

**Twelve Principles for Understanding the Universe
and the Role of the Human in the Universe Process**
by Thomas Berry

1. The universe, the solar system, and the planet Earth, in themselves and in their evolutionary emergence, constitute for the human community the primary revelation of that ultimate mystery whence all things emerge into being.
2. The universe is a unity, an interacting and genetically-related community of beings bound together in an inseparable relationship in space and time. The unity of planet Earth is especially clear: each being of the planet is profoundly implicated in the existence and functioning of every other being.
3. The capacity for ordered self-development, for self-expression, and for intimate presence to other modes of being must be considered as a pervasive psychic dimension of the universe from the beginning.
4. The three basic laws of the universe at all levels of reality are differentiation, subjectivity, and communion. These laws identify the reality, the values, and the directions in which the universe is proceeding.
5. The universe has a violent as well as a harmonious aspect, but it is consistently creative in the larger arc of its development.
6. The Earth, within the solar system, is a self-emergent, self-propagating, self-nourishing, self-educated, self-governing, self-healing, self-fulfilling community. All particular life-systems must integrate their being and their functioning within this larger complex of mutually dependent Earth systems.
7. The human emerges within the life systems of Earth as that being in whom the universe reflects on and celebrates itself in a special mode of conscious self-awareness. The human is genetically coded toward further cultural coding, by which specifically human qualities find expression in a remarkable diversity in the various regions of the Earth.
8. Domestication: transition to village life and greater control over the forces of nature took place in the Neolithic period, 12,000 years ago; beginnings of agriculture, domestication of animals, weaving, pottery and new stone implements.
9. The classical civilizations: progressive alienation of the human from the natural world; the rise of cities, elaborate religious expression in ritual and architecture, development of specialized social functions, increase in centralized government, the invention of writing and related technologies.
10. The scientific- technologic al- industrial phase: the violent plundering of the Earth takes place, beginning in Europe and North America. The functioning of Earth is profoundly altered in its chemical balance, its biological systems, and its geological structures. The atmosphere and water are extensively polluted, the soil eroded, and toxic waste accumulates. The mystique of the Earth vanishes from human consciousness.
11. The ecological age: a new intimacy is sought with the integral functioning of the natural world; destructive anthropocentrism is replaced with eco-centrism; transition to the primacy of the integral Earth community.
12. The newly developing ecological community needs a mystique of exaltation and finds it in the renewal of

the great cosmic liturgy, which celebrates the new story of the universe and its emergence through evolutionary processes.