enough for now. There is much to reflect on and much more to do. I have the possibility of becoming more of who I truly am, of relating to Bob in a more open and transparent way, and of quietly modelling a greater authenticity for my students. I recognize that it's up to Bob to choose his priorities, and the implications fall to him. My responsibility is to present the opportunity to him; his is to choose. I know that this latter will have a benefit for their learning as I will be that much more present with them.

What is demonstrated in the above vignette is a profound example of inner work. Akiko has shown her ability to reflect on and work with her own inner world experience. Further, she has clearly done herself, her student, Bob, and all her students a service. Dynamics of all kinds are taking place beneath the awareness of those acting them out and of those being affected by them. At the least, becoming aware of and working with this material makes for a better learning environment and a better opportunity for learning. Beyond the classroom, the ripple effect potential is great. Students exposed to this type of practice and educators who are practitioners will certainly carry this with them in many areas of their lives and in their communities. More vigorous learning and better peace building would be an outcome.

Sustainability as a work that disrupts the collective psyche that is trapped in consumptive and addictive patterns and transforms the soul of our civilization is a task that goes beyond cleaning up and repairing the damaged environment, or even slowing down the rate of material consumption and production. The latter is, of course, necessary, but not sufficient. The externally oriented or focused 'sustainability' work of repairing and sustaining the environment needs to be closely coupled with the further maturation work we do in our *inner environment* of thinking, perceiving, feeling, willing, and acting. We need to do inner and outer work simultaneously as the inner and the outer are seamlessly intertwined (Bai et al., 2014).

Becoming Nature as Sustainability Work

The internalization of self-limiting and destructive patterns has been taking shape through mass mechanisms of all major formal institutions of modernity, in particular, schooling (Illich, 2000), as well as informal institutions of family, workforce, and increasingly, media and advertising industry. At the heart of this mass mechanism is materialistic individualism. This is a worldview that fundamentally sees the world as "a collection of things," that is, as *stuffs* to accumulate and trash, not as "a communion of subjects" (Berry, 1982). Moreover, this worldview posits that human individuals are self-bound, singular and discrete beings whose main motivation is to survive as human individuals. The result of materialistic individualism is *objectification* of the world and everything contained in the world, including our selves.

Objectification leads to instrumentalism: denial of the intrinsic nature and worth of beings (Bai, 2001). We are enculturated and socialized to be disrespectful and destructive towards Nature as well as human others who are mostly seen as tools of production and consumption. Increasingly, human beings exist as rootless, and often nameless and soulless, workers (Rasmussen, 2000). Ironically, even the most affluent people are rootless in their jet-set lifestyle (Bauman, 1998). As personal material resources increase, the perceived need for protection grows, the ability to create the protective barriers is more available, and the separation from the world in general and others in particular is enhanced. Not surprisingly, alienation, isolation, and separateness grow.

There has been a mounting and spreading awareness amongst environmental educators that our priority has to be changing the internal landscape of our unsustainable selves (Bai, 2012; Bai, 2013; Bonnett, 2013; Gomes & Kanner, 1995; Metzner, 1999). As David Orr (2004) succinctly states, the devastation in Nature is a reflection of disorder in the human mind. For instance, we need to repeatedly remind ourselves that our fundamental interconnectedness with the world and Nature is not really broken or gone. It is not that Nature neglected, abandoned, or abused us. Nature is not behaving differently towards the modern and postmodern humanity than it was to our ancestor hundreds or thousands years ago. It is just that current humanity's beliefs and perceptions are misaligned with reality. This statement is not meant to suggest some romantic image of a past that never was. We are suggesting that collectively humanity is not seeing clearly or accurately. This is why David Orr (2004) has declared: "the disordering of ecological systems and of the great biogeochemical cycles of the earth reflects a prior disorder in the thought, perception, imagination, intellectual priorities, and loyalties inherent in the industrial mind" (p. 2).

It is important to note and remind ourselves that the natural world is not something we need to "get close to" or "back to." Nature has never left us, and we are never far from it. Nature *is always and already what is*. Therefore, even if we are in our homes, in front of the computer, we are *in* Nature and *of* Nature. Why does this reminder matter? Because we need to understand that if we want to facilitate the change for sustainability, then first and foremost we need to work towards identity

change: this is not change to who we are not. We have already succeeded far too well at this. We have demonstrated beyond any doubt our ability to wreak havoc on increasingly larger scales. The change we need is toward who we truly are. Committing to a process of inner work and self-cultivation that moves towards whole and authentic being affords a greater scope of adaption to the inner and outer environment and their seamless joining.

Nature mostly represents sheer 'otherness' for humans in both the popular imagination and learned discourse. From this view, humans are what Nature is not, and vice versa. Such a view is part of the previously mentioned objectivist and instrumentalist consciousness, which has humans see the world as otherness that exists separate from human beings, and that, inversely, has us see ourselves as individuals that are separate from the world. Sardello (in Hillman, 1982) writes about how this separation manifests as symptoms in humans: "The new symptoms are fragmentation, specialization, expertise, depression, inflation, loss of energy, jargons, and violence. Our buildings are anorexic, our businesses paranoid, our technology manic" (p. 75). These 'symptoms' are, we contend, aspects of an underdeveloped 'immature,' psyche that has yet to grow up and enter a new integrative stage of development wherein we see ourselves as part of Nature, or even further, we see ourselves as Nature and become Nature. Without the awareness that our essential psychological needs *at every stage of human development* are deeply rooted in the creative impulse of the natural world (Aizenstat, 1995; Abram, 1996), our view on human development will remain partial and unintegrated. Thus, sustainability discourse needs to include the sensibility that we can become *informed*, that is, intrinsically formed, by the psyche of Nature, that is, inner and outer Nature and their interconnection. At that deeper stage of human maturity, the inescapable, life-giving connection we share with the natural world can emerge as our fundamental existential awareness (Plotkin, 2008; Wilber 2000). Hence, our re-connection to Nature has its roots in our inner world.

Below, we have included another vignette, this time a series of journal entries that capture an attempt to "become Nature."

Recovery of the Original Nonduality
(from the journals of Shahar Rabi)

I

Every tree grows toward the sun. If we put a barrier between the tree and the sun the tree will adapt and go around the barrier. Such is in education—See the psychological barrier (psychological inflexibility) and the student will know what to do, he/she will know how to grow toward God/life/truth. Not Man nor women will arrive at this truth/God but he will aspire to get as close as he can in his life. It is built in . . . This aspiration is what counts because it brings us back to a very deep truth about life—we know what to do when we let go of the barriers and just listen.

II

Thoughts can be healthy or poisonous just like plants and fruit in a forest. This does not mean they are not beautiful to watch or to notice when they appear in the mind and it does not make them 'not natural' or something that we need to get rid of. Like in Nature, we have thoughts that are part of our internal balanced ecology. They have a reason and purpose as part of the whole psychological ecology even if we do not understand that yet: Maybe like a poisonous fruit, our negative thoughts bring balance to our self as it brings

diversity to the forest. If we push it away or try to 'kill' this thought, we might make our psyche less diverse (flexible?) and thus less healthy.

III

Let's take corn as an example of diversity: There are dozen of varieties of corn with a multitude of diverse colors, tastes, and adaptability to different climates (not to mention the aspect of beauty). Although corn is one family of grain, its diversity allows it to flourish. When we produce GMO corn, we loss diversity, and beauty, and risk famine. The same with the mind: If we say that the ways we understand the world should only be scientific, rational, etc., and the way of the markets could only be selfish then we lose adaptability, perspectives, and beauty. We create a "terminator seed" in the mind and in our culture. Without diversity, consciousness is weak. It is easier to be threatened: it is narrow. We should not listen to the voices that speak of efficiency in education, because these improvements can become "killer seeds" in the mind. These "improvements" can jeopardize inner abundance . . . The DSM is another example of the loss of diversity within. The DSM defines, adjusts, regulates, and to a large extent maps and owns what we think of the human condition. This is done in order to increase the 'efficiency' of psychiatry. However, the world soul is not something that needs efficiency, as Nature does not need to be patented and "improved." Psychiatry, like big seed companies, wishes to create dependency on its seeds/pills. In this hierarchical model, the patient/farmer becomes dependent and enslaved to the diagnosis/seed in order to receive treatment.

IV

I am a social and cultural process and in that I am center-less. I am not as autonomous as I wish to believe but a fluid creation from moment to moment—changing within through psychological patterns I am not always aware of. Such is the case with the people I work with . . . What I see and what I work with is not only 'them,' but an organism that is made up by personal and collective history (and even much more then that). That is why I first have to make them (and myself) aware of this beautiful process/pattern. Not change it, but become aware of it. In this seeing, there is freedom and in that freedom the (spontaneous) individual is born... the point is that we do not need to be autonomies to be authentic. The unique self (spontaneous individual) is a by-product of such awareness that bring forth a one of a kind randomization process/pattern. This means that the non-dual moment of awareness is what brings uniqueness and freedom to those I work with. This unique self derives directly from awareness as it gives space for the multiplicity of the social and cultural process. As such, the unique self is what we are when we tap into the creative, free spirit of life itself and then embody a unique expression of that (life). It is the life that becomes an embodied reality through us. Thus, we do not own it. It does not belong to us. Each of us—as a result of our location in the environment (ecology) and unique perspective (masks, psychology and soul)—has something to offer that is deeply needed for our flourishing.

What this journal vignette expresses is a philosophy born out of a deepening awareness of a personal inner world and how it is a reflection of the outer world. It is, as well, a 'seeing' of the relationship between the current condition of Nature and the wounds of the human inner world. It is an articulation of a process of development that is also a philosophical and psychological statement of one person that is a representation of humanity's torment and possibility.

Creativity, the erotic impulse, aggression, compassion, wisdom, time and space, and life and death, all of which are integral part of who we are, and are just a few examples of what is shared by Nature and human beings (Abram, 1996). Both the great outdoors and the emotional fabric of human life are part of Nature, and a full opening into both aspects of our selves is vital to becoming whole (Plotkin, 2008). If we are truly interested in sustainability, we need to continue to grow and mature in the direction of becoming whole and one with Nature and all its diversity. In other words, we need to embody within our psyche, the ecological diversity manifest in the outer world. We shall use the term, 'psycho-diversity' (Rabi, 2013) to denote this understanding of psychically embodying ecological diversity within. What does this all mean? We would say that psycho-diversity is the existence of a healthy diversity of imagery and perspectives in the conscious and the unconscious, as well as the ability of a culture and/or of individuals in a culture to access this imaginative space of richness that is our psychic reality in reciprocal relationship with its local surroundings. When we are interested in the *deep democracy of the soul*, which is the return to multiplicity and diversity within, between, and without, we discover that we are the ten thousand things within, or what Austin (1975) calls "an interior society" whose relations suggest "a community of internal agents" (in Beebe, 2002, p. 267). Thus psycho-diversity mirrors eco-diversity, which is a key factor in our collective and personal psychic strength.

As with eco-diversity, losing psycho-diversity is not only dangerous for our wellbeing and vitality, but also it is a challenge to our ability to sustain ourselves and to come up with creative solutions to our problems. Objectivist ontology and individualist ethics lead us to a psychological monoculture by continually suppressing what is considered, by the conventional societal norms and morality, undesirable and unacceptable. This latter practice is the origin of repressed human psyche.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter we have attempted to exemplify the values of living in touch with our inner worlds, each other, and Nature. We wanted to do more than talk about theories of Being and environmental crisis. We have abstained from blaming. We have included narratives that invite you, the reader, to entertain possibilities of different reality within your own consciousness. We have attempted to describe the process of sustainability and its connection to authenticity. We communicated the feeling of that which is ephemeral and infuses all of existence in the relational field. We hope that the spark within you has been well fanned.

References

Abram, D. (1996). *The spell of the sensuous: Perception and language in a more than human world*. New York: Vintage Books.

Ainsworth, M. (1978). *Patterns of attachment: A psychological study of the strange situation*. Hillsdale, NJ: MDS Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Aizenstat, S. (1995). Jungian psychology and the world unconscious. In T. Roszak, M. Gomes & A. Kanner (Eds.), *Ecopsychology: Restoring the earth, healing the mind* (pp. 92-100). San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Books.

Alexander, B. K. (2008). *The globalization of addiction: A study of poverty of the spirit.* London: Oxford University Press.

Austin, N. (1975). *Archery at the dark of the moon: Poetic problems in Homer's Odyssey.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bai, H. (2001). Challenge for education: Learning to value the world intrinsically. *Encounter*, *14*(1), 4-16.

Bai, H. (2012). Reclaiming our moral agency through healing: A call to moral, social, environmental activists. *Journal of Moral Education*, *41*(3), 311-328.

Bai, H. (2013). Peace with the Earth: Animism and contemplative ways. *Cultural Studies of Science Education, 2*(8), 1-13.

Bai, H., Cohen, A., Culham, T., Park, S., Rabi, S., Scott, C., & Tait, S. (2014). A call for wisdom in higher education: Contemplative voices from the *Dao*-Field. In O. Gunnlaugson, E. Sarath, H. Bai, & C. Scott (Eds.), *Contemplative learning and inquiry across disciplines* (pp. 287-302). New York: State University of New York Press.

Bai, H., Donald, B., & Scott, C. (2009). Contemplative pedagogy and revitalization of teacher education. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research, 55*(3), 319-334.

Beebe, J. (2002). An archetypal model of the self in dialogue. *Theory & Psychology, 12*(2), 267-280.

Bauman, Z. (1998). *Globalization: The human consequences*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Berry, T. (1982). *The dream of the earth*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.

Bonnett, M. (2013). Self, environment, and education: Normative arisings. In R. B. Stevenson, M. Brody, J. Dillon, & A. E. J. Wals (Eds.) *International handbook of research on environmental education* (pp. 87-92). New York: Routledge.

Bowlby, J. (1988). *A secure base: Clinical applications of attachment theory*. London: Routledge.

Brady, K., & Back, S. (2012). Childhood trauma, posttraumatic stress disorder, and alcohol dependence. *Alcohol Research: Current Reviews*, *34*(4), 408-413.

Bretherton, I. (1992). The origins of attachment theory: John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth. *Developmental Psychology, 28*, 759-775.

Briere, J., & Scott, C. (2008). *Principles of trauma therapy: A guide to symptoms, evaluation, and treatment*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Cohen, A. (2004). A process-oriented approach to learning process-oriented counselling skills in groups. *Canadian Journal of Counselling, 38*(3), 152-164.

Cohen, A. (2013). *Becoming fully human within educational environments: Inner life, relationship, and learning*. Vancouver/Jamestown, BC/NY: Writeroom/Cambria. (Original work published 2009 as *Gateway to the Dao-Field*)

Cohen, A., Bai, H., & Green L. (2008). An experiment in radical pedagogy: Enactment of deep democracy in a philosopher's cafe. *Radical Pedagogy, 9*(2). Retrieved from http://radicalpedagogy.icaap.org/content/issue9_2/Cohen_Bai_Green.html

Cohen, A., & Bai, H. (2008). Suffering loves and needs company: Daoist and Zen perspectives on the counsellor as companion. *Canadian Journal of Counselling. 42*(1), 45-56.

Davey, H. E. (2007). *The Japanese way of the artist: Three complete works on the classic tradition*. Berkeley, CA: Stone Bridge.

Fromm, E. (1976). *To have or to be*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Gillis, J. (2014, March 18). Scientists sound alarm on climate. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/18/science/scientists-sound-alarm-on-climate.html

Gomes, M., & Kanner, A. D. (1995). The rape of the well-maidens: Feminist psychology and the environmental crisis. In Roszak, T., Gomes, M. E. & Kanner, A. D. (Eds.) *Ecopsychology: Restoring the earth, healing the mind* (pp.111-121). San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.

Hahn, T. N. (1993). *Interbeing.* Berkeley, CA: Parallax.

Hanson, R., & Mendius, R. (2009). *Buddha's brain: The practical neuroscience of happiness, love, and wisdom.* Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.

Hillman, J. (1982). *Anima mudi: The return of the soul to the world.* Dallas, TX: Spring Publications.

Jordon, M., (2009). Nature and self – An ambivalent attachment?. *Ecopsychology*, *1*(1), 26-31.

Jung, G. C. (2002). *The undiscovered self.* Routledge: London.

Laing, R. D. (1967). *The politics of experience and the bird of paradise.* Middlesex: Penguin Books.

Illich, I. (2000). *Deschooling society.* London: Marion Boyars.

Loy, D. (1996). *Lack and transcendence: Existentialism, Buddhism, and psychoanalysis.* Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press.

Macy, J. (1991). *The dharma of natural systems: Mutual causality in Buddhism and general systems theory.* New York: State University of New York Press.

Merchant, C. (2005). *Radical ecology: The search for a livable world.* New York: Routledge.

Metzner, R. (1999). *Green psychology: Transforming our relationship to the earth.* Rochester, VT: Park Street Press.

Mindell, A. (2002). *The deep democracy of open forums: Practical steps to conflict prevention and resolution for the family, workplace, and world.* Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads.

Neufeld, G., & Maté, G. (2005). *Hold on to your kids: Why parents need to matter more than peers.* New York: Ballantine Books.

Orr, D. (2004). *Earth in mind: On education, environment, and the human prospect.* Washington, DC: Island Press.

Palmer, P. (1998). *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life.* New York: Jossey-Bass.

Plotkin, B (2008). *Nature and the human soul: Cultivating wholeness and community in a fragmented world.* New World Library: Novato.

Polanyi, K. (2001). *The great transformation: The political and economic origins of our time.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Rabi, S (2013). *The soul of recovery.* Unpublished manuscript, Simon Fraser University.

Rasmussen, D. (2000). Dissolving Inuit society through education and money. *INTERculture*, *139*, 3-64.

Sardello, R, J. (1985). Educating with soul: A phenomenological archetypal reflection on higher education. *Teachers College Record, 86*(3), 423-439

Schellenbaum, P. (1988/1990). *The wound of the unloved: Releasing the life energy* (T. Nevill, Trans.). Dorset, GB: Element Books.

Schneider, K. (2004). *Rediscovery of awe: Splendor, mystery, and the fluid center of life.* St. Paul, MN: Paragon House.

Shepard, P. (1982). *Nature and madness.* San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.

Siegel, D. J. (2010). *The mindful therapist: A clinician's guide to mindsight and neural integration.* New York: Norton & Company.

Taylor, C. (1991). *Malaise of modernity.* Toronto: The House of Anansi Press.

Thompson, W. I. (1996/1998). *Coming into being: Artifacts and texts in the evolution of consciousness.* New York: St. Martin's Press.

Wilber, K. (2000). *Sex, ecology, spirituality.* Boston: Shambhala Publications.