

Some basic reflections

The Web of Life

Introduction

- ▶ A basic introduction of the meaning of Ecology and Ecological Worldview.
- ▶ The development of Ecology as science and worldview.
- ▶ Understanding of The Web of Life.
- ▶ Our relationship to the Web of Life.



Ecology: what do we mean?



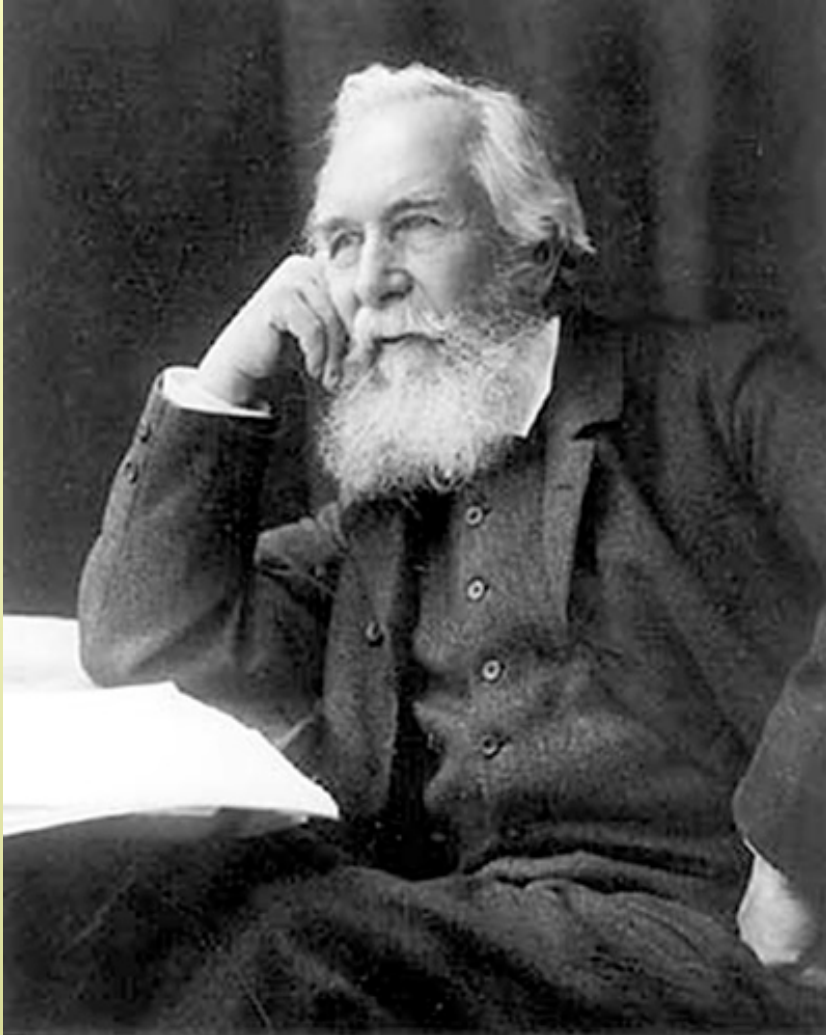
“Eco” and “logos”; the knowledge about the house of life



▶ **Eco**

- ▶ **Oikos: house (of life)**
- ▶ **Logos: science, knowledge**
- ▶ **Ecology is the science of the inter-connectedness between organisms , populations and a community (of life).**
- ▶ **The word economy has also the same root : “oikos”.**

Ecology: a rather new science



**Ernst
Haeckel: in
1866 he
used for
the first time
the concept
ecology**

Ecological Consciousness

- ▶ **In our time we slowly grow into the awareness being part of the web of life.**
- ▶ **Our ancestors knew in an intuitive way, that all life emerges from the same Source.**
- ▶ **One of the eldest forms of religious and mystical consciousness of humanity.**
- ▶ **Now the indigenous people and others live in this consciousness.**

Connected



Loss of connectedness

- ▶ **Now many have lost their sense of being part of the web of life.**
- ▶ **This is one of the causes of the ecological crisis of our time.**
- ▶ **Without the connection with the web of life, we can just take from the Earth whatever we want..**

To what extent can the Earth satisfy our demands?



Web of life: the primal experience of the human





The web refers to the unmovable center of the universe.

All of nature, the whole cosmos is a web of interconnected relations.

All is connected with everything else.

The “world” is a fabric of events

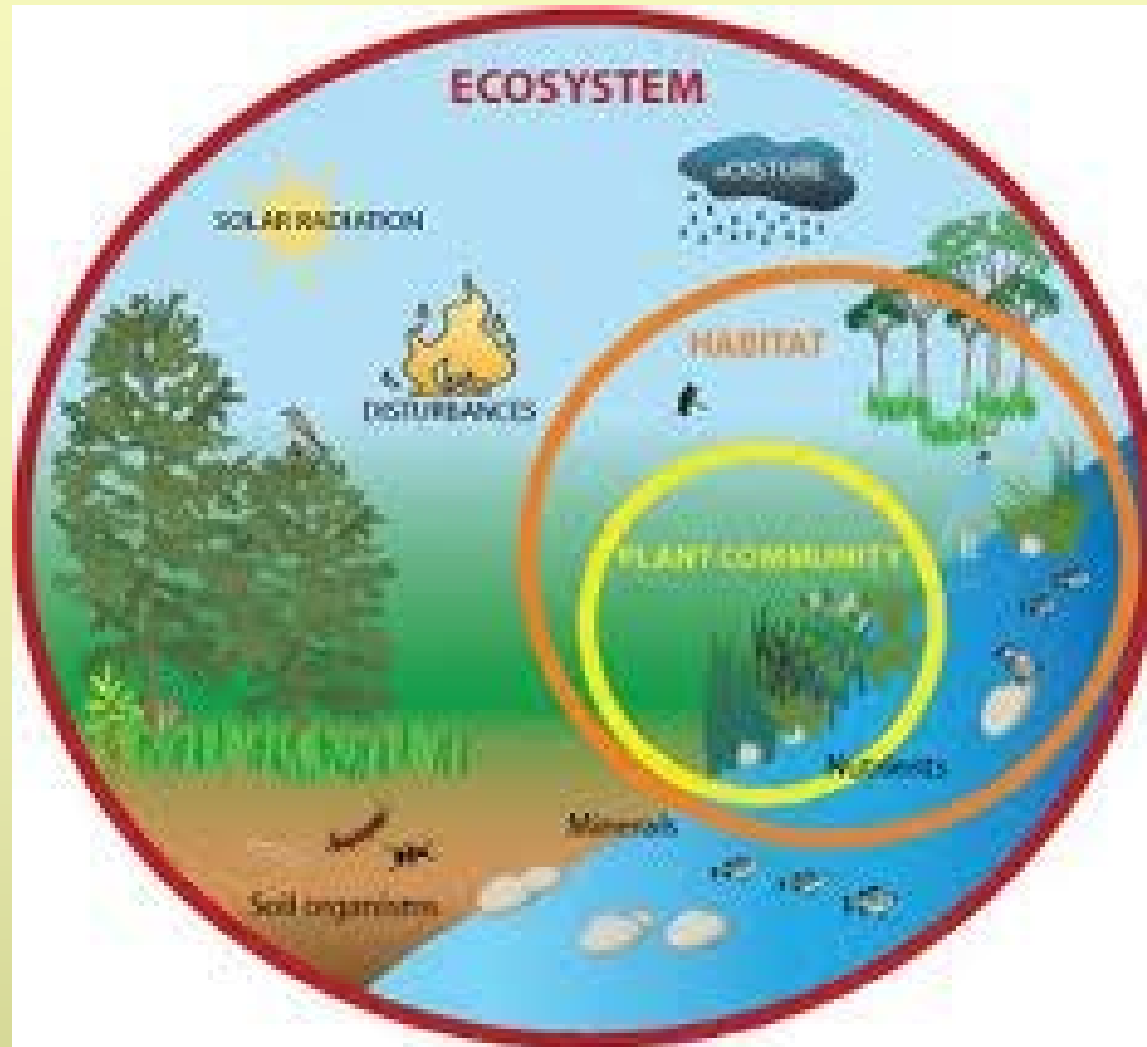
- ▶ **Events come, pass by and come again...**
- ▶ **The universe, the Earth, the world, all life and we humans are part of the Whole: not objects but parts knitted together .**
- ▶ **This is an ecological worldview.**

The Core : Relationships

- ▶ **The keyword in an ecological worldview is; connectedness.**
- ▶ **The Universe, the Earth, nature and all ecosystems are not isolated units. Everything is connected with everything else and influences other parts .**
- ▶ **Ecological systems are networks of relationships between plants, animals, other organisms like soil, water, air, sources of energy.**



Ecosystem: attuned balance in which all factors play a role.



Deep ecology

- ▶ **The awareness of fundamental connectedness of everything we call *deep ecology*.**
- ▶ **The human is part of the whole.**
- ▶ **Is a kind of religious - spiritual consciousness.**
- ▶ **If our soul is aware of the connectedness with everything, this is spiritual awareness.**



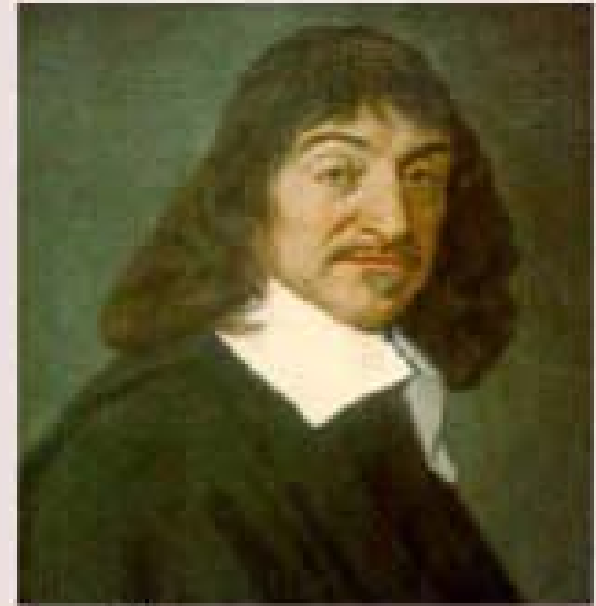
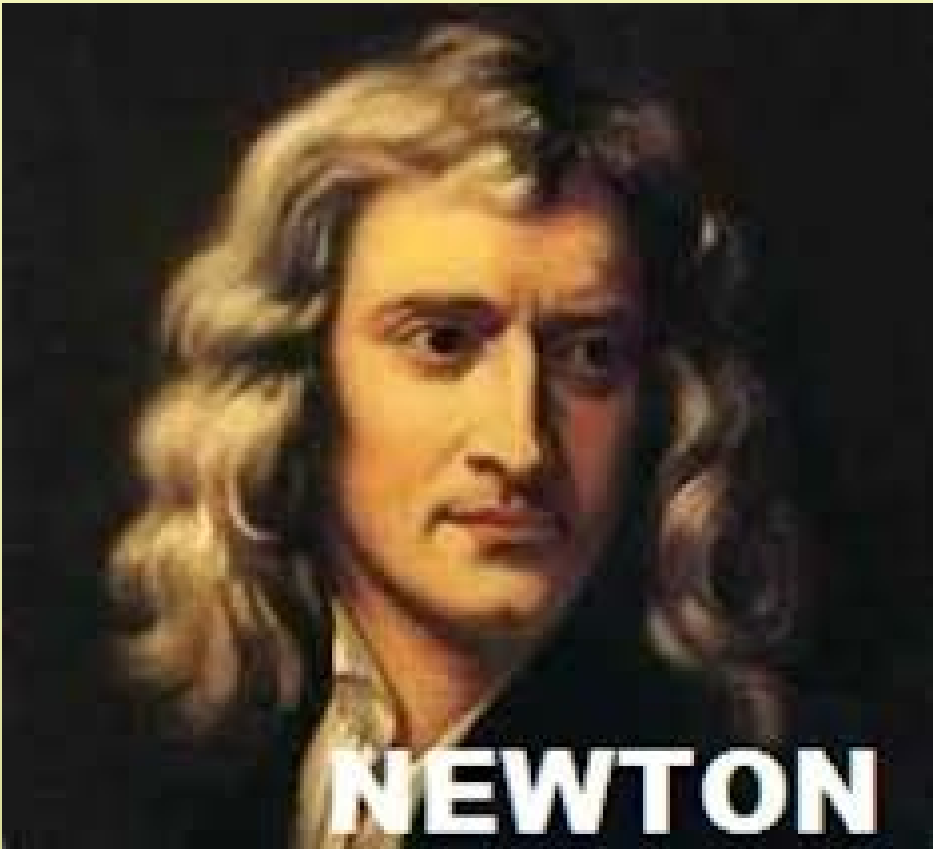
In the Beginning all was One

- ▶ **All is holy: in all that is the universe is present.**
- ▶ **The Universe, the stars, the sun, moon, Earth.**
- ▶ **Also in the human, in each one of us, all is present**
- ▶ **We are cosmos. Every cell in our body connects us with the universe and the whole history of life.**
- ▶ **So we can know and experience the power of the web of life from within. Our soul knows and remembers.**



17th century : a mechanistic worldview emerged

The world is a machine



"I THINK,
THEREFORE
I AM"
RENE DESCARTES

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- ▶ **The human creates the world, dominates nature and does not feel accountable to anyone.**
 - ▶ **Anything the human wants, can be made and created.**
 - ▶ **Everything is created for the glory of the human.**

Transition from an Anthropocentric to an Ecological Worldview

- ▶ **In an anthropocentric worldview the human is the center and destination of everything in creation and the world.**
- ▶ **To really change our present situation and to heal the Earth and give her a future, we have to change our way of looking at things.**
- ▶ **What you see, what you perceive you create and direct your energy and actions.**
- ▶ **We are on our way to an ecological worldview.**



Fire

Earth

Air

HUMAN

Plants

Water

Animals

An anthropocentric worldview



Fire

Earth

Air

CIRCLE

OF

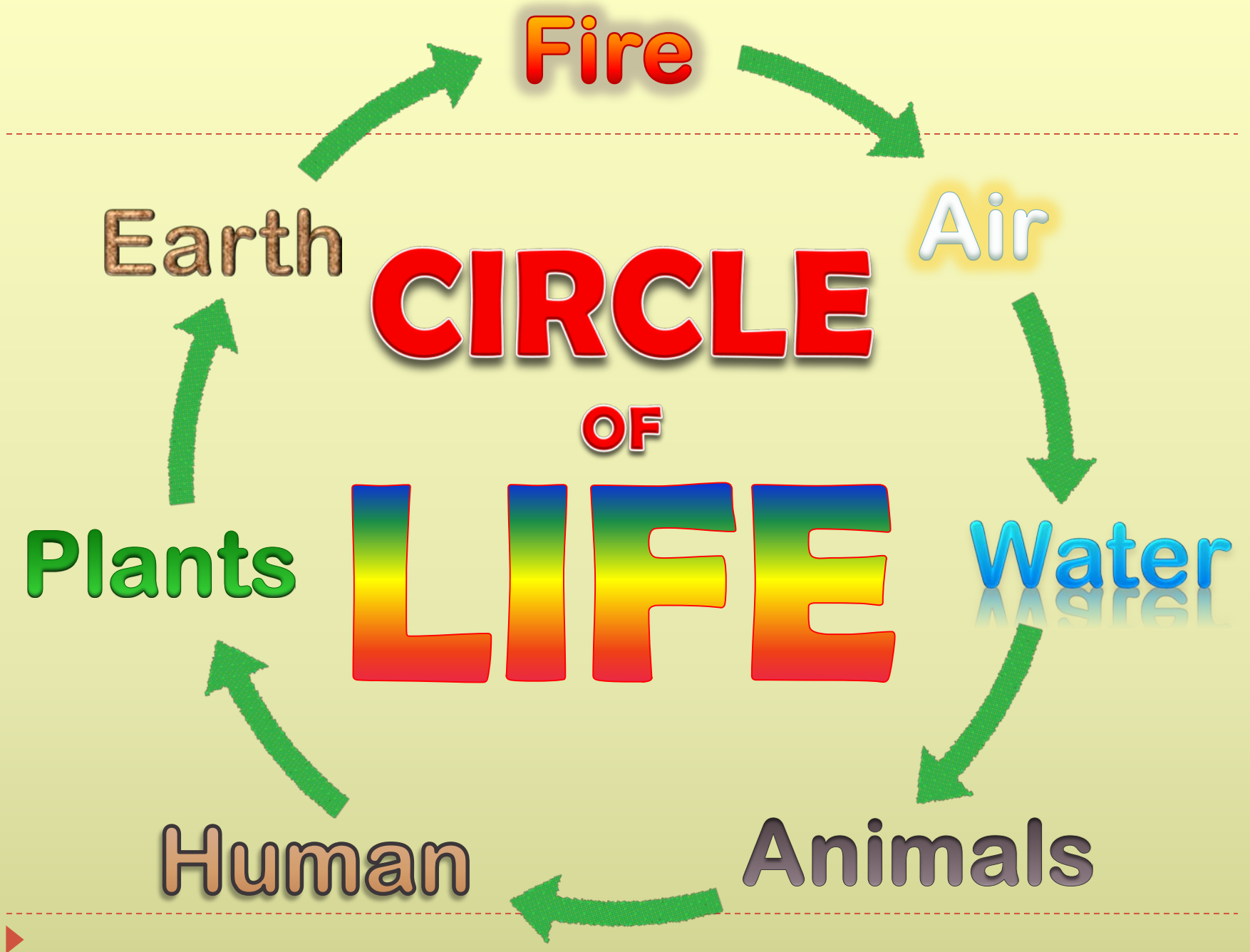
LIFE

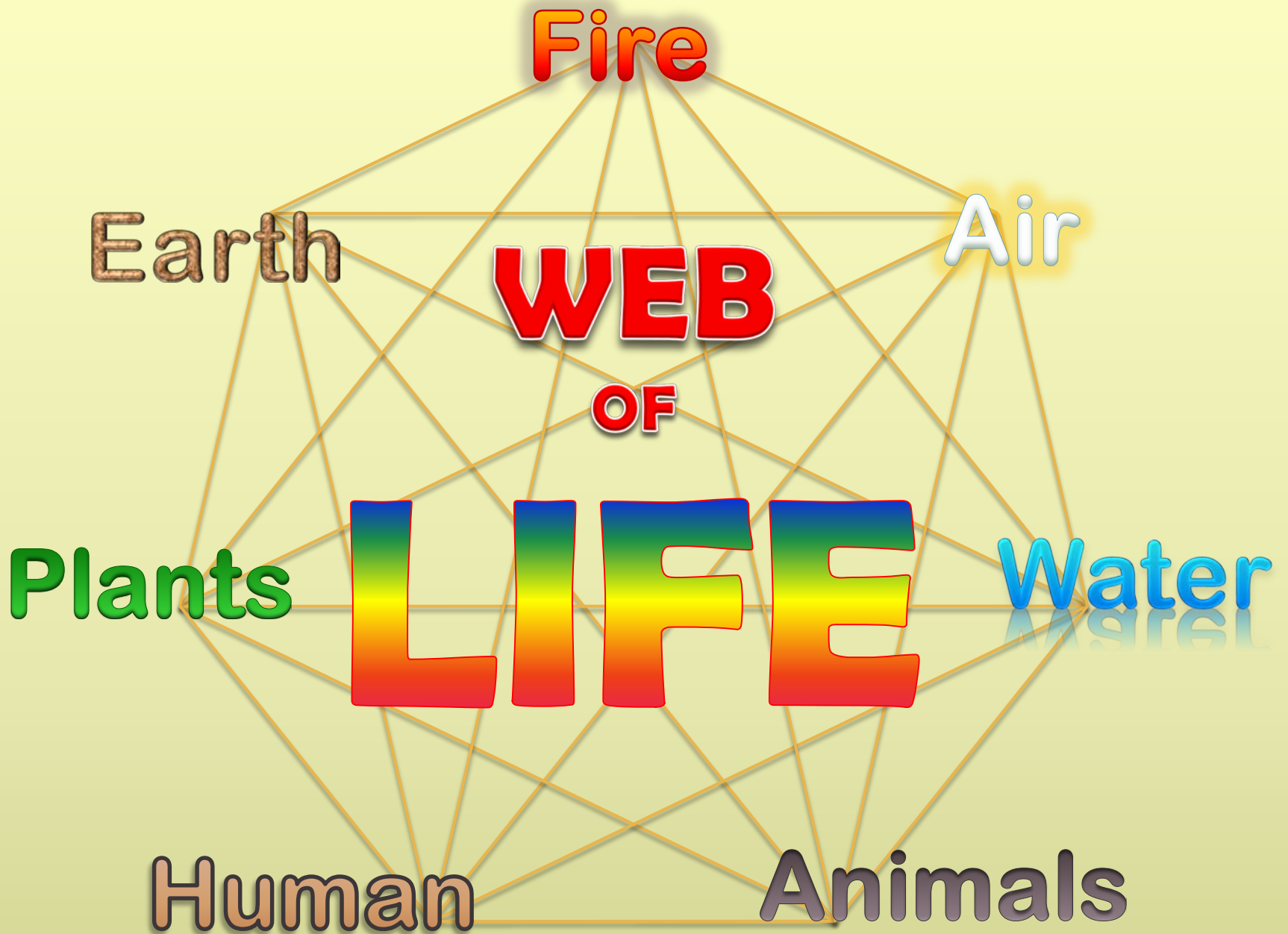
Water

Plants

Human

Animals





All the elements are **LIFE enhancing.**

Balance, harmony in nature

****LIFE** is at the center.**

**humans are merely a strand in
the web of life...**

though an important part.



In the web of **LIFE** ...

*everything is **INTERRELATED**

*everything is **INTERCONNECTED**

*everything is **INTERDEPENDENT**



The transition to an Ecological Worldview

All is in Consciousness



Systems view and way of thinking

- ▶ **The heart of an ecological worldview.**
- ▶ **To understand is to see the whole in which a part functions.**
- ▶ **The whole has qualities the parts do not have.**
- ▶ **See a tree and the function in the whole and you understand the damage done to Earth because of cutting trees.**



Consciousness is in All



The ecological human

- ▶ **Can let go of feelings of superiority over the rest of creation.**
- ▶ **Part of the whole, living Earth**
- ▶ **Interdependent : we are dependent of trees, bacteria , worms, flowers and bees, wind and fire and sun.**
- ▶ **Our origin and the origin of all of creation is the same Source, the same Beginning.**
- ▶ **The special role of human consciousness in the universe.**



The 5 spheres of the Earth

- ▶ **Atmosphere** **air, gas**
- ▶ **Hydrosphere** **water**
- ▶ **Lithosphere** **Earth crust, soil, rocks**
- ▶ **Biosphere** **layer of life that envelops the Earth**
- ▶ **Noosphere** **thinking layer of Earth (Teilhard de Chardin)**



“Unexpectedly Gaia revealed herself to me ”
J. Lovelock



- ▶ **The Earth is alive, a web of life.**
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- ▶ **Self-regulating capacities of Earth.**
 - ▶ **Homeostasis: balance in always changing circumstances.**
 - ▶ **“Life ” creates own conditions for her existence.**
 - ▶ **The circle of life has no beginning and no end.**
 - ▶ **The Earth, left alone, can continue endlessly.**
 - ▶ **The secret of sustainability.**



The variety of living organisms: plants, animals, fungi, micro-organisms and people in their (cultural) diversity.

Humans have discovered 1.9 million species. We think that there are at present at least 10 million species.

During the whole evolution between 40-80 million species have emerged and mostly all have disappeared again.

Present extinction of species

- ▶ **Nobody really knows the exact rate of extinction at this moment.**
- ▶ **We humans contribute to this extinction by the way we inhabit, use and exploit the Earth.**
- ▶ **By the loss of biodiversity, the Earth loses her capacity to function well and keep up the balance and harmony.**
- ▶ **Contributing to the loss of species is a sin against creation and a moral issue.**



A radical new ethical consciousness

- ▶ **All living beings are part of the web of life and therefore have absolute value.**
- ▶ **They are indispensable parts of the web of life, no part can be missed.**
- ▶ **Every species tries to survive and to fulfill their specific task.**
- ▶ **Each creature has rights: rivers have rights, mountains have rights, animals have rights, plants and seeds have rights.**



All is connected

- ▶ **All is energy. Everything is connected to everything else.**
- ▶ **All originates from the same source. All returns to the same source. All is ONE.**
- ▶ **Our thoughts and feelings are energy. All we think and all we feel influences everything and everyone on our planet.**



The web of life manifests itself:



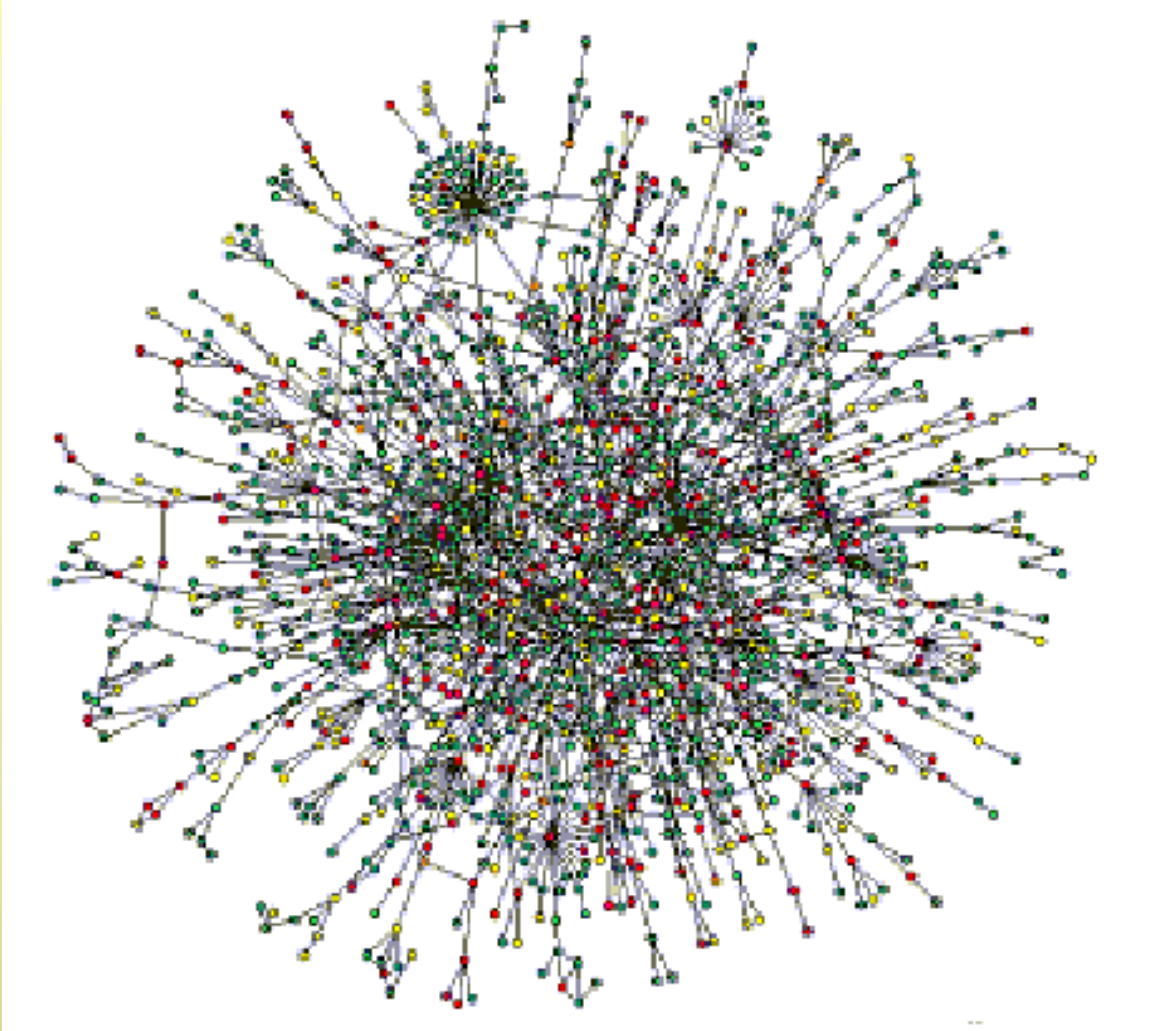
In forms and patterns that are repeated all over the universe



Patterns carry life: if a pattern disappears, the organism dies



All living beings are taken up in a network



**Isolation
does
not exist
in the
universe**

The resilience of the web of life



In the interdependence and the interconnectedness is the resilience.

We are harming ecosystems locally and globally at least in six different ways.

- ▶ **1. Habitat fragmentation; isolating patches of natural habitat**
- ▶ **2. Habitat destruction**
- ▶ **3. Pollution: adding chemicals to natural habitat**
- ▶ **4. Excessive harvesting, monocultures**
- ▶ **5. Exotic species enter ecosystems**
- ▶ **6. Climate change and global warming**

Our relationship to the Earth and web of life

- ▶ The human as a absolute ruler of nature. The human has dominion over nature. Unlimited belief in the possibilities of technology. Devastation and exploitation of Earth.
- ▶ The human as enlightened ruler of nature. The human has some understanding of the limited resources of the Earth. The human sees the benefit of working together with nature.
- ▶ The human as steward of the Earth. The steward reigns on behalf of some one else and is accountable. In Christianity the human is accountable to God. The human has to take care of the Earth according to Gods will. The human is called to bring creation to completion according to the will of God.

Towards a new model of connectedness with universe and Earth



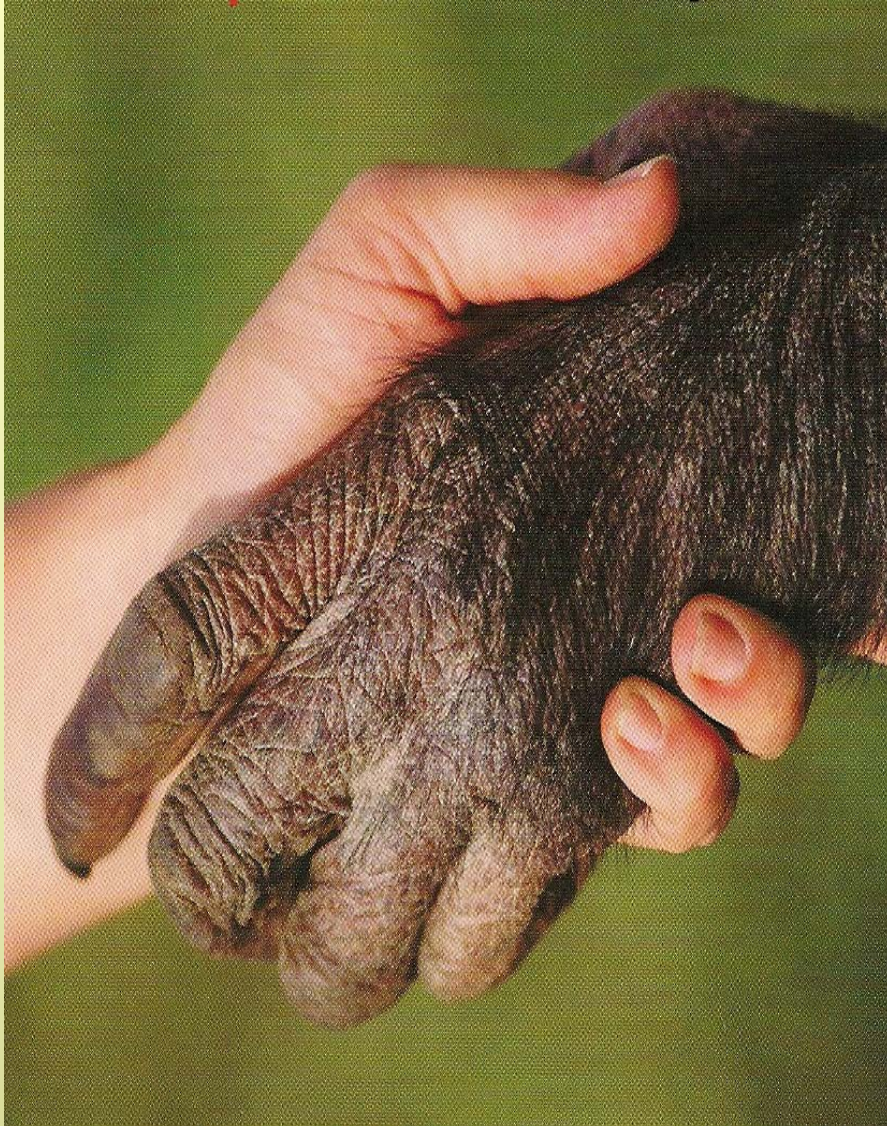
The human is kin to all that is: kinship model



We all come from the same Source, lovingly sustained by Creator Spirit

- ▶ This is the foundation for a deep respectful way of relating with everything that is created.
- ▶ The kinship stance: humans are interrelated parts and products of a world that is continually made and nurtured by the Creator Spirit.
- ▶ Human existence is one with the immensity of all that is.
- ▶ We belong, from the cells of our bodies to the finest creations of our minds to the intricate, constantly changing cosmos.(Sally Mac Fague)





The kinship model is the expression of present ecological consciousness. We are brothers and sisters of everything that is created.

**“Everything belongs together as blood that connects a family.”
Chief Seattle.**

Conversion to the Web of Life



Is a new way of seeing; we have no idea how radical this change is.

Peace with Gaia, with the whole of creation.

To know and learn the laws of universe and processes of Earth and live accordingly.

To let compassion for all life grow in us.



To see the mystery in all that is



Image: free source internet.

To know we are part of the web of life.

Prophecy: to defend the web of life



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▶ 48 Vandana Shiva, prophet for the web of life

To heal the web of life by our way of living



Inspiration

- ▶ Animate Earth, S. Harding , 2006 ISBN 1-903998-75-1
- ▶ De Genezing van de Aarde, J. Lovelock ISBN 902024364-0
- ▶ Dream of the Earth, Thomas Berry ISBN 0-87156-622-2
- ▶ Het levensweb, F. Capra ISBN 90-215-2993-9



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- ▶ Elly Verrijt, 2021
 - ▶ Please feel welcome to use this presentation for your work of ecological consciousness raising.
 - ▶ You are free to adapt it to your circumstances.