



The Natural Contemplative

"Contemplation Is a Relationship with Unfathomable Reality"

Contemplative Ecology

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My intention when I began to develop contemplative ecology around 2007, was to get to the heart of the ecological crisis. Our society is careering toward disaster, and we need to stop. Whenever I talk about contemplative ecology and the ecological crisis, I worry about whether I am going to hit the mark, because it is very easy to miss it. I was born in Rhode Island and raised in Vermont. My genetic inheritance, and my family and my culture did not in any way prepare me for this crisis. I was not born into a nature-loving family or society. We have to find a new way forward, a way that is not bound by what we have inherited from this culture.

The way of life most of us take for granted is destructive at its core, leading now to existential threats to other species and humans alike. Despite more than 50 years of attention, the ecological crisis is getting worse. We have very few years remaining to turn things around, so we cannot waste time on peripheral issues that are symptoms of the disease. We need to identify and address the core problem. That is what I had in mind when I began speaking and writing about contemplative ecology.

The heart of contemplation is an encounter with unfathomable reality, unmediated by any thought or concept or idea. In that encounter, everything changes. Reality touches us, and we are then unable to stomach the lies we normally tell, and the untruths our society encourages, and the destructive habits and systems in which we are embedded. We leave behind the belief systems that previously shaped our understanding of the world, and return to the whole of everything. The illusion of separation, and every psychological and societal system based on separation, is turned on its head. Contemplation has the power to change the course of civilization at its core.

The contemplation I will be describing is not a practice in the way we normally understand that. It is not a set of exercises or rules. It is not a way of saying, "do this and you'll get that." It is not a path to some future ideal. Those ways come from a mind that wants to control its experience. Contemplation means stopping everything and being here with a non-demanding attentiveness. Not trying to gain anything. Not trying to understand. Just being present with *this that is as it is*. When we stop trying to understand and navigate and explain and get the world to fit some idea that we have of it, what we are left with is this... right here... right now. *This* in its actuality. *This* life. *This* moment. And in this moment, the whole universe is present. Nothing that exists can be separated from the whole. Everything is a member of this whole living universe. Contemplation is the visceral, non-verbal encounter with this interconnected reality and the constant relationship with the living world that flows out of that encounter.

Contemplation is inherently ecological, since it is a realization of the wild, interactive and intricate interrelationship of everything. To speak of contemplative ecology is simply to make that insight explicit. Interrelationship is the essential nature of reality. And so the

contemplative way acknowledges interrelationship at every level, in everything we do and everything we are.

Contemplation Is a Radical Counter-Cultural Movement.

That sounds nice, but the contemplative life is and always has been a radical, counter-cultural movement.

In the words of religious historian John Dominic Crossan (who was not exactly describing contemplation, but the words are appropriate), the contemplative life is

"a profoundly explicit *no* to the profoundly implicit *yes* by which we usually accept life's normalcies... It presumes that there is something fundamentally wrong with the way of the world—not something that could be easily fixed, changed or improved but something so profoundly and radically wrong that only something profoundly and radically opposite could remedy it." (*God and Empire: Jesus Against Rome, Then and Now*)

"The profoundly implicit *yes* by which we usually accept life's normalcies" refers to everything we take for granted in our life, and that is a large package of beliefs and strategies for achieving social status, for accepting privilege, for fitting in. But it especially refers to another concept that appears in Crossan's writing: the exploitative normalcy of civilization. Exploitation and inequity have been baked into the structures of civilization from the very beginning, and because we are civilized human beings, they are baked into our assumptions about who and what we are and how to live. Most of us never examine the assumptions we are born into, so our entire life is an implicit *yes* to the normal violence of an exploitative system.

Contemplation is a response to that implicit exploitation that is part of the normalcy of civilization. It is a stick in the spokes of all of that haste toward destruction.

As I see it, most of our responses to the ecological crisis are attempts to preserve familiar economic, social and psychological systems while making superficial changes—and keeping our sense of self intact without changing at all!

Contemplation is radical because it goes to the root, grounding us in reality. That's what radical means: going to the root.

At its best, contemplation sees through every façade and exposes every deception, our own deceptions and those in the culture around us, but especially the many ways in which we deceive ourselves. Contemplation is not an easy road to walk. It reveals what we would rather keep hidden, even from ourselves.

My understanding of all of this comes from several places. I began meditating in high school, more than 40 years ago. And for most of that time I would say I was meditating

without understanding what I was doing and without understanding what meditation really means. I even spent a few years as a novice in a Benedictine monastery in my late twenties, hoping to find a radically different way to live. But what started me on the journey of understanding contemplation as ecological reality was when I met a whale for the first time.

When I left the monastery, I didn't have much. I did not have a job, or a place to live, or any money, and it took me a while to find my way. That was helped significantly when, six years later, I was alone on the aft deck of a small whale watch boat, afloat in a sea of fog in the Bay of Fundy, when an 80-foot fin whale surfaced right next to me, just beyond the reach of my fingers. I spent 15 seconds alone with that whale, and those 15 seconds lasted for what seemed like an eternity. I entered a different time-space. My sensory experience and my thought world, all the interpretive faculties of my brain, went quiet. For those 15 seconds nothing existed for me except that whale. The whale and I were meeting in perfect stillness, one movement of life together. I knew I was that stillness, and I knew I was that movement. There was no separation.

And then, after that eternity in 15 seconds, the whale dove back below the surface of the Bay, the spell was broken, and I knew I wasn't a whale, and I knew the whale wasn't a human, but I still knew that that whale and I and everything, are inextricably connected, one movement of life together.

So, I experienced in that meeting with a whale, something I did not expect, which is that meeting a whale and the contemplative life share a fundamental reality. That reality is something that is difficult to talk about, and I use a difficult word to describe it. That word is "emptiness".

Emptiness Is the Immeasurable

Emptiness is *not* some kind of esoteric experience that comes as the result of years of spiritual training. Emptiness is not something we can obtain or lose. It does not mean having a quiet mind or being "in the flow." It is not spaciousness or openness. It is not a heightened state of awareness or consciousness. It is also not despair or suffering or depression. Emptiness is not a state of mind.

Emptiness is the immeasurable. Emptiness is the unfathomable. Emptiness is that which cannot be captured by thought or captured by words or captured by ideas. In other words, emptiness is the presence of everything in its actuality.

You are empty. The reality of you, the actual you, your whole history, the deepest roots of your ancestry back to single-celled marine organisms and the elementary particles of the universe, what you love, what you fear, what's going on in the deep, unconscious layers of your mind at this moment, what you have inherited and what you have lost, cannot be captured by a thought or a word or a label or a sentence or a paragraph or a

lifetime of words. You are unfathomable, even to yourself. You can barely comprehend the ways in which you are interacting with the whole world right now. You only know what is appearing in the superficial, conscious layer. You are immeasurable. Unfathomable. Empty.

The natural world is unfathomable. Whales are unfathomable. You go out and see a whale, and you think you understand its behavior. The next time you go out it may be doing something completely different, something that you have never seen before. I worked as a whale watch naturalist, and the most common expression out of my mouth on those many trips was “I’ve never seen that before!” Whales are unpredictable. We know very little about the reality of their lives. Whales cannot be caught by our ideas about them. Their lives are unfathomable. They are empty.

Everything is empty. There is nothing in this world that we can absolutely, definitively, permanently catch in the net of our ideas. Because of its dynamic, interrelated nature, Life is ultimately immeasurable.

At its heart, the contemplative life is devotion to this emptiness, devotion to the immeasurable, devotion to unfathomable reality, devotion to the actual rather than to our inadequate ideas and beliefs.

By contrast, most of us spend our lives in devotion to the known, to what we believe, to what we understand, to the ways in which our minds reduce reality to something we can manage with our limited brains.

Being Emptied

There is another reason why the word "emptiness" works as the touchstone of the contemplative life. In order to come into contact with reality, with the reality of the living world, we have to get past all of our experiences of the world, which are partial glimpses; all of our ideas about the world; all of our beliefs about the world and ourselves; all of our opinions; all of our preferences and fears and desires. We have to emptied of all of that, at least for a moment, in order to have visceral, nonverbal contact with reality, the reality that lies behind our beliefs and ideas and thoughts and words.

We have to be emptied. The kicker—the thing that really turns our life on its ear and consequently overturns the world order—is that when we are emptied of all of our beliefs and ideas and words, when we are emptied of the framework that we use to make sense of the world and we come into a direct, unmediated encounter with unfathomable reality, one of the things that we lose is the sense of being a separate self.

Our sense of who we are as separate individuals is a mental construct. When all of our mental constructs fall away in an encounter with unfathomable reality, the self is one of those constructs that falls away. The self *is* separation. Separation and selfhood are

identical. The sense of being a self derives entirely from the walls of separation we build through reality. That sense of being a separate self is so fragile it requires constant maintenance, and it can evaporate in an instant when it comes into contact with something it cannot comprehend.

So, when I meet the whale in emptiness, there is no self, there is no other, the whale and I meet in perfect stillness, one movement of life together.

We think that our thoughts and ideas and our sense of who we are and our sense of what the world is are accurate representations of reality. That they are telling us who we are and what the world is. At best, they provide a partial glimpse, a snapshot, a static image of the world that has some survival value. At worst they are completely delusional. We never know the whole truth about the world. We never know the truth about ourselves. Never. To be in touch with the truth, with reality, we have to be emptied of ourselves, of our sense of separation.

The Infinite Desires of the Self

Ecologically, the problem with the illusion of the separate self is that, unlike a body that has limited physical needs, the self has unlimited desires.

The self has infinite desires exactly because it is not real. Have you ever had a dream in which you are thirsty, and you drink and you drink and you cannot slake your thirst? You probably really are thirsty, in your physical body, and if you could wake up and drink, you would be satisfied immediately. But in a dream you cannot satisfy your thirst. The self is a dream character. It's been made up by the mind out of its images of itself. It cannot be satisfied because it isn't real.

An economy, a society, that is built on the assumption that the self is real and that it is the most important thing in the whole world—*that* society, *that* civilization, *that* economy will inevitably create chaos and disaster, and will ultimately fail. And along the way it will lead to infinite exploitation because it is trying to satisfy a host of dream characters that can never be satisfied and never stop seeking satisfaction.

The Exploitative Normalcy of Civilization

That is the relevance of all of this for the ecological crisis. The structures of civilization are built on the illusion of the self. We have an economy and a society that depends on infinite growth and perpetual exploitation, an endless and futile attempt to satisfy the bottomless desires of the separate self.

The ecological crisis is not just about carbon emissions or habitat destruction. It's about the fact that the entire system of civilization is built on a lie: that you and I exist as separate entities: separate from each other, separate from the natural world, separate from

the animals, separate from the plants, separate from the soil, separate from the water and the air.

Our society wants us to believe and act as if we are selves that have infinite desires that must be fulfilled for their satisfaction and that the rest of the world exists only to satisfy our desires. When we see through the illusion of the separate self, the entire exploitation system collapses.

That is the fundamental insight of contemplative ecology: There is no such thing as a separate thing and there is no such thing as a separate self. Everything exists in interrelationship. Everything exists and has its meaning in a system of interrelated systems.

The Whole Movement of Life

When, through observation of the machinations of the mind and its actions in the world, we see this, non-verbally, totally, viscerally, when through an unmediated encounter with the wild world, the boundary of the self is seen through, and momentarily collapses, what remains is the whole movement of life – everything in interrelationship. No self, no other, one movement of life together.

The natural world opens itself up as our essential home, our most essential being. We are connected to the plants, the animals, the soil, the water, the air, the sun. We are inextricably intertwined with everything at the very root of our being and identity. The other creatures, the plants, the animals, the soil, are not resources to be extracted and commodified, nor objects to be studied. They are colleagues, companions, friends (and, yes, speaking as someone who has twice suffered from tick-borne Lyme disease, sometimes threats to our safety). Regardless, they are part of us and we are part of them. We belong to each other. We are each other.

Our delight in life is not to acquire or control, not to achieve or advance, it is to belong to and to listen to and to serve the whole of everything. Contemplative ecology asserts the value of every living being for its own sake, not as a resource or commodity to be bought and sold to serve our ends.

That is the heart of contemplative ecology. The separate self dissolves into emptiness, into the immeasurable wholeness of everything, the whole movement of Life. The spiritual and political and emotional and social and economic consequences that ripple out from that fundamental reversal of the norms of self-satisfaction, separation and exploitation then form the basis of a new life.

This realization, this self-emptying into wholeness, is nothing extraordinary or strange. It is not achieved through a spiritual practice or years of searching. It is not achieved at all. It is simply the way things are. The change in perspective comes when—for whatever

reason—we discover that we have spent our entire lives running away from *this that is as it is*. When we fall back into the embrace of the way things are right now, right here, it is a relief and a homecoming. And it is not the result of anything we have done. It is what is waiting when we stop all of our doing.

Life Is A Conversation

Martin Luther King Jr., in his final Christmas sermon in 1967, said that the fundamental nature of reality is interrelationship, and that we must recognize that reality in order to live harmoniously within it. Put another way, life is an ongoing conversation, a complex interplay of voices and actions. Unless we recognize the essential nature of that conversation, we cannot participate in it; we will always be in conflict with it.

Because interrelationship is the fundamental nature of reality, our only path to a healthier world is to enter into a new relationship with it. We need to enter into the conversation that is the whole movement of Life. In my experience as a contemplative person, there are practical ways that we can ensure that we are participating in that conversation, and not dominating it with our noisy minds.

But remember always that the heart of the matter is the unmediated encounter with unfathomable reality, the non-verbal recognition of the interrelated nature of existence, which is right at hand, wherever we are. That is where the truth lies, not in the schemes and frameworks and categories we use to describe that indescribable reality. Living in conversation requires attention and sensitivity to a particular place and a particular time. How we live depends on the needs of the life in the place where we live, and that changes from place to place and time to time. Contemplative ecology is not ideological. It is not a plan or a program. We all must find our own ways to live in balance, by discovering emptiness and living in attentive relationship with others, human and nonhuman. The living world is right here. We don't have to do anything or go anywhere to find it. But we have to be here.

Constancy – To Know and To Be Known

The word "constant" (originally meaning "standing together") has two meanings, both of which are relevant. It means ongoing, occurring continuously over time. It also means reliable, dependable. To be a constant companion is to show up regularly, predictably, and to be there when needed.

It is not possible to participate in the great conversation of Life unless our relationship with it is constant; ongoing, dependable. We show up every day, every minute, every moment. We can be counted on. In very practical terms, constancy means staying put. It means commitment to a particular place, to all of the beings who inhabit that place and to the place itself. It means becoming acquainted with the creatures who live around us and staying in touch with them. It means becoming familiar with the animals and the plants

and the ways they interact, and the ways we interact with them. It means knowing our place and being known by it, by the people we are living with and by the natural community in which we live and move and have our being, that gives us our life.

It is impossible to know any place with the shallow mind of thought. To live well in a place you have to know the place and the place has to know you, and that mutual knowledge comes only with long and intimate engagement, which cannot be had if we are constantly flitting about. So much energy goes into transportation, and so much damage is being done by global transport, that in the ecological age, constancy means not traveling far and wide. It means not flying around the world. It means being devoted to one place for your entire life, if that is at all possible. It is in many ways the opposite of what most of us do in the 21st century, which is fly wherever we want to go, relocate for work, leave home and live where the jobs are, and ship tons and tons of stuff all over the world. None of that is ecologically sustainable—global transportation is a major cause of the sixth extinction—so fidelity to place is immensely important.

The part about *being known* is especially important. We don't often acknowledge the ways in which the animals and plants know us. But they do. If there is a hawk in the area, or any bird or mammal, they will be aware of you long before you are aware of them. They are always watching and listening. If our relationship with them is aggressive and exploitative, they know that, in their ways of knowing. If you walk into their domain with an aggressive, noisy, predatory attitude, they will know that, because they all know about avoiding predators and avoiding aggression.

If you enter their world with affection, and care, and quiet, the animals will know that. And if you can be still and non-threatening they may come to you or they may go about their business without being concerned about you. The land knows us, and the longer we stay put in a particular place, the better the land knows us. They are paying attention to our every move. They know who we are, and they respond in kind, but it takes time for them to get to know us, so we have to be available and consistent. Many animals also know about being predators, so this is not an invitation to careless stupidity. Part of knowing the ways of a place is knowing when to get out of the way.

The same of course is true of our relationships with other people. If we are changing relationships all the time, moving, leaving, we don't give other people the chance to know all of our flaws and failings and vulnerabilities and all of our strengths and gifts. Because the vulnerability of being fully known is frightening for many people, and because there are people (human predators) in the world who abuse their knowledge of us and use it to manipulate us, staying put and being known makes us vulnerable, but it is the only way to have an authentic relationship with each other and with all of the inhabitants of Earth.

To know a place, and to be known by a place and its inhabitants, we have to stay put. It takes years to belong to a place, and knowing and being known never ends, because life is dynamic. At no point can we ever stop paying attention, because as soon as I declare

that I know a thing, or know a person, or know a place, I no longer have a relationship with it. I am stuck in my beliefs, and have fallen out of touch with reality. To know a place, and to be known by it, I must remain in conversation with it, always listening, always allowing my assumptions to be challenged, always letting go of what I think I know in favor of what is.

Staying put also means traveling less. Because global travel is one of the biggest contributors to the destruction of biodiversity, and of course to global warming, devotion to a particular place is both spiritually and ecologically valuable to the well-being of the world. The place we inhabit is full of beauty and surprises if we take the time to get to know it deeply. The excitement of travel is being in a new environment. But the home environment is new every day. It only appears the same when we stop paying attention to it. By being physically constant, we allow the place we live to know us and inform us and reveal itself to us in its own time and its own ways, and in turn we get to know intimately the place where we live.

Listening

My approach to contemplative ecology places an emphasis on listening. By "listening" I mean paying attention with all of the senses to the natural world, the world of the other animals, the wind, the flowing waters, the insects, the soil, the plants, the trees. But I also mean particularly listening with the ears. We are a vision-dominated culture. Hearing the world can change how we perceive the world and our place in it.

Paying attention, without imposing any agenda, lies at the heart of contemplation. It's quite simple. Get outside. Look around. Look at the sky. Feel the wind. Listen to the birds, especially the birds. They are the great messengers of the living world. Our hearing sensitivity is tuned to bird song. We are physically, evolutionarily tuned, not to hear each other, but to hear the voices of the birds. Listening to the natural world grounds us simultaneously in the reality of the current moment, and in the long history of life on Earth; what it means to be one animal among all of the animals.

If emptiness makes no sense to you, start listening to the birds, not as a means of identifying them but just to listen and begin to appreciate their world. Get a sense of why they are singing and why they are calling, and whom they are calling to and whom they are singing to. Begin to experience the amazing complexity of the living world and your place within it. See where that takes you.

Listen to Earth when it speaks to you, even if you do not understand.

I hope it is obvious that it is not possible to participate in a true conversation unless we are good listeners. Contemplative listening means listening carefully, listening sensitively, listening openly, listening without an agenda. It includes having the humility to listen to those who are wiser than we are, and changing our behavior when our

behavior is foolish. When Earth tells you that we are being foolish and we need to change, take that to heart.

For many people, this simple act of listening brings about a subtle but significant shift in perspective. One experiences the integrity of a place, and one's irreducible participation within that place. One experiences oneself as inextricably part of the larger whole. One finds oneself, locates oneself as *here* and *now* and *this*. The shift is from *me listening to that*, to *that being what it is, including me*. From separation and objectivity, to belonging. I am not certain why this shift occurs, but it might be in part because the inner voice, the commentator in our heads that plays such an outsized role in maintaining our sense of being a separate self, is unable to operate at the same time that we are listening fully. It's possible to be engaged in a visual activity while the commentator is yammering away, but it is not possible to listen. When we are listening carefully to the natural world, the sense of being a separate self is necessarily diminished, while the presence of the living world is accentuated.

Contemplative listening penetrates the heart, changes us. This life is not about me and my wants and desires; it is about the well-being of the whole biotic community. Listening to the land, and what it needs, may require me to forego something of what I want and what I need. There are many voices in the world who do not speak with a human voice. The wind and the birds and the trees and the silence have their own language. Listening to them and responding to them requires great stillness of mind and attentiveness at the core.

Life In Conversation

Life in Conversation is life in relationship. The original meaning of "conversation" is "turning together." It is a life of giving back. It is a life of sharing, a life of reciprocity. That conversation, in an ecological contemplative life, extends to the whole life community. We live in conversation with the other animals, the plants, the soil, the air. We share everything we have with them and they share everything they are with us. Whatever we take from the land, from the animals, from the plants, we try give back in some form that they can use. We listen; we pay attention to all of the voices of the community. Even when we do not understand them, we make sure every human and non-human voice is heard and all needs are met whenever possible. Life in Conversation merely recognizes and practices what is already fundamentally true: We are part of each other; we *are* each other.

We recognize that we are part of an ecological community. Our thoughts and actions affect and shape that community, so we take care. We serve the life in the place where we live. We also recognize that as limited humans with limited understanding, we will never do this perfectly. We never have perfect understanding of the ecological community to which we belong. We always have to return to listening, to trying to understand the needs

and the dynamics of the whole community. With every decision these questions must be answered: whom does it serve; whom does it harm; is there a better way?

Humility

Humility means "grounded." It comes from the same root as the word "humus," which is to say, dirt. To be made humble is to be brought down to earth, where we belong. There is nothing more humbling than discovering, unequivocally, that the self I have been tending and defending and feeding all these many years, is and always has been a figment of my own imagination. What a fool I have been, to care so deeply about this non-entity that I have given its care and feeding nearly every calorie of my waking energy. To be emptied of self is truly humbling, if not down right humiliating!

Brought back down to earth, though, is also the only possible true homecoming. To return to earth is simply the most delicious blessing imaginable. It's alive! The whole Earth is alive and speaking and singing and listening and communicating in ways we can barely comprehend, and other ways we can't comprehend at all.

The living world is engaged in an ongoing conversation. To participate in that conversation, we must remain in place, we must allow ourselves to be known and we must listen. Contemplation focuses on listening, because very often we do not listen. We accept the authority of the voice in our heads, conform to a static worldview, and fall deeply out of touch with reality as it presents itself to us. So, what does it take to come back into touch with reality? We have to listen, and we have to let reality touch us and bring us home.

Simplicity

We in the industrialized world are living lives of extreme excess. We are obese. We are extremely acquisitive. We are addicted to "more." We are filling the world with our waste. We have to reduce how much energy and material we consume and discard. What we do consume and what we do discard must fit into the natural cycles of the place where we live. Whatever we take must be returned in a form life can use to create more life.

But simple reduction is necessary. We must dramatically alter the amount and the mode of our consumption of energy and material goods. Many attempts have been made to quantify exactly how much human consumption Earth can support, and the conclusions of most of those studies are pretty stark. We must let go of most of the material security we take for granted. The reality is difficult to face, because we are so far out of balance, and the change required of us is profound. We often become defensive, or we feel helpless to change even if we want to, and we fall back into the way of life that is familiar.

The power of contemplation in this regard is that we are not denying ourselves what we desire, we are revealing the source of desire at the root. "Simplicity" means "folded

together as one." And there you have it. When the separate self is seen for what it is, life generally becomes a lot less convoluted. The amount of energy, both mental and physical, that goes into maintaining the self, moment by moment attempting to fix the cracks in its façade, is staggering. When the self loses its fuel, when its limitless desires dissolve, we no longer need or want all of the stuff we are incessantly commanded to buy. We don't need to pursue endless self-gratification. We don't need to travel to exotic places seeking excitement to feel alive. We no longer need to escape from *this that is as it is*. We need only the one thing; to be at home, in love with the life that moves around us and moves through us and unites us with everything.

Summary

Reality is the whole of everything, existing in interrelationship, living in conversation, and taking form in particular places and particular creatures. Wholeness is not a denial of difference. It is not a denial of diversity. It is not even a denial of individuality. Diversity and difference and individuality are not separation; diversity and individuality exist within the interrelationship of everything.

But the separate self is a mind-constructed fiction, a hungry dream character loosed on the world. Self is separation, so to be in touch with reality is to be emptied of self. There is no way around this.

When you see this, when you see it viscerally and nonverbally, everything changes. Because I and everyone I know have lived most of our lives in defense and maintenance of the self, trying to make the world work in a way that satisfies *me*. Losing that sense of self as the center, upends everything. Upends my life and the basis of the exploitative economy. And restores us to balance in relationship with everything.

The contemplative life is devotion to the immeasurable, to unfathomable reality, to the interrelated presence, the emptiness of everything. It is a life of listening, of open and undemanding attention. It is also a life of uncertainty, of vulnerability, of often not being right, of not knowing, of humility in the face of unfathomable reality.

It is a life in relationship, with each other and the whole world. It is a life lived in a particular place, knowing that place, and allowing ourselves to be known by that place and its inhabitants. It is a life of loss and humility. It is also a life of wonder and surprise and delight at the unfathomable creativity of the living world.

Contemplation is the loss of everything we think we are or think we should become to be embraced by *what is*, the whole of everything. Contemplation is life in devotion to everything in its actuality, the infinitely unknowable, emptiness and the whole movement of life.