

Daily Meditation 09/29/2022

Animals as Spiritual Teachers: Wisdom from the Mo...

Good morning.

In today's meditation, we take a bit of a pause from the news that we've been covering recently, which we said is quite heavy and demanding. And we go back to that watering hole, that oasis of the via positiva. And I happen to choose for the next few meditation some reflections on animals and what they bring us.

Animals are part of the big picture that we call Mother Earth. One of the most wonderful books I read this past year has been Carl Safina's book, *Becoming Wild: How Animal Cultures Raise Families, Create Beauty, and Achieve Peace*. And it focuses -- there are three parts to the book, and one focuses on the sperm whales. That's Part One, called "Raising Families". And Part Two focuses on the scarlet macaws, those beautiful parrots of Central America. That section is called "Creating Beauty". And Part Three is on chimpanzees, "Achieving Peace," and of course chimpanzees are the nearest animal to ourselves; we share about 90% of the same DNA with chimpanzees. And they make war but they also make peace.

In the epilogue, Carl Safina has a lot to say about the importance and the beauty and the giftedness, the grace, really, that we experience because of animals. He says:

If you zoom out to the big picture from Earth, life on Earth, an infinitesimal fragment of all cosmic matter and energy, is the universe becoming aware of itself. And culture is life adjusting and responding over ages and in real time to the corner of this galaxy in which it finds itself.... Life has in the most real ways, chosen random acts of beauty, random acts of beauty. Not all life, not all the time, but over time over the hundreds of millions of years of this wondrous journey, this has been a trend.

Life has created a perpetual capacity that is felt as beauty. And then has sought more and more of what is beautiful. Life prefers what is lovely and sees as lovely what it prefers. Life has chosen to see itself in our fleck of the sky as beautiful. That realization is so stunning, it can quite take our breath away. It makes our living world not just a cosmic accident of physics and chemistry, but a miracle.

Miraculous does not mean safe.

He talks about how the macaws are disappearing because of climate change and human encroachment in their places.

Beings who have succeeded on Earth for millions of years don't seek and should not require our approval. They belong as well as we, as do we. We do ourselves no favors by asking whether their existence is worthwhile. We are hardly in a position to judge, hurtling and lurching along as we are with no goal, no plan except bigger, faster, more.

If we have the courage to be honest about it, we would have to admit that whales and birds and apes and all the rest live fully up to everything of which they are capable. And we regrettably fall short of doing that. For them to be is enough. And we in our isolating alienation of our title, retreat from life.

For us, nothing is enough. It is strange how dissatisfied we insist on being when there's so much of the world to know and to love.

As we do, these other beings exert themselves to stay alive and to keep their babies alive. We are in many ways not so different. We are all kin, living together in this miracle.

So a newer question looms, will we let them continue to exist? Or will we finalize their annihilation? That is our stark choice. It used to be that the animals did not need us. Now they do. Unless we value their existence, the modern tide will engulf and obliterate them. Might we reconnect? No religion has ever preached that our role was to leave less for those who come after us. This is a moral matter.

Wise words from Carl Safina in his book *Becoming Wild*, in the epilogue to his book.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.