

### **More-than-human Nature:**

*Time: 1 hour or more, Materials: outdoor clothing*

Go out onto the land and wander. Look for objects, critters, trees, flowers, streams, clouds, places, etc. that seem to you to be like any of the 8 stages. Look, feel, touch, smell, and/or listen to those natural objects or places. There might be a fresh shoot that feels to you like stage one, or an ancient tree like stage 8, etc. Be open to finding things that resonate with each of the 8 stages. If you'd like, you can use as your guide the Earth archetypes from the book that identify the eight stages (Nest, Garden, Oasis, etc.) or you can draw from your own deep imagination. The important point is that you experience a true resonance between some natural objects/places and the eight stages. Sit with each thing you find for a good while. Learn from it. For the stages you feel you have already completed in your life and for the stage you feel you are currently in, reflect on which qualities and aspects (see pages 60 – 63 of NATHS, and also the shaded box at the beginning of each stage chapter) of those stages are very much alive in you and which are dormant or underdeveloped. As an option, you might dedicate a whole walk for each stage on eight different days.

**Applying your experience to everyday life:** Choose one quality from an earlier stage that you want to bring more alive in your life. Cultivate that quality for at least a week. Choose another quality the following week. Seek out role models, both human and nonhuman, of these qualities, Practice these qualities in both your imagination and your everyday circumstances. In each case, ask yourself:

- Where do I express this quality?
- What is the shadow (page 53, pages 281-283) side of this quality? How do I **project** this quality onto other people or things?
- What childhood survival strategies (pages 151 – 153 and 197- 202) or psychological defenses have I been using as a substitute for this quality?
- What skills or resources might I be missing that would allow me to develop this quality more fully?
- What are three specific practices I can use to cultivate this quality in my life starting today and using these practices daily for at least the next month?

### **Writing:**

*Time: 10 minutes or more, Materials: Journal, or paper and pen*

Write about anything that strikes you about any of the 8 stages.

- What resonates about each stage for you? What doesn't?
- Which qualities of each stage is your heart longing for? Which qualities is your heart repelled by?
- What feels puzzling?
- Which aspects of earlier stages do you believe you lived fully, not lived, lived partially?
- What is one quality from an earlier stage that you want to deepen into? How exactly will you do this? When will you do it? For how long will you keep it up?
- Write about your personal role models, your personal heroes, beings you have learned from (human and non-human, imaginal and perceptible). What are the qualities they exhibit from the different stages (as far as you can tell)?

**Applying your experience to everyday life:** Set aside a few hours each week for the next month (or longer) and continue to journal about these questions. At the end of this exploration, shape your writing into a poem.

**Art:**

*Time: 30 minutes or more, Materials: magazines, glue stick or tape, large-size paper*

Find a few magazines that you know or imagine might collectively include images from all 8 stages. (You can find old magazines cheaply at thrift stores, or free at medical offices or recycling collection locations.) Take a large piece of paper (the back of gift wrapping works well, if you don't have large-size paper at home). Divide your page into 8 stages in any way you please. Label each section with a stage name (page 61). Look through your magazines and tear/cut and glue pictures on your stages that resonate with your sense of that stage. (This might be from what you have read in the book or from what arises within you as you feel into this stage). Add any additional artwork, words, or textures that feel right. Be aware of your feelings and memories, the stage(s) with which you get bored, and/or the stages where you spend the most time while working on this collage. Note for which stages you find many images and for which stages you find none. (What does this abundance and this lack suggest to you about your life, your society, the state of Western culture?) Which images resonate deeply? Place your collage somewhere to which you can periodically return and spend time with it, or place it in a spot where you'll frequently encounter it during the day. Change it as you'd like.

**Applying your experience to everyday life:** What is one quality from an earlier stage you'd like to deepen into? How will you go about it? When will you do it and for how long will you stick with it (days, weeks, months, only an hour)?

**Questions to enjoy or ponder (to help you live more fully into a soulcentric life):**

- What are the developmental tasks (page 69) at hand in your life? Your core values? Greatest joys? (It's essential that you distinguish between "joys" that are relatively superficial and merely ego-comforting, on the one hand, and those that arise from soul, on the other. How do you tell the difference between the two?)
- What are your current, primary responsibilities in life? Challenges?
- What is calling you to a larger story, a greater life?
- Where is your current psychospiritual center of gravity (page 64)?
- What's the question or desire or passion or deepest need that you wake up with or that follows you throughout the day?
- What soul-rooted experiences have you missed in life? What have you lived fully?
- What is missing in your life today? What is fully lived in your life today?

**Applying your experience to everyday life:** What do these questions stir up for you? What consequences do you imagine will follow if you fully act on this? Do it! Be it!