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The Rio Grande slices through the middle of Albuquerque. The whole valley is intertwined with its undulating flow. In fall, the honking of geese rings and golden cottonwood leaves fall. Winter brings sandhill cranes roosting in river-supplied wetlands. Spring flow supplies both newly budding and decaying plants. The high summer waters give out cooling drinks to all, while silvery minnows flurry right below the surface. The river generates a rich melody. The gentle and rhythmic lapping. The creaking and rustling plants. The tapping of the woodpecker, coyote howl, croaking frogs and the sploosh of turtles, they all create the song of the Rio Grande. It is a song of life, death, and rebirth. An endless but not repeating cycle. The river is constantly changing, with the erosion of its banks and the slippery slide of the water; never the same track twice. The song of the river brings together everything, from its far stretching reach across the state and region to its local gifts which support all kinds of communities.

My response to the river would be one of thanks, but thanks in song. Swoosh, splash. A cold white waterfall erupts out of the facet. Rush, pitter-patter. Raining from above, from my shower head. Burble, gulp. Gentle flow from the water filter, into a glass, and then swallowed. Though the rushing water is purified and sterile, retracing its journey is easy, from me to the pipes, pipes to water main, water main to treatment center, treatment center to river. Showing the river my understanding of how its flow impacts my daily life would be my thanks. The reality that natural water is required for the sheltered life that I, and many others live. We are disconnected from the source of our life, not only the comforts, like flushing toilets and showers, but also the necessities of drinking water.

A theme constant throughout the quote from "Song of the [Río] Gavilan" is the understanding needed to hear the music of the world. Aldo Leopold understood the connection in our ecological communities. He knew the water we drink and the water that flows through the riverbed are one and the same. Hearing is the key, but it requires understanding the organization of the natural world, not the human world. Leopold alludes that understanding is gained by having experience with nature. Knowing the "speech of hills and rivers" is comprehending the impact and importance of the natural world. With an understanding of the scope of the natural world, you can put it into context, its past consequences, current effect, and future influence, hearing the whole symphony of life, transcending time and space. Once you hear the symphony, you can acknowledge the breadth of life and its glories. That is why Aldo Leopold strived for a definition of community that includes nature. Experiencing and understanding the natural world allows all people to have greater empathy for all living and nonliving bodies.

As a musician who plays in several different ensembles, I understand the necessity of a holistic understanding. In the same way that I, a violinist, must listen to the bass to understand how everything fits together, we must listen to our ecosystems. Though they may not be the melody, they bring together all life. This outlines the first steps for a greater world view. To understand the song of the river is to hear its reverberations through the ecosystem. Understanding allows for meaningful response, building a greater connection to our whole planet.