



The Poet Laureate of Deep Ecology Gary Snyder and His Animal Ethics

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ABSTRACT:

The first truth of the Four Noble Truths is *dukkha*, which views suffering as the ultimate truth. In ecology, suffering is also a crucial element in evolution. While appropriate suffering will contribute to the evolution of all species, excessive suffering will only lead to the extinction of the whole species. Nature itself cannot endure meaningless and enormous suffering. Utilitarian philosopher Bentham also said that the question about animal ethics is not “Can they reason? nor, Can they talk? but, Can they suffer?” The evolutionary principle of nature should be the balance of competition and cooperation. In this light, our contemporary ecological crisis is no other than humankind’s overcompetition and lack of cooperation so that the dying nature and animals have stricken back through natural disasters and epidemic diseases.

It is said in *Hua-yen Sutra* that all dharmas originate from the mind, which sounds painfully true in this Dharma Ending Age. The *Shurangama Sutra* also reaffirms that the turmoils in the world are the reflections of the five poisons such as greed, anger, attachment, arrogance and disbelief. This paper aims to illuminate Snyder’s animal ethics, which is based on the Buddhist cosmology of the mind and resorts to Tibetan Buddhism, Tien Tai Buddhism and the native American tradition to develop his deep ecological (he changed deep into depth) concept of the transformation of the consciousness in order to correct the Western rationalism, materialism and anthropocentrism.

In this paper, I will discuss Snyder’s *Myths & Texts*, *Earth House Hold* and *Turtle Island* to make explicit the three perspectives of his animal ethics: 1. The concept of “proper places of all beings” in the Tibetan Buddhist mandala; 2. Tien Tai Master

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Chan-jan's idea of "the Buddhahood of all beings"; 3. The symbiosis of all peoples in the native American tradition. In Snyder's ecological cosmology, the food-chain is the channel of energy flowing in nature. In his reference to the native American hunting ritual, the hunting ritual is to express our respect for life through fasting, prayer and gratefulness. Snyder's concept of the food-chain has communicated Buddhist vegetarianism and the native American hunting ritual. Through the above three perspectives, Snyder's animal ethics inspired by Deep Ecologist Arne Naess' idea of "the Council of All Beings" has further deepened and enriched its philosophical foundation and practice.

Keywords: Suffering, Gary Snyder, the transformation of consciousness, the concept of "proper places of all beings" in the Tibetan Buddhist mandala, Tien Tai Master Chan-jan's idea of "the Buddhahood of all beings", the symbiosis of all peoples in the native American tradition, the Council of All Beings

生態桂冠詩人蓋瑞·史耐德與其動物倫理觀

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摘要

佛說四聖諦第一諦為「苦諦」，揭示了「一切皆苦」的生命實相。生態學說亦視苦難為進化要素；適當的受苦，有益族群的進化，而過度受苦，則會導致整個族群的滅絕。大自然本身，無法承受無謂而巨大的痛苦。哲學家邊沁曾言，動物倫理的出發點，不在動物有無理性？不在動物能否說話？而在動物能否感受痛苦？大自然的進化法則，是競爭與合作的平衡。當今生態危機，源於人類過度競爭而缺乏合作，使承受巨大痛苦的自然與動物，以天災或疫病反撲。

《華嚴經》覺林菩薩偈有言：「一切唯心造。」末法時期，惡法亦如是。《楞嚴經》指明，世間亂象，皆因人心的貪嗔痴慢疑五毒，感召而來。本文期闡明生態桂冠詩人蓋瑞·史耐德的動物倫理觀，他以佛法「三界唯心、萬法唯識」為原點，提出以深層生態學(自稱為深度生態學)為本的「意識變革」觀，並以密宗、天台宗與北美原住民

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傳統為意識變革的根本，建構其動物倫理觀，以針砭西方「人中心」的理性唯物觀。

本文由其《神話與文本》、《大地家族》與《龜島》詩文中，梳理其動物倫理觀三大觀點：一、密宗曼陀羅「物在其位」觀；二、天台湛然大師「眾生佛性」觀；三、北美原住民的「族群共生」觀。史耐德生態觀中，食物鏈是自然界能量傳遞的管道，他提及北美原住民的狩獵觀，須遵守齋戒、祈禱、感恩等尊重生命的儀式。史耐德的食物鏈觀點，溝通了佛教茹素觀與原民狩獵觀。史耐德受深層生態學家阿恩·奈斯提出的「眾生大會」觀點啟發，更以此三面向，進一步深化豐富了「眾生大會」動物倫理觀的內涵與實踐。

關鍵字：苦、史耐德、意識變革、曼陀羅「物在其位」觀、天台湛然「眾生佛性」觀、

北美原住民「族群共生」觀、眾生大會

This paper aims to illuminate the poet laureate of deep ecology Gary Snyder's animal ethics, which is based on the Buddhist cosmology of the mind and resorts to Tibetan Buddhism, Tien Tai Buddhism and the native American tradition to develop his deep ecological (he changed deep into depth) concept of the transformation of the consciousness in order to correct the Western rationalism, materialism and anthropocentrism. I will discuss Snyder's works such as *Myths & Texts*, *Earth House Hold* and *Turtle Island* to make explicit the three perspectives of his animal ethics: 1. The concept of "proper places of all beings" in the Tibetan Buddhist mandala; 2. Tien Tai Master Chan-jan's idea of "the Buddhahood of all beings"; 3. The symbiosis of all peoples in the native American tradition. Through the above three perspectives, Snyder's animal ethics inspired by Deep Ecologist Arne Naess' idea of "the Council of All Beings" has further deepened and enriched its philosophical foundation and practice. In the following discussion, let us first begin from the essence of life: suffering, and its significance in Buddhism, ecology and animal ethics.

The Meaning of Suffering in Buddhism, Ecology and Animal Ethics

The Meaning of Suffering in Buddhism. The first truth of the Four Noble Truths is *dukkha*, which views suffering as the ultimate truth. Buddha's preaching was systemized as *arya-satya* (the Four Noble Truths, 四聖諦): *dukkha* (suffering, 苦), *samudaya* (origin, 集), *nirodha* (cessation, 滅), and *marga* (path, 道) in the *Buddhist Agama* (阿含經) and as the *Twelve Nidānas* (chain of causation, 十二因緣); both *arya-satya* and *Nidāna* became the philosophical foundations of Theravada and Mahayana. In Buddhism, self is merely a temporary embodiment of *Pancaskandha* (Five Aggregates, 五蘊, which was composed of *Rupa*, *Vedana*, *Samjna*, *Samskara*, and *Vijnana*, that is, form, sensory reception, perception, mental processing, and consciousness respectively, 色受想行識). The ultimate

way to the enlightenment is *anatta*, that is, nonself, because our self, which comes from our angst of existential nihilism, would lead to *dukkha*. In Buddhism, there is no ontology, which resulted from our delusion of reality; all that existed in the cosmos is but the process. After we are awakened from these delusions, we'll achieve *paramārthasatya* (Ultimate truth, 究竟第一義諦、最勝義諦), that is, *Anuttara Samyaksambodhi* (Supreme Perfect Enlightenment, 無上正覺).

The Meaning of Suffering in Ecology. In ecology, suffering is also a crucial element in evolution. While appropriate suffering will contribute to the evolution of all species, excessive suffering will only lead to the extinction of the whole species. Nature itself cannot endure meaningless and enormous suffering. Holmes Rolston in his *Conserving Natural Value* has discussed “health values,” and Callicott also edited Leopold’s essays as *For the Health of Land*. So far as the “health” of land is concerned, the land’s capability of regeneration can be viewed as one sign of land health. Even suffering can be regarded as a functional and beneficial alarm system; as James Gustafson has said, the natural ordering of “suffering, pain, death” can contribute to a sustainable life. In the cosmos, anything is functional and beneficial; Chris J. Cuomo also reminds us that even suffering is inevitable in ecosystemic communities because pains are “instructive, and necessary aspects of any healthy life and community” (Cuomo 103). What we should reduce is unnecessary suffering and violence.

The Meaning of Suffering in Animal Ethics and the Root of Ecological Crisis. In Buddhism, ecology and animal ethics, suffering should be the essential consideration; as utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham has said: “The question is not, can they [animals] reason? Nor can they talk? But can they suffer?” (qtd. in Miller 255). In ecological law and ethics, everything is connected to everything else, and all living things are endowed with intrinsic value; any unnecessary suffering of animals will lead to the suffering of the whole ecosystem and biosphere, which no doubt includes humankind. In Deep Ecology, Arne Naess has termed the connection between human beings and nature as “biospherical egalitarianism” and the process of connection evolves in the channels of energy from the base of the food-chain; it is said in the Bible that “all life begins as grass,” and in the

beginning of a scientific ecology course, we will also learn that: “all flesh is grass.” Life occurs in the food-chain through processing the solar energy by plants in photosynthesis. In aboriginal culture, appropriate killing can nourish life; life can only be killed to become food so that the process of the killing ritual should be accompanied with spiritual preparations and be painless, and the remains should be treated with respect.

Dr. Tsai Chen-hsing indicated that Snyder has shifted contemporary ecological discourse from ecological ontology to description of life (Tsai, 2008: 474). French Enlightenment in the 18th century held the dualism of matter and mind in religion and philosophy in which matter was inferior to mind. Nature was regarded as resources instead of the source of life. This cosmology not only cut matter off from the transformative energy but also brought about the environmental crisis in Western civilization. However, James Lovelock’s “Gaia Hypothesis” in 1979 started the age of Gaia, whose fundamental principle of life has put the spotlight on cooperation and symbiosis instead of individual competition. Eugene Odum further added that we should view “ecosystems as harmonious communities striving toward equilibrium through cooperation, instead of thinking of ecosystems as overlapping populations coexisting and competing amidst chaotic relationships and disturbances” (qtd. in Cuomo 109).

As critic Rod Philips (2002: 2) has mentioned, before ecology became worldwide, Snyder has discussed ecological aestheticism in college with his classmate James Welch to integrate an American Indian ecological outlook and Asian philosophy to cooperate with nature rather than control nature (Halper, 1991: 299; Philips, 2000: 3). The ecological crisis is not merely an environmental but a spiritual problem of sustainability. Snyder’s eco-poetry, which was inspired by native American oral literature, focuses on the spiritual “oneness with nature, the oneness of mind and body, the oneness of consciousness and unconscious, our oneness in society with each other” (*The Real Work* 157). Additionally, Snyder affirmed that human and nonhumans would become one, depend upon and coexist with their surrounding environment for survival and economic activities.

The Root of Natural Disasters and Epidemic Diseases: the Distorted Mind

It is said in *Hua-yen Sutra* that all dharmas originate from the mind, which sounds

painfully true in this Dharma Ending Age. The *Shurangama Sutra* also reaffirms that the turmoils in the world are the reflections of the five poisons such as greed, anger, attachment, arrogance and disbelief. A mind in conflict is viewed as evil in *Chan* Buddhism and as topsy-turvy hallucination (顛倒夢想) in the *Heart Sutra*. Because the causes of all diseases lie in a mind tortured by greed, anger and attachment, the Mind Only school (唯識宗) reveals the significance of the transformation of consciousness. This section also aims to illuminate Snyder's animal ethics from the perspective of the Buddhist cosmology of the mind. Let's first discuss Snyder's concept of the "Mind."

The Mind Only School and Snyder. Mazu's koan that "mind is Buddha" revealed the ultimate nature of Buddhahood. Bodhidharma once preached that anything in the three realms originated not from our self but from our mind. Snyder has described the influence of the *Heart Sutra* translated by Hsuan Tsang on him in its concepts of mind and emptiness: "the Buddhist scholar-pilgrim, brought back the famed '*Heart Sutra*'—the one page condensation of the whole philosophy of transcendent wisdom—in his pack. Once he had translated it into Chinese, it was set in movable type—the first text to be printed this way" (*MR* 160-61). The four characters (Kokope'li the Indian shaman, Monk Hsuan Tsang, the poet, and the Indian Prophet Wovoka) in Snyder's poem "The Hump-backed Flute Player," as Anthony Hunt has said in "'The Hump-backed Flute Player': The Structure of Emptiness in Gary Snyder's *Mountains and Rivers without End*," conveyed the wisdom of "form as emptiness" in the form of their respective hunchback, Hsuan Tsang's bamboo backpack, the poet's modern canvas backpack and hat (8).

In the same article, Anthony Hunt also pointed out the influence of the Mind Only School and Hua-yen Buddhism on Snyder through "the continuous transmission across time and space of the Buddhist doctrine of Emptiness" (8). In Snyder's poem "The Hump-backed Flute Player," Hsuan Tsang plays the most significant role:

Hsuan Tsang
went to India 629 AD
returned to China 645
with 657 sutras, images, mandalas,

and fifty relics—

.....

incense censer swinging as he walked. (MR 80)

Snyder depicted how Hsuan Tsang preserved the dharma in spite of the poet's anachronism in "The Hump-backed Flute Player": "The six-foot-thick walls of Nalanda, the monks all scattered—books burned—banners tattered—statues shattered—by the Turks. Hsuan Tsang describes the high blue tiles, the delicate debates—logicians of Emptiness..." (80). In this poem, Snyder used the present tense to represent the eternal moment of the dharmas, which echoes the Buddhist emphasis of the eternal present. The two parts of the poem serve as a contrast to highlight Hsuan Tsang's importance. Hsuan Tsang has transformed the devastation of the Turks' burning Buddhist sutras into the burning incense symbolizing Buddhist dharmas; this contrast also attests to Snyder's view of the transformative potential of energy, and it is the cosmic essence of "Emptiness" that makes the transformation possible.

The Transformation of Consciousness in Snyder's Depth Ecology and Eco-Buddhism

Deep Ecology and the Ecological Self. Max Oelschlaeger called Snyder "Poet Laureate of Deep Ecology" (Oelschlaeger 261) because Snyder had contributed to the development of Deep Ecology. Though Snyder didn't regard himself as a member of Deep Ecology but instead posed Depth Ecology (*The Practice of the Wild* 110), his works did contribute to the development of Deep Ecology. The foundation of Snyder's Depth Ecology tried to explore ecological issues of depth and the root of the ecological crisis. In his view, ecology should be concerned with issues of depth rather than deep or shallow problems and he aims to detoxify the poison of greed in Capitalism of exploitation from the perspectives of eco-Buddhism and his Depth Ecology. The Buddhist concept "Samsara is Nirvana" can embrace the wild energy of the mind and the wilder nature.

As for an ecological self, for Snyder it is a self of ecological consciousness in relationships and in the environment rather than a Western atomistic and individual self. Deep Ecology is advocated by Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess to emphasize the web

of interdependence and organic interconnectedness and to contrast with the short-term technological “shallow environmentalism.” As John Seed has said: “The thousands of years of imagined separation are over...The change is a spiritual one...referred to as deep ecology” (qtd. in Macy 292). Deep Ecology focuses on the inner connection of all creatures. What Leopold and John Muir held as Deep Ecology was based on the Gaia ethics that nature is a whole system of ecosystems, biotic communities, bioregions of species, individuals, and relationships with intrinsic values to form so-called “ecological communities.”

The concerns of Deep Ecology range from prayer to poetry, from the wilderness to an altered consciousness (a greening self), and it urges our direct action for the Earth. John Seed’s remarks suggest his concept of an ecological self: “I’m part of the rain forest protecting myself. I am that part of the rain forest recently emerged into human thinking” (qtd. in Macy 294). The concept of an ecological self, which is a larger identity crossing the cultural boundaries of an atomistic self, would relieve our current mental and spiritual burden of suffering in compassion, which means suffering with others including animals. The goals of Deep Ecology include “diversity, interdependence, openness, and adaptability- as well as the spiritual principles of cultivating wisdom and compassion” (Spretnak, 1999: 307).

Snyder and Eco-Buddhist Revolution of the Transformation of Consciousness. In the *Shurangama Sutra* (楞嚴經), we will learn that the five poisons of greed, anger, attachment, arrogance and faithlessness are the sources of the major natural disasters; for example, floods are caused by greed, fires including volcanic eruptions and global warming are caused by anger, typhoons are caused by attachment, and earthquakes are caused by arrogance; as for the war, it is caused by conflicts in the human mind. In perennial wisdom such as Buddhism, there exists an intimate connection between the outer world and our inner world, that is, our consciousness; contemporary abnormal weather changes are only the reflection of men’s chaotic and restless consciousness. Only through the transformation of consciousness will destructive, life-threatening earthquakes, storms and diseases be eased.

Snyder in his *A Place in Space* illuminated that the landscape of the ecosystem can find its parallel in our mindscape: “language as wild system, mind as wild habitat, world as

a ‘making’ (poem), poem as a creature of the wild mind” (qtd. in Gifford 77); “looking within...we come closer to being like a climax system” (*The Real Work* 173-74). In *Earth House Hold* (1969), Snyder’s first published prose volume, he called for our ecological change, spiritual transformation, and social, dharmic revolution and combined Buddhism and socialism in order to achieve the symbiosis of nature and culture and a new planetary culture through the transformation of consciousness. For Snyder, how to resolve the ecological crisis is not through technology but through our sense of responsibility; nature is not only a place but also our home and ground. We cannot return to nature because we will never leave it, and the earth mother is even more intimate than our mother for we are never able to cut off the umbilical cord from nature.

As Sherman Paul has said, Snyder’s revolution of the “ecological conscience” was “adjusting the mechanism of perception” to change our point of view (Paul 64). Snyder also asserts that “the goal of Revolution is Transformation” (*EHH* 128). For Snyder, the turning point of enlightenment lay in the transformation of the mind: “Unenlightened consciousness is very complicated—it’s not simple. It’s already overlaid with many washes of conditioning and opinion, likes and dislikes. In that sense, enlightened, original mind is just simpler, like the old image of the mirror without any dust on it” (*The Real Work*, 99). As David R. Loy has said, it is “the duality between us as a species, *Homo sapiens sapiens*, and the rest of the biosphere” (Loy, 2008: 105), which means discrimination in Buddhism, which has led to our ecological crisis.

For Snyder, humankind should take responsibility for the whole ecosystem. As Lynn White Jr. has said, the ecological crisis is actually a spiritual crisis (qtd. in Fox 106). As Nietzsche has said, we should replace our ethics of fear with love, and Spinoza’s ethics also affirmed that the cause of evil was the lack of love. The foundation of nonduality aims to deconstruct evils out of division and to promote goodness in unity. Snyder affirmed that we should be dedicated to “cultural and economic revolution that moves clearly toward a free, international, classless world” (*EHH* 92).

Snyder’s Animal Ethics Inspired by Tibetan Buddhism, Tien Tai Buddhism and the Aboriginal Cultures

Snyder’s animal ethics is inspired by Tibetan Buddhism, Tien Tai Buddhism and the

Aboriginal Cultures in the following three aspects: 1. The concept of “proper places of all beings” in the Tibetan Buddhist mandala; 2. Tien Tai Master Chan-jan’s idea of “the Buddhahood of all beings”; 3. The symbiosis of all peoples in the native American tradition. In Snyder’s ecological cosmology, the food-chain is the channel of energy flowing in nature. In his reference to the native American hunting ritual, the hunting ritual is to express our respect for life through fasting, prayer and gratefulness. Snyder’s concept of the food-chain has communicated Buddhist vegetarianism with the native American hunting ritual; for him, all religions share a universal value.

For Snyder,

the subculture of illuminati has been a powerful undercurrent in all higher civilizations. In China it manifested as Taoism, ...and the Zen Buddhists up till early Sung. Within Islam the Sufis; in India the various threads converged to produce Tantrism. In the West it has been represented largely by a string of heresies starting with the Gnostics, and on the folk level by ‘witchcraft.’ (EHH 104-05)

Nevertheless, as Thomas Berry has pointed out, most traditional religions were merely concerned with the moral codes for homicide and suicide, and the reflection on biocide and genocide only appeared in indigenous cultures. Both aboriginal cultures and Buddhism care about animals for their intrinsic rather than utilitarian values (qtd. in Tucker 136). Maybe that’s the reason Snyder would resort to Tibetan Buddhism, Tien Tai Buddhism and the native American tradition to develop his “deep” ecological (he changed “deep” into “depth”) concept of the transformation of the consciousness in order to correct the Western rationalism, materialism and anthropocentrism. Snyder also advocated the collective ecological unconscious which expanded the social contract to what Michel Serres advocated as the “natural contract,” in which the new egalitarianism, sense of community and bioregional awareness existed between humankind and other species including animals. In the following section, we will first talk about Tibetan Buddhist concept of “mandala” inspiring Snyder’s works.

The Concept of “Proper Places of All Beings” in the Tibetan Buddhist Mandala

Tibetan Buddhist Mandala and Snyder's Works. Snyder mentioned in "Poetry and the Primitive" of *Earth House Hold* that as BusTon says, "the voice of the Buddha arises, being called forth by the thought of the living beings.' In esoteric Buddhism this becomes the basis of a mandala meditation practice..." (GSR 58). Snyder further mentioned that voice is "the third Mystery. The charts and maps of this realm are called mandalas in Sanskrit" (59). Spiral is also the archetype of all religions; in Buddhist and Hindu dance, Snyder observed that the "physical properties of spiral conches approximate the Indian notion of the world-creating dance," and the "expanding form" in "cats cradles, Micronesian string star-charts" and in Tibetan mandala (EHH 129) would symbolize the cosmic movement. The foundation of mandala meditation is "Nayika, ali," which is the essence of words and the embodied wisdom of lightning, thunder, the present, the void, the supreme wisdom, and non-self. Snyder concluded that in the evolution of our consciousness for freedom, we will finally realize that the mandala of the mind is communicable with the spiritual science.

In Snyder's interpretation, the Tibetan mandala contained ecological elements. The shape of a mandala symbolizes the natural cycle of the universal system. For Snyder, when a believer meditates on the mandala, he will co-exist with Buddha, Bodhisattvas, lords of dharma, and enlightened lamas within the mandala: "an ecosystem is a kind of mandala in which there are multiple relations that are all-powerful and instructive. Each figure in the mandala—a little mouse or bird (or little god or demon figure)—has an important position and a role to play" (Snyder, *Place* 76).

As Walter Mitgutsch has indicated: "Snyder's concern lies more with man's position in a balanced ecological system than with the anthropocentric question of man's psychological reactions towards his technological environment" (428). Snyder's concept of an ecosystem is like a mandala of diversity and contrary to a monoculture: "When a system reaches climax, it levels out for centuries or millennia. By virtue of its diversity, ...it's the opposite of monoculture" (*The Real Work* 116). He further emphasized more the function of cooperation than competition in the ecosystem: "we live in a system...that has its own kinds of limits, and that we are interdependent with it" (*A Place in Space* 188).

The science of ecology confirmed the competitive, co-evolutionary and cooperative interactions in living systems. As Snyder has mentioned, our ecosystem is like a mandala

with god or demon figures of multiple relations. Though they are hierarchical in energy-flow, members within are equal. A natural system of energy-exchange and food-chains can be expanded to food-webs. Snyder added that the biological nature is like a puja and ceremony of offering and sharing, and the interconnection of frailty, impermanence and pain (the continuity of process and its ultimate emptiness) will lead us to compassion (*Bodhicitta* caused by *Shantideva*, 寂天). Snyder's concept of mandala thus embodies ecological egalitarianism.

Snyder and Tien Tai Master Chan-jan's Idea of "the Buddhahood of All Beings"

Tien Tai's central teaching preached by Zhiyi (智顛, 538-97) is the "middle way" or the "threefold truths": (1) all things are empty (of inherent existence); (2) all things have a provisional/interrelated reality; and (3) all things are both empty of the ultimate reality, and provisionally real at the same time (Stalling 29). In the "Teacher of the Law" (*dharma-bhāṅga*) chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*, Tien Tai's central canon, Buddha preached to the medicine king, good men and women how to attain the Buddhahood: "The 'Thus Come One's room' (如來室) is the state of mind that shows great pity and compassion toward all living beings, which could be viewed as Buddhist awareness of animal protection. The 'Thus Come One's robe' (如來衣) is the mind that is gentle and forbearing. The 'Thus Come One's seat' (如來座) is the emptiness of all phenomena" (Ueki 112). Tien Tai Master Zhiyi's One-thought-trilocosm (一念三千論), which further validates the dharmas out of the Mind.

Nevertheless, Snyder's concept of the nonhuman is different from that in Buddhist scriptures. In the *Lotus Sutra*, the nonhuman often signifies deities and demons, while Snyder has broadened the concept of the nonhuman to include all beings and represented

their consciousness in meditation: “the problematic art of deliberately staying open as myriad things experience themselves” (*A Place in Space* 113), which even signify the invisible life energies prevalent in nature.

In Snyder’s “Maudgalyayana saw hell,” the third poem in the “Burning” section of *Myths and Texts*, we could witness the sacredness of the nonhuman in reinterpreting the sin of Maudgalyayana’s (目連) mother as the waste of food energy. This poem also suggests that hell exists only in our mind, and our deliverance from the hell lies in the “revolution of consciousness,” that is, the transformation of mind:

*Under the shuddering eyelid
 Dreams gnawing the nerve-strings,
 The mind grabs and the shut eye sees:
 Down dimensions floating below sunlight,
 Worlds of the dead, Bardo, mind-worlds
 & horror of sunless cave-ritual
 Meeting conscious monk bums
 Blown on winds of karma from hell,
 To endless changing hell.
 Life and death whipped
 On this froth of reality (wind & rain
 Realms human and full of desire) over the cold
 Hanging enormous unknown, below
 Art and History and all mankind living thoughts,
 Occult & witchcraft evils each all true(GSR 417-18)*

In this poem, Snyder juxtaposed the revealing dreams of our suppressed desires in the unconscious and the hell of endless desires; both are the products of our unrecognized mindscape but will eventually affect the outer landscape. “Mankind living thoughts” such as “art,” “history,” “occult & witchcraft evils” are all human attempts to negotiate with his/her wild mind stuff, no matter good or evil. Nevertheless, after the journey of the hell, Maudgalyayana assumed the new identity of Maitreya (the future Buddha); the identity of

Maudgalyayana and Maitreya represented the greatest Buddhist paradox that “samsara is nirvana” and the Tien Tai “mutual containment of the ten realms” (十界互具). In the last poem of “Hunting,” we further witness the rebirth of Buddha and all creatures in the healing cycle of food-chain energy.

The Dhamma in India twenty-five centuries ago ensured the protection of the king’s (Ashoka Maurya, 阿育王) subjects including “beasts and birds”; the first precept of non-killing in the five precepts also asserted the values of life in Buddhist animal ethics. Snyder asserted that in Buddhism, all beings possess the potential of Buddhahood according to “the Buddhist non-duality of compassion and emptiness”:

*...drunk
On wine or truth, what you will,
Meaning: compassion.
Agents: man and beast, beasts
Got the buddha-nature. (Myths & Texts 34)*

Though Buddhism in the 2nd century AD proposed that not all beings could attain Buddhahood such as *Icchantika* (nonbeliever, 一闍提迦), the hunting native people and ethnic minority, and that sentient beings must attain human form in reincarnation to learn Buddhism, Buddhist egalitarianism could still be witnessed in Buddha’s affirmation of the attainment of Buddhahood by Devadatta (提婆達多, who tried to “break the harmony of the sangha,” 破和合僧) and by Naga princess (the dragon king’s daughter, who represented female, animal and life energy itself) in the *Lotus Sutra*. In the 8th century, Tien Tai Master Chan-jan (湛然 711-82) asserted the Buddhahood of even inanimate beings including a grain of sand to illuminate the “non-duality of being and nonbeing” (真無二相)

and “nothing outside the mind” (心外無物).

As Snyder quoted: “the single mind of a single particle of dust comprises the mind-nature of all sentient beings and Buddhas” (*GSR* 290); Snyder also asserted the Chinese Buddhist philosopher-monk Chan-jan’s argument that even inanimate things possess the Buddha-nature: “truth is not dual and that no objects exist apart from mind, Who then, is ‘animate’ and who ‘inanimate’? Within the Assembly of the Lotus, all are present without division” (290). The phrase “good earth” in *Regarding Wave* (1970) also echoed the view of this world as “the wonderland for all sentient beings” (眾生所遊樂) in the *Lotus Sutra*; in this earth, all beings including animals are sacred and possess Buddha nature.

Snyder and the Council of All Beings in the Native American Tradition

Animal Protection in Aboriginal Cosmology Inspiring Snyder’s Works. Aboriginal cosmology, which could be viewed as nondual and this-worldly, has affected Snyder’s eco-poetry profoundly. While Hindu, Chinese and Japanese poetry would emphasize the oneness of object and subject, in Western culture, subject and object are always separated. In Snyder’s opinion, native American tradition originated from East Asia and will connect America with the right Way; in the Indian myth of the “Turtle Island,” men can contact the Earth directly. Snyder indicated that for Australian indigenous people, different worlds were overlapped and geographical environments were combined into one: “The Australian aborigines live in a world of ongoing recurrence—comradeship with the landscape and continual exchanges of being and form and position; every person, animals, forces, all are related via a web of reincarnation—or rather, they are ‘interborn’” (*GSR* 61).

As for Totemism in aboriginal cultures, a totem can evoke the power, goodness and mutuality in the locale and awake our respect for other species. Totem, the powerful cultural symbol for native people, originated from the vernacular of native American tribe Ojibwas, meaning “his family and relatives”; Indian people would worship animate and inanimate beings as their tribal ancestor or genius loci. In totem worship, harm to and

hunting of the totem animal were forbidden; thus totem worship has suggested animal protection. Totem worship is the broadening of the identification of men and the other; in totem worship, the other is even holier than humankind. Gary Snyder in his “prayer for great family” also referred to the Mohawk prayer, in which the totem animal or plant in the native region had spoken for the rights of our nonhuman family members.

In Snyder’s view, “no literature can be studied apart from its milieu” (*He Who Hunted* 10); this view echoes the concept of interrelatedness in systems theory; in this ecosystem, the energy of all creatures is egalitarian, complementary and exists forever in the cycle of life in the matriarchal cosmology. For native people in the northwest coast,

animals have souls which are immortal and that they are re-born after death. They are considered practically equals of man in intelligence, and to surpass him in the particulars for which the animal is noted....An alliance with a supernatural animal or the cultivation of shaman power was the most common means. (He Who Hunted 26)

In referring to myth, Snyder indicated that “individual heroes or whole tribes are saved by the aid of animal people” (29). Snyder even recorded that “being a male, as a baby he was not of the preferred sex” (*He Who Hunted* 27). Moreover, he continued, the Northwest was influenced by the North America and Northeastern Asia so that myth was “not as the isolated product of a small group, but as a unique patterning of elements common to folk literature almost everywhere...Culture and myth reflect each other” (32). In this light, the awareness of animal protection is universally shared.

Snyder’s primitive view of nature is to give nature and all beings in nature an opportunity to speak; what he supports is a democracy of all beings and nature herself: “Some American Indian cultures have ‘mature’ characteristics....In Pueblo societies a kind of ultimate democracy is practiced. Plants and animals are also people, and, through rituals and dances, are given a place and a voice in the political discussions of the humans. They are ‘represented.’ ‘Power to all the people’ must be the slogan” (*EHH* 104). Through rituals, dances, place and voice, the spokesman will serve as the representative of fauna, flora and nature herself (109). Snyder affirmed that the democracy of people for Sioux Indians can embrace other peoples such as creeping people, standing people, flying people and

swimming people (108). He praised the subculture for “man’s natural being is to be trusted and followed;...one is being truly ‘moral’...[b]y this profound exorcism and ritual drama...for civilization is built on hierarchy and specialization” (115). Contrastingly, the democracy in the Turtle Island is the democracy of all beings.

The Council of All Beings Inspired by Aboriginal Tradition. Native rituals aim to recover our lost universal identity and our sense of wholeness from personal isolation and alienation of modern civilization and science to re-perceive the wonders of nature and its laws. John Seed in his *Thinking like a Mountain* held “the council of all beings,” which was inspired by Arne Naess; this council aimed to form a Deep Ecological and spiritual connection with all life and evoke our responsibility and compassion for the Earth. As Seed has said, “it is a form which permits us to experience consciously both pain and the power of our interconnectedness with all life” (Seed, 1988; qtd. in Henning 135). He further illuminated that “in the Council of All Beings, we channel the energies released by despair and empowerment and other rituals into facilitating a profound change to deeply ecological awareness” (135). It is “affective education” from our heart and body, and it is our mind that counts: “If we wish to reunite with nature, the first requirement is that we have the intention to establish this contact” (135).

In the “speaking for another life form ritual” in the “council of all beings,” we can identify with other forms of life such as animals. The ultimate goal in Snyder’s poetry of Depth Ecology is just to set up “the Council of All Beings,” which is inspired by aboriginal cultures. Snyder once mentioned that holism and responsibility are two major ethical disciplines in aboriginal cultures, and he suggested the reason why the collection of the native American myth and folklore would begin in the 1880s and flourish in the 1990s was that they had conveyed the message of comradeship of humans and nonhumans (Lin, 1990: 260-61). In “tomorrow’s song” in *Turtle Island* (1974), Snyder envisioned a future world in which myth would disappear, the continent would exist temporarily and the turtle island would be recovered; it is a time when our inner power will become less but stronger, and the rhythm of the wise light and silent knowledge out of our silent meditation will become all-encompassing. While working in the wilderness, everyone will exert his labor in his proper position (175), and it is a time the life energy of the cosmos will flow freely in “the Council of All Beings.”

Snyder's Concept of Animals in the Food Chain of Life-Giving Energy

Of all Buddhist schools, Tibetan Buddhism is most concerned with the transformative process of subtle energy. In *Myths & Texts*, Snyder mentioned a story of Buddha's feeding himself to a tiger in his past life to illuminate the Buddhist cosmology of energy transformation in the food-chain mechanism (29-31); the food-chain is also a major concept in Snyder's eco-poetry. Ecology is a branch of science which endeavors to keep human civilization in harmony with nature and natural beings and sets a model for an organic and cooperative human community, which is the basic unit in Snyder's "Earth household." Snyder's Depth Ecology contains the concepts of transformation of energy, gratitude for the food-chain, and equality.

Oelschlaeger argued in "The Idea of Wilderness in the Poetry of Robinson Jeffers and Gary Snyder" that Snyder's poetry of Depth Ecology and his idea of wilderness "reestablish the human bonds with the wild nature" (268). Aldo Leopold's ideas of food-chains and web in his "Land Ethics" have served as the inspiration for Snyder's eco-poetry: "Food-chains are the living channels which conduct energy upward; death and decay return it to the soil" (109). For Snyder, the food-chain assured the virtue of life-giving energy in the cosmos: "The most fundamental fact of life in the biotic community is...eating and being eaten. Each species is...a link in a food-chain, and a knot in a food web" (qtd. in Zimmerman 136). Though energy is itself neutral, our attitude toward energy in ecological ethics should be with gratitude and responsibility. In Snyder's view, the process of the food-chain should be undertaken with respect and avoid waste.

The "Shark Meat" of *Regarding Wave* also represents the transformative food-chain mechanism even when we are unconscious of it: "that hung in the net shed/ we never thought used." The process of life energy will follow the universal Way to our destination of Buddhahood (enlightenment, self-nature): "up the bamboo lanes to our place," and the Earth is only the temporary resting place in the life cycle of death and rebirth:

*The island eats shark meat at noon.
Sweet miso sauce on a big boiled cube
as I lift a flake*

to my lips,
Miles of water, Black current,
Thousands of days
re-crossing his own paths
to tangle our net
to be part of
this loom. (GSR 454)

In this poem, we can witness that even the seemingly irrelevant and the remotest objects (“the island,” “the shark”) can be linked together in the food-chain process (“eat”). Words such as “miles” and “days” suggest spatial and temporal influences, together with the movement (“current”) of “water” (the outer force); all of these forces affect and expand one’s own paths into an interconnected and constant changing net in the web-like life structure (“this loom”).

In “Long Hair” of *Regarding Wave*, the inner revolution of the eaten Deer further reveals the mutual transformative process of the food-chain mechanism: “Hunting season:/ /the Deer is inside the man....but the man doesn’t know it. When enough Deer have occupied enough men, they will strike all at once....and everything will change some. This is called ‘takeover from inside’” (GSR 462). The word “enough” suggests that the accumulation of positive life energy will lead to the transformation of consciousness, and the interaction of energy and consciousness also echoed the Tibetan Buddhist non-duality of prana (subtle energy) and mind.

In “For All” of *Axe Handles*, Snyder’s ecological community is composed of a web-like system, and members within are de-centered and nonhierarchical:

I pledge allegiance to the soil
of Turtle Island,
and to the beings who thereon dwell
one ecosystem
in diversity
under the sun
With joyful interpenetration for all. (GSR 504)

Different from the relationship between the heavenly God in Western religions and His people on earth, which is vertically hierarchical, all beings living on earth in native cultures are horizontally equal. As for the sun above, its energy will make possible the connection of life-giving energy between all beings (“in diversity”), and all activities on earth are nothing more than different manifestations of the solar energy (“one ecosystem”).

Snyder’s Negotiation between Buddhist Vegetarianism and the Native American Hunting Ritual

In *Jataka* (birth-stories of the Buddha, 佛陀轉生經), we see the flowing energy of the wild which Snyder kept calling for. *Jataka* tales are different from Darwinism in that they emphasize the symbiosis and the flowing life energy of the food-chain in compassion in the interconnected web of life. In the Pali canon, the Buddhist principle of *shila*, morality of nonkilling, asserts that even plants such as trees possess spirit in the holistic ecosystem. In Snyder’s *Myths and Texts* (1952-56), both Buddhism and the native American cultures serve as alternatives to America culture, and in his view, the aboriginal respect for the wild and the wilderness is negotiable with the Buddhist *Satori*. *Myths and Texts*, *Back Country* and *Turtle Island* are all endowed with Buddhist and native American elements though *Turtle Island* is more about the native American tradition.

In “hunting” poems in *Myths & Texts*, Snyder depicted an aboriginal scene of hunting ritual by Pueblo Indians to speak for the aboriginal right of hunting; before hunting, a hunter should fast and pray for the prey’s compassion for him. The hunter had to sing and wait patiently for the deer coming to him, and he should kill with gratitude. After the killing, the hunter had to cut off the animal’s head and locate it to face the sky so that the sacrificed animal could undergo the process of rebirth. Snyder himself also remarked the sacredness of the food-chain: “If you think of eating and killing plants or animals to eat as an unfortunate quirk in the nature of the universe, then you cut yourself off from connecting with the sacramental energy-exchange, evolutionary mutual-sharing aspect of life...by literally eating each other” (96-97). In Snyder’s view, even Buddha could not forbid a true aboriginal hunting (*TI* 109-10).

Conclusion

In this section, I will summarize Snyder's Animal Ethics Inspired by Tibetan Buddhism, Tien Tai Buddhism and Aboriginal Cultures.

For Snyder, the concept of mandala symbolizes ecological biodiversity that everything in the universe has a unique and proper niche. The process of achieving enlightenment in Buddhism can be interpreted as Buddhist healing to the ecological poisons of greed, anger and attachment. And the Mind-Only school highlights the significance of the transformation of consciousness, which is the main idea in Snyder's Depth Ecology. Through the transformation of consciousness, we can realize the identity of the interrelationship of landscape and mindscape and transform our ideology from individuality to a sense of our global village as an inseparable eco-community. Snyder's council of all beings in an ecological community is also the combination of aboriginal cultures and Tien Tai Buddhism. All of the above oriental and native traditions forged his sense of a harmonious relationship of nature and culture, which can redeem our contemporary ecological crisis and animal exploitation.

In Snyder's Depth Ecology, which was inspired by the above oriental and aboriginal traditions, he offered his unique solutions to the ecological crisis: through the transformation of our consciousness, we can broaden our concept of an egoistic self to an ecological self. In the web of the cosmos, life-giving energy can flow through the food-chain mechanism, and in his egalitarianism, the council of all beings in an ecological community will finally be realized.

Satori and the Wild for Snyder. In *Turtle Island*, Snyder's view of the wild echoed Buddhist *Satori*: "Wildness is the state of complete awareness. That's why we need it" (99). Snyder has endowed the concept of the wild with a spiritual connotation in asserting that the "wild land" could lead to the "sacred land" (*PW* 78). Snyder also connected the wild with life-giving energy itself: "the source of fertility is the 'wild'" (90). Snyder's view that man is the "beautiful animal" and "bring up our children as part of the wildlife" (*TI* 101) revealed his egalitarianism of humans, nonhumans and nature in their wild or wilder states, his faith in taking action and the relatedness between the wild and wilderness.

Compassion can also connect our self with others and thus make us wholesome because we could experience the healing power by connecting our mutual sorrows (Greenspan 331-35), as Snyder wrote in *Mountains and Rivers without End*: "The notion

of emptiness engenders compassion” (ix). Only when we empty ourselves can we embrace the whole world, and then the feeling of compassion will rise in the identity of self and other; only when the sense of a controlling rationality and order is emptied out can we see our inner suppressed wild unconscious and the outer oppressed wilderness in nature as they are, and the total acceptance is also the meaning of compassion. Buddhist Varsa (結夏安居, the summer repose avoiding going outdoors so as not to harm proliferating creatures) revealed the highest respect for life on earth.

Life on Earth is the manifestation of energy in a physiological “system for evolution by natural selection.” Contrary to the well-known Darwinism, scientific historian Patrick Tort proposed the “reversive effect,” which presents the global “progressive reversing of the selective efficiency during biological evolution: at first, the natural selection process acts alone; throughout the ages (millions of years) this process is distorted . . . by the emergent anxiety to defend the weakest” (qtd. in Sachs 191). Even Darwin himself recognized the “progressive beginning of anti-selective social instincts” (191), which echoed Snyder’s egalitarian status of walking, climbing, flying peoples in “the council of all beings.” According to Tort’s theory, our present situation of animal exploitation attests to an immature stage of humanity. Only when human beings learn how to protect other beings will the process of evolution be complete.

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