

The Original Diversity and Inclusion: The Earth's Bounty

Earth Day. April 22. It's too bad that humanity can only manage to honor the Earth for one day. But here's a 12th-century Persian poem and a 20th-century Finnish orchestral work that can help you treasure the mystery, the magic, the power and the glory of the world throughout the year, and throughout your life.



*"The Concourse of the Birds", Folio 11r from Mantiq al-tair, ca. 1600.
Painting by [Habiballah of Sava](#), Metropolitan Museum, [Gallery 455](#)*

Presence depends on a lot more than being good, or even great, at what you do for work. Compelling depth, wisdom, charisma, gravitas, happiness—they are all about continuous gratitude for being alive, being awake, being conscious. It's not about making yourself larger than life, it's about expanding the boundaries of your life: living consciously in a larger world.

Conscious Gratitude: A Swift Route to Wisdom, Presence and Happiness

We all tend to pay lip-service to gratitude. It's easy to be pleased and say, "Thank you! You're so wonderful for thinking of me and" blah blah blah. It's passive and too frequently can be classified as "greedy gratitude"—a thank you that hopes to get more and insinuates that very expectation. A better

form of gratitude calls for an active effort, something positive and contributive that grows from the kindness that was freely given to us.

"I'll treasure that forever." If we really do treasure something, it should have meaning and value to our Being. And it should prompt us to become more worthy of that treasure. It should prompt us to work at transforming our relationship to ourselves, our family, our community and our world.

The music selection I picked for Earth Day captures some of the grandeur and power of our planet—probably better than almost any other music composition I know. The composer, Einojuhani Rautavaara, may not be a household name, but his music is astounding. "Melancholy," from his *Cantus Arcticus*, makes your bones hear the deep life-giving power of the Earth, while your soul hears the shared secrets of life hidden within the songs of the birds—real birds!

[Einojuhani Rautavaara, Cantus Arcticus, opus 61, mvt 2, "Melancholy," \(~7:30–11:10\)](#)

from the album Apotheosis: The Best of Einojuhani Rautavaara, Naxos of America

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HLjXgV-Mhp0>

I was looking for a picture of birds to go with this post. Hardly original or surprising, but I wound up finding a photo of a rare illuminated manuscript of *The Concourse of the Birds* book in the Met Museum. I hadn't thought about Attar's *The Conference of the Birds* in many years. But it's a remarkable treasure of Sufi wisdom about the journey of the soul. Below is the description on the Met's website:

The illustration on this folio depicts a scene from a mystical poem, *Mantiq al-tair* (Language of the Birds), written by a twelfth-century Iranian, Farid al-Din 'Attar. The birds, which symbolize individual souls in search of the simurgh (a mystical bird representing ultimate spiritual unity), are assembled in an idyllic landscape to begin their pilgrimage under the leadership of a hoopoe (perched on a rock at center right). The careful, harmonious composition is consistent with that of the late fifteenth-century Timurid miniatures also in the manuscript, but three factors indicate that this image is later: the presence of the hunter, who has no place in the narrative; his firearm, a weapon that gained currency in Iran after the mid-sixteenth century; and the signature of the late sixteenth- to early seventeenth-century artist Habiballah.

The translation I read many years ago is *The Conference of the Birds* (*Mantiq ut-Tahir*), by Farid ud-Din Attar, CS Nott, English translation (from French translation by Garcin de Tassy, 1863, of original 12th-century Persian).

It's short, about 130 pages. It's worth reading. It's worthy. This and listening to the excerpt from *Cantus Arcticus* can exercise your gratitude muscles, feed your soul and give you something new to treasure forever.