

THE MAGIC BEYOND THE VEIL

TEN YEARS AGO, I WAS IN A LIFE CRISIS,

falsely accused of using a political position for personal gain. I became media clickbait, the subject of an intense and prolonged public shaming, and—literally overnight—I lost my position, my business, and most of my colleagues and alleged friends. Every day, new inaccurate stories, cruel comments, and hate mail flowed in. The fear became so intense I could smell it in my sweat and feel it seeping from my pores. I couldn't see a way forward.

One morning, I dragged myself into the tiny hot tub on my deck. It was bitterly cold. Shell-shocked and exhausted, my mind finally couldn't race anymore, and something shifted. I became deeply, intensely present in that moment.

I'd been in that tub on many cold mornings when steam billowed off the hot water. But I'd never truly *seen* the steam and the light beams before that day. I became aware of rich layers of sound and the silence behind them. I lost track of the boundaries of my physical body and felt an incredible expansion and connection to all creation.

This wasn't my first mystical experience, but it was the most intense, profoundly exposing the myth of separation, the false belief that we are isolated islands of consciousness, divided from one another and from the natural world. This myth shapes our treatment of other beings in deep, heartbreaking ways.

Humanity grapples with many "isms"—tribalism, racism, sexism. But we've barely begun to recognize "speciesism"—the belief that nonhuman species are of lesser intelligence, emotional capacity, and value. Speciesism allows us to treat other species in ways that would be criminal if done to a human. It allows us to justify an economy that accepts the eradication of entire species in pursuit of growth, an economy that drives the cascading ecological crises now confronting us.

Ecosystem collapse always harms human communities, demonstrating our interconnectedness. We rely on pollinators to grow crops, forests for protection from wind

CYLVIA HAYES is a speaker, author, and Unity minister. Her Substack, *Transcend*, is about raised consciousness, economic system change, and a world that works better for all. She's also the former First Lady of Oregon. Visit cylviahayes.com.



and drought, and grasses to hold soil in place. We depend on other species for our food and on bacteria in our bodies for normal digestion and immune function. But beyond the material,

our lives are also made richer on a spiritual level by the diversity of life on our planet.

New Thought spirituality teaches that separation is the ultimate illusion and that in reality, there is one consciousness expressing through infinite forms. The sparrow, the whale, the dog sleeping at our feet, the tree climbing into the sky—these are each unique manifestations of the same universal intelligence that animates our own being. A tree's intelligence isn't less than ours, it's just different, adapted perfectly to its purpose in the web of life. The consciousness expressing itself as a

dolphin kept alone in captivity, or as a cow in a slaughterhouse, carries the same spark of divine awareness we treasure in ourselves.

When we truly internalize the principle of oneness, our relationship with other species transforms, expanding our circle of compassion. As we embody the reality of interconnection, our choices about what we wear and eat and where we build roads and buildings become spiritual practices in themselves.

The dissolution of speciesism isn't about guilt, but rather expanding our awareness to match the truth of what we are. We are not separate selves competing for resources in a hostile universe. We are one with the universe itself, tentacles on the octopus of God—each unique but inextricably connected to the whole. When we truly know this, compassion becomes as natural as breathing and our experience of the world dances with magic. ☺

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