

Goodwill Toward Nonhuman Persons

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Note: This article is a more detailed version of the 2013 Festival of Goodwill Talk.

The Festival of Goodwill offers us a time each year to reflect on the power of goodwill, or the expression of the divine Will-to-Good on this planetary level. The overall focus of the Ageless Wisdom teachings regarding goodwill is on bringing about right *human* relations.

We have the opportunity and responsibility, though, to reflect beyond humanity. After all, the theory of hylozoism, which underlies all esoteric teachings, “posits a living substance, composed of a multiplicity of sentient lives that are continuously swept into expression by the ‘breath of the divine Life.’ This theory recognizes no so-called inorganic matter anywhere in the universe and emphasizes the fact that all forms are built up of infinitesimal lives, which in their totality—great or small—constitute a Life, and that these composite lives, in their turn, are a corporate part of a still greater Life. Thus eventually we have that great scale of lives, manifesting in greater expression and reaching all the way from the tiny life called the atom (with which science deals) up to that vast atomic life that we call a solar system.”¹

So we, the fourth kingdom, are all part of the One Life, along with the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms. “Humans, the brain of nature; the animals, the expression of the heart; the vegetable world, the expression of the creative force or of the throat center; these three kingdoms in nature forming, in a peculiar manner, correspondences to the three higher centers in human beings, as the three kingdoms on the involutory arc correspond to the three lower centers, and the mineral kingdom—abstruse as the idea may seem to those of you who have not the consciousness of the life-aspect—corresponding to the solar plexus, the great clearing house between that which is above and that which is below.”²

The Kingdoms of Earth

In the esoteric literature, we are told that the One Life is differentiated in relation to our planet into seven kingdoms, of which the following are the first five:

<i>No. Kingdom</i>	<i>Ray</i>	<i>Expression</i>
1. Mineral	VII. Ceremonial Organization I. Will or Power	Radioactivity The basic reservoir of power
2. Vegetable	II. Love-Wisdom IV. Beauty or Harmony VI. Idealistic Devotion	Magnetism Uniformity of color Upward tendency
3. Animal	III. Adaptability VI. Devotion	Instinct Domesticity
4. Human	IV. Harmony through Conflict V. Concrete Knowledge	Experience, growth Intellect
5. Egoic or Souls	V. Concrete Knowledge II. Love-Wisdom	Personality Intuition ³

“Relations between the four spheres of activity which we call human, animal, vegetable and mineral are now badly adjusted because the energy of matter is primarily the governing factor. In the human kingdom, the working of this energy demonstrates in what we call selfishness. In the animal kingdom, it demonstrates in what we call cruelty, though, where the sense of responsibility is nonexistent and only

instinctual and temporary parental responsibility is found, there is no criticism to be given. In the vegetable kingdom this maladjustment expresses itself during this planetary period of misuse as disease.”⁴

Esoteric teachings do include comments on our relationship with the other three kingdoms: “Humanity’s work for the animal kingdom is to stimulate instinct until individualization is possible. Work for the vegetable kingdom is to foster the perfume-producing faculty and to adapt plant life to the myriad uses of humans and of animals. Work with the mineral kingdom is to work alchemically and magically.”⁵

What we know from cosmology is that these kingdoms are all part of a single interconnected energy field and that the dynamic of interconnectivity and a free circulation of energy is as important as each of the individual kingdoms. “The main factor preventing a completely unimpeded sequence of impression from Shamballa straight down into the mineral kingdom, via all the other kingdoms, is the factor of free will, resulting in karmic responsibility.”⁶ So we have a responsibility to deal effectively with the energetic “pollution” that comes primarily from human thoughts and emotions. Energy inflowing from Shamballa is “‘stepped down’ by humanity’s constant reaction to glamour, to emotional or astral conclusions, and to selfish interpretations. It must be remembered that the activity of all these ‘impressing agencies’ is felt in a wide and general sense throughout the entire planet and the planetary aura. No kingdom in nature escapes this impact.”⁷

While esoterically it is clear that each kingdom has its own place and function in the whole, it is easy for us to unconsciously operate in terms of Aristotle’s assertion of the *scala naturae* (the ladder of nature), which rank-orders life forms with humans at the top.

The Concept of Personhood

Historically, our practical relationship with members of the first, second, and third kingdoms has been that of ownership and exploitation. Animals, vegetables, and minerals have been viewed as resources for our own use without regard to any moral rights that they might have. We may have been benevolently protective, especially in the context of the environmental movement, but we have not necessarily thought of “goodwill” in our interactions with them because we have not thought of them as entities in their own right—or as being “beyond use.”

While in esoteric circles, we may have maintained a paternalistic attitude towards members of these other kingdoms, some environmental and legal organizations have started to raise questions. These include the Center for Earth Jurisprudence,⁸ the Nonhuman Rights Project,⁹ and Wild Law UK,¹⁰ as well as community action groups such as the Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature.¹¹ Through a range of initiatives, various jurisdictions are now moving beyond the rights of natural persons (i.e., human beings) and juridical persons (e.g., corporations) to also recognize the legal personhood and accompanying rights of nonhuman entities.

Personhood is defined as having the following characteristics: self-awareness, with a rich inner life; being intelligent and able to think abstractly, being able to reflect on and choose one’s actions, being emotionally sophisticated and empathic; having complex social relationships; and being able to work cooperatively. Once personhood is acknowledged, there are certain moral or inherent rights that follow within our legal framework. The “negative” rights or entitlements include the right to life without threat of unnatural death, freedom from slavery or being owned by another, freedom from kidnapping, freedom from torture or experimentation, freedom from servitude or inhumane treatment, and freedom to live in one’s natural habitat. The “positive” rights include assurance of being treated with respect and dignity, being allowed to develop one’s own personality, just and favorable remuneration for work, the right to rest and periodic holidays, and the right to develop within one’s own community.

If we reflect on the inherent rights of personhood, we can begin to see that, if entities in the other kingdoms are acknowledged as nonhuman persons, there would be definite changes needed in not only our attitudes and actions but also how we express goodwill to these nonhuman persons.

Goodwill Towards the Earth

In esoteric terms, we know that “the Planetary Logos, the One in Whom we live and move and have our being, is the informing, ensouling life of this planet, the Earth. It is Its life that integrates the planet as a whole, and Its life that pours through all forms—great or small—that, in their aggregate, constitute the planetary form.”¹² Further, scientists have demonstrated that the planet Earth “behaves as a single, self-regulating system”¹³ with the negative consequences of environmental degradation of the biosphere and loss of biodiversity becoming more obvious. In terms of expressing goodwill, it is important to remember that all parts of the biosphere that we called the Earth are inhabited by living organisms, and that both Earth itself and many of the entities living within it meet the criteria of personhood.

In recognition that what we call “nature” is in fact an interrelated series of living ecosystems, Ecuador asserted in Articles 10 and 71-74 of its 2008 Constitution of Ecuador the inalienable rights of ecosystems to exist and flourish. In addition, these Articles give people the right to petition on behalf of ecosystems and requires the government to remedy violations of these rights.¹⁴

In 2010, Bolivia passed the Law of the Rights of Mother Earth, which includes the right of the Earth to not be polluted, to continue vital cycles unaltered, to be free of genetic alteration, and to be free of imbalance from mega-infrastructure and development projects. The law is administered by a Ministry of Mother Earth.¹⁵ The United Nations is formally considering adopting a Universal Declaration of Rights for Mother Earth,¹⁶ modeled on the Bolivian law. In addition, it is considering the enshrining of ecocide (any large-scale destruction of the natural environment or over-consumption of critical non-renewable resources) as an international crime against peace.¹⁷

In September 2012, New Zealand took another step and declared the Whangangui River an “integrated, living entity” with legal personhood status. Two guardians were appointed to act on its behalf, one representing the Maori and one representing the Crown.¹⁸

We can see from the above initiatives the beginning of a shift away from protection of the biosphere in order to ensure abundance for ourselves and towards respect for the environment and its components as living entities in their own right.

Goodwill Towards Nonhuman Persons in the Animal Kingdom

We are told that “[domesticate] animals are to their own kingdom what the New Group of World Servers is to humanity. The New Group of World Servers is the linking bridge and the mode of communication between the Hierarchy (the fifth kingdom) and Humanity (the fourth kingdom) under the present divine Plan; the domesticated animals fulfill, therefore, an analogous function between Humanity (the fourth kingdom) and the animal kingdom (the third).”¹⁹

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) began launching legal actions to end animal experimentation on the basis of cruelty to animals in 1980.²⁰ Their position has been that animals are not ours to eat, wear, experiment on, use for entertainment, or abuse. Their primary focus has been to ensure that animals have the right to live free from pain and suffering, especially on factory farms, in relation to the clothing trade, in research laboratories, and in the entertainment industry.

The Great Ape Project, begun in 1994, was the first to address the issue more broadly of legal rights and legal standing or personhood. Its focus was on our closest genetic relatives, the Great Apes (chimpanzees, bonobos, gorillas, and orangutans). Based on their being intelligent, self-aware, and highly social, it launched the World Declaration on Great Primates that espouses the right to life, the right to individual freedom including protection from commercial exploitation or trading, and a prohibition of torture (including testing in research labs).²¹

In 1999, New Zealand granted basic rights to great apes, making their use in research, testing or teaching illegal. In 2007, the Balearic Islands granted legal personhood rights to all great apes. Meanwhile Switzerland had amended its constitution in 1992 to recognize animals as *beings* rather than as *things* and

added a law on respectful treatment of animals.²² Germany followed in 2002 with a constitutional amendment guaranteeing rights to animals.

The next species to garner attention was the cetaceans (whales and dolphins). Based on scientific evidence that cetaceans are extremely intelligent, insightful and self-aware, capable of a wide range of emotions, compassionate and altruistic, creative with problem solving ability, and cooperative both within and between species, scientists issued a Declaration of Rights for Cetaceans in 2010.²³ The Declaration, which is available for signature, seeks to secure the following rights: the right to life, the right to be free and not the property of another, the right to live free of slavery or torture, the right to live in their own environment and to protection of that environment from pollution, the right to live within their own culture without disruption, and the right to move freely through the world's oceans and to reside in places of their own choosing.

Cetaceans live in a complex culture that varies from pod to pod, and they depend on sound to navigate and live. Ways that humans harm cetaceans include kidnapping, servitude in entertainment facilities, sonic blasts for oil exploration and navy maneuvers, pollution of the oceans, entanglement in fishing nets, and whale hunting. The US Navy recently issued an environment impact statement on the effect on cetaceans of its use of sonar, stating that over a five-year periods it will “unintentionally harm marine mammals 2.8 million times.”²⁴ Previous estimates had been that sonar testing would “only” kill 1,800 cetaceans and deafen 15,900.

Equally as intelligent as cetaceans, insightful, self-aware, capable of a range of emotions, compassionate, altruistic, ability to use tools and create art, and organized in a closely knit matriarchal society, elephants have not yet received formal advocacy. There have, however, been successful prosecutions of organizations like Ringling Brothers (Feld Entertainment) for mistreatment of elephants. Although trade in ivory is illegal, it still occurs; and there are websites advertising hunts to kill elephants.

A controversial but little explored issue is that of the employment of animals without compensation. Various animals are used as an adjunct to sports like hunting, for research or teaching, for entertainment (zoos, circuses, races), for physical labor, or for specialized work such as dolphins detecting mines or patrolling harbors, dogs detecting drugs or cancers, or cats used to increase bone density. In essence, this is slavery. It would be interesting to consider the consequences of setting aside a “salary” to support the animal at retirement age.

We are learning more as scientists shift away from imposing human assumptions on animals and instead learn how they interact in their own environment. As a consequence, we are realizing that we have grossly underestimated both the scope and the scale of animal intelligence.²⁵

Goodwill Towards Nonhuman Persons in the Vegetable Kingdom

While we may have experience in thinking about mammals like whales or elephants as intelligent and highly social, we are less likely to view the vegetable kingdom in that manner. If we think beyond our own use of plant life, we can recognize that “the vegetable kingdom is the transmitter and the transformer of the vital pranic fluid to the other forms of life on our planet. That is its divine and unique function.”²⁶ In esoteric terms, “the angels and devas are to the vegetable kingdom what the spiritual Hierarchy is to humanity.”²⁷

In the tabulation of kingdoms, we can see “that the vegetable kingdom is the expression of three rays, whereas the others are expressions of two. Through these three, the vegetable kingdom has been brought to its present condition of supreme beauty and its developed symbolism of color. The vegetable kingdom is the outstanding contribution of our Earth to the general solar plan. Each of the planets contributes a unique and specialized quota to the sum total of evolutionary products, and the unique production of our particular planetary system is the vegetable kingdom...and this is possible because it is the only Kingdom in which three rays have finally succeeded in coalescing, in fusing and blending. They are also the three

rays along a major line of forces, 2-4-6...Its success is demonstrated in the uniformity of its production of green in the realm of color, throughout the entire planet.”²⁸

Science is demonstrating through studies of plant neurobiology that many plants are autonomous, able to differentiate between self and non-self, capable of complex and adaptive behaviors, able to communicate and warn other plants of danger, and are able to enlist allies to aid them. Many forms of plant life, including trees and forests, are entitled to be treated with dignity because they are sensing, highly social organisms that communicate extensively, interact with their surroundings, learn from experience, are able to integrate diverse sources of information and act accordingly, and can distinguish between self and not-self and between kin and non-kin.²⁹

We are only recently appreciating the complex social development of plants and have not yet had public discussions about the implications of practices we impose on this kingdom (e.g., forest clear cutting, genetic modification) in the context of viewing plants as “nonhuman persons.” Switzerland has again been a leader in creating a Bill of Rights for Plants, which states that “living organisms should be considered morally for their own sake because they are alive.”³⁰

Goodwill Towards the Mineral Kingdom

In esoteric teachings, we are reminded that “the mineral kingdom is...the most concrete expression of the dual unity of power and order. It constitutes the ‘foundation’ of the ordered physical structure or the universe of our planet.”³¹ In understanding the spiritual development of the mineral kingdom, “there are three stages in the evolutionary processes...[that] are the correspondences in the mineral kingdom to the stages of animal consciousness, of self-consciousness, and of the radiant group consciousness of the soul. There is a fourth stage of potency or of organized expressed power, but this lies ahead and is the analogy in this kingdom to the life of the Monad.”³²

Further, “fire, intense heat, and pressure...have already succeeded in bringing about the divisions of the mineral kingdom into three parts: the baser metals, as they are called, the standard metals (such as silver and gold and platinum), and the semi-precious stones and crystals. The precious jewels are a synthesis of all three,—one of the basic syntheses of evolution. In this connection, some correspondences between the mineral kingdom and the human evolutionary cycles might here be noted:

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| 1. The base metals | Physical plane | Dense Consciousness | The first initiation |
| 2. The standard metals | Astral plane | Self-consciousness | The second initiation |
| 3. The semi-precious stones | Mental plane | Radiant consciousness | The third initiation |
| 4. The precious jewels | Egoic consciousness and achievement | | The fourth initiation |

The correspondences of fire, heat, and pressure in the evolution of the human being are self-evident, and their work can be seen paralleling that in the mineral kingdom.”³³

It is probably with the mineral kingdom that we, as humans, feel the least affinity although we are increasingly appreciative of the energetic communication of crystals and other gem stones. WE may not have thought through the implications of the fact that “the mineral kingdom and the kingdom of solar lives (the first and seventh kingdoms) are [both] the result of the activity of the first and the seventh rays. There is a close numerological interlocking here. These two kingdoms are respectively at the point of the greatest tenuity and the greatest density, and are produced by the will and the organizing ability of the solar Deity. They embody the nebulous plan and the concretized plan. In the case of the seventh or highest kingdom (counting from below upwards), the Will aspect predominates and is the most powerful; whilst in the case of the mineral kingdom, the organization aspect is of the most importance. his was to be anticipated, for the energy of Will is the first effect of the initiating divine activity, whilst the densest aspect of ceremonial organization is the counterpart of the initial impulse, its concretization.”³⁴

Bolivia is the first nation to protect, legally, the inherent worth of minerals, calling them “blessings.” To date, we have little experience in appreciating the mineral kingdom for its own esoteric role and contribution rather than as resources for human use and exploitation. Ordinances on the rights of nature are now in place in over thirty U.S. municipalities, including Pittsburgh.³⁵ However, the discussions about the negative impact of processes like fracking or tar sands oil extraction are being framed primarily in terms of impact on humans rather than on the mineral kingdom itself.

Broadening Our Focus of Goodwill

If we include the Earth and the other kingdoms in our loving determination to bring about right relations, then we have the responsibility to change our assumptions and how we act. We can start with a modification of the Tibetan’s definition of goodwill as being “goodness of heart, kindness in action, consideration for others, and mass action to promote [the] welfare of [all persons, human and nonhuman].”³⁶

One component of this change is to reflect on the implications of hylozoism and the fact that we are all equally important parts of the One Life. The animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms are not subordinate to us – they are not lesser beings aspiring to human status. Rather, they are entities profoundly affect by the choices we make. “When aspirants pray in the new Invocation: “Let Light descend on Earth” they are invoking something that humanity will have to learn to handle...All these planetary developments are attended by risks, and none more so than that of the absorption of light—on a world-wide scale—by humanity, with a subsequent reflex action on the three subhuman kingdoms. Nothing that affects humanity or that stimulates it to a forward-moving activity is without its inevitable effect upon the three lower kingdoms in nature. Forget not! Humanity is the macrocosm to this threefold lower microcosm.”³⁷

Another component is to remember the Tibetan’s admonition that goodwill needs to be “active in expression and *in tangible deed* upon the physical plane.”³⁸ How do we action this shift in consciousness? Perhaps we could begin by reflecting on the implications of the following inalienable and fundamental rights of all persons, human and nonhuman:

- a. To exist, persist, maintain, regenerate, and flourish within their usual environment or community free from imposed disruptions.
- b. To be treated with respect as distinct, self-regulating, and interrelated beings.
- c. To live free from torture, cruel treatment, or servitude.
- d. To have clean water as a source of life, clean air, and an absence of contamination, pollution, and toxic or radioactive waste.

We, the New Group of World Servers, have the responsibility to channel and direct the energy of the Will-to-Good so that all living entities indeed experience that sense of being appreciated and respected.

¹ Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology I* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1936), 149.

² Alice A. Bailey, *Treatise on White Magic* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1934), 360.

³ *Esoteric Psychology I*, 216-217.

⁴ *Treatise on White Magic*, 462.

⁵ *Esoteric Psychology I*, 267.

⁶ Alice A. Bailey, *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1950), 80.

⁷ *Ibid*, 78.

⁸ See <http://earthjuris.org/about/>.

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- ⁹ See <http://www.nonhumanrightsproject.org/>.
- ¹⁰ See <http://www.wildlawuk.org/index.html>.
- ¹¹ See <http://therightsofnature.org/>.
- ¹² *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle*, 182-183.
- ¹³ See the 2001 Amsterdam Declaration on Global Change, signed by 1,500 scientists from over 100 countries (<http://www.essp.org/index.php?id=41>).
- ¹⁴ Christina L. Madden, "Laws Gone Wild in Ecuador: Indigenous People and Ecosystems Gain Rights," *Policy Innovations*, 2 October 2008 (<http://www.policyinnovations.org/ideas/briefings/data/000077>).
- ¹⁵ Cecilia Jamasmie, "New Bolivian Law Poses Serious Challenges for Mining Companies," *Mining.com*, 29 October 2012 (<http://www.mining.com/new-bolivian-law-poses-serious-challenges-for-mining-companies-34199/>).
- ¹⁶ See the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth introduced at the United Nations in April 2010 (<http://climateandcapitalism.com/2010/04/27/universal-declaration-of-the-rights-of-mother-earth/>); Thalif Deen, "Global Campaign to Bestow Legal Rights on Mother Earth," 24 May 2011 (<https://www.commondreams.org/headline/2011/05/24-7>).
- ¹⁷ Juliette Jowit, "British Campaigner Urges UN to Accept 'Ecocide' as International Crime," *The Guardian*, 9 April 2010 (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2010/apr/09/ecocide-crime-genocide-un-environmental-damage>); Polly Higgins, "Ecocide Was to Be the 5th Crime Against Peace," *Common Ground*, August 2011 (<http://commonground.ca/2012/08/ecocide-crime-against-peace/>).
- ¹⁸ "New Zealand's Whanganui River Gets Personhood Status," *Environmental News Service*, 13 September 2012 (<http://ens-newswire.com/2012/09/13/new-zealands-whanganui-river-gets-personhood-status/>).
- ¹⁹ *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle*, 68.
- ²⁰ See <http://www.peta.org/about/learn-about-peta/default.aspx>.
- ²¹ See the World Declaration on Great Primates at <http://www.greatapeproject.org/en-US/oprojetogap/Declaracao/declaracao-mundial-dos-grandes-primatas>.
- ²² Swiss Federal Ethics Committee for Non-Human Biotechnology, *The Dignity of Animals*, February 2001 (http://www.ekah.admin.ch/fileadmin/ekah-dateien/dokumentation/publikationen/EKAH_Wuerde_des_Tieres_10.08_e_EV3.pdf). Leo Hickman, "The Lawyer Who Defends Animals," *The Guardian*, 05 March 2010. (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/mar/05/lawyer-who-defends-animals>); "Life Looks Up for Swiss Animals," 23 April 2008, *Swissinfo.ch*, (http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/Home/Archive/Life_looks_up_for_Swiss_animals.html?cid=6608378).
- ²³ See the Declaration of the Rights of Cetaceans: Whales and Dolphins, agreed in Helsinki on 22 May 2010 (<http://www.cetaceanrights.org>)
- ²⁴ Miguel Llanos, "Navy Raises Sonar Impact on Dolphins, Whales Dramatically," *NBC News*, 11 May 2012 (http://usnews.nbcnews.com/_news/2012/05/11/11659008-navy-raises-sonar-impact-on-dolphins-whales-dramatically?lite).
- ²⁵ See Frans De Waal, "The Brains of the Animal Kingdom," *The Wall Street Journal*, 22 March 2013; Christine Dell'Amore, "Black Bears Can 'Count' as Well as Primates," *National Geographic Daily News*, 29 August 2012 (<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2012/08/120829-black-bears-cognition-animals-science/>).
- ²⁶ *Esoteric Psychology I*, 241.
- ²⁷ *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle*, 79.
- ²⁸ *Esoteric Psychology I*, 217.
- ²⁹ Swiss Federal Ethics Committee for Non-Human Biotechnology, *The Dignity of Living Beings with Regard to Plants: Moral Consideration of Plants for Their Own Sake*, April 2008. (<http://www.ekah.admin.ch/en/documentation/publications/index.html>); Carol Kaesuk Yoon, "Loyal to Its Roots,"

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³⁰ Swiss Federal Ethics Committee for Non-Human Biotechnology, *The Dignity of Living Beings with Regard to Plants*.

³¹ *Esoteric Psychology I*, 228.

³² *Ibid*, 224.

³³ *Ibid*, 229-230.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 217-218.

³⁵ Mari Margil and Ben Price, “Pittsburgh Bans Natural Gas Drilling,” *Yes! Magazine*, 16 November 2010 (<http://www.yesmagazine.org/people-power/pittsburgh-bans-natural-gas-drilling>); Amy Goodman with Denis Moynihan, “Get the Frack Out of Our Water: Shale-Shocked Citizens Fight Back,” *Democracy Now!* 20 September 2012 (http://www.democracynow.org/blog/2012/9/20/shale_shocked_citizens_fight_back).

³⁶ Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Healing* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1953), 667.

³⁷ Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age, II* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1955), 327.

³⁸ Alice A. Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1957), 280.