

Nature is not, as the dismal science declares, an externality—and fertility is not a four-letter word.

The transition Earth demands as the price of our continuing as a species here is nothing less than a renunciation of hubris, the presumption that we can lord it over Nature, asserting our superiority to what we call “the natural world,” and so, as D.H.Lawrence, the British novelist put it, to presume that we can “do dirt on life.”

The times demand that we drop our human performance as “not-sees,” not seeing ourselves as belonging to this earth, not loving our home, not recognizing as “all our relations” each and every presence in nature, as did the people from whom Europeans seized this land.

As not-sees (and I thank author Daniel Asa Rose for coining the term), we divorce ourselves from the natural world at our peril.

C. S. Lewis called western people of modern times “men without chests.” Divorced by the fundamental tenets of modernity—denial of place (as in land one calls home, and loves); denial of the body, as wondrous and good; and denial of Nature, as an irrelevance—and all of this, for a long, long time, without noticing: For modernity is still, very much, the water in which we swim.

Our house is on fire, our children will burn—unless we can stop doing as we have been doing, consuming all nature by “not-seeing” it as alive, by “not-seeing” its aliveness as essential to ours, “not-seeing” ourselves as part of nature.

We need to know our lives especially in relationship to land and water, air and sunshine. Do you breathe air? Drink water? Eat, and excrete? Then you just may be part of nature!

And it's time to see that our presence on Earth is made possible by our atmosphere, a blanket of gases no thicker, around the planet, than is the skin on an apple, a blanket that keeps enough solar radiation on Earth to support life.

With that atmosphere in place, soil can grow where once there was only sand. Soil is alive: One spoonful of healthy soil contains as many microorganisms as there are people on the planet. Green leaves, which capture the sun's energy to produce carbon, to feed themselves and the soil, are the original solar panels.

According to Bloomberg, manufactured solar energy systems—panels and batteries together—are now cheaper than natural gas.

Today's news emphasizes the tremendous financial risks of investment in fossil fuels.

But our concern must be above all with minimizing the risks to life that we create in our pursuit of financial profit. For all the benefits we claim from our "not-see" pursuits, we must choose to embrace seeing, from the heart, and learning how to live amongst "all our relations" on earth.

As Antoine de St-Exupéry's little prince learns, "It is only with the heart that we see what is essential."

It is make-or-break time. If we can see that, we can find our way to taking the steps that will halt our assault on the earth, standing together for love of our kind and of all our relations, celebrating our hearts' power to return love to the soil and water, to the sun and air. We will stop existing as consumers, and find our lives' richness in the practice of gratitude.

No one ever promised us a rose garden—but all of nature "out there" is waiting to support us as one of its own kind. ###