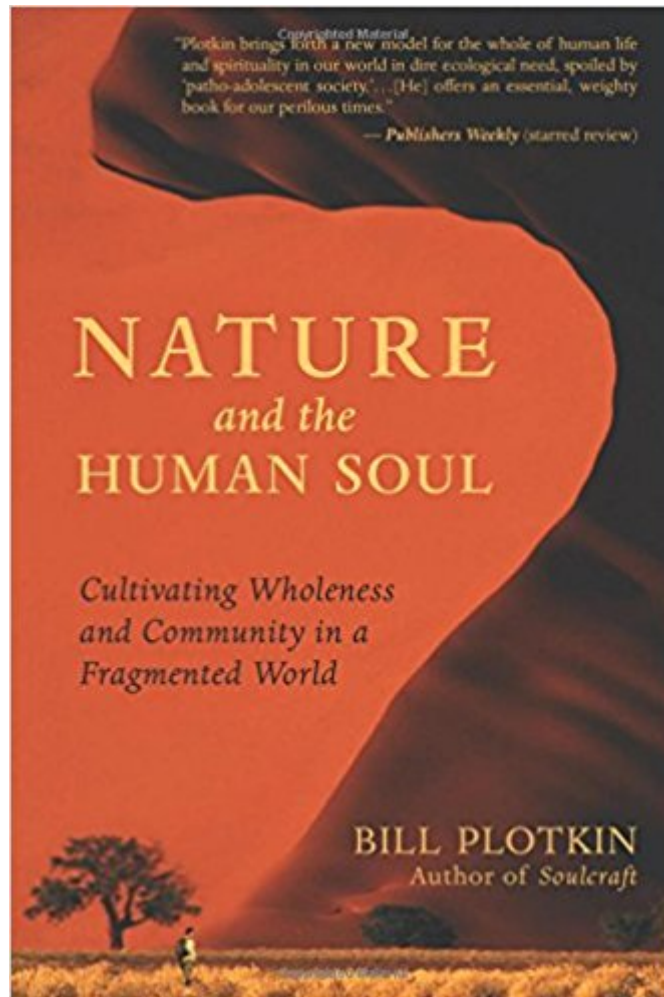


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# Nature And The Human Soul: Cultivating Wholeness And Community In A Fragmented World



## Synopsis

Addressing the pervasive longing for meaning and fulfillment in this time of crisis, *Nature and the Human Soul* introduces a visionary ecopsychology of human development that reveals how fully and creatively we can mature when soul and wild nature guide us. Depth psychologist and wilderness guide Bill Plotkin presents a model for a human life span rooted in the cycles and qualities of the natural world, a blueprint for individual development that ultimately yields a strategy for cultural transformation. With evocative language and personal stories, including those of elders Thomas Berry and Joanna Macy, this book defines eight stages of human life - Innocent, Explorer, Thespian, Wanderer, Soul Apprentice, Artisan, Master, and Sage - and describes the challenges and benefits of each. Plotkin offers a way of progressing from our current egocentric, aggressively competitive, consumer society to an ecocentric, soul-based one that is sustainable, cooperative, and compassionate. At once a primer on human development and a manifesto for change, *Nature and the Human Soul* fashions a template for a more mature, fulfilling, and purposeful life - and a better world.

## Book Information

Paperback: 528 pages

Publisher: New World Library; 1st Edition edition (December 28, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1577315510

ISBN-13: 978-1577315513

Product Dimensions: 1.2 x 6 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.8 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars Â Â See all reviews Â (59 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #71,691 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #67 in Â Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Psychology & Counseling > Developmental Psychology #119 in Â Books > Science & Math > Nature & Ecology > Nature Writing & Essays #234 in Â Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Aging

## Customer Reviews

To individuate is a subversive act. It requires a person to move against their habitual ego notions about how things are and to reject many of the accepted norms of their culture. Individuation is made more difficult in a time of what Jung called 'kairos', a time of the "changing of the gods", a time when the worldview of a culture is itself undergoing a rite of passage. In such times, when the myths

of our culture are not adequate to lead us into a new way of being, and new myths are not yet here, we have to return to what Thomas Berry called 'genetic guidance', the spontaneously creative and mysterious impulses of the world unconscious that originate in the same instincts through which the earth came into being. In short, we have to return to nature. But where can we find guidance that is not itself coming out of the old Cartesian, nature-phobic fantasy that is the problem? To read a text on individuation that is not grounded in such assumptions requires that the author be 'cured' of the disease of Cartesianism and have enough of the Bodhisattva in them to want to share their insights in a labor of love, a book. I am pleased to report that Bill Plotkin's second book, *Nature and the Human Soul: Cultivating Wholeness and Community in a Fragmented World*, fits this bill. *Nature and the Human Soul* begins with the idea that humanity is engaged in the process of the Great Turning, the move from an ego-centric industrial growth model of civilization to an eco-centric earth community model that is sustainable into the future. The question is then asked, "What does it mean to become fully human in an eco-centric world?" At a time when most therapeutic models are about coping with the dire consequences of our current circumstances, this is an especially generative question, one that is filled with hope for the future. To answer this question fully, Bill Plotkin dives deeply into the structure of the medicine wheel, the wheel of life, to create one of the most innovative and healing imaginations of the process of individuation that I have ever read. What brings this model to life is Plotkin's 25 years of experience as a depth psychologist, wilderness guide and eco-therapist, leading individuals into the wild to seek their destiny. The abstractions of life-span stage theory are given pulse and beauty through the soul-stirring stories of the individuals whose experiences illuminate the phases of the wheel of life. More than just another developmental theory, *Nature and the Human Soul* has the potential to be a foundation stone in the New Myth that we so desperately seek.

Ever wonder, as I have, why Holden Caulfield is still passing judgment on adult behavior, pointing out, more than fifty years since J. D. Salinger wrote "The Catcher in the Rye," that your average adult is only pretending to be an adult and therefore cannot be relied upon as a guide to lead someone like Holden into a deeper understanding of life? Holden, for all his outward cynicism and irreverence, is hurting inside and deserves a mature response. Bill Plotkin, in his new book "Nature and the Human Soul," offers, in quite an unprecedented way, a competent and compassionate response to the Holden Caulfields of the world. Holden is everyone of us who has ever gone looking for guidance from a mature adult, someone with the capacity to lead another into a deeply rooted sense of purpose and belonging, a need we hunger for so deeply that it leaves us feeling orphaned

in the only world we have come to know, a world too small, too trivial, and too everyday even to acknowledge this longing, let alone respond to it with competency and compassion."Nature and the Human Soul" speaks plainly and directly to what ails us as human beings in our process of maturing and evolving, and to what ails this fragile earth, our island home. Bill Plotkin recognizes so clearly that the will required to alter our destructive treatment of the natural world will only come, if at all, by seeing the natural world as priceless in its own right surely, but also as that which alone can speak to our persistent longing to inhabit a place and a purpose uniquely ours in this universe, part of an infinitely complex, interrelated web of relationships and conversations."Nature and the Human Soul" is a beautiful thing to behold for its symmetry, honesty, poetry, scholarship, and humility--a practical resource and basis for hope given to us as the fruit of a life lived very deeply and very boldly. The book makes you feel heard and confident that there is indeed a way forward that is authentic and noble and comes as a kindly blessing to the natural world.

As with Plotkin's first book (Soulcraft), I found Nature and the Human Soul to be an incredible map but better than that, more like a constellation of stars that allowed me to see/feel/experience a forgotten story that is our own. It is a glimpse of a great and wild ecological pattern. In fact, I can say that he has succeeded yet again in creating a cocoon on a collective level, one that serves humanity in its full maturation. I think it is a book that will have profound impact and is critical to the 21st Century and all its dangers...I've certainly been sending it to all my friends. As important as it is to both Depth Psychologies and Eco-Psychologies, this book is also fresh and readable, poetic in its imaging and easily accessible to everyone. The weaving of interviews into the text with elders Joanna Macey and Thomas Berry are startling and poignant as we get to experience their far reaching wisdom. As well, Plotkin's own storytelling masterfully draws one into the natural world showing us how nature can teach us and mirror our own humanity. He brings the soul's logic into view. The confluence of this organic developmental model of being fully human (the soul-centric developmental wheel) with one's own personal world is not constraining but rather frees us into our full imagination, expression and potential. It is a message that is highly original, vastly unique, and mysteriously familiar in its deep truth.

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