

*The girl huffed as she landed in a heap at the bottom of the hill. She had rolled [tumble bumble pell mell](#) down the knoll after leaping for the sky from its summit. It's not that she had expected to land among the puffy, white clouds – although she did feel as though she could. She sat up examining one skinned, grass-stained knee first with her eyes. Green pigment-colored lines across her skin connected the dots of her pores in an elongated diamond sort of pattern. She dipped her nose to smell the ruination of grass blades smeared across her joint, then tentatively stuck out her tongue to sample a mix of salty sweat with the sweet of vegetation. It was good.*

*She was a wild child; alternately left to roam her half-housed, half-wooded neighborhood, then stuffed weekly into a stiff dress with puffed sleeves to attend church. The braids remained in whatever habitat she was thrust; ejecting too short hair from each plait. She remembered sniffing in the scent of quiet rows of Pledged pews and gazed in wonder at the purple carpeted stairs up to the minister's podium. In later years she would tell a minister full of concern for her non-church-going immortal soul that she prayed in God's house – the hedgerows and wood edges that lined her daily run. She felt there, decades later, as if she could leap skyward some days and roll tumble bumble pell mell across the puffy white clouds full of grace and grass-stained knees.*

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Greetings Students, Colleagues and Friends,

Although some of you are past or current students, I have learned something from almost every person receiving this newsletter in one way or another. It just so happens that today several new lessons mysteriously connected. I have learned over time that it is best to never take such nexus for granted and in fact, to sit up and take notice whenever such things make themselves manifest in one's universe. Here's how it all came about today . . .

The Memorial Day weekend went for me, like it went for many of you I'm sure. Family and friends came to visit. This was a uniquely special visit for me this time because after 13 ½ months spent rebuilding from a fire, we were back in our home. Every box is not unpacked, nor every picture hung; but that has never stopped us from inviting people in for a lively weekend. Still, when the last person left today, I was looking forward to attending to some editing for a fellow writer friend of mine and per usual, his words did not disappoint.

After I finished his second piece, I clicked to my e-mail to sort through what had come in since before the holiday weekend. The first thing I noticed was a note from the [Center for Humans and Nature](#) with the words, "What happens when we see ourselves as separate from or as a part of nature?" For those of you who have had me in class this should ring familiar as my common question, "Do we consider ourselves a part of or apart from nature?" has met you in our classrooms. Of course, I had to click further. Freya Mathews had [answered](#) the question elegantly. In part, and you should really visit her entire short essay, she described the concept of *wu wei*, a Chinese explanation of organisms who actually live more efficiently, saving energy, by accommodating their actions to the needs and adaptations of those organisms around them as a path to their own destinations. This isn't a passive, "Oh, I'll do whatever you want," mode. It is a set of intentional actions meant to acknowledge and basically collaborate with all organisms sharing space in a given place. A part of nature.

I was still mulling it over, enjoying her words and thoughts when I took a break for lunch. A biomimicry colleague from India, Prashant Dhawan, had sent me a TED Talk he had [done](#) on Smart Cities which I intended to catch over lunch. Eerily as I watched, Prashant started describing the way nature

creates its yields, its ongoing ever-evolving end products (which never really “end” because nature cycles in its own circular economies) constantly adapting habitats, ecosystems and biomes which themselves eventually nest into neighboring biomes to create our entire world. Whew.

Nature works, as Prashant noted, not through master planning, but through master serving. In this way, organisms comprising entire ecosystems continually emerge into the most efficient and productive, life-friendly versions of themselves. His words were fitting together with Freya’s like jigsaw pieces. As humans work to “fit in with” and accommodate all other organisms to create a more healthy and productive environment, so too do larger groups of organisms achieve their best outcomes by cooperating with each other – providing what they alone can offer and what the larger system needs without doing harm to others or the whole.

My mind was a little blown at the serendipity of receiving and reading all this at once as I went back to my computer. Here a third e-mail, this one again from my friend Gavin Van Horn at the Center, greeted me with the importance of children learning *from* nature *in* nature. Considering both Freya’s writing and Prashant’s talk, my mind was fertile - ready to read and understand the opening lines of Carol Black’s [\*On the Wildness of Children: The Revolution Will Not Take Place in the Classroom\*](#). It began, “In Wildness is the preservation of the World.” These were not her words she chose to open her article. These were the words of Henry David Thoreau. Truly he was being literal. It was so obvious on the heels of my other teachers this day. We cannot accommodate other organisms if we do not observe and know them, for if we do not know them we cannot understand their needs or how the jigsaw pieces of those needs and all each organism has to offer can fit together in an efficient, productive way. Our children must be immersed in nature to understand their citizenship in the world.

Follow the links to learn more – what do you have to lose?

*But for this day, the girl simply flopped over onto her stomach to watch ants carry impossibly oversized food back to their brethren deep in the earth.*

Here’s to learning all that we can from our fellow organisms,

Margo

Margo Farnsworth

Screendoor Consulting

<http://screendoorconsulting.com/>

[615.478.4889](tel:615.478.4889)

Contributing author in [\*Wildness: Relations of People and Place\*](#)

***Give good people good information and they'll do good things.***

(If you've just received this single newsletter, it may be because I thought you'd be interested in this particular subject. You may or may not get others. If you want on my list regularly, e-mail me. If you want off my list, e-mail me. Thanks!)