

Save the planet
by doing nothing

*People want to save the planet.
There are calls for action.
But doing nothing might be better.
Mankind has done way to much.*

Save the planet by doing nothing

Learn how!

Arjan Mulder

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Contents

Purpose	7
Preface	9
1. Intelligence in everything	13
2. Connected to everything	25
3. When fear rules	33
4. When free is the norm	41
5. Out of balance	51
6. Personal turmoil, collective madness	61
7. Bright minds, simple users	71
8. Much education, little insight	81
9. To grow is to shrink	91
10. To shrink is to grow	101
How doing nothing will save the world	111
Learn More	121

Note: one hectare equals 2.47 acres, one meter equals 1.09 yards



Purpose

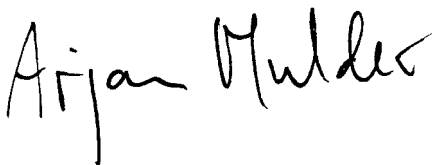
This is a personal manifesto for a livable Earth. It contains ten powerful reflections, to make clear that not doing, but doing nothing will save our planet. But doing nothing, in our Western thinking, proves to be the hardest thing in the world. We are doers. We call for action. And that is exactly what is wrong. The secret is in letting go. But within our Western thinking, letting go does not exist. We are doers.

Other cultures than the Western, show that doing nothing works good to solve a lot of problems. Certainly protecting the Earth goes very well with it. Ancient, indigenous and Eastern cultures accept life in all its (im)possibilities. They have a keen insight into the complex balances that keep our planet going. They also see how special it is to have the Earth as a house and as a home.

This manifesto makes clear how easily we can save our planet by doing nothing. A plea for doing nothing, not because I am lazy, but because doing nothing brings mankind what it needs to survive.

Doing nothing is hard work. Most people can't actually do it. But we have no other choice. We have to change course.

Summer 2021,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Arjan Mulder". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long, sweeping underline.

“We are at a dangerous point in our evolution as a species. We're smart, stubborn and impulsive, and a lot better at messing with nature than we are at understanding it.”

Diana Ackerman in “The Human Age”

Preface

Every astronaut who sees our Earth from above, and who has seen the moon rise above our beautiful blue planet, changes forever: he wants to save that planet – in a great sense of vulnerability and awe. And also because we only have one.

Our planet is in danger. For more and more people this is clear. Global warming is accelerating, the seas are becoming polluted, there is a huge decrease in biodiversity, and wealth is distributed very unevenly worldwide. Just like health, housing comfort, educational opportunities and more.

The magic words in our modern world are *growth* and *belief in one's own abilities*. In this manifesto I show you why instead we should start *stepping back* and *believe in the power of the cosmos*.

Economics, higher education, engineering, agriculture, health care – they all call for *inaction*. But that's not our feeling. Instead, our gut says we even need to become more active. Solving problems.

We are thinking in action. That is a real problem. By feasting on ourselves and our technical and scientific solutions, our actions have become disproportionate and in total extremely destructive. Our thinking has to change.

A long time ago my daughter gave me a funny poster. On it was written, "I'm not lazy, I'm saving energy". By now I think other words are more appropriate, "I'm not lazy, I'm saving the planet."

Because doing nothing can save us. People who do nothing someday will be the heroes of our planet.

Author Aldous Huxley once formulated the law of reverse effort: the harder you try to achieve something, the less you succeed. The French psychologist Emile Coué laid the foundation for this law and Alan Watts as a connoisseur of Eastern philosophy calls it the “backward law”. The backward law ensures that our Western pursuit of engineering the world almost always turns out the other way around. We want a lot, we always want more, we want it fast and hence we do not think of the consequences. Or at most we think, “we take care of the consequences later, once we will develop better technology”.

Meanwhile, we need 1.7 Earths to do what we want to do. Each person uses an average of 3 hectares, while a maximum of 1.8 hectares is available. This imbalance continues to grow year by year. This is, of course, not sustainable. Every child can see that. Even now that we make our technology greener, we keep using far too much. Even though we have technology that is supernaturally powerful, we are guided by emotions that are prehistoric. And that does not seem to be a good match, no matter how beautiful and useful we find our technology ourselves. Humans adore their clever ideas, but don't see or *don't want to see* the negative long-term effects. And so we use the Earth more and more, and give less and less.

The backward law works backwards for a reason. If we accepted our human incapacities and started doing not *more*, but *less*, wouldn't we accomplish more? Nature has developed clever and creative solutions long before there were any humans. Intelligent solutions to ensure the survival of life on Earth. If we would start to use our intelligence to just make better use of those clever solutions – like the ancient Easters and indigenous peoples – we might achieve much more. By sitting on our hands, the backward law would start to work forward after all.

That requires insight and wisdom. It calls for resignation, admiration, cooperation, friendship and creativity. So it also requires a different kind of teaching. And, most important, a different kind of leadership.

Eastern and indigenous peoples still have the required wisdom. They have been pushed almost over the edge of existence by Western culture, but we can still consult their insights into natural solutions. It is not yet too late.

Our Western brain is in a vicious circle: of fear and ego and the pursuit of possession and security. But that can change – if we recognize the viciousness of the circle. If we accept that striving for certainty does not bring us any further, that our Western “solutions” always have problematic side effects and always create new problems: then we are there. Insight, wisdom.

Understanding the capabilities and limitations of our brain provides wonderful solutions to change the destructive Western culture into a loving, admiring and nurturing one. Our brain has those capabilities.

A loving, admiring and nurturing culture lives from respect for the fragile balance called Life, sees Mother Earth as a source, and takes only what is really needed. Such a culture sees duties, rather than rights.

We can still save the planet. It's not too late. By simply doing nothing. In the right way. With right insight and right wisdom.

“When we look at plants, we see miracles of knowing. The apple tree knows how to make roots, branches, leaves, flowers, and fruit. You may say that the apple tree, having no intelligence, has no other choice. But your ribs, your glands, your backbone – have you created them with your intelligence? It is the work of ‘knowing’, which embraces all, including our own ability to think.”

Thich Nhat Hanh, in “The Sun my Heart”

1. Intelligence in everything

Humans consider themselves quite intelligent. More intelligent than animals and surely than plants. Now is that really that intelligent?

Intelligence, according to the dictionary, is “the ability to solve problems in a good way” or “quick-wittedness”. So intelligence is definitely not a human trait. A bird that gets a peanut out of a net is considered intelligent. A chimpanzee that carefully removes ants from a termite mound with a stick in order to eat them is intelligent. And a seagull that steals a french fry from the plate of an unsuspecting fry eater is also considered intelligent.

But although most people think of their pet, a monkey or a bird as intelligent, intelligence is still primarily associated with our own highly developed brain. Our own ability to think is the norm. “The ability to solve problems in a good way” is measured by what we humans think is a smart way. What we ourselves think is smart, is bound to be intelligent...

Reasoning this way, only that which people can judge for themselves is seen as smart or intelligent. If something is not visible, for example because it happens very slowly, to us “the ability to solve problems in a good way” is not noticeable and we don’t label it easily as “intelligent”.

Thus, for an organism to be considered “intelligent”, it must preferably respond quickly to changes in its environment, and the response must be recognized by us as being appropriate. Reacting, anticipating and processing information are the characteristics of intelligence – according to the human definition given above. Our own brains, our own solutions, are THE standard for intelligence.