

AN OPEN LETTER TO GAIA
from Serge Kahili King

Dear Gaia,

Thank you for your last communication. The birdsongs were delightful, the sunrise was spectacular, and the scent of plumeria carried into my room by your trade winds was a very nice touch. I certainly admire your mastery of the sensory medium.

But this is more than just a letter of praise, much as you deserve it. It's a plea for assistance in the survival of our species.

Oh, I know that many humans (one of your more rambunctious, prolific and mischievous group of apes, in case you aren't familiar with the term we apply to ourselves) are very concerned about your survival, but they don't know you as well as some of us. Those of us around the world who communicate with you on a regular basis know that your survival is not at stake. You would still be you whether you were a parched desert, a landless ocean, a ball of ice, a globe of lava or even a radioactive mass. And I've no doubt that you are creative enough to come up with some form of life under any conditions, since that's one of your specialties.

No, Gaia, the problem is us humans, the apes with imagination. Not only have we put ourselves in danger, but we are endangering a lot of your other species in the plant and animal realms. Of course, I realize that we may not be high on your priority list. We are fairly numerous, but we don't come anywhere near matching the numbers of your plants, insects, fishes, rodents and birds, even though we've tried pretty hard to diminish them. And I know we haven't been around as long as some of the ones I've just mentioned. And I also know that your natural forces have wiped out considerable numbers of species over the eons. So why am I writing in hopes that you'll help us?

Well, I think we've evolved some pretty unique qualities and habits that can serve you well if we can stay around long enough to develop them. What are they? I think they are love, creativity and communication.

Okay, okay, it seems like we're pretty violent and destructive, even toward and of each other. But that's not natural, it's an effect of stress and fear. The great majority of humans are quite a peaceful bunch. We like our fun and excitement, we love to play, and we can be quite aggressive when it comes to protecting ourselves. Violence, however, is an aberration, like a sickness, and more and more of us are actively seeking ways and means to cure it. If it were natural we wouldn't bother doing that. When we are not under severe stress and in states of fear our natural inclination is to help each other, to teach each other, and to care for each other. That's why we have so many individuals and organizations doing those things. A lot of humans don't realize it themselves, but there are far more people organized to help other people than there are that are organized to fight each other. And you won't find another species anywhere with as much concern for the survival and well-being of species other than our own. Sure, I admit that you won't find another species anywhere that destroys as many other species as we do, either, but we are trying to do better. We are trying harder than ever before in our entire existence. Check it out. Meanwhile, please help us to find a proper dynamic balance between competition and cooperation.

There's another aspect of our love, too. Remember that sunset I mentioned at the beginning? Well it's only beautiful if a human is looking at it. Otherwise it's just a lot of clouds and the sun at the end of another day. You won't find any other species gathering around to ooh and ahh at it, making up clever ways to duplicate it so others can see it who weren't there, writing poetry and singing songs about it. This love thing of ours includes an appreciation of beauty, an appreciation of you, that's different from anything you'll get from your other children. Inspire us, I ask you, to be even more aware and appreciative of your wild and complex magnificence.

Creativity I said. That imagination of ours has gotten us into a whole lot of trouble, and has hurt a lot of other species, but it has its positive side. I'm not sure how strongly you feel about preserving particular species, but the same abilities that we use to wipe out a lot of them are being used to save and protect many others, sometimes even from your destruction. And using your basic materials we've even managed to copy some of your techniques (we say that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery) and produce new kinds of beings like the many varieties of bananas, wheat, rice, horses, dogs and cats. Yes, we are messy, and some of our unhealthiest messes are probably going to be around for a very long time. That's a very unpleasant side effect of our creativity, to be sure.

All I can say is that there are a lot more of us keeping a close watch on that and trying to stop it and invent ways to correct it. With our creativity we have the potential for making life on the planet much more fun for everything and everyone. We just need more time. So please be patient and imagine (for if we can imagine you must be able to do so as well) all the wonderful things we can do together.

In the area of communication we really shine. Boy can we talk. We make sounds, of course, to exchange information with each other just like a lot of other animals. And we sing, like some other animals, and we dance, like some other animals, but we do special things that none of your other animals do. For one thing, we make pictures in our heads and then reproduce those pictures in all kinds of ways so that other humans can see them and learn from them. As a shaman it still amazes me that a young human can watch one of these moving pictures and in one hour can learn more about some of your most interesting creatures than a fellow shaman could learn by spending five years in the bush. Of course it might have taken a bunch of humans five years to put that picture together, but it's the ability to share the experience that's so unique.

Maybe you've noticed that we've also been able to tap some of your energy so we can communicate with each other across vast distances, sometimes using physical pathways made from your minerals and plants, but more and more often using invisible waves that we've modified from your bounty. By combining our communication and our creativity we've even linked you up to your partner the Moon and all your neighbor planets, in other ways than your existing links of light and gravity, that is.

We also communicate in subtler ways, somewhat like most of your other species, but perhaps with more energetic effect. We shamans are familiar with holding conversations with winds and seas and rocks, with animals and plants. We also know that everyone can do the same thing and that through their thoughts and feelings they do so without realizing it, often inadvertently causing droughts and storms as well as healing rains and bumper crops. Teach us, then, to communicate with you more directly, more clearly, and more effectively.

We could really serve you well, if you'd let us. We can appreciate you, we can work with you creatively to help keep your natural processes in harmony, and we can act as your eyes and ears and voice both here and across the reaches of space. Whatever our spiritual origin, we are formed of your stuff, conditioned to your environment, endowed with skills and abilities born out of your potentials. We are pretty adaptable critters, but we need your help so we can adapt even better. How can you help us? Inspire us, Gaia. With dreams, insights, awareness, respect and hope. Talk to more of us in all your myriad ways, in ways like those described by the poet Alfred Street:

“(Gaia) is man's teacher. She unfolds her treasures to his search, unseals his eyes, illumines his mind, and purifies his heart; an influence breathes from all the sights and sounds of her existence.”

Thank you, Gaia, for listening, through the eyes and ears of all who read or hear this letter.