



## A Sense of Wonder: Cultivating an Ecological Identity in Young Children and in Ourselves

An ecological identity is driven by a sense of wonder, the sheer delight in being alive in a mysterious, beautiful world.

David Orr, *Ecological Literacy*

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We do this walk several times a week. It's a way for us to load ourselves up with the feel of the landscape. The only difference between a place to live and holy land is the number of footsteps you've put into the ground.

Marc Parent, *Believing it All*

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Talk of mysteries!--Think of our life in nature--daily to be shown matter, to come in contact with it--rocks, trees, wind on our cheeks! The solid earth! The actual world! The common sense! Contact! Contact! Who are we? Where are we?

Henry David Thoreau

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Wherever you turn your eyes the world can shine like transfiguration. You don't have to bring a thing to it except a little willingness to see. Only, who could have the courage to see it? There is more beauty than our eyes can bear, precious things have been put into our hands and to do nothing to honor them is to do great harm.

Marilynne Robinson, *Gilead*

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Aesthetics is an ethical attitude, a way of thinking which requires care, grace, attention, subtlety and humor, a mental approach going beyond the simple appearance of things to bring out unexpected aspects and qualities. . . . [Aesthetics refers to] a process of empathy relating the self to things, an attitude of care and attention, curiosity and wonder. It is the opposite of indifference and carelessness, of absence of participation and feeling.

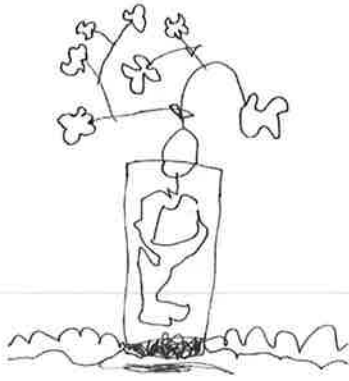
Veà Vecchi,  
*Art and Creativity in Reggio Emilia*

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The artist has to look at everything as though he saw it for the first time; he has to look at life as he did when he was a child . . . The first step toward creation is to see everything as it really is, and that demands a constant effort.

Henri Matisse

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The naturalist and the artist are alike in their watchfulness. They are both servants of their eyes.

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A naturalist learns to look intently at things, to listen to them, smell them, touch them, to wonder what they are made of, what they do, how they are like or not like each other, what they mean . . . to consider what is revealed and what is hidden and how these two accommodate each other. It seems to me much like what an artist does, looking for form and line and color and texture to define the relationship between spirit and substance.

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Drawing is a way of fostering interest in the world . . . It's a way of taking in the world's strangeness and power and finding comfort in it . . . It is not the finished drawing that counts. It is the time spent outside oneself, of which the drawing is merely a record.

Peter Steinhart, *The Undressed Art: Why We Draw*

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The ability of children to easily enter into the life of something other than themselves grows out of a fluidity and plasticity of thought . . . It is a way of seeing in which the seer does not distinguish between herself and the nature outside of her, a wilderness of thought: "what is of me is also what is happening around me."

Richard Lewis, "A Wilderness of Thought: Childhood and the Poetic Imagination"  
Orion, July/August 2013

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To love—a person and a place—means at least this: 1. To want to be near it, physically. 2. To want to know everything about it—its story, its moods, what it looks like by moonlight. 3. To rejoice in the fact of it. 4. To fear its loss, and grieve for its injuries. 5. To protect it—fiercely, mindlessly, futilely, and maybe tragically, but to be helpless to do otherwise. 6. To be transformed in its presence—lifted, lighter on your feet, transparent, open to everything beautiful and new. 7. To want to be joined with it, taken in by it, lost in it. 8. To want the best for it. 9. Desperately. 10. To love a person or a place is to take responsibility for its well-being.

Kathleen Dean Moore, *The Pine Island Paradox*

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Direct, personal contact with other living things affects us in vital ways that vicarious experience can never replace. . . . A face-to-face encounter with a banana slug means much more than a Komodo dragon seen on television. . . . One of the greatest causes of the ecological crisis is the state of personal alienation from nature in which many people live. We lack a widespread sense of intimacy with the living world.

Robert Michael Pyle, *The Thunder Tree*

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## A Poem on Hope

By Wendell Berry

The young ask the old to hope. What will you tell them? Tell them at least what you say to yourself. Because we have not made our lives to fit our places, the forests are ruined, the fields, eroded, the streams polluted, the mountains, overturned. Hope then to belong to your place by your own knowledge of what it is that no other place is, and by your caring for it, as you care for no other place.

This knowledge cannot be taken from you by power or by wealth. It will stop your ears to the powerful when they ask for your faith, and to the wealthy when they ask for your land and your work.

Be still and listen to the voices that belong to the stream banks and the trees and the open fields . . . Find your hope, then, on the ground under your feet. Your hope of Heaven, let it rest on the ground underfoot . . . The world is no better than its places. Its places at last are no better than their people while their people continue in them.

