

Trumpeter (1993)

ISSN: 0832-6193

Unexpected Harmonies: Self-Organization in Liberal Modernity and Ecology

Michael J. Cohen

Word Peace University

Michael J. Cohen is a professor of integrated ecology at World Peace University and founder and former director of the National Audubon Society Expedition Institute. He is the author of several books the most recent of which is *Connecting with Nature: Creating Moments that Let Earth Teach*. His mailing address is Box 4112 Roche Harbor, WA 98250.

Although you and I have never met, we are connected. We share a spectacular nurturing home, our living planet, Earth. We see the same migrating birds, whales and butterflies. We breathe the same air, drink the same water and love our beautiful land. It is Mother Nature that connects us.

As a twig is bent, so grows the tree. On average, we Americans spend over 95our lives indoors, excessively separated from nature. Collectively we spend less than 1 day per person per life time in tune with natural areas. We live over 99paced adult lives knowing Nature through detached words, facts and pictures, not through intimacy and pleasure. We are estranged from Mother Nature and each other, from the grandeur of natural love, support and responsibility.

The effects of estrangement

Our estrangement severs most of our natural connections. Without their support, we suffer from stress and unfulfillment. This results in 44 million of us in the U.S. having acute mental disorders, drug abuse or dependence. Our stressed immune systems can't cope with diseases like cancer. Cancer alone addition-ally stresses us by striking one out of three people we love.

Stress dissolve 50alcoholism, greed, cigarette smoking and violence. It unbalances personal and environmental relationships. Over 70

You and I are not islands. As long as we remain estranged, our negative social and environmental indicators rise. The cost staggers the imagination. In the last decade we spent over 100 billion dollars in the war on drugs alone, and today more people are addicted than a decade ago.

Our greatest problem is the estrangement of our awareness. Its estrangement makes us unaware that our gnawing personal environmental problems result from our estrangement.

Reversing Estrangement

Fortunately, today brings good news.

Have you ever sat near a roaring brook and felt refreshed; been cheered by the sweet song of a thrush or renewed by a sea breeze? Does a delicate wildflower bring you joy, a towering snow-capped peak charge your senses? Do your pets or house plants give you pleasure?

We neither earn nor learn these rewarding natural feelings, we inherit them.

Sometimes you may feel stressed or depressed, then intimately talk with a friend or just walk in a natural area and find that cares fade. When you do this, you do more than just get away from your problems. You interact. You rejuvenate good feelings by connecting your true inner nature to its natural origins, the nature of a person or place.

Now, you can learn newly developed sensory activities that permanently intensify the nature connecting process and its benefits. The activities let you catalyze lasting personal and environmental rejuvenation for yourself and your associates. Each activity creates a special nature-sensitive interactive moment. In that moment, many estranged natural senses awaken, play and strengthen. Additional sensory activities sustain and reinforce them. Ensuing ideas, feelings and understandings motivate sharing, community and connectedness. Sensitively, we learn to find the sense in our lives needed to relate responsibly.

Dramatically, nature connecting activities reverse our estrangement and its adverse effects. In parks, backyards or back country the fun activities relax personal and interpersonal tensions by re-bonding our inner nature with the natural world. The process revives more than 40 disconnected natural senses. Natural enjoyment (enjoyment) fills our being. It builds confidence, self-esteem and positive change. Balanced natural relationships with self, society and nature develop. Therein lies hope.

Citation Format

Cohen, Michael J. (1993) Unexpected Harmonies: Self-Organization in Liberal Modernity and Ecology *Trumpeter*: 10, 3. <http://www.icaap.org/iuicode?6.10.3.4>

Document generated from IXML by ICAAP conversion macros.
See the [ICAAP](#) web site or [software repository](#) for details