

The Great Work

(The Task of Bringing into Being the Ecozoic Era)

We are about the Great Work.

We all have our particular work—some of us are teachers,
some of us are healers, some of us in various professions,
some of us are farming.

We have a variety of occupations.

But beside the particular work we do
and the particular lives we lead,
we have a Great Work that everyone
is involved in and no one is exempt from.

That is the work of moving on from a terminal Cenozoic¹
to an emerging Ecozoic era² in the story of the planet Earth...
which is the Great Work.

—*Thomas Berry*

1. Our current geo-biological era, the Cenozoic era, began 65,000,000 years ago following the mass extinction of dinosaurs and many other species. Now Earth is undergoing another mass extinction of plant and animal species, this time caused by the impact of human activity on the community of life systems. The Cenozoic era is ending.

2. That another geo-biological era will follow the Cenozoic era is not in question. What is in question is whether humans and other forms of life as we know them will continue to flourish. Will we achieve a viable mode of human presence on Earth? The “Ecozoic era”—a time of mutually enhancing relationships among humans and the larger community of life—represents the hope that we will.

The Ecozoic: Reflections on Life in an Ecological-Cultural Age

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Thomas Berry's Work: Development, Difference, Importance, Applications

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Mission Statement

The mission of CES is to advance new ideas and ways of living for an ecozoic (ecological-cultural) age, through publications, education, arts, and action. CES emphasizes critical reflection, story, and shared dream experience as ways of enabling the creative advance needed to bring into being a new mode of human civilizational presence, and also of discerning the practical steps needed to do so. CES understands the universe as meaningful, continuously evolving, and relational. In such a universe, the Ecozoic is not something to be arrived at, but something ever to be created. Its hallmarks are inclusiveness, interdependence, and appreciation; communion, differentiation, and subjectivity; and sensitivity, adaptability, and responsibility. It involves more just and cooperative relationships among humans, as well as transformed relationships of humans with the larger community of life.



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Introduction to This Issue

Herman Greene

The “Colloquium on Thomas Berry’s Work: Development, Difference, Importance, Applications,” was held on May 28-30, 2014, at the Fedex Global Education Center of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Thirty-one people made presentations at the Colloquium. An equal number of people were attendees only at the Colloquium.

The event was co-sponsored by the

- Center for Ecozoic Societies,
- Carolina Seminars Program of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill,
- Douglass Hunt Lecture Series,
- Phoenix Foundation, and
- Relationality Seminar of the Carolina Seminars Program

Funding for the Colloquium was provided by the Douglass Hunt Lecture Series of the Carolina Seminars Program, the Phoenix Foundation of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and the Relationality Seminar of the Carolina Seminars Program.

The Douglass Hunt Lecturers were

- *Christopher Key Chapple, PhD*, Professor of Indic and Comparative Theology, Loyola Marymount University
- *Anne Marie Dalton, PhD*, Professor of Religious Studies, Saint Mary’s University, Halifax, Nova Scotia
- *Heather Eaton, PhD*, Professor of Conflict Studies, Saint Paul University, Ottawa, Ontario
- *Dennis O’Hara, PhD*, Professor of Theology, Saint Michael’s College, University of Toronto
- *Sheri Ritchlin, PhD*, Writer, Lecturer, and Dream Worker, Sonoma County, California, and Ovando, Montana

The members of the Colloquium Organizing Committee were

- *Becky Coble*, Coordinator of the Program on Integrative Medicine, UNC-CH (retired)
- *Arturo Escobar*, Kenan Distinguished Teaching Professor of Anthropology, UNC-CH
- *Herman Greene*, President, Center for Ecozoic Societies, Chapel Hill, North Carolina
- *Alice Loyd*, Vice President, Center for Ecozoic Societies, Chapel Hill, North Carolina
- *Michal Osterweil*, Senior Lecturer, Internship Coordinator, Curriculum in Global Studies, UNC-CH
- *James Peacock*, Kenan Professor of Anthropology, UNC-CH, and past President of the American Anthropological Association
- *William Peck*, Bowman and Gordon Gray Professor of Religious Studies Emeritus, UNC-CH

The Colloquium was held in 2014, the 100th anniversary of Thomas Berry's birth and the 5th anniversary of his death. Berry was one of the most important ecological thinkers and visionaries of his time. Berry's work has influenced thousands of activists in the United States and around the world. His thought is regularly cited in environmental ethics, environmental literature, and theology. Berry developed the concept of the anthropocene *avant la lettre*. As he put it in 1988, "The anthropogenic shock that is overwhelming the earth is of an order of magnitude beyond anything previously known in human historical or cultural development.... We are acting on a geological and biological order of magnitude. We are changing the chemistry of the planet."

His work linked together ecology, spirituality, and religion, among other fields. He envisioned a transition to an entirely different era and civilization, far beyond any form of contemporary culture, as the only 'way into the future.' He proposed the 'Great Work' that was needed in order to usher in an 'Ecozoic era.' He gave birth to three visible movements, the Universe Story movement, the Rights of Nature or Earth Jurisprudence movement, and the transition to Ecozoic Societies or Ecological Civilization movement. Less visible

but equally important were his contributions to bioregional movements, movements for a sentient or living Earth, and movements for the rights and wisdoms of indigenous people. He also engaged in the reform of religious orders. Further, he has been credited with beginning the spiritual ecology movement.

Though his influence and applications of his work have been many, his work has received limited critical review or attention. The Colloquium was based on the strong belief that it is imperative *to engage critically and creatively* with the key aspects of Berry's thought, as contained in his published and other written work, and to produce *thorough assessments of it* through scholarly and intellectual reflection and debate on the main dimensions of his work. The Colloquium thus was intended to move from straight commentary and appreciation of Berry's work to the *critical reception and re-articulation* of his legacy as it bears on the real transitions needed. We saw this process as being a crucial ingredient in the very transition that Berry envisioned from our current disastrous path to viable new life visions that make possible different organizations of society in the long run.

To this end, we invited individuals to offer presentations at this Colloquium that would:

- Situate Berry's work within broader intellectual and social currents and contexts
- Review his ideas critically
- Assess his contributions to particular domains and establish conversations between Berry's work and other fields or thinkers
- Analyze the contemporary relevance and potential applications of his work
- Develop further his key concepts concerning the main elements of the transition(s).

We gave Colloquium presenters these five key questions for consideration:

1. Does Thomas Berry's written work have independent and enduring significance such that it should be, as a prima-

ry source, widely taught, studied, further-developed, and applied?

2. Does Thomas Berry provide a set of foundational principles for the transition from economic-industrial civilization to ecological-cultural civilization?
3. Is the primary legacy of Thomas Berry his intellectual ideas?
4. Did Thomas Berry frame the Great Work of our time?
5. Why has Thomas Berry's rhetoric been so effective? And, at the same time, what has limited his influence?

Presenters were not asked to prepare papers prior to the Colloquium. They were, however, invited to submit papers based on their presentations for publication in this issue. The papers that were submitted are contained in this issue. This issue contains one article not presented at the Colloquium. It is David Schenck, "Cosmology and Wisdom: The Great Teaching Work of Thomas Berry." David was unable to attend the Colloquium, but he did send a paper.

We now proudly offer these papers to you. We believe they are significant contributions to Thomas Berry's legacy and they illuminate key aspects and applications of his work.

Thomas Berry and His Study of World Faiths

Christopher Key Chapple

Maya Angelou wrote that the overarching task of human life requires us “to be our best selves.” Thomas Berry inspired many who encountered his generosity and wisdom to pursue their dreams, to become their best selves, to become bold and creative following the example of his own pioneering work. In this paper, three of Berry’s early publications on non-western religions will be examined to shed light on the capaciousness of his thought.

Five Oriental Philosophies¹

This short book sets forth the basic methodology employed by Thomas Berry in his scholarly pursuits, a combination of historical analysis combined with his own penetrative wisdom. Berry always took the big view, which in the early phase of his work entailed the large scope of human cultural history, and in the later phase of his work, the context of the story of the universe.

Berry was born into a world without instant communications or fast travel, a world dominated by the processes of colonization, not globalization. The European world was distinct and separate from the African and Asian realms that it controlled. However, with the gradual collapse of colonialism worldwide, instigated by Mahatma Gandhi, new realities emerged. Berry notes that, due to the changes in the world-order in the mid-20th century, “western philosophers are being forced to abandon their isolation and to enter into a more universal tradition of philosophical thought” (p. 5). Although Rousseau had heralded the “noble savage” some years earlier, by the 20th century this Romantic notion gave way to a new pragmatism. The thought systems of Asia and Africa, as they threw off their European shackles, began to rediscover their own root origins, particularly with the eventual rise of Ubuntu philosophy in Africa and

1. Thomas Berry. *Five Oriental Philosophies*. Overview Studies ed. (Albany, NY: Magi Books, 1968). Page references in this section are to this book.

the re-discovery of Indian thought and practice on the subcontinent by such luminaries as Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, and Sri Aurobindo.

The demise of colonialism in the latter half of the 20th century corresponded with the rise in interest in world civilizations. One of the defining documents of this period, the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, shepherded by Eleanor Roosevelt, included wisdom from China as well as India, signaling what Berry later referred to as “a habit of mind responsive to the intellectual content of spiritual traditions” (p. 6). This marriage of intellect and the spirit took many forms in Asia. For starters, Berry notes the pervasive emphasis on the spirit over and against materiality in India: “To prove the existence of the world has traditionally been as difficult for the Hindu to prove as the existence of God is for the modern westerner” (p. 9). For Hindu thinkers, consciousness and mentation are the beginning origin point through which the material world takes shape. By changing one’s awareness, one actively shapes the directionality of intention drawing the senses into contact with particular objects, each individual holding her or his own individual perspective.

Indian schools of Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain thought developed several complex analyses of cosmology, ontology, and psychology. Berry juxtaposes this emphasis on particularity with the more aesthetic approach to be found in Confucianism: “Our deepest insight into Confucian metaphysics, as into the metaphysics of other Asian traditions, is at times attained through the arts rather than through formal philosophical writings” (p. 22). This aesthetic moment brings about a “profound reconciliation of all being [though which] all things participate in the supreme act of inter-communion or reciprocity” (p. 23).

Berry also commented upon intra-Asian philosophical disputes. Buddhism went afoul of the government authorities in ninth century Tang China, resulting in a massive repudiation of Buddhism and the destruction of many of its temples and monastic institutions. Berry notes, “The instinctive complaint of Confucian literati against the Buddhists has been that they represented a radical denial of life” (p. 24), a denial that required turning one’s back on the

all-important family structure. Taoism, which Berry deemed to be “strictly creative” (p. 32), fared somewhat better, perhaps due to its indigeneity. The rejection of foreign influences in China arises periodically, and Berry writes that “the one important meeting in Asia that has not yet taken place on any extensive scale is the meeting of Confucian thought with orthodox Hindu thought” (p. 36). Even today little appreciation can be found for Indian culture in China, and the reverse.

Berry, considering Zen to be a “major movement in the thought development of the 20th century in both eastern and western worlds” (p. 36), wrote that Zen helped bridge the gap between Asia and the West. The optimism with which thinkers adopted Zen ideas (Gary Snyder, Thomas Merton, William Johnston, and others come to mind), most likely caused Berry to write in regard to Asian thought:

These visions grow more rather than less important. The very differences in these experiences constitute their most valuable aspect, for one completes the others. A total experience of reality belongs to no one society but to the world community itself. These original intuitions are the more precious as they belong to an age that can never be repeated.... Because they came at this early period when the human mind was having its most immediate impressions of reality, they manifest a range of comprehension and a depth of insight which tends to be obscured for us at this later period when the mind is overwhelmed with the accumulated mass of its own speculations. (p. 37)

Original ideas hold great interest for Berry, who sought to understand the underlying grammar of world cultures.

Berry, ahead of his time, also celebrated variegation rather than sameness. In prescient language, he commented:

Diversity is no longer something that we tolerate. It is something that we esteem as a necessary condition for a livable universe, as the source of earth’s highest perfection. A monochrome world would be a dreadful sight for the eye to be-

hold. So also one identical experience of reality and one single thought tradition would be intolerable to the human mind.... To demand an undifferentiated unity would bring human thought and history itself to an end. The splendor of our multicultural world would be destroyed. Diversity exists for the perfection of the world in the intellectual order even more than in the physical order. (p. 45)

When Loyola Marymount University began to require a course in American cultures as part of its curriculum, recently retitled as a “Diversity Requirement,” the above quote was used to advocate for the study of diverse systems of thought and culture. A nearly identical sentiment was echoed in the address of Adolfo Nicolas, Superior General of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), to the heads of the worldwide network of Jesuit Colleges and Universities in Mexico City in 2010:

Where do we look for the classics? Is it still Greece and Rome? Or can we look at China, Japan, India? Can we look at the classics of the indigenous communities in different parts of the world—Africa, Latin America, and elsewhere? What we need is to open the whole range of the human mind.²

In some ways, the Jesuit order has suggested that we can learn valuable insights from what Berry called “pluralistic Asian humanism” (p. 48).

Five Oriental Philosophies sets forth a rationale for the study of world cultures. Berry’s other two published works on world religions, *Buddhism* and *Religions of India*, were written as textbooks presenting basic historical, philosophical, and textual material.³

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2. Adolfo Nicolas “Depth, Universality, and Learned Ministry: Challenges to Jesuit Higher Education Today,” (remarks for “Networking Jesuit Higher Education: Shaping the Future for a Humane, Just, Sustainable Globe,” Mexico City, April 23, 2010), http://www.sjweb.info/documents/ansj/100423_Mexico%20City_Higher%20Education%20Today_ENG.pdf, 4.
 3. Though he did not publish books on Confucianism or Native American spiritual traditions, he studied and wrote many papers on these traditions,

Berry spent most of his academic career teaching world religions to both undergraduate and graduate students and these books arise from his grasp of these complex systems. Both books report accurate assessments of their respective material in light of then-current research. Rather than focusing on the content, a few observations are made below of what distinguishes these works as indicative of the Berry approach, specifically his responsiveness to signs of the times, and his emphasis on enduring wisdom.

Buddhism⁴

At the end of the book titled *Buddhism*, Berry makes this observation: “These traditions are developing more profoundly and more soundly than they have developed for centuries. They are entering a new phase of their existence, a new phase of significance...for the whole world” (p. XX). Just as the Catholic Church, rejecting change in Vatican I (1869-70) and embracing change in Vatican II (1962-65), underwent many changes in the 19th and 20th centuries while coping with modernity, so also the Buddhist world awakened from its insularity in the years following the World Wars. The flow of ideas such as Communism from Europe and the rising consumer economies along the North American model clashed in the traditionally Buddhist countries of Asia creating tremendous upheaval and creativity. Around the time of the publication of Berry’s book *Buddhism*, intra-religious dialogue took place for the first time between Theravada and Mahayana adherents. Such figures as the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh began to take their place both as dialogue partners within Buddhism and as world spiritual leaders.

The book *Buddhism* tells a story not only about the major teachings of the world’s four largest religions, but also indicates Berry’s own *sitz in leben* as a Catholic priest and member of the Order of

which might at a future date merit editing into two different volumes. Thomas Berry never visited India, though he spent time in China and, in the 1970s, engaged in frequent encounters with Native Americans. He also traveled to the Philippines.

4. Thomas Berry, *Buddhism* (New York: Hawthorne Books, 1967; repr. New York: Crowell, 1971; New York: Columbia University Press, 1989). Page references in this section are to the Hawthorne Books edition.

Passionists. The book holds the imprimatur of Cardinal Terrence J. Cooke, dated December 1, 1966, and was published in 1967. It also bears the *nihil obstat* given by Censor Librorum, Daniel V Flynn, JCD. These proclaim that the book is “free of doctrinal or moral error.” They also state that those granting approval do not necessarily “agree with the contents, opinions or statements expressed.” While this may seem like a quaint or even disturbing holdover from pre-Vatican days, how remarkable it is that these offices took the time to make an assessment. Those reading the book learned a great deal about Buddhism!

This book from Berry is part of the *Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism*. *Buddhism* is Volume 145, under section XV of the *Encyclopedia*: Non-Christian Beliefs. The titles in part, here include:

- 140. Primitive and Prehistoric Religions
- 141. Religions of the Ancient East
- 142. Greek and Roman Religion
- 143. Mohammedanism
- 144. Hinduism
- 145. Buddhism
- 146. Christianity and Other Religions

Let us hope that any 21st Century Encyclopedia will be as inclusive!

When Thomas Berry moved from Riverdale to North Carolina several of his books on the religions of India came to Loyola Marymount University, including his favorite resource for primary sources on the Buddhist faith, William Clarke Warren’s *Buddhism in Translations*.⁵ In examining Berry’s margin notes in this anthology of primary Buddhist sources, we find interesting indications of how Thomas “read” these materials. In the Table of Contents, each of the selected passages is traced back to its location within the Buddhist Canon, indicating, for instance, if it came from the *Jataka Tales*, the *Digha Nikaya*, the writings of *Buddhaghosa*, the *Visuddhimagga*,

5. Henry Clarke Warren, *Buddhism in Translations: Passages Selected from the Buddhist Sacred Books and Translated from the Original Pali* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1896; New York: Atheneum, 1963).

the *Mahanidana Sutta*, the *Culla Vagga*, the *Dhammapada*, and so forth. Berry paid close attention to the internal categorization systems of any body of knowledge. This proclivity perhaps contributed to the organizational superstructure of his later synoptic descriptions of principles and his densely packed sayings.

In the very first of the *Jataka Tales* contained in the book, the story of the Buddha's birth as a wealthy Brahmin called Sumedha, Berry makes notes that the Buddha indicates his "Divine Status," that the Buddha talks about "water and purification, effort, and the tree of wisdom." His margin notes also include the words "gravity/gravitas, alms, precepts, renunciation, wisdom, courage, patience, truth, resolution, goodwill, indifference, power, tree, hero, ten perfections, wheel, moon, sun, rivers." As students we would be amazed at his ability to gather information and then penetrate and communicate its meaning. In examining the list of words he identified in his reading of the text, one gets a sense of what drove Berry forward: understanding not for the sake gaining facts, but for the purpose of making meaning.

In the later amalgamated story presented by Warren on the life of Siddhartha Gautama, Berry clearly reads the tale through a Jungian and/or Eliadean lens, noting in the margins "sorrow archetype," "heroic struggle," "conversion," "the great struggle," "asceticism," "effort, tree, tree, cosmic wheel, centering, witness of earth," even "Dante at end of Purgation" and "Rafters are Broken" (perhaps alluding to the biblical tale of one of Jesus's healing miracles). Berry notes two of the different types of trees that were important in the days immediately following the Buddha's awakening, writing "Banyan Tree" and "Mucalinda Tree" at the top of the page. When the narrative shifts to the end of the Buddha's life, Berry again notes that this took place under a tree, in this case between Sal trees. The margin notes in the later teaching passages highlight the Palmyra tree (pp.163, 168, 217) and the Asoka tree (p. 164). In the case of the Asoka tree, the Buddha describes its movement from bud into shoot and then leaf as a metaphor for the ripening and falling away of all existence, all form. Berry uses Buddhist ideas to explain the metaphor. However, he also writes such Jungian words in the margins as "serpent, wheel, root."

Although the textbook does not overtly apply a hermeneutical preference, Berry clearly used his studies of image, symbol, and religious history to shape his interpretations of Buddhism. The final words of this textbook on Buddhism reveal Berry's hope in undertaking this project:

Establishing a world context for man's spiritual and intellectual development has just begun. From the Christian side the Second Vatican Council took a great step forward when it established a special secretariat for communication with the other religious and spiritual traditions....This in modern times is a task similar to that of the early Fathers of the Church in establishing a deep communication with the thought, culture, and spirituality on the Hellenic world. A new patristic age...in which all the world traditions will have their finest and fullest expression (p. 184).

Berry expressed great optimism that the exchange of ideas in the latter part of the 20th century would create new avenues for understanding and a broadening and deepening of intercultural communication. In some ways, these predictions have come to pass. Many Americans now have a working familiarity with Buddhist principles and practices, and Asian nations, adapting cell phones and cinema and television and the Internet to their own needs, have absorbed and interpreted advances in European and American technologies.

On the other hand, within academia, it may be said that quite the reverse took hold in the past three decades (1985-2015) after three decades of exploration and creative engagement (1955-1985). Philosophy departments nationwide have generally turned to analytical philosophy. Few of the top-rated programs in the country have maintained their positions in nonwestern traditions. However, counter evidence may also be provided that the study of Asian traditions has flourished and has gotten stronger, not only in academia but also in the public sphere. The strongest department in Asian and Comparative Philosophy, the University of Hawaii, has nearly 100% placement of its graduates. When the Religion in South Asia section of the American Academy of Religion formed in 1979, there

were only 50 scholars present, including Wendy Doniger, Diana Eck, and David Knipe. Now the group has grown to more than 500 scholars. The practice of Thomas Berry's beloved Yoga (see below) has grown to 20 million lay participants in the United States alone, larger than the most robust of mainline Protestant denominations. Loyola Marymount initiated a two year graduate training in Yoga Studies in 2013, a course of study that includes three semesters of Sanskrit study along with anatomical studies, and textual and philosophical studies of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and comparative mysticism. The first year began with a cohort more than 50% larger than anticipated, and the numbers increased for the second year as well with a wait list. Buddhist mindfulness has similarly exploded into national consciousness, with a mainstreaming of this tradition into the military and into Congress itself, with Congressman Ryan of eastern Ohio a prime advocate.

Religions of India: Hinduism, Buddhism, Yoga⁶

Religions of India saw multiple publications. It was first published in 1971 and then reissued in 1992 and again in 2001. The revised version (1992) includes a new introduction that revisits primary Hindu (and Buddhist) texts through an Earth-friendly lens. Berry proclaims, "Absolute transcendence requires total immanence." He writes that the *Upanishads* exhort one to see "numinous presence in every visible form." The *Ramayana* carries a similar panentheistic message of "human intimacy with the flowering plants and with very living form." Berry writes, "In India we find a unique sensitivity to the pathos not simply of the human but of the entire natural world." This theological insight extends into the ethical realm. Berry writes about nonviolence, the core precept of India, as follows: "Ahimsa: belongs to the process of primordial orientations, conscious and unconscious," indicating its primacy within the Indian worldview.

The difference between the 1971 introduction and the 1992

6. Thomas Berry, *Religions of India: Hinduism, Buddhism, Yoga* (New York: Bruce-MacMillan, 1971; 2nd ed. Chambersburg, PA: Anima Press, 1992; New York: Columbia University Press, 2001). Page references in this section are to the Columbia Universe Press edition.

introduction signals the shift in Thomas Berry's own thinking. The original introduction explains the significance of the religions of India within world history. The 1992 introduction expands the context to situate the significance of Indian ideas about intimacy within the discourse of universe history. Although the book returns to the "world history" approach that Berry helped introduce in the 1970s, his insights about intimacy and the role of intimacy in making Earth-human connections resound strongly in the original material. The book gives the big picture within India's history identifying key terms, such as Central Tradition, Hinduism as Process, Non-Aryan and Aryan Components, and Union of Traditions. The books also explores categories such as world-negation, extreme asceticism, puja/worship, yoga, Sanskrit, sacrifice, the unity of Atman and Brahman, Maya, Samsara, Karma, and spiritual liberation (*moksha*). All of this material is presented in the frame of historical unfolding up until, and including, western contact and the emergence of the re-inventors of the tradition, such as Vivekananda and Tagore.

At the core of the book Berry moves from the historical frame into the spiritual and experiential realms with his explication of Yoga. The rhetoric soars. He writes "the whole purpose of Yoga is to provide the specific disciplines and techniques of inner control whereby liberation of this spiritual reality from its confinement is brought about" (p. 77). He notes, "A person studying Yoga must be aware that it is part of the larger whole of Indian life, learning, and spirituality.... Yoga is purely and simply a spirituality" (p. 80) and that "It is taken for granted in traditional India that everyone with a serious approach to life is carrying out a Sadhana, a program of practical spiritual discipline" (p. 93). Berry sets forth and explains the eightfold path of Yoga, beginning with the ethical precepts. He delves into the intent of each one, noting, for instance, that "veracity (*satya*)...covers much more than simply truthfulness. It includes the commitment to what is genuine, to the pure and virtuous, to the honest" (p. 95). He correlates not stealing (*asteya*) to justice and defines nonviolence (*ahimsa*) as "love for all living creatures." Berry's insight into the spiritual aspects of Yoga practices yields elegant prose, including his description of the practice of purity (*sauca*), which he states leads to "a true and lasting cheerfulness of mind

instead of a false and momentary succession of pleasures; a unified mind which cured the intelligence of its dispersion amid the transient phenomena with which it was surrounded” (p. 96).

Following a description of the middle limbs of Yoga, from *asana* and *pranayama* to mastery over the senses, concentration, and meditation, Berry writes about the culmination of Yoga in *Samadhi*. Berry rhapsodizes about this stellar moment:

The world is no longer opaque. It comes together into an ordered cosmos.... The one point of meditation enables the light of the self to permeate the universe. The point on which the mind is fixed becomes simultaneously center and circumference of reality. The whole is known simultaneously as the notes of a melody, successive in execution, are heard simultaneously by the mind. This status of the mind is sometimes referred to as the “cosmic mind.” A new awareness floods the mind (p. 102).

According to Berry, one dwells in a state in which one “lives in a cosmos completely responsive to his [or her] presence” (p. 103). Patanjali, the author of the *Yoga Sutra*, states emphatically in words elegantly rephrased and newly translated by Berry, “The Self does not undergo any change. It knows, but through activities of its own being. It exists in a pure state of consciousness totally undisturbed by processes of knowing. Nothing throws light on the Self; the Self illumines all else” (p. 104). Using one of his favorite descriptions of the nature of God from Thomas Aquinas, Berry writes that the Yogi experiences “the entry into perfect simplicity” (p. 106). Invoking a form of iconoclasm, Berry describes the ultimate religious experience as “a creative shattering of everything in order that the one unique reality be attained” (p. 107). Berry affirms the efficacy of Yoga as spiritual practice.

When Berry writes in his later years about intimacy, one gathers a sense that this connectivity that he evokes and extols mirrors the experience of *Samadhi* in Yoga. At the Harvard Conference on Religion and Animals in 1999, organized by Paul Waldau and Kimberly Patton, Berry wrote:

Our intimacy with the universe demands an intimate presence to the smallest particles as well as to the vast range of the stars splashed across the skies in every direction. More immediately present to our consciousness here on Earth are the landscapes; the sky above, the earth below; the grasses, the flowers, the forests and fauna that present themselves to our opening senses. Each in its own distinctive perfection fills our mind, our imagination, our emotional attraction.⁷

By examining his understanding of the levels of consciousness possible through the sustained practice of Yoga, one can understand the primacy given by Berry to the immediacy and simplicity of experiences engendered within nature.

Conclusion

During his classroom lectures at Fordham University that I attended from 1976 through 1979, Thomas Berry rued and lamented the rise of trivialization, the blind concern with ephemera, the inability of the human to awaken to the harsh realities that define human existence. Berry spoke often of a need for gravitas.

So much of what he anticipated has come to pass.

The perception of the perdurable nature of suffering set the Buddha on his quest for enlightenment. For Berry that enlightenment must and will arrive, not in moments of personal torment, but will collectively dawn as we, as a species, awaken from the slumber of our cultural entrancement with technology in each and every form that dulls the senses and deadens the mind. To the extent that we remain removed from the meadow, not as archetype but as living reality, is the extent to which we will continue to blindly suffer.

7. Thomas Berry, "Prologue: Loneliness and Presence," in *A Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science, & Ethics*, ed. Paul Waldau & Kimberley Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 5-6.

The Intellectual Legacy of Thomas Berry

Anne Marie Dalton

It was an early afternoon in May when I first wandered down the incline, crossed the creek and looked over the scene. The field was covered with white lilies rising above the thick grass. A magic moment, this experience gave me something that seems to explain my life at a...profound level. It was not only the lilies. It was the singing of the crickets and the woodlands in the distance and the clouds in a clear sky... this early experience has become normative for me throughout the entire range of my thinking.¹

—Thomas Berry

The purpose of this paper is to address the work of Thomas Berry in terms of the intellectual currents that are going forward in the texts he has left us. What is Berry's potential contribution to these intellectual currents? What is his legacy to the academy? Of course, it remains for the future to judge whether or not Berry created a new intellectual current himself. For the moment, however, it is highly important to keep his thought alive in whatever ways we can, including, but not exclusively, his very significant intellectual contributions. All of Berry's writings from the last half (at least) of his life, were dedicated to raising awareness and inspiring action to confront the ecological crisis. Keeping those texts alive is more and more critical as we approach the point of sensitivity to this horizon of ecological responsibility. While Berry himself encouraged almost all efforts one could take to confront these issues, his own writing engenders a specific way of engaging the crisis, one that he proposed as a critical and necessary way. So it is important to take his writ-

1. Thomas Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999), 12.

ings seriously and to engage them seriously, to debate them, see their relevance, and propose new avenues of discussion, not for the sake of academic activity only, but primarily to serve the critical cause which he had made his own.

In this paper I propose two rather vibrant intellectual currents I see at present that have deep resonance with Berry's work. The first is ecopoetics. I deal with both the thematic content and methodology of ecopoetics in relation to Berry's work. The second arises from contemporary work on radical democracy by Romand Coles. He has related his work to the latest biological research on mirror neurons. It is this aspect of his work on radical democracy that I find has resonance with some of the concepts in Berry's texts.

While on the face of it these two intellectual currents do not seem to have much in common, together they enlighten important dimensions of Thomas Berry's intellectual contribution. They bring to the fore the central role that some of his early work plays in his later thinking, concepts such as deep intimacy with the natural world and notions of genetic and cultural coding. These concepts elucidate Berry's proposal of a 'Story of the Universe' and the 'Great Work' he hoped to engender. When superficially read without a consideration of the layered background of these concepts, they can easily face the dismissive categories of romanticism, primitivism, or structural determinism.

Before I take up these two intellectual currents, it is important to give at least a cursory account of the hermeneutical moment in which I am addressing Berry's work, including my own place in that moment. All interpretation arises from particular contexts, and the present context is not the same as the context in which Berry himself wrote. There are peculiarities in this moment that influence interpretation in that many of those interpreting the work, myself included, knew Berry and were influenced—transformed even—by him.

Berry's earliest writings, focusing on the ecological crisis, emerged within the first widespread awareness and conversations about the ecological crisis that led to the publication of the *Limits to Growth*² report to the Club of Rome in 1972. Rachel Carson,

2. Donella Meadows, et al., *The Limits to Growth: A Report for the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind* (New York: Signet, 1972).

Barry Commoner, and E. Fritz Schumacher are among the greats who belonged to this era. There was alarm, made more concrete by the Club of Rome report, and a sense of urgency to mobilize and correct what was wrong. It was a time of intense and empowered social engagement. Berry's work constructs a vision, which he claimed should support and give depth and spiritual meaning to these efforts. As his work was not tied to a specific kind of activism, it endured throughout the rest of the century and onward, and motivated many ecological practices, academic courses, and so on.

Today we are in an alarmingly different moment. Scientific and statistical information indicate that the status of species, demographic trends, air, water, and soil, and climate continue to deteriorate. The deterioration is approaching (some say has already reached) unredeemable levels at a rate faster than anyone predicted. Despite improvements in individual local areas, we have not substantially changed the course of destruction. *The New York Times* recently interviewed Paul Kingsworth, political and environmental activist, and founder of Dark Mountain Project.³ Kingsworth is quite controversial in his view that environmental activism has been inadequate. We cannot now make a significant difference, he claims. As he poignantly puts it (and I paraphrase), we can only look into the darkness of despair and see what emerges. I do not refer to Kingsworth because he necessarily represents the dominant view of activists or my own view, but I believe he speaks for large segments of our societies who live in a kind of deep despair. In light of such gravity, we need to re-examine the meaning of hope and the source of our engagement with the natural world. Here existentially is where Berry's voice is most needed today.

Our personal stance towards Berry's texts is a second point to acknowledge. While we are attempting to interpret the text beyond the writer's intention, those of us who encountered Berry in his lifetime (whether briefly or over many years) carry that encounter into the reading of his texts. We are influenced in our interpretation by the manners in which he changed many of our lives. We

3. Daniel Smith, "It's the End of the World as We Know It...and He Feels Fine," *New York Times Magazine* (April 17, 2014), accessed April 18, 2014, <http://myti.ms/1gBbYpx>.

cannot escape hearing his voice (many of his writings were first given as talks). As Stephen Dunn has remarked in the Afterword to *The Intellectual Journey of Thomas Berry*, the ways in which each of us were influenced is different.⁴ It depends on such factors as what period of his life we were most associated with him and in what capacity.

I was a student of Berry in the early 1980s. As I prepared this paper, I recalled two events, which mark my association with him as quite influential: first, I recalled the suitcase full of books he presented me during my weekly appointments with him at Fordham University. He seemed never to run out of different books and, moreover, could introduce them all. Second, I remembered a most memorable time spent identifying and naming the trees around his dwelling place at the Riverdale Centre on the banks of the Hudson River in spring 1982. These memories speak within me as I contemplated the intellectual currents present in his work, and influenced my choice to dwell on Berry's aesthetic and contemplative sense of intimacy with the natural world in its concrete particularities. So in his work I find what Stanley Hauerwas has termed "the radical ordinary"—the very radical mystery of the seemingly everyday. In Berry's work the radical ordinary included the trees, the grasses, the flowers and all the other-than-human creatures which often go unnoticed in the encounters of our everyday life. They are, nevertheless, profoundly present.

Berry presents a great vision of the universe and its unfolding but this sense of the small and ordinary plays a significant part in the creation of this vision, and it is that sense that I primarily address.

The Eco-poetical Nature of Berry's Work

In my dissertation and first book on Berry, I identified his manner of writing as mainly descriptive (as opposed to the other type—explanation).⁵ These are ideal types, and all writing usually has ele-

4. Stephen Dunn, "Afterword: Postmodern Suggestions," *The Intellectual Journey of Thomas Berry: Imagining Earth Community*, ed. Heather Eaton (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014), 239-240.

5. Anne Marie Dalton, *A Theology for the Earth: The Contributions of Thomas*

ments of both description and explanation—certainly Berry’s does. In examining Berry’s work from the point of view of ecopoetics, I am building on this claim about the nature of his writing.

Berry had an amazing cross-cultural education in ancient texts in many traditions, as well as a deep education in his own Western-Christian tradition. He was also aware of different theories of knowledge beginning perhaps with his graduate work on Giambattista Vico.⁶ He could have written in a highly theoretic or scholastic mode (in the manner of Thomas Aquinas, or Aurobindo Ghose, or Ralph Waldo Emerson, or Karl Jung to name a few). But he did not. His texts employ descriptive language, designed to relate the content to the speaker and listener. They are written in an essay style addressing various publics (academic, religious, environmentalists, students, and generally mixed audiences). This is not to say, however, that the text is simple—in it Berry portrays a remarkable ability to present deep and complex thought in a descriptive style. (Such ability is perhaps not surprising as he was trained first and foremost in a religious community of missionary preachers!)

Ecopoetics enables us to examine more precisely the nature of Berry’s descriptive writing. To say that Berry’s work has a resonance with contemporary work in poetics is not to claim that he is writing poems (although he did write a few) or to say that all of his writing fits this designation.⁷ Poetics, in general, and ecopoetics in particular, deal with a wide notion of poetic language. The quotation given at the beginning of this paper is a sample of poetic writing. There is certain cadence to the text and an overflow of language, the use of language unnecessary to the literal meaning; there is a sense of intimacy and mystery at once. It plays with imagination and invites one in. Berry does not write merely “the inspiration from my life

Berry and Bernard Lonergan (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1993), 108-109.

6. Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch, trans., *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, 3rd ed., trans. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1968); Thomas Berry, *The Historical Theory of Giambattista Vico* [dissertation] (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1949).
7. See Thomas Berry, “Returning to our Native Place,” *Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco: Sierra Books, 1988), 1-5, for an example of an extended ecopoetic articulation.

work arose from the destruction of the natural world by the rise of industry.” No—he wandered (one pauses to dwell on this word) into the field (or meadow), saw not flowers or plants in general, but lilies arising above the thick grass—; and he heard not just insects but crickets. It was not merely a clear day—, there was a blue sky with drifting white clouds.

The manner we engage his descriptive text is different from how we engage an abstract statement. Most of Berry's texts contain such passages. Just to cite a few at random: We find in his essay “Wonderworld as Wasteworld,”⁸ “Scientists themselves are awakening to the wonder and the mystery of the universe, even to its numinous qualities.” Earlier in 1972, in an essay on “Traditional Religion in the Modern World,” we find a dramatic contrast: the optimistic role modern humans see themselves playing in the healing of the world, for example, is set against the tragedy of modern human despair: “This is mirrored profoundly,” he writes, “in the theatre and literature of the absurd where we find the revelation of the human as a despicable reality, ignoble even in his highest aspirations, a disoriented, deteriorated being.”⁹

Ecopoetics is a crossover of sorts between ecology-themed poetry and literary criticism.¹⁰ It belongs to the postmodern focus on textuality—the significance and life of a text on its own. Ecopoetics asks the question: “What is it that is addressed and created by the text itself?” The strictly postmodern literary critic focuses, however, on the text alone as real, based on the assumption that all reality is radically constructed. Ecopoetics, in contrast, holds that “nature is simultaneously real and constructed.”¹¹

For example, Scott Knickerbocker comments on Emily

8. Thomas Berry, “Wonderworld as Wasteworld: The Earth in Deficit,” *Cross Currents* 35 (Winter 1985-1986), 421.

9. Thomas Berry, “Traditional Religions in the Modern World,” *Cross Currents* 22 (Spring 1972), 136.

10. Introductions to ecopoetics can be found in several volumes including those by Rasula, Knickerbocker, and Killingsworth referenced below.

11. Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Harvard University Press, 1993), 7; cited in Scott Knickerbocker, *Ecopoetics: The Language of Nature, the Nature of Language* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 9.

Dickinson's poem, "A Bird came down the Walk." According to Knickerbocker, the bird is domesticated in the beginning of the poem, as inferred by Dickinson's language and familiar metaphors, but she repels that understanding in the latter part of the poem, a sense captured by the metaphors of distancing.¹² Again we relate to the otherness of nature in this dialectic of familiarity or intimacy against the mysterious otherness. David Abram expresses this sense in *The Spell of the Sensuous*, when he writes, "It is the inanimate earth that speaks: Human speech is but a part of that vaster discourse."¹³ Likewise, Gary Snyder concurs regarding the role of language as a natural phenomenon; he calls a book of his poetry *A Practice of the Wild*.¹⁴

So ecopoetics claims more than making nice language or talking about nature. It claims to represent nature as both constructed by as well as constructing humans. Nature has a being other than that which we create. Yet we are nature. Nature is, as Patrick Murphy contended, not really "other," but *ANother* to us.¹⁵ Ecopoetics challenges the notion that the map precedes the territory as the post-modern critic and public commentator, Jean Baudrillard, described our relationship to the world.¹⁶

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12. Knickerbocker, *Ecopoetics*, 10-13. Reference is to *The Poems of Emily Dickinson: Variorum Edition*, ed. R.W. Franklin (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998).
 13. David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-than-Human World* (New York: Random House, 1996), 179; cited in Knickerbocker, *Ecopoetics*, 2. See Berry's description of the revelatory nature of the universe in Thomas Berry and Thomas Clarke, *Befriending the Earth: A Theology of Reconciliation between Humans and the Earth*, eds. Stephen Dunn and Anne Lonergan (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1991), 4-7, esp.7.
 14. Gary Snyder, *A Practice of the Wild* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 1990); cited in Jed Rasula, *This Compost: Ecological Imperatives in American Poetry* (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 2002), 7.
 15. Patrick Murphy, "Anotherness and Inhabitation in Recent Multicultural American Literature" in *Writing the Environment: Ecocriticism and Literature*, ed. Richard Kerridge and Neil Sammells, (London and New York: Zed Books, 1998), 40-51.
 16. Richard Kerridge, "Small Rooms and the Ecosystem: Environmentalism and DeLillo's *White Noise*" in *Writing the Environment*, eds. Richard Kerridge

Furthermore, ecopoetics has an ethical edge—not in the preaching sense—but in the way in which language is understood to operate and is then intentionally employed. It asks from an environmental perspective: Where does language fit in? Can language weave us into nature? Can it open our hearts to the other that is the natural world? Or to use Berry's way of describing an appropriate relationship to the other, "The deepest values and most profound commitments of one seem to be challenged by the other. At this moment everything depends on mutual confidence and hospitality."¹⁷ In this quote, he was referring to the meeting of cultures, but the natural world became the sublime other in his later writings. "The ultimate goal of any renewal process," he writes in *Evening Thoughts*, "must be to establish a mutually enhancing mode of human-Earth relations."¹⁸

In its ethical dimension, ecopoetics examines the function of language as a vehicle of transformation. In his book, *Ecopoetics: The Language of Nature, the Nature of Language*, Scott Knickerbocker explains: "Environmental poets see themselves as curbing the excesses of post-structuralism (hermetically sealed textuality) that ignores the connection to the social, cultural and physical environment." He quotes Neil Evernden's words, "Environmentalism without poetry is merely regional planning."¹⁹ Hence, ecopoetic language or figuration, meaning poems, metaphors, stories, and other intentional forms, calls on the power of the imagination to re-create our manner of being in the world. It is, in a sense, a reaction against a techno-scientific world in which the humanities are confined to practices of leisure. In a manner akin to feminism, it challenges the dominant ideology of dividing the world according to dualistic categories. Poetic expression is not separate from science or politics any more than nature can be separated from human life, or an individu-

and Neil Sammells, 183. Reference is to Jean Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Simulations" in *Selected Writings*, ed. M. Poster (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988); 166.

17. Thomas Berry, "Education in a Multicultural World," in *Approaches to the Oriental Classics*, ed. Theodore DuBary (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 22.

18. Thomas Berry, *Evening Thoughts: Reflecting on Earth as Sacred Community*, ed. Mary Evelyn Tucker (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 2006), 22.

19. Knickerbocker, *Ecopoetics*, 103.

al's backyard can be immune from pollution.²⁰ Heidegger compared poetry to a dwelling place, or better to *the act* of dwelling, because he claimed poetics creates presence, a form of being, not merely a representation such as a map.²¹

So where in Berry's texts does one find resonance with ecopoetics both as a methodology and as thematic content? I have indicated a few examples above of poetic selections from Berry's writing. Most importantly, however, we find this reliance on the power of language to be the basis of his proposal to confront the ecological crisis. Berry's program for ecological responsibility is weighted heavily on the power of story. A quick reading of his proposal relates that proposal to a creation of worldviews. All cultures had stories, he observes, which answered the basic questions of life—where we come from, what we are doing here, where we are going, and what is important in life:²² Considered a little more deeply, however, what is it about a story that can create or change a worldview? The 'New Story' for the 'Ecozoic era' is based on the scientific evolutionary account; but as Berry significantly points out, this new story requires a certain way of telling. The scientific account needs a re-telling in a new language, one that captures imagination and promotes an intimacy with the natural world—science told in ecopoetics. In fact, he comments in several places that we need a new language.²³ "A new Ecozoic language is needed," he says in *Befriending the Earth*. Where is the source of this awareness of a different way to tell the story of the universe? We have to look at ancient stories to find the deeper layers of the language that Berry is proposing, and which he uses extensively.

I would argue the main source of the language relating humans to the natural world comes largely from his reading of the Asian traditions, set in the context of the existential turn happening as

20. Kerridge and Sammells, *Writing the Environment*, 7.

21. *Ibid.*, 55. Reference is to Martin Heidegger, "What are Poets for?" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. A. Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1975).

22. Thomas Berry, "The New Story," *Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco: Sierra Books, 1988), 123-137.

23. Berry and Clarke, *Befriending the Earth*, 100. See also, Berry, *Dream of the Earth*, 136.

Berry pondered the role of humans in the mid-twentieth century. His writings from this period indicate a reliance on his reading of Asian traditions and how they captured a sense of intimacy with the natural world.²⁴ We find one example in a review he wrote of the series, *Religious Life of Man*, edited by Frederick Strang (1974).²⁵ Commenting on the Japanese volume by H. Byron Earhart, Berry notes Byron's neglect of the role of art and literature as expressions of Japanese religion.

The Japanese experience of reality is much more in the aesthetic realm than is the case in most societies. This special sensitivity of the Japanese results to a large extent from the type of communion that exists in Japan between humans and the surrounding natural world. The very land itself, the islands of Japan, have a sacred quality. While this sensitivity to nature is of the human order, it is also a way of communicating with the deeper forces of the real.... We have a prevailing mood of religious communion set deeply within the realm of human sensitivity.²⁶

Furthermore, Berry contends, and this is significant, that during the Tokagawa period (seventeenth to mid-nineteenth century), which was considered by Byron to be a time of stagnation, this sensitivity deepened and was the source of strength for later Japanese development.²⁷ What I note in this passage is the connection Berry makes between expressions of aesthetic sensitivity and the source of

24. Several chapters in Eaton, *The Intellectual Journey*, draw special attention to Berry's work on the Eastern traditions. Cf. chapters by Christopher Key Chapple, "Thomas Berry on Yoga, Buddhism and Karl Jung," 47-64 and Mary Evelyn Tucker, "The Influences of Confucianism on Thomas Berry's Thought," 65-80. Other chapters also contain sections on the influence of Asian thought on Berry's work.

25. Thomas Berry, "Review Article" in series *The Religious Life of Man*, ed. Frederick J. Strang, vols. 1 -7, *Philosophy East and West*, XXIV, 1 (Jan. 1974), 99-110.

26. *Ibid.*, 105. Reference is to the volume by H. Byron Earhart, *Japanese Religion: Unity and Diversity*, (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2004).

27. *Ibid.*

that strength. If we jump ahead to *The Great Work*, we read passages such as “As our physical resources become less available, it is psychic energy that must support human existence in a special manner. This brings us a new reliance on the powers within the universe and also to experience within the deeper self... New fields of energy become available to support the human venture.”²⁸ Again the source of energy lies in the power of the psyche, which he has related to the aesthetic sensitivity to and intimacy with the natural world.

In a foreword to Dorothy McLean and Kathleen Thornod Carr’s *To Honor the Earth*, Berry betrays the concreteness of this intimacy. He writes:

Even though we foster ecological and environmental movements throughout the planet, even though we seek to save the rainforests and to renew the regions we have devastated, none of this will ultimately succeed unless it expresses a true intimacy with this larger Earth community. Such intimacy requires an awareness of the unique aspects of each region of the Earth. It requires a consciousness of the many varied species, and of the individuals within each species, as these speak to us from the inner depths of their reality... Every single life form has its own personality, its own voice, its own spirit reality. Each communicates its unique mystery that we never quite comprehend.²⁹

We recall the comment above on Emily Dickenson’s poem, “A Bird, came down the Walk.” The bird is both domesticated by our language and at the same time never totally comprehended. In *Evening Thoughts*, Berry speaks of the necessity of intimacy with the universe both in its largeness and in its smallness, and he adds, “More immediately present to our consciousness here on Earth are the landscape, the sky above, the Earth below, the grasses, the flow-

28. Berry, *The Great Work*, 170. The whole essay, “The Dynamics of the Future,” is an elaboration on this quotation. *Ibid.*, 166-175.

29. Thomas Berry, “Foreword,” Dorothy McLean and Kathleen Thornod, *To Honor the Earth: Reflections on Living in Harmony with Nature* (Forres, UK: Findhorn Press, 1990), iix.

ers, the forests, and the fauna that present themselves to our opening senses.”³⁰

So the sense of intimacy Berry revealed of himself in his account of the lilies in the meadow, the singing of the crickets, and so on, is strengthened by the resonance he felt with non-duality of heart and head, the sensitivity to the natural world in the Asian traditions. Here Berry found the power of a certain artistic expression to evoke transformation. Other sources, such as Augustine, Vico and Teilhard and Berry's general knowledge of cultural history, would translate this artistic articulation of intimacy into his preferred form—the story.³¹ This form would be the vehicle of the Great Work.

There is a lot more to be said about the potential for dialog between Berry's work and present developments within eco-poetics itself, but I move now to reflections on a second intellectual current—Romand Coles' physical-cultural foundations of *habitus* in creating radical democracy.

Berry and Romand Coles: Mirror Neurons, *Habitus* and Genetic-Cultural Coding

Berry contends the source of our strength arose from a combination of genetic coding and cultural coding—and furthermore attention to the genetic (or physical) coding has been neglected. For Berry, evidence that the interaction of these two codes existed in previous times and came down to us in different cultural traditions, especially in Asian traditions. In the Western tradition, he notes this interaction in the idea of the two books of revelation, the written scriptures, and the natural world.³² The sense Berry tried to capture in the notion of the two codes was most profoundly present in the worldviews of ancient and contemporary aboriginal peoples.³³ In an article in *Cross Currents* (1974) entitled, Contemporary

30. Berry, *Evening Thoughts*, 34.

31. Cf. Berry, “Introduction,” *The Dream of the Earth*, vii-ix.

32. Interestingly we find reference to these two books in eco-poetic literature as well. See Rasula, *This Compost*, 1. Rasula references 17th c. doctor, Thomas Browne *Religio Medici*, para. 15.

33. Cf. John Grim, “Thomas Berry and Indigenous Thought: First Nations and Communion with the Natural World” in Eaton, *The Intellectual Journey*,

Spirituality: The Journey of the Human Community,” Berry writes: “A broader communion is needed.... The more intimate, the more universal this communion becomes, the more sublime the presence of the human, the cosmic and the divine realms to each other.”³⁴ In *Monastic Studies* in 1976, this view is linked to primal humans. He observes of primal times, “Mankind [sic] lived in an ocean of energy in which the physical and psychic forms of energy were intimately related.... This is a period when there was a dominance of the unconscious depths of the human psyche, when the great visions took place.”³⁵ Later in the same piece he writes: “There is a need to be tender with the earth, for the suffering of the earth is the suffering of the human, exploitation of the earth is exploitation of the human, elimination of the aesthetic splendors of the earth is the diminishment of the human.”³⁶ And in a much employed refrain: “If we lived on the moon, for example, our sense of the divine would reflect that of the lunar landscape.... Our sensitivities would be dull because our inner world would reflect the outer world.”³⁷

In many places throughout Berry’s writing, we find reference to this physical as well as cultural basis for human societies in general and for the human relationship to the rest of the natural world. Here is where I find a resonance with Romand Coles’ accounts of mirror neurons and their role in the creation of a *habitus* for a “radical democracy.”³⁸

In similar fashion to Berry, Coles is concerned with the dynamics of transformation of attitude and behavior. For Coles, we are constructed for our manner of living in the world by way of prac-

123-148.

34. Thomas Berry, “Contemporary Spirituality: The Journey of the Human Community” *Cross Currents* (Summer/Fall 1974), 179.

35. Thomas Berry, “The Dynamics of the Future: Reflections on the Earth Process,” *Monastic Studies* 12 (Michaelmas 1976), 163.

36. *Ibid.*, 173.

37. Berry, *Befriending the Earth*, 9.

38. I am drawing on Romand Coles, “The Neuropolitical Habitus of Resonant Receptive Democracy” *Ethics in Global Politics* 4, 4 (2011), and on Stanley Hauerwas and Romand Coles, *Christianity, Democracy and The Radical Ordinary: Conversations between a Radical Democrat and a Christian* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2008).

tices. These practices become embodied through the interaction of the psycho-physical self and the culture into which one enters. Radical democracy is the proposal to combat the current stultifying effects of the practices of contemporary capitalist democracy. These sophisticated and targeted practices, according to Coles, result in a culture of indifference in relationship to the accommodation of the “other” in society.³⁹ Furthermore, such practices are focused on the production of ourselves as consumers of the capitalist culture. Consideration of these practices leads him to consider mirror neurons and the creation of *habitus*.⁴⁰ So what exactly are mirror neurons; what is new in the research; and in what sense do we mean *habitus*? Finally, how do mirror neurons and *habitus* relate to genetic and cultural coding for an Ecozoic era?

Mirror neurons are those primal neurons that seem to embody the pre-lingual access to learning, both in terms of time and precedence. Mirror neurons work in encounters. The simplest expression of the work of mirror neurons is the way infants imitate the smiles and frowns of those around them and give back their own versions. Neuroscientific research on mirror neurons has discovered their flexibility, agility and changeability. The neurons self-organize in the process of encounter and interaction as we engage with the world. So there is a circular process of influences between physical structures and cultural expressions. The expression of mirror neurons as self-organizing and social sounds a lot like Berry's notion of genetic and cultural coding.⁴¹

Coles relates this understanding of the neurons to the traditional concept of *habitus*. The word *habitus* received its first systematic treatment in the work of Thomas Aquinas following usage by Aristotle. *Habitus*, for Aquinas, refers to the “state of possessing or having (*habere*) an acquired, trained disposition to engage in certain modes of activity when encountering particular objects or situations. *Habitus* is that which grounds the disposition to act morally or to be

39. Coles, “The Neuropolitical *Habitus*,” 274.

40. *Ibid.*, 275-276.

41. Cf. Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*, 92-93. See also, Grim, “Thomas Berry and Indigenous Thought,” *Intellectual Journey*, 146, n. 43.

a virtuous person.⁴² The nature of one's *habitus* relies on the training one receives relative to moral and religious life.

For most of its historical tradition, the term was used rather loosely in social sciences to refer to the process of adaptation. While it still includes adaptiveness, the work of Pierre Bourdieu expanded its meaning. According to Bourdieu, *habitus* includes not only the arbitrary conditions of the world in which one experiences reality, adapts to it, and so acts in accordance, but also the non-arbitrary conditions into which one is born. Bourdieu sees little room to negotiate those non-arbitrary conditions.⁴³ The recent work on mirror neurons, however, challenges his view of the non-arbitrary as essentially stable. This challenge based on scientific findings prompted Coles to consider how a new *habitus* for a different form of democracy might be created.⁴⁴

It is clear mirror neurons do operate in the creation of *habitus*, but they are now understood to create conditions more arbitrary than Bourdieu imagined in his account. The *habitus* is substantially formed by the interaction of our psycho-physical being and our experience in the world. The *habitus* can be addressed and substantially constructed by sophisticated techniques such as those that form us into the capitalist, consumer, political ideologues, we habitually become. The *habitus* can also be changed, however, through ordinary encounters, what Hauerwas and Coles have called the radical ordinary of everyday life.⁴⁵ Here is where transformative practices can occur.

So what does this insight of Coles have to do with Berry's conceptions of genetic and cultural coding? Berry does not actually explain how this interaction of genetic and cultural coding happens. He observes that the human is genetically coded for culture; so he understands a direct relationship between the physical genetic makeup of humans and the psycho-spiritual expression of that makeup in culture. He understands also the ways in which the

42. Omar Lizardo, *Habitus*, January 7, 2012, accessed June 18, 2014, <http://www3.nd.edu/~olizardo/papers/habitus-entry.pdf>.

43. Coles, "The Neuropolitical *Habitus*, 288-290.

44. *Ibid.*

45. Hauerwas and Coles, *Christianity, Democracy and the Radical Ordinary*, 4.

historical development of cultures and religion affect the attitudes and behaviors of humans in relationship to the natural world, for example. The quotation above with respect to the aesthetic expressions of Japanese religion is ample evidence of his attention to the particular way in which genetic and cultural coding interact in different cultures. Likewise, his scathing critiques of Western cultural developments and its effect on human relationship to the natural world speak to the understanding that this interaction of cultural and genetic coding is agile, flexible, and even volatile.⁴⁶ Always this interaction works in forming that psycho-spiritual consciousness, the profoundly embodied space (*habitus*) from which one's deepest attitudes and actions emerge.⁴⁷

As I mentioned previously, Coles relates his vision of radical democracy to the richness of the ordinary, the ordinary practices, ordinary encounters with "the other," ordinary relationships. What is ordinary of course—the unnoticed—is the crux of the matter. Here is where the practices of life take place for better and/or for worse. It is here in the ordinary that the manner of our engagement with the world is constructed. Here, day to day, the mirror neurons form and are formed; hence the radicality of the ordinary. For Berry, of course, the ordinary includes, or ought to include, engagement with the natural world—awareness of the air, the water, this particular tree, that squirrel, and so on. In all probability Berry's wandering into the meadow and observing the lilies stand in for a young life surrounded by such expressions of the natural world. The scene was habitual in a sense and practiced. Hence it opened into an ethical life.⁴⁸

Clearly, much more examination of the relationship of Coles' work to that of Berry is in order but beyond the limitations of this account. I can merely suggest briefly how Coles' account of the action of the mirror neurons in creating a *habitus* resonated with my

46. This critique occurs in many places throughout Berry's writings. Cf. versions in Anne Lonergan and Caroline Richards, eds., *Thomas Berry and the New Cosmology*, (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1990), 15-17; and "The New Story," in *Dream of the Earth*, 123-137.

47. See Dalton, *A Theology for the Earth*, 117-118 and 181-182.

48. Berry alludes to this interpretation in *The Great Work*, 13.

understanding of Berry's account of the inter-crossing of genetic and cultural coding. The interaction of these two codes (genetic coding and cultural coding) creates a *habitus* for how humans relate to the natural world. Furthermore, the agility and evolving nature of the mirror neurons as they converse with cultural experience suggest that a new *habitus* can be created. We can un-learn and re-learn at the genetically-based cellular level as we practice encountering the radical ordinary anew.

Berry's proposal of a New Story with all the accompanying layers of meaning belongs to this *habitus*. Coles suggests that for radical democracy there must be a re-engagement with the other through the cultivation of new democratic practices across and beyond dominant ideologies. So too for Ecozoic transformation, a new engagement through new practices of intimacy with the "others" in the natural world is required. Herein genetic and cultural coding converse and a fitting *habitus* is created. Berry calls up the force of an ecopoetic form—the story of the universe—to engender and deeply ground such practices. This is what the primal peoples did, according to Berry, and they practiced the story in rituals. They lived in the radical ordinary of relatively wild nature and gave it poetic expression in ritual, in language, in story. It required and still requires poetic expression because there is no other way to practice a conversation with the ordinary tree, lily, cricket, rock, grass, moon, or star. There is no better way to capture the mysterious and numinous evolving process of the universe but in the poetics of story. Here is the vision of an eco-democracy in which the entire universe, especially in its earthly aesthetic expression, must be engaged, en-voiced and practiced if we are to evoke the psychic strength needed to face the present ecological challenges. As Thomas Berry writes, commenting on a book of verse for children in 1996:

So now we write our own
verses, bringing
the child and the universe
into their mutual fulfillment.

While the stars ring out in

the heavens.⁴⁹

It is a Great Work indeed.

49. Thomas Berry, "It Takes a Universe" (commenting on a book of verse for children, November 1996), n.p.

The Intellectual Roots of Thomas Berry's Proposal and the New Story

Heather Eaton

General Background

Thomas Berry, born William Nathan, was the third of thirteen children in a prominent Catholic family from the Appalachians, and later Greensboro, North Carolina. Raised in a vibrant and well-educated family, Berry was a pensive, introspective, and intellectually gifted child. Berry often described himself as a brooder, and said there were two ideal locations for those who brood: prisons or monasteries, and that he chose the latter. He entered the Passionist Order at the age of 20 and was ordained at 28, when he took the name Thomas after Thomas Aquinas.

Berry's early formation was deeply Catholic, meaning that he was immersed in the vast intellectual themes of classical theology. He had intimate knowledge of the tomes of Thomas Aquinas and later Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. He also studied European intellectual and cultural history, as well as being attentive to interiority and spiritual practices. He completed a PhD at the Catholic University of America with a focus on Giambattista Vico's philosophy of history. He lived in China in 1948 during the rise of Mao Zedong, and keenly observed the mechanisms of the vast cultural shifts taking place.

Berry was a remarkably educated person, and a product of the intellectual climate. From Western thinkers, the works of Thomas Aquinas, Dante Alighieri, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Rudolf Otto, Mircea Eliade, Christopher Dawson, Maurice Blondel, and Carl Jung were influential. He found the discussions of religion by Clifford Geertz, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Paul Tillich, and Emile Durkheim to be valuable. From South Asian thought, the Vedas and Upanishads, the Mahabharata and Bhagavad Gita, as well as the writings of Ādi Śankarācārya, Aurobindo Ghose, and Mohammed Iqbal, among others, were persuasive. From East Asia, the clas-

sics attributed to Confucius, and Mencius, as well as Ch'ang Tsai (Zhang Zai) and the poetry of Tao Ch'en, Li Po and Tu Fu were important. He learned Latin, Italian, Spanish, German, Chinese, Sanskrit, and Pali. To some, Berry was known as a Christian thinker, which is reasonable as he was a Catholic priest. Few are aware that he was also a scholar of the two centres of Asian cultures, India and China, and knowledgeable of Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian, and Daoist traditions. In addition, Berry studied and collaborated with several Indigenous peoples in North America, and with the T'boli tribal peoples of the Philippines. Berry became a cultural historian of religions, integrating facets of phenomenology and anthropology of religions.

Over his lifetime Berry acquired extensive knowledge of politics, economics, natural sciences, and cosmology. He wrote countless essays on a vast array of topics, which became the *Riverdale Papers*,¹ and he published a dozen books, including works on Asian religions, *Buddhism*² and *Religions of India*,³ and his later well-known publications, *The Dream of the Earth*,⁴ *The Great Work*,⁵ and *The Sacred Universe*.⁶ During 1970-1995 he founded and directed, the Riverdale Center for Religious Research. From 1966-1979 he developed and chaired the history of religions program at Fordham University and from 1975-1987 he was president of the American Teilhard Association.

The richness and genius of Berry's thought are not rendered immediately evident in his published works. The breadth and depth

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1. Thomas Berry, the *Riverdale Papers*, vols. I-XI (New York: Riverdale Center for Religious Research, 1969-1994). In some places I refer to the *Riverdale Papers*, although many of these essays have been collected and published in his books.
 2. Thomas Berry, *Buddhism* (1966, repr. Columbia University Press, 1996).
 3. Thomas Berry, *The Religions of India: Hinduism, Yoga, Buddhism* (New York: Bruce-Macmillan, 1971).
 4. Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988).
 5. Thomas Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999).
 6. Thomas Berry, *The Sacred Universe: Earth, Spirituality, and Religion in the 21st Century*, eds. Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009)

of his comprehension of numerous fields of knowledge are astounding. His appreciation for many modes of knowing is characteristic of his thought and writings. Influenced by Vico, Carl Jung, and others, Berry probed beneath a hyper-rationalized knowing to the realm of dreams, myths, imagination, poesis, and symbolic consciousness. He understood that this myth-making aspect of human functioning, which includes religious processes, is the most potent, creative, fertile, and profound realm of human activity. It is through this capacity that humans not only make meaning, but also develop narratives saturated with symbols, values, ethics, and priorities within which communities navigate all dimensions of existence.

The ecological crisis, in all its manifestations, came to dominate Berry's concerns. The latter part of his life, some thirty years, was dedicated to responding to the socio-ecological crisis. Berry is still one of a few who have grasped the magnitude of this crisis, comprising the end of the Cenozoic era. To fathom the causes and to have any viable future, all aspects of human activities need to be addressed at the most profound point.

Influences on Berry's Thought

The following are glimpses of some specific influences that oriented his thought.⁷ It is not comprehensive or in depth, although it will assist in understanding the richness of his proposal. Berry wrote of himself:

I studied history and philosophy to find out and test how people found meaning. I wanted to go back through the whole human tradition and test the whole process, because it was obvious from the beginning, going into religious life, that the process was not working.... Our modern world is not working. Christianity in this sense is not working.... Religion is assuming no responsibility for the state of the earth or the fate of the

7. For an in-depth examination of various intellectual themes within Berry's work, see Heather Eaton, ed., *The Intellectual Journey of Thomas Berry: Imagining the Earth Community* (Lanham: Lexington, 2014).

earth.... Somehow, when I was quite young, I saw the beginnings of biocide and geocide.⁸

Giambattista Vico

A significant influence pertains to the ideas of Giambattista Vico, Berry's dissertation subject.⁹ Vico's own work was an attempt to respond creatively to the confusing and turbulent issues of his day. He was searching for a unifying resolution, a wholeness or an ultimate homogeneity to reality within the prevailing turmoil of world-view transition. He sought a pervasive wisdom, inclusive of scientific and religious truths; a wisdom which offered a consolidating principle of universal knowledge. Vico resisted intellectual trends that divided science, philosophy, anthropology, and religion.¹⁰

Vico scorned the direction of his time, particularly because of a connection he made between confounded intellectual inquiries and moral relativity. He criticized the delusive dreams of progress, which he feared could endanger civic values and end in barbarism. Vico's views of history, briefly condensed here, portray ages of consciousness in the emergence of human life. At each stage, the evolution is one of the prevalent consciousness developing towards increasing complexity, but not necessarily advancing. Thus to discern the stage of one's time and place, which is the task of intellectuals, one must know the evolutionary challenge of the era.¹¹

Parallels to Berry's work are evident. Berry also sought a unifying

8. Dunn and Lonergan, eds., *Befriending the Earth: A Theology of Reconciliation Between Humans and the Earth: Thomas Berry and Thomas Clark* (Mystic: Twenty-Third Publications, 1991), 143-144.

9. Vico is most known for his controversial work *The New Science*, translation of the Third Edition (1744) by Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968). Berry's thesis was published as *The Historical Theory of Giambattista Vico* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1949).

10. See J. Samuel Preuss, "A New Science of Providence: Giambattista Vico," *Explaining Religion: Criticism and Theory from Bodin to Freud* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

11. For a detailed discussion of Vico's influence on Berry, see Anne Marie Dalton, *A Theology for the Earth: The Contributions of Thomas Berry and Bernard Lonergan* (Ottawa, Ontario: University of Ottawa Press, 1999), 15-32.

framework in which to understand the prevailing and difficult problems. He maintained that it is the fallacious perceptions of ultimate reality, that is the cosmology or the macrophase aspect of worldview, which are causal to at least some of the dilemmas. Berry was critical of the formidable aspirations and seductions of an “industrial wonderworld,” which actually are creating a wasteworld.¹² He spoke of Eurowestern cultures as being in the grips of a cultural pathology that is manifested by an autism towards Earth’s destruction.¹³ In *The Dream of the Earth*, he wrote, “This pathology is manifest in the arrogance with which we reject our role as an integral member of the earth community in favor of a radical anthropocentric life attitude.”¹⁴

In order to reform a culture in decline, Berry agreed with Vico’s belief that the most adequate approach would be to consider the larger context of the historical/cultural emergence of humanity to be in stages of consciousness. Although Berry delineated the eras of human history differently than did Vico, both valued the primal or tribal shamanic cultures.¹⁵ Here the primordial experience of human consciousness was the awakening to an awesome universe, filled with mysterious power.¹⁶ Berry wrote: In our tribal phase we lived in an ocean of energy in which the physical and psychic forms of energy were intimately related.... In the unconscious depths of the human psyche the great visions took place.¹⁷ Berry identified this stage with an awareness of the ultimate and vital mystery of the universe—an awareness we must invoke if we are to enter this phase of cosmogenesis, which requires an alignment with the primordial thrust of the universe.

12. Berry, “The Seduction of Wonderworld,” *Edges*, no. 3 (June 1990): 9-14.

13. Berry, “The Dream of the Earth: Our Way into the Future,” *Dream of the Earth*, 205-216.

14. *Ibid.*, 208.

15. Berry makes numerous references to this time period of human development. For example, see “The Wild and the Sacred,” public address for the Sacred Arts Festival, (New York: Cathedral Saint John the Divine, October 1993); “The Fourfold Wisdom,” unpublished manuscript, 1992; “The Historical Role of the American Indian,” *Dream of the Earth*, 180-193.

16. Berry, “Creative Energy,” *Riverdale Papers I* (1977), 1.

17. Berry, “The Dynamics of the Future,” *Riverdale Papers I* (1974), 5.

Vico saw the primal era as “the age of the gods,” and appreciated the vast and pervasive sense of undifferentiated communion with the divine, cosmic, and human energies.¹⁸ The grand mythologies, creation stories, cosmic rituals, poetry, monumental architecture, and celebrations proclaimed this archetypical period of history, where the imaginative and creative powers moved the human venture into a larger phase of its own structuring. All the great religions, with their intense spiritual sensitivities to the universe, were conceived of within this period. For Berry, the context and impetus of this first formative period of human history was the universe, wherein the “dynamics of the earth took such a leap in the forms of magnitude of its expression.”¹⁹ Hence the human was understood and experienced as a dynamic of the universe itself, and of Earth in particular.

These energies have directed the course of human affairs until the present period where, in Berry's words:

Our secular, rational, industrial society, with its amazing scientific and technological skills, has established the first radically anthropocentric society and has thereby broken the primary law of the universe, the law of the integrity of the universe, the law that every component member of the universe should be integral with every other member of the universe and that the primary norm of reality and of value is the universe community itself with its various forms of expression, especially as realized on the planet Earth.²⁰

It is the current vision, from what Berry called the sane, rational, and dreamless people—those who rejected mythology in the name of progress—which is compelled by a most powerful dream that is of the order of a *supreme pathology*.²¹ Berry justified such forceful language by observing that:

18. Berry acknowledges Vico's influence here; “Creative Energy”, 2; “Dynamics”, 6.

19. Berry, “Dynamics”, 8.

20. Berry, *Dream of the Earth*, 202.

21. *Ibid.*, 206.

The change taking place in the present is not simply another historical transition of another cultural transformation. Its order of magnitude is immensely more significant.... We are upsetting the entire earth system that has, over some billions of years and through an endless sequence of experiments, produced such a magnificent array of living forms, forms capable of seasonal self-renewal over an infinite period of time.... We are indeed closing down the major life systems of the planet.²²

It is a return to the macro-phase context, that of cosmology, which is required for any recovery. For Berry, to discuss macro-phase problems with micro-phase concepts will not be adequate to the task. This is a great difficulty of our time, as we are unaccustomed to reflecting at the macro-phase level and have few concepts from which to draw.

Thus, in periods of decline such as the present, it is a retrieval of the primordial archetypical experiences and visions, those now residual insights of the ultimate connections with the physical, psychic, spiritual and cosmic dimensions of both the universe and human life, which could realign human consciousness and reawaken an apprehension of a unifying essence of reality. Such a recovery is accomplished best through myth or cultural narrative.

Role of Cultural Narrative

Central to Berry's conception of a functional cosmology was his conviction that human communities function within narratives—stories that provide the macro-context for personal and communal self-understanding. Such stories are comprehensive and primary myths that provide for an ultimate context for societies. For Berry, myth originates in the numinous dimensions of the universe and is intuited in the deep structures of our psyches. Story is within the historical mode of consciousness and is related to concrete events.²³ It is the mythic aspects of cultural narratives that concern Berry,

22. Ibid.

23. Berry began to develop his usage of story, myth, and cosmology in an early essay, "The New Story," *Riverdale Papers V* (1970).

with a further interest in those stories that carry a cosmology—a story of the universe and the human place within the scheme of things. Nonetheless, the terms dream, story, myth, and cosmology are interchangeable for Berry.²⁴

Berry alleged that all societies live within some form of salvation narrative, that is to say nothing makes sense apart from the cultural narrative. Life itself has no meaning, no contours or parameters outside of the story. Further, the story renders the accounts of how the world came to be and how we fit into the grand scheme of things. It provides, guides, and shapes our personal and collective life purposes, actions, and interactions, and it offers ethical orientations. Outside the story, there is no context in which human life can function in meaningful ways.²⁵

While in China, Berry's experience of the period of the Chinese communist process and, in particular, the Long March, reinforced his certainty about the role of cultural narrative in human transformation. Berry perceived that the whole of this revolution was the most intensive period of cultural and psychic transformation in Chinese history. It was based on a transposing of mythologies. Although Marxist socialist movements seemed to be realistically based, they were actually structured on a mythology, a highly developed symbol system that evoked a powerful current of change, first in human consciousness, then in human affairs.²⁶ For Berry, the genius of Mao was in his evocation of the power inherent in the mythic depths of the unconscious. Through poetic vision and mythic form and style, the cultural symbolism was reconstructed in transposed dimensions and new objectives—a cultural revolution—

24. When asked to distinguish these terms, Berry said that dream is the ideal as it appears in pure form; vision is the dream applied to experience and is a mode of being; and story identifies the sequences of events and stages of religious transformations (Colloquium at Holy Cross Centre, Port Burwell Ontario, July 1994). Myth is the comprehensive context or cultural meta-narrative which bears archetypal symbols and narratives (creation stories, cosmogonies) carry revelations of the deepest realities of the universe. See Berry, "Dynamics," 6. In both his writing and speaking, however, Berry exchanges these terms without qualm.

25. Berry, "The New Story."

26. Berry, "Mao Tse-tung: The Long March," *Riverdale Papers III* (1974).

based on a refurbished salvific communal story. These experiences, related to China, enriched Berry's analysis of the elements necessary for effective cultural transformation, and the realization that human life functions within and is motivated by stories in mythic, symbolic form.

Myth, Story, Primal Cultures, and the Numinous Universe

Berry acknowledged that his thoughts about the function of cultural narrative have been influenced by the work of C.G. Jung and the understanding of archetypal structures which form the bases of psychic development.²⁷ In the manner of Rudolf Otto and Mircea Eliade, Berry accentuated the fact that the universe was the great manifestation of the sacred in primal cultures, and still is today for such societies.²⁸ Eliade proposed that what he termed "archaic societies" lived in close proximity to the sacred, that which revealed the numinous.²⁹ He used the term hierophany—a revelation of the sacred. In Eliade's words:

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27. Berry often refers to Jung's work in passing, and uses Jung's notions of archetypal psychic structures to support his position that the human psyche has been structured from ancient primal experiences of the awesome powers of the universe prior to the differentiation between unconscious and conscious. The role of dreams and spontaneous images, the integration of the material and natural worlds and the coexistence of matter and spirit within the psychic-physical universe all reinforced Berry's search for the deepest human expressions of the cosmic forces out of which the human emerges in psychic and physical form. See Berry, "Alchemy and Spiritual Transformation in C.G. Jung," *Riverdale Papers IX* (1982).
28. Tu Wei-Ming suggests that the current primal traditions (Native American, Hawaiian, Maori and other tribal indigenous religious traditions) have a profound sense and experience of rootedness, intimate knowledge of their environment, and a style of human flourishing which is sustainable. There are obvious lessons in the averting of further unintended disastrous consequences of the Enlightenment mentality. See Tu Wei-Ming "The Mirror of Modernity and Spiritual Resources for the Global Community," *Sophia: Tradition and Pluralism* 34, no. 1 (1995): 86. Berry would add that indigenous peoples understand themselves in a living universe, thus have a functional cosmology within their cultural narrative.
29. Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans., William Trask, (New York: Harvest Book, 1959), 11.

For those who have a religious experience all nature is capable of revealing itself as cosmic sacrality. The cosmos in its entirety was a hierophany.... The sacred is equivalent to a power, and in the last analysis, to reality. The sacred is saturated with being.... Religious man [sic] deeply desires to be, to participate in reality, to be saturated with power.³⁰

Eliade suggested that a desacralized cosmos is a recent discovery in the history of the human spirit and that this desacralization pervades the entire experience of the now non-religious people in modern cultures. Thus many people are presently incapable of experiencing the sacred in the very structure of the world and cosmic phenomenon. Berry and Eliade concurred that, in consequence, it is increasingly difficult to rediscover these existential dimensions,³¹ as we have lost our principal means of entering into the primordial directives and sustaining forces of the universe.³² Since, however, the greater part of human existence is fed by impulses that come from the depths of being, the unconscious, and that at the primal levels of culture, *being* and *sacred* are united,³³ and in so far as the unconscious is the result of countless existential experiences, potentially it is possible to reawaken a sense of a religious universe.

Eliade, Jung, and Berry commented that the contents and structures of the unconscious exhibit “astonishing similarities to mythological images,...in myths which are manifested in paradigmatic manners.”³⁴ Berry connected the primal awakening of humans to an awesome universe permeated with numinous energy to the primordial experience of human consciousness, and considers this to be the archetypal period of human history. Although the modern industrial myth presides over Eurowestern human consciousness, there are fragments of the primal sensitivities that still reside in the deeper realms of the unconscious. Berry believed it is because humans no longer experience a pervasive numinous presence that the modern

30. Ibid., 12.

31. Ibid., 13.

32. Berry, “Dream of the Earth,” in *Dream of the Earth*, 199.

33. Eliade, *Sacred and the Profane*, 210.

34. Ibid.

period is filled with angst and alienation from Earth, and a basic disenchantment with the world.³⁵

It is the recovery or reintegration of the primal numinous experiences of the universe, genetically encoded within the human psyche, which needs to be retrieved into consciousness. This can be accomplished best through myth, which connects the paradigmatic structure of the depth of the human psyche to the human context of cultural narrative. Berry wrote:

The mythic dimension of the ecological age is neither romanticism nor an idealism. It is rather a depth insight into the structure and functioning of the entire earth process.... The revelatory aspect of the ecological age finds expression in the ecological archetype which finds its most effective expression in the great story of the universe.... These archetypal symbols are the main instruments for the evocation of the energies needed for our future renewal of the earth.³⁶

Importance of World Religions

As a cultural historian and scholar of world religions, Berry studied the great cultural narratives and transformations and concluded that the mythic role of the cultural narrative (dream, story) is the vital piece. He understood religions to be forms of grand narratives for particular cultures, giving an overall containment of the sacred. Such stories oriented the people at the level of being and belonging. Berry's interest in world religions was essentially an existential and cultural one. It was existential due to Berry's assertion of the existential base of all religions and in terms of how people found meaning and cultural coherence particularly in moments of great transitions. It was cultural because Berry was persuaded that the larger world context was in profound transition, with a world culture emerging but without a macro-phase myth to sustain and guide this unique phase of human development.

Berry developed a deep appreciation for the penetrating and

35. Berry, "Creative Energy."

36. *Ibid.*, 4-5.

specific experiences that gave rise to distinct religious insights and traditions. This includes those based on an awareness of divine being (Hinduism), of the changing and sorrowful nature of reality (Buddhism), of an all-embracing harmony in the cosmic and human orders (Confucianism), of dynamic forces immanent in the universe (Daoism), and of a divine presence within history of the monotheistic traditions. Furthermore, although the originating experiences and subsequent interpretations are dissimilar, religions address experiences and themes within human existence: trans-human awareness, revelations, salvation, sacrifice, rebirth, virtues, sacredness, and rituals. Unlike Mircea Eliade, for Berry these are descriptive not normative forms. They are neither within all religions, nor equivalent in content. Berry claimed: "Religion takes its origin here in the deep mysteries of what we see, hear, touch, taste and savor." Religions provide the interpretative patterns to existence in narrative form. They are creative in form and salvific in purpose.

World religions, which, of necessity, developed the richness and particularity of expression of their revelatory experiences in isolation—a micro-phase period—now could either assist in the further development of each in a world context wherein "the full tapestry of revelatory experience can be observed," or could collapse into tribalism.³⁷ Berry perceived that the greatest need, in light of the ecological crisis, was to foster "a sense of the New Story of the universe as the context for understanding the diversity and unity of religions."³⁸ Such an era would become the macrophase period of development of most religious traditions, where, according to Berry, the traditions would be dimensions of each other. Further, the traditions themselves must move into this larger context of interpretation in order to maintain their ultimate orientation towards reality and value in a process of a transformation of their deep spiritual insights which "originate in an interior depth,...as revelatory of the ultimate mystery whence all things emerge into being."³⁹ Berry returned to the neces-

37. Berry, "The Catholic Church and the Religions of the World," *Riverdale Papers X* (1985), 5.

38. *Ibid.*

39. *Ibid.* In this article Berry delineates an understanding of the historical development of world religions, their uniqueness, and the necessity of each

sity of the larger context, the emergent universe, as the primary reality within which the religious traditions should situate themselves by telling their religious stories in their particular cultural contexts and narrating from the macro-phase cosmological story.

Indigenous Spiritual Traditions

In addition to a remarkable ability to appreciate the diversity and uniqueness of the great “world” religions, Berry had an ongoing and keen interest in and empathy for native religions. He studied and spent time with several tribes and communities in Canada and the United States, and with the T’boli people in the southern Philippines. Berry appreciated native traditions for embedding their sense of reverence and sacredness in the land, animals, plants, rocks, trees, and more. The living realms of all life are central to most Indigenous worldviews, thus there is a well-developed attentiveness to the natural world in all its manifestations, patterns, and seasons. These are central to a living spirituality in most Indigenous traditions. Berry wrote about the nature mysticism of North American Native spiritualities, and what he considered to be a numinous consciousness: that the mystique of the natural world is essential to their ways of life. Symbols, rituals, initiation ceremonies, sun dances, and vision quests are oriented to strengthening awareness of this mystique. For Berry, these communities and traditions maintained a living relationship with the natural world, kept alive through stories and ceremonies, to the degree that he often considered that they were the only people still carrying a functional cosmology within their psychic and social structures. Berry incorporated his deep appreciation for and insights from Indigenous peoples throughout his proposal for a functional cosmology.⁴⁰

for the next era. The structure of his interpretation is historical, looking towards an understanding of the role of world religions in this next phase of human/Earth development.

40. Berry, “The Historical Role of the American Indian,” *Dream of the Earth*, 180-193.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin was another significant influence on Berry's development.⁴¹ Teilhard de Chardin and Berry were concerned with the expanding rift between the religious traditions and the modern world, due to the lack of attention in those traditions, and Christianity in particular, to the needs, concerns and ideas of the modern world. They were both interested in how scientific developments affected changes in worldview or cosmology. Both took an interest in the evolutionary process and natural and human social history within a teleological perspective.⁴² Finally, both were affected intensely by the rise of technology and the subsequent effects on and transformations of Earth and of human life. Yet, even though profound interests were shared and Berry drew a great deal from Teilhard de Chardin's work, Berry dissociated himself from several of Teilhard de Chardin's assumptions and conclusions. The relevant aspects of this divergence will constitute the following section.

Each passionately pursued a grand synthesis of the universe as a whole. This included a sense of the great history of life, from cosmic beginnings to complex human sensibilities in an emerging, evolutionary process. This process culminated in human consciousness becoming cognisant of the evolutionary process itself. In Teilhard de Chardin's words:

Is evolution a theory, a system or a hypothesis? It is much more: it is a general condition to which all theories, all hypotheses, all systems must bow and which they must satisfy henceforth if they are to be thinkable and true. Evolution is a lamp illumi-

41. Their similar life choices are as striking as are their common intellectual pursuits. Both trained as priests and Catholic religious thinkers, lived in China, worked as army chaplains, taught university, had intense preoccupations with the evolution of the natural world and, most importantly, both sought comprehensive frameworks in which to honor the role of the human in the emergent cosmos.

42. Teleology in this sense means the orientation of cosmic evolution, from the less to the more complex. Berry's major concern is that the process of natural selection no longer is functional as it has been overtaken by human or cultural selection. (Conversation with Berry, Holy Cross Centre, July 1995.)

nating all facts.... The consciousness of each of us is evolution looking at itself and reflecting."⁴³

Teilhard de Chardin was acutely aware of the meaning of evolutionary theory when it was grasped in all its dimensions. The restitution of human development within this great Process, as he called it, was one of the major influences on Berry's work. Teilhard de Chardin reflected elsewhere on this revolution of awareness:

Any effort to understand what is now taking place in human consciousness must of necessity proceed from the fundamental change of view which since the sixteenth century has been steadily exploding and rendered fluid what had seemed to be the ultimate stability—our concept of the world itself. To our clearer vision the universe is no longer an Order but a Process. The cosmos has become a Cosmogensis.⁴⁴

One finds similar statements throughout Berry's essays.⁴⁵

Berry acknowledged the substantial content and complexity of Teilhard de Chardin's thoughts and proposals, including the less known influences of the vitalist, spiritual, and immanentist traditions of the Renaissance, and in particular of the psychic-symbolic hermetic traditions. Berry's essay, "Teilhard: The Renaissance Connection," explored this influence on Teilhard de Chardin's approach, and why there was so much suspicion of and resistance to his thought.⁴⁶ Berry concluded that Teilhard de Chardin's work is predominantly mythic, with "an agenda that cannot be formed in words but which is revealed to some extent in the symbolism suggested by the words."⁴⁷ Until the mythic context is understood more clearly, Teilhard de Chardin's thought will have limited effi-

43. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man* (London: Collins, 1959), 241, 244.

44. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Future of Man* (London: Fontana, Collins, 1969), 274

45. For example, see Berry's "Threshold of the Modern World," *Riverdale Papers* II (1964).

46. Berry, "Teilhard: The Renaissance Connection," *Riverdale Papers* IX (1982).

47. *Ibid.*, 2.

cacy. Considering that Teilhard de Chardin created much of his own vocabulary to communicate this cosmogenetic leap of consciousness, it is no wonder that his work continues to be a source of fascination.

Berry's horizon of concern was the ecological crisis in light of the universe and planetary processes; thus he valued the contributions of Teilhard de Chardin's work in so far as they advanced a cosmology of recovery. Berry's article "Teilhard in the Ecological Age" delineated what Berry considered to be the central contributions and distortions in Teilhard de Chardin's work.⁴⁸ The following discussion summarizes Berry's position.

Berry observed that Teilhard de Chardin explored six major concerns. The first was the unique synthesis of the vast intellectual, social, and spiritual attainments of the twentieth century found in *The Phenomenon of Man*, which approached the material from an evolutionary framework that Berry associated with a governing myth for the future.⁴⁹

A second concern was the understanding of the human as the consciousness mode of the universe and as the fulfilment of the evolutionary process. Teilhard de Chardin outlined four phases of this great process: galactic, earth, life, and human evolution. The revelatory insight was to situate the human as neither an intrusion in nor addendum to the universe, but as integral from the beginning in the psychic-consciousness aspect of the evolutionary process. This perspective overcomes the material view of the universe associated with Newtonian cosmology.⁵⁰ Berry, however, disagreed with Teilhard de Chardin that humans were the fulfilment of the universe.

The third concern of Teilhard de Chardin, according to Berry, was with the sacred dimension of the universe. Berry was, however, more interested in the shifting of the theological focus from redemption to creation, and found the over-emphasis on redemption to be a root of the ecological problem. Teilhard de Chardin, in a stronger manner than Berry, was committed to and concerned with Christian

48. Berry, "Teilhard in the Ecological Age," *Teilhard Studies*, no. 7 (1982); see also "Teilhard in the Ecological Age," *Riverdale Papers* VIII.

49. "Teilhard in the Ecological Age," 2.

50. *Ibid.*, 2-3.

interpretations of the modern venture. The reinterpretation of the cosmic Christ as the central thrust of the emergent universe is a “powerful Christian position,” as Berry suggests.⁵¹ If the Christian story could identify with the cosmic story as told by modern science, Berry saw this as being “the beginning of a new era in both religious and secular history of our times.”⁵²

The fourth contribution of Teilhard de Chardin that Berry valued was his appreciation of psychic energy, the vast energy required to sustain the evolutionary process. In the realm of human affairs, new intensities of psychic energy will be essential for humanity to enter into the necessary transformation required at this evolutionary stage. Teilhard de Chardin perceived the diminishing of psychic energy and of existential angst to be accompanied by the sense of an absurd universe. There was a lack of a worthy object to justify the endurance of as much pain as would be necessary to enter this most significant transition. The escalation of inter-human violence, social, and cultural tensions, and a sense of boredom when there was no vast creative venture to be undertaken, were signs of the waning psychic energy. Berry saw Teilhard de Chardin as resituating the human within the immense evolutionary process—the source of the deepest energies.⁵³

The role of science was the fifth concern of Teilhard de Chardin. Berry wrote: “Advance in knowledge is absolutely essential to the total earth process. This process Teilhard saw as a vast psychic enterprise into which the human entered by research, thought, and reflection. Thus the fundamental nobility of the scientific endeavor.”⁵⁴

Berry saw Teilhard de Chardin as leading the scientific profession into the macrophase or largest horizon of its concerns, the greatest need for all branches of knowledge. Teilhard de Chardin and Berry were interested in this macrophase aspect of the evolutionary process. They insisted that the disciplines must also understand themselves in their macro- as well as micro-phases. Finally, Berry admired Teilhard de Chardin for evoking the mystique needed to “fulfil the

51. *Ibid.*, 3.

52. *Ibid.*

53. *Ibid.*

54. *Ibid.*, 8-9.

destinies of the universe, the destinies which had been prepared over some billions of years in the galactic systems, advanced through the geological and biological formations of earth, and now were being activated in their highest expression in human consciousness.”⁵⁵

Berry, nonetheless, disagreed with some significant conclusions of Teilhard de Chardin. Perhaps the central point of divergence concerned the ecological crisis. Although the devastation of Earth was becoming evident during Teilhard de Chardin's lifetime and many ecologists were proclaiming warnings, he did not acknowledge this consequence of the industrial and technological exploitation of the planet. Entranced, as he seemed to have been, by the powers of science and technology and the human ability to master and harness such forces, Teilhard de Chardin saw ecological ruin as the necessary consequence of or sacrifice for the great Process. Everything was seen as progress and the damage to the natural world was incidental.⁵⁶

Berry was interested in the integral functioning of the entire planet, while Teilhard de Chardin was concerned predominantly with human progress. Berry's critique of Teilhard de Chardin's work was because of its lack of concern for the natural world, as well as of its profound anthropocentric emphasis rather than geo- or cosmic-centrism. Although Berry studied the complex of intellectual influences at work in Teilhard de Chardin's life and respected the contextual constraints, nowhere in Teilhard de Chardin's work did Berry find support for an ecological consciousness.⁵⁷ Teilhard de Chardin was immersed deeply in both the religious and humanist traditions of the West out of which the exploitative and imperial view of human-earth relations developed.

Berry was critical also of Teilhard de Chardin for failing to give sufficient attention to the benefits and limitations of the traditional civilizations and for not developing an adequate understand-

55. *Ibid.*, 4.

56. Progress here is not meant in a derogatory fashion. Teilhard emphasized the culmination of the great Process in human consciousness; thus Earth development and health were secondary to human development. He favored an organic-spiritual worldview over a mechanistic worldview, yet he accepted fully the industrial and technological exploitation of the planet as a desirable human venture. See Berry, "Teilhard in the Ecological Age," 10.

57. *Ibid.*, *passim*.

ing of the problems and questions of modern existence. Teilhard de Chardin was not interested in cultural developments, including those of primal cultures, and he paid no attention to the transition from the great civilizations to the modern world. For Berry, traditional cultural forms are exceedingly important. He wrote:

The very words we use with all the spiritual and cultural values they contain come from these traditional cultures, the ideals we pursue with our whole life effort, the deepest thoughts of our minds, our emotional responses to reality, our work and our worship, our music and our songs; all of these have been determined by the traditional cultures.... Even divine reality presents itself to us within these forms.⁵⁸

A further difference lies in their theological pursuits. Teilhard de Chardin, although attentive to the insights from Eastern traditions, remained Christian centered and the categories he used in the integration of science and religion often were Christian. While Teilhard de Chardin's primary theological orientation was to reinterpret Christianity for the modern age, Berry oriented his work to the larger society with language that "makes sense to everybody."⁵⁹ Berry's audience and concerns are not essentially Christian and he preferred some ideas and insights from other religious and humanist traditions.

Although Berry was critical of some basic orientations in Teilhard de Chardin's work, he appreciated the expanse of Teilhard de Chardin's pursuit and the acumen of his mind. Berry also suggested that the major thesis of Teilhard de Chardin's work can be extended and reoriented for an ecological age, although not without some key reappraisals.⁶⁰

58. Berry, "Threshold of the Modern World," 6-7.

59. Dunn and Lonergan, eds., *Befriending the Earth*, 10.

60. See generally Berry, "Teilhard in the Ecological Age."

The Role of Science

A further central influence on Berry's development of a functional cosmology was his acceptance of the findings of the empirical sciences, and in particular that of astronomy. Berry considered the discoveries of science to be of the order of a revelatory experience.⁶¹ In Berry's analysis of science, there were specific threads that he was tracking and to which he was giving meaning in light of his concerns. For example, he wrote:

This commitment to the order and intelligibility of the universe has been the basis of the past five hundred years of scientific inquiry. The idea that this intelligibility could be identified in the experiential order was the new sensitivity leading on through the transition phase to our present understanding of the universe. An understanding of this transitional sequence is most important, for only in this way can we appreciate the events that are taking place in these later times.... Each of the major figures was contributing something essential to a pattern of interpretation that would only become clear in the mid-twentieth century. Only now can we see with clarity that we live not so much in a cosmos as in a cosmogenesis, a cosmogenesis best presented in narrative; scientific in its data, mythic in its form.⁶²

As Berry's ideas coalesced, he saw the findings of science as being crucial to the task of transforming the cultural myth of the West, which he saw as necessary to the recovery of values in a culture that would resist ecological destruction and resituate the human in a living cosmos. Although Berry perceived that to recover from the period when culture is in decline is to retrieve archetypal elements which were more evident in primal phases of human existence, he was not interested in a return to a romanticized past or in the restoration of primal societies. He understood the universe process is an irreversible sequence of time-developmental transformations,

61. Swimme and Berry, "The Modern Revelation," *The Universe Story*, 223-240.

62. *Ibid.*, 228-229.

moving from a lesser to a greater complexity in structure and functioning, as well as to an increase in variety and intensity in its modes of conscious expression.⁶³ Thus it is the restoration of the primordial mode of human awareness, in a new context—not only in time and place, but also in consciousness—in view of how the ultimate mysteries of existence are being manifested in the emergent universe.

In the realm of science, Berry drew from several sources.⁶⁴ Further sources from science come from ecology, natural history, and nature writers. Authors such as Loren Eiseley are for Berry the “most impressive thinkers on the human situation within the rhythms and the mystiques of the earth.”⁶⁵ For Berry, however, science is not simply the accumulation of data. The great problem is not the lack of data, but in our capacity to understand the significance of the data that have come through empirical science. There are marvellous insights into the complex sequence of events that has brought Earth into being with its living world and human community. Berry writes: “There seems, however, to be little realization of just what this story means in terms of the larger interpretation of the human venture.”⁶⁶

For Berry, science was a cultural venture with spiritual dimensions. His orientation towards the efforts of science is interpretative, and is based on his concern for the assumptions and effects of the retrieval of values for an ecologically sound culture. He was critical, however, of the cultural values that imbue Eurowestern science. He suggested that it was the cultural context and orientation in which

63 Ibid., 223.

64. The work of Prigogine, Stengers, and Jantsch, and the self-organizing principle converge with Berry's appreciation of the universe, and forms of the anthropic principle support Berry's views. The Gaia theory of James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis, which holds the view that Earth is a living organism, adds empirical evidence to the previous visionary source professing the same insight. Berry, “Human Presence,” *Dream of the Earth*, 22; “The Gaia Theory: Its Religious Implications,” *ARC* 22 (1994): 7-19

65. Berry, *Dream of the Earth*, 228. See also Loren Eiseley, *The Unexpected Universe* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972); Loren Eiseley, *The Immense Journey*, (New York: Random House, 1960). Grassie notes that Eiseley is the closest model for Berry's work. See William John Grassie, *Reinventing Nature: Science Narratives as Myths for an Endangered Planet* [dissertation] (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University, 1994), 154.

66 Berry, *Dream of the Earth*, 228.

the entire development of science and technology has taken place that is precipitating the present difficulties.⁶⁷ Two central cultural commitments have oriented Eurowestern science: that humanity is transcendent to the natural world, and the belief in the infallible achievement by progress of a perfect age in which human life will surmount the restrictions that characterise the human condition.⁶⁸ Throughout his works, Berry developed his critique of these commitments.

Berry sought to interpret the findings of science within the limits and capacities of the Earth community, and upon which humanity is ultimately dependent. The task is to understand the findings of science as revealing a dynamic relationship between nature and human experience, and between science and culture.⁶⁹ In addition for Berry, the discoveries about the universe from science are mythic in dimension, and psychically archetypal. In fact, science itself is inherently mythic and mysterious, as Berry affirmed:

We emerge into being from within the earth process and enable the universe to come to itself in a special mode of psychic intimacy.... Any significant thought or speech about the universe finds its expression through [such] imaginative powers. Even our scientific terms have highly mythic content—such words as *energy, life, matter, form, universe, gravitation, evolution*. Even such terms as *atom, nucleus, electron, molecule, cell, organism*. Each of these terms spills over into metaphor and mystery as soon as it is taken seriously.⁷⁰

Therefore science can be resituated as that which enhances rather than reduces the mystery.⁷¹ For Berry, science illuminated the intrinsic spiritual dimension of the universe that is evident in the reverence for Earth processes as interpreted by scientists Prigogine,

67. Berry, "Science and Technology for Development: The Cultural Context," *Riverdale Papers VI* (1979).

68. *Ibid.*, 2-3.

69. This orientation echoes the work of Stengers and Prigogine and the joining of the new cosmology (new science) with the postmodern worldview.

70. Berry, *Dream of the Earth*, 198-199.

71. Dunn and Lonergan, eds., *Befriending the Earth*, 26.

Lovell, Dyson, and Swimme.⁷² However, the norm of science is not thus. Berry's critique is summarized in the following: "Science and technology, if only they would cease their deadly assault on the earth and their poisoning of the planet, could be of transcendent value in assisting the human community and the nations of the earth in finding their proper role within this ever-renewing cycle of life."⁷³

The Need for a Functional Cosmology

"The deepest crises experienced by any society are those moments of change when the story becomes inadequate for meeting the survival demands of a present situation. Such, it seems to me, is the situation we must deal with in this late twentieth century."⁷⁴ Berry was interested in the story of the universe. He claimed that humanity has developed such an antagonistic relationship with Earth because we no longer have functional stories from which to interpret the past, adequately deal with the challenges of the present, and receive guidance for the future. We are unable to find such meaning and direction from our traditional religious stories. Further, functional cultural narratives of the past arose from contexts so dissimilar from today that they are dismissed as extraneous fables.

This is a critical assumption of Berry's, that the ecological crisis is a *consequence* of the breakdown between cultural narrative and cosmology. Berry and Swimme remarked:

Traditionally, the cosmological enterprise aimed at an understanding of the universe and the role of the human in the universe. But over the last three centuries cosmology has come to mean "mathematical cosmology."... Traditional questions concerning the role and meaning of human beings were thus relegated to others so that the scientific enterprise could concentrate without distraction on the physical facts of the matter.⁷⁵

72. Berry, *Dream of the Earth*, 66-67.

73. Berry, "Science and Technology," 8.

74. Berry, *Dream of the Earth*, xi.

75. Swimme and Berry, *The Universe Story*, 22-23. Berry frequently addresses the history of cosmology, the factors which most affected Western cosmology,

Berry's definition of cosmology, while rooted in earlier understandings of the function of cosmology as that which seeks to understand the universe and the human role within the universe, was concerned with the emerging postmodern ecological worldviews that are grounded in an evolutionary natural science and emergent complexity theories of cosmology. His intention was the retrieval of particular values in view of the ecological crisis—a process necessary for cultural recovery. Berry contended that we need a cosmology wherein the natural world has intrinsic value as well as value to humans.

Berry thus sought a functional cosmology: one that unites the genuine human need for a story in which society finds meaning and direction with the story of the universe that the realm of science is discovering. He wrote:

Never before has the human community had such a profound understanding of the universe.... While this account is scientific it is also mythic. Almost every term used by science carries with it more mystery than rational comprehension. Although as yet unrealized, this scientific account of the universe is the greatest religious, moral and spiritual event that has taken place in these centuries.⁷⁶

Only the universe story, with the resulting implications for human priorities, is suitable to the tasks facing humanity in this era. This would be a functional cosmology.

We are entering a new era, what Berry called the Ecozoic era. In terms of human history, "the changes presently taking place in human and earthly affairs are beyond any parallel with historical change or cultural modification."⁷⁷ New historical visions are required to guide and inspire the course of human affairs through

and how this cosmology became distorted and dysfunctional, yet powerful enough to create a profound cultural pathology and autism towards the destruction of Earth. See *Dream of the Earth*, passim.

76. Berry, *Dream of the Earth*, 98.

77. Berry, "The Ecozoic Era," *Eleventh Annual E.F. Schumacher Lectures* (Great Barrington, MA: E.F. Schumacher Society, 1991), 1.

these times of stress. The rise and fall of civilizations, or the great historical movements from the classical to the medieval to the modern periods are patterns of transition that require interpretation of and guidance through the sequences of transformations. These are necessary to steer humanity to a more creative future. The issues now, however, are of a much greater order of magnitude.

Berry believed that the magnitude of change that is occurring is comparable to the end of the Palaeozoic era, 220 million years ago, and the terminal phase of the Mesozoic era, 65 million years ago.⁷⁸ At both moments there was extensive extinction of life. Now in the terminal phase of the Cenozoic era, Berry sees humanity as altering the structure and functions of the planet to the degree that we are closing down the major life-support systems.⁷⁹ The consequences are absolute speculation. Nothing in our cultural visions has prepared us to face this transition. Berry stated that, “such an order of change in its nature and in its order of magnitude has never before entered either into earth history or into human consciousness.”⁸⁰ This reality is not essentially a matter of human survival or a decision of ethics, or a moment awaiting a spiritual transformation of our contemporary culture. Berry’s work continually returns to the question of the order of magnitude. It is necessary to be clear about the kind of transformation we are facing, with all its extreme distress, culpability, and unfathomable loss and waste of life of this planet.⁸¹ Berry suggested that a new depth of psychic energy must be released if we are to live creatively in the future conditions of a diminished earth. Few environmentalists and ecologists are able to comprehend the extent of the crisis. Those who do are often met with disbelief, denial, and a call for “more research.”⁸²

78. Berry, “The Bush,” paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion (Washington, DC: 22 November 1993), 9. John Livingston states that there have been four periods of mass extinctions comparable to the present, they being 65, 94, 213, and 248 million years ago. See *Rogue Primate: An Exploration of Human Domestication* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1994), 1

79 Berry, *Dream of the Earth*, 206.

80 Ibid., xiii.

81 Ibid., 11-12.

82. Joni Seager laments the consistent denial of the severity of the ecological

Berry presented a vision that demands a radical change of consciousness in two ways in particular. The first is his consideration of the limits of our cultural traditions and the role they would play as we enter a new mode of consciousness. The second is that Berry sought to bend the mind in order to see the universe in an entirely new way. He endeavoured to “reinvent the human at the species level” in order to resituate the human within the community of life on Earth in a mutually-enhancing relationship.⁸³ The foundational guidance for this is within the story of the universe.

The two dimensions, considered to be the cultural and genetic circumstances, are necessary pieces of Berry's thought on how a functional cosmology could assist in a cultural recovery in light of the ecological crisis. Berry presented the cultural and genetic codings for two purposes: to situate the human problematic in culture and to find guidance within the cosmogenetic structure.⁸⁴ Others have described similar facets or divisions as the dichotomy between nature and culture, first and second natures, intrinsic and extrinsic sources, and genetic and cultural coding.⁸⁵ For Berry, genetic and cultural are associated intrinsically,⁸⁶ although separated here to

crisis, particularly on the part of governments who have invested heavily in a reductionist, objective science. She writes, “If the world ends not with a bang but a whimper, the last whimper that will echo in the void will be a weak cry for ‘more research.’” Joni Seager, *Earth Follies: Coming to Feminist Terms with the Global Environmental Crisis*, 162 (New York: Routledge, 1993).

83. Berry, “Reinventing the Human at the Species Level,” *Creation* (Vol 3, Sept.-Oct. 1987): 24-27. For a full description, see “Reinventing the Human at the Species Level,” *Riverdale Papers XI* (1988).
84. Berry developed these notions of cultural and genetic codings over many years partially in reliance on Chinese Confucianism. He describes them in *Dream of the Earth*, 92-108, and 194-203, and in “Individualism and Wholism in Chinese Tradition: The Religious Cultural Context,” *Riverdale Papers IX* (1982).
85. The first and second nature discussion, although used by ecologist Murray Bookchin in his social ecology, see *Remaking Society* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1989), has roots in Platonic thought, see Mary O'Brien, *The Politics of Reproduction* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981). Intrinsic and extrinsic sources are terms used by anthropologist Clifford Geertz, quoted in Max Oelschlaeger, *Caring for Creation: An Ecumenical Approach to the Environmental Crisis* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 85
86. Berry wrote, “The relationship between genetic coding and cultural coding is

assist in understanding what Berry is getting at.

Cultural Circumstances

Cultural Coding

“Inherent in the human situation is the problem of keeping our cultural expression integrally related to our genetic endowment.”⁸⁷ For Berry, humans are coded genetically for a further transgenetic cultural coding, wherein we “invent ourselves in the human expression of our being.”⁸⁸ Berry’s perspective on human viability was that humans, as a species, have a unique capacity for self-formation and for culture. It is this capacity for culture where Berry located the current problem that is causing the risks to Earth community. He defined culture this way:

The human in alliance with the earth is genetically encoded to invent a second level of its own being, a cultural realm freely developed in which the human gives itself its own identity in time and space and expands its activities in language and imagination and in the vast complex activities that we indicate by the term *human culture*.⁸⁹

Cultural coding, contained within and guided by the genetic coding, provides an orientation or a capacity for cultural development, although one in need of education. The content of the cultural coding, finding a variety of expressions throughout the human communities, is determined freely. It becomes the functioning norm of self-understanding, meaning, values, social ordering and guidance. This normative reference of reality is transmitted through language, symbols, familial and social education, rituals, and so on. For Berry,

among the most delicate of all issues in discussion of human thought modes and life disciplines.” See “Individualism and Wholism in Chinese Tradition,” 7.

87. Berry, *Dream of the Earth*, 199.

88. *Ibid.*, 200.

89. *Ibid.*, 92 (italics in the original).

we invent ourselves in these cultural modes. The difficulty is that the cultural coding is capable of pathological content, which is indicative of the current state.

Berry has reflected extensively on the sources and process of the development of cultural systems. There is a danger if the cultural coding becomes insensitive to the genetic coding. Our present crisis has been caused by Eurowestern civilization setting itself “deliberately against our genetic coding, and the *instinctive tendencies of our genetic endowment* are systematically negated.”⁹⁰

Patriarchy

Berry, among others, studied the origins of patriarchy, and determined that our current cultural pathology has its roots in the development of the patriarchal period.⁹¹ Patriarchy, with its values of aggressive plundering, male domination, and distorted notions of progress is the deepest and most destructive cultural vision ever devised. It is, according to Berry, the manifestation of a supreme pathos. The entire course of Eurowestern civilization is vitiated by patriarchy. As Berry recognized, the pathology is an arrogant, anthropocentric, and inherently devastating vision that has resolutely gripped those formed within Eurowestern culture. It is “antifeminist, antihuman and antiearth.”⁹²

The critique of patriarchy that Berry offered is basically analogous to a general feminist appraisal.⁹³ The integral players in the drama of patriarchy, based on a script of male domination, are: androcentric cosmological structures; a male-dominated religious perspective

90. *Ibid.*, 202 (italics added). Berry’s use of genetic and cultural coding is evident here where the genetic factor is manifested in the instinctive tendencies which can be temporarily overridden, not by the capacity to create culture, but by specific content.

91. Berry, “Patriarchy: A New Interpretation of History,” *Dream of the Earth*, 138-162.

92. *Ibid.*, 160.

93. Berry concurs with some feminists that the cultural vision of patriarchy contains inherently destructive elements. His critique is a basic assessment, and would not diverge from general feminist critiques of patriarchy, but Berry’s is not a sophisticated and in depth study.

assumed to be natural in the cosmic, social, and moral orders; the supremacy of rational, disconnected thought; national sovereignty; the aggressive use of power for conquest and domination, and reliance on military security; and corporate myths of economic prosperity and stability. The patriarchal establishment is imbued with pathos in spite of the truly noble inventions, discoveries, and achievements that have occurred within this period.⁹⁴

Patriarchy was a powerful vision of a way of life that took possession of the human (male) imagination, but was built on a dream that was disconnected from our earthly roots. Berry viewed the discussion about patriarchy from within his framework of cultural narrative, and the role of myth or cosmology⁹⁵ in human consciousness, and not from a feminist perspective. Berry's belief was that the foundational pillar of patriarchy is an alienation from Earth.⁹⁶ In the patriarchal myth, humans do not belong to Earth community, we are not an integral part of the natural world, and our destiny is elsewhere in a better world. It is for this reason that Berry claimed that none of the revolutionary movements has prepared us for what we must now confront. None of our existing cultures can deal with this situation from its own resources.

Cultural Pathology

It is most difficult to awaken to the crisis situation while in the grips of this cultural pathology. The vision of progress has become the central story of the human community and it is becoming glob-

94. Ibid., 154-160.

95. Again, for Berry, the words dream, story, myth and cosmology are somewhat interchangeable.

96. This would be similar to a deep ecology position. Feminists situate the problematic in numerous patterns, such as in Gerda Lerna's, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986). Some social ecologists see hierarchy as the root of all evils; see Murray Bookchin, *Remaking Society* (Montreal: Blackrose Books, 1989). Ecofeminism would link alienation from Earth with misogyny, ideologically constructed within a system of hierarchical dualisms; see Susan Griffin, *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978). Hundreds of subsequent publications address this, but the specific origins of patriarchy are hidden in the past.

al.⁹⁷ Endless energy has gone into fulfilling this commitment to progress and to the sense of the unlimited growth that it evokes. Yet the vision is creating a desolate wasteworld, full of animosity towards the human condition, Earth, the human community, and other species.⁹⁸

Berry spoke of learning to resist the seduction of this vision.⁹⁹ We need to experience the depth of this crisis—the spoilage of Earth—and to realize concurrently that Earth is perhaps the most precious and glorious reality of the universe. Berry insisted on the need to perceive with accuracy what is actually happening, and begin to experience the repulsive aspects of modern civilization. A combination of terror and inspiration is needed which could act as catalysts that energize and empowering psychic energy. Berry wrote:

When we think of the order of magnitude of change taking place in human affairs, it is important to think of the physical basis of all things human. What do we smell?... We are not even smelling the odors that are around us. Our senses are becoming deadened. Such diminishment of our sensitivities kills off our religious sensitivities and diminishes our understanding. It dulls our imagination.... We are like persons suffocating in a closed environment...in a drugged state.... Discussing possibilities, in terms of religion or ethics cannot happen unless we are alive, unless our basic faculties are intact, unless we can respond with the sense of physical vigor required to undergo the needed adjustment. This is a type of human situation that has never existed before at this order of magnitude or with this type of addiction.¹⁰⁰

Berry observed that humanity has become the terminator and termination, not fulfilment, of the Earth process. Humans are the

97. Berry and Swimme discuss the progress myth in *The Universe Story*, 218-219, 241-242.

98. Berry, "Wonderworld as Wasteworld," *Cross Currents* 35 (Winter 1985-86), 408-422.

99. Berry, "The Seduction of Wonderworld," 8-14

100. Dunn and Lonergan, eds., *Befriending the Earth*, 95.

most pernicious mode of earthly being in terms of ecological wreckage. Further, and even in the best of times, it is difficult for humans to change basic commitments, . . . until the present historical moment such a complete reversal of values has not, however, been necessary for survival. To awaken to devastation is, as Berry noted, “a bitter moment, not simply for the human, but for the earth itself. . . . Our hopes were so high, our arrogance unrestrained even by simple modesty.”¹⁰¹ Worse yet, the origins of these actions are imbedded deeply in the spiritual and cultural traditions that give us meaning and direction, as well as melded intricately into all social, economic and political systems.¹⁰²

Finally, Berry is renowned for the following three declarations:

1. The glory of the human has become the desolation of the earth.
2. The desolation of the earth is becoming the destiny of the human.
3. All human institutions, professions, programs, and activities must now be judged primarily by the extent to which they inhibit, ignore, or foster a mutually enhancing human-earth relationship.¹⁰³

Genetic Circumstances

Berry made a significant contribution by distinguishing several dimensions within the context of humanity. He challenged the prevailing confidence that the most effective resources reside in our cultural traditions or any form of transformation from within. Berry recommended a realization that the true context for the human is Earth, and that the context of Earth is the universe. This universal context is encoded genetically in the psychic and physical structure

101. Berry, *Dream of the Earth*, 204.

102. Berry has written about the values of antagonism towards Earth being embedded in the economic systems of the West, and now globally: “Economics as a Religious Issue,” *Riverdale Papers X* (1985); “Religions, Economics and Ecology,” *Riverdale Papers XI* (1986); “The New Political Alignment,” *The Great Work*, 107-116.

103. Berry, “The Seduction of Wonderworld,” 9.

of our being. He thus described:

Our genetic coding determines not only our identity at birth; its guidance continues also in every cell of our bodies throughout the entire course of our existence, a guidance manifested through the spontaneities within us. We need only to listen to what we are being told through the very structure and functioning of our being. We do invent our cultural coding, but the power to do so is itself consequent on the imperative of our genetic coding.¹⁰⁴

These physical and psychic structures contain the capacity to realize the extent of the crisis. Berry extended this to say that Earth carries the psychic structure and physical form of every living being on the planet.¹⁰⁵ He offered the following by way of explanation:

The universe carries the deep mysteries of our existence within itself. We cannot discover ourselves without first discovering the universe, the earth and the imperatives of our own being. Each of us has a creative power and a vision far beyond any rational thought or cultural creation of which we are capable. Nor should we think of these as isolated from our own individual being or from the earth community. We have no existence except within the earth and within the universe.¹⁰⁶

Core of Berry's Functional Cosmology

The most concise formulations of Berry's functional cosmology are a presentation of what could be called his presuppositions. His conviction that we must go back to the genetic imperative from whence human culture emerged, and from which we can never be separated without losing our integrity and survival capacity, ensues from the following observations and interpretations:¹⁰⁷

104. Berry, *Dream of the Earth*, 194-195.

105. *Ibid.*

106. *Ibid.*, x.

107. For a concise rendering of what Berry means by these aspects of his functional

- The universe is the only text without a context. It is the great epic, the story from which *all* other stories depend and emerge.
- The universe is the only self-referent mode of being in the phenomenal order. All other beings are universe referent.
- We live in an emergent, time-developmental universe: an unfolding, irreversible sequence of transformations, an evolving, integral, creative reality—a cosmogenesis.
- The universe is the fundamental revelatory experience.
- Everything in the universe is genetically related.
- The three basic tendencies of the universe are differentiation, subjectivity and communion.
- The universe is a community of subjects, not a collection of objects.
- The primary intention of life is neither one of peace nor conflict, but creativity.
- The earth is a one-time endowment.
- The earth is primary, the human is derivative.
- Humanity is a celebratory species. The universe reflects upon itself through the human. We cannot discover ourselves without first discovering the universe, the earth and the imperatives from our own being. Humans are a dimension of the earth and the universe.
- The community of creatures on earth is of greater value than any particular part.
- The earth exists and can survive only in its integral functioning, it cannot survive in fragments any more than any organism can survive in fragments.

From these assertions one can derive Berry's understanding of both the nature of the reality in which we live and any hope for a viable future.¹⁰⁸

cosmology, see Brian Swimme, "Berry's Cosmology," *Cross Currents* 35 (Summer/Fall 1987), 218-224. Heather Eaton, "Feminists or Functional Cosmology? Ecofeminist Musings on Thomas Berry's Functional Cosmology," *Ecotheology*, (5 and 6, 1998), 73-94.

108. These assertions are basic to Berry's functional cosmology and are reiterated

A Viable Future

For Berry, survival is possible only within the Earth system itself. The integrity of Earth is what allows the human to live and flourish. Berry eloquently described how he understood the relationship of intimacy and dependency humans have with Earth. He stated that Earth is primary and the human derivative, meaning that every aspect of human functioning—imagination, refinement of emotion, thoughts, words, and capacity for intimacy and awareness of experiences of the divine—is due to the magnificence of Earth. He wrote: “If we lived on the moon, our mind and emotions, our speech and imagination, our sense of the divine would all reflect the desolation of the lunar landscape.”¹⁰⁹

The ecological crisis is a result of the dysfunctional cultural content that, for complex and perhaps enigmatic reasons, is disconnected from our genetic coding. We need to see beyond the cultural conditioning to our fundamental origins, to, as Berry said, “reinvent the human,” and to establish viable and mutually enhancing human-Earth relationships. Berry exhibited his proclivity for the insights of primal cultures, and the conviction that in periods of cultural decline, recovery is achieved best through retrieval of the primordial insights from elemental cultures or unconscious promptings.

Berry was adamant about the need for a vision of an attractive future that provides hope for, expectation of, and enticement to the possibilities of life. Much like an addict, we must be frightened sufficiently by a lethal situation, and at the same time be attracted by an appealing dream of an alternative life.¹¹⁰ Berry proposed a new cul-

throughout his work. In particular, see the following essays in *Dream of the Earth*: “The Earth Community,” 6-12; “Human Presence,” 13-23; “The Ecological Age,” 36-49; “The New Story,” 123-137; “The Dream of the Earth: Our Way into the Future,” 194-215; and Swimme, “Berry’s Cosmology,” 218-224.

109 Berry, *Dream of the Earth*, 11.

110. Berry, “Creative Energy,” 4. Berry develops his comparison of the current cultural pathology to an addiction, in what he calls a mythic addiction, where “even when the consequences in a desolate planet are totally clear the industrial order keeps its control over human activities because of the energy generated by the mythic quality of its vision,” 4

tural myth: a cosmic creation story known through empirical observation. What Berry uniquely offered is an interpretation of *what it means*—its nuances, its intimate psychic and physical structure, and its ultimate guidance for our perilous future.

Berry delineated the conditions for an Ecozoic era that will assist in the change of consciousness necessary to enter this great stage of transformation. The reality is that future life will not flourish with the abundance and diversity of the present era. Too much has been destroyed. Berry, however, focused on a new self-understanding of humans as members of Earth community, which, with self-awareness, will consciously align humanity within the immense project of life within the universe. Berry maintained that all professions must be realigned to reflect this reality.¹¹¹ Thus economics, for example, must have as its first priority the well-being of the planet. The legal profession needs to be developed to include inter-species issues, biocide, geocide, and realities of ecological justice. We need to discover a new language, new definitions and understandings of what is happening. Our language systems are dreadfully inadequate to speak of the transformations required. The educational system must be adjusted to educate humanity to live with Earth. As well, Berry believed that all professions need to develop a sensitivity to life. He wrote: “We need to have religious sensitivity to the sacred, a deep, emotional, imaginative sensitivity to everything, from the bluebirds to the butterflies.”¹¹²

The Development of the ‘New’ or Universe Story

Berry was working within the parameters of Eurowestern culture. Although the universe story is “universal,” the language, concepts, philosophical and religious categories, and the researching and use

111. Berry reiterates the need for all professions and disciplines to be realigned with the natural world. See Berry, “The University,” public address at St. Jerome’s College (Waterloo, Ont., March 1995); “Ethics and Ecology,” public address at the Centre for Medicine, Ethics & Law, McGill University (Montreal, Que: April 1994); “The New Political Alignment”; “The American College in the Ecological Age,” *Religion and Intellectual Life* VI, no. 2 (Winter 1989): 7-28.

112. Dunn and Lonergan, eds., *Befriending the Earth*, 98.

of empirical evidence are all often from within the Eurowestern cultural heritage. While Berry travelled extensively and was cognisant of many religious and spiritual traditions, his main thrust was from and to the Eurowestern cultures, precisely because he considered these to be the most dangerous forces on the planet.¹¹³

A second reflection is that Berry does not accept a meaningless universe. He was baffled by those, such as Carl Sagan and Stephen Jay Gould, who consider any revelatory substance or purpose to the universe to be antiquated and illusory.¹¹⁴ Berry was stupefied by Weinberg's proclamation of a meaningless and pointless universe.¹¹⁵ For Berry, all life has meaning. The emergent universe is yielding the meaning.

Berry's work was immense in scope. It requires pondering to grasp the full implications of his vision. His intellectual inquiry had breadth and depth, with an astonishing capacity to integrate knowledge. Yet he only began publishing his thought in the latter half of his life. In 1978, when he was 64, Berry published his essay, "The New Story." This incorporated a skeletal version of what took him decades to understand and weave together. It is quite short, had no footnotes or references, and seems straightforward. If one is, however, aware of Berry's erudite history, then one begins to see the layers of learning and meaning that are not initially evident. "The New Story" has a lyric style. It is evocative, meaning it is appealing to mythic receptors: our dreams and desires, and our need for meaning and ultimacy. This essay indicates what became typical of Berry's style. It has breadth, depth, elegance, and clarity. It is incisive and profound.

My final comments concern Berry's essay, "The New Story," as related to his intellectual formation as previously described. The essay begins with the importance of cultural stories and our need for

113. *Ibid.*, 118.

114. The perspectives of Gould, Sagan, and Weinberg can be found in Haught, *Promise of Nature*, 12.

115. Weinberg, *The First Three Minutes*, quoted in Brian Swimme, "Cosmogogenesis," in *Worldviews and Ecology*, eds. Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994), 239. Berry often quotes this comment, and then questions how anyone could "live in such a world." Colloquium (Holy Cross Centre, July 1994), audio-cassette.

a story about how the world came to be. Then Berry discussed how such stories function by giving an account of the world and where we fit. These stories orient us, shape our sentiments, purpose, energy, offer emotional, aesthetic and spiritual fulfillment, consecrate suffering, integrate knowledge, provide a moral compass, and allow life to function in a meaningful manner. At first blush this seems reasonable, even simple. But when one ponders these dimensions of cultural stories, it becomes evident one has entered a rich, nuanced and profound arena of observation, knowledge, and wisdom. That is part of the genius of Berry.

The essay continues on the topic of the current story, and how it is dysfunctional, not able to deal with the demands of the era, and causing ecological ruin. Throughout the essay Berry described the pathos, dysfunction, cultural autism, and pathology connected to the current cultural orientation and story. There is considerable historical reference and background that provide context to his claims. Also, he wove in paragraphs about changes in the mode of human perception and social structures that accompany new understandings that are then incorporated into social narratives.

The breadth of historical overview in the first few pages of “The New Story” and the manner in which Berry presented it exemplifies his astonishing knowledge and integration of psychic processes, interior sensitivities, and religious emphasis (on redemption for example). He discussed the influence of catastrophic events such as the black plague, and the rise and significance of scientific discoveries. He presented these in the manner in which they function: their impact and consequences. At times Berry referred to Plato, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, and Dante, and later Francis Bacon and Charles Darwin.

All of this is useful to Berry for his analysis of how we become aware of the current dysfunctions. He explained the need to assess these deep within our cultures, identities, life orientations, ethics, and religious beliefs and foci: what Berry calls the larger social or cultural dimensions. He delved into our modes of perception and knowing, exposing the preference for hyper-rational modes of knowing that make the mythic levels and insights invisible. This leaves us incapable of discerning the mythos from the pathos or the symbol

from the datum. Here Berry revealed his knowledge of Vico, Eliade, Jung, and Otto.

Throughout the essay, Berry directly and indirectly referred to the dynamics of the mind and consciousness. He discusses how, as well as what, knowledge is gained. The quest for knowledge about the universe and Earth has been an extraordinary psychic feat, and successful beyond dreams. Yet, we are at an impasse because the knowledge is not understood and therefore not integrated. Gains in empirical knowledge, which have been the most significant in the past few centuries, strengthen our sense of progress, and yet diminish our sense of reality. This is an astounding claim. The success of the human mode of perception defined by empirical examination has been unquestionably effective, and yet is filled with pathos. We are seduced and intoxicated by, and addicted to, its power. Berry, similarly to Eliade, wrote of our awareness being altered and weakened, and yet we do not perceive this diminishment.

There are large sections of the essay that examine the consequences of the commitments of the Christian tradition, including how and why, and what kind of religious orientation it is fostering. Berry was critical of these commitments: the Christian focus on redemption, the centrality of a person/saviour which together blind us to seeing the universe and Earth processes and developing a sense of the whole. Berry claimed that religious experience, using the term the *numinous* from Rudolf Otto, has been reduced to “being faithful.” He suggested that religions are not functioning, their stories are not adequate, their knowledge is fragmented, and they cannot integrate with scientific discoveries due to impaired and reified epistemologies. Religions have become sectarian, and narrow.

Berry then considered contemporary science. While it is clear that science is opening the possibility of a new revelatory experience in human consciousness, the reductionist interpretation of science is preventing this revelation from occurring. Science is dominated by quantitative aspects and objectivity, and ignores the experiential and qualitative aspects.

Thus Berry has led the reader to see that both religion and science are at an impasse—individually and together. Their sectarian horizons of interpretation are too constricted to see the inner impasse,

thus are devoid of self-understanding. A second consequence is that there is no deep communion between religion and science. Both traditions are trivialized, and the potential from these distinct modes of knowing is reduced. Berry wrote that it suits both to keep this division, as neither has been able to adequately deal with the other.

It is good to remember that Berry was attentive to experiences, values, modes of knowing, and depths of perception: the dream that drives the action. He showed that from these impasses, largely unrecognized, communities are unable to derive adequate values or a moral compass from religion. Scientific knowledge is not translating into a greater appreciation for the vastness and vital dynamics of the universe and the intricate workings of the biosphere. There is no integration. Societies live with fragmented knowledge and incoherent stories. No community can live without a unifying story, assumed Berry. Social and ecological problems are not resolved because this impasse is embedded into all facets of Eurowestern culture. We cannot perceive the psychic-spiritual dimensions embedded in the physical-material, and cannot appreciate the magnitude and magnificence of existence. Hence we are waking up to ecological ruin on a vast scale with few clues as to how we arrived here. The remedy is the new story.

The last third of the essay is Berry's development of the new story. With eloquence and meticulousness, Berry offers the outline of his proposal of an integral vision, from the new context of seeing the emerging creative processes of the universe to the transmission of human visions and values. He inferred that this is a story that gives a structure of knowledge for all knowledge systems, and is a sacred story for all religion. The content of the story is the universe as an evolutionary and creative process, and is what can provide an over-all orientation for a viable future. If we can discover our role in the larger evolutionary processes, there is hope. Berry ended the essay with this phrase: "Sensitized to such guidance from the very structure and functioning of the universe, we can have confidence in the future that awaits the human venture."

Some Challenges

The remarkable contribution Thomas Berry made is only beginning to be discovered and disseminated. We cannot forget the extensive intellectual roots, and routes he took to learn, reflect and brood. Many people are attracted to Thomas Berry's work. Those who met him are likely to be cautious in assuming we have readily understood. For those whose access is only through his publications, there are recurring challenges that are evident. One is the tendency to simplify Berry's proposal, especially his notion of a new story or a functional cosmology. His writing style was clear, sharp, and reflective, and overall is in accessible language rather than academic jargon. There are no reference notes, and he did not reveal the decades of study that led to his thoughts. This is intentional. Berry wrote to a general rather than a specialist audience, and sought to arouse and inspire, rather than describe, explain, analyse, argue, or defend.

There is much confusion around what Berry intended by the new story, and what others are suggesting he meant. The debates around one versus many stories are tiresome. Knowing the intellectual roots to and meanings embedded within the new story should assist in realizing that this is not another hegemonic, imperialist narrative. If we are to promote Berry's work, it behooves us to understand it with depth and precision.

Learning about the universe, and how Berry interpreted it and our roles within it, evokes an awakening and celebration of self, life, Earth, and the universe of unusual power. To experience this is profound, life-changing, and rare. Some seek kindred spirits and communities dedicated to the new cosmology. While this is understandable, we can lose interest in the sufferings and complexities of the world. The larger and more difficult questions we must face, indeed the concerns that preoccupied and motivated Berry, were how to engage neo-liberal capitalism, corrupt or weak governments, corporations, free trade agreements, international concentrations of power, poverty, structural domination, education, and the religious traditions. He was immensely disturbed by human suffering as well as that of the Earth community. Much more work needs to be done, although it is good to take a pause here and celebrate Thomas Berry.

Earth as Our Primary Healer?

Dennis O'Hara

I am a chiropractor and naturopath, have practiced both, and have taught both. Later I studied theology and became a professor of theology. I was quite intrigued when my theological studies included works of Thomas Berry and I came across his thoughts on human health. Berry argues that “we cannot have well people on a sick planet,”¹ and then asserts that “medicine in [the ecological age] would envisage the earth as primary healer. It would also envisage integration with earth’s functioning as the primary basis of health for the human being.”² My doctoral dissertation wove strands from my earlier health-related professional studies and practices with my theological studies, with a focus on Berry, to fashion an understanding of the spiritual dimension of human health.

With a cultural historian’s ability to comprehend the complexities of long swathes of human history, Berry understood how cosmologies and religions provide a context for cultures to frame the meaning of their existence. Accordingly, when the scientific understanding of our universe story switched from a heliocentric alignment of one galaxy to a continuously expanding, irreversible, evolutionary cosmogenesis of billions of galaxies, Berry discerned that there was a pressing need to better understand how this new context might help us reawaken to the meaning of our existence. This need for a new context was pressing since the attitudes and values derived from our old cosmology had led to the devastation of Earth. More specifically, we had been operating from a dysfunctional state of mind that had permitted us to ravage the planet upon which our lives were dependent; and coming to this realization, we had not only continued our pathological practices but even intensified them. In doing

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1. Thomas Berry and Thomas Clarke, *Befriending the Earth: A Theology of Reconciliation*, ed. Stephen Dunn and Anne Lonergan (Mystic, Connecticut: Twenty-Third Publications, 1991), 100.
 2. Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Books, 1988), 104.

so, we contradicted one of the most basic principles that govern the behaviour of all life forms—self-preservation. Berry prescribed the removal of the dysfunctional cosmology that had schooled us into this crisis, and the adoption of a more functional cosmology. Without the implementation of a new cosmology and an understanding of its implications—i.e., a new context—it would not be possible to remedy the aberrant behaviors and values—i.e., the content—that were laying waste to the planet.

This approach of first gaining a correct understanding of context prior to focusing on content is typical of a holistic approach, especially as used in holistic medicine. Generally speaking, the word holistic “reflects a concern for wholeness, a desire for integration, and an attempt to understand the connections between the various aspects that constitute a given reality.”³ Commonly, holism is distinguished by four principles, namely that (1) entities and systems in the universe exist as unified wholes; (2) the parts of a whole are dynamically interdependent and interrelated; (3) a whole cannot be comprehended through an isolated examination of its constituent parts, no matter how many parts are added and/or studied; and (4) the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.⁴ Holism pursues the integrated, interactive whole of the reality being considered.

In Western medicine, it has often been thought that one could take a reductionistic approach to healthcare and transform it to a holistic approach by paying attention to the psychological, social and/or spiritual needs of the patient. In reality, this simply adds more silos to an already atomistic approach. Holism is about context; adding more content to a reductionistic model does not transform it into a holistic contextual model. In holism, one begins with the big picture or story—in other words, the context—and then focuses on specific content, coming to understand that content in terms of its relationship with the whole. If one wishes to take an integrated approach to a problem or to address a systemic or global problem,

3. Wilkie Au, “Holistic Spirituality,” in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, ed. Michael Downey (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 488.

4. Dianne E. Cmich, “Theoretical Perspectives of Holistic Health,” *Journal of School Health* 54, no. 1 (1984): 30-31.

then one needs to begin with a clear understanding of the context of the issue. In healthcare, this means beginning with the question “who is this patient?” before answering the questions “what is her/his complaint and diagnosis?”

This is not a new approach. As noted in the Hippocratic treatise on *Airs, Waters, and Places*, which Western medicine has claimed as a foundational text for modern medicine, Hippocrates (ca. 460-370 BCE) insisted that human health required a state of equilibrium between the physical body and mind, and between the person and the *external environment*.⁵ These were considered to be mutually dependent in a reciprocal and vital relationship; human health was judged to be inseparable from, dependent upon, and nourished by the environs. Hippocrates would advise his student physicians that, prior to meeting with a patient, they should assess the environs within which that patient lived. How were the agricultural fields in the community? Were the soils robust or depleted? How were the waters? Were they flowing or stagnant? How was the air? Was it too heavy or too active? Only when a physician understood the patient's environs could the physician begin considering a particular ailment: context was discerned before content.

Turn the clock forward a couple of hundred years and we can hear a debate between the physiologist and physician, Claude Bernard (1813-1878), and the developer of microbiology, Louis Pasteur (1822-1895). Pasteur argued that the cause of disease was the invasion of the body by germs. Hence, to cure diseases it was only necessary to discover ways to kill the germs, which Pasteur had already done through the use of vaccines. Bernard, however, argued that the human was not only affected by his or her external environment (including the germs in the environment), but also by his or her *milieu intérieur*. This interior “terrain” enabled the body to adapt to its external environment and gave it the vitality needed to repel infectious bacteria. Bernard asserted that if the interior environment of our bodies or if our vitality were compromised, then we could not optimally withstand infections that threatened our health. If the “ecosystem” of our body was less than healthy, bacteria

5. René Dubos, “Hippocrates in Modern Dress,” in *Ways of Health*, ed. David S. Sobel (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979), 206-207.

that were ever present and regularly repelled by our body's defences could take advantage of that weakness and cause illness. To some degree, Bernard's position parallels Berry's approach to health. Just as we cannot have healthy people on a sick planet, we cannot be healthy when our *milieu intérieur*—our internal ecosystem or inner planet—is sick.

The success of Pasteur's vaccinations against several infectious diseases, however, settled the public debate in Pasteur's favour. His victory influenced the direction of Western medicine as it sought to isolate the single offending cause of each disease so that the cause might be eradicated; and, thus, the germ theory of disease was born.⁶ Content—the invading germ or malfunctioning organ—became the focus; context—the health of the whole person and her/his situation and relationship with the environment—was put aside. I suspect that Berry would have cheered for Bernard in that debate.

Berry's early study of the long arc of human history and cultures prepared him for his later study of the longer arc of the universe story. In the case of the former, he had studied shifts in human cultures as well as the reasons for those shifts. With his study of the new universe story, he identified the profound dysfunctionality of our current time, both in its cosmological vision and its operative values, and the necessity to update the former to reinvent the latter. Like a good holistic practitioner, Berry began with the contextual questions of "What is our cosmology and its implications?" and "Who is Earth?" before seeking to diagnosis the ills of particular human behaviours or actions.

With this larger context in mind, I'll now review Berry's discussion of health at a contextual level, including the notion of Earth as primary healer. Then, I'll recall his more particular focus on the profession of Western medicine. Berry's discussion of Western medicine will then be considered, following the holistic model of rearticulating the particular or content within the understanding of the context, within the context of cosmogenesis. Finally, I'll consider the strengths and weaknesses of Berry's approach.

6. While Louis Pasteur did not originate the doctrine of specific etiology—that honour is perhaps best claimed by Pierre Fidèle Bretonneau (1778-1862—he and Robert Koch (1843-1910) were perhaps its leading proponents.

In an early articulation of Berry's "Twelve Principles for Reflecting on the Universe and the Role of the Human in the Universe Process" principle seven asserts that "the earth, within the solar system, is a self-emergent, self-propagating, self-nourishing, self-educating, self-governing, self-healing, self-fulfilling community."⁷ Although the principle speaks of Earth's self-healing rather than health, each of the other attributes can be understood to contribute to a dynamic of health for Earth and for its transformation. The principle also states that "all particular life-systems must integrate their functioning with this larger complex of mutually dependent earth systems."⁸ This is because "there is only one earth community, one economic order, one health system, one moral order, one world of the sacred."⁹ Since Earth would establish the primary conditions for human emergence, well-being and perdurance, and since Earth "can do without humans" but "humans cannot do without Earth," Berry would conclude that "the earth is primary; humans are derivative."¹⁰ By extension, Earth is our primary healer.

That is, recognizing the intercommunion among all the living and nonliving systems of the planet, and even of the entire universe..., medicine...would envisage the earth as primary healer. It would also envisage integration with earth's functioning as the primary basis of health for the human being. The role of the physician would be to assist in interpreting the earth-human relationship and guiding the human community in its

7. Thomas Berry, "Twelve Principles for Reflecting on the Universe and the Role of the Human in the Universe Process," *Cross Currents* 37, no. 2-3 (1987): 176. See also: Thomas Berry, "Twelve Principles: For Understanding the Universe and the Role of the Human in the Universe Process," in Anne Lonergan and Caroline Richards, eds., *Thomas Berry and the New Cosmology* (Mystic, Connecticut: Twenty-Third Publications, 1990), 108.

8. Ibid.

9. Thomas Berry, "The Ecozoic Era," Eleventh Annual E.F. Schumacher Lecture. Great Barrington, MA. October, 19, 1991, accessed November 21, 2015, <http://www.centerforneweconomics.org/publications/lectures/berry/thomas/the-ecozoic-era>

10. Thomas Berry, "A New Era: Healing the Injuries We Have Inflicted On Our Planet," *Health Progress* 73, no. 2 (1992): 63.

intercommunion with the earth, with its air and water and sunlight, with its nourishment and the opportunity it offers for the expression of human physical capacities. [In] the emerging ecological age, the age of the growing intercommunion among all the living and nonliving systems of the planet, . . . medicine in this context would envisage the earth as primary healer. It would also envisage integration with earth's functioning as the primary basis of health for the human being.¹¹

Our genetic coding bonds us with this intercommunion of Earth. On the personal level, Berry notes, it "brings about a healing whenever we sustain any physical injury. . . . It provides the ability to speak and think and create. It establishes the context of our relation with the Divine. All this is carried out by the spontaneities within us."¹² On a species level, Berry states, "We must reach far back into the genetic foundations of our cultural formation for a healing and a restructuring at the most basic level" so that we reform our cultural coding in ways that reintegrate us into the intercommunion with Earth;¹³ that is, in ways that are mutually enhancing for us and the rest of the Earth community.¹⁴

Berry paid particular attention to the ways that "our plundering industrial economy" has disrupted the very biosystems of Earth upon which our well-being depends.¹⁵ Consequently, he asserted that humans must heal the ecosystems they have damaged,¹⁶ and live in ways that are deeply integrated within Earth's systems and mutually

11. Thomas Berry, *Dream of the Earth*, 104.

12. *Ibid.*, 196.

13. *Ibid.*, 210-211.

14. *Ibid.*, 212. Cf., "The Earth is primary and the human derivative. . . . The first concern in every field of human endeavour must be the integration with the Earth community. If this community is diminished in its well-being, then every particular being within the Earth community is so diminished. Yet we try to be healthy on a sick planet, through medical technologies. We try to advance the gross national product in economics, while diminishing the gross Earth product. Absurd." Thomas Berry, "Art in the Ecozoic Era," *Art Journal* 51, no. 2 (Summer 1992): 48.

15. Berry, "A New Era," 60. Cf., Thomas Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999), 108.

16. Berry, "A New Era," 63.

enhancing for both humanity and the planet if they wish to flourish.¹⁷ Therefore, our sciences and technologies also need to be “coherent with the integral functioning of the natural life systems. We... need sciences that understand the natural world, not simply through analytic, reductionist, quantitative, or mechanistic approaches, but through the holistic, qualitative, and organic modes of functioning of the natural world within a self-organizing universe.”¹⁸

More specifically for healthcare, Berry declares, “future healthcare professionals must envisage their role within this larger context, or their efforts will fail in their basic objective. Although until recently healthcare providers could ignore this larger context, such neglect can no longer be accepted... Even with all our medical technologies, we cannot have well humans on a sick planet. Planetary health is essential for the well-being of every living creature.”¹⁹

Like other professions, Berry notes, the tendency in Western medicine “is to enter into a ‘Technozoic’ era, an era when we would depend even more extensively on the scientific skills we use to impose our mechanistic processes on the earth’s biosystems. We tend to increase our skills in manipulative processes rather than increase those subjective and evocative processes whereby living creatures achieve integral well-being. Living beings are not machines.”²⁰

Seeking to expand the horizon for the practice of medicine, Berry affirms:

17. Thomas Berry, “The Dream of the Earth: Our Way into the Future,” *Cross Currents* 37, no. 2-3 (1987): 212.

18. Berry, “A New Era,” 63.

19. *Ibid.*, 60. Cf., “The greatest lesson healthcare professionals can learn is that the health of the earth is indivisible. If the air, the water, the soil, and the plants, grains, and animals that provide our food are in distress, then human health will not be sustained for long. Containing the toxins produced through our chemical industries and through our energy systems and processing organic wastes back into the earth are ultimately of profound concern for individuals, government, the legal profession, educators, and religion, as well as for the healing professions. Yet healthcare professionals have their own immediate concern with the consequences of these disorders for the earth’s functioning. To an increasing degree, many human illnesses are either caused by or aggravated by environmental disorders.” *Ibid.*, 62.

20. *Ibid.*, 62.

The profession of medicine must now consider its role, not only within the context of human society, but in the context of the Earth process. A healing of the Earth is a prerequisite for the healing of the human. Adjustment of the human to the conditions and restraints of the natural world constitutes the primary medical prescription for human well-being. The medical profession needs to establish a way of sustaining the species as well as the individual if the human is to be viable as a species within the community of species.²¹

But how will Western medical professions undertake such an enormous and fundamental conversion and transformation from a reductionistic focus on content to an integrative, holistic focus within a cosmological context? Not surprisingly, Berry has a suggestion for the new way of thinking that might be adopted, if not much to say about the practical steps to bring about the transformation. He notes:

While our universities have gone through many transitions since they first came into being in the early medieval period, they have never experienced anything like the transition that is being asked of them just now. The difficulty cannot be resolved simply by establishing a course or a program in ecology, for ecology is not a course or a program. Rather it is the foundation of all courses, all programs, and all professions because ecology is a functional cosmology. Ecology is not a part of medicine; medicine is an extension of ecology. Ecology is not a part of law; law is an extension of ecology. So too, in their own way, the same can be said of economics and even the humanities.²²

I have met very few medical physicians who truly grasp this notion when I present it to them, and even fewer who agree with it at any level. I think that part of the obstacle is the elitism that is schooled into professionals and the relative place of ecology in the

21. Thomas Berry, *The Great Work*, 66-67.

22. *Ibid.*, 84.

hierarchy of academia. For most physicians, it is one thing to say that medicine must understand its principles and practices within a cosmological context; it is a much more humbling and therefore somewhat offensive suggestion to say that “medicine is an extension of ecology.” Too often, ecology is understood as merely the study of the relations of organisms to each other and to their physical surroundings, and what has that got to do with human diseases? Berry views ecology on a larger more dynamic scale, so the conversation tends to trip over a disconnected use of the word “ecology.” While it might be possible to overcome this obstacle through a shift in language and images, it is important to note that the disconnect between Berry’s prescription for the profession of Western medicine and the profession’s reception of his perspective is more complex than mere confusion over the word “ecology.”

To shift from anthropology to “Earthology” and cosmology, Berry has suggested that we “learn from the primal, indigenous peoples of the world who from the beginning have recognized this larger context of human affairs.”²³ With this in mind, let me quote Jack D. Forbes (January 7, 1934–February 23, 2011) who was born in Long Beach, California of Powhatan-Renapé and Lenape descent. Like Berry, Forbes often writes with words that are both evocative and provocative.²⁴ Forbes says of indigenous peoples,

For us, truly, there are no ‘surroundings.’ I can lose my hands and still live. I can lose my legs and still live. I can lose my eyes and still live. ... But if I lose the air I die. If I lose the sun I die. If I lose the earth I die. If I lose the water I die. If I lose the plants and animals I die. All of these things are more a part of me, more essential to my every breath, than is my so-called body. *What is my real body?* We are not autonomous, self-sufficient beings as European mythology teaches.... We are rooted just like the trees. But our roots come out of our nose

23. Berry, “A New Era,” 63.

24. For example, see: Jack D. Forbes, *Columbus and Other Cannibals: The Wetiko Disease of Exploitation, Imperialism, and Terrorism* (New York, NY: Seven Stories Press, 2008).

and mouth, like an umbilical cord, forever connected with the rest of the world.”²⁵

Forbes' words evoke an image that succinctly captures Berry's declaration that it is not possible to have healthy people on a sick planet. He also reminds us that our bodies are not limited to what Alan Watts has described as our “skin-encapsulated egos;”²⁶ our bodies are not strictly demarcated from the environs we inhabit, but instead are in a continuous discourse with the same.

In a more cosmic vein, I would also invoke what might be called ecozoic vitalism. Stated in its broadest terms, vitalism is the theory or belief that life processes cannot be entirely explained via their physical and chemical phenomena alone. According to the proponents of vitalism, life processes also arise from and contain a non-material vital principle or vital force which not only organizes or orders that particular entity into a recognizable being, but also connects the entity with the greater order or intelligibility of the universe. The micro order of the entity ought to be properly aligned with the macro order of the universe. There is an intelligibility to the universe, and the principle that orders the person is the principle that orders the universe. Life is not reducible to a mere concoction of physical and chemical reactions but is the process of becoming more than the sum of its parts, guided by this ordering vital principle.²⁷

25. Jack D. Forbes, “Indigenous Americans: Spirituality and Ecos,” *Daedalus* 130, no. 4 (2001): 291.

26. Joanna Macy, “The Greening of the Self,” in *Dharma Gaia*, ed. Allan H. Badiner (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1990), 53. Cf., Arthur J. Fabel, “Environmental Ethics and the Question of Cosmic Purpose,” *Environmental Ethics* 16, (Fall 1994): 312. Michael Zimmerman quite rightly reminds us that “ego consciousness, which is necessarily dualistic, is a major achievement in human evolution.” However, he also observes that ego consciousness is characterized by its tendency to differentiate and dissociate itself from the body, from nature and from woman. And regrettably, while rationality and ego consciousness emerged together in the history of the human, the latter initially defined but now confines the former. Subsequently, any further emergence into cosmic or interrelated consciousness tends to be perceived as irrational. See: Michael E. Zimmerman, “Quantum Theory, Intrinsic Value, and Pantheism,” *Environmental Ethics* 10, no. 1 (1988): 13, 15.

27. It has been argued that the discovery of DNA successfully displaced notions

Over the centuries, vitalism's popularity has waxed and waned, and its core principles have been articulated in various ways, often in response to the mysteries and persistent questions of that time. Nevertheless, there are arguably several core tenets of vitalism that can enhance our current understanding of human health whether it is associated with ecosystem health or contextualized within a cosmological vision.

A healthy response to the stressors that we daily experience, e.g., the everyday micro-injuries that assail us or a continually changing environment, involves the innate intelligence of the body's self-regulatory mechanisms selecting sufficiently adaptive responses without compromising individual integrity. Innate intelligence also accomplishes such mundane tasks as regulating our breathing, digesting our food, and repairing and replicating our tissues. This innate intelligence is an internal, intrinsic wisdom of the body that acts as the healer within, manifesting the natural healing power of the body (the *vis medicatrix naturae*). Our innate intelligence includes our genetic coding that has emerged through the processes and experiments of cosmogenesis.²⁸ Our genetic coding not only guides our

of vitalism. This might be true if vitalism was understood only within narrow parameters for bringing life out of matter, but contemporary vitalists tend to envision vitalism within a larger horizon of meaning that includes a teleological cosmos guided by an ordering principle, *logos*. For various perspectives on vitalism, see: Richard A. Hutch, "Health and Healing: Spiritual, Pharmaceutical, and Mechanical Medicine," *Journal of Religion and Health* 52, no. 3 (2013): 955-965; Ana M. Ning, "How 'Alternative' Is CAM? Rethinking Conventional Dichotomies Between Biomedicine and Complementary/Alternative Medicine," *Health: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the Social Study of Health, Illness & Medicine* 17, no. 2 (2013): 135-158; Tom Vinci and Jason Scott Robert, "Aristotle and Modern Genetics," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 66, no. 2 (2005): 201-221; Susan Oyama, "Biologists Behaving Badly: Vitalism and the Language of Language," *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences* 32, no. 2/3 (2010): 401-423; and, Hilde Hein, "The Endurance of the Mechanism: Vitalism Controversy," *Journal of the History of Biology* 5, no. 1 (1972): 159-188.

28. Innate intelligence and genetic coding are not identical. An example illustrates how they are different. Suppose that both a salamander and I have a toe amputated during an injury. The bleeding at the site of our wounds will gradually cease because the innate intelligence of our respective bodies preserves our existence by healing wounds. However, the salamander will

unprompted responses to life's adventures, affecting how we will grow, flourish, heal, speak, think, create and procreate, but it also bonds us to the Earth's ecosystems in ways that are mutually enhancing, since our genetic coding has emerged from within Earth's evolutionary creativity.²⁹ Berry has associated these spontaneities and our genetic coding with the numinous mystery from which the universe emerged and that continues to guide cosmogenesis.³⁰

Some authors have argued that an evolutionary consciousness or innate intelligence seems to be working in cosmogenesis. That is, evolutionary processes seem to be driven by a type of energy or intelligence that might be described by Henri Bergson's *élan vital*, Teilhard de Chardin's psychic or radial energy, or Ilya Prigogine's self-organizing forces.³¹

More primal or elder cultures were conscious of our embeddedness "in a place and a history, in the rhythms of climate, in the contours of a landscape" and the power of the environs about us.³² Earth and its life forms and systems were "consistently experienced as not only alive but also sentient, a great Being with whom we [could] communicate and exchange energy."³³ Because a person was considered to be formed by and within an organic relationship with the planet, a transactional bond, an ongoing dialogue and a creative co-existence with the biosphere and its inhabitants had to be maintained. To break faith with that relationship would not only have been an irrational act, it would have violated the sacredness of such

grow a new toe while I will have to be satisfied with a healthy stump. The genetic coding of the salamander is sufficiently evolved to manufacture new limbs while mine is not. The innate intelligence of the salamander causes the new toe to grow, but only because its genetic coding has prescribed how this can occur. The innate intelligence is the genetic coding in action.

29. Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*, 196, 199, 200-201, 208.
30. *Ibid.*, 47-48; Berry and Clarke, *Befriending the Earth*, 52, 77-78, 196-197.
31. A. Stikker, "Evolution and Ecology," in *A New Medical Model: A Challenge for Biomedicine?*, ed. H. Balner (Amsterdam: Swets & Zeitlinger, 1990), 85.
32. Theodore Roszak, *The Voice of the Earth* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 76.
33. Joan Halifax, "The Third Body: Buddhism, Shamanism, and Deep Ecology," in *Dharma Gaia* 23. See, also: Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), 11-13.

an intimate, life-generating, and life-sustaining bond.³⁴

Health practitioners who recognize this more holistic integration of factors contributing to human health also recall that the human body is inherently directed toward its own repair, growth and maintenance. These ecozoic vitalists recognize that the body's innate intelligence is ultimately responsible for the healing of the body's ills. It is this innate intelligence that orders each person's body into its unique existence.³⁵ Henry Lindlahr, a physician and naturopathic doctor from the turn of the 20th century, using the language of his time, described this innate intelligence in terms of a vital force that animates the body. This [vital] force, which permeates, heats and animates the entire created universe, is the expression of the divine will, the 'logos,' the 'word' of the great creative intelligence.... It is this supreme power and intelligence, acting in and through every atom, molecule, and cell in the human body, which is the *true healer*, the 'vis medicatrix naturae' which always endeavors to repair, to heal, and to restore the perfect type. All a physician can do is to remove obstructions and to establish normal conditions within and around the patient, so that 'the healer within' can do [its] work to the best advantage.³⁶

When Evelyn Underhill wrote her landmark book, *Mysticism: The Preeminent Study in the Nature and Development of Spiritual Consciousness*, in 1911, she argued that vitalists were so focused on the world of becoming that they neglected the world of being. I would argue that a vitalist in the Ecozoic Era would blend being and becoming rather than holding them in reductionistic isolation. This ecozoic vitalist, who shares the mystical sensibility of St. Francis of Assisi, knows the Sun and Moon, Fire and Water, Earth and Air, as brothers and sisters, and knows that numinous mystery is in all and all is in numinous mystery.³⁷ At the same time, the ecozoic vitalist will recognize that the order and intelligibility of the universe,

34. Halifax, 23; Roszak, *Voice of the Earth*, 76-79.

35. Michael Murray and Joseph Pizzorno, *Encyclopedia of Natural Medicine* (Rocklin, California: Prima, 1991), 6.

36. Henry Lindlahr, *Nature Cure* (Chicago: Nature Cure Publishing Co., 1924), 26 (Lindlahr's emphasis).

37. In 1979, St. Francis of Assisi was named by Pope John Paul II as the patron saint of the environment.

the wisdom of creation, the logos, has a source that both precedes and surpasses its phenomenal manifestation. If the universe story is a meaningful adventure going somewhere, then it presumably has both a significant source and a meaningful goal, and that source and goal might be considered to be the ultimate mystery, the *logos*, from which all that is comes.³⁸

As Thomas Berry observes, “awakening in the depth of human psychic awareness [is] a sense of ultimate mystery and how ultimate mystery communicates itself” from beyond the confines of the phenomenal world. As we increasingly renew our awareness of the universe as a revelatory experience, as a manifestation of the presence of the divine, we are becoming attentive to “a special interior depth of awareness” arising beyond ourselves yet from within creation and ourselves.³⁹ Just as all of creation, although diverse in its variety and unique in its individual manifestations, is joined in a common story, so also is our diverse experience of the numinous united by the unity of the source of that experience and the unity of the one who knows that experience.

Berry's genius provides- us with an extraordinary understanding of context, a context that both addresses the critical issues of our time and offers a way into the Ecozoic era. His writings are brief on the particularity of our responses within that context, i.e., the content, but that is our task, especially when it comes to reinventing institutions and professions, including those dedicated to health.

38. Cf., Berry, *Dream of the Earth*, 196-197, 200; Berry and Clarke, *Befriending the Earth*, 73.

39. Berry and Clarke, *Befriending the Earth*, 7.

Being Cosmos: The Human Relationship to Cosmos in Thomas Berry and Confucius

Sheri Ritchlin

In 1948, Thomas Berry traveled to China to teach and to study Chinese language and culture. His trip was cut short in 1949 by the Maoist revolution and he returned to study Chinese language at Seton Hall University. This opened up deeper layers of meaning in the classic Confucian texts and he went on to teach the *I Ching* and Confucianism, among other Asian traditions, at Seton Hall, St. John and Fordham Universities.

Berry found in Confucian thought an integral view of the Cosmos, Earth, and the human that touched on his own deepening concerns about contemporary trends that violated this relationship. In a 1973 article, Berry offered this description of the “profound intercommunion of Heaven, Earth and Human” that he found there: “The Cosmos is encompassed in the human and the human in the Cosmos.... The highest ontological attraction of things to each other in the Confucian tradition can be indicated quite simply by the word ‘communion’” (Berry 1973, 2). This statement foreshadows his primary cosmological concept that the universe is a communion of subjects and not a collection of objects.

Cosmology and Cosmos

In order to grasp the view of cosmology and Cosmos that we find in both Confucius and Thomas Berry, we need a clear definition of the terms as they appear in this paper. Here they are defined by the *American Heritage Dictionary*:

Cosmos

1. The universe regarded as an orderly, harmonious whole.
2. An ordered, harmonious whole.
3. Harmony and order as distinct from chaos.

Cosmology

1. The study of the physical universe considered as a totality of phenomena in time and space.
 - a. The astrophysical study of the history, structure, and constituent dynamics of the universe.
 - b. A specific theory or model of this structure and these dynamics.

While these two definitions appear to be irreconcilable, we can find in them some correlation with popular descriptions of the two hemispheres of the brain.¹ In this description, the left hemisphere is identified as the primary locus of rational, linear and analytical thinking and the right, as the primary locus of spatial, imagistic and holistic thinking. The left brain is also seen as the dominant center for language. The English language is made up of sentences with a subject, an object, and a verb, so it could be argued that the separation of subject and object is structured into the language itself. The Chinese language is composed of images, enabling a perspective more closely related to the right brain functions in our description. This is an oversimplification but it provides a useful analogy as a starting point. These differences can loosely be seen in our definitions of cosmology and Cosmos.

In his classic *History of Chinese Philosophy*, Fung Yu-lan, writing in the 1930s, makes this distinction between Western and Chinese philosophy.

Chinese philosophers for the most part have not regarded knowledge as something valuable in itself, and so have not sought knowledge for the sake of knowledge... Even in the case of knowledge of a practical sort that might have a direct bearing upon human happiness, Chinese philosophers have preferred to apply this knowledge to actual conduct that would lead directly to this happiness, rather than to hold what they

1. I say "popular" because our scientific understanding of brain functions grows more subtle and complex every year and this model would no longer be seen as neurologically accurate. Nevertheless it continues to have impact on psychology, education and other fields.

considered to be empty discussions about it. (Fung and Bodde 1952, 2)

Fung traces this basic difference to the emergence in the West of the consciousness by the ego of itself. “Once it has consciousness of itself, the world immediately becomes separated into two: the ego and the non-ego, or what is subjective and what is objective. From this division arises the problem of how the subjective ego can have knowledge of the objective non-ego...” (Fung and Bodde 1952, 1). In Chinese thought, he adds, the lack of such a consciousness resulted in little attention paid to the division between the ego and the non-ego, subjective and objective.

Richard Tarnas, a historian of Western thought, acknowledges the forging of the autonomous self in the West during the modern period. He notes that this made possible “a new freedom from externally imposed meanings and orders that had previously been seen as embedded in the cosmos, and upheld and enforced by traditional structures of cultural authority” (Tarnas 2006, 21). But he adds that this freedom was attained at a great cost: the disenchantment of the cosmos.

Disenchantment, the denial of intrinsic meaning and purpose, essentially *objectifies* the world—and thereby denies *subjectivity* to the world. Objectification denies to the world any capacity to intend, to signify intelligently, to express its meaning, to embody and communicate humanly relevant purposes and values. To objectify the world is to remove from it all subjective categories, such as meaning and purpose, by perceiving these as projections of what are now regarded as the only true subjects, human beings. (Tarnas 2006, 21)

Berry echoes this thought: “We gave away our subjectivity, our very souls to the objective, reasoning mind. You might say we conspired in our own diminishment in agreeing to live a divided life when interiority, or subjectivity, got lost in the process of ‘progress’” (Toben 2012, 80).

Without question, the development of objective, analytical

thought in the West is the source of the remarkable scientific advances that have improved the lives of millions of people throughout the world and brought us the wonders of the technological age.² But by the late 20th century, the exclusively objective scientific worldview described by Tarnas and Berry was showing its destructive shadow.

In an article on 21st century cosmology that appeared in the journal *Science*, astrophysicist Joel Primack and Nancy Abrams posed serious questions regarding this split.

- How many people recognize the possibility of a sacred relationship between the way the expanding universe operates and the way human beings ought to behave?
- How can we develop a planetary wisdom, now that we are a planetary power?
- What is the role of the human in the planetary evolution? (Abrams and Primack, 2001, 1770)

These are crucial questions asked by “cosmologists” who are seeking to cross that divide between our definitions of cosmology and Cosmos. As we shall see, Berry addresses these questions, often calling upon the framework of Confucian thought.

The *I Ching* and Its Confucist Commentaries

We find the earliest delineation of the Cosmos in China in one of the five great Chinese classics, the *I Ching* or *Book of Changes*. In Chinese tradition, this work arises with Fu Hsi, legendary founder of Chinese civilization and the first of the “*I Ching* sages.” According to this legend, the arrangement of the trigrams, three line figures

2. It should be noted that China, at the beginning of the 20th century, was a mere shadow of its former glory, weakened in nearly all areas and ripe for the Communist revolution that overtook it in 1949; a revolution that in the next decades virtually erased centuries of Chinese culture. By the end of the 20th century, East and West were leaning toward one another. The West was exploring Eastern thought and practices, while the East embraced scientific advances and the scientific method that had been so successful in the West. In China, Confucianism began to enjoy a revival, along with the study of Western philosophers like Alfred North Whitehead and John Dewey.

that would be used in divination, was revealed to him in the markings on the back of a tortoise that emerged from the Luo River in the 29th century BCE. Evidence of oracle bone and tortoise shell divination (yarrow stalks were later used) have been found dating from the last centuries of the Shang dynasty, between the 14th and 11th centuries BCE. In oracle bone inscriptions from that period, the act of the ancestors in meeting the gods was called *pin*.³ “Dead ancestors were often seen, in the records of the kings, to *pin* Shang Ti, in the course of which the king’s requests from the profane world were turned over to the Supreme Being” (Chang 1976, 161). This single word embraces ideas of prayer, divination, reception, and petition. In every case, it must be seen as an act of *opening up* between Heaven and Earth by the person of the sage or king. Through the instrument of the oracle—usually within the sacred precinct of the temple—the sage or king penetrates the world of Heaven. This extended also to the actual task of taking astronomical measurements of the heavens necessary to making adjustments to the calendar; putting the people, in their daily lives, in accord with Heaven.

The *I Ching* or *Book of Changes* that has come down to us includes the first textual statements appended by King Wen, founder of the Chou dynasty (c. 1046–256 BCE), in statements appended by his son, the Duke of Chou—identified as the second and third of the *I Ching* sages—and Ten Wings or Commentaries attributed to the fourth *I Ching* sage, Confucius (551–479 BCE). While recent scholarship suggests that Confucius was not directly the author of these texts, they nevertheless constitute one of the main pillars of Confucianism. The Ten Wings, particularly the *Ta Chuan* or Great Treatise, are deeply embedded in Chinese culture.

The One, Two, Three of the *I Ching* and Chinese Philosophy

The character for “one” (*i*) in Chinese is —, a single line. Its philosophical meaning is “the essence, the practice and the function of

3. Throughout this paper I have used an earlier Romanization system—Wade-Giles—for the transliteration of characters, rather than the present widely-used Pinyin system to avoid confusion over terms like Tao and Tai Chi. A brief glossary at the end will give the Pinyin equivalents.

the Way (*Tao*)” (Wu 1986, 1). In its function, I think of it as a process of “one-ing,” although as Lao Tzu tells us, “the Tao does nothing, yet nothing is left undone” (Ch.37). Nevertheless, he describes a process that we will meet again in the Confucist commentary on the *I Ching*. “The Way (Tao) brings forth *i* (one). One brings forth two. Three brings forth all things” (Ch.42, quoted in Wu 1986, 2). Throughout the *I Ching*, the “self-cultivated person” exercises this capacity for bringing order out of chaos through his or her own integrity—a one-ness that is shared with the Cosmos as Heaven-and-Earth. The sage is the highest expression of this, as beautifully described in the *Ta Chuan*.

In ancient times the holy sages
made the Book of Changes thus:

They invented the yarrow-stalk oracle in order to lend aid
in a mysterious way to the light of the gods.
They put themselves in accord with tao and its power [*te*: virtue],
and in conformity with this laid down the order of what is right.
By thinking through the order of the outer world to the end,
and by exploring the law of their nature to the deepest core,
they arrived at an understanding of fate.
(Wilhelm/Baynes 1977, 262)

In our scientific mode, we too “think through the order of the outer world to the end.” Through our introspective modes—philosophy, psychology, art, meditative practices—we “explore the law of our nature to its deepest core.” Through our spiritual traditions, “we seek to lend aid in a mysterious way to the light of the gods,” however that is envisioned. But the relevant idea here is this: “They put themselves in accord with *tao* and its [*te* - virtue], and in conformity with this laid down the order of what is right.” Tao as the unfolding, evolving universe is regarded as the model for “what is right.”

This sentence introduces the two principle ideas of Lao Tzu’s classic, the *Tao Te Ching*. (*Ching* means “classic book.”) In this seminal Taoist text, Lao Tzu offers a description of the beginning of creation, not as a fixed moment in time but as an ongoing origin; a description

of the way all things come into being.

There was something formed in chaos;
 It existed before heaven and earth.
 Still and solitary,
 It alone stands without change.
 It is all-pervasive without being exhausted.
 I do not know its name but name it
 Tao, the Way
 Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, Ch.25 (Wu 1989, 88)

Tao expresses evolution in its broadest and literal sense—“to roll out, unfold” as the way of the universe, constantly emerging into new forms yet always as a single process. In the Confucian classic, *The Doctrine of the Mean* (26:7), we find—“The way (tao) of Heaven and Earth may be declared in one sentence: They are without doubleness, and so they produce things in a manner that is unfathomable” (Legge 1971, 420). The universe is singular yet it is always producing a multiplicity of new forms, each one unique.

Te is usually translated as “virtue” or “power.” Both of those translations are inadequate to convey the full meaning of the word so it is useful to look for clues in the character itself.

德 *te*: virtue

In the lower right of the character is the element for heart-mind (inseparable in Chinese) and above it we find that single line meaning “one,” “straight.” Above that are “ten eyes,” meaning “ten eyes have seen it and called it straight, true, right” (Wilder and Ingram 1974, 38). It was said that before the days of square and plumb-line, ten eyes were called on to test the straightness of the frame of a house. To the left is the abbreviated character for “walking.” A literal translation for this would be “single (straight/true)-heart-and-mindedness in action before the world.”

As the human increasingly senses his or her natural course (tao) within the larger course (Tao) as the Way of Heaven-and-Earth—whether experienced in the inmost being or the external world—*te*

arises as this force of virtue, which is both the singular flowering of the individual nature and the quality of the universe coming into being. This is the meaning of a phrase that appears in the *I Ching* and the *Great Learning*—*ming ming te*: to manifest bright virtue. *Ming*, the “light, clarity” of natural inner virtue (the essence of human nature with its source in One) is brought outward to shine forth as the second *ming* through comportment and action in the world. The numinous seed that is the nature, bestowed by Heaven, is consciously and deliberately cultivated and lived out as the whole or integral person. In this way, the human could be said to lend an individual inner light to “the light of the gods” through expressing that light in the world as human thought and action.

Most Chinese philosophic schools have taught the way of what is called the “Inner Sage and Outer King.” The Inner Sage is a person who has established virtue in himself; the Outer King is one who has accomplished great deeds in the world. The highest ideal for a man is at once to possess the virtue of a Sage and the accomplishment of a ruler... (Fung and Bodde 1952, 2)

The Chinese character for two is 二. It doubles the character for one and can express the two realms of Heaven and Earth, each with its own process of one-ing. The *Ta Chuan* says, “In Heaven the images are completing. On Earth the forms are completing.” Completing is one-ing.

Ch'ien (the Creative) and *Kun* (the Receptive) are the hexagrams of Heaven and Earth and are made up respectively of all yang and all yin lines. Yang is represented as a solid line and yin, as a broken line. The yang “mode” is associated with heat, light, firmness and movement. The yin mode is associated with cold, dark, yielding and stillness.

Here is a description of the two hexagrams from the *I Ching* Ten Wings:

The way of the Creative works through change and transformation, so that each thing receives its true nature and destiny

and comes into permanent accord with the Great Harmony:
this is what furthers and what perseveres. (Wilhelm/Baynes
1977, 371)

Notice here the expression of Cosmos as “the Great Harmony.”
Through the way of the Creative as Heaven, “each thing” receives its
true nature and destiny and is brought into accord with that Great
Harmony. Thus everything in the universe is caught up in the activ-
ity of “Cosmos-making.”

The Receptive, in its riches, carries all things.
Its nature is in harmony with the boundless.
It embraces everything in its breadth
and illumines everything in its greatness.
Through it, all individual beings attain success.

The Receptive as Earth is the partner, complementary mode,
in Cosmos-making; embracing everything in harmony with the
boundless to bring each individual thing to completion.

It is important to emphasize that yin and yang do not exist inde-
pendently of one another but are two modes of a single process.
“That which lets now the dark, now the light shine through is called
Tao” (*Ta Chuan* I.5). Yi Wu explains this further: “The universe is
just one chi (energy). *Yang* chi (the Creative) is straight. When it
meets Earth (the Receptive), it turns in darkness and becomes *yin*.
Yang as the Creative gives the energy to create but it doesn’t produce
until it meets Earth.”⁴

This process, as imaged in the *I Ching*, is described in the *Ta
Chuan* (I.11) in this way:

Therefore there is in the Changes the Great Primal Beginning
Tai Chi - the Supreme Ultimate
This brings forth the two primary forces.
(Wilhelm/Baynes 1977, 318) ⁵

4. Class notes 1992, California Institute of Integral Studies.

5. Note that *chi* here is a different word from the previous one (energy) with the
meaning of “ultimate.”

These are the two modes, *Ch'ien* and *Kun*, imaged in the hexagrams for the Creative and the Receptive as Heaven and Earth.

The two realms, Heaven and Earth, must themselves be integrated for the higher one-ing to complete itself. And so there are three. The character for the numeral is three lines: ☳. This is also the figure of the trigram. The *Ta Chuan* passage continues:

Thereupon the eight trigrams were realized. The eight trigrams interacted, and afterwards the ten thousand things were born therein.

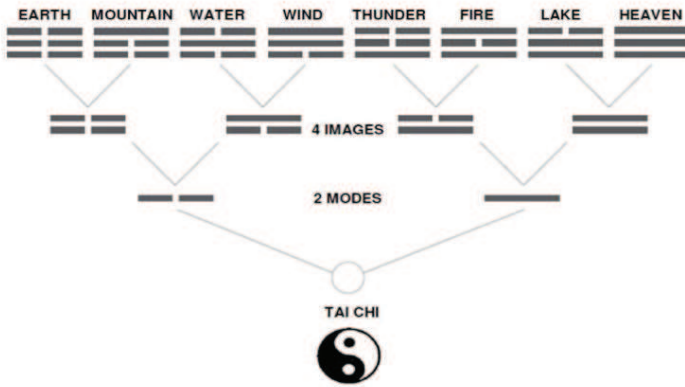


Figure 1. Graphic created by the author.

I created this graphic to illustrate the process presented in this paper. This is the first text in which the term *Tai Chi* appears, with the meaning “Supreme Ultimate” in the Wilhelm/Baynes translation. I have added the Tai Chi symbol because of its familiarity in the contemporary West, although it doesn’t appear until the 11th century when it is used as a symbol of the Supreme Ultimate among the Neo-Confucian philosophers. The martial art, Tai Chi Ch’uan, is not introduced until the 12th century.

The eight trigrams can be variously doubled to form a total of 64 hexagrams that function, (rather like the 64 DNA codons) to represent “all conditions under heaven.” As Western scientists sought units of matter, expressed in the Table of Elements, the ancient sages sought units of change, which they expressed as the system of *I*

Ching hexagrams. “They contemplated the changes in the dark and the light and established the hexagrams in accordance with them” (Wilhelm/Baynes 1977, 262).

In the context of the hexagram, the third is the realm of the human in the central position. The human is not separate from the Cosmos as Heaven-and-Earth but arises within it. The *Ta Chuan* speaks of the Three Ultimates or the Three Powers—Heaven, Earth and Human. Each of the Three Powers has its tao: “They determined the tao of Heaven and called it the dark and the light. They determined the tao of earth and called it the yielding and the firm. They determined the tao of [the human] and called it love [humane feeling] and rectitude. They combined these fundamental powers and doubled them” (Wilhelm/Baynes 1977, 262). The hexagram is a figure that is composed of two trigrams, one in the upper place of Heaven and one in the lower position of Earth. (In the diagram below I have shown the trigrams of Heaven, all yang lines, and Earth, all yin lines, in their matching positions). The hexagram figure also has a three-fold division representing the Three Powers in which the human realm emerges at the center, composed of a line of Heaven and a line of Earth—undergoing the often painful dialectic of those opposite forces to unite them through creative and procreative interaction.



Figure 2.

Berry underlines the importance of this idea and expresses it in language relevant to our own times:

The Chinese have a definition of the human as the *hsin* [heart-mind] of heaven and earth.... Thus...the human is the “understanding heart of heaven and earth.”... The phrase has [also] been translated by Julia Ch’ing in the statement that the hu-

man is “the heart of the universe.”...We are “the consciousness of the world,” or “the psyche of the universe” (Berry 1990).

Three lines as an expression of these three realms appear in the word for “king,” with the addition of a vertical line for the upright figure of the human capable of uniting the three realms in his role as sovereign.



A description of the first legendary sage-king of China in *The Book of History* (ca. 7th century BCE) shows an embodiment of the human in this central role between Heaven and Earth and offers a response to the question posed by Joel Primack and Nancy Abrams about the possibility of a sacred relation to the expanding Cosmos, the role of the human, and a wisdom that could be practiced on a planetary scale, albeit in this case it is on the scale of a kingdom.

Yao...was reverent, intelligent, accomplished, and thoughtful.... He gave distinction to the able and virtuous, behaved with love toward the nine classes of his kindred and brought order and refinement, clarity and intelligence to the people of his domain. He brought unity and harmony to the myriad states of the empire, and the black-haired people were transformed. There reigned a universal concord....

Yao commanded Hsi and He, in reverent accordance with their observation of the wide heavens, to calculate and delineate the movements and appearances of the sun, the moon, the stars, and the zodiacal spaces, and so to deliver respectfully the seasons to the people. He separately commanded the second brother...respectfully to receive as a guest [*pin*] the rising sun, and to adjust and arrange, accordingly, the labors of the spring. The emperor said “go and be reverent.” (Author’s translation adapted from Legge 1960, 15.)

It is Yao's knowledge of the Cosmos, through his astronomical observations, that inspires his awe and reverence, and that he "respectfully delivers to the people" who have been brought into harmony by his love and his example. Yao sends his third brother Nan Jiao to "arrange the transformations of the summer, and respectfully to observe the extreme limit of the shadow.... The day, said he, is at its longest, and the star is in Huo. You may thus exactly determine mid-summer. The people are more dispersed, and birds and beasts have their feathers and hair thin and change their coats" (Legge 1960, 15). This is an "opening up" in all directions—to the heavens, to the earth (as the natural world) and his people—that puts all in accord with the Great Harmony; the continuous inter-relationship between all things within the Cosmos.

Yao became the model of the enlightened human for millennia in China. He was held up as a model for school children into recent times. Almost two millennia after his recorded reign, Confucius extolled his virtues. "Great indeed was Yao as a sovereign! How majestic was he! It is only Heaven that is grand, and only Yao corresponded to it. How vast was his virtue! The people could find no name for it" (*Analects* 8:19 in Legge 1971, 214).

There is yet another way in which the three lines combine: the character *jen*, which becomes the hallmark of Confucian thought and central to Chinese culture. Here is the quality of the human when active in the central position of consciousness, as heart and mind, between Heaven and Earth.

仁 *jen*: Tao of the Human

The character for *jen* provides the most helpful clue to its meaning. It is made up of the character for "two" (also denoting Heaven and Earth) combined with the abbreviated radical for the human:

人 + 二 : 仁

The earliest Chinese dictionary says simply that *jen* means "to love each other" and adds that "it is the benevolence that must link each person (人) with his neighbor (二); mutual, reciprocal" (Wieger

1965, 28). The character also shows the human embodying Heaven and Earth and in doing so, bringing the two realms into interpenetration as an expression of one's life.

Confucius gives this definition of *jen* in the *Analects* (12:2): "It is, when you go abroad, to behave to everyone as if you were receiving a great guest [*pin*]; to employ the people as if you were assisting at a great sacrifice; not to do to others what you would not wish done to yourself" (*Analects* 12:2, Legge 1971, 251). Here again is the "opening up" of *pin* that creates the whole and the holiness of Cosmos in a uniquely human activity and spirit that "receives as a guest" the morning sun, and each individual who enters one's presence.

One difficulty in catching hold of the deeper meanings of *jen* lies in our tendency to place it either in the inner or outer world—as a subjective quality or as an outward behavior divorced from the inner condition of an individual. As Peter Hershock points out, "The central value of the Confucian Chinese view of humanity resides neither in the inner cloister of the 'self' nor in the outer personality of the 'public,' but must be seen as an orientation toward what lies vibrantly in between" (Hershock 1996, 163). The person of *jen* is one of deep self-knowledge capable of responding compassionately and generously to the world from an inner authority rather than merely reacting to the world based on its collective conditions, consensus and pressures.

The figure of the hexagram is able to image this for us as a field whose extent encompasses the inner and outer worlds, another designation of the lower and upper trigrams respectively. In Hexagram 1, for example, we see the *chün tzu* (the "complete human") developing through six phases of change from the lowest or most interior point of line one, "Hidden dragon. Do not act," to the fullest expression of line 5: "Flying dragon in the heavens. It furthers one to see the great man." (The sixth line shows the danger of excess: "Arrogant dragon has cause to repent.") While *chün tzu* has been most frequently translated into English as "the superior man," this does poor justice to the term, given our current associations with "superiority," and "man" as gender rather than species. It has also been translated as "the self-cultivated person," "the profound person," the "noble person," and "the exemplar." But above all, the *chün tzu* is the "fully

complete human,” the person of *jen*” who expands “humanness”—the innate capacities of the human—to the furthest extent.

Berry provides a description of *jen* in his Riverdale paper entitled “Affectivity [*jen*] in Classical Confucianism.”

A mutual attraction of things for each other functions at all levels of reality as the interior binding force of the cosmic, social and personal life.... Confucianism saw the interplay of cosmic forces as a single set of intercommunicating and mutually compenetrating realities. These forces, whether living or non-living, were so present to each other that they could be adequately seen and understood only within this larger complex.... Because of the intensity with which the Chinese experienced this interior, feeling communion with the real, they set themselves on perfecting themselves and the universe by increasing this sympathetic presence of things to each other within a personal and social discipline rather than by intellectual analysis (Berry 1973, 1).

Berry beautifully captures here the relationship between the cosmic, the social and the person as “compenetrating realities.” The phrase “they set themselves on perfecting themselves” echoes the description of the early sages who “put themselves in accord with Tao and its virtue.”

To more fully understand this idea and its importance to Berry’s thought, we need to look at another character that is the subject of his article on “Authenticity [*ch’eng*] in Confucian Spirituality.”

誠 *ch’eng*: Sincerity/Authenticity

We have noted in the *Ta Chuan* a description of the Three Powers, or the Three Ultimates (expressions of the Supreme Ultimate) that places the human in a position of equal importance with Heaven and Earth in the creative activity of the Cosmos. The three powers act in harmony to bring to fruition the potential of each in a constant process of perfecting and completing one another. The process is captured in the character of *ch’eng*, which contains elements for

“speech” (left) and “complete” or “perfect” (right). *Ch'eng* is usually translated as “sincerity” but is more literally an “expression of completing/perfecting.” Nothing is complete but is being completed and perfected in the continuous process of creation. Another Confucian classic, the *Doctrine of the Mean*, tells us that “Sincerity [*ch'eng*] is the way [tao] of Heaven. The attainment of sincerity is the way of men. He who possesses sincerity is he who, without an effort, hits what is right, and apprehends, without the exercise of thought; he is the sage who naturally and easily embodies the right way” (Legge 1971, 413).

Clearly the English word “sincerity” is difficult to imagine as the tao of Heaven. But if we think of it as “the expression of completing or perfecting,” we are in fact speaking of the ongoing creativity of the Cosmos as evolution itself and within it, the self-cultivation of the individual human. From this perspective, evolution is not just something that happened to things and creatures long ago *out there*—as objects in a world apart and in a distant past. Evolution is something that rises up within each of us, within all life, constantly generating new forms on a macrocosmic and microcosmic scale. Berry summarizes these ideas by saying that the small self of the individual reaches completion in the Great Self of the universe (Berry 1999, 190). The *Doctrine of the Mean* tells us that what is being completed or perfected in the human is his or her individual nature. (*Ch'eng* has also been translated as “integrity” and “authenticity.” Here I follow Berry's choice of “authenticity”).

It is through [authenticity] that the self [the individual nature] is completed. Its way (tao) is that by which man must direct himself. Without authenticity, there would be nothing. On this account, the self-cultivated man regards the attainment of authenticity as the most excellent thing.

The possessor of authenticity does not merely accomplish the self-completion of himself. With this quality, he completes other people and things also. The completing of oneself shows one's perfect virtue. The completing of other people and things shows one's knowledge. Both these are virtues belonging to the nature, and this is the way by which a union is effected of the

external and internal.

Therefore whenever he—the entirely authentic person—employs them, that is, these virtues—their action will be right. (Legge 1971, 419)

Self-completion and the completion of others, through tending one's own deep nature and opening up to the unique nature of other living things, not only leads to a mutual flourishing but brings about the union of the internal and external, the subjective and objective realms. It is this fluid, creative movement out of the subjective, internal One toward a blossoming in the manifest, external world—without duplicity—that is the source and definition of right action. This is the human performing that essential role in the central position as the heart-mind, the consciousness, of Heaven-and-Earth.

Able to give its full development to his own nature, he can do the same to the nature of other men. Able to give its full development to the nature of other men, he can give their full development to the natures of animals and things. Able to give their full development to the natures of creatures and things, he can assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth. Able to assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth, he may with Heaven and Earth form a ternion. (Legge 1971, 418)

We can look to Berry for a contemporary and more immediate description. Here he beautifully summarizes the entire process:

An original endowment which requires development throughout the entire course of our human lives, this nature has only its root form until, through the life development of a person, it comes to proper fulfillment. The basic obligation of humans is to perfect their nature. When this is accomplished we attain a complete interior spontaneity in our actions. That these actions accord with our nature, that they are spontaneous in the most profound sense of the word, that they are in harmony with all our social relationships, all this depends on the authentic

character of our being. The entire civilization was centered on achieving this authenticity [*ch'eng*]. (Berry 1970, 29)

The Great Learning

The means by which the human completes and perfects himself or herself is the subject of another of the Four Confucian classics, *The Great Learning*. This work develops the basic concepts of *tao*, *te* and *jen* into a coherent philosophy to be applied to the inner and outer worlds of the human and their expression within the social fabric of the culture. It would play a central role in the works of the 11th and 12th century Neo-Confucian philosophers of the Sung Dynasty and is still revered today. Here is a brief excerpt in which I have slightly adapted Legge's translation for clarity.

What the Great Learning teaches is—*ming ming te*
to bear into the world [evolve] the inner light of one's nature/
virtue;
to bring the people into close and harmonious relationship;
and to rest in the highest excellence.
The resting point being known, the goal is then determined;
and, that being determined, a calm composure may be at-
tained to.
Such calmness brings a tranquil repose.
In such repose there may be mindful deliberation.
Such deliberation will bring an attainment of the desired end.
(Legge 1971, 356)

To paraphrase the rest of this section, "as things are investigated, knowledge becomes complete. As knowledge becomes complete, thoughts become sincere, hearts become rectified, persons become cultivated, families become regulated, states become rightly governed and the whole kingdom is made tranquil and happy." It concludes:

From the Son of Heaven down to the mass of the people,
all must consider the cultivation of the person the root of ev-
erything besides.

It cannot be, when the root is neglected, that what should spring from it will be well ordered.

It never has been the case that what was of great importance has been slightly cared for. (Legge 1971, 359)

Tending the Root: The Return

The role of the human is to gather knowledge of the universe to its “furthest extent” [science]; to apply it with humaneness [*jen*] and rectitude [*te*] in the world so that our actions, like those of Yao, “bring unity and harmony” [Cosmos]. Thomas Berry brings these ideas into the present as what might be called an ecology of being—“being Cosmos”—in which the inner and outer worlds of the human, society, nature and the universe represent a single system of compenetrating realities.

In this context the role of the individual human becomes especially significant; for the cosmic is not simply the dimension of humankind, it is the larger dimension of the individual human person. In this enlarged experience of the individual are all those qualities of the universe itself. While this exalted ideal of personal-cosmic communion was thought of primarily as an experience of the sage-kings of ancient times and of a few later sages, it was so deeply enshrined in the tradition as the basic human ideal that it became the encompassing context within which we saw most clearly the meaning of our existence and the cosmic function that we fulfilled. (Berry 1973, 2)

This is a leap beyond merely bridging two hemispheres, as we described it in the beginning. If we look again at the movement of creative action described in the *Ta Chuan* and illustrated in Figure 1, we can see the paired opposites of yin and yang as they arise from the oneness of Tai Chi. *But they are never separate*, as the later Tai Chi symbol illustrates. The Neo-Confucian philosopher Shao Yung (1011-1077) makes this very clear. “The Supreme Ultimate is *I* (One), which is unmoving tranquility. It brings forth two, which have creative power” (Quoted in Wu 1986, 3). What defines a sage

is the capacity, not only to observe the creative process that emerges from the One to the “ten thousand things” but also the capacity to move in the reverse direction, turning back through the multiplicity, through the duality, to the One.

Berry describes this process for us in a very personal and accessible way that expresses the psychological as well as philosophical implications of the “practice” of authenticity.

In developing an authentic existence the human must pass through a dialectical process of realization [through “two” as duality]. After an early period of naïve self-identity we go through a period of self-alienation; we lose our authenticity [lost in the Ten Thousand things]. This requires that we undergo a process of recovery and further interior cultivation until we attain re-establishment of our own reality [return to the One; the center]. (Berry 1970, 28)

Su Shih—another Neo-Confucian philosopher of the 11th century—describes the result of such a process in the “fully developed human” or “the sage.”

All the *li* (principles, patterns) under heaven have always been one, but the one cannot be held fast.... This is why the sages made it clear that the [yin and the yang] and variation and transformation originally came from one, but through interaction, arrive at the infinite *li*.... Now as for the coming forth from one but reaching the infinite, when people observe this, they think there are infinite differences. But when the sages observe this, wherever they go, it is one. (Quoted in Smith, Kidder, Bol et al. 1990, 74)

Science and Religion in the “Second Mode”

In Ashok Gangadean’s interview with Thomas Berry in 2007, Berry expresses a similar idea. “The universe itself is primary in every attribute—it is one, it is diverse, and it is coherent. By ‘coherence,’ I mean the integrity of a pattern in which every created entity

is in a relationship to every other one. So there's a single but diversified universe and the understanding of the diversity and the coherence is the basic way of entering cosmology. I would say that such an understanding is the basis of religion, but it is not itself religion" (Berry 2007).

Berry is making a crucial connection here between Cosmos and cosmology in which "cosmology" is based on an understanding of the Cosmos as a single but diversified and coherent universe. The last statement, that this understanding is the basis of religion but is not itself a religion, seems particularly important. For millennia, religion has served as our access to the second mode; the source of spiritual inspiration and the vessel that holds the sacred life of a culture and defines moral action. Science has been our instrument for the "investigation of things" and for problem-solving worldwide. Yet the two have been as irreconcilable as our original definitions of cosmology and Cosmos.

By pointing to that wordless source in Oneness out of which all things arise, Berry identifies common ground for a human perspective in which religious and nonreligious people meet "at the root," however much they vary as they branch out from that point. In a secular democracy founded on religious freedom, I believe we need a collective "place-holder" for this—by whatever name—or we cannot successfully make the turn to the second mode and allow our scientific and religious traditions to be mutually enhancing.

Berry cautions that "science needs to function *within* a cosmology, not as if it *is* a cosmology" (Toben 2012, 57). His aim in presenting a new story of the universe with cosmologist Brian Swimme in their book *The Universe Story* was to open new ground in presenting a scientific explanation that did not banish the soul or ignore the inner depths and responsibilities of the human. "Scientific language," they write, "however useful in scientific investigation, can be harmful to the total human process once it is accepted as the only way to speak about the true reality of things. A more subjective language is needed to understand the subjective depth of things, to understand both the qualitative differences and the multivalent aspects of every reality" (Berry and Swimme 1992, 258).

In the same 2007 interview with Gangadean, Berry makes a rather

surprising statement, as a religious man (a priest of the Passionist order) well-versed in the scientific story of the universe: “We’re pre-occupied with a ‘science vs. religion’ issue, but I don’t think that’s the real problem. The problem with both science and religion is the lack of a cosmology.”

In the end, Berry provides a new definition of cosmology that transcends that division between cosmology and Cosmos that we noted at the outset. “The human story and the universe story is a single sacred story with the Divine as its origin and destiny. We can discern the numinous guidance that has accompanied the universe and the individual through all of its catastrophes and all of its transformations” (Toben 2012, 43). He is making the movement away from the dichotomies and polarities of the first mode in which subjective and objective are split off from one another to a new mode in which a “cosmology” embraces both, working in concert in the manner of the two modes, yin and yang. We can never “bridge” polarities from the realm of the Ten Thousand things. We can only go beneath them through the recognition of a “single but diversified universe.”

Summary

At the outset, we saw a description of two different modes of seeing and experiencing the world. In the first mode, which characterized the modern period that reached its climax in the twentieth century, Richard Tarnas and Thomas Berry both describe a worldview in which the individual human exists as an isolated subject in a meaningless universe of objects.⁶ To complicate matters further, the human can only come to understand the truth of this external world through the objectivity of analytical inquiry so the human too is divided between a subjective and objective self. The subjective self is seen as suspect; inadequate to perceive the true nature of “things.” When Berry calls for a communion of subjects, how could this be undertaken within such a worldview?

6. The Modern Era technically began with the development of the scientific method in the 17th century, but was most visible from the industrial revolution in the late 18th century onward.

The answer to this question is a redefining of subjectivity itself, which requires a radically different way of seeing and being in the world. In Berry's definition—"Subjectivity, also called 'consciousness,' is the interior numinous component present in all reality. Communion is the ability to relate to all other species due to the presence of subjectivity and differentiation. Together these create the grounds for the inner attraction of things for one another" (Toben 2012, 80).

In this second mode, which we have seen present in the ancient Chinese Cosmos of the *I Ching* and Confucianism, everything arises out of the One, the Tao that is essentially without name and form, yet also referred to as Tai Chi, the Supreme Ultimate. The unfolding itself is the Way of Heaven, which is without doubleness as a manifest expression of the completing of each thing's nature (*ch'eng*) and the nature of the universe itself. This singularity is the virtue or *te* of Heaven and Earth. All things arise within it, including the human, as a flower is first hidden in the interiority of the seed, then blossoms outward into the manifest world to "complete" itself with qualities that enhance the flourishing of other things and creatures. All creativity, microphase to macrophase, issues from this "interiority"; from subjectivity. Virtue (*te*), authenticity (*ch'eng*) and love (*jen*) are all facets of the same thing—*i* or one, as "the essence, the practice and the function" of the Way.

In Berry's description cited earlier, "the Cosmos is encompassed in the human and the human in the Cosmos" (Berry 1973, 2). Humans are "being Cosmos" in every moment that they are whole in this way—combining "external and internal" through authenticity; the spontaneous result of being true to one's nature.

[The] total efficacy associated with authenticity indicates that virtue brings the human into higher realms of being. In a special manner it brings about the intersection of the divine, cosmic and human planes of reality. It also establishes a person at the cosmic center. The resulting transforming of things is the expression of what is deepest in the reality of things, for only by virtue of higher transformation do things achieve their real being, their authentic expression. (Berry 1973, 31)

Alfred North Whitehead, among other pioneering philosophers and scientists, articulated this second mode early in the last century. He regarded self-realization as the “ultimate fact of facts” (1979, 222) and introduced us to an expanded view of cosmology: “It must be one of the motives of a complete cosmology to construct a system of ideas which brings the aesthetic, moral, and religious interests into relation with those concepts of the world which have their origin in natural science” (xii). Berry’s contribution brought it forward in simple, personal language that could guide and inspire individual action in a variety of ways to appreciate and protect the beauty of the planet and come into a mutually enhancing relationship with all living forms.

I believe that an area of Berry’s work that deserves wider attention is his articulation of the radical shift in consciousness and world view that is necessary to ensure that individuals engaged in the Great Work of our time, creating mutually enhancing human-earth relationships, develop that added dimension of inner work to put themselves in accord with the One; the root out of which all things emerge, including our own action and awareness. This is essential to being “without doubleness” and acting with integrity, with authenticity. It is essential to *being* Cosmos.

I end with a favorite quote from Berry’s *Dream of the Earth*, which so eloquently expresses “the return to the One” in the words of a 21st century sage.

We are returning to our native place after a long absence, meeting once again with our kin in the earth community. For too long we have been away somewhere, entranced with our industrial world of wires and wheels, concrete and steel, and our unending highways, where we race back and forth in continual frenzy.

The world of life, of spontaneity, the world of dawn and sunset and glittering stars in the dark night heavens, the world of wind and rain, of meadow flowers and flowing streams,...all this, this wilderness world recently rediscovered with heightened emotional sensitivity, is an experience not far from that of Dante meeting Beatrice...where she descends amid a cloud of

blossoms. It was a long wait for Dante, so aware of his infidelities, yet struck anew and inwardly “pierced,” as when hardly out of his childhood, he had first seen Beatrice. The “ancient flame” was lit again in the depths of his being. In that meeting, Dante is describing not only a personal experience, but the experience of the entire human community at the moment of reconciliation with the divine after the long period of alienation and human wandering away from the center. (Berry 1988, 1)

Wade-Giles – Pinyin Equivalents

| | | |
|------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| I Ching - Yijing | Tao – Dao | i - yi |
| pin – bin | Ta Chuan – Dachuan | Tai Chi – Taiji |
| ch’eng – cheng | jen – ren | Fu Hsi - Fuxi |

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Developing Thomas Berry's Functional Cosmology in the Trenches by Means of Story and Shared Dream Experience

Mike Bell

We are gathered at a colloquium, which is by definition, a meeting of academics or experts. Since I am neither, as I find myself somewhat intimidated. I'm counting on what Thomas wrote in the introduction to Anne Marie Dalton's wonderful book on *A Theology for the Earth*: "My intent is simply to present and to have the reader respond out of whatever background the reader might have."¹

My background is that of a practitioner—working as a community organizer in American inner cities and Canadian communities, as a Student Chaplain in Paris, and in my 27 years in the Canadian Arctic walking between indigenous Inuit and Dene cultures on the one hand and Euro-Canadian government cultures on the other hand.

In 2006 my wife and I moved from Yellowknife in the Northwest Territories to the Comox Valley on Vancouver Island in British Columbia—one of the most beautiful places to live in Canada. Since then I've been organizing against fossil fuel projects in our valley.

My subject is "Developing Thomas Berry's Functional Cosmology in the Trenches by Means of Story and Shared Dream Experience." This is a bit of a mouthful, so I thought I'd start with some explanations. Then I'll tell you where I'm going and where I'm hoping to take you.

1. Anne Marie Dalton, *A Theology for the Earth: The Contributions of Thomas Berry and Bernard Lonergan* (Ottawa, Ontario: University of Ottawa Press, 1999).

Some Clarifications

First, the meaning of a “functional cosmology.” As you are aware, cosmology is the study of how the universe and Earth were created and how they developed, along with the study of how other species and our human species developed. A functional cosmology is, in essence, a determination of meaning. It is how we translate this awareness of the universe and Earth into actions that guide our lives. And, since Earth and we ourselves are continuing to grow, develop, and change—what Thomas referred to as part of a cosmogenesis—we find ourselves in a sort of hermeneutical circle, only this time the “text” is the universe and Earth. This is what Thomas called “The only text without a context.” So we are influenced by changes in Earth and Earth is influenced by changes in us—big time—which shall become abundantly clear in a few minutes.

Now we come to Thomas’s statement about our mission.

The Historical Mission of our time is:

- *To reinvent the human*
- *At the species level*
- *With critical reflection*
- *Within the community of life systems—*
- *In a time-developmental context—*
- *By means of story and shared dream experience² —Whoa!*
Where did those two come from?

It strikes me that the first five—reinventing the human, species level, critical reflection, community of life systems, time developmental (historical) context are simple to understand but not easy to accomplish. They are all a more in-depth explanation about the *what* of reinventing the human.

But the last two—by means of story and shared dream experience—are about the *how*. And these are the two I’d like to talk to you about today.

2. Thomas Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999), 159 (italics and capitalization added).

So how do we translate Thomas's message to a broader audience: in the streets, in diverse cultures, and in the trenches? I use the word "trenches" deliberately for what was once a challenge has indeed become a battleground.

Two final introductory, but essential, comments before leaving Thomas's famous statement.

Thomas begins with the word "mission." He was telling us that we are not engaged in an intellectual exercise, not even one involving philosophy or theology. This is about our role in The Great Work. He is telling us that we have an obligation to go forth and, if you will, preach the gospel of a mutually enhancing relationship between the human species and Earth—the emerging Ecozoic era.

The last word in the text is "experience"—and it is important. We are going forth not only with a story of a shared dream, but we are going forth with *our own experience of telling the story and sharing the dream.*

Experience is critical. Erich Fromm once noted: "People never think their way into new ways of acting. They act their way into new ways of thinking." And Lao Tzu put it even more succinctly: "If you know, but do not do, you do not know."

And that brings me to a picture of the way forward.

Tell the Story

Often after Thomas gave a talk, people would ask him what they should do and he'd say, "Tell them the story." He was referring to the cosmological story. So, in this talk, I'm going to follow Thomas's lead and tell you my functional cosmology story. Actually I'll tell you four stories that I will weave together into one big story.

The first story is about my experiences in Paris and the Arctic. Out of these experiences emerged an understanding of Thomas's functional cosmology.

The second story is about framing and reframing. If we are to carry out our mission we must understand where people are coming. We must step outside our frames, understand their frames, and determine how we can help them reframe.

The third story is about my understanding of the two key ele-

ments, story and shared dream experience, and how they fit together.

The fourth story is about the new story and shared dream experience in the trenches. In this part I will describe how we are trying to tell the story and share the dream while wrestling with coal mines and pipelines in our valley and in the waters around Vancouver Island.

The common thread in these stories is how my version of a functional cosmology has emerged and is still emerging out of my experiences.

Paris and the Arctic

I was born and raised in Toronto and, in my early teens, I went to a prep school run by the Passionist Order. Eventually I entered a novitiate in this order and spent the next eight years living as a monk. This is when I first met Thomas Berry, who was also a Passionist, when we lived in the same monastery in New York. I was eventually ordained and worked for a number of years in the institutional priesthood. I'm deeply indebted to the Passionists. They cared for me, parented me, educated me, and fostered my spiritual development.

Several years after my ordination, I went on for further theological studies, first in Ottawa and then in Paris where I worked part-time as a student chaplain at the Cité Universitaire. The Cité is a unique student campus on the edge of Paris. Bringing together students from around the world, it houses 6,000 students in forty national houses. Paris and the Cité were interesting but even more interesting was what happened when I was there.

In May 1968 student riots broke out. In addition to attending countless student meetings and watching the student and French police battling it out on the barricades on the Left Bank, I was trying to work on a degree in the theology of preaching and was interested in all aspects of communications. The university and libraries were closed, but I did have most of the books of the Canadian communications guru Marshall McLuhan. I remember one of his statements in particular. He said, "I don't know who it was that first discovered water, but I'm sure it wasn't a fish." I saw this played out one day at

the huge student cafeteria on campus.

The student riots were in full swing and I went across the campus to get lunch. It was an amazing sight. Students were eating lunch in their cultural groups, some of them dressed in traditional dress and speaking in their own languages. They had to yell at one another to be heard over the din of the tin plates and other languages. It was like the ground floor of the Tower of Babel.

I was standing in a serving line next to two American students. They were looking at this amazing sight like I was and one of them said to the other, “Gee, I wish we had a culture, don’t you?” This was my first real introduction to the often invisible, but very real existence, of frames.

In the following years I left the Passionists and the institutional priesthood, married, got a degree in communications from the University of Wisconsin and worked as a community organizer in communities in the United States and Canada.

In 1980, our family moved to Baffin Island, an Inuit homeland, where I took up a job as Superintendent of Social Services. The Baffin is the fifth largest Island in the world. It is in the high Arctic north of Quebec and to the west of Greenland. This was almost 20 years before the creation of Nunavut³. I asked my boss in Yellowknife, in the Western Arctic, what my job was. He told me it was to help people develop. It took some months before the irony of that statement struck me. The Inuit had lived on the land and survived for thousands of years in perhaps the most severe climate on earth—and I was there to teach them how to develop. But I was up to the challenge.

When I first got to the Baffin, I was quite confident in my abilities. I was well-educated, had a lot of relevant street work experience, and had even worked for five years as an administrator of a health care facility in northern British Columbia. At times, in my arrogance, I figured I was just the person for whom the Inuit were waiting.

3. Nunavut is the newest, largest, northernmost, and least populous territory of Canada. It was separated officially from the Northwest Territories on April 1, 1999. Wikipedia contributors, “Nunavut,” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, accessed July 3, 2016, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Nunavut&oldid=728058618>.

I was sure that having a workable management context was essential. I was most anxious to try out my management theories: performance measurement, management by objectives, zero-based budgeting, etc. etc. But I bombed. I quickly discovered that these contexts weren't working in the cross-cultural environment in which I found myself.

Another thing: I ran into some competition trying to help folks in the communities “develop.” I'd be way up at the top of Baffin Island in community meetings. It would be in the dead of winter, 40o F below without the wind-chill with twenty-four hours of darkness, and I'd be holding forth in community meetings on child welfare services or correctional services or mental health services—very serious stuff. But I'd find myself competing with elders. As I listened to their speeches through an Inuktitut translator, they would be saying over and over different versions of the same mantra: “Learn from the land. Learn from the land.” I thought their words were interesting from a cultural point of view, even quaint, but not relevant. So with my organizational contexts falling apart, and the elders, in my opinion, not addressing the real issues, I was going through a vocational crisis. Was I really cut out for this type of work?

Then one day, in the search for a new organizational context that would work in this environment, I picked up one of Thomas's books and read these words: “The universe is the only text without a context.” The words began to sink in. Could this be the context I had been looking for? Could it be that all human endeavours should be organized the way Earth and life organizes itself? And a short time later I read the clincher: “We are not a collection of objects. We are a communion of subjects.” As I read these words the teaching of the Elders flashed into my mind: “We have come from the land, we will return to the land. Learn from the land.”

From my experience in Paris and the Arctic I came to realize that my role in the Great Work was essentially about communication. And to communicate effectively, I had to step outside my own frame and comfort zone and explore and discover the other person's frame—his or her beliefs, values, and concerns, the way he or she sees the world and gives it meaning. Only then could I carry out my mission.

About Frames and Reframing

Most of you, I'm sure, are quite aware of frames and reframing. This is Marshall McLuhan and his "the medium is the message," Thomas Kuhn's paradigm shifts, Howard Gardner's frames of mind, Paulo Freire's praxis, George Lakoff's framing, and particularly the Indigenous frame of elders about learning from the land. In the theological context, we might turn to concepts of *kenosis* and *metanoia*.

My definition of a frame is "*the living context within which we send, receive and interpret messages, establish relationships, see the world and give it meaning.*"

Our frames are not visible to the eye, but they are real. They are the compilation of our family history, our work experiences, our values, our successes, our failures our education, and so forth. They have emerged out of our experiences. Because frames are so much a part of our personalities and way of life, we have a vested interest in preserving them.

Our frames are deep within us and defend us from unwanted intrusions. They filter out information with which we do not agree, and they let in things that support our values and viewpoints. Because of our frames, Anais Nin has noted, "*We do not see the world the way it is. We see the world the way we are.*" That is why it is so difficult to help people to reframe—even the good guys.

Over the last ten years of Thomas's life, I went down from the Arctic once or twice a year to visit him in North Carolina. He would always ask me about my work. And the discussions helped me to understand more and more about reframing.

I remember a reframing experience I had during one early visit to Thomas. I said to him, "Tom in the Arctic there are many people interested in an Earth-based spirituality. Have you ever written anything on an Earth-based spirituality?" He paused for a moment and said, "No I haven't. But I have written something on the spirituality of Earth that you might find interesting."

About Story and Shared Dream Experience

We tend to think of story and shared dream experience as two

different things. I think they are two distinct elements of the same dynamic. One day, in the midst of a discussion, Thomas said "Context is everything." He saw story as providing the context in which life could function in a meaningful manner. He was talking about the essential role of story as the creator of context. For me, shared dream experience is the inner spirit that enables us to manifest and activate the story by sharing it with others in some kind of community setting.

So a few words about story and then shared dream experience.

The Power of Story

Some years ago a First Nation band (you would likely call it a tribe) in northern British Columbia wanted to negotiate their land claim. The federal government officials arrived from Ottawa and held a meeting with the band council and some of the elders. During the course of the meeting one of the civil servants said, "I hope you realize that this land we are talking about belongs to the federal government in Ottawa." The elders were shocked. One of them stood up, looked across the table at the civil servant who made this statement, and said, "If this is your land, where are your stories?"

The stories we tell confer identity. They validate our persona and power.

For Carl Jung, stories were not just something people told. They were part of a person. He noted that everyone has a story and when psychological problems occur it is because our personal story has been denied or rejected. Healing comes when we discover or re-discover our personal stories. So, in a very real sense, we are our stories.

Stories have power. It is through the telling of stories that we often become aware of the presence of Spirit. Most of the great leaders have used story to motivate people.

St. Matthew's Gospel tells us "Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables; indeed he would never speak to them except in parables." (Matthew 13:34)

Mahatma Gandhi was a story teller. He entitled his autobiography, "The Story of My Experiments with Truth." Martin Luther King was a great story-teller as we see in his "I have a Dream" speech.

For many years Thomas told the story about the degradation of Earth. Today we have something that he didn't have—a name for that degradation: *The Anthropocene epoch*. It emerges from science. Its primary manifestation is global warming. It is having universal impacts and is affecting all aspects of life as we know it: all environments, cultures, populations, economies, lands, oceans.

Unlike previous epochs—like the Holocene which began 11,700 years ago with the retreat of the ice shields—the Anthropocene is relatively recent. It began at the beginning of the industrial revolution in the early 1800s and unlike all previous natural epochs, it is man-made—thus the name “Anthro” for “human” and “cene” for new.

The predictions are dire. Denis Meadows, one of the authors of the 1972 M.I.T. study *Limits to Growth*⁴ has stated that we have overshot the so-called “limits” described in the study. Our only option now is to try and build resilience into the declining systems. I think of us as triage workers on declining systems. Other scientists state that we are on our way to the sixth mass extinction of the species. *Sic transit Gloria mundi*.⁵

The anthropocene is the dominant story in our lifetime but it is not the emerging story that Thomas called for. So we are faced with a puzzle. As we all know, Thomas said “We are in between stories now... The old story is no longer effective...yet we have not learned the new story.” How can we tell the story if we do not have a new story to tell? Who will create it?

I think if Thomas were here today he would say to us, “You must create it. You must not only tell the traditional cosmological story, you must create and tell the new cosmological story. This is what a functional cosmology is all about. This is The Great Work. This is your mission.”

The Power of Shared Dream Experience

What Thomas meant by “dream” is a bit uncertain. It probably

4. Donella H. Meadows, et al, *The Limits to Growth: A Report for the club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind* (New York: Signet, 1972).

5. Thus passes the glory of the world.

goes back to *The Dream of the Earth*⁶—some dynamic, conscious, powerful force that created the universe, our Earth and its species, and our human species. But if “dream” is a bit uncertain, the concept of a “shared dream” is not. Whatever the dream is, it must be a shared dream. It brings together humans with Earth and its species. There is a communion of subjects who work together to help carry out the mission of the great work. So the shared dream is a community enterprise.

Indigenous people in the Arctic understand this. They have lived a nomadic existence. So their concept of a community have not been defined by geographical boundaries, nor limited to relationships with humans. Here is one Dene definition of community. A *community is an intimate relationship with all living things, both animate and inanimate*. I think this was written for the white guys who will quickly point out that something can't be both living and inanimate at the same time. You've got an oxymoron—unless of course you believe that Earth—all of it—is indeed living. (A bit of reframing there).

As Dom Hélder Câmara noted: “*When we dream alone, it is only a dream. When we are dreaming with others, it is the beginning of reality.*”

The Challenge in the Trenches

As I indicated earlier, I spent a lot of my early life in the United States and I've always enjoyed the American perspective of Canadians. We are seen as people with funny accents who are polite, genteel, deferential, and not at all pushy.

American question: “How do you get 100 Canadians out of a swimming pool? Answer: You say to them, “Please get out of the swimming pool.”

I'm here to tell you that if you still have this impression of Canadians, you have to do some serious reframing. The federal government under Stephen Harper and the provincial government in British Columbia under Christy Clark are trying to turn our coun-

6. Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988).

try into a super energy state by digging up tar sands, gas and coal and transporting them by pipelines and huge tanker ships for sale abroad.

They are doing away with environmental laws, lying to the public, silencing scientists, attacking environmental groups, disregarding their responsibilities to aboriginal peoples' traditional lands and their self-government and forbidding ordinary citizens to participate in environmental project reviews unless they can demonstrate that they are directly affected by impacts. (Try and prove that you are personally affected by climate change.) They are signing international agreements which give foreign companies access to our resources. The Chinese, Japanese and Koreans have more say over the future of our Comox Valley than we do. We Canadians now live in very different times. This is life in the trenches.

Thomas tells us in *The Great Work* that we each have to figure out how to carry out our role. I have no intention of suggesting to you how you should carry out your role in your own discipline or your own community. I can only tell you what we are trying to do in our community. And, once again, much of it is about reframing.

When I was new to the valley and first got involved in a project, people told me I should talk to Ruth Masters. Ruth, now in her mid-90s, has been involved in every environmental project in the valley for the past fifty years. She shows up at demonstrations wearing a sign that says, "*Senior Citizen Shit Disturber*." So I phoned Ruth, explained what the project was about, and asked her to join us. She asked me one question. "Are you in it for the long haul?" I said I was and she joined us.

Ruth's question was insightful. She knows that many people get involved because they think we can win. But we lose more battles than we win and many people drop out. Sometimes they flare out. We have to reframe.

Our work is not about winning—though it is nice when we do. It is about some spiritual power that rises up within you and makes you do things *because it is the right thing to do*. You don't get this from the project. It is something you bring to the project or develop when you get involved.

To survive in this work you have to be spiritually grounded. For

some it is a daily practice of meditation or contemplation, for others it is a walk in the woods and communing with nature, for some it is prayer—listening to creation for guidance, but it is always some kind of spiritual practice that grounds us and enables us to continue for what Ruth calls the “long haul.”

Just as we need to ground ourselves in some kind of spiritual practice, so we need to do something similar on a community level. We have numerous groups in our valley, most of them dedicated volunteer groups providing a range of community services: environmental groups, labour unions, farm groups, food security groups, health care groups, etc. They are all doing their own thing, but they have difficulty finding a common ground that provides a solid basis for working together to deal with resource development in the valley. Is there a common ground?

I think there is. Years ago I remember a conversation with my friend Tom Keevey. We were discussing the ecumenical movement and the problem the churches were having finding a common ground. Tom said, “*The first things the churches seeking a common ground have to realize is that they are standing on it.*” I think the same principle applies to our groups in the Comox Valley.

We try to build coalitions around our love of this valley. This is our common ground.

We don't just complain about things. We stress the need for positive alternatives—clean energy and green jobs, better public transportation, limits to carbon, better housing, support for small businesses, longer-term jobs, and so forth,

We try to reach out beyond the “usual suspects.” We try to and build upon issues that affect people directly and about which they have an emotional investment. We've been supporting our First Nations and their efforts to stand up for their traditional rights. Recently some of the churches have come on board by opposing coal projects. And we develop things like letters of agreement and social contracts that provide a way of linking groups together.

And the key to success? In all the successful groups there is a spark: two or three committed people who do the heavy lifting on a day-to-day basis.

So we create and tell the new story and share a dream, reflect on

our experiences, and take care of ourselves and one another.

A Few Words about the Way Forward

There is no doubt that the Anthropocene and climate change is becoming the dominant story of our times and will remain so for some generations to come. Nor do I doubt that what Thomas described as a cultural autism—living in a denial bubble—will continue for some time to come.

The anthropocene is the classic bad news story and people don't like bad news. It is a complex story with no easy solutions. It requires us to change and change is difficult for all of us. Many people will claim that the climate change is something "out there" that we really can't do anything about so it is best not to worry about it.

So they fail to see that the coal mines, pipelines, and fracking wells are the symptoms of a greater problem. The causes are governments and their partnerships with multinational corporations. They seem to have one policy first articulated by Deep Throat to Robert Redford in that dark parking garage in the movie *All the Presidents Men*: "Follow the Money." But, for a variety of reasons, many organizations will refuse to "Get Political."

But as bleak as things look, I think there are signs of real hope. I'm a news junkie and every morning I read a number of papers on-line. There are constant references to droughts, hurricanes and tornadoes, disappearing ice shields and shrinking glaciers, disastrous floods and landslides dead zones in the oceans, poisoning of local waters, holes in the ozone, dense air pollution, etc. These are beginning to create awareness of a clear and present danger that is finally getting many peoples' attention, worries them and makes them seek solutions.

Then, of course, there are the folks in communities all over the world who are fighting back, creating the new story, and sharing the dream.

Bringing these thoughts close to home...the task of carrying out the Great Work in this rapidly changing world has special significance for academics. You are the experts on the thinking of Thomas Berry and you understand systems. AS R.D. Laing once said, "Until

you can *see through* the rules you will only see through the rules.” You have the skills and intellectual capacity to see through the rules, but you have a real challenge.

In *The Great Work*, Chapter 14 deals with “Reinventing the Human.” But the four preceding chapters tell the story of “The New Political Alignment,” “The Corporation Story,” “The Extractive Economy,” and “The Petroleum Interval.” The members of these groups are the ones we must influence—but none of them are at this Colloquium.

I intend no criticism when I say that members of the academic community are often locked within the boundaries of their own disciplines. So are community organizers like me and we are often seen as the “radical enemy.” But we all have to regularly “wander off the ranch” and become, like Thomas, geologists.

And as geologists, working to usher in the new Ecozoic world, we must continually recognize the importance of telling the story. As the poet Muriel Rukeyser put it some years ago: “The world is not made up of atoms. It is made up of stories.”

Closing Thoughts

Thomas Berry has changed my life and given it meaning and I’m sure he has done the same for you. I think of my visits and conversation with him as very special times—what he called “moments of grace” in times of transition.

In terms of our mission, I liken the difficult situation we are all going through as our chrysalis experience. When the caterpillar’s body breaks down into a mass of protoplasm, a few cells—very different cells—begin to emerge. They are called *imaginal cells*. They carry within them the image of the butterfly that is waiting to be born. At first they are attacked by the cells trying to protect the caterpillar’s immune system. Some of the imaginal cells are destroyed. But eventually the imaginal cells become more numerous and succeed in the transformation.

Somehow Thomas has placed the image of the Ecozoic era within us. We are going through a painful transition—but new life will emerge. This is what we hang onto. It is our hope. And, as Teilhard said, “The future belongs to those who can give a reason for hope.”

Thomas Berry and Martin Luther King, Jr.: Cosmology, Ecology, and Social Justice

Drew Dellinger

Twenty-four years ago I heard Thomas Berry speak for the first time. The setting was the Earth and Spirit Conference in Seattle in October 1990. On the opening night of the conference, after stirring talks by Brian Swimme and Joanna Macy, Thomas gave a speech that lit the room on fire. He invoked the depths of environmental destruction and the mass extinction crisis by saying, “We have to be terrorized by what we’ve done, but not without hope.”

He suggested that we put the Bible on the shelf for twenty years until we learn to read the scripture of the natural world. He said we should put *Webster’s Dictionary* on the shelf as well because we needed a new language to guide us into an ecological future. He said the dark side of the Western tradition was its treatment of the natural world as objects to be used and exploited. He said we needed a new religious consciousness that saw the Earth as primary. And, of course, he spoke his sublime mantra and ethical formula: “The universe is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects.”

Even before this conference I was favorably inclined to Thomas from reading his essays in *The Dream of the Earth*,¹ from hearing descriptions of his work from Miriam Therese MacGillis, O.P., on her “Fate of the Earth” audiotape,² and from other sources. What I thought was confirmed when I heard Thomas speak: I was in the presence of a prophet.

What I experienced when I heard Thomas speak twenty-four years ago was like what Brian Swimme described in an email he sent to our graduate school community a couple years ago. Brian said, “Hi everyone. First my life story. In 1978 Thomas Berry wrote an

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1. Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988).
 2. Miriam Therese MacGillis, O.P., “Fate of the Earth,” audiotape, 1986, accessed May 4, 2017, <http://thegreatstory.org/macgillis.html>.

article 'The New Story.' When I read it in 1979, I knew in a vague way that this is going to occupy a lot of my life."

So this was the confirmation. I had already felt, in a vague way, that *this* might occupy a lot of my life. When I heard him speak that night, I was convinced.

I left the Earth and Spirit Conference with my friend Steve Snider, who had come up to Seattle from Prescott College with me. We were more determined than ever to carry forward this plan that we had to create a college-level course on Thomas Berry's work. And in spring 1991 we did offer a course at Prescott College called "The New Cosmology," which we later changed to "New Cosmology: The Universe Story." We taught this course for three semesters. We were students, but because Prescott College was an experiential school, we were able to create a group independent study and do this. I think that was one of the early college-level courses in the United States on ecology, worldview, and the vision of Thomas Berry.

As we taught and revised the course, we learned more about Thomas Berry's work, and I was able to study with Thomas in the summers of 1991, '92, and '93 in Assisi, Italy. So even as I was still learning and trying to get my mind around this, it seemed so important, so inspirational, so vitalizing that I felt a responsibility to begin sharing it and I haven't stopped. A lot of my journey for the last twenty-five years has been promoting ecology, social justice, and cosmology through education and the arts.

I've told you a little bit about our early educational ventures. In addition, my friend Steve and another friend, Omar Zinn—all of us were from Chapel Hill, North Carolina—started the rap group, "Sweet Acidophilus." Part of our inspiration was what Thomas and Brian were always saying even after they published their book, *The Universe Story*,³ which was that the universe story is not a book, the universe around us is communicating its own story in every raindrop, every photon of light and every shimmering aspen leaf. Thomas would say that each of us needs to tell the universe story. We need especially for artists to tell the universe story and we need

3. Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, *The Universe Story: From the Primordial Flaring Forth to the Beginning of the Eozoic Era—A Celebration of the Unfolding Cosmos* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994).

the artist within each of us to tell the universe story.

So when we started this rap band, Sweet Acidophilus, the third song we wrote was called “The Universe Jam.”

The first verse
of the universe,
pours forth
like a sea of mystery
out of the void.

Unmanifest
silence,
space-time,
comes into existence.

Unseen shaping,
swirling,
unfurling,
hydrogen, helium,
divine is revealed
within galactic whirlpools
as energy flows in.

A star collapses,
supernova explosion,
a cloud of cosmic debris,
drawn together by gravity,
by the mystery of attraction,
primordial bonding,
universe action.

It goes on like that. So that was “The Universe Jam.”

Let me talk briefly now about what I consider to be some of the key insights of Thomas Berry.

I certainly can't go into all of the important aspects of Thomas's work, but I want to identify a few that I think are particularly important.

The first key insight of Thomas Berry is that human beings *are* the universe (and the Earth within the universe) thinking about itself. For example, Thomas wrote: “The human is precisely that being

in whom this total process reflects on and celebrates itself, and its numinous origins, in a special mode of conscious self-awareness.”⁴

Thomas, like Taoism, is very simple and very profound at the same time. There's a lot of depth to what he is saying and yet it can sound almost too simple at first. We humans are the universe. We are the Earth thinking about itself. The deeper concept is that every phenomenon on Earth is the Earth. The Earth flies when the birds take wing. The Earth gained sight when the first eyeball evolved. The Earth writes poetry when we write poetry. The Earth composes symphonies through Mozart, and creates brilliance through John Coltrane.

Thomas is talking about the total unity of the process and a redefinition of what the human being is. It's a 180-degree turn in Western thinking.

The second key insight of Thomas Berry is that the universe is a spiritual process from its beginning as well as a physical process. He gets this directly from Teilhard de Chardin. There is a great line in *The Great Work* where he says, “The human is neither an addendum to the universe, nor an intrusion into the universe. We are quintessentially integral with the universe. In ourselves the universe is revealed to itself as we are revealed in the universe.”⁵

It's fantastic, it's thrilling. I do think that he gets some of this sensibility from Alan Watts. There are several statements of Watts I've seen recently that are very, very similar to this type of language. Watts said, “You are an aperture through which the universe is looking at and exploring itself.”⁶

Thomas wrote in *The Dream of the Earth*: “The thoughts and emotions, the social forms and rituals of the human community are as much ‘earth’ as the soil and the rocks and the trees and the

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4. Thomas Berry, *The Sacred Universe: Earth, Spirituality, and Religion in the 21st Century*, eds. Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim (Maryknoll, NY, Orbis Books, 2009), 126.
 5. Thomas Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999), 32.
 6. Brianna Wiest, “26 Of The Most Mind-Opening Alan Watts Quotes,” accessed May 4, 2017, <http://soulanatomy.org/26-of-the-most-mind-opening-alan-watts-quotes/>.

flowers.”⁷ Watts wrote: “If you see yourself in the correct way, you are all as much extraordinary phenomenon of nature as trees, clouds, the patterns in running water, the flickering of fire, the arrangement of the stars, and the form of a galaxy.”⁸ “You and I are all as much continuous with the physical universe as a wave is continuous with the ocean. The ocean waves, and the universe peoples.”⁹

You get what I’m saying: It’s the unity of the human and the Earth process that is so important and it’s a psychic-spiritual process from the beginning.

The third key insight of Thomas Berry, one that really got me excited when I was starting at Prescott College, is that all educational areas and disciplines can be integrated by the comprehensive context of the Earth and universe. I was galvanized into action when I read the chapter in *The Dream of the Earth* on “The American College in the Ecological Age.”¹⁰ At the time, I was just beginning my studies at Prescott College, a small liberal arts college of just the sort that Thomas said was really important as we move forward.

As I said before, Steve Snider and I created and taught this course “New Cosmology: The Universe Story,” but we had a greater goal: we were like...we need to reinvent Prescott College education! We were handing out copies of Thomas’s chapter on “The American College in the Ecological Age.” Remember in yesterday’s session I mentioned being zealous. Well, Steve Snider and I waited outside the Board of Directors meeting of Prescott College with mimeographed copies of that chapter and as each Board member came out we handed them a copy.

I think it’s fascinating what Thomas talks about in that essay: To tell the universe story comprehensively you would have to bring every member of the faculty together. You would have to have the physicist and the artist and the anthropologist and the mathematician. So it’s just a brilliant image of the unity of the educational process within a cosmological context. You couldn’t do an introductory

7. Berry, *Dream of the Earth*, 91-92.

8. Ibid.

9. Alan Watts: Quotes, accessed May 4, 2017, <http://openmindspace.org/AlanWatts>.

10. Berry, *Dream of the Earth*, 89-108.

course for students on the universe story without bringing all of the faculty together in some sense.

And then there is this great passage from *Befriending the Earth* where Thomas says,

What is education? Education is knowing the story of the universe, how it began, how it came to be as it is, and the human role in the story. There is nothing else. We need to know the story, the universe story in all its resonances, in all of its meanings. The universe story is the divine story, the human story, the story of the trees, the story of the rivers, of the stars, the planets, everything. It is as simple as a kindergarten tale, yet as complex as all cosmology and all knowledge and all history... It gives a new context for education.¹¹

Let me quickly move on to my fourth key insight of Thomas Berry, which is the power of story. I think it's a critical insight of Thomas's—the importance of narratives. He is the first person I heard talking about this. I'd be interested to hear from you all where you think Thomas gets this...we heard a little bit about Mircea Eliade¹² yesterday and we also talked about Giambattista Vico.¹³

Thomas said, "Narrative is our primary mode of understanding. This is how we understand anything. This is why we tell stories to our children." When Thomas was emphasizing story, there wasn't a whole lot in the culture about this. In 1988, the same year as the publication of *The Dream of the Earth*, the six-part series of Bill Moyers and Joseph Campbell on "The Power of Myth,"¹⁴ came

11. Thomas Berry and Thomas Clarke, *Befriending the Earth: A Theology of Reconciliation between Humans and Earth*, eds. Stephen Dunn and Anne Lonergan (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1991), 101.

12. Mircea Eliade, 1907-1986, was a famous historian of religion who taught at the University of Chicago.

13. Giambattista Vico, 1668-1744, was an Italian political philosopher and rhetorician, historian and jurist. Thomas Berry wrote his doctoral dissertation on Vico.

14. Bill Moyers interviewed Joseph Campbell and his interviews were presented in six episodes in 1988. The episodes are available and may be viewed at, accessed May 5, 2017, <http://billmoyers.com/series/joseph-campbell-and-the-power-of-myth-1988/>.

out. It was one of the most popular series ever on public television. Interest in the power of stories has continued to grow. I'm on Twitter and there are dozens and dozens of different accounts on storytelling and story, and there is storycorps.org and bighistoryproject.com and more. I think that he was once again ahead of the curve in terms of recognizing the importance of narrative, the importance of story. Of course this all ties in to the overarching significance of Thomas's approach to cosmology and worldview.

Let me move along quickly to the core of what I want to share in terms of connecting cosmology with social justice. We talked yesterday about conversation partners. So let me tell you a little of how I got into this. I had dinner with Carl Anthony. Do you know Carl Anthony—African-American eco-psychologist, architect, and urban planner, co-founder of the journal *Race, Poverty & the Environment*, past President of the Earth Island Institute, Founder and Executive Director of Urban Habitat? He was and is a very significant and accomplished figure.

Here's something from my journal in October 2000: "On Saturday night Israel my son and Jeanine Canty (she teaches in Boulder) and I ate dinner with Carl Anthony and Belvie Rooks. Carl expressed his profound disappointment with Thomas's book, *The Great Work*. He asked how he could articulate an overarching 'great work' for all humanity and make no mention of justice, racism, oppression, and the 500-year resistance struggle against Western domination. He also stressed that Thomas is his Bible and that what's there in *The Great Work* is amazing, but this is a profound omission in the vision that was otherwise so comprehensive." That was my commentary on the dinner.

And then I wrote, "This conversation has gifted me with the core of my dissertation: to unite the cosmology of Berry with the movement for justice." I had already been reading Martin Luther King, Jr. I had already been kind of interested in this and had already noticed a few things in this direction. But this really was powerful to hear Carl Anthony say Thomas Berry is my Bible and yet I'm profoundly disappointed in this book called *The Great Work*.

Not everybody has to deal with everything. One of my pet peeves is when somebody does 99 things great and then someone says, "Oh,

but you forgot that one.” So I’m not saying Thomas has to do everything, but here is where the problem comes in: When you have a vision that is so comprehensive, and you’re putting forth a prescription that’s so comprehensive, and you are going to call it *the* “Great Work,” for our civilization, on the planet, at this time—then it’s a profound omission when you don’t have any mention of 500 years of oppression of African and African-American peoples. There are other social justice issues we could talk about for sure, but this is the one that Carl Anthony brought up.

I sat with that for a while...months and months. I was looking at Martin Luther King, Jr.’s work, but I had not given him that much attention, because I am kind of contrarian. When somebody is celebrated that much I am—well, you know...whatever.

But it got to a point where I said I’ve got to find out more about Gandhi and I’ve got to find out about King myself. And when you read their materials, you go, “Okay, I get it. I see why they are so celebrated. There is a lot here and it’s pretty amazing and powerful.”

With King and especially in the United States, we have a very foreshortened, superficial kind of “Hallmark card” presentation and understanding. Jesse Jackson says we treat Dr. King like he’s a big civil rights Teddy bear and we forget that this guy was radical.

I found that to be really true when you go back and read his speeches, sermons, and writings. He says things like this...I believe this is from a speech about ten days before his assassination: “A nation that will hold people in slavery for 244 years will ‘thingify’ them, will treat them as things.” This idea is not original with King—he drew on Tillich and Buber and Aime Cesaire—but I had never heard the term “thingify.”

Immediately a light went off in my head, and I remembered a conversation when I was sitting with Thomas in his hermitage in Greensboro, just the two of us, and he said, “People say that you shouldn’t treat a person as a thing, and that’s a good saying...But you shouldn’t even treat a thing as a thing...because there is no such thing as a thing!”

Notice that here we have Thomas Berry, ecological thinker, cosmological thinker, all the way over here; and we have Martin Luther King, Jr., civil rights thinker, social justice thinker, all the way over

here; and they are both talking about the same principle.

I became interested in this. This was many years ago, before people were talking as much about the intersection between ecology and social justice. And I'm saying to myself, if I'm seeing this, then I have a responsibility to work with it and see if I can develop and share it. I began to ask myself, what are the deep principles that connect ecology, cosmology, and social justice?

It seems to me that personhood connects these—cosmic personhood, not only human personhood. Think of the way the Native Americans talk about the “bird people” and the “tree people.” If we have that kind of definition of personhood, then this is what Thomas is talking about when he says the universe is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects. It's the same thing King is talking about with “thingifying” people and keeping them in slavery for 244 years. Thomas is talking about thingifying the natural world, thingifying the cosmos.

So personhood, or reverence, connects this. I also began to feel that another deep principle that connects these is community.

As I began delving into King's speeches, sermons, and writings, I began to notice more of these resonances of cosmology, ecology, and social justice. King says frequently, “The universe is on the side of justice,” and he also says frequently, “We have cosmic companionship in the struggle for justice.” These are just two short, pithy statements. I wasn't really clear what he meant by them. I thought they could have just been rhetorical flourishes, or they could be revelatory of the essence of his worldview. I wasn't sure. I had to do more research.

So as I delved into more of his work, I began to see more and more of these references to the cosmos and the universe. I began to see more and more references in Martin Luther King, Jr., to what we would now clearly call ecological thinking or systems thinking. I found so much, I wrote my doctoral dissertation on it, which is finally done!

Let me give you a few examples to be more specific about what I was seeing. This was fascinating: In 1956, in the middle of the bus boycott he gives the sermon called “Our God Is Able.” But the title doesn't tell you what he is going to go into. He goes into the cosmic.

He talks about the solar system. He talks about how fast Earth is traveling through space. He talks about how the sun, although it appears near to us, is 93 million miles away. He's basically bringing his audience, in the middle of the Montgomery bus boycott, into the cosmological wonder of how we are situated in our solar system.

King had a very cosmological sense of justice—justice is woven into the cosmos. So when he meets with white leaders during the Montgomery bus boycott, he says, we need to decide if we are going to give our allegiance to outdated customs or to the ethical demands of the universe.

Some of this, you could say, was because he was being strategic; that he used cosmological language to be more inclusive than using theological language.

But I think that his cosmological references were very sincere with him. There is no question in terms of my research. There is some great stuff online at the King Center's digital archives. I found an undated index card--perhaps notes from a book, or perhaps written by him--but in his own handwriting, which conveys a sense of cosmological wonderment. It states (some of these figures are outdated):

I stood one night on the ship on the blue Mediterranean. The heavens are vast. Mercury 36 million miles away traveling 36 million miles a second, always day. Venus 67 million miles away. Jupiter 88 million miles away, 16 times larger than Earth. Neptune with the climate as such men could live 10,000 years before age could attack them. Saturn 86 million miles away. The moon, satellite of the [Earth], no air and water there, always 200 below zero. Thirty-six million stars—the nearest star 1,000,900,000 miles away; stars that guide sailors in storms; stars that enrapture astrologers as they ponder the zodiac; stars of the Milky Way; stars that thrill the hearts of poets.

So King had a deeply cosmological interest and sense. He also had what I would call a deeply *ecological* worldview; and I think, based on the research I've uncovered, that King should be recognized in the lineage of early ecological thinkers and he should be recognized in the lineage of early systems thinkers.

Let me explain what I mean by this. The last book King wrote that was published in his lifetime was called *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?*¹⁵ And then soon after he was assassinated, a posthumous book called *The Trumpet of Conscience*¹⁶ was published. It's a collection of the five Massey Lectures he gave through the Canadian Broadcasting System in November and December 1967. I'm so thankful he was asked to give these lectures. Just 2-3 months before he was assassinated he had his opportunity to give these five talks and to really pour out everything that was on his mind in the last months of his life.

I consider these to be the clearest expression of his final worldview. The first four are in the radio studio. King is at his worst when reading from a script. It is painful almost to listen to him reading the first four of the Massey Lectures. But the fifth one was delivered live from Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia, on December 24, 1967. It's called "A Christmas Sermon on Peace."¹⁷ He says things like, "If we are to have peace on Earth we must develop a world perspective.... It really boils down to this: that all life is interrelated."

Now I want to put a challenge out to you. If I told you that John Muir said, "It really boils down to this: that all life is interrelated," or that Rachel Carson or James Lovelock said this, you wouldn't have a problem believing it would you? Were you surprised to hear this from Martin Luther King, Jr.?

King had used this idea of interrelatedness earlier in a work you will recognize, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail." He wrote, "I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states.... We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

But in his Christmas Sermon on Peace of December 24, 1967—I

15. *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1967).

16. *The Trumpet of Conscience* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1968).

17. Text available at, accessed May 9, 2017, http://www.ecoflourish.com/Primers/education/Christmas_Sermon.html; video available at, accessed May 9, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1jeyIAH3bUI>.

want you to get this distinction—he takes this statement further and this is why I think it is an essential part of his worldview:

It really boils down to this: that all life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied into a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. We are made to live together because of the interrelated structure of reality. Did you ever stop to think that you can't leave for your job in the morning without being dependent on most of the world?... This is the way our universe is structured, this is its interrelated quality. We aren't going to have peace on earth until we recognize this basic fact of the interrelated structure of all reality.¹⁸

I would submit to you that anytime you are talking about the interrelated structure of all reality, you're talking ecologically, you're talking cosmologically, you're talking in terms of systems thinking.

So this has been one of my efforts, to connect ecology, cosmology, and social justice using Martin Luther King Jr. as a paradigmatic figure of what I call a "cosmology of connection."

The last thought I'll leave you with is, if cosmology means worldview, the problem is not that we just need a worldview, it is that we have a worldview. It is not that we just need a cosmology, no, we have a cosmology. What we need is a cosmology of connection—this is what Martin Luther King, Jr. presents us with and offers to us is a cosmology of connection. And what Thomas Berry offers us is a cosmology of connection. The reason why Thomas celebrates Eastern wisdom and indigenous wisdom is because they have cosmologies of connection. The reason why he criticizes the Western worldview is because we have a cosmology of separation, a cosmology of disconnection. We have what Thomas terms a "radical discontinuity" between the human and the natural world, one that we perceive and perpetuate. This is the anthropocentrism, the human-centeredness, that, as Thomas says, gives all the rights and all the value to the human, and no rights and no value to the more-than-human realm.

So I think Thomas Berry, Martin Luther King, Jr., Eastern

18. Ibid.

wisdom, Indigenous wisdom, goddess spirituality, ecofeminism--all are social justice work. All of these are ways of reinvigorating and creating a cosmology of connection.

I think there are deep, deep, practical connections between Thomas's cosmology and work for social justice. Thomas's statement that "the universe is a communion of subjects, not a collection objects" is not just an ecological-cosmological statement, it is a social justice statement. When Thomas says "It's all a question of story," this is not just an ecological-cosmological statement, it is also a social justice statement. We can look at racism, sexism, and heterosexism as dysfunctional stories.

Now I will take some questions, and then I'll end with a poem.

Questions and Answers

Comment: Drew, the first time I encountered a great connection between ecology and social justice was in the "Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream" symposium of the Pachamama Alliance. I want to thank you for your part in putting together that program because it changed my life.

Response: What a great opportunity I was given. Some of you may not know the story. The Pachamama Alliance is a nonprofit group in San Francisco. They called in 2003 and said to me, we were told that you knew Thomas Berry and had studied with Thomas Berry. I said, yes, and then they said they wanted me to come over and meet with them. They quickly added that they had been doing work with the Achuar people in Ecuador and Peru. The Achuar people had thanked them for coming to Ecuador to help them protect the rain forest and their culture, *and* if you really want to help us protect this in the long run you, you need to go back and change the dream of the North. You need to change the dream of the modern world. That was the charge they had been given by the Achuar people of the Amazon and then they came across a quote from Thomas Berry in the back of a Jerry Mander book about the mythic entrancement of the industrial world. They called me up and asked, "Do you think there is any connection between what the Achuar told us and

Thomas Berry?" And I told them "Hell yeah!"

I worked with them as a consultant. I was part of a small core team and helped them develop the original "Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream" symposium. I gave them my cosmological slideshow that I had developed in the '90s that became part of the film they made. That symposium was a great way to bring Thomas's work into a program that has been given in 78 countries and has been translated into 18 languages.

Comment: When you were talking about Thomas Berry and how he left out the social justice piece, I think it was implicit in his materials even if he did not directly speak to it. What do you think?

Response: I think that's right. I don't believe for a second that Thomas Berry didn't care about social justice. One of things that my professor Robert McDermott said is that in the history of philosophy, you have to understand the writers are responding to what came before them. If you take something out of context, you don't understand that it was written as a response to issues of that time. So Thomas would often say social justice cannot be achieved in the industrial context. You can't help people directly anymore, you have to change the industrial context in which we are living.

That's a profoundly unsatisfactory answer to people who are dealing with oppression on a daily basis, but I think Thomas was so adamant because he was responding to decades and decades and decades and decades of people not thinking of social justice as being anything other than human-centered social work. Thomas was saying we may never completely eradicate social injustice and we can get caught in a whirlpool for decades more and miss the larger issue of ecological injustice and its effects. It's not that he didn't care about social justice, but the particular gift he was offering is the focus on the transition to the Ecozoic era. I think he cared very much about social justice within that context, but he didn't deal specifically with it.

Comment by Heather Eaton: I think for him social justice comes out of a dream and a vision and an orientation. For him justice isn't

a vision, it's a practice that comes from a vision. He was extremely interested in justice, but for him it came from a worldview and vision.

Comment by Herman Greene: I would point to Thomas's three mediations: divine-human, human-human, and human-Earth. He was trying to balance these.

Response: Yes, and he felt like so much had been written on the first two that his particular message was the third.

Comment: I would like to bring up *Community: The Structure of Belonging* by Peter Block. We cannot address social justice issues and environmental issues as separate silos. Block talks about how separation is embedded in our language and how we can change that. It's very powerful.

Comment by Jim Schenk: I am a social worker. My feeling is that Thomas talks about social justice when he talks about the Earth. We are Earth. So everything he says about Earth, we can translate into ourselves. In this way he very much deals with social justice. I think our big struggle is seeing ourselves as part of Earth.

Ok, I will close with a poem. This is a poem I wrote for Thomas Berry:

Carolina Prophet: Poem for Thomas Berry

we were dreamed
in the cores
of the stars.
like the stars,
we were meant to unfold

we were dreamed in the depths
of the undulating ocean.
like the waves,
we were meant to unfold

like bursting supernovas, birthing elements,
which crucibles give rise to creativity?

the world makes us
its instrument.

Father Thomas,
speaking for stars, in a voice
old as wind: 'origin moments
are supremely important'

what are the origins
of a prophet?

found in syllables of Sanskrit,
or Chinese characters?
in a decade of midnight prayer?

in childhood epiphanies
rising like heat?
blue Carolina sky;
dark pines;
crickets;
birds;
sunlight
on the lilies,
in the meadow,
across the creek.

born in Carolina
on the eve of the Great War,
Saturn conjoining Pluto in the sky.
raised in a world of wires and wheels,
watching dirt roads turn to pavement.

brooding intensity,
measuring loss
when others could see only progress.
white hair communing with angels of Earth

Father Thomas, reminding us
we are constantly bathed in shimmering memories
of originating radiance

we are constantly bathed in shimmering memories
of originating radiance

the psychic stars:
the conscious soil:

this thin film of atmosphere;

and only gravity
holding the sea from the stars.

when a vision of the universe takes hold
in your mind, your soul becomes vast as the cosmos.

when the mind is silent,
everything is sacred.

like the spiral
like the lotus
like the waves
like the trees
like the stars,
we were meant to unfold.

Communion and Chiasm: Articulating the Unthought-of Aspects of Thomas Berry’s “Communion of Subjects” and Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s Phenomenology of Perception

Matthew Eaton

I. Introduction

As the legacy of Thomas Berry grows there remain aspects of the New Story¹ requiring re-articulation and expansion if the hoped for Ecozoic era is to emerge. Among the most crucial ideas in need of further discussion is Berry’s understanding of the universe as a “communion of subjects rather than a collection of objects.”² For the sake of further understanding and articulating the subjectivity and relationality of materiality, I suggest that the New Story enter a dialogue with Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of perception. In what follows, I will review Berry’s understanding of material subjectivity and relationality, and subsequently explore how Merleau-Ponty’s work helps articulate a contemporary understanding of cosmos and Earth as a communion of subjects and not a collection of objects. The conclusions reached about a re-imagined cosmology are neither present within Berry’s New Story, nor are they absent from his thought. They exist in what we might call the *unthought-of* aspects of Berry’s work: i.e., ideas that are “wholly

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1. The “New Story” refers to Thomas Berry’s ideas concerning the story of the evolutionary development of the universe and the meaning and significance of that story. The New Story is one of the most prominent ideas in Berry’s work and appears throughout his writing.
 2. Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, *The Universe Story: From the Primordial Flaring Forth to the Ecozoic Era—A Celebration of the Unfolding of the Cosmos* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), 243.

his,” but nevertheless open to “something else.”³ Such thoughts are in a sense hidden within Berry’s cosmology, not straightforwardly articulated but nevertheless compatible with his trajectory, emerging only when he enters into dialogue with others. My aim throughout this essay is to summon the unthought-of elements of Berry’s ontology. This is not, however, the whole story, as the same can be said of the unthought-of elements of Merleau-Ponty’s work that are revealed by Berry’s New Story. While this essay focuses primarily on re-imagining Berry’s work, I suggest how the New Story might also give new life to Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology in the service of an emerging cosmology arising from the thought and unthought-of elements present within both thinkers.⁴

3. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signs* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1965), 160. This idea builds upon the work of Heidegger, later applied by Merleau-Ponty to the thought of Husserl. Heidegger states that “the greater the work of a thinker...the richer is what is unthought in this work, which means, that which emerges in and through this work as having not yet been thought.” Martin Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 71. “The main feature of this principle, according to Sean Dorrance Kelly, is that the seminal aspects of a thinker’s work are so close to him that he is incapable of articulating them himself. Nevertheless, these aspects pervade the work; give it its style, its sense, and its direction; and therefore belong to it essentially.” Sean Dorrance Kelly, “Seeing Things in Merleau-Ponty,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Merleau-Ponty*, ed. Taylor Carman and Mark B. N. Hansen (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 74.

4. Ultimately, this essay, like all philosophical works, is an entangled mess of ideas emerging as novel instantiations of thought wherein the elements are inseparable from one another and impossible to simply and naively assign to this or that author. Merleau-Ponty refers to this as a “middle-ground where the philosopher we are speaking about and the philosopher who is speaking are present together, although it is not possible even in principle to decide at any given moment just what belongs to each.” Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, 159. Such a perspective avoids both “an ‘objective’ history of philosophy” as well as “a meditation disguised as dialogue.” Thus we seek to avoid both “inevitable distortion,” as well as “literal reproduction,” both of which do a disservice to the philosopher we speak with. *Ibid.*

II. Thomas Berry and the Communion of Subjects

The centrality of the “communion of subjects” in Berry’s work is evident upon examining his “Twelve Principles” for understanding the universe and the role of the human in cosmogenesis, five of which evoke aspects of the communion.⁵ For Berry, the cosmos “is a unity, an interacting and genetically-related community of beings bound together in an inseparable relationship in space and time.”⁶ All differentiated existents within such a communion engage one another through their capacity for self-expression and intimate presence to other modes of being, something Berry describes not simply as a physical, but a pervasive “psychic” dimension within the universe from the beginning.⁷ Such features exist ubiquitously through cosmos and Earth, with “differentiation, subjectivity, and communion” characterizing the reality of all existents.⁸ But this does not outline in detail exactly what Berry means by describing the cosmos as a communion of subjects and not a collection of objects. Further details concerning the relationships between differentiated subjects can be found throughout Berry’s corpus, but are most clearly set forth within the New Story, especially within the discussion of the cosmogenetic principle which provides detail on the concept of

5. Thomas Berry, “Twelve Principles for Reflecting on the Universe and the Role of the Human in the Universe Process,” *Cross Currents* 37, no. 2-3 (1987): 176-177. This list is repeated in Thomas Berry, “Twelve Principles for Understanding the Universe and the Role of the Human in the Universe Process,” in Anne Lonergan and Caroline Richards, eds., *Thomas Berry & the New Cosmology* (Mystic: Connecticut: Twenty-Third Publications), 108-09. Principles two, three, four, six, and seven deal with the communion of subjects. I note here that I am using the phrasing of the original “Twelve Principles,” including the reference to the “psychic” dimension of the universe, which I understand to exist as ubiquitous perception occurring in all things. A later version of the “Twelve Principles,” given in Thomas Berry, *Evening Thoughts: Reflecting on Earth as Sacred Community*, ed. Mary Evelyn Tucker (San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Books, 2006), omits this crucial dimension in Berry’s thought.

6. *Ibid.*, 176.

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*

subjectivity.⁹

Following the logic of the cosmological principle, which states that materiality throughout cosmic space operates according to the same physical principles, the cosmogenetic principle articulated by Swimme and Berry in their book, *The Universe Story*, states that the evolutionary dynamics of cosmogenesis and epigenesis are the same throughout the cosmos.¹⁰ Following this assumption, Swimme and Berry outline three form-producing dynamics at work throughout cosmos and Earth that are essential starting points in understanding the cosmos as a communion of subjects: differentiation, auto-poiesis and communion.¹¹ I limit my discussion here to autopoiesis and communion as being most directly relevant to the discussion at hand, while assuming differentiation as following from the relational subjectivity.

Autopoiesis is the term used to describe subjectivity in *The Universe Story*, and as can be detected within Berry's "Twelve Principles," autopoietic subjectivity asserts the presence of unifying and self-organizing dynamics within the cosmos as a whole as well as its individual existents. Subjectivity then refers to an existent's inner dynamism, "the source of its spontaneity, its self-manifesting power," enabling the cosmos itself along with each being to pursue various possible fulfillments related to its particular dreams for existence within the matrix of the world's relational materiality.¹² Subjectivity in the thinking of the New Story is thus nothing like the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum* with its anthropocentric bias for forms of perception

9. Swimme, and Berry, *Universe Story*, 63-79.

10. *Ibid.*, 66.

11. The narrative offered here, despite being Berry's most detailed treatment of the topic, is described as "a prologue for later treatments as our direct experience of the universe's development extends throughout space and time." *Ibid.*, 71. This accounting of cosmic subjectivity is thus meant to serve as starting point for understanding the communion of subjects, with the expectation that subsequent encounters with cosmos and Earth will develop the notion further.

12. Swimme and Berry, *Universe Story*, 73. The term "dreams" refers to the goals that all existents strive to fulfill their particular embodiment. See *ibid.*, 47-61, for a more complete narrative concerning the dreams, energy, and resistance of existents.

possessed by the human and those animals with similar cognitive abilities.¹³ Subjectivity refers instead to “self-organizing powers in general,” characterizing materiality itself within an infinite plurality of forms: from atoms and rocks; to red oaks and red foxes; to Earth itself, the Milky Way galaxy, and beyond.¹⁴ Subjectivity is thus akin to a ubiquitous, non-mechanistic blueprint driving the dreams of cosmos and Earth to grow, develop and articulate the various potential forms of its self-determined fulfillment.

Yet, this self-organized pursuit of dreams does not arise apart from relationship and occurs in direct response to the larger community comprising cosmos and Earth. “The cosmos,” Berry and Swimme assert, is “organized by communion. To be is to be related, for relationship is the essence of existence.”¹⁵ The agency of the cosmos and Earth have a direct impact on each existent as the self-organizing powers of each respond to the larger communal matrix of materiality. Subjective fulfillment emerges in various forms depending upon one’s relationship within the community of cosmos and Earth. Subjects determine the form of their own dreams in response to the material community while maintaining their own irreducible singularity within “a differentiated web of relationships among sentient centers of creativity,” where each subject is “meaningless outside of this enveloping web of relations.”¹⁶ Such a “communion of subjects” within the New Story thus refers to the organization of the cosmos according to the inner power of each existent to realize its own fulfillment in a variety of ways in and through relationship

13. Cf. David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1996), 45: “The living body is,” according to Abram, “the very possibility of contact, not just with others but with oneself—the very possibility of reflection, of thought, of knowledge. The common notion of the experiencing self, or mind, as an immaterial phantom ultimately independent of the body can only be a mirage: Merleau-Ponty invites us to recognize, at the heart of even our most abstract cogitations, the sensuous and sentient life of the body itself.”

14. Swimme and Berry, *Universe Story*, 75.

15. *Ibid.*, 77.

16. Swimme and Berry, *Universe Story*, 77. Cf. Thomas Berry, *The Sacred Universe: Earth, Spirituality, and Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 71, 78.

with a cosmic community of other differentiated subjects. Such a vibrant, dynamic community contrasts with a modernist cosmology narrated as a “collection of objects,” wherein the world exists as a static, mechanistic backdrop for the only true centers of subjectivity, i.e., the human. Yet, while the New Story recognizes the subjectivity of cosmos and Earth, allowing us to acknowledge the integrity of the non-human without comparison or reference to the human, there are aspects of this framework that remain unclear and, thus, call for development and re-articulation. I suggest here three areas of inquiry that require further exploration within Berry’s understanding of cosmos and Earth as a “communion of subjects.”

First, the relationship within subjectivity between the irreducible singularity of individual existents and the creative power of the wider community is unclear. Are subjects envisioned as existing within a messy, monistic substance that blurs the boundaries of separate embodiment? Or are subjects within the New Story simply separate but related beings possessing their own distinct parallel interiority that influences but does not ontologically penetrate the other? All subjects are “sentient centers of creativity,” but the ontological nature of such centers remains unclear.

Second, and related to the previous concern, the nature of creative relationship and organizational power within the relational ontology of the New Story is unclear. On the one hand, Berry stresses the active dynamism present throughout cosmos, Earth, and each individual existent that exists through self-articulation. And yet, creativity only emerges within the relationship of a cosmic and planetary community, suggesting that nothing simply creates itself, but is co-created by others. Thus, it is crucial to address the ontology of creative power, asking whether it is active or passive, or a co-creative mix of both.

Third, following upon the need to expand the notion of the subject as well as the dynamics of material relationship, we also require a more robust articulation of what exactly is occurring within the creative, organizational, communion occurring between subjects. The New Story, asserting that “everything speaks itself and everything is receiving something from every particle of the universe,”¹⁷

17. Thomas Berry and Thomas Clarke, *Befriending the Earth: A Theology of*

begins to speak of this engagement in the poetics of voice and agency. Yet, what exactly these poetic dynamics refers to is unclear and giving further articulation to this element of the New Story is needed within the vision of a renewed postmodern cosmology. What is needed is a deeper framework for the dynamics involved when various differentiated subjects meet one another within the matrix of materiality.

Finding clear answers to such questions and concerns within Berry's work is, I suggest, impossible given that he was either not preoccupied with such specific ontological nuances or because they were so deep within his thought that they were simply unable to be fully articulated. As such, his work provides no definitive answers or formulas that settle such questions. Hence we must consider the *unthought-of* elements present within Berry's work. Nevertheless, the trajectory of what lies unthought-of in Berry's cosmology can be set by clues within his work that are able to be expanded upon subsequently through the work of other thinkers. Such a method in reading Berry hopes to simultaneously remain faithful to his thinking, while aiding it along a coherent trajectory through a dialog with others.

Regarding such concerns, I suggest that the unthought-of elements in Berry's relational ontology suggests, however unclearly, that the subjectivity of differentiated existents overlaps in the co-creative power of the active and passive dynamics of a cosmos that acts and is acted upon and that such relationships emerge through the power of embodied perception inherent within materiality itself, which I understand to be the "pervasive psychic dimension" of cosmos, Earth and each singular existent. These broad conclusions are based on the logic of Berry's cosmology, beginning with a view toward subjectivity *as the organizational dynamic that brings materiality into being*.¹⁸ Such

Reconciliation between Humans and the Earth (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1991), 15-16.

18. I am omitting the "self" that Berry often prefixes to words such as organization. Such prefix makes sense when talking about cosmogenesis as a whole as this takes place within a community, but applied to separate, differentiated existents it is less helpful as it is tempting to distinguish the power for organization and articulation from the existents passivity insofar as it is created by the organizational and articulating powers of others. Self-

a creative, organizational and articulating power cannot, according to the New Story, be reduced to the individual existent apart from the dynamism of other sentient subjects. As stated in *The Universe Story*, differentiation, autopoiesis, and communion exist within one another as a symphony of entangled elements wherein each inseparably shapes the others.¹⁹ Thus, despite Berry's understanding of subjectivity as the inner, self-organizational power of a singular existent, such power, according to the New Story, is necessarily inseparable from the power of other centers of subjectivity as well as that of cosmogenesis as a whole. All that exists within and because of a communal, relational matrix that supports the ontology of cosmos and Earth. Thus, creative power cannot be the possession of any one thing separate from the power of others; subjectivity must exist communally within a relational ontology that unites all materiality, expressing itself within differentiated, but inseparable particularities of embodied and "sentient centers of creativity."

Consequently, because the power of organization and articulation is inherently communal, it becomes suspect to locate the boundaries of subjectivity neatly within the power of differentiated, but autonomous individuals who simply engage and respond to others as outsiders possessing parallel, but distinct subjectivities. Subjectivity then must in some sense be shared with the whole. Likewise, it also becomes suspect to define subjective power as simply the active dynamic of self-creative individuals since "everything speaks itself and everything is receiving something from every particle of the universe."²⁰ While Berry says little about vulnerable yet creative passivity, this dynamic allows individual existents to be acted upon, and thus co-created within the wider cosmic and planetary community. Subjective dynamism is thus the power both to create and be created.²¹ Finally, the New Story's assertion of the deep sentience

organizational power is present in the whole and its parts, but until we have a sufficiently communal grasp of subjectivity, it seems wise to downplay the self-organizational powers of the cosmos unless we accompany it with commentary.

19. Swimme and Berry, *Universe Story*, 72
20. Thomas Berry, *Befriending the Earth*, 15-16.
21. Interestingly toward the end of Berry and Swimme's discussion of communion within the *Universe Story*, they reference the bear, even within its mother's

present within bodies is not understood within an anthropocentric framework of mind but instead the ability of matter to relate to other bodies according to its particularity and inner blueprint.²² Such sentience, or awareness, is deeper than the human mind and cannot be defined by such. Instead it resides within an infinite plurality of relational embodiment through what we can only refer to as the power of perception, a power out of which relationality grows and differentiates. What is needed as we proceed, however, is a deeper framework for the dynamics involved when various differentiated subjects meet one another within the matrix of materiality.

Such ideas, I suggest, represent some of the unthought-of dimensions of Berry's cosmology and relational ontology. Yet, because they are not fully considered in his work they require further articulation and development through the horizon of other frameworks that deal in greater detail with such ideas. I turn now to the thought of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, whose phenomenology of perception is helpful in developing the present but unthought-of dimensions of the New Story.

womb, as responding to the forest that calls for its particular shape and constitution. The description, however, like Berry's elsewhere, emphasizes an active dynamism within the individual existent to respond to the outside world. It remains unthought-of, however, to embrace the passive dynamism of the power to be created as something other than a privation. Yet, there is a clear and deep recognition that nothing can simply manifest itself apart from the power of the other. Such a focus on active dynamism makes sense in responding to mechanistic cosmologies, as Berry and Swimme were doing, but it is important to note the other side of subjectivity as well.

22. The "psychic" dimension of the cosmos is thus the basis of mind, but cannot be defined in reference to the human. Any position of pan-psychism must defer the human mind to emerging from the deeper perceptual power of materiality itself, allowing relationality to exist among an infinite plurality of flesh. In the New Story, bodies are not spoken of as within a phenomenology of perception, but their capacity for relationship suggests that a sentience exists in materiality itself, in a manner allowing each to receive as well as radiate information. Perception is the most basic for of expressing the passing along of such information within a variety of forms that does not appeal to any one for of normative embodiment.

III. Merleau-Ponty and Chiastic Subjectivity

A helpful model able to expand and re-articulate the “communion of subjects” within the New Story is found within the phenomenological framework of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Through Merleau-Ponty, we might conceive of subjects who not only actively speak and respond to others beyond the rigid boundaries of differentiated bodies, but also penetrate the porous membranes of form, touching, being touched, and becoming entangled with one another in co-creative relationship. The blurring of subjective lines through the material and psychic entanglement of differentiated bodies, as well as their existence as simultaneously active and passive dynamisms is found both in Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of perception and in his understanding of materiality as emerging from chiastic encounters between differentiated, yet entangled instances of flesh.²³

For Merleau-Ponty, the phenomenal world exists as a community of entangled bodies perpetually co-creating the matrix of materiality through phenomenal relationships where subjects both actively touch one other and are passively touched in return.²⁴ Such relationships are not limited to the abstract musings of separate Cartesian minds, but occur within the perceptual powers of the flesh itself regardless of its form. Human bodies, in all their bio-historical richness, exist and relate within the deeper sensuous tissue of cosmos and Earth, where relationship defines existence and bodies emerge from the dynamism inherent in materiality itself to perceive differentiated others and respond through the radiation flowing from their own particularity. While differences exist between bodies, the trajectory of Merleau-Ponty’s thought encourages us to recognize the relational nature of materiality which senses and responds to itself within the particular perceptual powers of its differentiated

23. The outline of Merleau-Ponty I am framing here is not presented historically but in the spirit of the trajectory of his thought, which was ended by his death in 1961.

24. The reference to touch is not meant to be the only perceptual terminology to understand such relationships. We may substitute any perceptual power where appropriate for the existents in question. Merleau-Ponty references seeing and being seen as well, e.g., Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (New York: Humanities Press, 1962), 68.

ways of being-in-a-world.

At the heart of this ubiquitous relationality is perception, which refers to the unique ways that any one body-subject negotiates its world by feeling and responding to the presence of other body-subjects according to the inner dynamism each possesses. Perception is an epistemology unique to all bodies; it is a means of exchanging, interpreting, and responding to information through the horizon accompanying the existents involved in phenomenal engagements. As such, perception is the dynamic communicatory event between all sensuous bodies, which plants relationship firmly and ontologically at the heart of materiality from the seemingly mechanistic interactions of atomic particles to the complex linguistic endeavors of the human.²⁵ Perception thus allows us to speak poetically of communion, an interactive dialog between bodies in relationship within the matrix of materiality, but also as critical realists, of the agency of all things existing not as static objects but as dynamic subjects who, feeling and responding to the community around them, reach out into space-time. Through this relational community of subjects, or the perception of an object-horizon structure as Merleau-Ponty calls it, the world emerges.²⁶

25. Early on Merleau-Ponty shows some hints of a phenomenology that reduces the other to the same, but there are clues at this stage that he does not hold absolutely to this reductionism. In the essay, "The Primacy of Perception, and its Philosophical Consequences," he admits to the "paradox of immanence and transcendence." Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception: And Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History, and Politics* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 16. For a brief consideration of why this reductionism may have been present, see Jack Reynolds, "Merleau-Ponty, Lévinas, and the Alterity of the Other," *Symposium* 6:1 (2002): 63-78, esp. 64.

26. "More precisely, the inner horizon of an object cannot become an object without the surrounding objects becoming a horizon, and so vision is an act with two facets." Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 68. The community of things guarantees the possibility of material reality since no subject can perceive the material field from all perspectives. The hiddenness of every subject from the perspective of the perceiving subject is displayed to other subjects within the material horizon and the total of perception from a complete horizon allows a world to persist. Vision can only occur because the wider horizon, or *in communion*, using Berry's terminology, allows things

To see is to enter a universe of beings which *display themselves*, and they would not do this if they could not be hidden behind each other or behind me. In other words: to look at an object is to inhabit it, and from this habitation to grasp all things in terms of the aspect which they present to it. But in so far as I see those things too, they remain abodes open to my gaze, and, being potentially lodged in them, I already perceive from various angles the central object of my present vision. Thus every object is the mirror of all others. When I look at the lamp on my table, I attribute to it not only the qualities visible from where I am, but also those which the chimney, the walls, the table can “see;” the back of my lamp is nothing other than the face which it “shows” to the chimney. I can therefore see an object in so far as objects form a system or a world, and in so far as each of them treats the others round it as spectators of its hidden aspects and a guarantee of the permanence of those aspects by their presence.²⁷

Thus, it is important to emphasize here that perception is not simply the power of a perceiver that is somehow separable from the dynamism of the individual perceived, let alone the dynamism of the entire field comprising the horizon of all material reality. We do not just have relationships between singular existents, but a perpetual communion of the totality. As such, it is incoherent to suggest that any singular existent might exist at all apart from the whole, residing somehow as a static object not contributing something equally important to embodied encounters as all things engage in perceiving and being perceived. Each existent radiates its own being and as such provides a crucial dynamic to other existents that are able to feel the presence of the other. And yet, without a wider community to feel the subject as it reaches out, there could be no world at all and nothing that we perceive as individual relationships between distinct subjects. It is only because the totality of existents perpetually reach

that display themselves to be present as a whole within the world. Despite no subject being able to be perceived absolutely from all angles, the sum total of the horizon guarantees the totality of any singular body.

27. Ibid.

out into the world actively and simultaneously receive and feel the material presence of the other passively that perception can occur within embodied space-time events. The moment of communion between existents occurs as each subject lends its body to the other thereby exchanging the inseparable organizational power that simultaneously reaches out into the world within active dynamism while feeling-for-the-other with a complimentary passive dynamism.²⁸ “The sensible” according to Merleau-Ponty, “gives back to me what I lent it, but this is only what I took from it in the first place.”²⁹ Thus, there is simultaneously an active as well as a passive dynamism organizing and articulating the world within all embodied encounters. In such events, each existent touches and is touched by the other in a co-creative synthesis not attributed to separate existents but their relation as a totality. Such a relational ontology blurs the boundaries of sensuous and sensible centers of creative subjectivity, as each thing is created through its self-display to a cosmos that can “see,” “touch,” and “feel” such manifestations from every angle.³⁰

This intersection of bodies is eventually described by Merleau-Ponty as a chiasm of the flesh.³¹ In the chiasmic nature of materiality, as beings touch and are touched by one another, they actualize differentiated being in relational, co-creative events. The chiasm of the flesh is an event connecting each subject as both perceiver and perceived resulting in the emergence of new being as the embodied horizon of each differentiated existent crosses over into the other thereby drawing forth space and time. Materiality thus emerges

28. See Merleau-Ponty *Phenomenology of Perception*, 68-72; 207-242.

29. *Ibid.*, 214.

30. Since nothing can perceive the whole, organizational, articulating power, what Berry calls subjectivity, can only be present as a totality. There is a sense then in which subjectivity, as organizational power that brings reality into being, can only exist as a communion. Nothing is itself without everything else. “The house itself is not the house seen from nowhere, but the house seen from everywhere. The completed object is translucent, being shot through from all sides by an infinite number of present scrutinies which intersect in its depths leaving nothing hidden.” *Ibid.*, 69.

31. Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, and Claude Lefort, *The Visible and the Invisible; Followed by Working Notes* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 130-55.

within the communion of the active and passive dynamisms characterizing all materiality in its capacity to perceive and be perceived.³² Cosmos and Earth are the result a communion of subjects wherein relationship co-creates reality thereby drawing forth differentiated subjects in an infinite plurality of developing forms.

In this chiasm of the flesh, however, as bodies co-create one another, they do more than cross or touch at some rigid boundary beyond which they cannot pass. Instead, through perception, bodies “plunge” into one another and “inhabit” perceived bodies.³³ As subjects emerge within a relational matrix, they carry all those who co-created them within their bodies, which exist as the result of a communion of subjects both past and present. The being of any subject is thus understood to include the being of all those subjects who lent their co-creative power to bring potentiality into phenomenal actuality. A differentiated body is thus not a self-generated individual emerging simply from an inner autopoietic power in response to an outside world; the body of any existent is a relational event, is relationship itself. The trace of outside alterity is ontologically present within all existents, ontologically constituting being through the becoming of the subject as they respond to sensible and sensuous others, carrying in themselves all those who co-create them.³⁴ “The world and I,” in the thinking of Merleau-Ponty, “are within each other.”³⁵ Thus, with Merleau-Ponty, “as I contemplate” the world,

32 Cf., With David Abram’s description: “It is this open activity, this dynamic blend of receptivity and creativity by which every animate organism necessarily orients itself to the world (and orients the world around itself), that we speak of by the term ‘perception.’” Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 50. See also, Reynolds, “Merleau-Ponty, Lévinas, and the Alterity of the Other,” 68-69.

33. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 67.

34. “Thus, the positing of one single object, in the full sense, demands the compositive bringing into being of all these experiences in one act of manifold creation. Therein it exceeds perceptual experience and the synthesis of horizons—as the notion of a *universe*, that is to say, a completed and explicit totality, in which the relationships are those of reciprocal determination, exceeds that of a world, or an open and indefinite multiplicity of relationships which are of reciprocal implication.” *Ibid.*, 71.

35. Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 123. David Abram describes bodies in this vision as having porous membranes, allowing others to pass in

but particularly now, the green of the tree within a Toronto park as I write this essay, “I abandon myself to it” as the green presents itself to me within our shared earthy matrix. I feel the green within my human horizon knowing that it is not less, only differently, dynamic than myself, as we both reach out in self-presentation while firmly rooted and passively perceived, each according to its own kind. In this entanglement of the flesh, “I plunge into this mystery;” this green “thinks itself within me” as we “are drawn together and unified.” I am, in a sense, the tree, “saturated within this limitless” green.³⁶

IV. Re-Articulating the Communion of Subjects

Our tenuous relationship with Earth will remain so long as we continue to embrace mechanistic cosmologies while relying purely on the capitalist driven projects of modern science and technology to heal the anthropogenic harm done to the planet. The universe is a communion of subjects rather than a collection of objects. Such is the “central commitment” of the New Story and the mythic vision that must fuel the necessary psychic shift needed among humanity

and out of each other, while paradoxically maintaining difference between the two even as the two create one another. The boundaries of bodies are porous, “like membranes [more] than barriers.” Abram, *Spell of the Sensuous*, 46.

36. This section is entangled with Merleau-Ponty’s words found in his *Phenomenology of Perception*, 214. It highlights not only the spacious entanglement between existing bodies, but the entanglement of bodies throughout time without regard to space. Merleau-Ponty, or a ghostly form of his former vibrancy, is carried into the present through his writings and as I read him he comes to reside within me as I write, blurring the lines of subjectivity and authorship. This is a “middle ground,” we saw Merleau-Ponty advocate above “where the philosopher we are speaking about and the philosopher who is speaking are present together,” impossible “to decide at any given moment just what belongs to each.” Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, 159. The full quote from *Phenomenology of Perception*, 214, is found here: “As I contemplate the blue of the sky I abandon myself to it and plunge into this mystery; it ‘thinks itself within me.’ I am the sky itself as it is drawn together and unified, and as it begins to exist for itself; my conscious is saturated with this limitless blue.”

if Earth is to approach the Ecozoic era.³⁷ A poetic, yet critically realist mythos of cosmos and Earth teeming with vibrancy expressed through the active and passive dynamisms of a renewed understanding of subjectivity are necessary as we move toward the future. “One cannot,” according to David Abram, “enter into a felt rapport with another entity if one assumes that the other is entirely inanimate. *It is difficult, if not impossible, to empathize with an inert object.*”³⁸

While a communion of subjects is a necessary framework to understand cosmos and Earth, much remains unsaid within the framework as it now stands. Thomas Berry's communion of subjects must be re-articulated with a mind toward the unthought nuances present within his New Story. Such ideas remain faithful to Berry's thinking, though they are not clearly articulated within his extant texts; rather they emerge through the trajectory he sets upon and the dialogical nuance added through conversation with other thinkers. As I have suggested, the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty provides a beginning to this re-imagined communion of subjects in line with the unthought-of dimensions of the New Story. Yet, it would be naïve to see Merleau-Ponty as merely providing nuance to Berry, without Merleau-Ponty's own work being transformed through the drawing out of the unthought-of within his own framework. Merleau-Ponty, writing in the mid-twentieth century, was not concerned with cosmology and relational ontology for the sake of a wider ecological ethic. He also possessed anthropocentric biases in his work, perhaps placing too much distance and difference between human and non-human flesh. As such, his work is read in light of Berry's ecological framework just as much as Berry is read within Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological framework. While my explicit focus is not transforming Merleau-Ponty, it is assumed in what follows as I construct a renewed cosmology and communion of subjects where authorship is blurred within a “middle ground” where philosophers “are present

37. Swimme and Berry, *Universe Story*, 243.

38. David Abram, *Becoming Animal* (New York, NY: Pantheon, 2010), 44. If such a “childlike” perception of existents in their active and passive dynamisms were encouraged, “this early collusion with things would quietly deepen and mature into a nuanced respect for the manifold life of the world, a steady pleasure in the profusion of bodily forms and the innumerable styles of sentience that compose the earthly cosmos” *Ibid.*, 40.

together,” rather than isolated into distinct centers of subjectivity.³⁹

I suggest two specific means of reframing and rearticulating the communion of subjects within the dialogue outlined in this essay. First, we must be careful to avoid locating subjectivity simply within the bodies of individual existents. While “everything speaks itself” within a sensible “universe of beings which *display themselves*,” such existence is meaningless and ontologically incoherent apart from the wider sensuous community which hears, sees, and responds to each existent touching back as soon as they are touched.⁴⁰ The “force of gravitation,” says Berry, “holds the differentiated universe together, enabling it to be a universe of individual realities distinct from, but intimately present to, one another.”⁴¹ Such a presence-to, or presence-within as I would articulate it in light of Merleau-Ponty, speaks to an ontological intimacy among existents that co-create one another as they take up residence deep within the sensuous tissue of materiality. While Berry’s articulation of co-subjectivity and co-presence within such statements is somewhat vague, he seems to embrace such a blurred line when he says that “the Earth acts in all that acts

39. Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, 159. In the working notes of *The Visible and Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty writes of the flesh, “my body is made of the same flesh as the world...and moreover that this flesh of my body is shared by the world” (248). He notes later (250) that the flesh of the world and human flesh are different, as the latter has sentience, or self-awareness. While there certainly is a difference, such a simple bifurcation of self-awareness and non-self-awareness seems inadequate to describe the difference, and in a discussion of Merleau-Ponty’s work we could demonstrate this as the unthought-of within his own thinking. Yet, we must remember that this work was not finished when Merleau-Ponty died in 1961 and this thought necessarily needs development. Merleau-Ponty describes this ultimate direction for his project in the final pages of the working notes in *The Visible and Invisible*. Just two months before his death in 1961, he writes that his work “must be presented without compromise with humanism, nor moreover with naturalism, nor finally with theology—Precisely what has to be done is to show that philosophy can no longer think according to this cleavage: God, man, creatures.” *Ibid.*, 274. Merleau-Ponty’s trajectory suggests that such a reading presented within this essay is faithful to him.

40. Thomas Berry, *Befriending the Earth*, 15-16; Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 68. Berry and Swimme say further that the subject is “meaningless outside of this enveloping web of relations.” *Universe Story*, 77.

41. Thomas Berry, *Sacred Universe*, 71.

upon the Earth.⁴² Such a blurry, messy and infinite understanding of subjectivity and interior co-presence likewise appears to be present, yet still unthought-of, when Berry asserts that “all the energy that would ever exist in the entire course of time erupted as a single quantum—a singular gift—existence. If in the future, stars would blaze and lizards would blink in their light, these actions would be powered by the same numinous energy that flared forth at the dawn of time.”⁴³ There is an ontology here, though not fully articulated, wherein reality consists of differentiated though not utterly distinct existents emerging from the unified and shared creative energy unfolding in cosmogenesis and epigenesis. As such, subjectivity becomes impossible to reify, resisting our attempts at totalization through its perpetual retreat toward infinity.⁴⁴ Subjectivity then can only refer to the shared creative power of articulation present in all things through relationship and, as such, must in a sense be collectively shared by all differentiated, though not absolutely distinct, existents.

We require then a mythic framework of a chiasmic communion between differentiated but entangled subjects; we require a communion wherein the inner and outer do not occupy separate space alone, but paradoxically mingle in a mysterious mutual penetration that decenters as much as it locates differentiated being. Such subjectivity would thus speak not of self-organization but co-organization through co-creative power, and each existent within the cosmos would ontologically constitute a microcosm of the whole. In this framework the subject exists as a chimera whose power to actualize material reality is more than an inner response to an outer stimuli; it is the entangled, co-creative communion penetrating deep into the reality of each sensible and sensuous existent whose subjectivity becomes infinite, incalculable, and impossible to locate beyond relationship itself. Subjects would thus not simply be present to one

42. Ibid.

43. Berry and Swimme, *Universe Story*, 17.

44. Merleau-Ponty describes this as revealing to us “the perceiving subject as the perceived world.” Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 72. Not even our own bodies resist such conflation as we recognize that what we are is the result of the same co-creative event of cosmogenesis.

another, but present within one another as perpetually new constitutions of being that paradoxically preserve the alterity of differentiation within a deeper unity.⁴⁵

Second, our framework for communion must likewise be rearticulated in greater specificity. Through a phenomenology of perception incorporating all flesh we might understand existents not as mechanistic, static, and inert objects, but as dynamic, sensuous presence, poetically capable of living, breathing, and speaking within a relational material matrix. Such is a cosmos where a thing sees and is seen, touches and is touched back; it is a world where “everything speaks itself” and is acted upon by “every particle of the universe.”⁴⁶ Through perception, each existent would radiate its own being, actively reaching out into the world as it simultaneously feels the presence of other subjects in ways unique to the particulars of specific forms of embodiment. This vision imagines all materiality is inherently sensible as well as sensuous and conceives of subjects within an active as well as passive dynamism that is once more infinite and not restricted to any one form of embodiment. Pure objects as static and inert things that simply receive the action of others would not exist in such a cosmology, nor would things that simply act and reach out into the world. In such a framework, both the subjectivity present as a whole and in its differentiated parts would com-

45. This is not a fusion of subjects eradicating difference, yet there is a real sense that bodies do not have rigid boundaries, but reach out into the world to reside in the other. Cf. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin’s vision of the “Omega Point,” where such an ontology exists. Omega, for Teilhard, is a monistic matrix where differentiation paradoxically exists and resists eradication. Teilhard de Chardin, Pierre, *The Human Phenomenon* (Brighton, UK: Sussex Academic Press, 1999), 167-208. While I regard this as the default ontology of cosmos and Earth, Teilhard helpfully articulates a similar union in a future Omega point by asserting “the more together, they become the other, the more they become ‘themselves.’...a system whose unity coincides with a paroxysm of harmonized complexity.” *Ibid.*, 186. While Teilhard is uncomfortable with the language of “blending,” I see this as an inevitable consequence of this thought that promotes intimacy, unity, and, also diversity. Yet, in the context of his argument, Teilhard seeks to avoid pantheism and an undifferentiated monism, and so I take this to be the blending he eschews, not a paradoxical unity in differentiation.

46. Berry and Clarke, *Befriending the Earth*, 15-16.

prise distinct elements of both active and passive dynamisms that are able to act within the boundaries of their capacities while unable to utterly transcend their bodies and ignore the impact of other beings.

Within such a framework, we must embrace the vast differences of perceptual power here in all of its forms without normalizing any one way of being as definitive of relational subjectivity. Each existent possesses certain abilities to actively hold itself together and fulfill its dreams, respond to other bodies, and present itself to the wider communion of subjects. Yet, each also possesses a complimentary passive side. Existents are created by the wider community, are acted upon in ways they are helpless to avoid, potentially preventing the fulfillment of their dreams, and they touch the world only insofar as they are touched back. All these dynamics comprise subjectivity and communally co-create the matrix of cosmos and Earth. Within such dynamics of active agency and passive receptivity, a world of relational subjectivity emerges in all its beauty, diversity, and vulnerability.⁴⁷

As we move toward the Ecozoic, we must pay special attention to this final element. The communion in whom (declaring subjectivity as communal) we live is a vulnerable communion of vulnerable subjects (declaring subjectivity as individual). Since each existent has its own active dynamism expressed in particular abilities, and simultaneously exists within a passive dynamism, expressed as inabilities, vulnerability becomes a fundamental metaphysical characteristic of materiality. While existents speak and reach out into the world, they are also unable, utterly unable, to fulfill themselves in creative tension without the wider community.⁴⁸ Such a relational ontology allows the world to pursue its dreams, while allowing for the constant potential for such dreams to be altered and thwarted. The communion of subjects must carry itself toward the Ecozoic;

47. Inability does not enter into Berry's account of what constitutes the subject. We must move away from a subjectivity that reduces dynamism to active agency and voice, and embrace the reality that inabilities, just as much as abilities, constitute the co-creative power of the subjective.

48. Of course existence within creative tension also presupposes natural violence and interruption that contributes to the flourishing and unfolding of cosmogenesis as well as epigenesis. Berry and Swimme helpfully outline this thermodynamic necessity in the *Universe Story*, 47-61.

and the human role in this is to recognize what the wider communion can and cannot do for itself, and respond to the summons of material vulnerability insofar as our power allows us to act on behalf of the other. It is this vulnerability emerging from the nature of the communion of subjects that we must attend to, understanding that despite the radical difference from ourselves, the myriad of subjects within cosmos and Earth summon us as our empathy meets the non-power of a vulnerability that paradoxically constitutes the dynamic summons calling the human toward the Ecozoic.⁴⁹

49. Additional exploration of the dynamics of non-power or radical passivity would benefit from the ethics of Emmanuel Lévinas and what he refers to as the “resistance that has no resistance—the ethical resistance.” Lévinas, Emmanuel, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 194. Such a study would also benefit from the ethics of Jacques Derrida who develops a non-anthropocentric view of Lévinas’ ethic. See especially Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet, trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).

Body, *Being* and the Emerging Ecozoic: Thomas Berry's Relevance to Modern Medicine

Renée Eli

Introduction

Common to all living beings, including the human being, is the tacit organismic knowing how to *be*—to sustain life—and how to *become*—to produce and to actualize life. I am referring specifically to the biologic processes of autopoiesis and morphogenesis defined by Humberto Maturana, Francisco Varela, and Rupert Sheldrake, respectively.¹ If we follow this thread even briefly, we soon come to the realization that every living being is enminded with an innateness toward flourishing.² In this essay, I suggest Thomas Berry was referring to this enminded nature of *being* and *becoming* when he referred to all living systems, the biosphere, and the whole of the cosmos as “ensouled,”³ though he en fleshed the mere biological with

1. Humberto R. Maturana and Francisco J. Varela, *Autopoiesis and Cognition: The Realization of the Living* (London: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1980). Maturana and Varela originate the notion *autopoiesis*, which describes the self-organizing and self-actualizing qualities of all living organisms. For an elaboration on embodied cognition, see also: Francisco, J. Varela, Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch, *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993). For a sophisticated and interdisciplinary contribution to the discourse on “mind in life,” see also: Evan Thompson, *Mind in Life: Biology, Phenomenology, and the Sciences of Mind* (Cambridge: The Balkans Press of Harvard University Press, 2007). Regarding morphogenesis, see: Rupert Sheldrake, *Morphic Resonance: The Nature of Formative Causation* (Rochester, VT: Park Street Press, 2009); and Rupert Sheldrake, “Morphic Fields,” *World Futures: The Journal of New Paradigm Research*, 62 (2006), 31-41.
2. Mark Johnson and Tim Rohrer, “We are Living Creatures: Embodiment, American Pragmatism, and the Cognitive Organism,” in *Body, Language, and Mind*, vol. 1, eds. Jordan Zlatev et al. (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2007), 17-54.
3. Ever since the time of Descartes in the first half of the seventeenth century,

the numinous.

Thomas Berry offered to us a providential vision that urges a resuscitation of the human being. In his 1991 Schumacher lecture, Berry outlined six conditions necessary for emergence into the Ecozoic era.⁴ The essence of these conditions is that the human being must relinquish alienation from living and endeavor instead toward psychic communion with all life processes—with *being* and *becoming*. Such a communion is not merely epistemological; rather, it must be a living ontology. Berry elsewhere outlines what he refers to as “six transcendences”⁵ of the human being—penumbras, which

Western humans, in their dominant life attitudes, have been autistic in relation to the non-human components of the planet. Whatever the abuse of the natural world by humans prior to that time, the living world was recognized until then in its proper biological functioning as having an “anima,” a soul. Every living being was by definition an *ensouled* being with a voice that spoke to the depths of the human of wondrous and divine mysteries, a voice that was heard quite clearly by the poets and musicians and scientists and philosophers and mystics of the world, a voice heard also with special sensitivity by the children. Thomas Berry, “The Ecozoic Era,” (paper presented at the Eleventh Annual E. F. Schumacher Lectures, Great Barrington, MA, October, 1991) (italics added), <http://www.centerforneweconomics.org/publications/lectures/berry/thomas/the-ecozoic-era>.

4 Ibid.

5. Thomas Berry, *Evening Thoughts: Reflecting on Earth as Sacred Community*, ed. Mary Evelyn Tucker (San Francisco: Sierra Books, 2006), 25-32. Berry suggests what makes us vulnerable is, first, a “*transcendent, personal, monotheistic deity*.” Displacing the Divine from immanency has the tendency to “desacralize the phenomenal world.” Second, Berry contends that we have transcended, accordingly, the nature of the human being by assigning *human as spiritual* and the natural world as material. That which is material, by its very object nature becomes external. Third, we are made vulnerable by our “primacy of belief in *redemption*”—the notion that “we are not of this world,” and thus, only sojourners on this material and earthly plane. Berry suggests the fourth transcendence, the “*transcendence of mind*,” is a Cartesian legacy, which splits mind from materiality and makes that which is material void of an *anima*. Materiality is rendered, thus, mechanistic, and, in effect, “desouls” the world. The fifth transcendence, a *transcendent technology*, allows us to transcend the basic laws of biology, which otherwise place limits on species and life-processes. The sixth transcendence is the belief in a “*transcendent historical destiny*” for the human being. That we are destined for another *transphenomenal* place and/or mode of being significantly diminishes our

hinder a flourishing humanity and therefore, increasingly, all of the natural world. He puts forth a foundation upon which we reckon our existence.

In this paper, I suggest that Thomas Berry's appeal to humanity for an emerging Ecozoic era finds relevance in medical theory and practice. I consider Berry's six transcendences within the context of anthropological and sociological attitudes toward the human body, a Cartesian "object" body, and a medical paradigm that renders the living body paradoxical and creates for the healthcare clinician—particularly the physician—an obstruction, a conundrum, and an ongoing master-slave dynamic. I offer to Western medicine an ecozoic body, an enminded flesh that is consistent with and an elaboration upon Berry's vision for the reinvention of the human being. Implicit in Berry's appeal is a renewed, ensouled communion with the human body, which understands that the human-nature relationship is intimate, integral, immanent, and always dynamic. Such a view is not anthropocentric. Rather, it is a foundational view of the embedded human.

I attempt here to achieve three aims that are distinct but inseparable. First, this paper pays homage to Thomas Berry on this occasion during which we convene to further his imaginings, to expound upon and indeed expand his contribution to and invocation for this binding endeavor which he termed *The Great Work*.⁶ Second, I offer an embodied mode of writing that means to call forth within the reader a similar mode of embodied being—a living-lived and likewise intelligent, perceptive, and discerning mode of being. Third, I offer a brief analysis of Berry's vision for a flourishing Earth-human community in the context of Western modern medicine at a time when human and planetary health demonstrably, and with a crescendoing importunity, disclose that a flourishing humanity is inti-

care for this material world, which includes our own bodied-being. Richard Tarnas provides a lucid and elaborate contextual account of the tendencies of the Western mind, which supports Berry's "six transcendences." See, Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas that Have Shaped Our World View* (New York: Ballantine, 1991).

6. Thomas Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999).

mately dependent upon an equally robust vegetal-animal-mineral-biotic sphere.

The Cartesian Body: An Object Body

Berry's concern about an object materiality finds congruence in anthropological and sociological considerations for an object human corporeality. As anthropologist and medical social scientist Margaret Lock insists, the human body mediates all human "reflection and action upon the world."⁷ The body's centrality to a renewed relationship with *being*, particularly within a context of flourishing, is therefore immediate.

Though each of Berry's notable six transcendences of the human being is integral to each other one and to the whole of turning toward an Ecozoic era, I highlight three of Berry's six transcendences that exemplify human vulnerabilities toward an object ontology of the body. These transcendences are, according to Berry, the "*spiritual nature of the human*," the "*transcendence of mind*," and a "*transcendent historical destiny*."⁸ What these three beliefs repeatedly convey to human beings is that the body is of the material world indistinguishable from all of nature. As such, our very flesh is external, object, and to be transcended.

The belief in an especially spiritual nature of the human being manages to bring about two insidious coups: first, that the human being is essentially a spiritual being isolates humanity as separate from, and therefore superlative in relation to all other living beings; second, such an attitude desacralizes materiality,⁹ including our own corporeality. Berry elaborates upon the impact of segregating human life from all other living processes. Yet, I suggest Berry likewise intends that desacralizing our own flesh conveys comparable life-alienating meaning. When the body of our own being is desacralized, we lose our connection with life itself, because it is

7. Margaret Lock, "Cultivating the Body: Anthropology and Epistemologies of Bodily Practice and Knowledge," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 22 (1993), 133-155.

8. Berry, *Evening Thoughts*, 27.

9. *Ibid.*, 26.

by way of our body that we are beings-in-the-world. A lost “sacred dimension”¹⁰ of our body—cells and inside our cells, marrow and maw—begets a body that becomes subservient to the spiritual realm. The body in this context—much like the natural world—is at risk of being viewed as a constraint or an obstruction.¹¹

Philosopher Sally Gadow offers an insightful phenomenological perspective of the human self-body relation. Gadow maintains that disruption of immediacy occurs between the experience of self and body in psychic development of human experience. At the level of primary immediacy, there is a prevailing self-body unity, which is a unity of both being-*in-the-world* and being-acted-upon-*by-the-world*. Being and world are distinct but inseparable, as are self and body inextricably tied. When the nexus of being shifts from that of being-*in-the-world* toward a more inwardly focused experience of self as distinct, “the self-body experiences itself as acting upon and being acted upon, not by the world but by *a part of itself*.”¹² Here, the unity of being is disrupted. The body is established by the self as object and that upon which the self must act and be acted upon. The body, in short, has become an “objective reality.”¹³ The body is no longer an essential subjectivity.¹⁴

Expounding on Hegel’s master-slave dynamic, Gadow eluci-

10. Ibid.

11. Sally Gadow, “Body and Self: A Dialectic,” in *The Humanity of the Ill: Phenomenological Perspectives*, ed. V. Kestenbaum (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982), 86-100. See also: Richard J. Barron, “Why Aren’t More Doctors Phenomenologists?” in *The Body in Medical Thought and Practice*, ed. Drew Leder, 37-47 (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992).

12. Gadow, “Body and Self,” 88. Emphasis in original.

13. Berry, *Evening Thoughts*. 26.

14. Gadow, in “Body and Self,” develops four stages of relationship between body and self as a “dialectical progression.” The earlier two stages are first, primary immediacy: the lived body; and second, disrupted immediacy: the object body, which I have offered here. The two later stages, not covered here, are third, cultivated immediacy: the harmony of the lived body and object body; fourth, aesthetic immediacy: the subject body as exemplified in aging and illness. Such a dialectical progression of the lived experience is, however, immanent, the understanding of which is important to an epistemology of the phenomenological development of the human being.

dates two features that are extant in an object body ontology: first, only the self is experienced as subject: the body is object, and thus becomes self's "vehicle and instrument, serving the will of the self as does the slave its master."¹⁵ Second, there is the always plausible inversion of the above: the body "rebels, refuses to function, and through the asserted independence, the former master—the self—becomes the slave."¹⁶ This phenomenological relationship between perceived self and perceived body functions quite similarly to the human-nature relationship that takes place in the context of a pride of human spiritual essentiality.

I now turn to Berry's *transcendence of mind*. The following four-word statement from Berry conveys an existential urgency: "Descartes desouled the world."¹⁷ It is as if Berry is suggesting that something vital to all being has been stripped away. Indeed, Descartes left us with a legacy which insists: (i) that which is not mind is mechanism; (ii) mind is the only rational instrument of the human soul; and (iii) mechanism is causal, measurable, reductive, predictive, and replicable.¹⁸ In other words, that which is not mind can be controlled by and be subservient to mind. Mind is to be found only in the thinking brain, supra-positioned above the rest of the body and presumed, thus, to be separate from the body, as if it were *non-body*.¹⁹ Mind is subject. Body is object.

Phenomenologist David Michael Levin insists our Cartesian metaphysics renders the corporeal body incapable of thinking.²⁰ A body incapable of thinking is incapable of reason, and is there-

15. Gadaw, "Body and Self," 88-89.

16. *Ibid.*, 89.

17. Berry, *Evening Thoughts*. 26.

18. Berry, *Evening Thoughts* and "The Ecozoic Era." See also Drew Leder, "A Tale of Two Bodies: The Cartesian Corpse and the Lived Body," in *The Body in Medical Thought and Practice*, ed. Drew Leder, 17-35 (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992).

19. Renée Eli, "Of Flesh and Flourishing: Body and the Innateness of Being and Becoming—A Literature Review" (unpublished manuscript), (San Francisco, CA: California Institute of Integral Studies, 2014).

20. David Michael Levin, *The Body's Recollection of Being: Phenomenological Psychology and the Deconstruction of Nihilism* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985).

fore perceived to be of little to no value, if not immoral and void of good.²¹ Elizabeth Grosz maintains that what we are left with is an abysmal “somatophobia.”²²

Descartes’ notions regarding mind and body are not limited, however, to a dispassionate view of perceived reality. Phenomenologist Drew Leder asserts that Descartes’ metaphysics are influenced, if not powerfully driven, by a profound existential angst regarding mortality.²³ Descartes insisted that the human soul does not perish when the life of the body is extinguished, but the perishability of the body itself posed a significant threat to Descartes.²⁴ In an effort to advance medical science, Descartes “engaged for years in the dissection of dead animals and animal parts. At certain periods of his life he paid almost daily visits to butcher shops, collecting material for this purpose.”²⁵ The result is that we are rendered a medical philosophy and theory that is based not on the living body, but on the corpse.²⁶ Such a medical view of the human body must acknowledge that its worldview, theories, and practices are based on a body that is inanimate.²⁷

While Descartes alone cannot be blamed for Berry’s sixth transcendence—a *transcendent historical destiny*—we see in Descartes this attitude and belief at work. As separate entities, body and soul are offered immeasurably distinct destinies: a certain death and decay of the body and an almost certain immortality of the soul. Relieved of the body, the soul is “destined by nature for pleasures and felicities much greater than those we enjoy in this world.”²⁸ Such a division of soul with body, and mind with body, divides ontological being and sets a teleological trajectory toward an oth-

21. Ibid. See also, Leder, “A Tale of Two Bodies,” and Wanda S. Pillow, “Exposed Methodology: The Body as Deconstructive Practice,” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 10 (1997), 349-363.

22. Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994).

23. Leder, “A Tale of Two Bodies.”

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid., 19.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

28. Descartes, as quoted in Leder, “A Tale of Two Bodies,” 18.

erworldly place—beyond body, beyond materiality, beyond Earth.

The Medical Body: A Paradoxical Body

It would seem that the body poses a conundrum.²⁹ On the one hand, the body is devoid of value, if not altogether negated,³⁰ and the body is materiality that will be transcended by an immortal soul. In other words, our body is instrumental, but not essential for the endeavors of the soul. On the other hand, the body is that which must be tended to, freed of infirmities and aging, and preserved with longevity. The body, in this context, is to be emancipated from its unavoidable mortality. For the scientist and the physician alike, this means the body is to become, in many senses, transparent *so that* it can be “known” and thus preserved as a life-sustaining physicality of the human being.³¹

In this sense, the body is a problem to be solved; and for the patient and physician, such a problem is rarely, if ever, experienced as the same reality.³² The Cartesian object body presents to modern medicine, thus, as a paradoxical body. It is a body to be diagnosed and treated. It is the very same body that obstructs diagnosis and treatment, because it is a living body indwelt by a living human being.

Berry's suggestion regarding Western tendencies toward a belief in a *transcendent, personal monotheistic creative deity* is operative in Western modern medicine. Personal authority for our bodily-being has been displaced and projected onto another—the physician—whom, we believe, will save us from the vicissitudes of our corporeality, and particularly in this medical context, from *dis*-ease and aging.³³ But such a displaced authority for bodily being removes

29. Barron, “Why Aren't More Doctors Phenomenologists?,” 37-47. See also: Leder, “A Tale of Two Bodies.”

30. Abigail Bra and Claire Colet, “The Haunted Flesh: Corporeal Feminism and the Politics of (Dis)Embodiment,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 24,(1998), 35-67. See also Leder, “A Tale of Two Bodies,” and Lock, “Cultivating the Body.”

31. Barron, “Why Aren't More Doctors Phenomenologists?”

32. Gadow, “Body and Self,” 86.

33. For more on bodily authority, see Levin, *The Body's Recollection of Being*.

human care and responsibility for our own flesh and places it in the hands of another to whom we offer our bodily deeds and misdeeds in hopes of corporeal salvation—if only for a time. In doing so, we surrender inward communion with our intrinsic bodily authority, which has its own biological inclination toward knowing how to *be* and to *become*. We diminish, thus, our body's sacrality and vital essence, its "own inner form, its own spontaneity, its own voice,"³⁴ which gives language and meaning to our existence. We diminish our body's subject "ability to declare itself and to be present to other components of the universe in a subject-to-subject relationship."³⁵ We rely, instead, on another, whose view is external and deemed "objective," to convey to us the reality of our bodiedness and therefore, our *being* and our *becoming*.

Moreover, when we, by our attitudes and beliefs, desacralize our body, we unknowingly desacralize our existence. We are vulnerable, thus, to a *transcendent technology*, permitting us preservation of the instrument and vehicle that is the body, which, despite our attitudes, is our belonging.³⁶ Barron insists: "Since physicians are mostly searching for the disease within the body, the usual approach is to fix the mechanically defective agent of the self, an approach which, of course, separates body and self quite substantially."³⁷ Prior to Descartes, however, such a methodology of mechanically fixing the broken "part" was inconceivable. Certain moral forbiddance constrained "human tampering with nature."³⁸ Such a shift in world view toward mechanism and technological advancement allows human beings to surpass basic biological limits.³⁹ We are now not only able to preserve life and delay death, we can and do undermine the intrinsic restraints of human population growth on the planet.

What happens, however, when the body rebels or refuses to succumb to a medical regimen? What happens to the patient, and to the physician too? Our medical model is enigmatic, because its philoso-

34. Berry, "The Ecozoic Era."

35. Ibid.

36. Frédérique de Vignemont, "Embodiment, Ownership and Disownership," *Consciousness and Cognition*, (2010), 1-11.

37. Barron, "Why Aren't More Doctors Phenomenologists?" 40.

38. Leder, "The Tale of Two Bodies," 20.

39. Berry, *Evening Thoughts*, 27.

phies and theories are derived from the dead even though our post-Cartesian angst is one of preserving the machine as long as medical technology will permit.

Berry suggests that we abide in a certain and ubiquitous resentment against our human condition because of our tendency to believe that “life might be other than it is.”⁴⁰ For Berry, it is this resentment that compels our efforts to transcend the “*very conditions of life* through our scientific technologies.”⁴¹ Such an attitude is met with another supporting belief, or the third “transcendence”:⁴² the primacy of belief in *redemption*. When the body turns away from *being* to *dying* and becomes master of the medical doctor and the patient too, we turn to the belief that we will be restored. We are, after all, according to this belief, not of this place. Nor are we of this body. We are only sojourners biding time as incarnate. For Western modern medicine, then, “the dead body is frequently the symbol of failure and termination of the therapeutic project. The business of the doctor is to attend the living, not the dead, and to preserve life in all but extreme circumstances.”⁴³ When the body refuses the therapeutic project, modern medicine must step aside. The work of the human thereafter is to shed the body so that the soul may be atoned.

40. *Ibid.*, 28.

41. *Ibid.* Emphasis in original.

42. *Ibid.*

43. Leder, “The Tale of Two Bodies,” 17. Thomas Berry elaborated on the impact of the fourteenth century European plague that came to be known as Black Death upon the Western human psyche. In response to this catastrophic event and other social ills of the time, the Western psyche responded, according to Berry, in two distinct directions: first, toward a “religious redemption out of a tragic world,” and second, toward greater control over nature in a similar attempt to escape suffering. Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Books, 1988), 125.

The Ecozoic Body: An Embedded, Ensouled Flesh⁴⁴

What if we were to begin not only our imaginings, but our phenomenological *being*, with human body as a subject living-lived body? What if, in other words, being *with* the human body prompts in the human being a living-communion and context so eloquently and with such immediacy as to urge none other than a revivification of all modes of human *beingness*? It is, after all, by way of the body that the human comes into *being* moment-by-moment. How might the human call forth such an embodiment of being? I leave this question open, though not without providing further context for inquiring into such a mode of *being*.

By *subject*, I am referring to the body as *sentient*, which is to say that the human body is animated with organizing principles that enable the body to both sustain its living organism and to become the fullest expression of its *biological endowment*.⁴⁵ By *living*, I am referring to the moment-to-moment *dynamism* of the organismic body coupled with the surrounding environment.⁴⁶ Such a dynamic coupling shapes both the body and the *surrounding milieu in an always ongoing process of reciprocity, a process that is unending*.⁴⁷ By *lived*, I am referring to the *experience* of bodily *being*, which is moment-to-moment and that which becomes living bodily memory and meaning. Such a *sentient, dynamic, experiential* ontology of the human body as embedded within the whole living cosmos ensouls once again human flesh. I suggest this mode of subject living-lived

44. I borrow the term “flesh” from Maurice Merleau-Ponty. See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, ed. Claude Lefort, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968). Of particular importance to this paper is Merleau-Ponty’s position that flesh is the living threshold of being and world, a dimensional permeable organismic boundary that distinguishes being and dissolves the dichotomous division of inner and outer, serving instead, as the pervious, living-lived threshold that serves the dynamic coupling of bodily-being with surrounding milieu.

45. Lyn Margulis, “The Conscious Cell,” *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 929(1), (2001), 55-70.

46. See Thompson, *Mind in Life*, and Johnson and Rohrer, “We are Live Creatures.”

47. Thompson, *Mind in Life*. See also Sheldrake, *Morphic Resonance*, and Sheldrake, “Morphic Fields.”

body is consistent with Berry's appeal to the human being and to Western modern medicine.

In her editorial preface to Berry's *Evening Thoughts*, Mary Evelyn Tucker offers: "This is what Berry does for each of us, places us in the vast matrix of life so we experience kinship once again. He helps us to find our way home."⁴⁸ Berry encourages such kinship even in modern medicine. How does kinship find its expression, however, in Western modern medicine if the body is perceived as paradoxical, obstructive, and, in its connection to a self, problematic? How does modern medicine move away from dogmatism and strict empiricism to a living-lived bodily subject-to-subject philosophy and practice?⁴⁹ Is such an approach called for in the context of a human and other-than-human flourishing?

Berry insists that it is. He calls forth an ecological medical model, one that not only allows for an embedded subjectivity, but also urges an understanding of the always dynamic relationship of subject with subject—human with human, human with other-than-human.⁵⁰ A medical philosophy and theoretical construct whose ontological understanding is one of bodily subjectivity not only rectifies the medical body paradox, but it also reconciles strangely abstruse life-alienating tendencies in the context of an institution whose role it is to support life. A truly life-supporting medical system likewise acknowledges biological limits, natural cycles of waxing and waning, and the always dynamic reciprocity of human with other-than-human spheres. Berry writes: "In prior centuries, human illness was experienced within the well-being of the natural world with its abundance of air and water, and foods grown in fertile soul."⁵¹ He adds:

The profession of medicine must now consider its role, not only

48. Mary Evelyn Tucker, "Editor's Preface," in Berry, *Evening Thoughts*, 10.

49. For more on dogmatism and empiricism in the history of Western medicine, see Richard A. Zaner, "Parted Bodies, Departed Souls: The Body in Ancient Medicine and Anatomy," in *The Body in Medical Thought and Practice*, ed. Drew Leder (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992), 101-122.

50. Berry, "The Ecozoic Era."

51. Berry, *The Great Work*, 67.

within the context of human society, but in the context of the Earth process. A healing Earth is prerequisite for the healing of the human. Adjustment of the human to the conditions and restraints of the natural world constitutes the primary medical prescription for human well-being. The medical profession needs to establish a way of sustaining the species as well as the individual if the human is to be viable as a species within the community of species.⁵²

An ontological communion with our subject living-lived body embeds the human being within the broader *web of life*,⁵³ and permits us a return to the tacit understanding that we are a vast community of subjects,⁵⁴ each interacting and interdependent with the viability and flourishing of all life. Our body is “ensouled” flesh—*of* the world, *in* the world.

52. Ibid.

53. Fritjof Capra, *The Web of Life: A New Scientific Understanding of Living Systems* (New York: Random House, 1996).

54. Berry, “The Ecozoic Era.”

Taking Thomas Berry's Thought Seriously: Opening Lecture of the Colloquium

Herman Greene

If anything happens out of our time together, it will not be because of my effort, but because of what you bring to this Colloquium. We all bring our respect, love, and admiration for Thomas Berry. This is good, yet at the outset let's agree this event is different from other events about Thomas. To my knowledge this is the first academic colloquium on his work. I don't mean academic in the sense that we will be using the language of a certain discipline, such as that of philosophy, theology, or ecology. Rather this Colloquium is academic in the sense that we have taken time to prepare by reading and writing about Thomas's work, and now we have come together to engage Thomas's thought and try to understand it better.

I heard someone say that our time together in this small, intimate community would be fun. While this may be the case, some caution is in order. What we are trying to do here is along the lines of a dispassionate look at Thomas's work. Thomas Berry was a wonderful person with a warm personality. We are not, however, here to tell stories about Thomas--you can tell stories about Thomas, but that's not what we are here for. What we are focusing on is the significance of the body of work he left. Thus we have titled this event, "Thomas Berry's Work: Development, Difference, Importance, Applications."

While I can't speak for Thomas, I don't know of any better way to honor this man who gave himself so thoroughly to his work, than to consider it carefully and carry it forward. There is a long poem by Nikos Kazantzakis called *Saviors of God*¹ where he says we are one body with all human beings, those before and after us. He talks about how the dead are crying out, "Finish my work! Finish my work!" So Thomas gave us a Great Work and now we are the ones who carry that on. Thomas wrote in his essay "The Spirituality of

1. Nikos Kazantzakis, *The Saviors of God: Spiritual Exercises* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1960).

Earth” that it is part of the dialectics of history that great understandings need to be associated with a person.² For example, we speak of Kant’s ideas or Socrates’ ideas. None of us know Kant or Socrates, but we talk about Kant’s ideas and Socrates’ ideas. Thus, here we will talk about Thomas Berry’s ideas, not for the sake of understanding alone, but to come to terms with them and carry them forward in the Great Work.

Thomas Berry’s Thought

I’m going to make some provocative comments about Thomas’s work to begin our Colloquium. More than one person has made statements along the lines that academic study of Thomas’s work misses the point. To approach Thomas this way, they say, makes it too objective, too much like school. I would note, though, that some of you were students of Thomas when he taught at Fordham University, or you wrote your dissertations on Thomas’s work. I have read your stories of your relationships with Thomas when I read your tributes to him that we published.³ Going to school with Thomas was a moving event.

This man had a personal library of 10,000 books and he read all of St. Thomas Aquinas’s major work, more than 20 volumes, in Latin. He read the major works of St. Augustine’s in Latin. He learned Sanskrit to study Indian religions. He traveled to China to learn Chinese and study Chinese culture and religions. He studied the ways of indigenous people. He was the best historian I have ever known. When he was in his prime and you were having a conversation with him, you could ask him about nearly any event in the past anywhere in the world and he would be able to give you the background of that event. He was just phenomenal as a historian. He taught as a cultural historian and it is important to remember that this was his academic field.

The work for which he is best known was published after he

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2. Thomas Berry, “The Spirituality of Earth,” *The Ecozoic: Reflections on Life in an Ecological Age 1* (2008).
 3. See tributes to Thomas Berry in “A Tribute to Thomas Berry” special issue, *The Ecozoic: Reflections on Life in an Ecological Age 2* (2009).

retired from teaching. In this time made presentations at many events and had extended personal conversations with many people. If he was pithy in his talks and gave easy to remember-and-say ideas, such as “Earth is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects,” they were ideas that came out of a lifetime of study and reflection. What always captures this for me is that in his early life as a monk he practiced the canonical hours. After the Midnight Office he would sometimes stay up and read books until it was time for Matins because he was so passionate about learning. Given all this, it’s certainly no dishonor to study Thomas Berry.

Here’s a way of looking at Thomas. In 2000, I wrote a paper called “Thomas Berry’s Great Work.”⁴ I began by talking about the awe I felt when I first held *The Great Work*⁵ in my hands. And then I wrote:

I considered the man behind the book. What was his great work? How could one describe this man and his thought, now most recently made available in this slim book, to those who do not know him? He is so widely known and influential in a small circle, and so little known in the world at large. Yet, he has everything to say to the world at large. The crisis resulting from the ecological devastation of the planet by human activity is real, though not yet expressed in a commanding and immediate way that is evident to all. We need Thomas to help us understand what is going on; to give us eyes to see, ears to hear, passion to feel, courage to act; to give us ways to explain what has happened; and to give us knowledge of what we authentically may rely on, hope for and move toward if we are to create a viable future in this dawning new millennium.

That Thomas has done this—given us a new understanding of (i) where we are, (ii) who we are as humans, (iii) how we got here, and (iv) where we are to go—is his great work.⁶

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4. Herman Greene, “Thomas Berry’s Great Work,” *The Ecozoic Reader* (Fall 2000): 1-16.
 5. Thomas Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999).
 6. Greene, “Thomas Berry’s Great Work,” 1.

This was his great work, but he gave all of us a “Great Work” to do, and I think that should be at the foreground of our consideration. I’ll continue reading from the paper I wrote⁷:

In the very first chapter Thomas lays before us “The Great Work.” In each historical epoch, he writes, people are given a “Great Work” to do—in one age, the settling of new lands, in another the building of great cathedrals, the creation of artistic, philosophical, religious or scientific works, or the shaping of political structures and ideas. The Great Works of prior periods are seen in such things as the movement of the first people out of Africa in the Paleolithic period; the creation of language, rituals and social structures in hunter-gatherer communities; the establishment of agriculture communities in the Neolithic period; the development of the great classical civilizations; and, in the modern period, advances in technology, urban civilization, new ideals of government and human rights, the modern business enterprise, and globalism.

Our Great Work is not something we choose, Thomas says. It is something we find ourselves thrown into by virtue only of being born in a certain time and place. The task may seem overwhelming, one coming in response to some huge historical difficulty, but, he observes, just as we are given our historical task by some power beyond ourselves, we must also believe we are given the abilities to fulfill this task.

The Great Work into which we and our children are born, Thomas says, comes in response to the devastation of the planet caused by human activity. We are facing a breakdown in the life systems that can only be understood by comparison with events that marked the great transitions in the geo-biological eras of Earth’s history, such as the extinction of the dinosaurs and countless other species when the Mesozoic era ended and our present Cenozoic era began (p. 3). Our task is to move from our modern industrial civilization with its devastating impact to that of benign presence. It is an arduous and overwhelming task, one exceeding in its complexity

7. Page references are to Thomas Berry, *The Great Work*.

that ever offered to humans, for it is not simply one of adjustment to disturbance of human life patterns, as, for example, that occasioned by the Great Depression or the recent World Wars, but one of dealing with the disruption and termination of the geo-biological system that has governed the functioning of the planet in the 67 million year reign of the Cenozoic era in the history of the planet Earth. The Great Work before us is to move from the terminating Cenozoic era into an emerging "Ecozoic era" when humans will be present to Earth in a mutually enhancing way and become functional participants in the comprehensive Earth community. To do this involves "reinventing the human," because we have a task and role emerging from our modern capacities and dimensions that has never been conceived in the human venture. From the earliest times in human history we have been acculturated into a microphase awareness of our place in the Earth system, yet we find ourselves now at a place where humans as a whole have a macrophase impact. *Microphase* refers to our individual survival, achievements, freedoms, and aspirations; *macrophase* refers to our place as a collective human community within the Earth system.

To accomplish this transition requires a fundamental reassessment of our role as humans, and it must be done as might be said in computer talk, in "real-time." We have no reprieve from being participants in the destructive impacts of our present modes of civilizational presence, yet from our places as active participants in the current system, we are called to bring about a transition to a mutually enhancing mode of presence.

The complexity of this task, as compared with other Great Works, can be understood when we realize there can be no frontal attack on our adversary in this crusade. There is no "we" and "they," there is no "here" and "there," there is no frontier to cross, and no externalities that can be ignored in the name of one great cause. No, everything is in the midst; we are both on the side of this cause and against it. The transformation that is called for is both inner and outer, regional and global, national and international, economic and social,

individual and collective, family and sect, and—for the first time in human history with self-conscious awareness—human and other-than human nature.

....

This then is where we are: We are in modern industrial civilization in the terminal phase of the Cenozoic era. We are people born into the Great Work of creating and transitioning into an emerging Ecozoic era.

This is quite moving, isn't it?

Now Thomas talked a lot about cosmology. I would like to give an understanding of what Thomas was doing when he dwelt on this subject by reading from another paper I wrote called "Whitehead and Civilization."⁸ It is about Alfred North Whitehead's work but it sheds light on what Thomas was about.⁹

Let us begin with the importance of cosmology and Whitehead's work as cosmology. In the contemporary mind, I would venture, cosmology means something old on which ancient civilizations were grounded....And if, in the contemporary mind, cosmology doesn't mean something old, I would venture it means physical cosmology—the work of scientists in investigating the structure and dynamics of the universe and the description of the universe as given by such scientists.

Neither something that is antiquated, nor something limited to the investigations of modern science would lead Whitehead to write, "In each age of the world distinguished by high activity there will be found at its culmination, and among the agencies leading to that culmination, some profound cosmological outlook, implicitly accepted, impressing its own type upon the

8. Herman Greene, "Whitehead and Civilization," paper presented at the 7th International Whitehead Conference, Bangalore, India, January 7, 2009.

9. Page references in the quoted text are from "Whitehead and Civilization" are to Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (1933, 1st paperback ed., New York: The Free Press, 1967), except where indicated they are to Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (1925, 1st paperback ed., New York: The Free Press, 1967).

current springs of action.” He must have had something different in mind with the term “cosmology,” something of essential importance.

We might ask “Of essential importance to what?” The answer to that lies in Whitehead’s statement of what his subject was in *Adventures of Ideas*. He wrote, “The intellectual agencies involved in the modification of epochs are the proper subject of this book.” (p. 12) It is in this context that Whitehead understood cosmology, which he implicitly defined as “the most general ideas at the base of the whole development of science[—the] concepts of Speculation and Scholarship, and the various notions of the Order of Nature, and of Nature itself.” (p. 103)

This is really what Thomas was about with cosmology. Now continuing with the paper on Whitehead:

Given the way Whitehead employed the term cosmology in *Adventures of Ideas*, we can understand “science” as used in the foregoing definition very broadly as meaning knowledge of the world and ourselves generally.

The cosmology of a particular epoch, though profound in its influence, is only partly expressed, and the details of such expression issue into derivative specialized questions of violent controversy. The intellectual strife of an age is mainly concerned with these latter questions of secondary generality which conceal a general agreement upon first principles almost too obvious to need expression, and almost too general to be capable of expression. In each period there is a general form of the forms of thought; and, like the air we breathe, such a form is so translucent, and so pervading, and so seemingly necessary, that only by extreme effort can we become aware of it. (p. 12)

Whitehead’s whole philosophical task, [and one could say Thomas’s as well,] was to make people aware of the inadequacy of the cosmology of the epoch or age that we call modernity,

the period beginning in the West in the 16th century and extending to the present, and of a more adequate cosmology emerging out of both contemporary science and culture (including philosophy and religion) to inspire and guide the post-modern world.

Thus Whitehead writes in *Science and the Modern World*:

Philosophy, in one of its functions, is the critic of cosmologies. It is its function to harmonize, re-fashion, and justify divergent intuitions as to the nature of things. It has to insist on the scrutiny of the ultimate ideas, and on the retention of the whole of the evidence in shaping our cosmological scheme. Its business is to render explicit, and—so far as may be—efficient, a process which otherwise is unconsciously performed without rational tests. (*Science and the Modern World*, vii)

In the chapters of *Adventures of Ideas* on how great ideas have been carried in Western Civilization, Whitehead includes a critique of modern thought. For two thousand years “Plato’s philosophic theories and Christian intuitions” informed the soul of Western man. In the modern period, physical science and individualism became preeminent. Metaphysics was abandoned and philosophy developed around the narrow range of concerns of positivism, utilitarianism, and empiricism. Of modern scholarship and modern science he writes:

They canalize thought and observation within predetermined limits, based upon inadequate metaphysical assumptions dogmatically assumed. The modern assumptions differ from older assumptions, not wholly for the better. They exclude from rationalistic thought more of the final values of existence. The intimate timidity of professionalized scholarship circumscribes reason by reducing its topics to triviality, for example, to bare *sensa* and to tautologies. It then frees itself from criticism by dogmatically handing

over the remainder of experience to an animal faith or a religious mysticism, incapable of rationalization. (p. 118)

Whitehead wholly approves of science while upholding the value of philosophy: "Science and Philosophy are merely different aspects of one great enterprise of the human mind." (p. 140) "Science and Philosophy mutually criticize each other, and provide imaginative material for each other." (p. 146) For 1800 years after Aristotle, science was dominated by philosophical conception of the universe with insufficient attention to observation. Modern science focuses on observation, but with insufficient attention to philosophy. Science observes "particular occurrences...issuing in wide classifications of things according to their modes of functioning, in other words according to the laws of nature which they illustrate. [In contrast,] the emphasis of philosophy is upon generalizations which almost fail to classify by reason of their universal application." (p.143) Modern science fails to recognize the "grave weakness in the observational order. Observational discrimination is not dictated by the impartial facts. It selects and discards, and what it retains is rearranged in a subjective order of prominence." (p. 155)

Without philosophical reflection, science is unaware of its own presuppositions. "No science can be more secure than the unconscious metaphysics which tacitly it presupposes." (p. 154) Philosophy "seeks those generalities which characterize the complete reality of fact, and apart from which any fact must sink into an abstraction. But science makes the abstraction, and is content to understand the complete fact in respect to only some of its essential aspects." (p. 146) Philosophy broadens the inquiry:

[Philosophic systems] are the way in which the human spirit cultivates its deeper intuitions. Such systems give life and motion to detached thoughts. Apart from these efforts at coordination, detached thoughts would flash out in idle mo-

ments, illuminate a passing phase of reflection, and would then perish and be forgotten. The scope of an intuition can only be defined by its coordination with other notions of equal generality. (p. 144)

The difficulty with much of modern philosophy is that it has accepted the same abstractions of what constitutes a “fact” as modern science and seeks to describe reality through such means as empiricism, utilitarianism, substantial objects, measurable qualities, and logic. Whitehead calls for a nondogmatic return of philosophy to the task at its Hellenistic roots, that of describing a complete fact. This would entail at least covering these elements of Plato’s philosophy: “The Ideas, The Physical Elements, The Psyche, The Eros, The Harmony, The Mathematical Relations, The Receptacle.” (p. 147)

Now I will give one last set of reflections from two papers I wrote titled “We Cannot Act Effectively in the World without an Adequate Understanding of the Nature of the World,” (Understanding the Nature of the World)¹⁰ and “Process Ecozoics: Philosophy and Theology in the Ecozoic Age,” (Process Ecozoics).¹¹ These papers again cover ideas from another thinker—E. Maynard Adams, former head of the Philosophy Department at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill—that I believe illuminate what Thomas was about.¹²

How we understand the nature of the world is our philoso-

10. Herman Greene, “We Cannot Act Effectively in the World without an Adequate Understanding of the Nature of the World.” *CES Monthly Musings* (April 2013): 7-10.

11. Herman Greene, “Process Ecozoics: Philosophy and Theology in the Ecozoic Age, Keynote Lecture, 8th International Whitehead Conference on “Eco-Sophia,” Sophia University, Tokyo, Japan, September 26, 2011.

12. References in the quoted text are from “We Cannot Act Effectively in the World without an Adequate Understanding of the Nature of the World” are to E. Maynard Adams, “The Mission of Philosophy Today,” *Metaphilosophy* 31, no. 4 (July 2000): 349-64, except where indicated they are to E. Maynard Adams, “Rethinking the Idea of God,” *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* XXXIX (2001): 313-329; available at, accessed October 31, 2011, <http://emadams.unc.edu/Rethinking-the-Idea-of-God>.

phy whether we use the term philosophy or not. We cannot act effectively in the world without an adequate understanding of the nature of the world. Our present situation calls for wisdom, insight, intimacy, solidarity and creativity as we give form to a new age. None of these are, however, possible if we do not understand the nature of the world.

The modern period, while opening up new vistas of understanding and much progress in human affairs, has introduced many distortions in our understanding of the world. Descartes is considered the originator of modern philosophy in the West. His "Cartesian dualism" divided mind from matter. Other ontological dualisms of the modern period include fact and value, primary qualities and secondary qualities, science and the humanities, the religious and the secular, humans and nature, objective and subjective, and civilized and uncivilized. These dualisms have become natural for the modern mind, but they are not natural to nature, not even our human nature.

Much can be written about how contemporary philosophy has accommodated itself to the un-natural distortions of the modern worldview. The philosopher E. Maynard Adams in "The Mission of Philosophy Today," describes how, in the modern period, scientific naturalism, based on sensory empiricism, materialism, and efficient causation, seeped into and came to dominate the cultural mind. He wrote that this is attributable to the great success of science:

Empirical science provided the factual knowledge that was fruitful in making things and in the manipulation and control of the material environment. In time, the great success of empirical science in providing the knowledge base for mastery of nature, the making of useful things, and the production of wealth led to the discrediting of all other kinds of knowledge claims. (pp. 354-55)

Further, the presuppositions of science undermined the humanistic dimensions of society and led to skepticism, subjectivism, relativism, and even nihilism in the cultural sphere.

Science . . . eliminated, normative, value, and meaning concepts, the fundamental categories of the humanities and humanistic thought in general, from its descriptive/explanatory conceptual system because they cannot be funded with meaning by sensory experience, and so statements containing them [could] not be confirmed or falsified by scientific methods of inquiry. Thus, according to the presuppositions of modern science, there are no normative laws, values, inherent structures of meaning, ends, or teleological causality in nature—only existential and factual structures and elemental and antecedent causes that engage them. One cannot accept modern science's descriptive/explanatory account of something as the truth about it without accepting its presuppositions about the basic structure of the world. Yet the presuppositions of science are inconsistent with the presuppositions of most religious beliefs and humanistic thought in general. (pp. 353-54)

Adams wrote of a “cultural mind” based on a widely shared set of assumptions and beliefs. He believed it is the province of philosophy to discover and critique the presuppositions of experience, thought, and action in the cultural mind. Further, philosophy needs to “[excavate] the inherent commitments about the categorial structures of various subject matters and the world as a whole that are hidden in these presuppositions, and to develop an account of how the culture is grounded in and maps[,or is not grounded in and does not map,] the basic structure of the world.” (p. 357)

Now I'll read from *Process Ecozoics*:

[Adams] understood the mission of philosophy as cultural critique and reconstruction, a mission few academic philosophers, at least in the Anglo-American tradition, would accept. With this understanding, and his conviction that the cultural mind contained fundamental errors about the categorial fea-

tures of the world and the humanistic enterprise, he wrote:

The mission of philosophy in our time is daunting, even overwhelming, for our basic cultural problems are philosophical. While there are other resources in the culture that must be utilized, it is only through clear philosophical analysis and education that we can come to grips with our deep-est problems in a way that will overcome our cultural derangement and prepare the way for cultural renewal. We must redefine the human enterprise by shifting our priorities from materialistic to humanistic values, reassess the semantic and knowledge-yielding powers of the human mind, reexamine all sectors of the culture to determine how each is grounded in experience and related to the items, features, and structures of the world, and construct a coherent worldview that makes sense of all the realities we know, especially human existence and the whole human phenomenon. (p. 356)

The *human phenomenon*...it's almost like I read all of this to get to the human phenomenon. This was at the core of Thomas's work.¹³

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13. Thomas taught and regularly referred his students to Pierre Teilhard Chardin's book, *The Phenomenon of Man*, trans. Bernard Wall (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), which in a later translation was called *The Human Phenomenon*, trans. Sarah Appleton-Weber (Brighton, United Kingdom: Sussex Academic Press). Brian Swimme wrote the foreword to this later translations. *Ibid.*, xiii-xvi. There Swimme quotes Thomas as saying:

Teilhard was the first to see the universe in a new way, so I suppose it's inevitable that he would be criticized. If you're bothered by what a few scientists have to say [about Teilhard] you should read some of the theologians! Fundamentally the difficulty is one of scale. Any attempt to understand Teilhard that does not begin with the entire complex of civilizations as well as the vast panorama of the evolutionary universe is doomed to failure for it is simply too small to grasp what he was about. *Ibid.*, xiii-xiv.

Swimme wrote about his conversations with Thomas about Teilhard's book:

Now back to Process Ecozoics:

Adams understood that philosophy alone could not bring about a cultural reformation, but it was his position that there cannot be a cultural reformation without a philosophical reformation. With respect to philosophical reformation, he wrote, "It is not enough for a few philosophers to solve these problems intellectually; the solutions need to be worked out in the culture, in the experience and lives of the people, and in the social structure and the institutions of the society." (p. 362) This meant, for him, that philosophers needed to be engaged in the culture working to bring about change....

Adams offers three historical examples of how changes in philosophy functioned to bring about cultural transformation: (1) The Greek Enlightenment from the 6th to the 4th century before the common era; (2) the development of Christian feudalism in the wake of the collapse of the Roman Empire and its supporting culture; and (3) the dissolution of Christian feudalism and the emergence of modern Western civilization from the 14th to the 18th century. In each of these periods, philosophers exposed cultural errors in the dying civilization and helped construct and defend a new vision of humankind in the world and a culture that would support and generate social institutions that would support the new way of life. (p. 360)

I would read on my own and once a week discuss the ideas with Thomas Berry; I would be regularly amazed by how much of the world's intellectual history it seemed necessary to refer to. He drew constantly not just from physics and biology, but also from philosophy, poetry, linguistics, music and above all world history and cosmology.... The unexamined assumptions that had been organizing my experiences in the world were now writhing. *Ibid.*, xiv.

Swimme also makes clear that in Teilhard and Thomas the universe must be understood in terms of the human phenomenon. He quotes Thomas as saying: "Teilhard was one of the first scientists to realize that the human and the universe are inseparable. The only universe we know about is a universe that brought forth the human." *Ibid.*, xv.

In the foregoing I have offered philosophical background for understanding part of what Thomas's work was about. Philosophical papers like the ones I have just quoted from, however, cannot take these messages to the larger culture. A language is needed that takes those ideas and engages the culture. Offering such a language was Thomas's great gift. But, I would submit, he work is grounded in deep philosophical understandings.

I feel insufficient attention has been given to Thomas's historical analysis, his cultural critique, and his proposals for reform of societies. Many people are aware of Thomas's association with the universe story and that's all they know about him. Even on the subject of the universe story, I feel there hasn't been enough attention given to Thomas's various statements by him concerning how the universe story can function as the "New Story" for our time. Kudos though to the long work of Brian Swimme, Mary Evelyn Tucker, John Grim, Jennifer Morgan and many others on this.

On another subject, I know people admire Thomas, but to me making Thomas an icon is an obstacle to the spread of his thought. What do I mean by icon? The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines icon as a "representation or picture of a sacred or sacrifice sanctified Christian personage. One who is the object of great attention and devotion, an idol."¹⁴ Thomas's passion was his work and in a larger sense the Great Work. Let this be our passion too.

I also recommend that we resist the efforts to spiritualize his teaching. What I have in mind by spiritualizing his teaching is using it devotionally. Thomas's work is inspirational and I've used it devotionally—I don't mean that we should never use his work devotionally. It's a matter of emphasis. More attention needs to be given to analyzing Thomas's work and what its meaning and implications are.

I feel Thomas's work is often quoted without careful examination of its significance. For example, I believe that his central message that "the universe is not a collection of objects but rather is a communion of subjects" is generally understood as an attitude we should take in regard to nature, rather than a statement about the

14. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 3d ed. (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1992).

structure and nature of existence.¹⁵ Thomas's call for intimacy with the Earth community is important, but let us not forget how his teaching counters the mechanistic understanding of the universe on which so much of modern thought and action is based.

David Orr has an insightful passage about the difficulty and length of the task that lies ahead. He thinks the hardest thing, for those who are really concerned about these problems, is to adopt a long view. He says it will be 500 years before the planet and the climate and the systems of the planet return, if they do return, to what they were in the preindustrial period.¹⁶ Taking the long view doesn't mean we shouldn't fight fracking or we shouldn't fight the XL pipeline, but there has to be recognition that we need the philosophical critique and development of new civilizational understandings in order to effect a change of the scale and magnitude of that which

15. I do not know how Berry came up with his statement that the universe is a communion of subjects. I do know, because he told me so, that he read Alfred North Whitehead's work. Whitehead's "ontological principle" was this: "Apart from the experience of subjects there is nothing, nothing, nothing, bare nothingness." Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, corrected ed., ed. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: The Free Press, 1978), 167. Whitehead could have stated this principle another way as "all of reality consists of the experience of subjects."

16. David Orr, *Down to the Wire: Confronting Climate Collapse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), xiii (emphasis added):

The news about climate, oceans, species, and all of the collateral human consequences will get a great deal worse for a long time before it gets better. The reasons for authentic hope are on a farther horizon, centuries ahead when we have managed to stabilize the carbon cycle and reduce carbon levels close to their preindustrial levels, stopped the hemorrhaging of life on Earth, restored the chemical balance of the oceans, and created governments and economies calibrated to the realities of the biosphere and to the diminished ecologies of the postcarbon world. *The change in our perspective from the nearer to the longer term is, I think, the most difficult challenge we will face.* We have become a culture predicated on fast results, quick payoffs, and instant gratification. But now we will have to summon the fortitude necessary to undertake a longer and more arduous journey. Rather like the builders of the great cathedrals of Europe, We will need stamina and faith to work knowing that we will not live to see the results.

occurred, for example, in the transition from the medieval to the modern period. It wasn't the horse collar that caused this, though this was important, rather it was ideas. Why did Hitler, after he invaded Poland and quickly gained control, proceed to kill university professors, priests and other thinkers? It was because he wanted to control ideas.

For a long time I have felt that Thomas Berry was a seminal thinker, one of the most important in the 20th century. He is not without academic standing—certainly he is often cited in works on ecological ethics and he gave rise to contemporary spiritual ecology. I do not, however, think he is sufficiently recognized for his contributions to philosophical cosmology, though he should be. What he did was give a very powerful rhetoric for communicating to the larger culture critical concepts about the nature and structure of existence. Go back to that statement of Whitehead I read earlier, “in any era of high achievement, at the base of it there is a profound cosmological outlook.” This underscores the importance of a cosmological outlook. A cosmological outlook is more than physical cosmology. It is also philosophical cosmology. The novelty of Thomas's work did not relate to physical cosmology, it related to philosophical cosmology—the meaning and understanding we give to the world in which we live.

In closing, let me sum up what I have been concerned with in this lecture. I see deep structure and consistency in Thomas's thought. I see philosophical commitments in his thought. These are very important to me. What is involved is not just head logic or structure, because Thomas was concerned with more than opening up our minds, he was concerned with opening up our heart connections to the world and our ways of being in the world.

Does Thomas Berry Provide a Foundational Set of Principles For the Transition to Ecozoic Societies?

Herman Greene

I have always felt that Thomas laid out a foundational set of principles for the transition to ecozoic societies. Much attention has been given to his work on the universe story, but not so much to his guidance on the transition to ecozoic societies. In this paper I would like to present what for me are the most important principles Thomas gave for this transition.

When attention has been given to Thomas's vision for social transformation, it seems to me the focus has most often been on eco-communalism.¹ I'll use Paul Raskin's definition of eco-communalism to explain what I mean by the term: Eco-communalism involves a "vision of bio-regionalism, localism, face-to-face democracy, and economic autarky." "Economic autarky" refers to local or regional economies that are self-sufficient without the need for imports. Eco-communalism does not have to be understood as rigidly adhering to bio-regionalism, localism, and economic autarky, rather as holding these as being of high value. Eco-communalism differs from our present globalized economy where, when you pick up something as small and ordinary as a pencil and you may be holding something with inputs or processing involving several continents.

As I sometimes point out, Alibaba, the largest Chinese on-line-retailer, sold \$17 billion worth of goods on Singles' Day, the Chinese equivalent of Valentine's Day.² Consider how many people were involved in producing these goods, how their livelihoods depended

1. Paul Raskin et al, *Great Transition: Promise and Lure of the Times Ahead* (Boston, MA: Stockholm Environment Institute, 2002), 14.

2. In May 2014, when this talk was given, Alibaba's sales on Singles' Day were \$5 billion. Alibaba's sales on Singles' Day (November 11) in 2016, topped \$17.7 billion. Yue Wang "Alibaba Smashes \$14 Billion Sales Record on Singles' Day." *Forbes*, November 11, 2016, accessed April 14, 2017, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ywang/2016/11/11/alibaba-smashes-sales-records-on-singles-day-hype/#22ffd6114b2e>.

on this work, the resources that were used, the many consumers who purchased the goods, the experiences they had in buying and using the goods, and the effects of the production, transportation, sale and consumption of the goods on the environment. These goods are the fruits of industrial development. In a world of 7 billion people on the way to 11 billion by the latest UN estimates,³ is humanity to forgo industrial production and inter-regional, interstate, and/or international commerce?

We need the Genesis farms, examples of how to live in harmony with nature on small scales. Meanwhile there is this world happening. For the first time in the history of humankind, more than 50% of the world's people live in urban areas.⁴ When I traveled in India and China over the last decade, I was astonished to learn of all the cities with over a million people of which I had never heard. In China new cities in excess of this size are built and populated in a matter of years. There are 20 million people in the metropolitan area of Lagos, Nigeria, the largest city in Africa. There are 38 million people in the metropolitan area of Tokyo, Japan, the most populous in the world. For the foreseeable future we will live in an urbanized, globalized world. Does Thomas give guidance to this world?

Paul Raskin of the Tellus Institute and his co-authors produced a

3. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects the 2015 Revision: Key Findings and Advance Tables* (New York: United Nations, 2015), 2, accessed July 17, 2016, https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Publications/Files/Key_Findings_WPP_2015.pdf.

4. According to the 2014 revision of the *World Urbanization Prospects* by UN DESA's Population Division: "54 per cent of the world's people live in urban areas, a proportion that is expected to increase to 66 per cent by 2050. Projections show that urbanization combined with the overall growth of the world's population could add another 2.5 billion people to urban populations by 2050, with close to 90 percent of the increase concentrated in Asia and Africa, according to a new United Nations report launched today." United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "World's Population Increasingly Urban with more than Half Living in Urban Areas," July 10, 2014, accessed April 18, 2017, <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/news/population/world-urbanization-prospects-2014.html>.

book called *Great Transition: Promise and Lure of the Times Ahead*.⁵ It talks about three scenarios for the future. One is business as usual—just taking care of things as they are, making things more efficient, and continuing on the present trajectory of development with or without policy reform. Another is of barbarism involving two sub-scenarios of fortress world and breakdown. We must wonder if we are not heading to the barbarism scenario, because business as usual can't serve all the people of the world and conditions will worsen as environmental degradation continues. We see a movement to fortress world—regions of prosperity and protection in the midst of an impoverished world. And in significant areas of the world, we are seeing breakdown. The third scenario is of “great transitions” to a sustainable world and there are two sub-scenarios. One is eco-communalism and the other is the “new sustainability paradigm”—the latter being change in the ordering principles of society but retention of a complex, globalized, urban societies. Raskin and his co-authors take the position that eco-communalism will not be the dominant form of the great transition without first passing through some form of barbarization.⁶ I interpret this as meaning that if there is widespread collapse or repression (in fortress world), most of the world's people may be forced into self-sufficient, subsistence communities and this is the only way the authors see eco-communalism becoming prevalent. Is Thomas preparing us for such a wrenching transition? There are writers on the left who foresee breakdown and a move to survivalist modes. Or does he provide guidance that would support the “new sustainability paradigm”?

5. Paul Raskin et al, *Great Transition*. An update of this book was published in 2016. Paul Raskin, *Journey to Earthland: The Great Transition to Planetary Civilization* (Boston, MA: Tellus Institute, 2016). The update retains the three scenarios.

6. While popular among some environmental and anarchistic subcultures, it is difficult to visualize a plausible path from the globalizing trends of today to Eco-communalism that does not pass through some form of Barbarization.” *Ibid.*, 15.

Here are some of the characteristics of the three scenarios and their sub-scenarios⁷:

| Worldview | Antecedents | Philosophy |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| <i>Conventional Worlds</i> | | |
| Market | Smith | Market optimism; hidden and enlight- ened hand |
| Policy Reform | Keynes Bruntland | Policy Stewardship |
| <i>Barbarization</i> | | |
| Breakdown | Malthus | Existential gloom: population/resource catastrophe |
| Fortress World | Hobbes | |
| <i>Great Transitions</i> | | |
| Eco-communalism | Morris and social Utopians, Gandi | Pastoral romance; human goodness; evil of industrialism |
| New Sustainability Paradigm | Mill | Sustainability as pro- gressive global social evolution |

Do we get to choose which of these scenarios we want to live in? Or are we, as Thomas wrote in *The Great Work*, thrown into a scenario by virtue only of being born in a certain time and place.⁸

7. Ibid., 17.

8. We do not chose the moment of our birth, who are parents will be, our particular culture or the historical moment when we will be born. We do not choose the status of spiritual insight or political or economic conditions that will be the context of our lives. We are, as it were, thrown into existence with

What is needed? What is possible—remember that Alibaba sells \$17 billion of goods on Singles' Day? What guidance does Thomas give?

Professor Jim Peacock, who is here with us and teaches anthropology at this university, has students in his class on “Consciousness and Symbol” read *The Great Work*. He struggles with the questions his students ask about the book. They ask, what does Berry want us to do? I have wondered, what are the students asking when they ask this? Are they asking, how can humans live on Earth without making an impact? If so, there is no answer that Thomas or anyone else can give.

We long for a perfect answer where nature will be wild and free, pristine, untouched by civilization, and yet where we and other humans will have our needs and many or most of our wants met. When we think about sustainability even for a moment, however, we realize there can be no such answer. Thomas identified the longing for perfection as part of a millennial expectation of beatitude here on Earth. Throughout the modern period, at least since the 16th century, this has been interwoven into the idea of progress, and in late modernity, especially beginning in the latter half of the 20th century, with the vision of a technological wonderworld. Today as we enter a new 21st century phase of technological innovation in genetic technology, nanotechnology, information technology, robotics, and energy, some visionaries offer the prospect of a world where, through these technologies, abundance not scarcity will be the problem and humans will live virtually (pun partially intended) forever.⁹

Thomas would call this the technozoic vision of the future, one he regarded as false and dangerous...dangerous in the sense that he believed it was leading humanity on the wrong path. The modern period has been a journey of liberation from old authorities and restraints. Bruno Latour says that modernists revel in the escape

a challenge and a role that is beyond any personal choice. The nobility of our lives, however, depends upon the manner in which we come to understand and fulfill our assigned role. Thomas Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999), 7.

9. See, for example, Ray Kurzweil, *The Singularity is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology* (New York, Penguin Books, 2006), and Peter Diamandis and Steven Kotler, *Abundance: The Future Is Better Than You Think* (New York, Free Press, 2012).

from the bondage of the past and move to a Utopian future without realistic content.¹⁰ In contrast, he says that ecologists seek a practical vision of the future and in this future the new name for humans is “Earthbound.” Thomas gives guidance for the Earthbound. Yet technological innovation will not stop, what guidance does Thomas give for the use or control of technological innovation?

Before going into Thomas’s guidance, to guard against the tendency to wander back into a golden age of an agrarian past, I would like to offer an example to ground ourselves in reality. Let’s consider India and China, each with a population of more than one billion people, but for this example let’s say one billion. If each of those one billion people were to acquire and burn one 60-watt light bulb, it would take (without counting the manufacturing and shipping of the bulbs, or the delivery of electricity to them) 60 billion watts to power those light bulbs. So just to power one 60-watt light bulb for each of these people, there would be a need for an additional one hundred twenty 500-megawatt power plants, which would likely be coal powered.¹¹ This illustrates the impact of only one small modern amenity when multiplied by one-seventh of the world’s people. We know that within only a few more years another billion people will be added to the human population and then the illustration would have to be multiplied by eight to see the global impact. Fortunately, LED’s and other efficiencies reduce the impact of the individual amenities—for example an LED may only require 15 watts of power—but even 15 watts multiplied by 8 billion is a huge number and this is for only one small modern amenity. Sustainability on a global scale is quite a puzzle.

10. Bruno Latour, “Facing Gaia: Six Lectures on the Political Theology of Nature,” (Gifford Lectures on Natural Religion, Edinburgh, Scotland, February 18-28, 2013), 106, 117, accessed December 5, 2013, http://www.bruno-latour.fr/sites/default/files/downloads/GIFFORD-SIX-LECTURES_1.pdf.

11. I borrowed this example with modifications from Thomas Friedman, *Hot, Flat and Crowded* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2008), 31. According to the World Bank, in 2014, 75.1% of India’s electric power was generated by coal, up from 49.1% in 1971. In China in 2014, 72.6% of its electric power was generated by coal up slightly from 70.1% in 1971. The World Bank, “Electricity Production from Coal Sources (% of Total),” referencing International Energy Association statistics, accessed April 30, 2017, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EG.ELC.COAL.ZS>.

So it is fitting that Thomas's first guidance for the transition to ecozoic societies is that we have a great big job ahead, a "Great Work" to do. Then he follows this guidance with the counsel that we will be supported in the Great Work by the powers of the universe. He writes, "We must believe that those powers that assign our role bestow upon us the ability to fulfill this role. We must believe that we are cared for and guided by these same powers that bring us into being."¹² And he gave these words of hope:

The basic mood of the future might well be
one of confidence in the continuing revelation
that takes place in and through Earth.
If the dynamics of the universe from the beginning
shaped the course of the heavens,
lighted the sun, and formed Earth,
if this same dynamism
brought forth the continents and seas and atmosphere,
if it awakened life in the primordial cell
and then brought into being
the unnumbered variety of living beings,
and finally brought us into being
and guided us safely
through the turbulent centuries,
there is reason to believe
that this same guiding process
is precisely what has awakened in us
our present understanding of ourselves
and our relation to this stupendous process.
Sensitized to such guidance from the very structure
and functioning of the universe,
we can have confidence in the future
that awaits the human venture.¹³

12. Thomas Berry, *The Great Work*, 7. Page references in this section are to *The Great Work*.

13. Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988), 137.

As to the nature of the Great Work, Thomas described it in two ways:

The Great Work...is to carry out the transition from a period of human devastation of the Earth to a period when humans would be present to the planet in a mutually beneficial manner. (p. 3)

The Great Work [is] the task of moving modern industrial civilization from its present devastating influence on the Earth to a more benign mode of presence. (p. 7)

As to the magnitude of the work, he wrote, “[The] transition has no historical parallel since the geobiological transition that took place 67 million years ago when the period of the dinosaurs was terminated and a new biological era began.” (p. 3) He said that the Great Work is an arduous task, one exceeding in its complexity that ever offered to humankind. He, also, said the Great work was of epic dimensions, one surpassing anything heretofore described under that term.

He observed, “The deepest cause of the present devastation is found in our mode of consciousness that has established a radical discontinuity between the human and other modes of being and the bestowal of all rights on the humans. [The other modes of being] have reality and value only through their use by the human.” (p. 4)

His most concise statement of what needs to be done is given in this one sentence with seven phrases: “The historical mission of our times is

1. to reinvent the human—
2. at the species level,
3. with critical reflection,
4. within the community of life-systems,
5. in a time-developmental context,
6. by means of story and
7. shared dream experience.” (p. 159)

Each of these phrases is important. I have heard Thomas say “within the community of life systems” is most important. For purposes of this Colloquium, however, I want to emphasize “through critical reflection.” I think most followers of Thomas have generally emphasized story and shared dream experience. Note that Thomas puts “with critical reflection,” before “story” and “shared dream experience.”

Let’s consider the importance of critical reflection. You have been to school and you probably remember a teacher you especially liked. You will say about the teacher, she changed my way of thinking, and 20-30 years later you’re still living out of what you learned from her. John Maynard Keynes wrote:

The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed the world is ruled by little else. Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influence, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist. Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back.¹⁴

Both Thomas and Keynes made the same point: Ideas are operative in society and they exert a significant controlling influence over society. Thomas presented some powerful ideas and they need to be studied, interpreted, and applied. Further, he admonished us to do our own critical reflection to develop ideas and act on them.

Now I’d like to go through some of the guidelines Thomas gave for ecozoic societies. I have passed out the paper “Call for Ecozoic Societies.”¹⁵ In this paper I presented three pillars of ecozoic societies:

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14. John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (1936), 383-84.
 15. Herman Greene, “Call for Ecozoic Societies,” a CES Foundational Paper, accessed April 23, 2017, <https://www.ecozoicsocieties.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Call-for-Ecozoic-Societies.2003-01-12.rev.2014-06-05.pdf>.

- The universe story (knowing)
- Bioregionalism (doing)
- Ecological spirituality (being)

With regard to the universe story, I state that it has important mythic and ritualistic aspects, but I also emphasize it has a knowing aspect. The universe story calls us to be Earth and universe literate. Each time we come to know about the dynamics, processes, flows, and materials of Earth, we engage the universe story. With regard to bioregionalism, Thomas says that a bioregion is a naturally occurring geographic area of Earth that contains an interacting community of life functioning as a relatively self-supporting system within the ever-renewing processes of nature. He further states that Earth sustains itself in its bioregional modes of expression. If this is true and we want to live sustainably, then we need to understand our bioregions and act in ways that support the communities of life within our bioregions. Not everything that supports a bioregion, however, is within the bioregion. For example, wind, water, and migrating animals among many other things are part of a global commons. So we also need to understand the global processes that sustain bioregions and act to support them as well. With regard to ecological spirituality, I emphasized what Thomas calls the psychic-spiritual dimension of Earth. When we have a spiritual experience of the natural world we are experiencing the spirituality that is present and operating within it, not something we are projecting upon it. Ecological spirituality has the gift of transcending spiritual and religious traditions that guide and sometimes divide the people of Earth. It is in the area of ecological spirituality that we can participate in the meta-religious mode that Thomas considers, as noted below, so important for the future.

Another paper I have passed out is “Our Way into the Future: Guides from the Great Work by Thomas Berry.”¹⁶ These are guides

16. Herman Greene, “Our Way into the Future: Guides from *The Great Work* by Thomas Berry,” accessed April 23, 2017, <https://www.ecozoicsocieties.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Thomas-Berry-Guides-to-the-Future.2010-07-05.pdf>. For a fuller explanation of these guides, see Herman Greene, “Thomas Berry’s Great Work,” accessed April 23, 2017, <https://www>.

to the future I identified in the book, *The Great Work*. I ordered the guides under three headings, which give rise to three questions:

- We need to develop a viable mode of human presence on Earth; so when we act we should ask “Is it viable?”
- We need to form a single community of life with the other Earth components; so when we act we should ask “Does it favor intimacy/community?”
- In our special mode of self-conscious awareness, we need to celebrate the universe; so when we act we should ask, “Does it celebrate the universe?”

The word viable is very interesting. It is based on the Latin word, *vita*, which means “life.” The meaning of viable that is pertinent to Thomas’s usage is “Capable of success or continuing effectiveness; practicable: *a viable plan; a viable national economy*.”¹⁷ The word also means capable of living or survival. Thomas guidelines are not guidelines for a Utopia, they are guidelines for life in its fullness, imperfections, and limitations. From a more somber standpoint, Thomas’s guidelines are given to reorient a mode of civilizational presence that is not viable.

With each of these three main guides, Thomas offered three paths:

Viability

- We need to be Earth-centered, not human-centered
- We need to become self-limiting and accept creative discipline
- We need organic, ever-renewing economies, not extractive, terminal economies

ecozoicsocieties.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Thomas-Berrys-Great-Work.2003-01-12.pdf.

17. “Viable,” *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 3d ed. (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1992).

Single Community of Life

- We live in a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects
- We need to understand our integral relation with Earth community through intimacy and ecology
- We need to reform comprehensively our cultures and institutions in light of this understanding

Celebrate the universe in a special mode of conscious self-awareness

- We need to celebrate the universe through story and shared dream experience
- We need to participate in the vast cosmic liturgy
- We need to join with others in a worldwide meta-religious movement of renewal

There are two other sets of broad principles that Thomas offers. The first set he called “The Determining Features of the Ecozoic Era.” These principles provide his essential guidance for the transition to the ecozoic. In a similar fashion to the way the above guides were taken from Thomas’s book *The Great Work*, these “determining features,” were taken from a lecture he gave to the E.F. Schumacher Society in 1991, called “The Ecozoic Era,” and a book by him of the same year, *Befriending the Earth*.¹⁸

Here are the features¹⁹:

1. Earth is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects.

18. Thomas Berry, “The Ecozoic Era,” Eleventh Annual E. F. Schumacher Lectures, October 1991, Great Barrington, Massachusetts, edited by Hildegard Hannum, accessed January 31, 2016, <http://www.centerforneweconomics.org/publications/lectures/berry/thomas/the-ecozoic-era>; and Thomas Berry and Thomas Clarke, “Conditions of the Ecozoic Age, in *Befriending the Earth: A Theology of Reconciliation between Humans and Earth*, eds. Stephen Dunn and Anne Lonergan (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1991), 96-103.

19. Handout from the library of Santa Sabina Conference Center, San Rafael, California, 2004, except that Item 7 is from a similar list presented by Thomas Berry at an annual conference of the Center for Reflection on the Second Law held in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

2. Earth exists and can survive only in its integral functioning. It cannot survive in fragments any more than any organism can survive in fragments. Yet, Earth is not a global sameness. It is a differentiated unity and must be sustained in the integrity and interrelations of its many bioregional modes of expression.
3. Earth is a one-time endowment. It is subject to irreversible damage in the major patterns of its functioning.
4. The human is derivative, Earth is primary. Earth must be the primary concern of every human institution, profession, program, and activity. In economics, for example, the first law of economics must be the preservation of the Earth economy. A rising Gross National Product with a declining Gross Earth Product reveals the absurdity of our present economy. It should be clear, in the medical profession, that we cannot have healthy people on a sick planet.
5. The entire pattern of functioning of Earth is altered in the transition from the Cenozoic to the Ecozoic era. The major developments of the Cenozoic took place entirely apart from any human intervention. In the Ecozoic, the human will have a comprehensive influence on almost everything that happens. While the human cannot make a blade of grass, there is liable not to be a blade of grass unless it is accepted, protected and fostered by the human. Our positive power of creativity in the natural life systems is minimal, while our power of negating is immense.
6. Progress, to be valid, must include the entire Earth in all its component aspects. To designate human plundering of the planet as progress is an unbearable distortion.
7. The Ecozoic can come into existence only through an appreciation of the feminine dimension of Earth, through a liberation of women from the oppressions and the constraints that they have endured in the past, and through the shared responsibility of both women and men for establishing an integral Earth community.
8. A new role exists for both science and technology in the Ecozoic period. Science must provide a more integral un-

derstanding of the functioning of Earth and how human activity and Earth activity can be mutually enhancing. Our biological sciences especially need to develop a “feel for the organism,” a greater sense of the ultimate subjectivities present in the various living beings of Earth. Our human technologies must become more coherent with the technologies of the natural world.

9. New ethical principles must emerge which recognize the absolute evils of biocide and geocide as well as the other evils concerned more directly with the human.
10. New religious sensitivities are needed that will recognize the sacred dimension of Earth and will accept the natural world as the primary manifestation of the divine.
11. A new language, an Ecozoic language, is needed. Our language is radically inadequate. A new dictionary should be compiled with new definitions of existing words and an introduction of new words for the new modes of being and functioning that are emerging.
12. Psychologically all the archetypes of the collective unconscious attain a new validity and a new pattern of functioning, especially in our understanding of the symbols of the Tree of Life, the heroic journey, death and rebirth, the mandala, and the Great Mother.
13. New developments can be expected in ritual, in all the arts, and in literature. In drama especially, extraordinary opportunities exist in the monumental issues that are being worked out in these times. The conflicts that until now have been situated simply within the human drama are magnified considerably through the larger contours of conflict as these emerge in this stupendous transition from the terminal Cenozoic to the emerging Ecozoic. What we are dealing with is in epic dimensions beyond anything thus far expressed under this term.
14. Mitigation of the present ruinous situation, the recycling of materials, the diminishment of consumption, the healing of damaged ecosystems—all this will be in vain if we do these things to make the present industrial systems acceptable.

They must all be done, but in order to build a new order of things.

These are such a profound set of principles that it is almost overwhelming to get into them. Where should one start...Earth is a communion of subjects?...Earth is primary, the human is derivative? All of these features serve to reorient humans within the community of life. They make clear that humans are integral with and dependent on Earth, and yet how humans, in what must be described as hubris, have come to lord over the other Earth components to the detriment of all. There are calls to become coherent with the functioning of Earth, for the way Earth functions is vital to life processes. We can't claim human success if the functioning of these life processes are declining.

When I read these features, I am always captivated by the 5th feature and the 14th feature. In brief the 5th feature is a description of the Anthropocene—humans have become the primary geobiological force on Earth and are involved in all aspects of Earth's functioning. The 5th feature ends with this warning: "Our positive power of creativity in the natural life systems is minimal, while our power of negating is immense."

The 14th feature also ends with a warning: All the things we do like recycling, environmental remediation, and reduction of consumption "will be in vain if we do these things to make the present industrial systems acceptable. They must all be done, but in order to build a new order of things."

Upon reading these 14 features, many will find them easy to accept as wise counsel, but they will likely, also, find them difficult to live by and act upon, because they are not self-explanatory. What is this "new order of things"? What is this post-industrial society? Surely it is neither what is meant when people talk of the United States as a post-industrial society, nor a world of ecovillages where everyone presses mud bricks and lives off the land.

Further, while we may like the idea of an ecozoic dictionary and enthusiastically repeat Thomas's call for this dictionary, where is this dictionary more than 25 years after Thomas's call for it? How long is your personal list of words that would go into it?

To say it is difficult to understand these principles in practical terms and apply them is, however, in no way a criticism of them. What I am advocating is to move beyond repetition of these words to a more thorough understanding and explication of them, and beyond that to creative applications of them. Searching Thomas's texts for their meanings is an important starting point, but the primary task is to conduct your own study of them and expand upon them.

The second set of principles Thomas calls "Twelve Principles for Understanding the Universe and the Role of the Human in the Universe Process."²⁰

Here are those principles²¹:

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 Earth is especially clear; each being of the planet is profoundly implicated in the existence and functioning of every other being of the planet.
3. From its beginning, the universe is a psychic as well as a physical reality.
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

20. Anne Lonergan and Caroline Richards, eds., *Thomas Berry and the New Cosmology* (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1987), 107-108.

21. Thomas Berry would continually revise papers he wrote. There are multiple versions of the "the Determining Features of the Ecozoic Era," and of "Twelve Principles for Understanding the Universe and the Role of the Human in the Universe Process." For another version of the latter see Thomas Berry, "Twelve principles for Understanding the Universe," Appendix 1 to *Evening Thoughts: Reflecting on Earth as Sacred Community*, ed. Mary Evelyn Tucker (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 2003), 145-47. The version presented in the text above is my preferred version.

- 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 human is that being in whom the universe activates, reflects upon, and celebrates itself in conscious self-awareness.
 7. Earth, within the solar system, is a self-emergent, self-propagating, self-nourishing, self-educating, self-governing, self-healing, self-fulfilling community. All particular life systems in their being, their sexuality, their nourishment, their education, their governing, their healing, their fulfillment, must integrate their functioning within this larger complex of mutually dependent Earth systems.
 8. The genetic coding process is the process through which the world of the living articulates itself in its being and its activities. The great wonder is the creative interaction of the multiple codings among themselves.
 9. At the human level, genetic coding mandates a further trans-genetic cultural coding by which specifically human qualities find expression. Cultural coding is carried on by educational processes.
 10. The emergent process of the universe is irreversible and non-repeatable in the existing world order. The movement from non-life to life on the planet Earth is a one-time event. So too, the movement from life to the human form of consciousness. So also the transition from the earlier to the later forms of human culture.
 11. The historical sequence of cultural periods can be identified as the tribal-shamanic period, the Neolithic village period, the classical civilizational period, the scientific-technological period, and the emerging ecological period.
 12. The main human task of the immediate future is to assist in activating the inter-communion of all the living and non-living components of the Earth community in what can be considered the emerging ecological period of Earth development.

These principles present key points in Thomas's philosophical

understanding of the nature of the world. To an extent these principles are based on empirical investigation, but others are presuppositions on which empirical investigations and action are to be based. The philosopher E. Maynard Adams explained this distinction this way:

Although much of what is taken for granted in our efforts to know and to cope with reality is no doubt subject to empirical confirmation or correction, the most fundamental assumptions and beliefs that constitute the mind of the culture are not. They pertain to the categorial features and structures of experience and thought as well as to the basic constitutive features and structures of whatever the subject matter of our experience and thought may be, including a comprehensive view of the world. *We do not discover these features and structures of things by an empirical investigation of them in the way in which we discover contingent features and structures; rather, the way we empirically investigate and think about any subject matter presupposes commitments about its categorial features and structures. These presuppositions govern the outcome of empirical investigations rather than being the products of such investigations.* This is not to say that our empirical findings may not generate problems that call into question our categorial commitments, but these problems are of a different order from the logical problems among empirical beliefs that force revisions to keep them faithful to reality.²²

The modern worldview has been dominated for centuries by an understanding of the nature of the world as being mechanistic, in other words as being composed of inert matter in motion. The higher capabilities we see in living beings to sense, feel, and be conscious, are said to be attributable to emergent complexity. Change in nature is deterministic, the product of antecedent cause and effect relationships...except when chance mysteriously comes into play. As Adams in his writing often states, in this mechanistic conception value,

22. E. Maynard Adams, "The Mission of Philosophy Today," *Metaphilosophy* 31, no. 4 (July 2000): 356 (italics added).

meaning, creativity, and purposeful action are excluded from explanations of the universe.²³ Further, in this conception, even humans are ultimately to be understood as fully determined machines.

Berry's 12 principles are incompatible with this mechanistic view. Principle 3 holds up the psychic dimension of the universe. A definition in the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* helps in understanding what Thomas meant when he used this term: Psychic means "lying outside the sphere of physical science or knowledge: immaterial, moral, or spiritual in origin or force." Another meaning of psychic in this dictionary is "is of or relating to the psyche,"²⁴ which can mean all the elements constituting the human mind including emotion and morality. Thomas extends the psychic beyond humans when he says in Principle 1 that the universe is composed of subjects—in other words all beings in the universe have experience and some creativity. To understand this refer to my first lecture²⁵ where I talked about Teilhard's view that everything has an inner (psychic) and an outer (physical) aspect, Whitehead's ontological principle that the universe is composed of subjects, and indigenous and other traditions that understand the universe as in some sense living.

You might consider Thomas's 12 principles of the universe as being extraneous to an environmental ethic. With the exception of feature 1 in the "Determining Features of the Universe," you might, also, say there is no necessary relationship between those features and the 12 twelve principles. For Thomas, however, they were not extraneous and the two lists were necessarily related. As I stated in my first lecture, Thomas was concerned with the human phe-

23. Science...eliminated, normative, value, and meaning concepts, the fundamental categories of the humanities and humanistic thought in general, from its descriptive/explanatory conceptual system because they cannot be funded with meaning by sensory experience, and so statements containing them [could] not be confirmed or falsified by scientific methods of inquiry. Thus, according to the presuppositions of modern science, there are no normative laws, values, inherent structures of meaning, ends, or teleological causality in nature—only existential and factual structures and elemental and antecedent causes that engage them. *Ibid*, 353-54.

24. "Psychic," *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, accessed April 30, 2017, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/psychic>.

25. "Taking Thomas Berry's Thought Seriously," in this issue of *The Ecozoic*.

nomenon: not just the human phenomenon as it related to human beings, but the human phenomenon as it related to how the universe developed from the beginning through both psychic and physical processes.

This aspect of the universe was recognized in indigenous traditions who experienced a living universe, but it was also identified by Teilhard de Chardin in his analysis of the evolutionary dynamics of the universe and by Whitehead in his metaphysics. Further even some naturalistic scientists, as they have come to understand the fine tuning of the universe in the earliest period of its emergence that made Earth and humans possible, speak of an “anthropic principle.”²⁶

The 12 principles were also needed because of Thomas’s understanding of humans as cultural beings. Thomas, a cultural historian, knew that humans seek ways of understanding the larger structures of the universe and based on this, in part, they shape their societies. He also knew that humans have a psychic connection with the universe—an example is the wonder you may feel when you gaze at the Milky Way on a dark night. Thomas saw the need for connection with the psychic dimension of the evolutionary process as a way of empowering humanity for the stupendous task of the transition to the Ecozoic era. These 12 principles foster this connection.

Based on my own extensive conversations with Thomas and my reading of his work, I believe Thomas would say the 12 principles are at the base of his work and they are essential to the transition to ecozoic societies. Before leaving the 12 principles I would add that, like the features of the universe, the 12 principles need to be studied, developed, and applied.

So I have presented some of Thomas’s key guidance for the transition to ecozoic societies. These I believe are the most important ones, but there are many more.

26. The anthropic principle means “either of two principles in cosmology: a : conditions that are observed in the universe must allow the observer to exist—called also *weak anthropic principle*; b : the universe must have properties that make inevitable the existence of intelligent life—called also *strong anthropic principle*. “Anthropic Principle,” *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, accessed April 30, 2017, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/anthropic%20principle>.

I will close by reflecting on the question I asked earlier, whether Thomas's guidance applies to an urbanized, globalized world. I will answer this by reference to guidance given by two other authors. The following were identified as areas where transformational leadership is needed in books by David Orr²⁷ and D. Paul Schafer²⁸:

- (i) creating a new theoretical, practical, historical and philosophical framework for the world of the future (with an emphasis on the importance of the cultural dimension of life and of strengthening this dimension);
- (ii) dealing with the intimate relationship between people and the natural environment;
- (iii) providing uncommon clarity about our best economic and energy options;
- (iv) helping people understand and face what will be increasingly difficult circumstances; and
- (v) fostering a vision of a humane and decent future.

If you believe that modernity provides an adequate framework for the future, then you will not see the need for Thomas's 12 principles. If you don't and you find deconstructive post-modernism helpful but as not providing an adequate philosophy, then perhaps you will, especially if Thomas's writing is supported by philosophies new and old that give his writing support.

If you believe in the singularity and that abundance will become our problem and not scarcity, then you will not see the need for Thomas's vision of a viable future that is Earth-centered and involves self-limitation and creative discipline. If you fear environmental and social collapse, then you may find Thomas's realism challenging but nonetheless refreshing.

If you believe we face increasingly difficult circumstances and will need a shared psychic energy to move into the ecozoic, then you

27. David Orr, *Down to the Wire: Confronting Climate Collapse* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2009).

28. D. Paul Schafer, *Revolution or Renaissance: Making the Transition from an Economic Age to a Cultural Age* (Ottawa, Quebec: Ottawa University Press, 2008).

may find Thomas's work insightful.

Applying Thomas's work to an urbanized, globalized world is not easy. For example, the "precautionary principle"²⁹ might be thought of as a way of implementing that part of feature 5, which states: "Our positive power of creativity in the natural life systems is minimal, while our power of negating is immense." Yet applying this principle is difficult and its status in practice is limited at present.³⁰ The Great Work depends on it, however, and when it is pursued with the understandings of Thomas as background, the work on the principle gains relevance and becomes more urgent.

Does Thomas provide guidance to an urbanized, globalized world? I will conclude by saying yes, but we must first understand that Thomas's work is fundamentally a judgment of that world. In his last years he said that the 21st century must reverse the course of the 20th century. I think it is a mistake, however, to interpret Thomas's guidance as backward looking and as calling for a return to an agrarian past. While Thomas offered little regarding how his work provides guidance to this urbanized, globalized world,³¹ I

29. "The precautionary principle, proposed as a new guideline in environmental decision making, has four central components: taking preventive action in the face of uncertainty; shifting the burden of proof to the proponents of an activity; exploring a wide range of alternatives to possibly harmful actions; and increasing public participation in decision making." D. Kriebel, et al, Abstract, "The Precautionary Principle in Environmental Science," *Environmental Health Perspectives* 2001 Sep; 109(9): 871–876, accessed April 30, 2017, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1240435/>.

30. The authors of the above article, hastily add:

We examine the implications of the precautionary principle for environmental scientists, whose work often involves studying highly complex, poorly understood systems, while at the same time facing conflicting pressures from those who seek to balance economic growth and environmental protection. In this complicated and contested terrain, it is useful to examine the methodologies of science and to consider ways that, without compromising integrity and objectivity, research can be more or less helpful to those who would act with precaution.

Ibid. The authors are right: This is difficult—it is the Great Work

31. One place where Thomas did provide such guidance was when he affirmed

think taking Thomas seriously requires application to that world simply because it is the world in which we live. It is the world in which most of the 7 billion people on Earth live, and it is the world that brings us into the Anthropocene and affects all of life.

Thomas was a profound thinker, a seminal thinker. He passed the torch to us. Now his work must be ours.

“The radical transformations suggested by the ecologists—organic farming, community-supported agriculture, solar-hydrogen energy systems, redesign of our cities, elimination of the automobile in its present form, restoration of local village economies, education for a post-petroleum way of life, and a jurisprudence that recognizes the rights of natural modes of being.” Thomas Berry, *The Great Work*, 110.

Living into Thomas Berry: Prophet of a New Story

Nancy Hardy



A Prophet

I believe Thomas Berry was a prophet, perhaps on a level never seen before. Galileo refuted the prevailing story of a flat Earth as the center of the cosmos, which was a huge shift, but there was no mass extinction or question of the very survival of the planet involved in his revelation. Thomas Berry refutes the cosmology of separate human beings as the center of the cosmos and points to the limits of this cosmology.

He reveals the power of story, or worldview. And he may have, back in 1978, been among the first to do so.¹

1. Drew Dellinger, "Living Forward In the Spirit of Thomas Berry," (lecture, 40th Anniversary Festival, Whidbey Island Institute, Whidbey Island, WA).



He pointed out many of the limitations and consequences of the prevailing story. Just a few of these limitations include:

1. seeing human consciousness as an epiphenomenon, an intrusion which therefore sets humans apart from the rest of nature
2. believing humans were given dominion
3. John Locke's doctrine of Earth as human "property" justified on the grounds of our possessing unique, divinely bestowed, rational abilities
4. superiority of races, Manifest Destiny
5. objectification of beings (including other humans) for manipulation and use

I could go on.

A New Story

Thomas Berry laid out some tenets of a new story. Just to mention a few:

1. The universe is the primary referent, the only text without a context. Said another way, the universe, solar system, and Earth are the primary revelation of that ultimate mystery

- whence all things emerge into being.
2. The universe is a simple but seamless multiform energy event.
 3. From the beginning the universe has always had a pervasive psychic dimension, with the capacity for ordered self-development, for self-expression, and for intimate presence between all modes of being.
 4. You can't tell the story of anything without telling the story of everything. Nothing is separate.
 5. Earth's activity is primary, the human is derivative.²

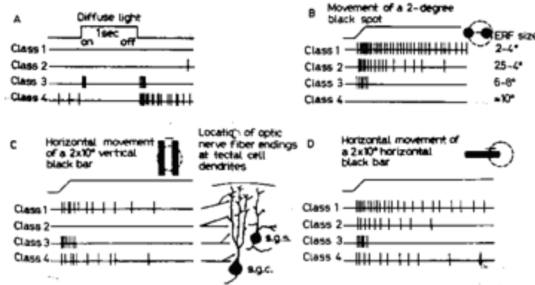
I will go into some of these tenets in more detail soon. But for now, I want to point out a major problem.

Living Into the New Story

Do you know how difficult it is to change stories?

We *are* our stories—they dictate even what we *see*. We don't see objects or things, or reality in its completeness.

In "What the Frog's Eye Tells the Frog's Brain," J.Y. Lettvin, Maturana Humberto, W. S. McCulloch, and W. H. Pitts tell us the frog's eye and your eye show patterns of light and dark.³

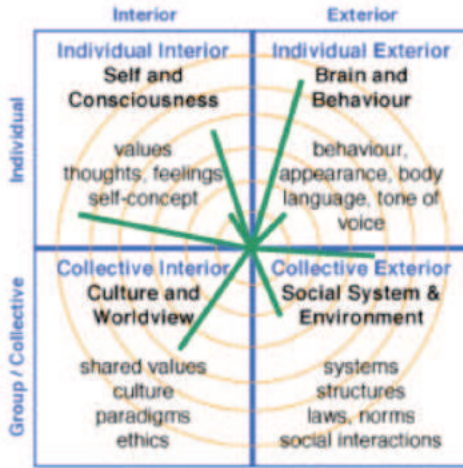


2. See generally, Thomas Berry, *Evening Thoughts: Reflecting on Earth as Sacred Community*, ed. Mary Evelyn Tucker (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 2006).
3. J. Y. Lettvin, H. R. Maturana, W. S. McCulloch, and W. H. Pitts, "What the Frog's Eye Tells the Frog's Brain," in *The Mind: Biological Approaches to its Functions*, ed. William C. Corning and Martin Balaban (New York: Interscience Publishers, 1968), 233-258.

Your experience and story of your experience dictates what you see in those patterns. People who were born blind suddenly having vision still cannot see what you and I see. As they connect language and stories to patterns, then they “see.”

Language is the way of articulating these patterns to others and to ourselves. Our way of being in the world and the possibilities available to us are mostly given by the default assumptions embedded in our language and our culture. I believe this is why Thomas, calling for a new language, advocated putting our Bible and dictionary on the shelf for a while.

And let’s look at reality according to Ken Wilbur’s “Integral Theory.” It is considered a metatheory or “theory of everything.”⁴ It posits that everything can be experienced in four quadrants. If you graphed interior-subjective/exterior-objective against individual/collective, you would end up with something like the following chart:



Stages or levels of development can be drawn as centered circles. Lines arise as distinct developmental domains or capacities. Types are items or patterns present at all stages or states. Unlike stages, which are permanent, states are temporary conditions that can

4. Ken Wilbur, *The Integral Vision: A Very Short Introduction to the Revolutionary Integral Approach to Life, God, the Universe, and Everything* (Boston, MA: Shambala Publications, 2007).

quickly transform into entirely new conditions. They are like a point within the map.

Our modern culture has typically emphasized the empirical exterior quadrants. Even though they shape our world, it is relatively new to consider all quadrants at once. What this illustrates is that what we can see, talk about, and share are dictated by our experience and what Thomas Berry calls our cultural coding. You can't, by whim, shift to what you don't know you don't know.

Martin Heidegger called these worldviews our "listenings"—our "thrown" or default way of being.⁵ They cannot be shifted by just will. Usually, the best we can do is just become aware of them. That allows an opening for something else to emerge. Ludwig Wittgenstein said that in order to think (as opposed to just parroting our cultural coding), you have to hurt yourself.⁶ Admit you don't know. Consider that you are blind and need to learn how to see. I think that is why Brian Swimme says that Thomas Berry's essays "are like the invention of the eye with which to see the Earth." Miriam MacGillis says Thomas Berry offers "the unfurnished eye."



Thomas said that transforming cultural coding calls for a groping exploration before a new coding can be formally expressed—especially during this time with a context change of this magnitude.⁷

So how do we grope more effectively? I don't know, but I wish to

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5. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1962).
 6. Norman Malcolm and G.H. Von Wright, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1958), 40.
 7. Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 2006), 92-96, 200-215; and Thomas Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way Into the Future* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999), 106.

share some sign posts left by Thomas Berry that have greatly influenced me.

Sign Posts Left by Thomas Berry



The universe and Earth are primary, human activity is derivative.

If Earth is primary, I need to learn all I can about Earth—from Earth, and I find that most of my previous knowledge is too conditioned by the old context of Earth as a resource. For example, I have a degree in forestry. What I learned in forestry and wildlife management was that forests were a collection of products to use and harvest. I did not learn that forests had rights and were home to me and my estranged animal kin to live in together in harmony.

Another example of how I was conditioned lies in my experience as a Franciscan monastic. St. Francis said we were kin to all beings, but I thought then that communicating with birds and wolves was for saints, not ordinary beings. St. Francis said that creation was our first sacred book. St. Francis might not have been horrified by Thomas's suggestion that we put the Bible on the shelf for 20 years. But I think the current generation of Franciscan sisters is not exempt from the old limiting story—one sister from my monastery wanted the field paved outside her window so she would not have to encounter nature.

While in the monastery, however, I did learn about Thomas Berry. So when I came out of the monastery in 2008, I took a permaculture design certification course because I wanted to learn more about

Earth being primary. I later became certified as a permaculture teacher.

Permaculture is a design system available to anyone offering the possibility to *disengage from consumer culture* through practical design solutions which emulate natural patterns. It is concerned with how all human activities, from governance, finance, healthcare, and education, to land care fit into the planetary ecosystem.

It is a worldwide environmental and cultural movement that *combines ancient wisdoms with scientific knowledge* to form a set of ethics and principles for creating sustainable human culture within Earth's life network. This includes designing for human settlements with zero waste that allows the land, air and water to replenish themselves, and it works for the benefit of all species, not just humans. It is about restoring or creating balanced ecosystems that are regenerative.

A basic premise of permaculture is that, as well as learning the practical aspects of sustainability, humans need to *relearn cultural practices that connect us to Earth and to tribe or community*. I think Thomas would agree.

Along with the intense intellectual experience of the curriculum, part of the “invisible structure” of a permaculture design course is community. Participants meet in circles, we share words and songs of gratitude and inspiration, we make music, we dance, we work together, we hear each others' stories—thus we strengthen the network of sustainable relationships so necessary for life to flourish.

The ethics of permaculture are as follows:

Care of Earth. This concept ranges from the very obvious—take care of the living soil—to galactic viewpoints of Gaia's place (and thus our own) in the universe. We take stewardship of our own homes, but do not assume that humans have the wisdom or the power to take stewardship of an entire planet. We are kin, not stewards.

Care of Humans. If we are taking care of humans properly, all the other species will be allowed to live the lives their wisdom dictates. Taking care of humans means recognizing them to be part of, not masters of, the web of Life on this planet.

Share the Surplus. We, limiting our consumption and our population, live in such a way that there is surplus to share.

Respect Intrinsic Value. We remember that all living beings have intrinsic value, not just the extrinsic value that humans give them.

These principles are often encapsulated in *Earth Care*, *People Care*, *Fair Share*, and *Respect all Beings*.



Compare these to Thomas Berry. Care of Earth—Earth is primary. People Care as part of the web of life and Fair Share as limiting population and consumption. Reinvent the human to have a benign impact. Respect Intrinsic Value—Rights originate where existence originates.

And then there are principles of permaculture. Principles are the pillars or patterns we use to solve systemic ecological problems and to create balanced eco-systems. They can be used in infinite variations for each locality.

Permaculture principles are brief statements or slogans that can be remembered as a checklist when considering the complex options for design and evolution of ecological support systems. These principles can be seen as universal although the methods that express them vary greatly according to place and situation. Permaculture design principles arise from a way of perceiving the world that is

described as “systems thinking” or “design thinking.”

There is one *primary* design principle I want to share with you:



NEC Organic Farm

Observe and Interact

When I am teaching this principle, I always ask as a way of illustrating this, “When you have a bee in your hand, what do you have in your eye?” Answer: “Beauty, because beauty is in the eye of the bee-holder.”

Observe means that the primary design tool is the designer.

“Observe” is a short way of saying: “noticing the information coming from all your senses as they experience and interact with your environment, both inner and outer.” The root of this principle is a willingness to begin designing a culture based on co-creation with nature. (Again, learning to see Earth as primary, the human as derivative.) It is a willingness to dance with nature, learning when to act and when not to act; learning where limitations and abundances exist, and how to place our needs within the needs of the whole of life to form a balanced ecosystem for the benefit of all. It is a willingness to watch, participate, and learn.

Observation practices: Sit Spot (we’ll come back to the Sit Spot later), contemplation, meditation, breathing awareness, journaling (especially of seasonal changes in animals and plants), na-

ture walks (learning about the flora and fauna that live around you), herb walks (learning about wild edibles and medicinals), learning tracking/hunting skills, and learning about the movement of the constellations and the moon.

Examples: knowing how much sun a spot in your yard gets before planting something there, or knowing the bird migration patterns so you can plant edibles for them as well as yourself.

It is for this reason I recommend you stop doing things: Lie fallow for awhile. Listen. Observe. Spend time outdoors. See what comes to you, how the universe wants to co-create with you, rather than just spewing out and acting on whatever comes to your mind.

I begin to think that most of what our minds come up with should be ignored. Most of the content is formed out of the old story of separateness and is just part of the problem.

I am happy continuing to learn permaculture and apply it in the homesteading I am doing with my husband, Albert, in Lockridge, an intentional community. My permaculture mentor and teacher, Patricia Allison, lives in Earthaven, and I continue to learn a lot with each visit I make there.

I also took Transition Initiatives Training and Transition for Congregations Training (Transition is doing permaculture on a civic scale. Rob Hopkins, its founder, is a permaculture teacher.)

I have some ideas of what might be possible if more people get involved. Permaculture defines work as when not enough people show up to play.



Work is When Not Enough People Show Up To Play

World Health Organization

Because I know there are some systemic solutions, I do have more hope. There are wonderful alternatives to our institutions and education systems!⁸ And this brings us to the next signpost.



To tell the story of anything, you must tell the story of everything. Everything connects to everything else.

After leaving the monastery, I also became a facilitator for the “Awakening the Dreamer Symposium.” Drew Dellinger had a key role in helping the Pachamama Alliance put together the symposium, which was based on Thomas Berry’s new story connecting environmental sustainability to social justice, and to spiritual fulfillment.⁹

The symposium teaches that we cannot look at environmental sustainability, social justice, and spiritual fulfillment as the result of overcoming a set of problems, as a list of actions to do, or different silos to work within. That is what got us where we are in the first place.



8. Patricia Allison, David Holmgren, Bill Mollison, various lectures.
 9. *The Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream Symposium*, Pachamama Alliance, (San Francisco, CA: 2005).

In simple terms, we need to connect to ourselves, to others, and to the rest of nature.

In his recent talk, “Living Forward in the Spirit of Thomas Berry,” at the Whidbey Institute, Drew said, “We are all called to connect ecology, social justice, and cosmology. We need to build a movement to connect these using the power of dreams, story, art and action.”¹⁰

He also said that we need all voices and eyes—we each need to tell our own universe story. We each are the universe speaking, sharing a piece of the whole. Just as Raimon Pannikar says that every other religion offers him a facet of Christ that Christianity fails to address,¹¹ the universe cannot be captured in just our story alone. Drew quoted John Berger as saying, “Never again will a single story be told as if it were the single one.”¹² Which leads us to the next sign post.



We are the universe

We are part of one single transformative process that includes everything. It is the source of our truest education. Carolyn Toben quotes Thomas Berry in her book, *Recovering a Sense of the Sacred: Conversations with Thomas Berry* as saying: “From the (universe, and particularly, the) Earth we learn to understand the presence of all things to each other and this changes our human relationships. Learning to appreciate the universe is the key to all knowledge

10. Dellinger, “Living Forward.”

11. Raimon Pannikar, *Christophany: the Fullness of Man* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004).

12. Dellinger, “Living Forward.”

because it constitutes an *approach* to everything.”¹³

Thomas believed that the development of the capacity of presence and appreciation with others is not possible on the level of personal, societal, or even cultural identity. The possibility of developing a mutually-enhancing relationship, that is to say to experience mutual presence and reciprocity, requires a greater identity—an Earth identity and a cosmic identity.



You are the World Experiencing
Itself, by PearlWhiteKnight

In *Journey of the Universe*, Brian Swimme and Mary Evelyn Tucker say,

Our vision now extends back through billions of years of evolution. With this new and powerful way of seeing, we find ourselves blinking in a thrilling and yet unsettling light. Rooted in the center of the immensities, we open our eyes and see each thing ablaze with billions of years of creativity. We are involved with building a new era of Earth's life. Our human role is to deepen our consciousness in resonance with the dynamics of the fourteen-billion-year creative event in which we find ourselves. Our role is to provide the hands and hearts that

13. Carolyn W. Toben, *Recovering a Sense of the Sacred: Conversations with Thomas Berry* (Whitsett, NC: Timberlake Earth Sanctuary Press, 2012), 69.

will allow the universe's energies to come forth in a new order of well-being.¹⁴

With this sign post in mind, I ordered all of Brian Swimme's DVDs and took an Earth Literacy course from Genesis Farms. I developed a portable Cosmic Walk I can take to events. I practice stretching my mind and emotions all the way from the beginnings of the universe to the Earth today. And considering the community of Earth today brings us to the next sign post.



Earth is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects.

Drew shared an amusing story in his recent talk. Thomas said to Drew, "Now we know that we shouldn't treat a person as a thing. But you shouldn't even treat a thing as a thing because there is no such thing as a thing."¹⁵ Now, that makes you think!

An object is something that is separate from oneself and can be acted upon, whereas a subject is a primary referent. An object is an "it," different from ourselves, which we feel we can manipulate or destroy, while a subject is that with which we identify that we respect and revere, but are not identical to.

Thomas said that our primary orientation with Earth, and even each other, is now a "mystique of use." Relationships of communion, he said, must now become our primary context.

14. Brian Thomas Swimme and Mary Evelyn Tucker, *Journey of the Universe* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), 116-117.

15. Dellinger, "Living Forward."

Thomas shared with Carolyn a deep vision of communion. She quotes him in her book as saying,

We are here to become integral with all our relations; I have said before that our role and rationale and mission is to be in communion with all living forms, both human and non-human. . . . In each meeting there is the mystery of the presence of another with whom one can discover new possibilities for life. Everyone and everything calls for recognition, the longing to be known for its special presence. To deprive any being of this sacred quality is to disrupt the total order of the universe.

We depend upon others to give us ourselves by seeing our greater selves and bringing them forth through our relationships with them. We actually activate the sacred by recognizing it. There is a need for great interior development if this value is to be realized so that we can nurture one another's journey toward fulfillment. And people need to have a constant renewal of their bonding with one another.



Mediatate 4 Life

Carolyn shared how Thomas believed that learning intimacy and reciprocity with nature is key to this—because we are integrally a part of nature, or the universe!¹⁶

I believe this is the answer to the mass extinctions, because they will only stop when we heal disconnected relationships. It is this disconnect that results in our destroying whole species. Maybe even

16. Toben, *Recovering*.

OUR OWN.

In looking for ways to develop a stronger connection with the natural world for myself and others in classes I was conducting at Eno River Unitarian Universal Fellowship and in the Earth Sabbath Celebrations I was facilitating for North Carolina Interfaith Power and Light, I came across a book, *Coyote's Guide to Connecting with Nature*, by Jon Young, Evan McGown, and Ellen Haas.¹⁷ Jon just recently wrote another book, *What the Robin Knows*.¹⁸ I ordered both books. They call for deep nature connection and participation, not just head-knowledge, through the development of sensory awareness and knowledge of place.

Two core routines are having a regular Sit Spot—remember the permaculture principle, Observe and Interact!—and then storytelling about what you learned in your Sit Spot. A Sit Spot is when you sit still in one spot in nature on a regular basis.



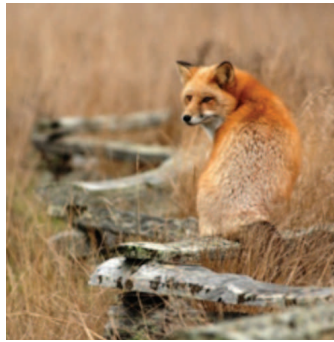
Mountain School

Coyote's Guide describes the Sit Spot this way:

On the simplest level, to sit silent and still for a long period of time will slip open the door of a world that most humans never know: the private world of wild animals and the language of birds.... Wild animals—weasels, raccoons, bobcats,

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17. Jon Young, Ellen Haas, and Evan McGown, *Coyote's Guide to Connecting with Nature* (Shelton, Washington: Owl Link Media Corporation, 2010).
 18. Jon Young, *What the Robin Knows: How Birds Reveal the Secrets of the Natural World* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2013).

owls, for example—know the patterns of human activity and move out to its edge to go unseen. Sitting still initiates you into their undomesticated realm, a wild place that plays by different rules than the human world. By being a quiet, unobtrusive guest, you will come to know Baloo’s “Jungle Law,” and learn to make yourself welcome again, as an accepted member of the natural community.¹⁹



EurekAlert!

Last December, I received an email from Jon Young’s 8 Shields Institute about a Leadership Initiation Project being led by Sal Gencarelle. It was described as learning the essence of indigenous wisdom in becoming a ceremonial specialist. Since I facilitated the Earth Sabbath Celebrations, and I was impressed by the two books I have already mentioned, I enrolled. Going deeper into Earth as a communion of subjects, we find our next sign post.



19. Young, Hass, and McGown, *Coyote’s Guide*.

Indigenous Wisdom

Indigenous wisdom is one of the four wisdoms Thomas Berry mentions as helping to guide us into the future. It is distinguished by its intimate participation in the functioning of the natural world. He said that indigenous peoples offer a unique human mode of expression equal to other great spiritual traditions.²⁰

The training turned out to be a deep immersion into Lakota cosmology in the direct lineage of Woptura Chipps, who died in 1914. He is credited with giving Crazy Horse his medicine and keeping Native American ceremony alive. The training includes some exposure to other traditions such as the Naro Bushmen in the Kalahari.



Original Women 1836, 1916
Four generations of energy

The mission is to pass on an indigenous lineage of cultural creative mentorship, bridged to the modern world, designed to empower faith keepers of community in the work of restoring a world to balance—a world where people are free from the bonds of historic and individual trauma, living in loving community in balance with the rest of nature.

Participants learn Advanced Connection principles and practices in service to their community for the identification of unbalanced patterns and to transform the patterns of disconnection and grief into those of connection and health. These practices include deep

20. Thomsas Berry, "The Historical Role of the American Indian," in *Dream of the Earth*, 180-193.

nature connection and cultural healing processes. Participants learn specific processes to ensure the emergence of vision, genius and leadership that will allow for the regeneration of resilient people and communities for generations to come.

Specifically, the project aims to connect participants to nature, to others, and to themselves—and teach them how to help others connect. The training is also training in mentoring. It is intergenerational, with ceremonies for every life stage.

One of the premises of this training is that nature connection is needed foremost because it gives the energetic capacity to heal from grief and learn about relationships, including a deeper relationship to self. This is what Thomas Berry also believed.

Community in this training is seen as the container that supports the development of the other two connection points—self and nature. It is the relationship with our elders, mentors, anchors, peers, and younger generations which provide a context for our gifts and passions.

The essence of the training is the belief that all is sacred and that to use a tool—any tool—on the sacred is to profane the sacred. The only way to make this right is for the person using the tool to maintain the highest level of prayer.²¹

To the Lakota, prayer is your connection, your presence, your conduct, and what you are a conduit for. Any action taken requires respectful asking before doing the action, a giving back in return, and the intention to right all wrongs, to heal, and to do so not just for this generation, but for future generations as well.

I am learning much from the Lakota cosmology. There is no separation—everything is connected and we are able to relate and communicate with all of creation. It is not just for saints. And it is not just for fauna and flora. The Lakota believe that while we can never fully understand Wakan Takan, the Great Mystery, we can relate to the energy beings that have manifested, particularly the eldest beings. To them, the sun, air, earth and stone are sacred ones. Wind is seen as the prayer of the sun to fill the void.

We can learn to relate to these energies – for the Lakota, the

21. Salvatore Gencarelle, *A Man Among the Helpers* (College Station, TX: Virtualbookworm.com Publishing, Inc., 2012).

word “sacred” means “connected”. We can gather wisdom or ‘sicun’ from everything and contribute to everything. *Everything*. There is no such thing as a thing, as an object, as we have been conditioned to believe.

Thomas Berry agrees that the indigenous people’s intimate connection to the natural world gives them great resilience. He also said that they also have greater facility with use of symbols, visionary experience, dream power, and integration of a rich inner and outer life in language and culture.

Thomas said indigenous people have kept a creative response and are able to sustain a distinct cultural life even in the face of tragedy and oppression.²² This brings us to the next sign post.



Art: We have to make a creative response to the current challenge

As we are groping into a new story, we need visionaries expressing new dreams in powerful symbols and embodying a new language and culture to give us resilience and hope.

I went on a Vision Quest last August and received, among other things, the word, “Seven.” So I have undertaken the study of the Seven Sacred Attributes and how they relate to the Medicine Wheel and stages of life. Here is a panorama of art I envisioned and am collaborating with Joseph Grubbs-Hardy, a graphic artist, to create.²³ It is a draft at this point. Here is the first diagram with its description below.

22. Berry, “The Historical Role of the American Indian.”

23. The following five images are by Joseph Grubbs-Hardy, commissioned by Nancy Hardy. Reprinted with permission.



First you are born into a body and presence.—*wo-wah'wala*, inner peacefulness and deep listening.

Then, as a small child, you grow in heart capacity and feelings—*wo-canto'gna-ke*, deep love for those you hold in your heart.

As a youth, you are developing the mind, particularly in the sacred knowledge of connections and patterns in nature, hopefully building from grounding in body and heart, allowing *wo-canto'gna-ke* to deepen into *wo-wa'unsila*, or compassion for all of creation.

As an adult, hopefully you are learning more of Spirit, which calls you into *wo-wa-wo-ki-ye*, or the willingness to be of service to others.

If you connect more with Spirit, it shows you/carries you as an

Elder to recognize other bodies besides just your individual one—the body of your family, community, nation, Earth community. You are again in the NW quadrant of the diagram, but on a higher level. As Spirit moves stronger within you, you become the heart of your family, community, nation, Earth, to have the wisdom of a sage—the NE quadrant on a higher level.

Once all four parts of the medicine wheel are integrated as one and Spirit is moving strongly in a clockwise manner, a solid pillar of energy spirals up to the heavens with the eagle in vibrant concerted action for the future. This is *wo-bli'heca*, or the state of being fully alive and working on a sacred purpose.



If grounded in the present moment, a shimmering half-sphere of delight forms, or *wo-wi'yu'skin*, or overwhelming heartfelt joy, awe, wonder and delight in the present moment. Perception is beyond individual ego. It keeps one strong, unafraid of the future and very productive.



If you delve deep into the past with the mole nation, to learn and heal errors from the past, you complete the sphere and begin *wo-cho-za'ni*, sacred healing.



As Spirit swirls and moves, it demonstrates sacred health—*wo-za'ni*—not just for you but for the planet.



I found creating these works of art broadened my understanding of the Seven Sacred Attributes and grounded them directly into the well-being of the Earth, a community of all beings.

Part of the creative response needed will also show up in our celebrations, the last signpost.



Celebrate!

Thomas Berry said in *The Great Work*, “In accord with indigenous modes of thinking throughout the world we might give a certain emphasis to the need to understand the universe primarily as celebration. While the universe celebrates itself in every mode of being, the human might be identified as that being in whom the universe celebrates itself and its numinous origins in a special mode of conscious self-awareness.”²⁴

I believe we are called to celebrate life by appreciating and responding to it. It can be done on a personal and collective level.

Formal celebrations within churches are often called *liturgy*. Liturgy is a Greek word meaning “the work of the people”. While worship can be done privately, ‘liturgy’ is always a public, group activity. It refers to the formulary, form, or a customary repertoire of ideas, phrases or observances used to create public religious services, or to the actual service based on such a template.

It commonly includes a set of regularly performed rituals.

Michael Davis, in a little book named *Rituals*, says the value of ritual lies in “its ability to connect you to a larger context that clarifies your relationship to yourself, others and your place in the universe.”²⁵

Rituals connect us to the spiritual heart of community, mark important passages of time and events, and help with transitions—with closing one chapter of life and the beginning of something new.

24. Berry, *Great Work*, 19.

25. Michael Davis, *Rituals: Light for the Soul* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2002), 5.

They are vital to the process of change, and of community. They allow us to find the strength, the courage and the grace to bless all that befalls us, all that emerges for each one of us and for the community as a whole. They allow us to transform loss into presence and to multiply joy and creativity.

Thomas Berry called for a liturgy that integrates the evolutionary with the cyclical context, and which calls for (invokes) intimate participation in the functioning of the universe.²⁶

I believe we have a mission to convey the new cosmology of a sacred universe through all our liturgies. The wonderful thing is that it is also an opening to true creativity, one of the basic powers of the universe.

How can we collectively learn to appreciate the universe? Here are just a few ideas:

Celebrate the universe Story with a Cosmic Walk. This ritual was designed to bring our knowledge of the 13.77 billion year universe process from our heads to our hearts. Outside, you mark off a spiral to scale. Indoors, you can take a rope spiraled on the floor. Then you light candles and read readings to celebrate major events in the universe story.



The first photo of Earth as seen from space changed our perspective forever. For the first time, we could collectively think about the planet as a whole. The exploration of the entire universe process as one integrated activity is another transformative activity.

26. Thomas Berry, "The Universe as Cosmic Liturgy," chap. 10 in *The Christian Future and the Fate of Earth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

*Celebrate the universe Story with a monthly reflection and song by Kathy Sherman, CSJ.*²⁷

Celebrate the gifts of our ancestors. These are questions and answers from a community building exercise or game I created. Games can bring diverse people together and make learning easy and fun. In this game, people are given either an answer card or a question card, and they mill and introduce themselves until they match up.

Celebrate the elements, planetary forces—Powers of the Universe Card Set. This is currently part of the Transition Game I created, but it could be turned into a question and answer game.

Honor threefold cosmological cycles: daily, seasonal, and planetary.

- Daily: Sunrise, sunset
- Seasonal: in an individual's life—birth, maturity, death; spring, summer, fall, winter
- Planetary: Earth's orbit around the sun
- Solstice celebrations are for everyone, not just pagans.

Honor indigenous wisdom and their rituals. Not to appropriate them, but to respectfully practice together.

Use the Thanksgiving Address—Words before All Else from the Haudenosaunee. John Stokes explains in a foreword: "You are invited—encouraged—to share in these words, that our concentrated attention might help us rediscover our balance, respect, and oneness with Nature. Now our minds are one."²⁸

Honor the Seven Directions (north, south, east, west, sky, earth, center).

27. Kathy Sherman, CSJ, *Once Upon a universe in Story & Song* (La Grange Park, IL: St. Joseph Press, 2009).

28 *Thanksgiving Address: Greetings to the Natural World. Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen: Words Before All Else* (Corrales, New Mexico: Native Self-Sufficiency Center, Six Nations Indian Museum, Tracking Project, Tree of Peace Society, 1993).

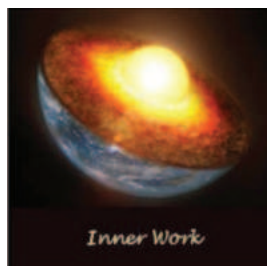
Pray the Orderly Fashioned Prayer, where you pray first for the Spirit Energies, then Creation, then all Human Beings, and finally yourself.

Increase knowledge and celebration of place, of the ecosystem. The *Coyote Guide to Connecting with Nature* by Jon Young, Ellen Haas, and Evan McGown is a great resource.²⁹

- Increase deep connection to nature. Not just head-knowledge, education about, but participation and spending time with nature.
- Know your bioregion, especially in deep time. North Carolina is especially rich—the Piedmont is one of the top ten ecosystems in the world.
- Know the other beings who share your ecosystem and their needs.
- Celebrate great events, like bird migrations.
- Have a Sit Spot you go to regularly as an individual or a group.
- Play with expanding sensory awareness or habits of perception.
- Tell a Story of the Day to entice people to engage in direct experience with the plants and animals in their ecosystem.
- Play Games, such as Non-Trivial Pursuit. This is a game I created of simple question and answer cards.

Play the Transition Game. Here's a description: transition from chaos/survival through resiliency and sustainability to thriving: at home and in local, regional, and global Earth communities. Engage in opportunities for teamwork, global collaboration, and individual choice. Perform actions and community service, take stands, move through breakthroughs and breakdowns, and take time for inner replenishment. Encounter the powers of the universe and experience and share gratitude and grief in meaningful ways. I especially love Inner Work, which includes Gratitude, Replenishment, and Grief.

29. Young, Haas, and McGown, *Coyote's Guide*.



Use Joanna Macy's exercises to reconnect, such as the Council of All Beings.³⁰

These are just a few of my examples of designing new liturgy. The main message is to be creative and engage all the senses—dance, play games, read poetry, tell stories.

In *The Christian Future and the Fate of Earth*, Thomas Berry calls for us to make “our return to the universe as vibrant cosmic liturgy.”³¹

I believe creating vibrant cosmic liturgy calls for our greatest creativity and passion. This is what will ultimately save us.

Thomas Berry said, “Only a sense of the sacred can save us. It has been said that ‘we will only save what we love.’” And he added, “We will only love that which we regard as sacred.”³²

Recap of Journey

To recap what I have learned on this journey:

We are not the center of the universe.

We are not who we think we are.

Everything else is not what we think they are.

Starting from there, communion and celebration will save us.

Go forth and commune and celebrate!

30. Joanna Macy and Molly Young Brown, *Coming Back to Life: Practices to Reconnect Our Lives, Our World* (Gabriola Island, BC, Canada: New Society Publishers, 1998).

31. Thomas Berry, *Christian Future*, 116.

32. Toben, *Recovering*, 35.

Thomas Berry CP: The Passionist Heritage in The Great Work

Thomas Keevey

I am very happy to offer these reflections on Thomas Berry within the context of his life and formation as a Passionist religious and priest. And I thank Herman Greene for organizing this Colloquium and supporting such a presentation.

First a disclaimer: this paper makes no pretense of being an academic presentation or commentary on the thinking of Thomas. It is concerned with the life of Thomas as a Passionist and the influence the Passionist community had on him and he on the community. I believe it is an aspect of his life little known and, in some instances, not fully appreciated. Although some would disagree with this approach, I do speak from my experience as a member of the Passionist community for some 30 years who lived with Thomas and as one who has spanned both pre-Vatican II and post-Vatican II developments within the community. As director of the formation program for our theology students, I enlisted Tom's help for various presentations, and I was also his Provincial superior for a number of years as well as a friend and student of his thinking, frequently visiting him in Greensboro.

I. Introduction

Thomas described himself as a cultural historian and a geologist. I would paraphrase these approaches as teacher and mystic, namely as one who had a great desire to teach, study, and communicate the evolution of cultures and as one who, in his broodings or meditations, became spiritually in touch with the mysterious processes of the universe and Earth—a priest-shaman, as he would often say. In developing these two aspects of Thomas's life within the Passionist community, I found the great phrase of St. Irenaeus of the second century to be appropriate: "Gloria Dei, homo vivens"—the glory of God is the human person fully alive or, as Gregory Baum, a Canadian theologian, translated: God is what happens to someone

on their way to becoming fully human. I believe Thomas sought to bring the human community into a new consciousness, a new completeness—fully alive and thus being part of the Earth community and not *apart* from it so that God is glorified when the human sings and celebrates with the rest of creation.

To understand these two approaches, I propose to treat the Passionist culture historically, to see Thomas within that culture as teacher and contemplative, and finally, his prophetic role within that same community. Thomas often said that it is all a question of story and again, to tell the story of anything, you have to tell the story of everything. So, here is my story.

II. The Congregation of the Passion—Brief History and Paul Daneo

The community and culture that Thomas Berry accepted and until his death vowed his life to was the Passionist community. Paul Daneo, who was born in 1694 and died in 1775, founded the Passionists. Paul's early education was sporadic, either at home or with various priest teachers, but he quickly excelled in all his studies. Early in his twenties he was going to join the crusade of 1714, but as a result of prayer and a series of interior visions, he set out on a determined path to live a life of poverty and to preach the gospel. In a later vision he saw Mary dressed in a black habit with a sign over her heart with the inscription: "Passion of Jesus Christ," and thus the quest began to gather companions and found a community dedicated to prayer and intensive missionary activity. Years later, in an attempt to get approval from Roman authorities for his community, he was refused and abruptly thrown out of the Vatican. His determination, zeal, and holiness were soon recognized, however, along with his dramatic preaching of missions throughout Italy. Befriended by officials and the Pope himself, he was able to establish what was called at that time, "The Congregation of the Discalced (not wearing shoes) Clerics of the Most Holy Cross and Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ."

If we take culture to mean the behavior patterns, the arts, and the beliefs of particular groups, we can outline a certain culture that

has perdured in the Passionist congregation. This culture flourished through the writings and Rule of Life written by Paul Daneo, as well as the practices established by his followers. Paul became known as Paul of the Cross—later canonized as St. Paul of the Cross, and every Passionist followed that practice with a new name and title: thus William Berry became Thomas of the Mother of God and later, Thomas Mary Berry.

A. Charism of the Congregation

A charism can mean a special talent or spiritual gift that bestows power, influence, or knowledge and, for religious orders, it denotes their spiritual orientation and special characteristics of the order's mission and values. For Paul of the Cross, his charism, and that of the community, was to contemplate and preach the Passion of Christ. Paul frequently quoted the words of St. Paul the Apostle in 1 Corinthians 2:2: "I determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified." Besides the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience taken by all religious, Paul of the Cross went further in strengthening the charism of the congregation by adding a fourth vow, namely to keep alive the memory of the Passion of Christ in mind and heart and to give witness to it in word and deed.

Paul of the Cross often called prayer, penance, poverty, and solitude the spirit of the congregation, and this spirit enhanced and gave nourishment to the charism of preaching the Passion of Christ. Symbols are powerful expressions of various realities, especially as found in nature, and need to be controlled by so-called rituals that should neither suffocate nor be too expansive. So what rituals are to symbols, so too for Paul, the spirit was to the charism of the community, namely keeping a balance between being too powerful or too weak. For Passionists, a contemplative spirit of prayer, penance, poverty, and solitude held the charismatic preaching of the Passion in balance.

B. Prayer: Rhineland Mystics, Geography

Paul was insistent on long periods of prayer for his community.

Up to the 1960's, the worldwide *horarium* called for chanting the entire Divine Office: the canonical hours of Matins from 2 a.m. to 3 a.m. in the early morning, again at 6 am for Lauds, and the rest of the Hours throughout the day with at least two hours of silent prayer together in the chapel. It was said that Passionists were Trappists at home and Jesuits on the road as preachers of missions and retreats.

The language of Paul of the Cross regarding prayer is found in the writings of the Rhineland Mystics, especially that of John Tauler of Germany. Paul devoured Tauler's writings, freely using them in his own voluminous letters on the spiritual life and recommending him to others. His predilection for Tauler was completely original as a mystic, since Tauler at that time was little known in Italy and, being suspect of Protestant and Quietistic leanings, was everywhere ostracized. Paul also used John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila. This group of contemplatives, the Rhineland Mystics, was sometimes called Nature Mystics and again, Friends of God. Hildegard of Bingen was one of those who launched this European brand of mysticism, but their father was the Dominican priest and theologian, Meister Eckhart, from Germany. John Tauler and Henry Suso were medieval mendicants of the Dominican Order who were disciples of Meister Eckhart. This mystical and contemplative tradition from Germany was like a deep underground stream, often hidden and at odds with the organizational church, spanning the time of the Black Death and the Avignon papacy, which flowed through Europe and appeared like springs in Spain, with Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross, and in England, with Julian of Norwich and Walter Hilton, author of the *Cloud of the Unknowing*. These mystics emphasized such themes as the birth of God within us and the Incarnation; spiritual motherhood; nature being in God before creation and God remaining in nature after creation; and the creative power of the "word" which becomes the world and makes the world divine. Tauler, like Thomas Merton, was an active mystic in his teaching and preaching. He did emphasize that contemplation also goes back to the Passion and Death of Christ. From these mystical waters and the writings of Tauler, Paul of the Cross drank deeply and developed his own emphasis on mystical death as part of the contemplative life, as well as the themes of "the ground of being and divine rebirth."

In his Rule of Life, Paul called for solitary walks so that in silence one could commune with God through nature. He often spoke of the divine presence in all the wonders of nature; they were the voice of God. He was known for speaking and listening to the flowers, the woods, the sea, and the nightingale as they loudly proclaimed the praises of God. One time, while walking in the woods, he remarked to his companion: “Ah do you not hear the trees and shrubs crying out: Love God, love God.”¹

The mysticism of Paul of the Cross translated into where he chose to build his monasteries—deep in the woods or on a high hill or overlooking the sea. The preacher, he felt, returning from arduous missionary work needed to refresh his soul by being close to nature in silence and prayer.

C. Education/Study

Although Paul had a literary and humanistic education, his theology and philosophy were mainly self-taught in addition to receiving spiritual direction from his Franciscan mentors. He was insistent that his religious community members, both priests and young students, spend much time in study and adhere to the teaching of Thomas Aquinas. We read in the original Rule and Constitutions: “Let all the schools of the Congregation firmly adhere to the unshaken doctrine of the Angelic Doctor and let all the teachers be strictly obliged to teach it.”² Thomas Berry would always insist that he was a Thomist, and he took many of his principal themes from the works of Thomas Aquinas.

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1. Constante Brovetto, “Mystical Death and Divine Nativity,” in *Introduction to the Spirituality of St. Paul of the Cross*, trans. Simon Wood, and Silvan Rouse, (Rome: The Passionist, 1955), 40. Brovetto also mentions that Paul, in his letters, urged his correspondents “to accustom themselves to see a sermon in nature” and “when you are walking alone...lift up your spirit and listen to the sermon preached to you by the flowers, the trees, the shrubs, the sky, the sun and the whole world” (39).
 2. Congregation of the Passion of Jesus Christ, *Rule and Constitutions* (Rome: 1984), 55.

III. Thomas Berry within the Passionist Culture

A. Initial Formation Years

Into this culture of the Passionist community stepped young William Nathan Berry, a quiet seeker of truth from Greensboro, North Carolina, who was energized with his own charism of nature mysticism and a missionary desire to explore and teach various cultures. What I call his nature mysticism was rooted in an experience he had when he was eleven years old of gazing at a meadow with its flowers, hearing the sounds of the crickets, and seeing the clouds in the sky that convinced him that all human activity had to support the meadow as part of the wonder and beauty of creation. He called this experience “a magic moment” and it remained with him for the rest of his life and appeared in many of his writings. He was seeking a place “to brood,” as he would so often say and fondly remember, and this brooding, pondering, or contemplating would later serve to help him probe and understand the cultures of Asia, the Indigenous peoples, and, ultimately, the mysteries of the universe and the beauty of Earth.

As with many young vocations to religious life, Thomas was first attracted to the community when he met a Passionist priest, Fr. Egbert Albert, preaching in the area and then, through research on the various religious orders, he found in the Passionists what he was looking for, namely solitude and a place to study, read, and partake in missionary activity. There, he felt he could think and be independent. Although the Passionists counseled him to become a diocesan priest, Thomas insisted that he wanted the religious life of the monastery and not the priesthood. So, after high school and a year of college, he was accepted as a postulant into the community.

Holy Cross Seminary in Dunkirk, New York, was where he completed his second year of college, as education in the preparatory seminary called for high school and two years of college. Then, the postulant entered the novitiate for a year of intensive introduction to Passionist religious life, followed by three years of philosophy and four years of theology as a professed religious of the community. At Dunkirk, Thomas found the Lake Erie beachfront and the pine

groves on the property to be places where he could walk and meditate. Early on, especially in the novitiate, he felt a sense of foreboding of what the industrial world would do to the planet. He pondered his vocation as one of warning against these mechanisms that would destroy, because, as he later said, “What we make, we become.”

B. Post-Novitiate Studies in Preparation for Priesthood

It is interesting to note that Paul of the Cross began as a hermit and did not envision himself as an ordained priest. However, establishing a new religious order and desiring to preach the Passion would ultimately be facilitated by his ordination to the priesthood. Something similar happened to young Thomas, who saw himself as a hermit or monk, but soon realized that for what he wanted to do, he would accept ordination. Later, he would sometimes refer to his ordination as an entrance into a kind of “shamanic priesthood.”

After the introductory year to religious life, called the novitiate, Thomas took vows and became a professed religious. He found the daily rhythm of chanting the psalms and hours of silent prayer conducive to his contemplative nature. In a very real sense, these ancient monastic practices would remind him of the cosmic dimension of the universe and the old maxim “to pray always,” which for Thomas became a prayer in union with the world already at prayer and a cosmos celebrating a liturgy of wonder and praise.

As regards his education in philosophy and theology, Thomas did mention some outstanding teachers from the Passionist community, such as Simon Yungfleisch and Ralph Gorman, but he also did extensive reading on his own. He read much of the great classical literature, including modern European writers, St. Augustine, and Thomas Aquinas. While completing his studies in the New York City area monasteries, he took advantage of the opera, the museums, and the abundant resources of the city. He would often say that he led a medieval life in the monastery but enjoyed what the city had to offer, and this included the social activities of the Catholic Worker where he met Dorothy Day, Peter Maurin, and other peace activists as well as those who were poor and homeless.³

3. Robert Carbonneau, “Interview with Thomas Berry,” DVD (Elon, NC: Elon University, 2004).

Perhaps it was these experiences within and outside the monastery that prompted Thomas to speak so warmly about compassion. In an interview conducted by Fr. Rob Carbonneau, who is the Province Archivist and a scholar of Chinese culture and language, Thomas spoke of the mystery of redemption as God's compassion and that Passionists, in contemplating this mystery, became Compassionists—a good name for the community, he thought. He went on to say that compassion was the key to the meaning of life and, although other religions had this sense of compassion, Christianity brought a special dimension because God entered into human suffering. Compassion, or suffering, was one of the deepest mysteries of the universe in which love and suffering created their own wisdom.⁴

C. Thomas: Missionary and Teacher; China and Germany

After ordination, every young priest was quickly introduced to Sunday preaching through weekend assistance in parishes and, at the same time, received training in preparing and delivering formal sermons for missions and retreats. This special year was called "Sacred Eloquence," but it soon became evident that Thomas was not so eloquent a preacher. He often joked about parishes calling up and requesting that he not be sent back again!

His desire to teach and be a missionary in China, along with the study of languages and various Asian cultures, only increased with time. As a young boy he was already attracted to the Chinese culture, its religions, and especially Confucianism. Since the Passionists had a foundation in China, it was not unusual for someone to volunteer for that assignment. So, after he had obtained his doctorate at Catholic University in Washington, DC, he was off to Peking, China. It would, however, be a short stay because of the Communist uprising, but, like the meadow experience, the enduring qualities of the Chinese people with their strength to survive and protect their beautiful and rich heritage would always remain with him.

The years following his return from China were filled with the study of languages and various cultures. He also taught for a few years at the preparatory seminary in Dunkirk, and his students have

4. Ibid.

fond and often interesting memories of his teaching style. Fr. Victor Hoagland remembers the time he came into the first day of class and gave them the Communist manifesto for study and followed it up the next day with Augustine's *City of God*.⁵ Needless to say, the superiors did not appreciate this unusual curriculum for young seminarians.

In an attempt to return to Asia, Thomas, believing he would get close to his beloved China, volunteered as a chaplain in the army during the Korean Conflict. However, he was assigned to Germany and there, using his own innovative methods, he did his best to educate the soldiers and their families in Christian doctrine and practice.

Upon his return, Thomas once again renewed his insatiable appetite to digest various approaches to other cultures and languages. For him the missionary and preaching charism of the congregation was translated into his desire to teach. Although the community had sent many young priests for further education, including doctoral studies, it was for the purpose of the internal education of seminarians in Dunkirk and the professed students taking philosophy and theology. Teaching outside of the community was not seen as part of Passionist activities; the community was founded to preach the Passion of Christ and nothing else.

D. Post Vatican II and the Passionist Community

1. Emergence of New Forms of Community Life and Activities

Following the Second Vatican Council, religious communities were asked to revise and update their Rules and Constitutions in light of the approaches outlined in the documents of the Council. The Council had emphasized the need for the church to adapt to the modern world, to other religions, and to its own internal life and worship. For the most part, religious communities faithfully carried out this directive. In one sense, pre and post-Vatican II life within the church and religious communities was similar to a Newtonian

5. Victor Hoagland, personal conversation with author, Immaculate Conception Monastery, Jamaica, NY, 2014

worldview and that of Einstein, between a fixed mechanistic order of reality and that of an evolutionary world of relative realities. The transformation process was huge and, for many, very difficult. In a vocational film from the Passionists, a priest said his life was so regulated that if you gave him the time of day in ten years, he could tell you precisely what he would be doing. That kind of a fixed approach to Passionist monastic life was slowly changing.

New forms of community life began to flourish in accordance with the revised Rule and Constitution of the Congregation. For example, there was a Charismatic community using spirit-filled expressions of praying and preaching, a House of Greater Solitude that followed the previous strict observance, and smaller communities emerged in neighborhoods dedicated to preaching and simpler small group living. Within this context the Riverdale Center of Religious Research founded by Thomas was new, but well within the view of expressing the Passionist charism. I was once asked how I, as Provincial, dealt with these various groups, and my answer was that when I was with the Charismatics, I prayed in tongues, in the House of Greater Solitude, I was up at 2:00 a.m. in the morning, and at Riverdale—well, how do you capture the thinking and enthusiasm of Thomas Berry? One listens and learns!

2. Speaking Engagements, Academic Conferences at the Center, Other Countries

During this enthusiastic time within the church, Thomas was in constant demand for lectures and workshops at academic conferences and universities. He spoke to religious communities as they looked to their future in a changing world. In one instance he was requested to present an article for the Superiors General of Women Religious in Rome entitled, "Apostolic Women Religious as a Voice of the Earth." Little did Thomas know how profoundly he would influence religious orders, not only then, but even more so today.

At the same time, his courses at Fordham University were well attended, and many of today's scholars in ecology and spirituality owe much to his guidance and generous giving of time and insights. The Riverdale Center itself offered numerous workshops and lec-

tures and hosted the meetings of the Teilhard Society, of which Thomas was for many years president. At the Center, Thomas produced an outstanding number of scholarly and timely papers, the *Riverdale Papers*, that he freely shared with whomever came to visit him. And, of course, there was the usual cup of tea with him as he asked his favorite question: “Now, what are you doing?” But Thomas could easily depart from an in-depth conference or presentation to explore other avenues of art and culture, or describe the geography and trees in the Riverdale area. One evening after a long day’s workshop, he invited a small group to the back room, or salon, of the house for a reading, and there we listened to the Four Quartets read by T.S. Eliot himself while Thomas commented on the same—truly a delightful experience.

Paul of the Cross envisioned his Congregation spreading to other countries, and he had a special predilection for England. It is interesting to note that one of the founding fathers of the Passionists in England, now Blessed Dominic Barbari, was the one who received John Henry Cardinal Newman into the Catholic Church. In that spirit, Thomas was a missionary to other countries where he was invited to speak or participate in conferences. Two places where Thomas did outstanding work were Canada and the Philippines. In Canada he conducted an annual workshop on ecology issues at Port Burwell, Ontario, where the Canadian Passionists had a retreat house. He was also instrumental in assisting with the design of the rebuilt parish church of St. Gabriel in Toronto. The church’s website has this to say: “The Passionist community commissioned Roberto Chiotti (Larkin Architect) to design the new church. Chiotti is a Canadian architect who is also trained in theology, especially in eco-theology arising from the wisdom of Father Thomas Berry—the Passionist thinker whose work inspired many in the ecological movement around the world.”⁶

Thomas was a visiting lecturer in the Philippines where the American Passionists had made an earlier foundation in the southern island of Mindanao and fostered the growth of Filipino vocations, who now have their own province. At the invitation of Fr.

6. *Église Verte* Green Church, St. Gabriel’s Passionist Parish, Toronto, ON, accessed July 2, 2014, <http://stgabrielsparish.ca/who-we-are/green-church/>.

Rex Mansmann, who had worked for years with indigenous peoples and particularly the T'boli in the mountainous regions, Thomas came and, through seminars and consultations, helped establish "The Great Work Foundation" that is still in existence today.⁷ The Foundation strives to implement the vision of the Great Work through education and practical applications with regard to land management and agriculture. There is always the struggle to keep their ancestral lands from those, especially corporations, who want it for development.

3. Prayer: Contemplative Life, Nature, Cosmos

Although much of the discipline and rigor of Passionist community life was changing at this time, Thomas maintained his own prayer discipline. Thomas was quite reticent about his personal prayer life and piety, but in several interviews Thomas explained his own prayer as one in union with Earth already at prayer praising the creator. He placed his emphasis on compassion, which is best defined by Meister Eckhart "as the keen awareness of the interdependence of all living beings which are all part of one another. Whatever God does, the first outburst is always compassion." Thus Thomas would acknowledge the beauty of the planet but lament the destruction taking place, especially as it affected the future of our children.

His reflection and prayer led him to see, as he states in one of his papers, now published in *The Christian Future and the Fate of Earth*, that the Wisdom of the Cross and the Wisdom of the Universe are aspects of a single wisdom.⁸ For Thomas, the redemptive cross had to be kept in balance with the redemptive or transformative process of the universe. In this he was echoing his understanding of the Early Fathers of the Church who placed the "Book of Nature" on a par with the Book of the Bible and, oftentimes, said that nature was more important. Thomas's prayerful insights were also in the context of great sacrifices—"moments of grace" as he called them—

7. Great Work Foundation, "A Movement to Advance Philippine Tribal Society," accessed July 2, 2014, <http://www.greatworkfoundation.org/>.

8. Thomas Berry, *The Christian Future and the Fate of the Earth* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009), 82-95.

that both the cross and nature represent. Like Teilhard, Thomas saw Christ not only in the mystery of the cross, but also in the great fulfillment of the cosmos, the Cosmic Christ. Perhaps, one might describe his outlook on prayer by again quoting Meister Eckhart: “The eye with which I see God is the same eye with which God sees me,” which I might paraphrase for Thomas: The eye with which I see the divine in nature is the same eye with which nature sees me.

IV. Prophetic Role in the Community

A. Trials, Difficulties, Support (Superior General and Provincial Chapters)

1. Teaching and Superiors

For some years Thomas endured the suffering of not being able to teach. His provincial at that time, citing misgivings about his orthodoxy, forbade him to do so and assigned him to the Jamaica monastery and the front door apostolate. This was a critical time for him as he thought of leaving and finding a place where he could fulfill his passion for teaching. He eventually accepted his role of what we called “being on the door,” thanks to friends who likened this apostolate to the work of Confucius who opened the door of the mind to many people. In this capacity, I fondly remember him serving tea to my parents on one of their visits. I also remember that, as professed students, we were not supposed to talk to Fr. Thomas for reasons not given at that time, but we suspected it was because of his radical ideas. No one, however, could forbid us from going to confession with whomever we chose, so we had long chats with him during confessions.

2. Superior General; St. John’s and Fordham Universities

The Superior General, Theodore Foley, intervened and released Thomas from this purgatory of the front door and allowed him to teach outside of the community. It should be noted that Theodore had a broader vision of the Congregation and its mission than did

some superiors on the local level. Thomas's difficulties with his own Provincial were partially due not only to strict interpretation of Passionist Ministry, but also personal issues, especially in their understanding of theology.

When Thomas was teaching at St. John's University he was involved, although minimally, in a protest against the administration. The President of St. John's fired all who, criticizing the administration without due process, signed a petition. Thomas defended his involvement, but, along with other professors, was terminated. Again the Superior General, Theodore, stood up for Thomas and dismissed any process from Rome barring him from teaching. In his personal letters to Thomas, Theodore assured him of his rightful place within the Congregation and the contribution he was making. Once freed from St. John's, Thomas found his true and lasting teaching home at Fordham University.

3. Provincial Chapter of 1974: Riverdale Center in the Bronx, New York

The original foundation of the Passionists was a large Victorian house in Riverdale, with adjacent property located on the banks of the Hudson River that faced the impressive cliffs of the Palisades in New Jersey. Eventually a new large retreat house was built on the property and, although Thomas lived in the retreat house for a while, he eventually moved with a few others to the "old house." At the 1974 Provincial Chapter, the highest local legislative body, the work and reputation of Thomas was recognized and the "old house" became his Riverdale Center for Religious Research. Necessary accommodations and restructuring took place, which the Province supported. The activities of the Center are too numerous to detail, but Fr. Columkille Regan, retreat director at that time, remembers offering Thomas any number of available times on the yearly calendar for his programs. Unfortunately, Thomas could not operate in such a planning mode, so his programs usually took place in the Center. During the years, 1975 to 1987, that Thomas was President of the American Teilhard Association, monthly meetings were held during the academic year where there was a lecture, discussion, and

potluck dinner.

Thomas produced an enormous volume of written papers and he eventually had a secretary to type them. Eileen Doyle became a fixture at the Center and would often comment on how massive Thomas's output was and how much she enjoyed learning from this gentle priest. During these years, a few Passionists were assigned to assist Thomas in the Center's management as well as studying with him in order to continue his vision and work. Of all of those religious, Brother Conrad Federspiel stood out as a companion to Thomas and assisted him in the programs that were offered. He also took care of the house and grounds as well as the many visitors who came to consult with Thomas, and he loved to regale us with the list of famous people he had met. He often said that being educated by Thomas in history, the works of Teilhard, and ecology was such a wonderful privilege. He was a strong promoter of Thomas within the community.

4. Colloquium à Deux: Debate on the Hudson

The work of Thomas Berry and his approach to creation and redemption gradually captured the minds of Passionists in other Provinces, especially in Europe and Asia. One of those who delved into the thought and writings of Thomas was Stanislaus Breton, a French Passionist. Through the sponsorship of Stauros International, the Congregation's international organization for the academic promotion of the Cross and Passion of Christ, a meeting was set up so that Stanislaus could have an opportunity to discuss ecology with Thomas. This conversation or dialogue—better still, debate—took place at the Center. I mention this because Stanislaus was a leading European philosopher and expert on Marxism. He was imprisoned during the Second World War and brought much of that experience to his writings. The European Passionists held him in high esteem—a very gentle and kind man.

Thomas did not have too much to say about this debate, but Stanislaus did write up some reflections on the meeting and some of the *Riverdale Papers* afterwards in one of the "Stauros Bulletins."⁹

9. Stanislaus Breton, *Soteriology or Cosmo-theology?* *Stauros Bulletin* (Leuven,

The text demonstrated that Stanislaus had read many of the *Riverdale Papers* and saw Thomas as continuing and expanding the thought of Teilhard. It was also evident that he appreciated the works of Thomas, who, as he said, had the key to the Riverdale garden and was where Stanislaus found the primordial Silence, the birthplace of the Word, and the promise of a universe. At one point, when Thomas spoke of the coming ecological age, Stanislaus wrote, "He raised his voice, a tear illumines his compassion for a battered mother." They parted friends but with fundamental disagreements regarding redemption and cosmology. Still Stanislaus summed up the "ambitious and magnificent project" of Thomas with this synthetic and interesting definition: "The task of our times involves taking the responsibility for building a new history, at once cosmic and human, physical and spiritual, in order to bring into being by a third mediation (man-Earth)—specific to our ecological age and in which East and West are united—the values of diversification-complexification, interiority and intercommunion which will make of man, by his consciousness of the universe, the new man, authentically universal and fully human."¹⁰

B. Prophetic Vision; Three Mediations

I would like to think that Thomas's prophetic role and his vision quest for a mutually enhancing Earth-human relationship became his passion, his Great Work. The result was a Passionist priest-shaman filled with compassion for Earth and its future, as well as a belief in the divine workings of the universe. Like the beautiful window in the Chartres Cathedral depicting the evangelists on the shoulders of four Old Testament prophets, so too Thomas relied on many previous prophets, such as: Aquinas, Dante, Christopher Dawson, and Teilhard. His vision would be fulfilled in the next great era of history, which he called the Ecozoic era. Whereas Paul of the Cross would frequently call his vision for the community "the Good Work," Thomas had his "Great Work."

Thomas frequently outlined the arc of history in three media-

Belgium: Stauros International Association, 1979), 3.

10. Ibid, 25.

tions: human-divine; human-human; Earth-human. Now was the time to reverse the degradation of Earth and restore a primitive and mutually enhancing relationship between the human and Earth itself, with all its variety of life forms and wondrous aspects. I believe Thomas envisioned the community taking up this third mediation by expanding its preaching of the Passion of Christ in Jesus of Nazareth to the Passion of the Cosmic Christ and the redemption and sacrificial process already present in the universe, and presently in the passion and suffering of Earth. Our retreat houses and parishes, before being closed for financial reasons, were ideal places to explore this relationship—their locations had the perfect landscapes and magnificent views of nature. While many Passionists in both American provinces and in other countries implemented his vision in their preaching, it did not become a focus to be explored or translated into a way of carrying out the charism of the congregation. Many Passionists objected that people would not understand this so called eco-theology, but the audiences that Thomas addressed, particularly the young college students and so-called millennials, reacted with enthusiasm and a renewed sense of Christianity on hearing his message. They were also open to understanding and appreciating the spiritual dimension of nature and the universe.

C. Province Meetings: Reciprocity

Thomas often quoted Confucius who, when asked to sum up his teaching in one word, replied “reciprocity.” In that sense there was mutuality between Thomas and the community. Locally, when Thomas lived in Riverdale, one could find him early in the morning in the retreat house dining room ready and waiting to discuss the topics of the day with members of the community as they arrived for breakfast.

It was during the years of 1986-87 that the Provincial, Fr. Columkille Regan, gathered a group to do some serious planning for the Province. Columkille recalled that Thomas so mesmerized the group with his vision for the future that he practically took over the whole process. The Provincial knew that, for his purposes, he had to take another approach to the planning process.

As regards Province meetings, Thomas was invited to give a major presentation at the Philadelphia Celebration of the 150th Anniversary of the Passionists' arrival in the United States in 2002. There, Thomas gave his "Christianity in the 21st Century" paper with interesting references to the history of the Passionists in the country and their contributions. The celebration took place in one of the large hotels in order to accommodate the hundreds of invited guests. Thomas had an overbooked crowd at his talk and it was well received. He took this occasion to outline the devastation of the planet by the industrial world and the efforts being made at sustainability. He saw for the Passionist community a progression for preaching the Passion of Christ, namely the Passion of Christ in Christ himself, the Passion of Christ in the Christian people, and the Passion of Christ in the entire Earth community. He returned to his familiar theme of hope for the future as found in the souls and desires of young people. Like St. Paul's challenge to Peter at the first council, he called for a transformation, a new exodus from the past to a future coming toward us. For this transformation process, he turned to the words of Fr. Jose Orbezo, Passionist Superior General at the 45th General Chapter when he spoke of the need for the renewal of religious life, not just through the reform of legislation or structure, but through something far greater that he described in these words:

The need [is] to die, abandon houses and ministries rather than settle for half measures and capitulations vis-à-vis the demands of the religious life. Holding back that death only serves to block or hold back the renewal of our Passionist lives or our opening up to alternative models of life and mission. Appeal [is] sometimes made to providence and tradition in order to legitimize that delay. Frequently however, there's a deeper reason, the fear of dying charismatically or the fear of incapacity to live evangelically.

This statement appealed to Thomas, which he often quoted and cited as an opening to his own vision for Passionist life and ministry. It was at the Provincial Chapter of 2007-2008 that Thomas was

honored and spoke at the evening session. He came before the assembly clothed in his Passionists habit and briefly spoke of the transition to the 21st century and his own efforts to foster this awakening that, for him, meant recovering the sense of the Sacred as part of the destiny of the Passion of Christ itself. He concluded on a note of gratitude to the community which had sustained him in his efforts.

D. Legacy

It was around 2006-2007 that a proposal was drawn up and given to the Provincial, Joseph Jones, outlining a project to continue the legacy of Thomas by the Passionist community. The original proposal read: "It is proposed that the Passionist Community, Province of St. Paul of the Cross, establish an Institute to preserve, develop and carry on the work and ideas of Thomas Berry. His work has been significant in the area of Ecology which he has outlined in his book, *The Great Work*, and in his conception of the Ecozoic Age. The Institute might be named the 'The Thomas Berry Institute.'" The Provincial approved the idea and a committee was formed to explore various possibilities. Discussions lasted over several years ranging from using the Riverdale Center, other places, or a special Chair of Studies or Institute at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago that was founded by several religious communities including the Passionists. It was hoped that progress could be made so that such an Institute or undertaking could be announced at the annual fundraiser, called the Passionist Presence dinner, during which Thomas would be honored.

I remember going to see Thomas in Greensboro at the committee's request to receive his permission and blessing on the project. Thomas was very cordial and, after assuring him about the viability of such an undertaking and the support this project had from both provinces, he agreed. It was his sister, Margaret Berry, who helped facilitate this meeting. Margaret was always there to help and support Thomas when he lived in his little hermitage and, later, when he joined her at the Well-Spring Retirement Center. She had carefully preserved all documentation referring to Thomas and his undertakings, and sent them to Harvard University. This documentation

known as The Thomas Berry Collection, for which Margaret is the liaison, is part of Harvard University's Environmental Science and Public Policy Archives. The attempt, however, at creating a Thomas Berry Legacy within the Passionist Community, after much time, energy, and meetings did not succeed for a variety of reasons.

V. Conclusion

A. Defining Thomas Berry

Thomas Berry is beyond a clear definition, but within the Passionist community he does have several reference points. He began his life in Greensboro, North Carolina, and eventually returned there. He looked for a place to brood and meditate and found the contemplative life with the Passionists. Like Paul of the Cross who first began as a hermit, so too Thomas had his hermitages on the Hudson and on the old farm property in Greensboro. In the meantime, this active mystic taught us all how to reverence the divine in the universe, how to see the Cross and Passion of Christ in a cosmic dimension, and how to respect the beauty, wonder, and intimacy of Earth, our home.

So, I have attempted to define Thomas in terms of teacher and mystic within the Passionist tradition. Sr. Joan Chittister, Benedictine nun and spiritual writer, gave me an insight into his passion for teaching. In a conversation with her, she said that after many years she realized that she was a writer first and a Benedictine religious second. So, too, Thomas was a teacher first in all that he undertook and then a Passionist. However, it was a mutually enhancing relationship.

B. Sophia: Divine Feminine and the Four Wisdoms

“Wisdom” was a word frequently used by Thomas. In the early Jewish scriptures, wisdom was the inherent principle that guided and filled the universe with the presence of God. Wisdom, or Sophia, was personified in Old Testament wisdom literature as a female figure. St. Irenaeus said: “God made everything through his

Logos and made everything beautiful through his Sophia.” The role of Sophia in the divine activity reached a new level in the 9th century depiction of the Holy Trinity in a Bavarian Church. There, the Holy Spirit is in the form of a woman.¹¹ Could this early emphasis on the Divine Feminine, Sophia or Wisdom in biblical and theological writings, have been an influence on Thomas and his prophetic insight in naming the wisdom of women as the most important of all the wisdoms to guide us into the Ecozoic Age? Also, Paul of the Cross’s early foundational vision of Mary wearing the Passionist habit, the place of devotion to Mary in the Passionist community, and Thomas’s taking the title “Mother of God” might have contributed to his emphasis on the wisdom of women. The thinking and writings of Thomas had a great influence on religious communities of women and their leadership personnel. Even today at this time (2014), that same leadership, the LCWR (Leadership Conference of Women Religious), is in the headlines as they are again being questioned by Rome about their orthodoxy. Various commentaries on this debate mention Thomas Berry as one of the leading *influences* on their stance towards the world and religion.

Perhaps the four wisdoms that Thomas named as guides for the new age are also indicators of his own developmental thinking and journey towards the Ecozoic Age. 1) The wisdom of classical civilizations: Thomas used the wisdom from past civilizations, especially thinkers from the Chinese and Greek cultures as well as Aquinas, Dante, and Dawson. 2) The wisdom of indigenous people ; he praised and honored the wisdom of native peoples, especially our own native nations, as having a deep spirituality based on their love and respect for Earth and their sensitivity to the elements of creation. 3) The wisdom of science: Thomas accepted the new wisdom coming from science that shapes the modern world and scientists’ writings on evolutionary development, especially the contributions of Teilhard de Chardin. 4) The wisdom of women, which brings us to the divine feminine in creation, Sophia, the hope for the future.

11. Thomas Schipflinger, *Sophia-Maria: A Holistic Vision of Creation* (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, Inc., 1998), 391.

C. Virtues

Thomas had many outstanding qualities, or virtues, and here are just a few that were his hallmark within the community. His gentleness made him a true gentleman who took interest in what other Passionists were doing. His respect for others made it rare to hear an unkind word from him, no matter what disagreements they might have had. His deep sense of gratitude for all that the community had done for him was a sentiment he quite frequently repeated. Here I would like to again quote Meister Eckhart: "If the only prayer you say in your entire life is 'thank you' that would suffice." Thomas practiced an important aspect of Passionist life, namely hospitality. Whenever people visited him, they always received a warm and genuine welcome from him. Thomas also had a profound humility regarding the importance of his work or his name, not unlike the final days of Thomas Aquinas. Like Teilhard, he had an abiding hope in the future and placed that hope in his belief in the goodness of the world. Lastly, the virtue of compassion was an abiding presence with him, so much so that he saw it as animating and flowing from the contemplation of the Passion of Christ in the world and the universe.

D. A Final Note of Gratitude: "Going Home"

I conclude with Thomas's touching and deeply felt letter to the Provincial, Fr. Terence Kristofak, and to the community in 2005. Again we find his abiding sense of gratitude, his love and concern for the community, and one of his familiar themes, namely "going home." During his final years at the Well-Spring Retirement Community with his dear sister Margaret, he would always inquire of us about the community and its activities. Thomas may have been absent physically from the community but never psychologically or spiritually. As he said to Fr. Rob Carbonneau: "I couldn't have done what I did in any other context." In that context here is his letter:

Dear Terry,

To yourself and to every member of the community I send greet-

ings of this Christmas season! The nativity is such a joyful occasion. I am infinitely grateful to the community for all that they have done for me over these past many years. I am much the same as I have been since I came here [to the Well-Spring Retirement Community] some two years ago. I have recovered some of my ability to read, a capacity that I had lost for the first year. It is a question of diminished sight and then interpreting the meaning of the words. I read like a grammar school child. I can write well enough, although I have lost my ability to remember the names of persons, places and events.

Still I do a bit of thinking and may be able to publish a collection of earlier essays. It will not be a very good book but it will, I hope, carry a thought or two. Although it will be almost entirely of past writings, it will be entitled “Evening Thoughts”—from one of the recent essays. [It was dedicated to the community.]

Please give my greetings to everyone. As the years pass I am ever more fond of my monastery home. I am ever more conscious of being given a home, of being cared for, educated and supported throughout my life. It’s no small gift! It has lasted a lifetime.

Thomas

I would like to sum up by returning to my introductory quote from St. Irenaeus: “*Gloria Dei, homo vivens*,” the glory of God is the human person fully alive, which I now paraphrase for Thomas as “*Gloria Dei, terra vivens*”—God’s glory is the whole Earth fully alive in all its splendor and multitude of life forms.

Appendix: Personal Thoughts

Final years and drifting

During the final years when Thomas was weakened by various issues, whenever I called or visited him, he would say that he was drifting. The idea, I explained, suggested the Irish notion of “white martyrdom.” Early Irish monks, I explained, were not subject to the bloody—that is, “red martyrdom”—of the Roman Church, yet they found other forms of suffering for the faith. “Green martyrdom”

was living as hermits on mountaintops or lonely islands, studying scripture and communing with God like the anchorites of the Egyptian desert. “White martyrdom” they saw as setting sail adrift (drifting) to wherever God would take them for whatever purpose. I think Thomas was amused by this notion of white martyrdom as “drifting.”

Last wishes

About twice a year Mike Bell, Bob Molyneaux, and I—all former Passionists, followers, and friends of Thomas—drove to Greensboro to spend a few days with him, whether he was at the farmhouse or at Well-Spring Retirement Community. Margaret arranged our meetings with Thomas. There we would discuss his latest papers and projects and, as usual, he would ask what we were doing. But what really bonded us during those days and made them so enjoyable was our common history in the Passionists: We told familiar “war stories.” We reminisced about certain members in the community who had done outlandish or crazy things that were fondly remembered by everyone. We laughed and told jokes to which Thomas would give his usual response, “Oh my.” And We wondered together where the church and religious life were going or what the evolutionary process might entail. But in the midst of these conversations during some of our last visits, he would ask about the details of his burial, especially whether he should be clothed in his religious habit. He would ponder our replies, perhaps brood over them, and move on. He was buried, eventually, in his religious habit.

The Beethoven Difference, the Thomas Berry Difference, the Prophetic Difference

Finally I would like to make a comparison between Thomas and Beethoven. A few weeks ago I heard a lecture by Scott G. Burnham, Scheide Professor of Music History at Princeton University. In his lecture, “The Beethoven Difference,” he discussed how Beethoven galvanized the musical classical style, thus moving Western music into the 19th century; he was the difference that has lasted to today.

His difference was the power of his universality. His music, as Victor Hugo said, helped the dreamer to recognize his dream, the sailor his storm, and the wolf his forest. Illustrating these ideas by passages from Beethoven's compositions, Professor Burnham summarized the composer's motivation by the phrase *ad astra per aspera*, to the stars through adversity. His music is powerful and in-your-face; whereas Haydn's Minuet took twenty seconds to set the theme, Beethoven did the same in four seconds. His Third Symphony, the Eroica, opens with two wham-bam notes. Beethoven then takes us on the hero's journey up into the heavens, wandering among the stars, and we ask about where he is going or if he is lost, and then he comes down to the musical text and concludes the journey.

All during the lecture I kept thinking about how Thomas changed the discourse about ecology and theology, how he would hit us hard with his shocking statements, take us on a wandering journey into the divine energy of the universe, and then bring us into his discourse of present day problems and possible ways to enter into the dawning of a new age. As with Beethoven's innovations, Thomas's ideas were prophetic, and like many prophecies they were difficult to take, often misunderstood, and underappreciated. Beethoven and Thomas were harbingers of something radically new. As one conductor said, Tchaikovsky played to the soul of the human, but Beethoven played to the soul of the universe. Thomas has played and continues to play, bringing us to understand the universe and this wondrous Earth that we must love and preserve.

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From Demonic Dream toward a New Story: Reflection on Thomas Berry's Instructions for Reorienting the Human Project

Malcolm M. Kenton

What specific instructions does Thomas Berry offer for reinventing the four core institutions governing human affairs for “the emerging Ecozoic era?” To answer this question, a closer reading of his three most influential works—*The Dream of the Earth*,¹ *The Universe Story*,² and *The Great Work*³—is required. The theme that emerges is this: in spite of how radical a shift Thomas seems to be urging our species to undertake, at least when it comes to the structures of organized religion, government and the university, his instructions suggest more of an evolution than a revolution. He says quite clearly that existing institutions can be retooled; they need not be done away with in order to start over from scratch. The only one of the core institutions for which he suggests a more fundamental reshaping is corporations—since in their present form they are the chief plunderers of the planet and the chief progenitors of our entrancement with what he calls a “distorted dream.”⁴

I came to know Thomas thanks to my father, who, after moving to Greensboro, North Carolina in 1986, became involved in environmental issues. He was part of the successful push to start the city's municipal recycling program in the early 1990s and worked to fight sprawl-inducing highway and water projects.

My father was invited to connect with Thomas, and when he did,

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1. Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Books, 1988).
 2. Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, *The Universe Story: From the Primordial Flaring Forth to the Ecozoic Era—A Celebration of the Unfolding of the Cosmos* (San Francisco, CA: Harper-Collins, 1994), 209.
 3. Thomas Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999), 201.
 4. *Ibid.*, 201.

he brought me along for what became regular monthly lunchtime visits. Eventually, Thomas came to serve as a personal professor and learning guide, giving me broad reading assignments and, as he could do like nobody else, offering me an encompassing context in which to view what I was learning in history, literature and science.

I was moved by the depth of his analysis and of his spiritual sense of the unity of all things. I continued to join him for lunch on a regular basis right up until his death in 2009, which happened just after I moved to Washington, DC. I returned to Greensboro to give a eulogy at his funeral.

The word “context” best encapsulates the core of what Thomas sought to convey to his students and his audiences. To virtually any question asked of Thomas, his answer would draw on lessons from history, science, or world religions. His critique of the dominant modern notion of human progress was based in these vast intellectual repositories.

Cultural Coding and the Demonic Dream

The root of modern society's ills is its disconnect from the context in which our species evolved and through which we find meaning in our lives. The trajectory of human thought away from being grounded in the natural world was cemented following the Bubonic Plague in 13th-century Europe. Thomas repeatedly emphasized just what a cataclysmic historical event the Plague was. It instilled in Westerners a “hidden rage against those inner as well as outer forces that create limits on our activities,” driving Western civilization to seek a new foundational mythology.⁵

In *The Universe Story*, Thomas cites Disney World as the living embodiment of this perverted ideal: “a nonthreatening world of fabricated imitations, or caricatures of the universe and all its living manifestations” and “an artificial world where nothing is left of the original spontaneities of nature.”⁶ Thomas calls this entrancing myth “as pure a superstition as was ever professed by humans.”⁷ This

5. Ibid., 67.

6. Swimme and Berry, 209.

7. Berry, *Dream of the Earth*, 41.

myth of linear “progress” that drives Western civilization thrives by disguising itself as something inevitable, as rational behavior, as the only way to satisfy everyone’s needs and desires with no real alternative, and even as a sacred task.

“We thought we were elevating the human,” Thomas declares, “when in reality we were alienating ourselves from the only context in which human life has any satisfying meaning.”⁸

Perhaps a way to begin to chip away at the techno-industrial mythology is by exposing and ridiculing its absurdities. Maybe a century or two from now, when children are told that people used to think they were on a separate plain from the rest of creation, they’ll laugh and say “that’s ridiculous.” One example of such an attempt to illustrate the true nature of the present industrial economy is the Story of Stuff Project (www.storyofstuff.org). This video explains the process feeding consumer culture and the waste it creates in a way that clarifies its absurdity.

Casual observers tend to glom most “radical” strains of thought on ecological matters as wanting humans to be treated not as a unique beings, but as just one of many animals sharing Earth. Thomas’s philosophy, however, does set humans apart as the beings in which the universe reflects upon itself.⁹ The uniqueness of humans comes from our capacity to reflect on, exalt, and serve as stewards and protectors of the Earth community. Instead of being uniquely apart from the rest of the living world, we are uniquely a part of it. We have a special role within the living world.

Thomas also diverges from mainstream science by reading into the pattern of Earth and life’s evolution a purposeful creative force seeking greater diversity, complexity and the individuality of each being, while binding it all together in communion. The particular creative tension between forces within the universe drives its quest to enrich and better know itself through greater complexity. The universe, according to Thomas, is not simply a static cosmos, but also a

8. *Ibid.*, 115.

9. *Ibid.*, 56: “Here, in this human mode, the universe reflects on and celebrates itself in a unique mode of conscious self-awareness.”

dynamic, evolving cosmogenesis¹⁰; and it is creative.¹¹

As beings grow, multiply, and come into contact with one another, they tend to express a multitude of separate identities (differentiation), act upon their own inner guidance and express self-organizing dynamics (subjectivity), and form enduring relationships with all other beings with which they interact, interactions that shape their form and function (communion).¹² In lectures, Thomas would illustrate how important communion is to life by pointing out that nearly all people, and many animals, would consider it torture to be confined in a position where they are unable to interact with anyone or anything.

Unlike other animals, humans don't receive all the instructions we need for a fulfilling life from our genes. Instead, to figure out how to be human, we rely on the handed-down learning that takes place during childhood, which is quite prolonged in humans compared to other animals. Thomas calls this process "cultural coding,"¹³ and says it shapes us just as much as the coding in our DNA. To reincorporate the ongoing leadings of the universe into our cultural coding, we need to learn to be humble and filled with gratitude towards the forces and web of life that sustains us, and we also need to learn to better recognize and respond to our inner spontaneities.

Thomas defines "cosmology" as the framework in which we understand our relationship to the universe—a framework that prescribes the proper roles of science and religion within it.¹⁴ As Thomas said to me many times, "science cannot tell us how to use science;" science and organized religion become destructively self-important in the absence of a guiding cosmology.

We draw our inspiration from the wild and untamed, which is the wellspring of creativity. The key to reorienting our guiding mythology is to incorporate a sense of the sacred dimensions of the natural world into our cultural coding, thereby establishing a "functional

10. Swimme and Berry, 67.

11. *Ibid.*, 52-56

12. Berry, *The Great Work*, 159-164.

13. *Ibid.*, 91.

14. Thomas Berry, *Evening Thoughts: Reflecting on Earth as Sacred Community*, ed. Mary Evelyn Tucker (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 2006), 96.

cosmology.”

One of Thomas’s pithiest sayings, which he often repeated in talks towards the end of his life, is “the churches are too pious; the corporations are too greedy; the government is too subservient to the corporations; and the universities should know better.”¹⁵ His sense of the needed functional cosmology leads him to a few conclusions about how to rebuild the foundations of these four institutions, but he leaves it to us and future generations to figure out the rest.

Reforming Religious Institutions

The church’s liturgy was once based on celebrating God as revealed through seasonal acts of creation and renewal. In a short timespan following the bubonic plague of the 14th century, however, Christian liturgy began to center on the historical life of Jesus, and the church’s core teaching turned to redemption theology: the idea that our home is not in this world, but rather in a heaven reached through a personal relationship with a divine savior who came to Earth in human form to lead us home. With this transformation, the natural world became a mere backdrop for religious life, rather than a focal point that revealed God’s continued presence on Earth.

“Emphasis on the verbal revelation to neglect the manifestation of the divine in the natural world,” Thomas admonishes in *The Great Work*, “is to mistake the entire revelatory process.” The church has erred in emphasizing “redemption processes to the neglect of creation processes.”¹⁶

Reorienting the established religions so that they attend to the divine omnipresence in the cosmos around us requires a return to rituals that tie our lives to nature’s processes. It also entails adopting the Universe Story as a guiding mythos for all religions. Thomas says we must observe the spiritual aspect of all beings, regard other

15. A variation of this appeared in *ibid.*, 79-80, where Thomas expresses the view that the universities should lead the way: “Here I propose the religions are too pious, the corporations too plundering, the government too subservient to provide adequate remedy. The universities, however, should have the insight and the freedom to provide the guidance needed by the human community.”

16. Berry, *The Great Work*, 75.

animals as relatives, and regard the universe itself—rather than an anthropomorphic deity—as that which judges us. But Thomas fails to fully address all the challenges such shifts would encounter, hurdles that include credence in the Universe Story and recognition of our kinship with all life—the developmental processes of the cosmos and the chain of human evolution. There are many other possible cultural consequences relative to not taking scriptures literally. Convincing religious fundamentalists to accept what science has revealed about how everything came to be, and convincing scientists to consider the spiritual aspect of the universe, will both be daunting tasks that will take many generations.

Thomas also fails to consider how atheists, agnostics and humanists are to be “brought into the fold” to work in concert with people of faith on the tremendous species-wide project of detoxifying ourselves from the demonic dream and laying a foundation for the Ecozoic era. There are many who disavow the existence of a spiritual realm, acknowledging the existence only of matter and mind, who nevertheless are hard-core ecologists and realize the dangers inherent in the Western industrialist mindset. Somehow they will need to be made part of the Ecozoic project, in spite of not subscribing to the spiritual aspects of the work.

Rights vs. Commons

Thomas argues that the supreme fallacy in the principles on which most modern nation-states are founded is that nonhumans are excluded from enjoying rights, thus giving humans the absolute right to do what they want with nonhumans, treating them as property and resources to be used to human ends. This is ultimately self-destructive, he maintains, as it is the community of living and nonliving beings that gives us physical, psychic and spiritual sustenance. Thomas's two key instructions for reforming government are to grant legal rights to all beings and to remove the legal frameworks, such as corporate personhood, that make government subservient to industrial corporations.¹⁷

17. *Ibid.*, 74 (legal rights for nonhumans), and 216 (the legal power of corporations).

There seems to be a tension between these two ideas that Thomas holds: first, that all of Earth's components are a commons to be shared by all Earthlings according to need, and second, that inviolable individual rights are to be accorded to all human and nonhuman beings, both individually and collectively.¹⁸ Is a river, for example, both part of the commons and a being with rights? Are there cases when an individual's rights must be violated in order to preserve or improve the community's well-being? Is it possible to truly respect the rights of all individuals?

Thomas seems to subscribe to a more relativist notion of rights, rather than an absolutist one. But the idea of other beings having rights presupposes that we humans should conduct ourselves based on the proposition that other beings have inherent value based on the reality of their existence and expression of themselves, instead of acting out of a sense of kindness or moral obligation on our part, or acting in our species' broader self-interest. In other words, other beings have value independent of human judgment, determined simply by their existence. But nature's balance seems to require the sacrifice of certain rights for the good of others or of the community. So this value is not absolute. For example, all animals must kill—either plants or other animals—to have food. This denies their prey the right to be.

Thus, I posit that Thomas would err on the side of the integrity of a community, of an ecosystem, or of a species taking precedence over the absolute right of each member of the community, ecosystem or species to live, to have a suitable place to live, and to fulfill the role assigned by the niche it has made in the community.

Thomas himself had no qualms about eating meat. He is more concerned with human actions that impair or negate other beings' ability to function in a more permanent or substantial manner, such as poisoning them or their surroundings, than the act of a human killing an animal to eat. Therefore, he would probably say that humans do not meaningfully violate the rights of other animals by killing them for sustenance, as long as humans take simply what they need for food, clothing, or shelter in a way that doesn't disturb species survival or an ecosystem's ability to renew itself and con-

18. *Ibid.*, 62 (sharing of property), and 161 (inviolable rights).

tinue to function and flourish. Thomas's notion of rights is more cosmological, whereas most modern rights theories are tied to the individual, with the degree of an individual's rights being based on the degree to which the individual is capable of suffering or of experiencing harm done to it.

Viewing rights in a cosmological sense seems to imply viewing them through a more relativistic lens. The modern notion of rights, being inherently tied to the individual, leads to arguments that the greater good is served by denying an individual something that is considered to be a right. Thomas insists, "The Great Commons of the planet Earth" should be "shared in proportion to need among all members of the Earth community."¹⁹ For this to work in a way that maintains ecological balance, it is obvious that some redefinition of human needs will be required. People who are accustomed to all the modern conveniences have trouble conceiving of life without them; thus these "creature comforts" tend to rise to the level of need rather than simply desire. Those working to attract more people to be a part of the Ecozoic transition must be careful to present it as providing a richer and more meaningful life; they must convince people that the fulfillment we think we get from the consumption of resources for our Western lifestyles is empty in comparison. Attention must also be given to how to conceive of the needs of nonhumans, and to the obligation of humans to actively help other creatures meet their needs, rather than simply avoiding actions that interfere with their needs being met.

Thomas doesn't seem to go along with ecologists who call for doing away with the idea of private property. Instead, he states, "The basic elements of personal security and personal property would be protected, although the sense of ownership would be a limited personal relation to property, which would demand use according to the well-being of the property and the well-being of the community, along with the well-being of the individual owner."²⁰ He seems to accept that, because the idea of private property is so ingrained in the Western mindset, retaining it in a limited form, rather than replacing it with a strictly communitarian ethic, offers the more feasible path forward.

19. *Ibid.*, 61.

20. *Ibid.*, 62.

Bioregional Governance

A deep human flaw is that we have macrophase power but only a microphase sense of ethics and responsibility, and even that is generally limited to how we treat other humans.²¹ Thomas urges us to consider our responsibility to maintain the integrity of the entire Earth process and all its interrelated components, particularly at the bioregional level.

Thomas defines a bioregion as “an identifiable geographical area of interacting life systems that is relatively self-sustaining in the ever-renewing processes of nature” and as a “self-propagating, self-nourishing, self-educating, self-governing, self-healing and self-fulfilling community.”²² To redraw the lines separating government jurisdictions—counties, states, nations, for example—to align with bioregion boundaries would be a monumental task fraught with differing interpretations. It would be incumbent upon each person to learn, through being taught in school or independently, about the geography, fungi, plants and animals in their bioregion and their interactions undertaken in order to establish a suitable way of life within this community. Beyond insisting that bioregion-states be governed in a biocentric, rather than anthropocentric, manner, he does not offer specific instructions for how to govern them. Perhaps he intends to leave it up to the population of each bioregion and its leaders to figure this out for themselves, being guided by their enhanced understanding of their unique habitat’s biological, geological and hydrological dynamics.

Ecozoic Transportation

Much of my career has been devoted to improving transportation, which is one of few areas in which Thomas offers this more specific suggestion: “A bioregional roadway will allow walking, bicycling and horseback riding, and would accommodate animal-drawn carriages. The tyranny of the automobile can no longer be

21. *Ibid.*, 101.

22. *Ibid.*, 162

accepted.”²³ Automobile dependence is indeed untenable, even if cars are renewably-fueled, because of the sheer amount of land devoted to roads and parking lots in an auto-centric society. But it is strange that Thomas would emphasize the use of horses and animal-drawn carriages and not mention much more energy-efficient and space-efficient electrified railroads. Despite railroads’ historical role as enablers of resource exploitation, humans have yet to devise a technology capable of moving larger quantities of people and goods efficiently using only electricity—which can be produced from renewable sources such as solar and wind. Railroads do this using minimal land compared to highways and airports. To minimize steep gradients, they tend to be built in harmony with the land’s contours.

Robust passenger train service fosters the development of dense, walkable communities around stations that make a car unnecessary for most travel. And, aside from walking and cycling (both of which generally require paths to be cleared), train travel gives one a unique and intimate view of landscapes through which the train passes, and lends itself to socializing among passengers, thus aiding social cohesion of disparate populations. I see railroads as a fine example of an industrial technology that can be adapted to play a benign role in the Ecozoic era. Being reliant on railroads for the longer-distance movement of people and goods—beyond the range within which our feet or bicycles can carry us—forces a healthy discipline. The unfettered ability to go as far as we want when we want that automobiles and trucks provide leads to a hyper-inflated sense of the possible, which thus begets sprawling development patterns that gobble up land and fuel. And while the automobile isolates people inside their own moving steel fortresses, the train brings its passengers together in ways that buses and airplanes do not, fostering a more egalitarian sensibility.

Fixing the US Constitution

The US Constitution “represents the height of good aspects of the modern world, but it’s also a deadly document,” Thomas says in the printed form of a 2003 lecture before the E.F. Schumacher Society

23. Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*, 68.

.entitled “Every Being Has Rights.” “It is deadly to give humans such exaltation, such freedom to own property and do with it whatever they want. The government can’t stop them. Nothing can stop them.”²⁴ So the US Constitution must change, but will simply amending it be sufficient? Thomas seems open to this approach, but to infuse the document with a sense of humans’ more humble place in the Earth community, when it thoroughly exalts the human in its current state, will require a great deal of tinkering.

Thomas repeatedly holds up the United Nations’ 1982 World Charter for Nature as a model.²⁵ This is a foundation from which we can work to reshape government for the Ecozoic era. We are, however, still fighting merely to establish that corporations are not people and money is not speech. We should all get behind the effort to amend the Constitution in order to undo the doctrine of corporate personhood. “Big corporations require big government—unless the people are willing to accept the corporations as the government,” Thomas admonishes in *The Great Work*. Not only is government necessary to limit the power of corporations, it also provides the basic conditions in which corporations can perform and operate: “almost every industry has come into being and survives with support from public lands and public funds.”²⁶

Finally, Thomas seems firmly aligned with the current media reform movement being led by groups like Free Press (www.free-press.org). They seek safeguards for the neutrality of content across Internet service providers and rules that protect community-serving journalism and local voices, and ensure that those with viewpoints opposed to those of the corporate overlords of mainstream media have space on the airwaves. This cause, fortunately, has the US Constitution and American traditions on its side. “The commercial-industrial control of the media can be considered among the most effective forces thwarting and remedial action to save the disintegrating planet,”²⁷ Thomas laments.

24. Thomas Berry, “Every Being Has Rights,” pamphlet ed. Hildegard Hannum (Stockbridge, MA: E.F. Schumacher Society, 2003).

25. United Nations General Assembly, World Charter for Nature (1982), accessed June 22, 2017, <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/37/a37r007.htm>.

26. Berry, *The Great Work*, 131.

27. *Ibid.*, 68.

The Roots of Corporate Power

Corporations are the chief purveyors of the demonic dream. “The corporations have taken possession of human consciousness in order to evoke the deepest of psychic compulsions towards limitless consumption,”²⁸ Thomas puts it succinctly. They entice us with promises of a “Wonderland” achieved through “the ever-increasing exploitation of the earth through our amazing technologies” and “consumption of products that have been taken violently from the Earth or that react violently with the Earth.”²⁹

The United States of America is the first nation-state in history in which large corporations became the dominant organizing principle of the economy, thus coming to a position of influence over the decisions made by an at least structurally, if not functionally democratic government. Some multinational corporations are simply too large for effective oversight. If a corporation is “too big to fail,” as leading US politicians have claimed of some major banks, manufacturers and retailers, perhaps it is just too big, period.

The elements fueling corporations’ ability to become so massive are modern communications technologies and, above all, cheap and abundant petroleum. When petroleum inevitably becomes too scarce and expensive to be widely used, corporations will be unable to maintain supply chains as they currently do. Thomas, adhering to E.F. Schumacher’s “small is beautiful” philosophy, thinks more economic activity should move to the local and regional levels.³⁰ But he does not directly address the inevitability of a return to smaller-scale economies as petroleum dries up as a cheap, plentiful commodity.

Possible tactics for right-sizing economies and dethroning mega-corporations include the following:

- Use the power of the corporate charter. In the early days of the American republic, companies were chartered to fulfill a limited, public purpose, such as constructing a bridge or

28. *Ibid.*, 120.

29. Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*.

30. E.F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as If People Mattered* (London: Blond & Briggs, 1973).

canal. Upon the completion of the designated project, the firm would fold. But towards the middle of the nineteenth century, firms came to be chartered for broader, unlimited purposes. It remains the case, nevertheless, that no company can legally do business without a charter from the state where it is headquartered. Governments do have the power of “life and death” over corporate “bodies.” If a corporation abuses the public trust or acts in a way detrimental to people and/or the planet, the state government ought to revoke its charter.³¹

- Counter corporate propaganda about government’s role. Through their power to finance campaigns for elected office, corporations come to treat government the same way they do “natural resources” and labor: something to be manipulated for the greatest profit. They milk subsidies out of government, but otherwise want very little government. They ally themselves with right-wing groups, championing the cause of personal liberty and small government. Additionally, they convince the rank-and-file of these groups that “big government” is a greater threat to individuals’ well-being than the consolidation of wealth and political power in the hands of fewer and fewer corporations and very rich individuals.
- Animate the body politic in functionally democratic countries to be able to see through the corporate propaganda machine. Part of the solution lies in establishing think-tanks to write an effective counter-narrative to that pushed by the corporate-funded libertarian ones. Another solution is to champion public financing of campaigns, so that money is not such a barrier to running for office, and corporations cannot simply “pay to play” in legislatures.
- Expand the “triple bottom line” mentality, and foster green- and socially-minded entrepreneurs. As Thomas declares in

31. One discussion of this is found in Charles Cray, “Revisiting Corporate Charters,” Summit on the Future of the Corporation,” Paper No. 7 (2007), 67-76, accessed February 25, 2016, <http://www.corporatepolicy.org/pdf/charters.pdf>.

The Great Work, “opposition between the industrial-commercial entrepreneur and the ecologist can be considered as both the central human issue and the central Earth issue of the twenty-first century.”³² But these need not be diametric opposites; green entrepreneurs offer a bridge for this gap. Most of the leaders of today’s mega-corporations are not so much entrepreneurial as oligarchical. Perhaps the word “entrepreneur” in Thomas’s declaration is better replaced with “oligarch.” The term entrepreneur connotes a smaller-scale businessperson who is experimenting with novel ways to make money while providing a good or service for which there exists a perceived demand. While some entrepreneurs see their businesses grow to become large corporations, or are acquired by or absorbed into large corporations, nevertheless we should seek a framework in which successful entrepreneurs do not strive to become oligarchs.

There are a significant number of entrepreneurs, especially amongst my Millennial generation, who start businesses that offer ecologically beneficial products or services, or who seek to demonstrate that business can be done in a way that is ecologically sound, while also treating workers and consumers fairly and ethically. There is a growing movement of B Corporations (www.bcorporation.net) or ‘triple bottom line’ businesses: people, planet and profit. Green America (www.greenamerica.org) is a national organization working to nurture and promote ethical and sustainable businesses. The theory is no responsible business should pursue one of these bottom lines at the expense of the others, and each bottom line is of equal importance. B Corporation leaders see themselves as both entrepreneurs and ecologists. A band of triple bottom line entrepreneurs may be necessary in order to weaken the oligarchs by providing goods and services as alternatives to those made by large corporations.

Critics say the triple bottom line concept is a form of greenwashing, and these businesses are only doing small favors to people and the planet while primarily seeking profit.

32. Berry, *The Great Work*, 59.

Regardless of how some self-described triple-bottom-line businesses may be acting in practice now, I hold that the triple bottom line concept offers a valuable framework in which business managers should be made to consider all the consequences of their affairs. It should become unthinkable for any company not to be a triple bottom line business.

Thomas gives no indication that corporations will cease to exist at the dawn of the Ecozoic era. Given this, any concept that trains corporate leaders to think in terms of the contexts in which they operate or instills the idea that other considerations are as important as turning a profit is one that should be developed and broadened. Thus, corporations can become a more benign presence while still serving as an effective organizing principle for providing people's material needs. I submit that the B Corporation offers a model for the way a corporation that would exist in the Ecozoic era: primarily on a small, local scale as an integral component and servant of its human and biological community.

- Use natural processes as models for industrial methods. Thomas touts the idea of “living machines” as a seed for a viable form of industry, and says our technologies should defend us against nature's destructive forces without themselves being destructive.³³ Principles on which these can be modeled include the following:
 1. No being nurtures itself—thus every process's waste should become food or fuel for another.
 2. The well-being of the soil and the plants that grow there is paramount.
 3. Because the sun is the primary power source, solar energy technologies must be scaled up.
 4. Nature abhors uniformity. We have to refine our idea of “economies of scale” and the thinking that sees efficiency and cost savings in such practices as monocultures and mass production.
 5. The economy must function in accord with a new-found human intimacy with all other modes of being

33. *Ibid.*, 65.

and deep awe and reverence for the depths of the universe's mystery—not only its pleasant and joyous side, but also its violent and dynamic aspects.

6. Treat capitalism as a tool, not an ideology: In the Ecozoic era's organic economy, businesses would see the limitations imposed by nature as “strengthening discipline” rather than obstacles to be overcome.³⁴ Economic cycles of production, use and deposition would be in line with the ever-renewing cycles of nature, with every waste product becoming useful food or fuel for another organism or process. Thomas suggests all existing political and economic institutions will continue, but will function in ways that enhance one another, the community, ecosystems and the planet.³⁵

Capitalism is simply a tool, and tools can be used for beneficial ends as easily as they can be for malicious ones. The trouble is capitalism has come to be seen as an ideology in and of itself and, as such, has become destructive. What is missing is an overarching, cosmology-based set of norms and expectations that both governments and individual consumers enforce.

With such a context in place to guide use of the tool that is capitalism, capitalism can exist and serve a useful purpose. Entrepreneurs should be able to acquire wealth in the pursuit of providing assets (goods and services) in an ecologically beneficial way. The guiding laws and set of norms will prevent the creation and acquisition of wealth from being seen as the constitutive purpose of business—the fallacy at the root of the modern corporate structure.

Perhaps the national government would grow to a point where it reins in the mega-corporations, then shrink to serve limited functions of overseeing migration and commerce between states and regions. Such a proposed government may likewise provide for basic standards of exchange and a larger-scale transportation and infrastructure network, as the centers of power reorganize along biore-

34. Berry, *The Great Work*, 67.

35. *Ibid.*, 62.

gional lines. Nonprofits would seem to have a central role in the re-education effort: many universities and academies are themselves nonprofits. They are also effective means of organizing people for collective action through a legal body freed from the obligation to turn a profit for shareholders.

A New Framework for Education

It is difficult to overstate Thomas's emphasis on education. Currently, "our concern for the natural world is one of utility or as an object to satisfy intellectual curiosity or aesthetic feeling."³⁶ Because of this alienation, humanity "has lost its own meaning." "Education," he writes, "is the activation of the possibilities of the planet [necessarily through] human intelligence and the entire range of human activities."³⁷ Thus, the university is the only institution capable of helping humanity rediscover its meaning in a cosmological context.

Human education is part of Earth's self-education, because humans are "the psychic component of the earth in its most complete expression."³⁸ Educating people is how we pass on our cultural coding, which does for humans what genetic coding does for all other species. Education relies on the humanistic traditions, because "[science] has been unable to understand the significance of its own achievements. As a consequence, the cultural coding could not be established in an integral form; education remained dependent on its earlier structures for its humanistic meaning."³⁹ Or, as Thomas told me more succinctly, "science doesn't tell us how to use science."

Our species' coming to know the true story of the universe's unfolding since the Great Flaring Forth, through scientific inquiry, is "the greatest religious, moral and spiritual event that has taken place in these centuries,"⁴⁰ as it has helped the universe to get to know itself in an entirely new and much deeper way. It is this grand

36. Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*, 90.

37. *Ibid.*, 92.

38. *Ibid.*, 90.

39. *Ibid.*, 95.

40. *Ibid.*

story, of which all other stories are a part, that gives context and meaning to our lives. Thus, Thomas declares the Universe Story must become the basis for all curricula in all subjects in schools, colleges and universities: "Our greatest single need is to accept this story of the universe as we now know this as our sacred story."⁴¹ To this end, astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson's television program *Cosmos* is very much on the right track.⁴²

Cosmology as Reconciler of Science and Religion

Ecology, Thomas says, must become the foundation for all courses, programs and professions.⁴³ Ecological economics, for example, is the only true and viable form of economics. The human economy is a subset of the Earth economy and must be considered as such, rather than as a regime that humans impose on the Earth.

Universities, together with religious institutions that also embrace the Universe Story—thus integrating scientific understanding into theology—must lead the transformation to the Ecozoic era. Only the university retains a significant degree of independence from the influence of corporations and their mode of thinking, and the university is the institution housing the body of scientific knowledge. The university also gives scientists the space and means to pursue knowledge and understanding for its own sake instead of needing to justify its exploitative utility to a corporate funder—a requirement that, sadly, occurs too often in today's universities. This freedom that the university enjoys is necessary, and puts it in position to guide the human community out of the terminal Cenozoic era.

"What is needed...is the completion of the story of the physical dimensions of the universe by an account of the numinous and psychic dimensions of the universe."⁴⁴ Through this dialectic between

41. Berry, *The Great Work*, 83.

42. *Cosmos: A Spacetime Odyssey*, television program aired on the Fox network in the United States in 2014, produced by Livia Hanich, Steve Holtzman, Bill Pope, Brannon Braga, Neil deGrasse Tyson, Alan Silvestri, Carl Sagan, Ann Druyan, and Steven Soter.

43. Berry, *The Great Work*, 84.

44. Epigraph, Sean Esbjörn-Hargens, *Ecological Interiority: Thomas Berry's Integral Ecology Legacy*," in Ervin Laszlo and Allan Combs, eds., *Thomas*

science, religion, and humanities, spurred by the constantly growing and evolving body of knowledge and understanding each possesses, humanity may come to develop a new cosmology: an overarching sense of the nature of the universe that gives context to scientific, religious, and humanitarian enterprises. The lack of cosmology as the overarching context leaves all three trivialized.

Holistic Education

Thomas envisions schools and universities becoming places where the universe reflects on itself through the full creative expression of human intelligence. Art, music, literature, and poetry classes, he declares, should be at least as important, if not more so, as the “hard” sciences and social sciences.⁴⁵ Perhaps the artistic and the investigative, the creative and the analytical halves of the education sphere will come to better align with the structure of the human brain, in which they are integrated, and join together. In such a re-conceived educational model, artistic expression of concepts taught in a science class, for example, would not be unusual. In such a system, it would become difficult to judge students’ performance objectively and compare one student to others based on uniform metrics. School and class sizes would necessarily become smaller, and teachers would guide students individually to discover their place in the cosmological order and the Earth community. Schools would teach students about their bioregion, its history and functioning. They would guide them to know on multiple levels all beings with whom they share their home area. They would give students the tools needed to live and thrive in an ecologically integral way and guide them in acting on their inner spontaneities.

Education is more than formal schooling. It is perhaps the primary activity that makes us human. It is a pervasive life experience, something we do throughout our lives. Yet formal schooling is necessary to provide the integrating context for each person’s own learning journey. Students, Thomas suggests, should feel involved in a major historical and personal process.

Berry: Dreamer of the Earth (Rochester Vermont: Inner Traditions, 2011), 92.

45. Berry, *The Great Work*, 73; Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*, 94-95.

If the purpose of school were presented in this way from inception, as part of a great unfolding mythological journey—a story of adventure—perhaps fewer young people would rebel against teachers and school authorities, and truancy and dropout rates would cease to be problems. In too many schools, anything beyond what is necessary to allow the student to function as part of the industrial economy is treated as secondary, “elective” or “extracurricular.” Such schools, therefore, do not activate the student in the full wholeness of his or her being.

Formal schooling should guide students into replacing their entrancement with technology with enchantment by the rush of waves, the flights of birds, the power of thunderstorms, the beauty and endurance of trees, and the ways of wild animals. Then let them think about and imagine what life would be like if humans immersed themselves in and truly celebrated these processes. “The feel for life, the skills for creative interaction with the earth process,” Thomas indicates, “these have been suppressed over a series of generations.”⁴⁶ Such reawakening would provide the basis for a viable alternative to the demonic dream. This mystique, Thomas says, must be associated with three commitments: to the Earth as an irreversible process, to the Eozoic era as the only viable form of the millennial ideal, and to a sense of progress that includes the natural as well as the human world.⁴⁷

A New Vocabulary and the Four Archetypes

“We do not presently have a terminology suited to a serious consideration of the earth,”⁴⁸ Thomas laments. We must start by redefining existing words, such as “progress” and “profit,” words laden with hyper-natural meaning in the context of our collective entrancement with the demonic dream. Moving away from this, the intellectual basis for the present industrial society, we will be like addicts going through withdrawal. But somehow—it is difficult to fathom how this process will look as the creation of a language takes

46. Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*.

47. *Ibid.*, 16.

48. *Ibid.*

place over centuries—a new language must come about. The new language would be less explicitly human and more Earthly. It would contain more words for natural phenomena and their interactions, and a vocabulary broader than “beautiful,” “sublime,” “awesome,” “fearsome,” or “mysterious” to describe the way the universe, its elements, and their powers present themselves to us. English and other Western languages are useful for dissecting and describing specific parts of things, but not so good at naming and explaining wholeness and interrelatedness.

Thomas offers these four archetypes that would be brought forward in schools:

- The Great Mother: the maternal principle inherent in the universe
- The Tree of Life: a symbol of the interconnectedness of earthly life and its common ancestry
- The Hero’s Journey: a way of seeing one’s life journey as a microcosm of the Universe Story
- Death/Rebirth: the reality that new life comes from death in life’s constant transformation⁴⁹

He suggests the following as core courses to be taught in universities:

- The universe’s unfolding prior to human emergence, presented so that the student gets a sense of what it took to make that student’s life possible
- The great classical cultures’ contributions to human development
- The development of science and technology, leading to an awareness of how this all came to be and an understanding of the power that now rests in human hands
- An Ecozoic era course, which would serve to reestablish the human in its context, heal the damage done, foster a re-newing economic order, and, finally, to identify values to

49. *Ibid.*, 192.

inspire the renewed civilizational energy needed to forge the Ecozoic era. Within this course, Earth economics would emphasize the concept of externalities, or of “the tragedy of the commons.” These concepts get at the idea that environmentally detrimental actions tend to come back to bite those who take part in them, and the real costs they impose are borne by others not party to the transaction. But the course would go beyond that, to first teaching how the Earth economy reuses and conserves matter and energy, then exploring ways that human technologies can fit into or mimic these processes.⁵⁰

- Learning From the Fourfold Wisdom.⁵¹

As reflected in the Chinese character that stands for both ‘crisis’ and ‘opportunity,’ catastrophic moments are also creative moments. This is one of many profound insights Thomas has discerned as his mind melded deep study of so many aspects of earth and human history. As we face the most catastrophic time in Earth’s history, Thomas calls upon people to heed the wisdoms of four strains of thought, teachings that have been either forgotten or perverted as we Westerners have disconnected ourselves from our roots: indigenous peoples, women, classical traditions, and science.

We need to blend all four of these wisdoms as we start to tell the new story that will give us the context to cope with the enveloping consequences of industrial civilization’s excesses and build a resilient human framework that is integrated with the dynamics and ever-renewing processes of nature.

Thomas saw patterns that nobody else saw before, and they led him to some amazing conclusions, but also some deeply troubling ones. The general lack of specific instructions in Thomas’s writings is perhaps partially intentional: he opened a door and began to lay put forth a path towards a civilizational trajectory that leads away from destruction and towards celebration and fulfillment. But he left it to succeeding generations to lay different paths that diverge from the main path, the way a tree’s branches diverge from its trunk. For we

50 Berry, *Dream of the Earth*, 99-105.

51. Thomas Berry, “The Fourfold Wisdom,” in *The Great Work*, 176-95.

all must branch out and flower in our own way, but we are all rooted to the same trunk from which we, and ultimately every other being, originated. While Thomas began to depict what the next branch might look like, more importantly, he helped us to see the trunk and appreciate the whole of the still-growing tree.

To conclude, *The Dream of the Earth* offers a hopeful note for the reconciliation of our technology and industry with the demands and limits of the planet: “The purpose of all our science, technology, industry, manufacturing, commerce, and finance is celebration, planetary celebration.... The final norm of judgment concerning the success or failure of our technologies is the extent to which they enable us to participate more fully in this grand festival.”⁵²

52. Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*, 69.

Naming a New Geological Era: The Ecozoic Era, Its Meaning and Historical Antecedents

Allysyn Kiplinger

Editor's Note: Allysyn Kiplinger made a presentation at the Colloquium on the above-titled topic. She based her presentation on an article with the above name that was published in *The Ecozoic* 3 (2013): 7-28.

Please contact the Center for Ecozoic Societies for a copy of this paper.

What Cry Can Bring A Healing?^{*} Christian Resurrection in the Work of Thomas Berry

Abigail Lofté

Introduction

When Thomas Berry writes about what he thinks will happen in the future after we die, he often simply states that he believes we will continue to be part of the universe, embedded in the cosmos. This is a rather vague answer to such a fundamental human question. Although a Christian, he rarely mentions resurrection, and instead appeals to remaining related within the great web of life. Many argue, with some support from Berry, that religion, Christianity in particular, is an “old” and outdated way of thinking with limited relevance to life today, which is operating out of a new science-based cosmology. I believe, however, that religion, and for the purposes of this paper, Christianity, has something to say that uniquely contributes to addressing questions of what happens after we die precisely because we Christians believe in a resurrection after death, like that of Jesus, where we will be transformed and reach final fulfillment with all beings.

In this paper, I seek to explore the little that Thomas Berry writes on Christian resurrection specifically, and how it applies to a future

* The question is raised in Thomas Berry, “Morningside Cathedral,” line 11 (International Community for Ecopsychology, 1983), accessed July 14, 2014, <http://www.ecopsychology.org/journal/gatherings3/berry.html>:

But now, darkness deeper than even God
Can reach with a quick healing power
What sound,
What song,
What cry appropriate
What cry can bring a healing?

resurrection and fulfillment for Earth that acknowledges our broken and disordered reality, while looking into the future in expectation of glorified transformation. In doing so, I intend to demonstrate how traditional Christian resurrection can be applied to the material world for the sake of seeking justice, valuing the physical world, and reconciling the anthropocentrism that dictates our world, in anticipation of an eschatological new heaven and new Earth.

Thomas Berry on the Resurrection

All Berry writes about the new cosmology as it relates to Christian resurrection, using the word “resurrection” specifically, can be found in one paragraph in his book, *Befriending the Earth*, where he speaks to “The Question of Evil.”¹

My paraphrase of what Berry writes there is that we human beings have the capacity to respond creatively when confronted with any form of suffering. In Christianity this creative response is captured in the idea of the resurrection, the ultimate word of life over death. Resurrection—that transformed, complete, and final fulfillment of reality—offers us a way to view the world. The human capacity for destruction, however, is also at play, cutting short the natural life processes of various species for selfish gain. It is no longer acceptable to believe we can destroy the planet and that everything, our existence, will still be okay in the end because God will gloriously transform all in the fullness of the resurrection. We must care for our planet now and work for life for all beings, because this has both temporal and eternal consequences. Berry asserts that any destruction we impose in this life on Earth will be imposed forever, even in the resurrection. In this way, what we are changing in the makeup of creatures and ecosystems now not only has negative effects here for our lives on Earth, but for our lives, our Earth, for all time.²

Berry makes this claim that we must care for Earth now and

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1. Thomas Berry and Thomas Clarke, *Befriending the Earth: A Theology of Reconciliation*, eds. Stephen Dunn and Anne Lonergan (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1991), 82.
 2. *Ibid.*

that we must not wait for a future where everything works itself out in the end by appealing to divine immanence, theosis, agency, and moments of transformation present in creation. He first appeals to divine immanence, the belief that God is intimately present in all of creation from the very beginning of time. As Creator of all, God knows us well and is nearer to us than we are to ourselves. This divine presence is expressed by creatures in every mode of existence, though differentiated, thus reflecting the multiplicity and goodness of God. If God were not present in creation, nothing could exist because it is the divine spark of life, the divine being in me, that makes me who and what I am. This mystery in the depths of my being helps me to know what I am here for, and, when I can recognize this sacred mystery in other creatures, I become a witness to the divine presence of God, the Creator who can be known throughout Earth.³ Therefore, when we destroy something of creation, we extinguish an expression of the immanence of God in the world.

Related to divine immanence, Berry makes use of theosis, or divinization, which acknowledges that God's presence in the world makes the world holy, as God is the power that infuses all things with life. Destroying any expression of the immanence of God in the world through our destructive habits means we also destroy the sacramentality or holiness the world gains by being loved by God and by God being at work in the world. God, the originating power, brings forth and draws out the universe by freely sending cosmic and creative energy as a gift, which results in the existence of creation. Because God is one and not many, this initial energy is also one, and all creatures share in this one energy. Berry writes, "If in the future, stars would blaze and lizards would blink in their light, these actions would be powered by the same numinous energy that flared forth at the dawn of time."⁴ Viewing the universe in this way, it appears that nothing is separate from other creatures or from that original energy. This coming-in-to-being power of the universe becomes the foundation, the web of relationships that enables life to exist at all, and

3. *Ibid.*, 19.

4. Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, *The Universe Story: From the Primordial Flaring Forth to the Ecozoic Era—A Celebration of the Unfolding of the Cosmos* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1992), 17.

continues to be present in the actualization of every single moment of grace, of transformation in the universe story.

Operating out of this graced existence, originating with the creative energy of God infused in an intimate way throughout the universe, Berry understands all created beings as having their own personal agency. In the matrix of relationships, Berry understands each creature as having the capacity to act for itself, and the universe as having the capacity to act on its own as well. The universe is not stagnant; rather it is a dynamic collaboration of various bodies acting together for the sake of realizing their own creative energies, separately and together.⁵ Thus the activities of the universe in their multiplicity and singularity become an expression also of the one initial primordial universe activity, resulting in a diversity of life forms acting upon each other. When seen this way, the universe cannot be simply a "thing," but rather an animate being expressing many modes of life that all work together for the symbiotic whole. This agency of the universe is being disregarded, however, for the sake of perpetuating the belief that human agency is the pinnacle of all knowing and becoming in Earth's life. Conflating our superior intelligence among all species with that of the Supreme Being, we humans exert our power, our creativity, and our technology over the rest of creation for the sake of trying to control Earth. We attempt to perpetuate our species at the expense of all others while satisfying the insatiable appetite of our greed. We know, however, that we cannot actually exist this way, because we need each other for the sake of ensuring our survival, both now and into the future.

Berry advocates for care of Earth now out of a vision of relationship where we recognize the processes of transformation at work in the world. Billions of years ago Earth itself was born out of the vast universe processes of life and death, generating living beings to inhabit the land and sea, and setting the stage for the evolutionary processes required for human beings to emerge. Earth's history is ripe with mystery, with brilliance, and with wonder as life forms have grown to greater complexity and diversity, making the world more beautiful.

Drawing upon the work of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Berry

5. *Ibid.*, 71-75.

understands the universe as constantly undergoing a series of transformations, driving creation forward to greater complexity and consciousness and ultimately being drawn forth toward total fulfillment in the Christic image of the Omega Point.⁶ All creation is centered upon this one point, and all things move together toward the Omega Point, so that they converge with each other in vast and deep layers that also look ahead to their ultimate point, the Omega, which will bind and encompass all beings in union.⁷

When viewed as a process of increasing complexity toward fulfillment, the presence of human beings on Earth too becomes simply one moment of transformation in a whole series of transformations leading up to that point of convergence and richness. Teilhard writes,

In the same beam of light the instinctive gropings of the first cell link up with the learned gropings of our laboratories.... The passing wave that we can feel was not formed in ourselves. It comes to us from far away; it set out at the same time as the light from the first stars. It reaches us after creating everything on the way.... Man alone constitutes the last-born, the freshest, the most complicated, the most subtle of all the successive layers of life.⁸

As the freshest and most complicated layer of life, humans are deeply embedded within the ongoing development of the universe, from the self-organization of the very first cells to human self-reflective consciousness. In this way, humans find within ourselves the very macrocosm from which we come into existence, and this human microcosmic reflection carries within it the potential for interior transformation, the capacity for creativity, and the ability to respond to change and challenge. In this way the human story is the

6. While Berry does not write of the Omega Point, he embraces de Chardin as having written the “basic work of the twentieth century theology” and “possibly, the most powerful restatement of Christianity since the time of St. Paul.” *Ibid.*, 23. Berry outlines de Chardin’s contributions at *ibid.*, 23-25. For de Chardin’s vision, see Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, trans. Bernard Wall (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), 254-272.

7. *Ibid.*, 259.

8. *Ibid.*, 224

universe story, part of the symbiotic whole that constantly reaches out and works in tandem with the rest of creation for the sake of creating and sustaining life.

The Christian story also participates in the universe story, with the belief that God is uniquely and intimately present in created reality through the act of creating and imbuing all beings with life, thereby allowing them to participate in divine life. God is both the centre from which emerges the foundation of life and the force toward which all beings are moving. In the life that comes from our very cells and the elemental universe that sustains all existence, we encounter not simply God's goodness but the actual, living presence of God who anchors us to each other in harmonious union.⁹

God's incarnation in the person of Jesus, then, is simply another moment of transformation, though an important moment in the history of Earth, where God reveals Godself, present to Earth in a different way than previously experienced.

The prodigious expanses of time which preceded the first Christmas were not empty of Christ: they were imbued with the influx of his power.... All these preparatory processes were cosmically and biologically necessary that Christ might set foot upon our human stage. And all this labour was set in motion by the active, creative awakening of his soul inasmuch as that human soul had been chosen to breathe life into the universe. When Christ first appeared before men [sic] in the arms of Mary he had already stirred up the world.¹⁰

Jesus, like the rest of humanity, contains within himself the microcosm of the expansive and complex universe; yet because of his hypostasis unites what is seemingly disparate: temporality and eternity. By incorporating all beings into himself—the personal, the universal, every element, every creature—he makes a place for us in his very being and is the cosmic image of the magnetic centre toward which the entire universe is oriented.

9. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Hymn of the Universe*, trans. Simon Bartholomew (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 84-85.

10 Ibid., 76-77.

Resurrection in the Paschal Mystery

Drawing on Berry we must take into consideration divine immanence, the divinization of creation, the agency of creatures, and the series of transformations that contribute to the universe and the flourishing of life as we discuss Christian resurrection in relationship to cosmogenesis. Moving away from the notion that the universe is a once-and-for-all-time created space allows the universe to be a dynamic agent, a subject active in its own becoming whose own natural processes are part of the ongoing transformation of Earth. Humans cut short these processes in the name of advancement and achievement and the perpetual quest for “more.” What was left to our care and responsibility, Earth, is now at our mercy for its very existence and for the sake of ensuring its survival. This has serious ongoing consequences, as Berry points out, ranging from the temporal damage we inflict to what Berry suggests will also be eternal damage. Everything is not going to be okay.¹¹

What does Berry mean, while discussing resurrection, when he says the destruction imposed on Earth now will be imposed forever, thereby having eternal significance? For this, I appeal to Berry’s background in Christianity and look to the paradigmatic figure, Jesus of Nazareth, as a way to understand how the resurrection can include temporal damage that remains eternal. An understanding of incarnation that I share with Berry is that of Jesus as God working within creation for the sake of helping to transform the world through relationships. Where I find Berry lacking, however, is in his treatment of the incarnation of Jesus as it relates to the entirety of the Paschal Mystery. Discussing the nativity of Jesus as God intimately present with creation in a physical way and Jesus’ passion as indicating the sacrificial dimension of suffering, Berry seems to overlook that the resurrection of Jesus explicitly has any real consequences for the life of the planet today. The alternative I wish to put forth, therefore, is to expand the notion of incarnation in the Christian story and its relevance to the universe story for the sake of including the entire Paschal Mystery: the life, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus. This entire reality is what Jesus assumes in his nativity and, as the

11. *Befriending the Earth*, 82.

first-fruit of creation, is the model we look to and look forward to in the fullness of time.¹²

Berry advocates for divine immanence and the sacramentality of Earth, ways that God is present and active in the world from the beginning of time up to today and into the future. He also argues for a series of transformations occurring throughout the universe resulting in greater complexity and consciousness. For Christians, this transformation is understood in a new way in the unique and important event of the nativity of Jesus Christ, the manifestation of God in the world in a new mode of being, as a human who is born into time and space. While this doctrine of incarnation has been argued throughout Christianity's history, Berry himself does not consider Jesus to be the pinnacle, the crowning jewel of all creation, or as Rahner might say, the human come to self-transcendence, but rather as one event of transformation in the context of the universe's multi-billion-year-long history.¹³ Instead of being the apex of creation, where evolutionary processes no longer have any importance and are no longer needed because creation has finally been fulfilled in the birth of a saviour, Jesus Christ, Berry might argue that Jesus, while being an important figure in history and an important occasion of divine immanence, is not the fulfillment or completion of this transformation in and of itself. We are still very much on the way toward this reality.

I agree with Berry that Jesus fits very securely into the context of cosmogenesis and is an important moment of transformation for the world where he lives a life of sacrifice for the good of others and helps them to encounter through the experiences of their own lives the immanent God in their midst. Jesus himself undergoes his own series of transformations throughout his human life, but I argue these transformations culminate not simply in his birth as a divine being enfleshed in the cosmos but in his resurrection from the

12. 1 Cor. 15.23 (NRSV).

13. See Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon, 451, for developments of Christological doctrine. See also Karl Rahner, "Christology within an Evolutionary View of the World," in *Theological Investigations*, trans. K. Kruger, vol. 5.VI.1 (New York: Crossroad, 1983) for discussion on Jesus as the self-transcendence of the cosmos.

dead, the greatest and most meaningful transformation of all. Jesus endures severe pain and suffering in his passion for the sake of his commitment to the divine mission and, when he has been raised to new life, he emerges victoriously in triumph over death.

This does not mean, however, that Jesus' tortured body is somehow made pristine, covering over any indication of the brutality of his death. Rather, Jesus appears with the marks of his passion and death still on his body, though he is transfigured to the point where, in the gospel stories, he gleams like white, has an ethereal quality about him, and is wholly unrecognizable even to those closest to him.¹⁴ Jesus is raised wounded yet glorified, and I think that this, being wounded yet glorified, might be how we can understand Berry's belief that temporal ecological damage lasts eternally in the resurrection. What we do now and how we choose to treat Earth carries with it lasting effects, but this does not have to mean that Earth will be utterly destroyed in the fullness of the Reign of God with no hope of final transformation. Rather, we can continue to hope for a renewed existence, a new heaven and a new earth that, like Jesus, is transformed but still bears the marks of suffering inflicted upon it.

Augustine, in *The City of God*, offers a way to think through resurrected bodies retaining their wounds. Entertaining the idea of what happens to a body in the resurrection that has any kind of blemish marring human beauty in this life so that the natural substance remains and is yet altered to a beautiful quality, Augustine appeals to the example of the martyrs.¹⁵ Suffering at the hands of others in the name of Christ, Augustine asserts that somehow God will supply whatever is necessary for the sake of maintaining bodily integrity while avoiding any diminution. The martyrs will retain the marks of their wounds in their immortal bodies, without any privation, and these will not be deformities but marks of honor that make the martyrs more beautiful. While this may seem like another justification for the defeatist attitude Berry seeks to combat, that being "what is done is done and it doesn't really matter because God will fix it in the end," I think that the inclusion of wounds in resur-

14. Matt. 28:3, Jn. 20:17, Lk. 24:13-33, Jn. 20:11-18.

15. Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dodds, XXII.19 (New York: Modern Library, 1950).

rected bodies says something about the place of suffering within the resurrection.

In Christian understanding suffering necessarily accompanies resurrection—it did for Jesus and so it will for all of us. As Jesus suffers on the cross, God remains near in silent presence accompanying Jesus from one life to the next; and in the midst of utter travail, Jesus holds God's hand throughout the process of his death and the darkness of the tomb.¹⁶ As he is raised triumphantly from the tomb, Jesus returns to his friends, speaks peace to those in his midst, and invites his doubting disciple Thomas to touch his wounds.¹⁷

These marks of suffering that remain in Jesus' body when he appears risen from the tomb indicate resurrection is a complete transformation, not simply a covering over of transgressions, an ignoring or forgetting of past wrongs, or a magical kind of making-better. Rather it is a visible, public statement conveying that God is not only able, but desires, to work within the past hurts of our reality and transform them into something good and true and beautiful.

Augustine makes clear that when the martyrs are resurrected, they exist in their glorified bodies without deformation and yet are still wounded. This scarred wound, Augustine says, is a testament to the glory and the virtue of the martyrs.¹⁸ While, like the resurrection itself, we cannot say just how this reconstitution of matter happens, we can be confident God will do it. Instead of receiving a new and different body that is glorified, in the resurrection the martyrs retain their same earthly body that God makes glorified. The resurrection is not an event that happens outside of God's one act of creating or a moment of intermittent action by a wholly transcendent deity; rather, it is a continuation of the martyrs' lives that move from earthly to eternal. It is this transformation among many throughout their lives on Earth that brings the martyrs to fulfillment, and in the resurrection, adorns them with beauty and luminosity.

This must be how Earth can be resurrected in any fullness if we believe that temporal damage is in fact eternal damage. Earth has to

16. Edward Schillebeeckx, Christ, *The Experience of Jesus as Lord*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 467.

17. Mt. 28:9, 10, 16-20, Mk. 16:9-20, Lk. 24:13-51, Jn. 20:11-30.

18. Augustine, *City of God*, XXII.19.

retain the wounds we have imposed through our indiscriminate use of resources, while still being glorified by participating in divine life; and while possessing those wounds, there is still nothing lacking or deformed. This transformation to resurrected life is just one in the series of transformations in which Earth participates as it remains all one reality. There is no brand new Earth that is going to instantly appear in the fullness of the resurrection. It is *this* Earth, *this* cosmos we live in right now, that will be made new through the resurrection, precisely because of God's immanent presence in the world. Through this presence God cares for this world and this life and continuously makes these realities holy and new.

Implications

By retaining the wounds inflicted by humans, Earth's eternal scars are made testament to the planet's honor and beauty, as expression of God in the world, as bedrock of our existence, and as locus of the matrices of life. If we do not expand incarnation to include considerations of the resurrection as a final, glorified, and complete transformation of all life as exemplified by Jesus of Nazareth in his Paschal Mystery, then we are left with God in the world but no hope of any future, of final fulfillment. If we do not look to Christ as a model for Christian resurrection—of fulfillment and glorification in his suffering, then when Berry says that any temporal damage we inflict on Earth will remain eternally, what that must necessarily mean is that there can never be any justice for the planet, that the material world really has no value, and that the anthropocentrism that Berry rails against will remain forever as it relates to life on the planet.

If there is no final transformation in the resurrection like Jesus's, then all of the distorted relationships humans have with Earth will never be repaired. We humans have irreparably damaged Earth and even if we work diligently now to right our past wrongs, we continue to be finite beings on Earth for a limited amount of time. There is no way that in our limited capacity we will ever be able to restore what we have caused Earth to lose. What is required is justice, a sense of equality in mutual relationships that seeks to rectify rela-

tionships on a cosmic scale.¹⁹ Nothing, no creature, will ever reach fulfillment by living out natural life processes here on Earth while humans continue to inflict damage by destroying habitats and polluting ecosystems. What remains is simply the same pattern of disordered relationship that Earth has always participated in when it comes to the degradation of it by humans. We need the resurrection as an opportunity for justice, for a righting of relationship on a universal scale that will never be fully realized here in this life.

If there is no resurrection that includes any kind of glorified transformation for Earth, the material world will be seen as inferior and even unnecessary. Through the resurrection we know the physical world is the locus of divine immanence and where God is at work in the world, constantly deifying created matter. In this way, the material world mediates who God is to us and is the primary mode of divine revelation. Aquinas says that even in the presence of the Beatific Vision, our souls are not truly happy until they are reunited with the physical body.²⁰ Our bodies are the way we present ourselves to the world and convey the message to others of who we are. The material world also presents itself as being a representation of what matters to God, that is, a multiplicity of expressions of life reflecting the multi-faceted goodness of God.²¹ Even in death, Augustine remarks, the physical mediates.²² If there is no final trans-

19. For a discussion on justice in various ethical contexts, see: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. John Warrington, V (London: Dent, 1963).

20. Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, trans. English Dominican Fathers, 4.LXXIX.11 (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1923).

21. Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, I.47.1 (New York: Benziger Bros, 1947-1948).

22. Augustine, *City of God*, XI.24, XII.4-5. Augustine maintains that in the destructive fire, corruptible elements and bodies perish but somehow are transformed by God in the resurrection by having qualities added that make the body more harmonious and contribute to the renewal of the new heaven and new earth into something better than it was before. It seems that if the primary function of the created world is to give glory to God by conveying Beauty, there would be no need for it in the resurrection if we are in the presence of the Beatific Vision itself. However, Augustine maintains that it is precisely because of creation's function of mediating divinity through beauty that creation is necessary in the resurrection so that it may continue to reflect the radiance of God, causing those who experience this to delight in it.

formation for the material world, the physical ceases to exist, and the divine attributes matter conveys are lost. We need the resurrection to preserve the physical so that it can eternally continue to reveal God in many modes of being.

Finally, if there is no total and complete transformation in the resurrection for Earth as humans continue to devastate life on the planet, causing temporal and eternal damage, the anthropocentric worldview that keeps humans at the centre of the universe is perpetuated. This worldview where the human is self-referent and Earth is derivative and where our human desires are more important than the life of the planet as a whole, is the cause of our current ecological crisis. Yet, humans cannot exist without the planet that gives us life. As Berry states, “We cannot save ourselves without saving the world in which we live.... We will live or die as this world lives or dies.”²³ The changes humans make in Earth are irreversible. One species should not be the determining factor for whether or not other forms of created life continue in existence. In the anthropocentric view this world matters only as matter that is passing away and is to be used to benefit humans. For God all beings matter eternally and even in their suffering and in some cases extinction will be glorified. It is up to God, not us, to determine what is important and prioritized in creation and, since God is a god of love, we believe that God wills life in abundance for all, and not just some. In the Christian understanding Jesus died a sacrificial death that others may live. We believe his sacrifice and love were made possible by his vision and expectation of resurrected life. We like him realize this world is not for us alone. We live in the promise in the fullness of being and of all beings, and in the promise of the resurrection give ourselves to them.

Conclusion

It seems that resurrection, then, as described in the Christian tradition of a wounded yet glorified reality, can be a helpful way to

23. Thomas Berry, “Christianity’s Role in the Earth Project,” in *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-Being of Earth and Humans*, ed. Dieter T. Hessel and Rosemary Radford Ruether (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 131.

consider the transformation we seek for Earth when we consider the degradation being imposed by humans. As Thomas Berry asserts, we must care now for Earth and not wait for a future where God will magically make things better, but we can look to the future for a resurrection that acknowledges the suffering of Earth while transforming it into something glorified. In this way, the immanence of God in creation making it holy, the agency of all beings acting upon each other in a symbiosis, and the series of transformations working in the cosmos to bring it to greater complexity and consciousness find an ultimate fulfillment, not only in our inadequate attempts to fix the world we have broken, but in the mercy of God who is present in silent nearness accompanying Earth through suffering and into new life. In this vision, the temporal damage we inflict does remain eternal, but it does not have to remain deformed or lacking anything. Instead we can achieve justice for Earth, valuing the material world as a source of divine revelation, and moving away, finally, from the anthropocentrism at work in the world today as we look forward to our future at home on Earth both now and eternally.

Rudolf Steiner and Thomas Berry: Anthroposophy and the Ecozoic

Eve Olive

Some people are nonplussed by the word “Anthroposophy.” Others are startled by the word “Ecozoic.” And of course, there are many who have heard of neither.

Are these just two curious words, which have nothing to do with one-another, or are they somehow related?

“Anthroposophy” as a movement came into the world through the work of Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925). The word comes from two Greek words, and it can be translated, variously, as “the wisdom of the human being,” or “consciousness of one’s humanity”...or, as stated more fully by Steiner in 1924, “Anthroposophy is a path of knowledge which arises as a need of the heart and leads from the human mind and spirit to the Mind and Spirit of the Cosmos.”

“Ecozoic” is a term coined by Thomas Berry (1914-2009). Berry’s observations of the world, as it is now, and the vast sweep of evolutionary history, led him to point to the fact that we have entered a different age which needs its own name.

The most recent period, the Cenozoic, which started 65 million years ago, saw the gradual emergence of the natural world we know now, with its beautiful flowers, its majestic forests, its clear flowing streams and sparkling oceans, its great variety of animal life, and finally the human being.

Ah! The human being...

This Being of free will.

This Being with a kind of consciousness that the animals do not possess.

Here we are, each with our individual egos, free to do as we please...

And what have we done? We have brought the Earth, which sustains us, to a tipping point. We have created mass extinctions of

animal and plant life. We are busy destroying the lungs of the Earth as, hour-by-hour, great swaths of forest fall.

We have upset the balance of carbon dioxide to a dangerous degree with our extractive economy.

We are destroying our home.

Thomas Berry has said that we will not save or protect that which we do not regard as sacred.

How do we come to a sense of the sacred?

Is it something we are born with?

Can it be developed?

Steiner and Berry and the Sacred

There are many ecologically-inspired organizations out there doing wonderful work, and maybe it is because they all have a sense of the sacred—though they may not name it.

It is this sense of the sacred, this experience of the numinous, this feeling for, this awareness of, something more than the surface appearance of things that interests me in the Ecozoic movement and that encourages me to see a connection between the work of Thomas Berry and Rudolf Steiner—between the Ecozoic and Anthroposophy.

Some of you may know that Steiner's view of the human being as a spiritual being clothed in a physical body was developed philosophically in profound ways in his many books and lectures. In the last third of his life, after the first World War, this wisdom entered into life in very practical ways, inspiring many different professions—agriculture, medicine, political/social life, the arts, architecture, sculpture, painting, music, drama, poetry, eurythmy (a new art of movement), and of course education, with the founding of the first Waldorf School in Stuttgart, Germany in 1919.

I would like to read you the verse which Steiner wrote for the students of the Waldorf School, and which they, from fifth grade on

through high school, recite each morning:

I gaze into the world
In which the sun is shining,
In which the stars are sparkling,
In which the stones repose,
Where living plants are growing,
Where sentient beasts are living,
Where human souls on Earth
Give dwelling to the Spirit.

I gaze into my soul
That lives within my being.
The World Creator weaves
In sun light and in soul light,
In world space there without,
In soul depths here within.

To thee, Creator Spirit,
I will now turn my heart
To ask that strength and blessing
For learning and for work
May grow within my inmost being.

One can see that this verse encourages a sense of the sacred, both when looking out into the world, and when looking within—without any sense of dogma or coercion.

Now, when we look out into the cosmos with our great telescopes and space probes, we see that creation continues. The universe is not fixed, not finished.

When we look within, we know that we are not fixed, not finished. We have the option, with our free will, to continue the work of creation on ourselves—to perfect and refine our attitudes and ideals, to become more centered, more aligned with the highest we can imagine.

One wonders if these two great men, Steiner and Berry, had met in this life, if they would have found a connection with each other,

or whether it is up to us to make that connection now.

Steiner was born first, and had a relatively short life—64 years. Berry, born 53 years later, was a boy of 11 when Steiner died.

If Steiner had lived into his 95th year, like Berry, Berry would have been 42 when Steiner died. There is the chance they would have known of each other's work. However, that is not to say they would have admired each other's work, or found a collegueship with each other.

Those of you who know anything about Steiner know how much his work followed on from that of Goethe (1749-1832), both in a scientific and in a literary way; and yet Steiner said that if he and Goethe had met in life, they would not have been congenial!

Sometimes it is significant that two beings, whose life work is related, need to be born apart in time, and the connections discovered later and developed further. In this case, with Steiner and Berry, I am suggesting that this is *our* work, if we choose to take it up, to find the connections.

Right now, these two great beings are in the spiritual world, with a perspective they could not have had on Earth. Both were deeply concerned for the Earth and humanity. Now they are able to contemplate possibilities they might not have connected with when they were here on Earth.

For me, these two life works, these two biographies, are like two pieces of a puzzle that fit together, that inform and enrich each other. One can say that the one brought the answers before the problems and the questions, articulated by the other, were even apparent.

Steiner foresaw a time when the Earth would be devastated, when human life on the planet would be sparse and very difficult. This picture haunts us now in relation to the legacy we are leaving our children, our grandchildren, and our great-grandchildren. Thomas Berry has spelled it out for us with great clarity and urgency. Individually and within all our institutions, we need to wake up. I doubt that Steiner, speaking in the early years of the 20th Century, thought that this vision of the Earth might become a reality as soon as it now appears possible it will become.

Steiner recognized we are citizens of two worlds. This world, in which we appear in physical bodies—and the spiritual world, in

which we exist as souls, and from which all the splendor of the universe has emanated, and is still emanating, in a great ongoing work of creation.

As souls, we exist before our birth, and at death, we return to our spiritual home. We have been here on Earth before, and we will return again. We were the ancient Greeks and Romans, the monks, the nuns, the knights and peasants of the Middle Ages. The Earth is our schoolroom. The physical evolution, which gave us our upright bodies and eyes that could gaze at the stars, is complete. Now our task is the evolution of consciousness, and coming to an awareness of the divine spark within us. That is something we can ignore, or consciously choose to do.

When we contemplate the possibility of a devastated planet, it is we who will inherit it.

The idea of reincarnation, of repeated Earth lives, may be problematical for some, and the subject is probably not often discussed in academic settings. I have come to realize that not everyone has the same idea of what reincarnation means. We are certainly not talking here of transmigration of human souls into animal bodies. Nor is this some kind of system of easy second chances.

The picture presented by an Indian gentleman I met recently—“Ah, yes, as Hindus, we believe that four days after death, the soul enters another body”—this picture does not ring true for me.

If there is such a thing as reincarnation and karma, it must be logical. It must help to explain, for instance, the inequities of life. Looking at the different destinies of people, it can be hard to believe in a God of love. Some of us are well clothed, well fed, well educated, while others are starving, illiterate, or mentally or physically handicapped.

One life? The possibility of multiple lives can help make sense of this conundrum. And here I should like to dispel the notion that misfortune in this life is a punishment. It may be a consequence. It may be a conscious sacrifice. There are an infinite number of possibilities.

With our consciousness after death, we look back upon the life just lived. We experience all our interactions with others from the viewpoint of the other person, and so we understand the full import

of our actions, our thoughts, and our words. We judge ourselves.

It is this understanding, this *self*-judgment, which leads us to desire to do better in the future life. With great artistry, high spiritual beings help to work on our karma, creating possibilities for the next life on Earth, for our continuing biography. But that next life may be several hundred years away; will there be an Earth for us to return to? Will there be healthy bodies for us to inhabit?

If reincarnation and karma are realities, they are part of the story—The Great Story—and we need to include them. We ignore them at our peril.

Steiner considered it an important part of his mission in this life to bring to humanity a clear, modern understanding of the reality of reincarnation and karma. It is something we need to consider.

Just as we see a need to integrate a religious or spiritual world view with the scientific world view, as Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme encourage us to do in *The Universe Story*, and as Michael Dowd encourages us to do in *Thank God for Evolution*, so there is yet another step for us to take.

Behind all *natural* science stands what we may term *spiritual* science. Is this what Thomas Berry sensed in his observation that everything we see has a psycho-spiritual aspect? It is this realm of spiritual science to which Rudolf Steiner devoted his life. His meditative observations and spiritual research are recorded in over 20 books and 6,000 lectures. This treasure is there for us, if we wish to dip into it.

Steiner and Berry and the Arts

Another thing I find interesting and encouraging about the Eozoic movement is the interest in culture, in the arts.

Yes, yes, yes!

If we are going to transform society, the arts must be there—all of them. This is another area where there is a great resonance with the work of Rudolf Steiner. Steiner was in one way or another involved with all the arts—from designing the Goetheanum buildings, both I and II, to writing four great mystery dramas which, by the way,

will be performed this summer (2015) in Spring Valley, New York, in a great nine-day festival. This is the first time all four of them will be performed in English on this continent. Each play takes a day to perform!

And of course there is eurhythm—*the art of movement*, which came into being through Rudolf Steiner, together with the art of creative speech.

I visualize performances of eurhythm celebrating the beauty of our world in the words of some of our first “environmentalists,” the romantic poets—Wordsworth, Shelley and others, like Gerard Manley Hopkins and Yates.

I hear a yet-to-be-written oratorio, celebrating the creation of our world in a different seven-fold-ness, based on Steiner’s spiritual vision and research.

Is there a new Mystery Drama for our time, waiting, yet to be written and performed? Will the greatest art form of all—that of the Social Order—be accomplished in our time, or at least start to be consciously worked upon? And will the great gifts of biodynamics be used to heal the Earth before it is too late?

Many questions, many challenges—but maybe, as in the finale to Christopher Fry’s play, *A Sleep of Prisoners*, we too can say:

Thank God our time is now when wrong
Comes up to face us everywhere,
Never to leave us till we take
The longest stride of soul Man ever took.
Affairs are now soul size.
The enterprise
Is exploration into God.
Where are you making for? It takes
So many thousand years to wake,
But will you wake for pity’s sake!

Personal Reflections on My Journey of Teaching Thomas Berry

James Peacock

Overview

How do you teach Thomas Berry's work? In this article I reflect on my own journey and explore what has and has not drawn undergraduate students to Berry's vision.

I first taught a class called "Consciousness and Symbol" at Princeton University in 1966. Since 1967 I have taught it at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, as Anthropology 435. Each year approximately 60 students, mostly undergraduates, from a variety of majors, take the course. It took over 30 years of teaching this class before I discovered Thomas Berry's work and included an ecological viewpoint. Shortly after its publication in 1999, I added *The Great Work*¹ to the syllabus. I am frankly amazed and appalled that it took me so long to include an ecozoic and ecological perspective. I believe the lag mirrors the lag in society of understanding the ecological perspective. It is an on-going struggle—how to introduce people to and engage them with environmental ideas.

Background History—A reflection on my journey before Thomas Berry: 1944 to 2000

My father was in D-Day. While overseas he sent me a book from England about cave dwellers. It inspired me to set about making stone axes. This created an important connection for me to nature, although it was a connection through tool use. When my father came home from the war we moved to Georgia and he became an electrical engineer and contractor. I worked for him from the age of 13 to 19 and gained great knowledge and appreciation of the use of tools. At age 17 I went to college, majored in psychology—the experimental non-human lab variety—then broke out of the lab and

1. Thomas Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999).

went to graduate school in anthropology at Harvard in 1959.

During my first year at Harvard four fellow students (one of whom is present here at the colloquium, Bill Peck) and I joined a seminar by Talcott Parsons and Robert Bellah on the sociology of religion. A key focus of the seminar was meaning and symbols. This was very important to me. Perhaps more important, however, was a profound insight I gained—that the individual is grounded in social and cultural systems. Talcott Parsons's systems theory was so exciting to me that I harangued my fellow students Michael Ames, Nahum and Fran Waxman, and Tom Kirsch about Parsons as I drove us, non-stop, overnight, from Boston to Chicago, to a meeting of the Association for Asian Studies in March 1960. Later, as part of a grant that extended my education in Parson's theory, I studied a symbolic expression of working class thought, a Communist-related drama called *Ludruk*, in a slum in Surabaya, Indonesia. (Florence Peacock, my new wife, gave up a promising musical career to join me. She survived a mad dog bite and a volcanic eruption.)

My first teaching position was at Princeton University. It was 1965. With the linguist David Crabb I created a program which would become the Department of Anthropology. That year James Boon, a sophomore, took my introductory course in the fall, and in the spring took my first course on symbols. Sitting-in on the class were Amalie Rorty, a philosopher, and Florence Peacock. The premise of the class was that human consciousness is grounded in society. I anchored my teaching on the work of Emile Durkheim. When I moved to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1967, I continued to teach the course. Over the years it has evolved. I added readings by Carl Jung to provide a psychological perspective and Griselda Pollock for a feminist perspective. I had yet to discover Thomas Berry and his ecological perspective.

After Thomas Berry: 2000 to 2014

As I mentioned earlier, I still teach "Consciousness and Symbol" at UNC, Chapel Hill. Durkheim's perspective remains the focus of my class. I was introduced to Thomas Berry's *The Great Work* by Herman Greene of the Center for Ecozoic Societies. Berry's ecozoic

framework now provides a larger context, the context of nature, of which human society is a part: I nest Durkheim within Berry. The readings are enriched by lectures from the physicist Gerald Cecil on energy as well as Herman Greene on threats to the environment and the fallacy of science that separates subjective and objective realities, a reflection on Bruno Latour's work. Class exercises include Chi Gong led by Stephen Lambeth and Sinead Corrigan (also present at this Colloquium). Some students choose to extend their experience of the class by interning with Tim Toben at Pickards Mountain Eco-Institute or abroad with Nourish International. Several students participate with Herman Greene at the Center for Ecozoic Societies. It is satisfying to see how students are drawn to Berry's vision and mission and how they enact its message in the world.

What is missing, however, from this classroom approach to Berry is a sense of urgency. Students have burning questions: "What can I do?" "How do I move from Berry's vision and warning into action?" "Earth and all that dwell upon her are endangered. We need to act!" Another weakness of Berry is the abstract and idealistic perspective expressed in *The Great Work*. Where is the human experience grounded in the particularities of life—social, cultural, psychological, personal, and historical? Another important question I ask myself is "What actually grips these students?" One answer is life's journey, the journey that each student is on. This journey entails psychological and social questions of identity, of jobs and careers. This often eclipses the demands of ecology and the universe. Frankly, I am a long way from answering these questions in general, or in this course.

This spring, in response to students' questions, I formulated a perspective to begin integrating three levels of movement. I called it "Journey into Wholeness," borrowing a phrase from the Jungians. The three levels or aspects are 1) movement toward the Ecozoic, 2) Jungian individuation, i.e., movement toward balance or wholeness of the self, and 3) Grounded Globalism.² The first two are well known, the third is my own work and may need a brief explanation.

The point of Grounded Globalism is this: collectively we strive

2. James Peacock, *Grounded Globalism* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2007).

toward an ecozoic balance, individually we strive toward a psychological balance, and these journeys are related. The journey is global, part of a process that is global, but also local, grounded in the place where each of us lives. For the student at the moment it is in a town, a state, a region, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, the US South, all part of a nation and world. So we work out of that place as a start. That place is not just an environmental place, but also a social, cultural, historical, psychological, as well as an ecological place. Berry himself grounded his ecozoic vision in a memory of a meadow he encountered as a child, a point noted by several speakers at this Berry symposium.³

As we situate ourselves in a place, the many locales of the students' lives, we encounter not only physical spaces but also social and cultural spaces. For example, oppositions and differences of ethnicity, gender, of regional identity. All are part of the global journey and of the students' identities. Working with identities or oppositions is part of the journey into wholeness. Techniques may include, as Berry himself suggests, dreams and other subjective expressions like creative writing or drawing. I sometimes advise students to get in touch with the free therapy offered by student health services on campus if they do such work. And a therapist I also recommend is one Berry suggests: Earth.

Earth transcends differences of gender, ethnicity, class, and global identities, hence it can help frame and put these differences into perspective. But the differences do need to be confronted as part of the journey. Berry's idealized images of dreams and the unconscious need long bridges to reach into the actual dreams of students, which are often focused on immediate social situations. A tragic example from the media of late: Mr. Rodger recently killed several fellow students in Santa Barbara, California, as well as himself. His motive: he was rejected by several women that he wished to date. His action highlights the social preoccupations of young students.

Here are examples of young people's perceptions after being introduced to Berry's work:

- My granddaughter Isabella is 6. She expressed great inter-

3. Thomas Berry, "The Meadow across the Creek," in *The Great Work*, 12-13.

est in and knowledge of the universe and nature starting at age 3. When I asked her what story she wanted me to tell, she replied “the universe, from the big bang to the final crunch.” When her nursery school taught “Thank you God for birds that sing, thank you God for everything,” she added, “Including bacteria.” Herman Greene gave me several of the children’s books expressing Thomas Berry’s story of the universe, and I read one to her. She interrupted me, “Abuelo, let me tell this story,” and she did, elaborating the birth of the universe by her own birth, tracing the sperm, the egg, etc. She has asked me to come to her school and tell her class a nonsense story that I made up about the “mean man who lives in a garbage can.”

- An African American woman in my Anthropology 435 class this spring met with me about a writing problem. She mentioned a recurrent dream about being bullied, so I advised her to go both to the writing clinic and the student health therapist. She did so and reported that both helped her greatly. She now volunteers as an intern with juvenile delinquents. Note her issue: bullying, not the environment. But by paying attention to her dreams she was led to her Great Work.
- A Chinese man, a sophomore, who lives in Utah, wished to participate in ecozoic work. He composed two songs, which he recorded with his band and which he played for our class. They have a nature and journey theme. He composed a very rich interpretation of the Ecozoic melding social, psychological, and cultural issues.
- My first student, James Boon, who was in the symbol course at Princeton in 1966, has become a leading scholar. I was recently asked to contribute an essay to a journal that is devoting an issue to his work. In that essay I suggest that Berry might enrich Boon’s vision. A key point of connection is Berry’s first of fourteen points: Earth is a communion of

subjects, not a collection of objects.⁴ Perhaps my critique will lead Boon's brilliant cultural analysis to include the wider experiences of existence including ecology.

- And from my own youth, I recall at age 11 or so reading a comic book. In it a hero and heroine were left on an Earth destroyed by catastrophe. The hero had to cross a bridge, hand over hand, because the roadbed was eradicated. No other humans existed in this barren Earth. A second image from my youth was a science fiction story about four or five boys in New Jersey who worked together in a garage making a space ship. The lonely, barren Earth from the first recollection was cheered up by the friendly group in the second. Later in life I lived with and studied Muhammadiyah, a Muslim organization in Indonesia, which now boasts some 30 million members. In a training camp there I experienced the camaraderie I had read about of the boys making the garage spaceship. Much later still, I experienced again a similar small group solidarity with a half dozen young people who worked together to create a program called "Global Carolina." Most of them are together still and the program continues to thrive.
- Recently, two charismatic young people, Elizabeth McCain and Hudson Vaughn, developed a neighborhood project that grew, in part, from a student taught honors seminar on civic issues and community involvement. As an advisor to the civic group I failed to draw Berry into their impressive self-taught course and project-launch. If they had grabbed hold of Berry, they would have made more of a difference.

4. Thomas Berry, "The Determining Features of the Ecozoic Era." Handout from the library of Santa Sabina Conference Center, San Rafael, California, 2004, except that Item 7 is from a similar list presented by Thomas Berry at an annual conference of the Center for Reflection on the Second Law held in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Some versions of this document may have thirteen points. The version I work with has fourteen points, including item 7 referenced above.

The secret of teaching Thomas Berry and spreading his vision lies in deeply engaging with one's students. Our efforts to teach Berry will bear fruit to the extent that the young people catch fire and live the vision he expressed.

The First Earth Church

Shirley Pevarnik

In recent centuries, indeed, the believing community has not been concerned with any cosmology, ancient or modern, for the believing community has its real values concentrated in the Savior, the human person, the believing church, and a post-earthly paradisaal beatitude.

—Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*

Thomas Berry has suggested many times we should put the Bible on the shelf for twenty years or more and listen to Earth. In that spirit, I am suggesting that we put the Bible aside and listen to and celebrate Earth in what might be called the “First Earth Church.” In my own life, I have been searching for a community of people to celebrate the Earth with—to participate in what Thomas Berry might call an Earth Liturgy. I visualize it more like an Earth Circle—fellow humans celebrating the “more than human world” and our wonder in being here—a world we have become autistic to according to Berry. It seems to me, we need this affirmation of being part of Earth now more than ever. Whom do we share our deep communion of hawk or flower with and our profound sadness and fear of the 6th extinction we now find ourselves in? We need one another to help us out of this pathological world view that separates us from the natural world, each other, and even ourselves. I have been looking for this deep sharing of our larger self in many types of churches, but I have always felt disappointed. If I was able to endure the service, I usually left feeling like a fraud. I wasn’t feeling what others appeared to be feeling. I was offended by the words spoken most of the time and felt angry. I felt a stab in my chest every time I heard words of a male God, especially in a culture that covertly practices patriarchy. I could not sit still and listen to our ministers and priests holding an afterlife hostage by what we believe about the life of Jesus. A familiar refrain was that you will not be saved unless

you believe in what this particular church believes about Jesus. Not to mention I strongly believe this idea of being saved and of good people and bad people creates a great separation when what we really need is love and acceptance of ourselves, each other, and especially the natural world. I still remember when I was only 12 hearing about purgatory—how those not baptized would not see God—and knowing, even then, they could not be talking about my God. My God would be accepting of everyone. For many years I thought it was just me. Something must be wrong with me for not believing the dogma of most of our churches, but I just couldn't.

I still, however, felt this unspoken awe and wonder and had a great desire for celebration and understanding. I was still drawn to religion to help me express and explore these inner and outer mysteries. Luckily, I did find a few priests who held different views, and when I heard Thomas Berry speak of religious communities as believing communities, it made more sense. Our churches seem to place more value in beliefs than in experience. No one ever asked me what I felt or what my experience of the divine or the world was. I realized the only sacredness I saw in the church seemed to be for the ritual and historical beliefs, not for this gift of life and this wonder of a planet. So, although I was looking for a place to celebrate my awe and wonder, I very seldom felt that need met in our religious institutions. There is a need for a First Earth Church—a church that has less beliefs and more inquiry into the experience of awe and wonder we feel as humans on this awesome and challenging planet.

The historical mission of our time is to re-invent the human—at the species level, with critical reflection, within the community of life systems, in a time developmental context, by means of story and shared dream experience.

—Thomas Berry, *The Great Work*

This statement is central in Berry's wisdom and guidance into the Eozoic era which follows the last 65 million years of the Cenozoic. The Cenozoic, the most verdant time in our planet's history, is coming to an end as all the major systems of the Earth are being

disrupted. The Ecozoic era is a time when humans realize Earth is primary and humans are derivative, and when we learn to live in a mutually enhancing relationship with the Earth. Berry's guidance is pivotal in our healing into the Ecozoic, but where do we go to grapple with its deeper implications? In *The Great Work* Thomas identifies the four major institutions that need to shift if we are to enter this Ecozoic era: the government, the corporation, the university, and the religious institutions. Which of these institutions will facilitate this communion—this deep grappling needed for humans to begin to shift our understanding and story? None of these institutions even admits that a shift is needed, let alone has a willingness to facilitate this shift. However, there is only one that even acknowledges the numinous dimensions of our world, a central awareness paramount to a shift into the Ecozoic, namely the religious institutions.

It is thought that the largest minority in the United States is the nonreligious population. I think many people, like myself, have stopped attending our religious institutions because of some of the reasons I have stated above. And, like me, they are still searching for a community to help them understand their relationship with the more than human world and human world and to understand this connection for which we have no words. This population is growing as humans become more and more aware that we are in a crisis situation on the planet. They are looking for wisdom to go forward—the kind of wisdom that Thomas Berry offers. In the natural world when a species disappears or a need becomes great enough, a niche opens up, and a species appears or moves in to take that space and fulfill that need. We have an open niche right now in our human world—one that wants to share its concern and grapple with the type of wisdom Thomas Berry has to offer. There is a need for this wisdom and there is an open niche, so it makes sense that something like an Earth Church could fulfill that need.

When Thomas Berry talks about story and shared dream experiences, I believe he is referring to our inability to re-think our way into the future. We cannot grasp what we are to do or how we are to be as humans with our current rational minds. We need to re-imagine or dream our way into the future if we are to survive in a mutually enhancing world, if we are to shift into the Ecozoic. All of

our institutions and languages, indeed our thinking, comes out of a paradigm that believes we humans are primary, there is a hierarchy, and we are all separate. In that hierarchy the natural world is valued the least. We don't even see ourselves as a part of the natural world. This illusion of separation is deep in our language. We don't even have a vocabulary that has words for our interconnectedness. We need new words to convey this new story that Earth is primary and we humans are derivative. This separation is even more magnified with our religious institutions using the Bible as primary context. The Bible, while revelatory, is steeped in this language of separation and human hubris. However, Thomas Berry would say the Earth is also revelatory. Maybe a First Earth Church could begin to create a new language to share our story of our larger self and to reflect on our shared dream experiences.

This is the kind of church I want, one that will focus on shared experience and a new story of connectedness. One that wrestles with the challenges we face in our human and more than human world and helps us create words to express our concern and compassion. One that sees through the façade of patriarchy and honors our interconnectedness. One that has the power to break through our autism toward the natural world. One that is a continually emerging celebration and profound adventure into our souls. I know there is movement today in some religious institutions to address some of the issues I have raised. Some churches are doing some very innovative things to include the natural world and search for deeper meaning. This is all good and provides a larger context to live in and community for many who sense there is so much more. But is it enough at this time? I don't know. I only know my own desires and, I believe, the desires of the Earth are not being met, yet. My idea for a First Earth Church is just that: an idea, a dream—a story of community, celebration, and possibilities.

What are your dreams for a community to share our interconnectedness and celebration of our larger self? Where can we find a place to explore what Thomas Berry calls "the Dream of the Earth?" These questions may lead us to the very Earth-centered church we and the Earth itself (indeed, our larger self) need.

Ecstasy of the Earth: Some Implications of Thomas Berry's Thought for Sexual Ethics

Michael Ross

Those of us who study Thomas Berry know that he not only draws upon many different fields of knowledge but also offers ways of thinking about—or at least hints at ways of thinking about—the connection between the new story of the evolutionary development of the universe “New Story” or “Universe Story” and other human endeavors, such as science, religion, technology, law, economics, urban design, education and healthcare, to name a few. But what did Berry say about sexuality and sexual ethics? How does the sexual dimension of our personhood relate to the New Story? What is the ontological status and purpose of human sexual desire if we take the cosmology of the New Story seriously?

Given the many symptoms of sexual dysfunction in our culture, both inside and outside Christian Churches, I argue that “reinventing the human” without also reinventing human sexuality would be impossible. Accordingly, I believe Berry must be critiqued for offering no guidelines with regards to sexuality. In fact, a close reading of his work with this concern in mind leaves one with the sense that despite references to a vast array of subjects, he seems to have gone out of his way to avoid sexuality, the body in its sexual dimension, and the general erotic aspect of human life. Other than references to early forms of plant and animal sexual reproduction in the *The Universe Story*,¹ and one mention of sexuality addressed below, Berry never even uses the word “sexual” or “erotic,” in any of his writings, nor does he even hint how, for example, we might grapple with related ethical questions concerning overpopulation and procreation.

1. Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, *The Universe Story: From the Primordial Flaring Forth to the Beginning of the Eozoic Era—A Celebration of the Unfolding Cosmos* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994)

We can certainly understand some of the obvious reasons for this omission. After all, Berry was a celibate priest. Moreover, one could argue that avoiding sexual ethics and church doctrine in general is the reason he escaped the Vatican censorship faced by so many other progressive thinkers of his time. However, we must also concede that Berry was a product of his era and of the monastic sexual formation he would have received in the late 1930's. While Berry's subsequent travel and cross-cultural exposure propelled his intellectual development far beyond the doctrinal confines of pre-Vatican II theology, it would seem that his thinking on sexuality never benefited from that same level of development. Yet it also seems that he personally had a well-integrated sexuality and was genuinely called to the celibate life. Perhaps the sensitivity he felt towards creation had, on some level, an erotic dimension whereby the sexual drive was transmuted into a sense of wholeness and communion found in the beauty of nature. Possibly Berry never addressed sexuality because it was simply not an issue of major concern for him.

Nonetheless, there remains a desperate need for an ecozoic understanding of sexuality from which the non-celibate, vast majority of the planet's human beings might find inspiration and ethical guidance. How could we even begin to find our way into the future without addressing one of the most powerful drives of the human experience that involves, among many other things, our very ability to reproduce? It is time to add a sexual chapter to the New Story. While Berry never gave us directions or content on the subject, I argue that his articulation of the New Story does offer the necessary context and a map of the terrain.

Given our limited starting point, the task of articulating an ecozoic understanding of sexuality requires the insights of others already doing sexual ethics. In particular, we need the insights of those who are challenging the assumptions of traditional Christian sexual ethics and models used by, for example, official Roman Catholic teaching. These new voices in sexual ethics include both Roman Catholic and Protestant systematic theologians, as well as contextual theologies, including feminist, gay, black, liberationist and disabled perspectives, to name a view. Combined with other new social-scientific approaches to sexuality, a plethora of recent scholarship offers

the framework for sexuality that Berry never provided.²

Remarkably, many of the core insights of the new voices integrate quite well with Berry's cosmology. As we will touch upon below, themes such as the centrality of contextual meaning or lived experience (or "relational-centered," as opposed to "act-centered" sexual ethics), the diversity of sexual expression, the evolving nature of human sexuality, the critique of "procreationism," along with a general assertion that sexuality is enmeshed in larger socio-political contexts, all offer creative avenues for dialogue between sexual ethics and Berry's work. I suggest that such a dialogue could not only correct the missing dimension of sexuality in Berry's thought, but could also enhance our understanding of sexual ethics by situating sexuality within a larger ecological and cosmological context.

The Value of Story

In principle number seven of the "Twelve Principles for Understanding the Universe and the Role of the Human in the Universe Process,"³ we can find Berry's one reference to sexual-

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2. See, for example: Todd A. Salzman and Michael G. Lawler, *The Sexual Person: Toward a Renewed Catholic Anthropology* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2008); Margaret A. Farley, *Just Love: A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics* (New York: Continuum, 2006); Marvin Mahan Ellison, *Erotic Justice: A Liberating Ethic of Sexuality* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996); Daniel T. Spencer, *Gay and Gaia: Ethics, Ecology, and the Erotic* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 1996); Christine E. Gudorf, *Body, Sex, and Pleasure: Reconstructing Christian Sexual Ethics* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1994); M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010); Traci W. West, *Disruptive Christian Ethics: When Racism and Women's Lives Matter* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006); Elizabeth Stuart, "Disruptive Bodies: Disability, Embodiment, and Sexuality," in *Sexuality and the Sacred: Sources for Theological Reflection*, eds. Kelly Brown and Douglas Marvin M. Ellison (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 322-337.
 3. Thomas Berry, "Twelve Principles for Understanding the Universe and the Role of the Human in the Universe Process," in Anne Lonergan and Caroline Richards, eds., *Thomas Berry & the New Cosmology* (Mystic: Connecticut: Twenty-Third Publications), 108-09.

ity: "All particular life systems in their being, their sexuality, their nourishment, their education, their governing, their healing, their fulfillment, must integrate their functioning within this larger complex of mutually dependent Earth systems."⁴ In this principle Berry affirms sexuality as a central dimension of our being commensurate with other fundamentals such as nourishment, healing and fulfillment, and he also implies that sexuality can only properly exist in the "larger complex of mutually dependent Earth systems." That is, Berry's single reference to the subject comes with only one ethical imperative: that one's sexuality must be integrated into a larger ecological context.

One way of appreciating this insight is to contrast Berry with traditional theological anthropology and the sexual ethics derived therefrom, particularly as expressed in official Roman Catholic teaching. Even for non-Catholics, or non-religious people, the legacy of Christian understandings of sexuality continues to inform contemporary assumptions about sex in ways we can barely even measure, especially insofar as sexuality has been historically intertwined with the doctrine of original sin. And indeed, as many feminist voices have demonstrated, the "patriarchal put-down" of women, the body, and sexuality goes hand in hand with the debasing of the natural world.⁵

Yet I want to draw attention to an even more fundamental theological problem, a problem that is especially acute in Roman Catholic theology. That is, despite the acceptance of evolution in official teaching, the Magisterium has struggled to acknowledge that evolution removes the possibility of a literal Adam and Eve and an actual historical Fall that occurred in human history.⁶ As Piet

4. Ibid., 108.

5. See Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989); Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gaia & God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992).

6. Acceptance of evolution in official Roman Catholic teaching can be found in various documents and comments from recent popes and other officials. Of particular note is the International Theological Commission's 2004 document, *Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God*. Yet official teachings on the doctrine of original sin and sexual ethics,

Schoonenberg so eloquently put it, in traditional Christian theological anthropology “there would seem to have been a higher form of humanity at the wrong end of man’s evolution.”⁷ This lack of clarification has serious implications for Church understandings of sexuality because Magisterial sexual ethics, particularly since Pope John Paul II, continue to use Adam and Eve and the story of the Fall as exemplars of gender and sexual norms.⁸

The first key insight that we can draw from Berry concerns his emphasis on story, which takes on much significance as we reflect on this problem. Berry is certainly referring, in part, to this evolution-original sin confusion when he observes that we are “in between stories right now.” He writes:

The deepest crises experienced by any society are those moments of change when the story becomes inadequate for meeting the survival demands of a present situation.... We are confounded at present because our historical situation has changed so profoundly. Our story, too, has changed. We no longer know its meaning or how to benefit from its guidance.⁹

For our purposes though, this confusion takes on even more significance as we reflect on the insights of contemporary theological analyses of Augustine. As sexual ethicists such as Margaret Farley emphasize, in Christian theology since Augustine, the human experience of sexual desire, lust and concupiscence is directly related to the Fall of humankind.¹⁰ Peter Brown paraphrases Augustine’s connection between original sin and sexual desire as follows: “The

as evident in sources such as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* continue to talk about Adam and Eve and the Fall as real events in history.

7. As quoted in Tatha Wiley, *Original Sin: Origins, Development, Contemporary Meanings* (New York: Paulist Press, 2002), 135.
8. See, for example, John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan* (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 1997); John Paul II, *Love and Responsibility* (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2013).
9. Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988), xi.
10. Margaret A. Farley, *Just Love: A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics* (New York: Continuum International, 2006), 41.

Christian married couple must 'descend with a certain sadness' to that particular task: for in the act of married intercourse itself, their very bodies spoke to them of Adam's fall."¹¹

Despite a multitude of innovative, non-literal theological reinterpretations of original sin, despite official Roman Catholic endorsements of the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation, despite the fact that recent popes themselves have demonstrated an awareness that Adam and Eve are "mythological" and "symbolic figures," official teachings on sex and gender, as well as teachings on original sin, continue to be based on a literal appeal to Adam and Eve and a natural law tradition based on fixed, immutable, ontological categories.¹² I would suggest that, to one degree or another, a similar tendency exists in almost all Christian traditions.

Berry's seemingly simple emphasis on the importance of story shines a light on a deep problem in Christian theology. That is, we have no functional cosmology when it comes to reconciling our contemporary scientific understanding of cosmic and human origins with the dimension of sin and suffering that exists in the world. Moreover, we have no functional cosmology with regards to understanding the role of human sexuality in that story. Even while

11. Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 426-427.

12. For a good overview of contemporary understandings of the doctrine of original sin, see Tatha Wiley's *Original Sin*. On the issue of biblical interpretation, many sexual ethicists have pointed out that while Roman Catholic teaching has embraced critical historical methods overall, the Magisterium goes against its own understanding of the Bible when it makes literal appeals to certain passages to uphold teachings on sexuality. Meanwhile, recent popes have acknowledged that the Genesis story uses "symbolic language" to convey our human origins, but this further confuses the issue when it comes to constructing a "functional cosmology," to use Berry's term. When affirming traditional heterosexual marriage, for example, John Paul II refers to Adam and Eve as real people in history that convey God's intended model for human sexuality. Consider section 390 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: "The account of the fall in Genesis 3 uses figurative language, but affirms a primeval event, a deed that took place at the *beginning of the history of man*." (Italics in original) How one is to square this historical understanding with the scientific account of human origins affirmed in documents such as *Communion and Stewardship* is left entirely unclear.

recent Roman Catholic and other Christian traditions attempt positive articulations of sexuality—such as the “theology of the body” expressed by John Paul II—there is still the *story* of the Fall, and a *dis*-functional cosmology that implies that sexual desire is an ontologically negative force that was introduced into creation as a divine punishment for sin, a punishment which is then passed on to our children through sexual intercourse. Amongst other problems, the story does not square with our evolutionary understanding of human origins. A new story for sexuality is needed.

Creative Energy

Another central insight in Berry’s work is the concept of “creative energy” and his sense that the universe is permeated with powerful energy forces that propel the unfolding of creation. Humans have traditionally participated in this creative energy by communing with the natural world through ritual and celebration. Activities like this created “an abundance of energy” flowing through the human being, giving ultimate meaning for the individual and also fueling the development of culture and civilization.¹³

This way of connecting with Earth was, to a large extent, a phenomenon of indigenous traditions and classical civilizations occurring in the early emergence of human cultures that lived within a consciousness of a spatial, seasonal, and ever-renewing cosmos. But a different consciousness emerged in Western civilization leading to a view of creation as time-developmental. In this mode, “the true reality of things and even the universal and liberating goal of human striving came to be seen as a development within the history process.”¹⁴ Thus the goal of spirituality shifted to a sense of redemption in a future-paradise, and the summoning of creative energies, as indigenous peoples had done, no longer satisfied the needs of an emergent technological civilization. The resulting sense of “alienation” of which Berry writes, I suggest, offers a more appropriate

13. Readers of Berry’s work are aware that he often lists examples of indigenous rituals; yet note that not once does he mention a sexual ritual.

14. Thomas Berry, “Creative Energy,” in the *Riverdale Papers* I, 4.

contemporary understanding of a so-called “original sin” or “Fall.”¹⁵

For Berry, this shift became particularly troublesome when Earth’s status and fate was downgraded as humanity focused on its own salvation independent of the natural world. This emphasis on a future paradisiacal orientation created a human-earth split in Western civilization. As Berry puts it:

Not only are the deeper realms of humanity’s own being rejected, not only is the subjective communion with the earth stifled, but there is also a neglect of the all-numinous presence. We no longer experience the renewal of psychic energy which formerly was experienced within this presence of the sacred. The primary community of the divine, the natural and the human is shattered. This supreme source of energy is lost.¹⁶

This change in human consciousness is not a permanent alteration of our nature, however, since “these energies remain available and as potent as ever. We have simply lost the capacity for absorbing them.”¹⁷ Thus for Berry, one of the fundamental tasks of spirituality, of a functional cosmology, is to foster a proper relationship between human and Earth by re-cultivating the human experience of, and connection to, creative energy. This requires an integration of both the spatial and temporal realities of human experience. As Berry says “One of the great needs is to slow down the sequence of time changes by an increase in spatial awareness.”¹⁸ Elsewhere he writes, “The main function of contemporary spirituality is to create this interior paradisiacal space, in which we can breathe the refreshing air of eternity and thus save ourselves from suffocation in time.”¹⁹

A subtle connection to sexuality, and more broadly, love, begins to emerge when Berry presents the Universe Story as a continuous development of attraction. “The gravitation that pervades the universe, holds it together, and causes each tiniest particle to attract and

15. See Thomas Berry, “Alienation,” in *The Riverdale Papers II*.

16. Berry, *Creative Energy*, 6.

17. *Ibid.*, 6-7.

18. *Ibid.*, 9.

19. Berry, *Alienation*, 10.

be attracted to every other particle, involves an awareness, an inner communication, an intercommunion.”²⁰ Thus the gravitation that brings atoms together, and planets together functions as a “remarkable symbol of love attraction and communion in the human order.”²¹ Building on Berry’s insights, Brian Swimme explains in a recent interview that it is useful to think of “love” as a word that refers to the whole cosmological dimension of attraction. Love and allurements brought about the complexity of creation as we know it through the force of attraction, even to the point of human beings discovering their very origin and the role of attraction in the emergence of life. That is, in Swimme’s words, “We are the place in which the original primal love of the universe is aware of itself and we are aware of that every time we fall in love.”²² When we fall in love, and/or feel sexual attraction, we are experiencing the primal love of the cosmos, which is yearning to become in us *human* love. This is significant because “as the human species learns to embody love, the entire planet goes through a fundamental transformation because... human presence now permeates all of the species of life.”²³ The way in which humans express love—of which sexuality is a major dimension—is shaping the evolutionary outcome of the planet.

Berry’s concept of creative energy offers the first key aspect of what we might call an ecological sexual anthropology. First and foremost, it implies that human sexuality, when considered within the functional cosmology of the Universe Story, is fundamentally and ontologically good. To experience sexual desire is to experience a yearning for intimacy that is the human expression of the same cosmic intimacy that holds the universe together, and guided its creation in the first place. This certainly seems logical with respect to sexuality in its *procreative* dimension. That is, engaging in sexual intercourse often quite literally creates new life. But I believe that it also implies that sexuality, in its unitive dimension, is a good, or an

20. Berry, *Creative Energy*, 11.

21. *Ibid.*

22. Chip August, “Love in the Cosmos--Interview with Brian Swimme,” in *Sex, Love and Intimacy Podcast* (Personal Life Media, 2011), <http://podcasts.personallifemedia.com/podcasts/222-sex-love-and-intimacy/episodes/3588-brian-swimme-love>.

23. *Ibid.*

end in and of itself because it is an expression of the universe's own desire for intimacy. The *unitive* dimension of sexuality is not just an add-on bonus to what is an otherwise procreative activity.

Indeed, recent new voices of sexual ethics have called into question traditional assumptions about the centrality of procreation to sexuality. From Todd Salzman's and Michael Lawler's critique of the Roman Catholic demand of openness to procreation, to Christine Gudorf's claim that "cultural procreationism" reduces the complexity of human sexual expression to genital sex and obscures larger issues of sexual exploitation, there is a movement in Christian sexual ethics to affirm the intrinsic value of the non-procreative dimensions of sexuality; and I suggest that Berry's notion of creative energy offers a way of anchoring this movement in a functional theological anthropology.²⁴

Another aspect of creative energy concerns the rediscovery of spatial awareness and the "all-pervasive numinous." There is much literature—both scholarly and personal-anecdotal – about sexual experience as spiritual awakening. Often these descriptions sound very much like Berry's account of, for example, the state achieved by indigenous peoples through cosmic ritual. In Berry's terms, sexual ecstasy might be thought of as a form of spatial awareness. For example, in Margot Anand's widely read *The Art of Sexual Ecstasy*, she describes a sexual moment with her partner as follows:

Suddenly we both seemed to be floating in an unbounded space filled with warmth and light. The boundaries between our bodies dissolved and, along with them, the distinctions between man and woman. We were one. The experience became timeless, and we seemed to remain like this forever. There was no need to have an orgasm. There was no need even to "make love." There was nothing to do, nothing to achieve. We were in ecstasy.²⁵

Peak sexual states are also often described as a feeling of unity with

24. See Salzman & Lawler, *The Sexual Person*; Gudorf, *Body, Sex and Pleasure*.

25. Margot Anand, *The Art of Sexual Ecstasy: The Path of Sacred Sexuality for Western Lovers* (Los Angeles: J.P. Tarcher, 1989), 2-3.

all of creation. Scholar Georg Feuerstein has uncovered a common theme of “erotic spirituality” in all religious traditions whereby sexuality is seen as a transformative vehicle for spiritual growth that always involves an element of deeper awareness of the body and the natural world. Sounding in many ways like Berry, he writes:

Sacred Sexuality is about love—not merely the positive feeling between intimates but an overwhelming reverence for all embodied life on whatever level of existence. Through sacred sexuality, we directly participate in the vastness of being—the mountains, rivers, and animals of the earth, the planets and the stars, and our next-door neighbors.²⁶

Berry adds yet another dimension to this sense of ecstasy when he states that we cannot properly understand ourselves as humans until we see ourselves “not as a mechanistic function of matter but as the ecstasy of the earth.”²⁷ In other words, as that being in whom the universe comes to a special mode of self-reflective consciousness. Our experience of ecstasy, including sexual ecstasy, is also the universe itself experiencing the pleasurable sensations of beauty and life through the complexity of the human.

Most people do not have access to the kinds of ritual experiences Berry discusses with respect to indigenous traditions, but most people do have their sexuality as a way to experience creative energy. For Berry, we *must* have some way of rediscovering and harnessing this creative energy to solve the ecological crisis. In one very interesting passage, Berry writes:

For the will to succeed in this task of shaping the future with the ease and excitement, the human satisfaction, the cultural achievement and human magnificence that is indicated, something more than the will of the phenomenal ego must be functioning. The deeper self of man, *the entire libido* must be func-

26. Georg Feuerstein, *Sacred Sexuality: The Erotic Spirit in the World's Great Religions* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2003), xi.

27. Thomas Berry, “Cosmic Person and the Future of Man,” in the *Riverdale Papers* I, 7.

tioning. The individual will can function in this capacity only through its union with the human community.”²⁸

Note that the Oxford dictionary defines “libido” as (i) sexual desire, (ii) the energy of the sexual drive as a component of the life instinct. Even if Berry only means the latter, it is still a distinctly sexual word to use.

Once again, the radical nature of this idea can only be appreciated when we contrast it with the sexual component of traditional theological anthropology. In the Augustinian tradition of original sin, sexuality is ontologically negative. To experience sexual desire is to experience our fallen nature. In this story, we were once in control of these passions, but then God punished us, and one of those punishments was the experience of lust. But Berry’s cosmology suggests that sexual desire is not the result of a divine punishment in response to a catastrophic mistake in human history, but a human expression of a creative energy that is very much in harmony with the divine creative force.

Some Ethical Implications

I have been suggesting that the first and most basic task in developing a new sexual anthropology from Berry’s telling of the Universe Story, is to make this shift from a negative view of sexual desire to a positive one, and to do this by situating human sexuality within a larger cosmological context. But this is just the starting point for a much larger project. Further development of this sexual anthropology will draw on other concepts from Berry’s thought to work out the content of ethical guidelines. A positive understanding of human sexual desire does not mean that any and all expressions of sexuality are positive or morally good. There is much truth to Augustinian concerns about the destructive power of sexuality. There is also much reason to link that destructive capacity of sexuality to a sense of a Fall, a loss of innocence, or a kind of alienation that cycles downward into destruction. After all, we are the most vulner-

28. Thomas Berry, “The Dynamics of the Future,” in *Riverdale Papers I*, 16 (italics added).

able in our sexual dimension, and damaging the sexuality of others is one of the most extreme forms of violence humans can inflict upon one another. Much like the imagery of original sin, sexual damage is indeed passed on to future generations.

Berry's three "primordial intentions" or "values of the Earth process"—differentiation, subjectivity and communion—offer another framework for developing the ethics of an ecological sexual anthropology. Berry talks about differentiation and the unfolding of variety and diversity at every level of the cosmos, from atomic structures to plants, animals and then to humans where the diversity is more extensive than any other known reality. This law of differentiation represents the "first fundamental value...the inherent indestructible value of the individual."²⁹ Yet Berry also emphasizes that the difficulty is that "there is no absolute model for the individual."³⁰ One's differentiation is in constant creative tension with various interior and exterior forces. In each historical age and cultural form, a new reality must be created and "there is no adequate model.... At each moment we must simply be what we are...and open into a larger life."³¹ While traditional theological anthropologies are premised upon universal and static notions of personhood, gender, and sexual orientation, Berry gives a dynamic, multivalent view of the human being shaping its own identity in constant creative tension with its surrounding environment.

The second primordial intention of the Earth process is subjectivity and interiority. Each being has its own interior reality and its own numinous aspect. "To deprive any being of this sacred quality," he writes, "is to disrupt the total order of the universe. Reverence will be total or it will not be at all."³² And the third value of the New Story is intercommunion. Just as the Earth process is marked by the ongoing differentiation of beings, and the increase of subjectivity, it is also marked by attraction and the yearning for communion: "Increased capacity for differentiation is inseparable from

29. Thomas Berry, "The New Story," in the *Riverdale Papers* V, 17.

30. *Ibid.*

31. *Ibid.*, 16-17.

32. *Ibid.*, 17.

this capacity for communion.”³³ Berry also says the communion that occurs when the universe becomes aware of itself through human consciousness reaches a completion point through the “communion attained in the affective and in the aesthetic experience...of itself in its human expression.”³⁴ Considering the sensual connotation of words such as “affective” and “aesthetic,” it is not too much of a stretch, I believe, to say that Berry is implying that human intimacy, including sexual intimacy and the experience of the erotic, is a kind of completion point of the universe’s own yearning for communion.

What is particularly interesting about Berry’s notion of differentiation is that it is in line with recent movements in marital and sexual therapy. Psychologist and sexual therapist David Schnarch, who challenged conventional models of therapy in the 1990’s, has redirected the focus of marital and sexual therapy toward the same concept of differentiation. Other contemporary therapists such as Esther Perel echo Schnarch’s emphasis on differentiation as the key to both successful committed relationships as well as long-term sexual passion. Only when each partner is able to continue his or her spiritual growth towards greater differentiation and become “self-validated” in their own sexuality are they capable of true intersubjectivity and communion.³⁵ In other words, humans are no different than all of the other species in the sense that we need ongoing differentiation and evolving development to be able to then express communion and sexual intimacy effectively.

Yet the emphasis on subjectivity also implies an ethic that highlights the other’s subjectivity as a sacred quality, that one’s sexuality is itself a divine mode of presence, the violating of which constitutes a grave sin. Again, this connects with recent developments in sexual ethics that focus not on the ontological, timeless meaning of a sexual *act*, but considers the context of the lived experience, the personal meaning and the particular people involved in a sexual

33. *Ibid.*, 19

34. Thomas Berry, “The American College in the Ecological Age,” in the *Riverdale Papers* VII, 26.

35. See David Schnarch, *Passionate Marriage: Keeping Love and Intimacy Alive in Committed Relationships* (New York: Henry Hold & Company, 1997); Esther Perel, *Mating in Captivity: Unlocking Erotic Intelligence* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006).

act. Meanwhile the focus on differentiation privileges the diversity of lived experience. As Berry writes, “Each human being has such a unique identity that each person seems almost to constitute a different species.”³⁶ If this is true, and if sexuality is central to our personhood as Berry argues, then the New Story implies that the moral condemnation of those with “alternative” forms of sexual expression is perhaps one of the most egregious sins of all.

Evolving Sexualities

A final dimension of Berry’s thought to be developed in an ecological sexual anthropology concerns the evolving nature of reality itself and how Berry’s cosmology challenges the static model of natural law and/or any theory of sexuality that presupposes any kind of fixed, unchanging understanding of human sexuality. As Michael Foucault demonstrated, sexuality is not an ahistorical constant.³⁷ Berry’s sense that there “is no absolute model for the individual” has enormous sexual implications and suggests that human sexuality itself is changing as humans evolve and shape its meaning. While Berry never openly challenged the natural law tradition explicitly, he did discuss the magnitude of the transition occurring as we evolve beyond “medieval” forms of thought:

The great need of contemporary Christianity is to relinquish all medieval forms of expression.... Christians of our times still insist on external imitation of what is no longer a source of life.... Christians become the worst enemies of Christianity. In this situation we cannot live our own lives but must relive the medieval lives of our predecessors. We cannot think our own thoughts but must rethink theirs. We cannot have any new experiences of life but must repeat the medieval experience. In this way the finest spirituality becomes an oppressive ma-

36. Thomas Berry, “Perspectives on Creativity: Openness to a Free Future,” in the *Riverdale Papers* VIII, 21.

37. See: Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, *An Introduction*, trans Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

teriality. What was dynamic becomes static, what was helpful becomes a hindrance.³⁸

As many theological critiques of traditional sexual ethics have emphasized, it is most notably in the realm of sexuality that the traditional churches remain gripped by “medieval forms of expression.” Berry writes: “No longer do we consider things as fixed in their structure. We speak now in developmental terms.”³⁹ He goes on to warn that the acceptance of reality as an evolving process is perhaps the most critical aspect of entering into the Ecozoic era. We have moved from talking about cosmos to cosmogenesis, from fixed species to biogenesis, from humankind as a determined reality to anthropogenesis. Arguably, it is in these reflections on the nature of change itself, that Berry offers his most provocative insights. Again, he does not acknowledge sexuality as a subject, but the implications for sexual ethics are profound.

A New Story, A New Dialogue

Margaret Farley has observed that our culture tends to create one of two extremes with regards to sexuality. Traditional religious approaches place excessive importance on sexual morality, whereby everything sexual is either “moral” or “immoral,” and “morality” effectively becomes nothing more than *sexual* morality. But another extreme, often found in liberal thinking, tends to see the sexual sphere as exclusively private and isolated from the rest of human life. Reiterating the feminist assertion that the “personal is political,” Farley affirms, “What happens in the sexual sphere of human life is not isolated from what happens in other spheres—whether familial, religious, social, political, or economic.”⁴⁰ I believe that this new emphasis in sexual ethics is the opening for a dialogue between sexuality and the new cosmology; a dialogue that corrects a missing link in Berry’s thought but that also expands the context of sexuality

38. Thomas Berry, “Creative Revolution,” in the *Riverdale Papers* V, 11.

39. Thomas Berry, “Threshold of the Modern World,” in the *Riverdale Papers* II, 2.

40. Farley, xi.

to go even further beyond familial, religious, social, political, and economic spheres, to include the ecological and cosmological.

As we have seen, Berry offers a vision of a functional cosmology that creates a new context for understanding sexuality in a way that integrates the human experience of sexuality within larger ecological and cosmic spheres. It is cosmological because Berry's linking of love and attraction with the larger cosmic forces of allurements allows for a view of sexual desire that celebrates the erotic as a good, whereas traditional theological anthropology has characterized it as the flawed result of a punishment. The vision is ecological because it suggests a sexual moral agent that exists in a creative tension with not only other people, but also the natural world. While we require differentiation and autonomy, we also require communion and must respect the subjectivity of the other's sexuality. Embedded within this vision is an ethical system to be developed that both draws upon and expands the conversation already occurring among the new voices of sexual ethics.

Thomas Berry's Influence on a Thirty-Five Year Evolution from Story to Action

Jim Schenk

My wife, Eileen, and I are both professional social workers. In the mid-1970s, I was the director of an inner-city neighborhood center focused on serving low income people. One of the realities that struck us was it wasn't only the poor who were unhappy, but most of the people in our culture were unhappy. Doing some research, we concluded over three-fourths of the people in our culture are not happy. Here we are in the most consumptive culture in human history, and people aren't happy.

We started asking why? We felt if we could answer that question, we could also deal with the issue of poverty. Further research led us to the conclusion there is a huge dichotomy between our culture, which says we need lots of stuff and money to make us happy, and the real needs of humans, which, after the basic necessities of life, are our relationships with each other—caring for others and being cared about. In this culture a philosophy of individualism has overcome our basic need for community.

Our next phase was to begin looking at ways to get in touch with our real needs and wants as humans. In 1978 we began an organization called Imago, "to image." We attempted to set up a Catholic Worker House. Dorothy Day and Peter Morin, who started the Catholic Worker movement, emphasized hospitality, discussion, and farming. We also offered workshops on community and began an ongoing discussion around this concept.

At the same time a friend of ours, Joyce Quinlan, left a Catholic convent after some 39 years as and moved in with us. She began working on a doctorate at the Union Institute and University, referred to then as the "University without Walls." Her area of concentration was future studies. She ended up visiting Findhorn in Scotland, Pendle Hill in Philadelphia, and Chinook on Whidbey Island near Seattle, Washington. At the same time she brought home

Thomas Berry's Blue Books (*The Riverside Papers*). After devouring these and discussing Joyce's experiences in Findhorn, Pendle Hill, and Chinook, it dawned on us we aren't just disconnected from each other in this culture, but from Earth itself. Going into its second year, Imago moved away from a purely anthropocentric direction and began looking at how we would live if we held Earth and Its people as sacred.

Thomas Berry was the primary impetus that led us to seeing ourselves as Earthlings, to see Earth as subject, not object. His notion that the old story isn't working any longer, that we need a new story, was the idea we needed to move into focusing on a new story rather than working to stop the damage being done under the old story. During the 1980s, we began doing workshops on community, organic garden, passive solar greenhouses, and other practical ways of living more sustainably.

It was moved by reading Thomas Berry's analysis of our time, in which he stated, in admonition, "The time has come when we will listen or we will die," and, in judgment, "Our difficulty is that we have become autistic. We no longer listen to what the Earth, its landscape, its atmospheric phenomena and all its living forms, its mountains and valleys, the rain, the wind, and all the flora and fauna of the planet are telling us." I felt this didn't give our species a great deal of hope. We had cultural autism; these are the beliefs of a culture. We needed to change these cultural views. Thomas put it this way, "It is not easy for us to move beyond those basic points of reference that have guided our way of life in former times, for these have given us our human identity and directed our religious and cultural traditions over the past millennia. These traditions have determined our language, our intellectual insights, our spiritual ideals, our range of imagination, our emotional sensitivities."

I considered we were also in a culture in which the large majority of people live quite well materially. With all of this, how could we convince ourselves we are in real trouble? I believed the human species was in great danger of extinction and, for sure, is directed toward a major reduction in population and consumption. I concluded we didn't have a bright future and predicted our species had only a 20 percent chance of survival as a species for more than 50 to

100 years. While I am an optimist, I still hold this to be true. It is hard for me to see our overcoming this autism.

I truly hope I am completely wrong, that we can learn to listen to Earth and learn to live within *Its* parameters. I find being a human, being Earth conscious of itself, is such a blessing I hope many more humans get the chance to celebrate being part of it over the coming centuries. In this hope, I find the will to continue working to make this happen. There is still a chance.

In 1982 I had an experience I will never forget. My father died in June of that year. I had nine brothers and sisters at the time, and I did most of the organizing for the funeral. While my siblings and their families went out to our parents' farm, I decided to take a walk in the Hoosier National Forest, which was right alongside the cabins where we were staying. I walked into the woods and followed some trails, but eventually went off the trail. I ended up sitting under an oak tree. There I had an experience of connection to the tree and ecosystem around me I had never had before. I experienced for the first time that I remember the ability to communicate with the other-than-human world. It was amazing and life altering. It was a deep experience of being an Earthling, of being one with this planet.

As Thomas Berry said, "What is needed on our part is the capacity for listening to what the earth is telling us," and this was the most direct link I had ever experienced. Science tells me it's fantasy, but it seems otherwise to me. It was my "white lily" moment. As Thomas also said, "Intimacy with the planet in its wonder and beauty and the full depth of its meaning is what enables an integral human relationship with the planet to function."

I also had the experience that the rest of the planet, the animals, plants, rocks, etc., have no animosity toward humans. We are simply a part of Earth, and it is the way they experience us. In terms of Earth, we are not bad or evil, any more than the asteroid that hit the planet and destroyed the dinosaurs was evil. If we believe humans are evil, we believe Earth is evil. We are simply doing what Earthlings do, using the abilities we evolved into in the best way we know how, in order to survive.

While our way of living has worked, giving us over seven billion of our species on this planet, our cultural autism is keeping us from

seeing this way of living on the planet cannot continue or we are going to destroy our species. There is no evil in a species becoming extinct. Many more species have gone extinct than presently exist. If the human species and many other species go out of existence, it is not a bad thing for Earth. It is only bad if you are a human and want to see our species continue.

This is one area where I disagree somewhat with Thomas. Humans are not a blight on the Earth. We are Earth, doing what Earthlings do. We have a story that is outdated, and if we want to survive, we need a new story. Like any species, we have a drive for survival. If we have the time, we will develop a story that will help us survive.

While Imago did a good number of its own workshops and presentations during the 1980s and into the 1990s, it also brought nationally known ecologists to Cincinnati as a way to help us better understand our relationship to Earth. Among them were Fritz and Vivienne Hull, Michael Dowd, Dorothy McLean, Sun Bear, Dennis Banks, and Charlene Spretnak.

I contacted Thomas a number of times through the 1980s about coming to Cincinnati to no avail. He did not know Imago, so I wasn't surprised. However, toward the end of the decade I became aware his nephew, Jim Berry, was the director of the Cincinnati Nature Center. I contacted him and told him I really wanted Thomas to come to Cincinnati and asked if he would invite him. He did, and I believe Thomas was honored to have his nephew want him to come. Imago and the Cincinnati Nature Center co-sponsored a conference with Thomas in 1989. It was the beginning of an ongoing relationship with him.

Thomas emphasized the need for a new story, but he also emphasized the need to walk the talk. From this we decided we needed to be involved in actually creating this new story. Our assessment was that much energy was being put into trying to stop the disintegration of the planet, but not a lot in creating a new story that tells us how we might live in harmony with Earth.

In 1993 we had Thomas return with his brother Jim to do another workshop for us. We invited them to a breakfast to meet with a dozen people about our idea for creating Price Hill as an ecological neighborhood. This meeting thrust us into a new action phase. We

created a video about our efforts. While we did many things toward this goal, it became evident we had bitten off a larger land area than we could really affect. In 1997 we had the opportunity to apply for a grant of \$100,000 per year for five years toward rejuvenating our neighborhood. We applied with a focus on creating an eco-village in a particular area of Price Hill. We received the grant to do this. While we ended up creating a strong comprehensive community development organization in Price Hill called Price Hill Will, the eco-village never happened. It failed because, again, we had chosen too large an area. It was the most depressed area in Price Hill, and we didn't have a support system in this community for creating an eco-village.

While working on this project, we also held, in summer 1998, our first EarthSpirit Rising Conference, which concerned how to integrate spirituality and ecology. At this conference we had as keynote speakers Dennis Banks, David Abram, Sr. Paula Gonzalez, Rosemary Radford Ruether, and David Orr. We have held seven EarthSpirit Rising Conferences since that date. In 2005 we held the conference around the concept of Earth Elders. Our theme was "How can we, as Earth Elders, use our wisdom to help reconnect our cultures with Earth?" Thomas presented at this conference. He was especially effective speaking from his own experiences as an Earth Elder. Meeting him there gave me the opportunity to interview him for the book I edited, *What Does God Look Like in an Expanding Universe?*¹ which was published in 2006.

Two years before this, in early 2004, we split off Price Hill Will. Though we had developed the organization, we found they were not as ecologically oriented as we were. Following this separation, while lying in bed one morning, it dawned on me Enright Avenue where I lived is not too big, it isn't depressed, and we have a support system in the community. Why not have an eco-village here?

Considering this, we asked many questions: "How do we change our existing paradigm?" How do we turn from a culture that holds economics as primary, humans as simply producers and consumers, and Earth as simply a resource. This is a culture that has been successful, that has been a big part in bringing about a population

1. Jim Schenk, ed. (Cincinnati, OH: ImagoEarth Publishing, 2006).

of over (at that time) six billion people, but is now literally going to destroy Earth's ability to sustain us. This is a culture where the majority of people have lived extremely well for decades and still does. How do we convince them things aren't right?

Banking on the majority of people not being happy, is there a way we can model a different way of living that might enhance their sense of happiness? And can we do it in the city? Can we do it in an existing neighborhood?

It made a lot of sense to start in our own neighborhood with people we knew and cared about. So we invited 29 people to join us for a meeting to look at developing an eco-village on Enright Avenue. Seventeen of them showed up: Diana, pharmacist; Dennis, chef; Sharon, psychiatric nurse; Jerry, contractor; Jeanne, nurse; Michael, graphic designer; Kim, social worker; Kathy, homemaker; Jim, librarian; Eileen, educator; Blanche, retired; Joyce, futurist; Julia, farmer; Vince, food services; Carla, homemaker; Eileen, social worker; and myself.

We started out talking about the notion of an eco-village and then broke into three groups: deck group, kitchen group, and living room group. After answering the questions, "What does an eco-village mean to me?" and, second, "Does it make sense for Enright Avenue?" each group recorded the responses to the following question: "What would an Eco-village mean on Enright Avenue?" From this information, each person chose four areas they felt important and might be interested in working on. From these we set up five areas to begin and task groups to work on them. About each area, an early report stated:

Enright Ridge: Planters at top of street—They were installed, the flower selection is wonderful, and have held up extremely well.

Hiking Trail—The trail is open all around Enright Avenue. It goes through some beautiful areas, well worth the hike. Need some permissions from the neighbors whose backyards it goes through. Still needs some work, but a nice hike.

Community Meal—After discussion it was decided to have the first one on Sunday, September 26th if the Earth Center is available. Details will be worked out, and notices gotten around to residents on Enright Avenue.

Ways of including rest of residents on street—The street potluck is one way. A second suggestion was developing a street newsletter. Lydia Justice expressed interest in helping with this. For the first issue, e-mail materials to Jim Schenk.

Marketing Enright Ridge as a Eco-village—This has a potential of making Enright really special (this understanding is already floating around the city) which will improve homeownership, property values, and bring people interested in in the eco-village idea onto the street. Develop a brochure. Jim S. had a rough draft as a demo. Michael offered to work on it. Add eco-village to flower pots. Use the newsletter as a way to introduce the concept to other residents on street. Also, there are opportunities to talk to groups in the city about this.

This was the beginning. It consisted of:

1. Declaring Enright Avenue an eco-village called “Enright Ridge Urban Eco-village,”
2. Setting up task groups to begin the process of developing the eco-village, and
3. Keeping communication open with all residents.

We next felt we needed to involve the rest of the neighborhood. We developed a concept called “treasure mapping.” We made a 4’X4’ box of plywood and put at the top of each side one of four topic areas: Families, Greening, Housing, and Marketing. We asked people in the neighborhood to respond to what they would like to see in the eco-village in terms of those topic areas.

The eco-village runs along a three fourths-mile long street. We divided the street into eight areas and had “ambassadors” for each area, whose job was to pass out fliers we developed about the event,

and, on the day of the event, to get people to come out. We put the box on the back of a truck along with two tables. We brought the truck to the area, unloaded the tables, put the box on one table and magazines, markers, scissors, tape, etc. on the other table. These were materials people could cut out and put on the box to express what they wanted to see happen in each of these four areas. At the end there was a collage of interests in each of the areas.

We gathered around the collaged box a few days later and assessed what people wanted. From this we developed a Housing Task Force, Communications Task Force, the Ecological Green Group (EGG), and Marketing. Underlying all of these was the idea Thomas Berry shared: "Developers see human needs and desires as primary; environmentalists see the earth community as primary. Developers expect nature to adapt to human activity; environmentalists ask humans to adapt to nature. Developers, in general, exhibit a low sensitivity to the concerns of the earth community; environmentalists are driven by a painfully high sensitivity to other beings." It was important to us that we approached all of these from an environmentalist position.

Housing in the eco-village is one of the most ecological aspects of being environmentally friendly. Instead of starting with virgin land and virgin forests to build our homes, we are living in an existing neighborhood. The houses are here. The housing committee has focused on purchased houses that are foreclosed on or otherwise would possibly be torn down, rehabbed them and sold them to homeowners, while keeping a few to rent.

The Ecological Green Group is focused on educating people in the eco-village on how to be ecologically oriented. They write articles for the newsletter and have bought a Pathfinder for people to use to assess sun availability for solar applications and gardening. It is also working to become National Wildlife Federation Certified Wildlife Community.

The Communications Task Force has two focuses: One is to keep people informed in the eco-village about what is happening. It is a way to keep people not directly involved with the eco-village informed and comfortable that there is not an attempt to pull the wool over their eyes. This is done primarily by a monthly four-page

newsletter that is handed out by the ambassadors. The second focus is on the broader community. We feel this is a model for a way to rejuvenate our cities, make them more liveable, and help to preserve the planet. Since we believe humans need to stay clustered in order to preserve places for other species, we need models for making our cities sustainable. This committee keeps up the eco-village website, gives presentations about it, and welcomes new people who move here.

The Marketing Committee worked to advertise the houses available in the eco-village. The primary ways were by hosting a yearly house tour of the eco-village and offering monthly tours of the eco-village.

Over the years new people, including many young families, have moved to the eco-village. The Marketing Committee ceased, and the Communications Committee took over many of their tasks. And finally the CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) began in 2009. It is a CSA using backyards and lots rather than a farm. It hires farmers and provides organic food grown in the city. It has written and published a book called, *Starting Your Urban CSA, A Step-by-Step Guide to Creating a Community-Supported Agriculture Project in Your Urban Neighborhood*.²

We now have over a third of the residents involved in the eco-village, about a third open, and another third indifferent to the ecological aspect of the eco-village, but appreciative of the positive changes that have taken place. We have a neighborhood where almost everyone knows everyone else and enjoys being a part of it.

Thomas said, "We must now reinvent the human as a species within the community of life species." Our goal with the eco-village is to reinvent ourselves, and to do it as a model for other neighborhoods. We are in a time of serious Earth changes. It is critical we quickly reinvent ourselves, and to do it in the urban setting. Enright Ridge Urban Eco-village is a demonstration of one possible way of doing this.

2. Jim Schenk and Julie Hotchkiss, *Starting Your Urban CSA, A Step-by-Step Guide to Creating a Community-Supported Agriculture Project in Your Urban Neighborhood* (Cincinnati, OH: Bold Face Press/Price Hill Historical Society, 2014).

Cosmology and Wisdom: The Great Teaching Work of Thomas Berry

David Schenck

For each thing in its nature is good, but all things together are very good, by reason of the order of the universe, which is the ultimate and noblest perfection in things.

Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book 2, 45:10 (1264)¹

So you see, I do ask of you things greatly surpassing the human: the near-divine nature of your minds—that is what I am challenging you to reveal.

Giambattista Vico, *On the Heroic Mind* (1732)²

Biology has mistaken its mythology. It needs poetry rather than mathematics or language-as-science to think with; not an exclusive but an inclusive mythology.

Elizabeth Sewell, *The Orphic Voice* (1960)³

- I. Cosmology: Problematizing Cosmology, Science in the Wisdom Eye, The Mode of Human Being, The Great Responsibility, Our Doubled-Coding
- II. Wisdom: Transforming Traditions, A Teaching School, The Earth, Dreaming
- III. The Legacy

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1. Thomas, Aquinas, Saint, *Summa Contra Gentiles – Book Two: Creation*, trans. James F. Anderson (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press edition, 1975), 139.
 2. Vico, Giambattista, *On The Heroic Mind: An Oration*, trans. Elizabeth Sewell and Anthony C. Sirignano, in *Vico and Contemporary Thought*, ed. Giorgio Tagliacozza, Michael Monney, and Donald Phillip Verene (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1979), Pt. 2, 230.
 3. Sewell, Elizabeth *The Orphic Voice: Poetry and Natural History* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 44.

Notes on this Text:

1. For the purposes of this essay I have placed in parentheses truncated citations for direct quotations from Berry's primary works. These abbreviations will be used for four of Berry's books:

DE = *Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988)

ET = *Evening Thoughts* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 2006)

GW = *Great Work: Our Way into the Future* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999)

SU = *Sacred Universe: Earth, Spirituality, and Religion in the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009)

One work by Pierre Hadot, contemporary scholar of Hellenistic philosophy, is quoted often. The abbreviation for his main work is:

Hadot = Pierre Hadot's *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, trans. Michael Chase (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 1995)

2. All other citations appear in the footnotes.
3. Berry tended to capitalize "Earth" and "Universe" in his work in the last decades of his life. He also at times makes a distinction between "Dream" and "dream." I have tried in my text to follow his usages when working directly with his texts, and to follow more normal usage at other times.

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We are best able to grasp Thomas Berry's teachings when we approach them as standing in the long lines of wisdom literatures, as found in the rich cultural traditions we commonly identify as rooted in China and India, Attica and the Middle East. Oriented in this way, I will argue, we can initiate our readings and re-readings of Berry with the intent of exploring the idea that "cosmology," in his hands, is fundamentally a "wisdom-teaching." These wisdom literatures, together with the teachers who keep them alive, constitute the schools of cultivation and transformation of the human that preserve and renew the profound cultural legacies of the world's civilizations. We can move forward, too, with the suspicion that Berry warrants recognition as a teacher of stature engaged in an effort to renew nearly defunct wisdom traditions, traditions known in our time in the Western world mostly by their absence.

In an effort to situate himself in terms both of contemporary cultural life, and in the lineage of cultural historians, Berry came to speak of himself as a "geologist." He was quite careful not to speak of himself as a philosopher or as a theologian. Why is this important? I would argue that the coining of the term "geologist" had to do with acknowledging the primordial power and significance of the earth and of the earth dreaming. No existing term could indicate the radical departure from our contemporary ways of thinking and understanding and draw attention to taking the earth and that dreaming with ultimate seriousness. For Berry cosmology is at once science and poetry, and most fundamentally, a matter of vision and myth and epic. A geologist might then fairly be considered a visionary for the earth.

Thomas Berry, in addition to being our contemporary, is both behind us and ahead—a historian preserving the living core of wisdom traditions of human cultivation—and a visionary listening towards the future cultivation of human presence on and to the earth. There is no point in pretending that we know who might be counted as a geologist or what being one might mean. We will learn most if we keep the oddness of that notion at the forefront of our minds. We have the cosmologist, a seeming holdover from the past; and the geologist coming to us out of some unknown future.

I. Cosmology

Problematizing Cosmology

There is a tendency for us as readers, beguiled by Berry's confidence and persuasiveness, to proceed as if we knew what cosmology is. But if we slow down and think about it, if we take a good look at it, we find it to be actually a very odd business. Who can tell the universe's story? Who dares? And especially, how can humans dare—how can any human given that we are the ones who have inflicted on the earth what Berry calls the “supreme pathology”—how dare *we* claim to speak for the universe?

Further, cosmology, for Berry, is clearly neither philosophy nor theology. It is not science, though it is in intimate dialogue with science. What then is it? Part of our difficulty here is that a *new cosmology is not only a new story; it is also a new or newly recovered way of thinking.*

As modern thinkers, we are trained with the methods and categories regnant in contemporary pedagogy and disciplines—the very habits of thought and perception that are, in fact, animating and justifying the devastation of the biosphere. But their logic, the logic of exclusion, “either/or” thinking, precludes the very possibility of any cosmology that is not simply a matter of mathematics or physics. Cosmology as Berry understood it is closer to poetry than it is to either philosophy, or science. Poetic thinking, mythic method, figurative language provide alternatives to the linear logic of scientists, philosophers, and theologians. What would be considered a contradiction in the latter disciplines is an indicator of what we may call *fecund recursion* in cosmology.

We need then to be continually asking what cosmology is, even as we read Berry's presentation of the new story and its significance. We need to be continually asking how cosmology can best be understood in our intellectual milieu. And we should not assume that Berry has in any one place given as clear and decisive an account of cosmology as we might wish. It is important to remember that a great thinker, and especially one standing in a wisdom tradition, drives us on more often by his questions than by his answers.

I suggest it would be helpful here to think of cosmology as having a narrow meaning—the *universe story*—and a broader one, which is the *whole range of human responses* to, as Berry puts it in *Evening Thoughts*, “being seized by an archetypal reality in the unconscious depths of the universe.” (ET 74) Wisdom literature could then be understood as a part of Cosmology in this broader sense (with a capital “C”)—alongside another part of cosmology, the telling of the new story.

We might then think of cosmology in the narrow sense of the universe story (lower-case “c”) as an invitation to Cosmology in a broader sense, as well as a significant component of it. But a new story without dance and music, without a new economy, a new agronomy, and new banking is not, cannot be a new Cosmology. To act in a way such that we dance with the earth—that is as much Cosmology as the new story.

In this frame, Berry’s Great Work was to begin the re-invention of wisdom literature. Such a renewed wisdom tradition would take its place as a component of cosmology, even while urging the importance of cosmology, in both the narrow and the broader senses, in our individual lives and in our communities. Such a literature would be composed in part by essays like Berry’s that take a direct role in making the new cosmology a part of every facet of human life. His essays show what a renewed wisdom literature adequate to our pivotal time needs to address—just as they show one way that work might be done.

We need new means of cultivating ourselves if we are to live differently on the earth. Developing and telling the new story is one component of establishing such cultivation. But the grand sweep of the longed-for cultivation is found only in Cosmology envisioned as the comprehensive presentation of the mystery of presence of the universe in myth, ritual and dream; in liturgy, poetry and music; in wisdom literature and renewed philosophies and theologies; and in the plastic arts of all kinds—painting, sculpture, architecture.

How might we think otherwise? Cosmology encompasses many ways of knowing, many ways of celebrating. Cosmologies are not just ideas and theses; not just new sets of themes or even clusters of stories. What is needed is not just new pictures and ideas, but a

range of activities we can recognize as Cosmology. Ideas and activities undertaken with clear intention and profound awareness and always honoring the primacy of the mystery—always with, as Berry would have us remember, the universe as the singular referent.

Science in the Eye of Wisdom

Nearly every Thomas Berry essay, in one way or another enacts the union—explores the complementarities—relishes the encounter, the doubled-reading and presence of the physical and the psychic. Despite the compelling nature of many of Berry's essays, and the great force of many passages within them, it remains, however, to be seen whether such an integrated science is in fact possible. What is certain is that we do not yet have a science that can encompass the two, the psychic and the physical, the numinous and the scientific. It is likewise the case that we are not likely to have such a science for some time to come, regardless of the hopeful signs here and there to which Berry points.

Berry's argument gets stuck here in a very difficult place—as indeed it does in relation to classical wisdom traditions. The puzzle is how much to accept and how much to reject of the cultural inheritance we have received. Berry's arguments demand that he accept and champion great discoveries made by the methods and models of that very modern science that he rightly chastises elsewhere for playing a significant role in the destruction of the biosphere. Or, to come at it from the other side, Berry's arguments include a call for an integral science that, by the standards of today's science—so central to Berry's own presentations—would not be considered science at all.

Yet we may, in spite of all this, get a science that attends to a wider range of evidence—and thus takes in as evidence, themes, topics, part of what we consider now to be matters of intuition or even poetry. We may get a science that touches on the psychic and the physical, and finds a way to speak of them in an integral language. But this will not give us a Thomas Berry reading of the universe and its myriad wonders. That science will not give us the eyes of Thomas Berry, nor the heart of Thomas Berry. What makes Berry's readings of the creativity of science—his ability to recover its wonder and

profundity—is his wisdom eye. I almost even want to say his eye of analogy. Analogy opens our awareness, and we find ourselves considering a variety of related ideas and images alongside the central movement.

We can appropriately speak of the Earth as a “Living Planet.” This term is used neither literally nor simply metaphorically but as analogy, somewhat similar in its structure to the analogy expressed when we say that we “see,” an expression used primarily for physical sight but also used to connote intellectual understanding. *A proportional relationship is expressed.* The eye is to what it experiences as the intellect is to what it experiences. (SU 110, italics added)⁴

Analogy accounts for much of the distinctiveness of Berry’s practice as a thinker and a writer—a practice imbued with a gift for and appreciation of analogy as method, and an appropriation of analogy

4. The literature on analogy is of course immense. For a delightful and expansive contemporary treatment of analogy as the essence of thinking see Douglas Hofstadter and Emmanuel Sander, *Surfaces and Essences: Analogy as the Fuel and Fire of Thinking* (New York: Basic Books, 2013). For a standard work on Aquinas and analogy see R. M. McNerny, *The Logic of Analogy* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961). And for exploration of analogy in the light of 20th century understandings of language and philosophy, see David Burrell, *Analogy and Philosophical Language* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973).

Worthy of special note, because of the extraordinary importance of the Confucian tradition in the development of Berry’s entire vision of human life on the earth, is the discussion of analogy found in Tu Weiming’s *Confucian Thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1985), 67:

Analogy, in this sense, far from being an imperfect form of deductive reasoning, signifies a mode of inquiry significantly different from linear logic but no less rigorous and compelling. To think analogically is to develop self-understanding by a continuous process of appropriating insights into the human situation as a whole and one’s particular “location” in it. This involves systematic reflection and constant learning.

as a source of balance and beauty. He could hardly have put his conviction on the importance of analogy more strongly:

Analogy is the key to all human communication with the nonhuman, whether the divine or the natural world.... The effort to reduce all wisdom to a univocal language is a primary error or failure of our times. (SU 145)⁵

Analogy thus will be, indeed *must* be, the core method for cosmological discourse, because cosmology has as its entire subject matter the non-human and the relationship of the human to the non-human.

Berry makes relatively few detailed references to analogy as a strategy of thought, though he deploys it in nearly every essay. Most often he utilizes what would be termed the “analogy of proportionality.” In its most rudimentary form that would be: 2 is to 4 as 6 is to 12. Take this example from Berry’s treatment of the scientific enterprise:

When we inquire just why scientists devote such intense effort, such enduring dedication to research projects concerned with the story of the universe, one answer might be that scientists are answering the irresistible call of the Great Self of the universe to the Small Self of the individual. (ET 113)

Read this, as instructed, neither literally nor metaphorically. And then ask who else understands modern science this way? Effort, dedication, the universe—put these alongside one another and the mind can jump easily enough, moving analogically, to a connection between Great Self and Small Self. But this is not a move that can be made scientifically or analytically. Yet it will only be such a wisdom-

5. Berry’s entire intellectual effort was, in one reading, a matter of persevering in analogical inquiry in the face of the inevitable misreadings and lack of comprehension such an inquiry occasions. Analogy gives us a gestalt, where logic gives us an equation. And wisdom, in all its manifestations, arrives in configurations of habits, ideas, images, inclinations—arrives, that is to say, in gestalts.

view that can open into the Ecozoic era and guide its development. It will be such a view that informs the Great Work and calls us into a new science. Once again:

Any significant thought or speech about the universe finds its expression through such imaginative powers. Even our scientific terms have a highly mythic content—such words as *energy*, *life*, *matter*, *form*, *universe*, *gravitation*, *evolution*. Even such terms as *atom*, *nucleus*, *electron*, *molecule*, *cell*, *organism*. Each of these terms spills over into metaphor and mystery as soon as it is taken seriously. (DE 199)

What is suggested here is, in effect, an “archeology” of scientific terminology as its terms arise analogically. For a beautiful example of wisdom put to work on science, we can take up Berry’s interpretation of gravity.

The rate of emergence [of the universe] was such that the consequent curvature of the universe was sufficiently closed to hold the universe together within its gravitational bonds. (SU 125)

Recall that there is nothing more central in the development of modern physics—and, concomitantly, of the paradigm of modern science—than the analysis of gravity. While thinking Galileo, Newton, and Einstein, read what comes next:

This bonding of the universe, whereby every reality of the universe attracts and is attracted to every other being in the universe, was the condition for the rise of human affection. It was the comprehensive expression of the divine love that pervades the universe in its every aspect and enables the creative processes of the universe to continue. (SU 125)

So one might say, let us have an integral science that constitutes a portion of our wisdom literature, which contributes texts of subtlety and scope and wonder. But then let us also have texts that read the new science with the eye of wisdom. And among those texts, let us

have some that tell a new story of the universe as told by the new science—a story read, if you will, by wisdom's eye. Let us differentiate, that is, between scientific thinking and the mind of analogy... and then take both.

True, there are scientists who also make contributions to cosmology. Berry names a few: Lewis Thomas, David Bohm, Rachel Carson, Ira Prigogine, Freeman Dyson, and Bernard Lovell. But the vast, vast majority of our scientists are not capable of this. And most would in fact see avoiding cosmology as understood by Berry as being critical to the integrity of scientific method and to the soundness of scientific conclusions. An approach to the universe through the lens of cosmogenesis may one day issue in a science as aligned with wisdom as, say, the Islamic science of the medieval period. But that day appears to be a very long way off indeed. What we need now, and likely will for centuries, are people who can offer wisdom readings of the science we do have. And, I would argue, this is the special duty of those who, like Thomas Berry, are producing wisdom literature in our time. The issue is not how to turn science into wisdom; but rather, it is how to read the wisdom in the science we have. Being able to accomplish readings that honor both science and wisdom is a rare gift. Berry had it: "The problem of mass extinction is not a one-species problem. And humans are not alone in trying to solve it."⁶ Who else speaks this way of the crisis of geological dimensions we find in the biosphere?

If we hope to cultivate people who can read as Berry did, then it is to the classical wisdom traditions we must turn, for they have been and remain—in spite of their egregious failures—the best examples of how to read both the inner and the outer worlds at once. Only the classical teaching traditions have access to techniques and resources sufficient to train our eyes to wisdom.⁷

6. From notebooks of Ann Berry-Somers. Personal communication to the author.

7. It is important to attend very carefully to the subtlety of the presentation Berry makes of the potential contribution of modern science to an emergent wisdom. Note, for instance, that each time he mentions modern science in his essay "Creative Continuity," ET 59-74, he introduces a caveat:

The new origin story, the supreme achievement of the scientific

The Mode of Human Being

Berry introduces a distinctive phrase to talk about the place of the human in the universe. How are we to understand what Berry means when he speaks of the human as “*a mode of being of the universe*”? He begins, as he often does, by seeking guidance from Chinese tradition:

We can see, for example, the importance of the early Chinese sense of the human as the *hsin* of the universe. The word *hsin*, written as a pictograph of the human heart, can be translated as either “mind” or “heart.” So the Chinese phrase defines the human as the heart of the universe, or as the consciousness of the universe. (SU 74)

effort of these centuries, *must be completed by a sense of the psychic, as well as the physical, dimensions* of the evolutionary process from the beginning. ET 69, italics added.

An *integral creation story* is available in the modern scientific account of the origin and development of the universe, because this account of the physical universe is *completed by an awareness of its numinous and psychic aspects* from the beginning. ET 69-70, italics added.

Hence the need for more comprehensive articulation of the epic of evolution. For there is likely no way into the future that does not take as its basis the *more integral form* of this new vision of the universe. ET 70, italics added.

The point is that the achievement of this “integral form of the epic of evolution,” this completion of science’s physical accounts with “an awareness of its numinous and psychic aspects,” cannot happen without the resources of the classical wisdom traditions. While it is true that the egregious failures of the “humanistic-religious traditions” enumerated above—and indeed, along with various others, in many of Berry’s essays—have made any effort to bring forward the disciplines of the classical traditions problematic, none of the failures exhaust the resources of those traditions. The modern scientific view, unless utterly transformed by the wisdoms of which Berry has spoken, will assuredly continue its role in the devastation of the planet. For modern science is no less ambivalent or flawed as an inheritance and guide than the classical wisdoms. The combination of the two, Berry argues, is what is essential if there is to be any way forward.

From there he moves to a more abstract presentation:

This might lead us to consider whether we should identify the human primarily as a mode of being of the universe or as a particular being in the universe. While we need to do both, *the sense of the human as a mode of being of the whole*, more than as a particular being in the whole, enables us to have a more meaningful perspective on the human and on all human activities. (ET 61, italics added)⁸

Beginning with an analogy we are next invited to turn to philosophical formulation and to talk about the place of the human in the universe. In the passage above, then, a “mode” is an aspect of a whole, but essentially a part of it; and a “particular being” is understood to be a discrete thing, having its own distinctive identity and meaning apart from that of the whole. Berry does here note that for some purposes and in some times, we might need to attend to the distinctiveness of the human, to study the human as a “particular being.” But what he wants to insist on here is that the human derives its meaning and purpose *entirely from the universe*. For it is just this continuity, this indwelling of the universe by the human, that stands most in need of recognition, and emphatic emphasis, in the face of the realities of catastrophic devastation of the earth by projects and priorities of those who do not recognize themselves as integral aspects of an all-compassing universe.

And yet, precisely because so much rests on understanding the relationship of the universe and the human, we must examine carefully and closely the nuances of Berry's articulation of the mode of being of the human. Is there any way in which the human has a special place, though an utterly integral one, in the universe? A place like the one the heart holds in the embodied human life? That the answer here might be “yes” is suggested by his presentation of the relationship of the human mode of being to the universe's dimension of consciousness.

8. See SU 74 for more on *hsin*, where Berry states: “It can be translated by a single word or by a phrase that conveys both feeling and understanding.” Berry also notes there that *hsin* could be translated as “the psyche of the universe.”

Another way of proceeding is to begin with human consciousness and to say that we are intimately aware of the human psychic mode of being. There is no way of accounting for the human mode of being and functioning other than through the prior structure and functioning of the universe itself. If the human has a psychic-spiritual mode of being, then the universe must be a psychic-spirit-producing process. (ET 65)

The affirmation of the principle of continuity for all beings, coupled with the awareness that the human being has a psychic dimension, means that the universe itself must have a psychic dimension that is shared by all beings. Next comes a critical move for understanding that mode of being called the human:

The later more complex and conscious realities of the universe give us deeper insight into the structure of the universe than do the elementary parts out of which the later wholes and modes of consciousness emerge. (ET 65)

This is to say human beings give us more understanding of the psychic dimension of the universe than subatomic particles or the first cells of life. And then there is emphasis on the point that the psychic dimension must have been present since the beginning of the universe. This is required by the principle of continuity in a universe that develops through time, out of and by its own creativity.

Indeed, since the universe is a singular reality, consciousness must, from its beginning, be a dimension of reality, even a dimension of the primordial atom that carries within itself the total destiny of the universe. (ET 65)

The lens turns now to focus on the human:

To study the universe without the human is to study an abstraction. There is no universe without the human and no human without the universe, although the revelation of the human form of the universe did not take place in any adequate

way until some two hundred thousand years ago, with the appearance of *Homo sapiens*. (ET 65)

It has taken two hundred thousand years for the full development of the human to occur. But, given that development, it is the human that now gives us our most decisive insights into the consciousness dimension of the universe.

The human might be described as that being in whom the universe reflects on and celebrates itself and the deep mysteries of existence in a *special mode of conscious self-awareness*. Our human role is to enable the universe to reflect on itself in a *special mode of consciousness*. (SU 95, italics added)

And again:

In this perception the human is seen as a mode of being of the universe as well as a distinctive being in the universe. Stated somewhat differently, the human is that being in whom the universe comes to itself in a *special mode of conscious reflection*. (DE 16, italics added)

And once more:

The human needs to be seen as that being in whom the universe and especially the planet Earth becomes conscious of itself in a *special mode of reflective self-awareness*. (ET 71, italics added)

What is it about the human that makes it a special mode of being? And does being special, in whatever sense, make the human fundamentally unlike other modes of being? The blue heron and the valley are also modes of being of the universe. But is the difference between the human mode and the blue heron mode more significant than the difference between the blue heron mode and the valley mode? The reason one might be led to think this is the case lies in phrases we find throughout Berry's essays: *conscious self-awareness*,

conscious reflection, and *reflective self-awareness*. The human allows the universe to *reflect* on itself, to *celebrate* itself, to *come* to itself, to *become conscious* of itself.

Since, as we have already seen, there is a consciousness dimension in every aspect of the universe, it cannot be consciousness alone that distinguishes the human. That which does so would have to be that special mode of consciousness that entails “self-awareness” that is “*conscious*” and “*reflective*.” But rather than making the familiar move of modern philosophy – the move of Descartes or Kant – into an examination of human subjectivity, Berry turns *outward* to the communion of subjects to investigate human consciousness. It is in such outward movements, he argues, that we find the meaning of this self-awareness of the human that becomes the self-awareness of the universe. It is in this *activity* that “we experience the universe as a communion of subjects, not as a collection of objects.”⁹ This is key: To understand what is special about the human mode—about “*conscious self-awareness*,” “*conscious reflection*” and “*reflective self-awareness*”—we go outside the self and outside the human towards the Earth. We enter consciously the community that is the Universe.

Our role is to be the instrument whereby the valley celebrates itself. The valley is both the object and the subject of the celebration. It is our high privilege to articulate this celebration in the stories we tell and in the songs we sing. (DE 179)

The human song celebrates the valley as object of human response of delight. This we would expect. But what is surprising is the idea that the valley is not only an “object” of human awareness, but is itself a “subject” that is able to celebrate itself *through* human song and human story. This is what is distinctive about the human mode. Which gives us, in turn, a special responsibility in and to the universe.

Humans are now involved in an effort at self-understanding of the entire universe, of the Earth, and of all living creatures. (ET 71)

9. SU 86.

The crux is this: That we not only think, but that in turn the universe and every mode of being within it can think through us, can celebrate through us, and can become reflexive and self-aware through us. And this in a way with humans that is not the case for other beings, including other living beings.

It is then especially tragic that we misunderstand our relationship to the earth and to the universe. If humans are called, in some very particular sense, to carry the role of the mirror of the universe, to take on the responsibility not just to be conscious of and to reflect on ourselves, but to do the same for the entire universe, then we are squandering an opportunity the enormity of which we cannot begin to fathom.

This special role in the universe is consistent with the ways in which we differ from other living beings:

As humans we function differently from other living species, which are determined in their life patterns and in their association among themselves and with other species and have much less of that psychic development we identify as human consciousness. (SU 148)

Part of our uniqueness is that we are imperfect at our inception in a way that requires the development of human culture for completion.¹⁰

In its raw, uncultivated state, the human being is not satisfactory. . . . It must be altered to a degree so great that it is described as a new birth, a truly human and spiritual birth. . . . This is the meaning of initiation rituals among indigenous peoples, of the Hindu bestowal of the sacred cord, and of Christian baptism. (SU 9)

Indeed, the uniqueness of the human is such that it takes special preparation by the earth itself for the distinctive human mode of being to be able to appear, with its capacity for the unique kind of consciousness it manifests:

10. See section on "Two Codings" below for fuller development of this point.

This period, the Cenozoic, the last 65 million years, has been the culmination of the most brilliant phase of life's expansion on the planet. Only at the end of this period, when the planet was at its most gorgeous expression, was it possible for humans to appear. (SU 134)

The human capacity for a special mode of consciousness is drawn out of the human by the earth's beauty.

For only in a world of such magnificence could the human mode of being be fully developed, only then could the divine be properly manifested, only in such a world could the burden of human sensitivity and responsibility be sustained, the human condition be endured, and the constant healing needed by the human soul be effected. (SU 134)¹¹

All beings are connected to all beings. But the human capacity for reflection means it has what we may call a doubling relationship with each item in the universe. We might say that *the human relates to other beings both as a fellow-being and as a mirror in which that being looks at itself*.¹² It is in just this sense, as I read Berry, that the human is a mode of being of the universe—a special mode.

True, Berry also makes the argument that *every* being is at once integral and unique. Every species has a distinctive, unique place in the universe.

Everything within this curvature [of space] has not only its individual mode of being but its universe mode of being, since the universe is integral with itself throughout its entire extension in space and throughout the full sequence of its transformations in time. (SU 113)

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11. "We need a way of designating the Earth-human world in its continuity and identity rather than exclusively by its discontinuity and difference." SU 73.
 12. "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*." ET 146, italics added.

Time itself is community. As is space.

Indeed, nothing can be itself without everything else. Everything exists in multiple dimensions. A tree is a physical being, a living being, an Earth being, and a universe being. (SU 113)

Each member, every individual is multi-layered and has itself distinctive and unique roles. But then, and totally without contradiction, all individual instances together constitute the single inter-subjective communion that is the universe. We have, as Thomas Aquinas taught, an extraordinary perfection.

Every mode of being is needed, for every being shares in the great community of existence. In this community of existence we discover our own fulfillment. (SU 96)

All particular beings participate in the community of beings that is the universe. But for Berry the uniqueness of the human has an extra layer, a further dimension: In the human mode of consciousness, the psychic-spiritual being of the universe receives its most distinctive expression. The human is the breakthrough point for evolution and consciousness, a break through *into* reflexive consciousness. And therefore a mode of the universe in a sense that other beings are not.¹³

13. Just as the Earth is a planet in a sense that other planets are not:

On Earth we find the fulfillment of the primordial tendency of the universe toward clearly articulated and highly differentiated entities. Earth astounds us with the vast differences between itself and the other planets. SU 110.

This provides us with the way of dealing with the special role of the Earth as revealing the deepest realms of existence with perfection unequalled in any other mode of being we know of. For in the Earth we have our most magnificent display of diversity caught up into the coherence of an unparalleled unity. SU 115.

But there is another way to approach this that does not reserve a privileged place for human beings in the expression of consciousness-dimension of the universe. Berry has taught us that the human is one living being among others, but the one being that jumps evolution, and the earth itself, indeed the universe itself, into consciousness, just as the first living beings jumped the universe to a new level, the level of a “living” universe out of the “non-living” universe. Could we not then expect that consciousness, having now manifested in the human, might continue to manifest in more and more complex forms that run as far beyond the human as the human has run beyond the first living beings?

It is not clear that Berry grants this as a possibility, or that he would welcome it. Neither is it clear that he rules it out. What we can say at this juncture is that Berry’s position on the place of human in the universe is likely to be misread in one of two different directions:

- (a) Essential continuity of the human with the universe—the human understood in terms of the theoretical framework of evolution and understood as having no more special role in the development of the universe than any other species or form of life or form of being.
- (b) Essential discontinuity between the human and the rest of the universe—the human understood as fundamentally distinguished from and/or transcending the rest of the natural order by virtue of rationality, or soul, or volition.¹⁴

And then there will be those who say that Berry is neither (a), nor (b), because he claims both are true. He claims the human is at once continuous with the rest of nature, and yet holds a distinctive responsibility for the direction of the growth of the universe. For such readers this amounts to a fundamental contradiction at the core

14. Compare Berry’s own version of these two directions in his essay on Teilhard de Chardin: “In its modern orientations the human mind seems to be caught between a downward reductionism of the mechanists and the upward reductionism of the spiritualists.” Thomas Berry, “Teilhard in the Ecological Age,” in *Teilhard in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Arthur Fabel and Donald St. John (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003), 66.

of his position and of his account of the new cosmology. And whichever camp of critics one falls into, neither projecting the coming of a whole new science, nor leaning heavily on the traditional practice of story is likely to be received as a satisfactory response.

But these critics, and we as readers trying to follow Berry here, are asking the wrong questions. Or, perhaps better, we are all looking for the wrong kind of answer. We are looking for a position on the human, established by contemporary methods of argument—induction and deduction. We expect to find marshalling of evidence, empirical and textual. We think Berry will give us a scientific account or a philosophical one. In fact he gives us neither. A Thomas Berry essay is not science and not philosophy; likewise, it is not poetry or myth. He asks us, instead, to consider his work as cosmology, whose fundamental structure is that of analogy.

I see only one way to hold together this doubled-presentation of the human in such a way that it is not experienced or understood as a fundamental contradiction, or as some fundamental, crippling ambiguity in Berry's position, or as resolvable in some new envisioned but not yet manifested science. And that is to claim that Berry has *intentionally* placed us just here in the midst of these perplexities. He is asking us to step into the "impossibility" of the human as totally unique and totally continuous and think and feel and dream and act that impossibility. It would not be the first time a wisdom-teacher assigned his students a *kōan*.

The Great Responsibility

There is an immense question at the core of the Great Work: "How can humans enter the future with some responsible use of their creative freedom?" As if anticipating the very argument being made here, Berry notes that "there is a tendency to revert back to the traditional disciplines of past cultural developments." (ET 66) But, he says, "The difficulty with this solution is that these humanistic and religious traditions themselves are largely responsible for the situation that has evolved." (ET 67) He lists three critical inadequacies of these traditions:

1. “the placing of the divine as transcendent to the natural world;”
2. “the establishment of the human also as transcendent to the natural world;”
3. “the doctrine of an infrahistorical millennial age.” (ET 67)

None of these criticisms of the classical traditions are especially novel, and their applicability to developments in Indo-European cultures is not easily disputed. When the divine is not only understood but *lived* as transcendent, the natural order, its laws and its beauties, inevitably are subordinated – Berry’s word here is “diminished.” Humans, being modeled on the divine transcendent, and having a special relationship to the transcendent divine, are understood as transcending all the rest of the natural world. When this transcendence is understood as “sovereignty over,” the *lived* consequences are beyond comprehension. All nature is at the disposal of human beings without regard to the intrinsic right to being of anything humans have sovereignty over. Additionally, there is the sense that some future moment in history—the dynamics of which may be understood in terms of either a theology of history or a philosophy of history—will bring to fulfillment human being human and the natural order. All meaning, order and beauty in the present time are then to be discounted when seen in the light of this privileged time to come.

But then, in one of those characteristic turns that mark Berry’s essays, he transforms this relatively academic-sounding list into deeply-piercing insight into the inadequacy not just of our moral thinking, but of our very moral perception:

The inadequacy of the humanistic and religious past can be seen quite clearly from the ethical issue in its traditional context, where we perceive the evil of suicide and homicide, and especially the horror of genocide. Yet we have little objection to biocide or geocide. The very magnitude of such activities escapes us. (ET 67-68)

We do not have enough imagination to even begin to grasp how

dire our situation is—and just *that* is how dire it is. And only the new universe story, Berry is arguing, can offer the breadth of vision and the sense of the enormity of time necessary for re-imagining the moral life.

Berry next goes on to indicate that these failures of imagination and vision are to be found not only in the “humanistic-religious traditions,” but also in the practices and policies of our major institutions and professions.

All four—the political, religious, intellectual, and economic establishments—are failing in their basic purposes for the same reason. They all presume a radical discontinuity between the nonhuman and the human modes of being, with all the rights and all inherent values given to the human. (GW 72)

Laid out here is the fundamental link Berry sees between our current political and economic situation and the major failures of our received wisdom traditions. The partitioning of the universe, the structures of transcendence and hierarchy that Berry sees as characteristic of the “humanistic-religious traditions,” unfolds in this reading of the history of the modern world into a lived order that prizes the human above all else, to the point of being willing to sacrifice all else for the sake of the human.

He summarizes his critique of our past and present resources and practices by speaking to the “demonic aspect” of and the “cunning” behind all our furious efforts to re-make the earth for ourselves (ET 69). The dramatic term “demonic” urges us to recognize that the human is just now in the thrall of enormous powers well beyond ready comprehension, and well beyond the scope of any moral, social, or imaginative resources we have readily at hand. Or, in other words, it is because this distorted vision of the human in the world is the *root dream of our modern culture* that it has such overweening power. Which, in turn, means the only commensurate power will be that of a vision rooted in, and nourished by, dream—not analysis, not policy, not wisdom literature, but dream (ET 68-69).¹⁵

Take it as given that human beings stand now as the major threat

15. See also DE 202-11.

to the balance and order and survival of many dimensions of life and beauty on the earth. How and where, then, can we see the earth moving to heal itself in relation to human beings, and to heal human being as well? Or, put differently, what are the processes, agents, “mechanisms” involved in human efforts to heal the human community and to heal the community that is the earth? Another way of asking this question may be useful: If the new story, the new cosmology, is itself one creative manifestation of the human, how is the new story itself related to the earth’s creativity? Or, in very short form: How is cosmology renewed?

Our Doubled-Coding

According to Berry, every activity of every human being at every turn has been and will be the result of a two-fold coding: genetic DNA coding and transgenetic cultural coding.

The creative genius of the earlier life processes of the Earth, as well as its principal instrument of education, is genetic coding.... The ultimate creative genius of the Earth at this level is the emergence of the total biospheric interaction of genetic coding and the mutation processes whereby new codes are developed. (ET 71)

Our genetic coding, Berry claims, provides the basis for the development of our transgenetic—that is, linguistic and cultural—coding. It is the ongoing and radical creative potential carried in our DNA that underwrites the creative potential and possibilities of human culture.

With the emergence of hominoid life the Earth community brought forth a genetic coding for the transgenetic processes that identify the human level of cultural development. The human being is genetically coded for speech.... The entire complex of human culture is genetically coded. (ET 72)

The genetic coding thus provides the “infrastructure” of the cul-

tural coding, if you will. And that “transgenetic coding” in turn governs the entire progression of human culture:

Over the centuries this cultural coding of human communities has been articulated in its early Paleolithic tribal phase, in its Neolithic village phase, then in its classical civilizational phase, when the more populous centers arose with their more spacious architecture, their written literatures, their more elaborate religious, political, and economic establishments. (DE 201)

Yet, like all things temporal, even the grandest of articulations and manifestations of the possibilities open by and to the cultural coding lose their force and cogency.

These achievements, which are sometimes designated as the full realization of the human mode of being, have a certain tendency to disintegrate in the manner that we are presently experiencing. (DE 201)

When the transgenetic coding is at a dead end, human beings can go back under and behind that coding and access a whole new dimension of creativity, the creativity of the earth itself as that manifests in our genetic make-up, our DNA. That then is the answer to the question of how human consciousness can get outside itself to (re-)create itself, to renew its cosmology, in the deepest and broadest understanding we can muster of that term.¹⁶

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16. The key move in this sequence is rooted oddly enough not in any science, but in the writings of a historian and philosopher of culture, one who was a careful student of the wisdom texts of western culture. And one known quite well to Berry, who wrote his doctoral dissertation on him:

Giambattista Vico, the eighteenth-century Neapolitan interpreter of human history, considered that the eighteenth century was the period when a second barbarism, a barbarism of refinement, erupted in the civilizational enterprise. A new descent into a more primitive state must then come about, a reimmersion in the natural forces out of which our cultural achievements came about originally. (DE 201)

Our cultural resources have lost their integrity. They cannot be trusted. What is needed is not transcendence but “inscendence,” *not the brain but the gene*. (DE 208, italics added)

Most fundamentally then: *The knowledge of how to be on the earth lies already and always in our DNA—which is to say, in our bodies.*

How, in a time dominated by demonic permutations of transgenetic cultural coding, are we to restore the balance with the genetic, with our bodies?

As all creativity involves being seized by an archetypal reality in the unconscious depths of the universe, as creative religious personalities were seized by revelatory experiences of the divine whereby they created the religious cultures of the past, so now we are being seized by a new revelatory experience that is coming to us in the new origin story and its fulfillment in this latest communion phase of the universe. (ET 74)

Berry’s hopefulness, which he would convey to us, rests in large part upon the conviction that at just this historical juncture in the life of the human species and of the planet Earth, “we are being seized by a new revelatory experience.” The moments, the periods when human communities and individuals are “seized by an archetypal reality in the unconscious depths of the universe” can usher in new worlds, new eras. He speaks of the “emerging ecological phase,” the fundamental characteristic of which will be the “conscious integration of the entire range of all those codings that govern the living and the nonliving systems of the universe.” (ET 72) This is the decisive moment in the human venture in which we stand and act and hope. But we do this with the awareness that we do not face this immense prospect alone:

We are an immediate concern of every other being in the universe. Ultimately our guidance on any significant issue must emerge from this comprehensive source. (DE 195)

And the community—the communion of subjects that Berry says the universe is—is right at hand: “Nor is this source distant

from us. The universe is so immediate to us, is such an intimate presence, that it escapes our notice.” (DE 195) We are, in short, that communion—our bodies themselves are communions of billions of beings. We ourselves are composed of cells of more beings than we can possibly imagine. This is the wonder; this is the mystery; this is the universe.

II. Wisdom

Transforming Traditions

What would it mean to say that Berry's essays are best understood as wisdom teaching? To proceed, it will be helpful to make some provisional distinctions. I will take “classical tradition,” “wisdom tradition,” and “wisdom teaching tradition” as referring to the same phenomenon. And that would be, as Berry explains very carefully, collections of texts and disciplines—deeply interrelated and mutually re-enforcing—passed on from generation-to-generation within a given culture.

The most primordial intuitions of humankind, as expressed in myths and spiritual disciplines, communicate to us across the ages—at least in outline—this cosmological context for cultural development. (SU 22)

These texts and disciplines address fundamental questions and agonies of human beings, questions of how as humans we are to live and act and see—on the earth, in the universe. These spiritual disciplines will include ritual, meditation, and prayer practices, spiritual exercises, social duties, and scholarly disciplines. Texts will typically include sacred scriptures, canonical teaching texts, and interpretations and commentaries on these core texts.

Berry spells out the development of such tradition as that process is widely understood. First we have the formation of the sacred scriptures—or, perhaps more accurately their “reception”:

These visionary experiences that took place in mythic arche-

typal modes were articulated into mythic and historical narratives, in ritual, and in wisdom reflections. (SU 191)

Note that the shamanic encounters with the cosmos are understood to have come before scripture and commentary. What we may think of as canonical texts are generated at this time. And next there is wisdom literature:

Then came the more explanatory works, the commentaries on the sacred revelations, and the mystical disciples. (SU 191)

Such texts mediate between those who would be shaped by them and the sacred texts themselves, which are often cryptic, elusive, mysterious, demanding, and thus in need of commentary.

Ever since that time [of the composition of scriptural texts], humans have sustained and developed the greater cultures by constant reinterpretation of these ancient written scriptures in the light of new historical experiences. The constant renewal of civilizations, their very life process, has been associated with, and largely governed by, reinterpretation of these same texts. (SU 22-23)

It is to be emphasized that the role of these “reinterpretations” is by no means a passive one in relation to sacred and canonical texts. To some degree, *every piece of wisdom literature defines anew the tradition in which it lies.*

Given that ours is a time that human cultures stand in desperate need of renewal, we would expect to find that a critical component in the Great Work would be “constant reinterpretation” of such wisdom as we received, reinterpretation “in the light of new historical experiences.” My argument here is that Berry’s essays are themselves exemplars of such reinterpretations—as well as a call for massive efforts of reinterpretation on the part of communities all over the planet.

We need now to look at the components of classical wisdom traditions, and the roles and types of wisdom literatures within them.

To do this, we will take as brief “case studies” two traditions Berry knew well: Hellenistic philosophy and Confucianism. We will rely on Pierre Hadot’s account of Hellenistic philosophy and Berry’s own account of Confucianism. Both traditions sought to pass on from generation-to-generation teaching that explains the place of the human in the universe, and training in the practices and disciplines of cultivation needed to hold that place properly and fruitfully. The schools that arose in these traditions around their central texts were places for learning how to live. And this training was not just for the living of one’s own life but, especially in the Stoic and Confucian schools, for living in community—that is, an education for politics, for family, for teaching.

Pierre Hadot, the French scholar who has done so much to revolutionize our approach to Hellenistic philosophy, puts it this way:

The Stoics, for instance, declared explicitly that philosophy, for them, was an exercise. In their view, philosophy did not consist in teaching an abstract theory—much less in the exegesis of texts—but rather in the art of living. It is a concrete attitude and determinate lifestyle which engages the whole of existence. (Hadot 82-83)

Considering Chinese tradition, Berry put the same point this way:

Thus the entire Confucian teaching can be considered as a tradition of personal self-cultivation, as the art of self-awareness, as a mode of self-discipline. The purpose of all this was to become one who immediately and instinctively, without hesitation or reasoning, spontaneously manifests in his or her actions an authentic human personality.¹⁷

The unshaped, uncultivated human life is one subject to violent reversals, sharp pivots in mood and behavior. The person living

17. Thomas Berry, “Affectivity in Classical Confucian Tradition,” in Tu Weiming and Mary Evelyn Tucker, eds., *Confucian Spirituality* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003) 1:107.

such a life remains unprotected against the whims of the fates. Whether that state is spoken of somewhat benignly as the gyrations of “monkey mind,” or more stringently as ignorance, or more direly as the fundamental illness, the unformed state is understood in wisdom teaching to be a matter of extraordinary and unnecessary suffering, both for the individual and the communities, on all levels, in which they live. In wisdom schools one finds students who seek cultivation and freedom; and one finds teachers who are masters of the disciplines for living and models of the cultivated life. Teachers in these traditions offer their students what generations upon generations have found curative.

Hadot makes this observation:

The exercise of meditation allows us to be ready at the moment when an unexpected—and perhaps dramatic—circumstance occurs. In the exercise called *praemeditatio malorum*, we are to represent to ourselves poverty, suffering, and death. (Hadot 85)

First there is the matter of preparation of mind and of spirit. Next an interpretive frame is to be learned.

We must confront life’s difficulties face to face, remembering that they are not evils, since they do not depend on us. (Hadot 85)

And this interpretation is most readily absorbed, takes the most direct role in formation, when it is taken on not in treatises or essays, but in maxims or slogans.

This is why we must engrave striking maxims in our memory, so that, when the time comes, they can help us accept such events, which are, after all, part of the course of nature; we will thus have these maxims and sentences “at hand.” What we need are persuasive formulae or arguments (*epilogismoi*) which we can repeat to ourselves in difficult circumstances, so as to check movements of fear, anger, or sadness. (Hadot 85)

We need striking maxims so we can recall them in times of great stress and danger, and persuasive maxims so they will remain convincing to us in the face of the worst perils of living.

Moreover, each commentary was considered a spiritual exercise—not only because the search for the meaning of a text really does demand the moral qualities of modesty and love for the truth, but also because the reading of each philosophical text was supposed to produce a transformation in the person reading or listening to the commentary.¹⁸

And in what context are these commentaries, these specimens of wisdom literature, produced?

They [a philosopher's works] are the products of a philosophical school, in the most concrete sense of the term, in which a master forms his disciples, trying to guide them to self-transformation and -realization. (Hadot 104-05)

Again, we tend to think of philosophy as either the complex metaphysical systems that constitute the reading lists in most introductions to philosophy, or the close analysis of problems or statements. What we have to recognize is that in a wisdom tradition the

18. Pierre Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, trans. Michael Chase (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 155. Texts are thus sources of sustenance and rejuvenation, when approached properly:

The exercise of meditation and memorization requires nourishment. This is where the more specifically intellectual exercises, as enumerated by Philo, come in: reading, listening, research, and investigation. It is a relatively simple matter to provide food for meditation: one could read the sayings of the poets and philosophers, for instance, or the *apophthegmata*.

Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, trans. Michael Chase (Oxford, UK : Blackwell Publishing 1995), 86.

methods utilized depart as much if not more from modern methods as the contents of the teachings do from the themes that have dominated philosophical work for the last 250 years. Hadot again:

Such a [philosophical] method, consisting not in setting forth a system, but in giving precise responses to precisely limited questions, is the heritage—lasting throughout antiquity—of the dialectical method; that is to say, of the dialectical *exercise*. (Hadot 106)

Dialectic and analysis take a central place in these schools not as methods for securing epistemological foundations, but as exercises oriented to right action, to the development of character and virtue. This last is the dominant activity, the whole focus of all the disciplines, the teachings, the schools in Hellenistic philosophy.

Berry provides a similar approach to Chinese tradition:

The basic solution offered was to establish, first, a ritual order of life in which the basic virtues would be cultivated according to an established style of conduct...by providing specific training in these disciplines of individual, family and social living in a meaningful ceremonial context; second, to establish a humanistic tradition for education of the young that would center on the understanding of humans and the manner in which their special qualities are developed in an overall scheme of reality.¹⁹

There is training to develop habits and norms, and there is education to cultivate the gifts of mind and heart. Without these, human beings face chaos within themselves, social chaos, and chaos in their relationships with Heaven and Earth.

The Chinese were quite conscious of the experience that we describe as self-alienation. Recovery of the self was the fundamental object of human cultivation and all spiritual discipline. (SU 41)

19. Berry, "Affectivity," 110-111.

Schools and scholars preserve traditional texts and teachings, carrying them forward to new generations, but with the singular goal always of formation, of the development of human beings towards responsible, creative action in the social world, the natural order, and the cosmic order.

Tu Weiming, an important contemporary scholar of Confucianism, presents the centrality of the text and the formation of the individual in similar fashion:

By implication, the centrality of learning (*hsüeh*) in the *Analects* must also be interpreted as a process of training the self to be responsive to the world and culture at large. Thus, one studies *Poetry* (*Shih*) in order to acquire “language” (*yen*) as a necessary means of communication in the civilized world, and *Ritual* (*Li*) in order to internalize the “form of life” characteristic of one’s own community. Accordingly, learning is a way to be human and not simply a program of making oneself empirically knowledgeable.²⁰

20. Tu Weiming, *Confucian Thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation*, 68. Further:

To turn the mode of questioning from the impersonal self to the personal I requires intellectual sophistication as well as existential commitment. The safe distance between what I as a person speculate about in propositional language and what I speak as a concrete human being is no longer there. I am exposed, for what I think I know is now inevitably intertwined with what I do know. If I am wrong, it is not simply because what I have proposed is untenable but also because of a defect in the way I live.

Ibid., 57.

And again:

The whole process seeks to enrich the self, to enhance its strength and to refine its wisdom so that one can be considerate to others and honest with oneself.

Ibid.

Scholarship then meant something different from the scholarly study of texts currently dominant in the academy. In ancient wisdom there is no pretense of objectivity or of not being engaged. Indeed, both Hellenistic and Chinese traditions were all about engagement, all about action. They were paradoxically thus also about detachment and contemplation, about not being ruled by reactivity and near-sighted responses. Detachment was needed, not in favor of some value-neutral ideal, but in order to effect true transformation of self and world. This is a scholarship aimed at preserving the memory of great texts in a given tradition, because these texts are basis for cultivation, which cultivation is in turn the foundation of right action.²¹

A Teaching School

So what have we learned from these two very brief case studies of wisdom traditions that is relevant to the Great Work?

First: We must be mindful of the fact that the processes of cultural foundation and transmission of the major civilizational centers arc over millennia. The classic example of this, in addition to the evolution of Chinese cosmology that Berry so often cites with particular approbation, is the development of the Upanishads out of Vedic hymns, and out of the Upanishads, the development of the major branches of Indian philosophy.

If in thinking this way, we were called on to give classic examples of traditions undergoing massive transformation in the face of enormous, catastrophic political and social conditions, we could turn to the development of rabbinic Judaism after the destruction of the Temple and throughout the Diaspora. We might also think of the creative transformations of classical Greek philosophy in the hands of Epicurus, Epictetus, and Plotinus as the Athenian Empire gradually gave way to the dominance of Rome.

Likewise, we should recall those enormously fruitful encounters

21. Needless to say, learning in the Confucian perspective is basically a moral self-cultivation. It is a gradual process of building up one's character by making oneself receptive to the symbolic resources of one's own culture and responsive to the sharable values of one's own society. *Ibid.*, 68.

in the medieval period in the West of the traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam with the scientific and medical traditions stemming from Greek natural philosophy. Maimonides, Ibn Rushd, and Al-Farabi, as well as Aquinas, all come immediately to mind.

These are the models and this is the scale we should have in mind when thinking in our time of the renewal of the possibilities for human culture and human being. This is the level of transformation Berry says those engaged in the Great Work should hope for and believe in, in the face of the rapidly changing political, religious, and scientific realities we face.

Second: What we will need to go forward will be schools where disciplines and texts aimed at cultivation (Confucian) and formation (Hellenistic) can take place. And we will need teachers for such schools. What we do have is a sense of the general frame of the teachings needed—for balance and detachment; for engagement and compassion; and for seeing ourselves as part of the larger whole. We remember in particular that for Stoics and well as for Confucians, social action was a key discipline. It was something to be practiced just as the breathing exercises of the yogis, the awareness meditations of the Buddhists, and the spiritual exercises taught by the Jesuits.

Though daunting, this task is by no means impossible. As Berry notes:

Whatever the magnitude of the task and however vast the required imaginative range [in our current crisis] we cannot really say that the work is proportionally so much greater or its objectives so different from the objectives sought and mission fulfilled during the early history of the classical civilizations. There was then, as now, the challenge of awakening to human meaning and purpose within a large and encompassing universe. (SU 21-22)

Yet this stark truth remains: We have as yet no living tradition capable of cultivating people who can live on the earth in our time. And, tragically, Berry argues, in large part because of this, we are now approaching rapidly one of those decisive, pivotal moments,

not just in human history but *in geology*. If the pivot is reached, then nothing enormous enough can be done to reconcile human beings as a dominant species with the earth, or to prevent the crashing culmination of the great extinction already well under way.

With this in mind one might then say that Berry's *own* "Great Work" was the effort to found a new wisdom tradition drawing on the "Four Wisdoms" he expects to guide humanity in 21st century: "the wisdom of indigenous peoples, the wisdom of women, the wisdom of the classical traditions, and the wisdom of science." (GW 176).²² Recall a critical piece of the argument above: *every piece of wisdom literature defines anew the tradition in which it lies*. Thus we may see that Berry's essays at once identify—and *call into being*—the tradition into which they (will) fall. This sounds paradoxical, but is actually the situation of all wisdom literature. It is just far more difficult to grasp in Berry's case.

And what might be most distinctive about such a "new wisdom school?" A key passage here is one where Berry is talking about what he calls "the three scriptures"—the cosmic, the written, and the inner awareness "imprinted within our own being":

This [inner] awareness, however, can come to life only through vital contact with the other two scriptures. Thus the period prior to the composition of early verbal and written scriptures is the period of unarticulated but deeply felt human response to the scripture of the cosmos. From it came the verbal scriptures so familiar to us over the last three millennia. (SU 23-24)

Those verbal scriptures include *ur*-texts like the Vedas and the Torah, and also the wisdom literature that come after them.

And the role of science in relation to the three scriptures?

Now we are in the third period, the period of inner awareness that reads the verbal scriptures within new scientific realizations of their context, in an evolving world and among diverse societies but without losing the older humanist and religious

22. This entire essay is of the utmost importance for the argument: Thomas Berry "The Fourfold Wisdom," GW 176-95.

insights and values. (SU 24)

The new scientific realizations provide a new context, a new impetus, a series of new perspectives for receiving, reading, and interpreting the verbal and the cosmic scriptures mediated through the scripture of inner awareness. The new scientific realizations, however, are not to displace the older verbal and written scriptures or the older classical religious and humanistic teachings.

The classical humanistic and religious traditions, the wisdom traditions as I have been calling them, were foundational and central throughout Berry's intellectual career.

This story of the universe is at once scientific, mythic, and mystical. Most elaborated in its scientific statement, it is among the simplest of creation stories.... If until recently we were insensitive in relation to its more spiritual communication, this is no longer entirely true. (SU 121-22)

The first part of the task of working with "scientific statement" is to discern and bring forward its "spiritual communication." This is work that is really just now beginning. I would argue, of course, that the essential criteria and guidance for this discerning and bringing forward are those found in the wisdom traditions. But if that is so, what specifically does the "spiritual communication" from science have to offer?

In this [scientific] understanding, we have an additional context for understanding all the religious traditions, just as our more recent cosmologies do not negate but add to the Newtonian worldview and enable us to deal with questions that could not be dealt with in the Newtonian context. (SU 122)

Science gives us new ways of understanding, reading, and teaching the inherited traditions without negating them.

Wisdom traditions, as noted earlier, have always had a place for the science of their day. Indeed, *it is only modern science that has*

defined itself by differentiating itself from its contemporary wisdom traditions and using that very set of boundaries and distinctions to argue for its own superiority. It is not that science does not and should not belong to wisdom teaching. The argument is that our distinctively modern science must have a subordinate role, one determined by a wisdom reading that elicits spiritual understanding. That said, it is a central aspect of Berry's teaching that there can be, in effect, a science-reading of wisdom traditions, as well as a wisdom-reading of science.

Now we have additional depth of spiritual understanding through our listening to the universe in ways that were not available through our traditional insights. (SU 122)

Working from just that insight, I would argue that the universe story itself is best understood not as something derived primarily from science, but as a vision derived from this doubled-reading made possible by the contemporary conjunction of "new scientific realizations" and the traditional wisdoms.

What is arising in human awareness is our nature as a species, which has emerged out of planetary processes. This awareness is beginning to reshape our religious imagination. This concept *implies a prior sense of the religious dimension* of the natural world. (SU 128, italics added)

The reading of the science rests on prior appreciation of the religious dimension. And this appreciation of the religious dimension comes to us both through internal awareness but also, at this point in our history, from the classical traditions. Then science can expand religion. But which comes first? Religious awareness comes first. Berry next goes on to point out that it is critical how we hold this religious awareness:

In general, we think of the universe as joining in the religious expression of the human rather than the human joining in the religious expression of the universe.... We consistently think

of the human as primary and the universe as derivative rather than thinking of the universe as primary and the human as derivative. (SU 128)

One may indeed challenge the idea that religious awareness in general is structured around the priority of the human—there are just too many exceptions here for us to conclude otherwise. But as wisdom teaching, what is here is compelling: We humans have a tendency to make religion serve our needs—to use religion to amplify or inflate the importance, within the span of the universe, of our own dramas, and indeed of the ongoing drama of human life. In Buddhism results of such distortion is sometimes referred to as “spiritual materialism.” In Western prophetic traditions, this phenomenon is known as idolatry. And throughout Western religious history, prophets have called on their communities to break away from an exclusive focus the human and turn their attention back to the divine. So we might say that Berry stands in this prophetic line, but with the huge difference of seeing the earth itself as the fullest expression and fullest presence of the divine. The cry to subordinate the human to the divine becomes in Berry the cry to subordinate the human to the earth. “What is needed is not transcendence but ‘inscendence.’” (DE 208) This is at once extraordinarily radical—and extraordinarily traditional. Which is just what the prophetic has always been in Western religious life and imagination. And prophetic literature, it should be recalled, is a significant part of the body of wisdom literature of the religious traditions of the West.

The Earth, Dreaming

There has been tremendous emphasis on the importance of story in the presentation of the emergent cosmology in much of Berry's writing. But story, cosmology as story, and indeed any and all forms of cosmology are cultural products that themselves result from the fantastic explosiveness at the point where culture meets gene, where gene spawns culture. As we have seen, Berry steadily insisted that all received wisdoms stand in need of a total renewal that can come about only by re-immersion in our genetic coding, the coding that

lies under our cultural coding and brings it into being. We need something even deeper than cultural renewal—we need a renewal at the species level. This is the wildly radical Berry.

But there is one more decisive point lurking here: *Human dream-space is where the gene talks to the brain*. Or: Human dream-space ought to be considered the crossover point from DNA to culture—from genetic coding to cultural coding.

We need to remember that this process whereby we invent ourselves in these cultural modes is guided by visionary experiences that come to us in some transrational process from the inner shaping tendencies that we carry within us, often in revelatory dream experience. (DE 201)

Consider then that the process of assimilating the Dream (with a capital “D”) of the earth, of fully receiving it into human being, will certainly include telling stories about the universe. Once the Dream is moving into culture, it is birthing cosmology—story, dance, ritual, poetry, pottery, and painting. Cultural coding is rooted in genetic coding; culture is rooted in dream. And the latter is so because it is in dream that genetic coding is shown to the conscious mind. It is the body that presents the earth to the mind in dreams.

Whales are the Dream of the earth; maggots are; molten lava, coral reefs. We are but one part of the Dream and our cultural coding but a very small part of that Dreaming. But we receive as best we can, we open as much as we can—and we respond as best we can. This is what we do—like cheetahs run and bees buzz. And so, yes, receive the Dream and be Dreamt.

In [the “Dream of the Earth” essay] I am concerned with the earth not as the object of some human dream, but with the earth itself and its inherent powers in bringing forth this marvelous display of beauty in such unending profusion, a display so overwhelming to human consciousness that we might very well speak of it as *being dreamed into existence*. (DE xiv-v, italics added)

We are ourselves part of what the earth dreams—along with all

else that lives and moves and stands and is. And next we have the human dreaming.

Our own dreams of a more viable mode of being for ourselves and for the planet Earth can only be distant expressions of this primordial source of the universe itself in its full extent in space and in the long sequence of its transformations in time.
(DE xv)

Our dreams are the dreams of a species, of individuals being themselves dreamt well on back, time-into-time, space-into-space. We then access and receive and are part of earth's dreaming.

Dreams, it is worth emphasizing are received. They are not written or created. They can be invited; we can learn to take on stances or postures or practices that human experience through millennia have shown will open us—communities or individuals—to large dreams. Ultimately, though, it is a matter of receiving, which is to say a gifting.

What then is the universe but a dreaming infused with poetry? And a dreaming infinitely deeper than the human. And we bow to that. We must. And if we are true students of Thomas Berry it is this above all that we must learn.

III. The Legacy

The primary conclusions of the interpretation of Thomas Berry's writings offered in this essay may be stated succinctly:

1. *We are best able to grasp Thomas Berry's teachings when we approach them as standing in the long lines of wisdom literatures, as found in the rich cultural traditions we commonly identify as rooted in China and India, in Athens and Jerusalem.*
2. *"Cosmology," in his hands, is fundamentally a "wisdom-teaching."*
3. *Berry warrants recognition as a teacher of great stature engaged in an effort to renew nearly defunct wisdom traditions, traditions known in our time in the Western world mostly by their absence.*

A new wisdom school is just now only a possibility. No one can begin to predict the parameters of such a school, if it were to come into being—its texts, teachings, disciplines. Berry clearly felt the integration of the four wisdoms was a process already underway. But, truthfully, we have no idea as yet what a wisdom tradition developed to guide the transition into the Ecozoic era might be. What we do have before us, as resource and as challenge, is Thomas Berry's remarkable effort to both define such a school and produce works of wisdom worthy of standing within it.

But, finally, mustn't we ask: What if the call for the Great Work is answered all over the world, and all that can be done is done, and there is, after all, no Ecozoic era? What if the centuries that come after ours simply play out the endgame of the human species? Does this mean the Great Work would be but a failure and the Dream of the earth but an illusion, a great untruth? Here we must, in spite of all, answer "No," for two reasons. *First*: the Great Work is fundamentally a work of formation. And if it succeeds in shaping the lives of thousands or hundreds of thousands into true living with the Earth—that is success. *Second*: the deep reality is that certain dreams are of such power and beauty as always to be true—and the Dream of the earth is one of those.

The universe, Berry tells us, is violent and creative—and profligate. Much must always be destroyed before the truly new can emerge. This hard teaching he repeats again and again. If we are to be true to Berry's own teaching, we must entertain the idea that the earth may need to end decisively the dominance of human beings to unfold into her next era.²³ In that case, indeed in *every* case no

23 Berry himself clearly entertained this possibility. See the following from DE 209:

In this disintegrating phase of our industrial society, we now see ourselves not as the splendor of creation, but the most pernicious mode of earthly being. We are the termination, not the fulfillment of the earth process. If there were a parliament of creatures, its first decision might well be to vote the humans out of the community, too deadly a presence to tolerate any further. We are the affliction of the world, its demonic presence. We are the violation of the earth's most sacred aspects.

matter how unimaginable, Berry would have us have confidence in that creative process that is the iniverse, in its pulse of creation and destruction. If we are true students we go forward aware that there is no guarantee of Ecozoic era for the human and the earth, but trusting in the creativity that has produced the splendor all around us, the splendor we live here on earth.

Finally we come to this: The most startling thing about the work of Thomas Berry is the power that manifests through it of his unconditional love of the universe. As ecologist, Berry comes to be an amanuensis of the new cosmology, one who receives the Dream of the earth. Cuing off Aquinas and Dante, Thomas Berry shows us that the unconditional love of the universe is the deepest wisdom.

But then, also, the tempering movement: "The universe has a violent as well as a harmonious aspect, but it is creative in the larger arc of its development." ET 145.

At the Species Level

F. Nelson Stover¹

This paper focuses on discerning the practical implications of two major themes in Thomas Berry's writings within the context of the four institutions in which major changes are required: educational, religious, economic, and political. The first theme is centered on Thomas's oft-quoted statement, "The historical mission of our time is to reinvent the human—at the species level." The second theme explores the epic qualities of the evolutionary story of the emerging universe.

In the interrelated global society of the 21st century, these themes of Thomas's work provide clues for new forms of social interaction and personal development. This paper builds on Thomas's work and provides strategic clues for people interested in giving institutional form to his spiritual insights. From the individual perspective, Thomas's work provides a framework for seeing and interacting with the natural world as a mode of revelation for the divine presence in the cosmos. Relative to institutional perspectives, Thomas's understanding of the patterns of the universe provides fresh clues for organizing and managing organizations. Combined, the principles of Thomas's work provide a foundation for creative actions for future generations.

The four sections of this paper cover:

- Thomas's Foundational Wisdom,
- Ecozoic Worldview Simplified,
- Four Transformative Institutions, and
- Fresh Operational Paradigms.

1. Not all of the slides in the presentation on which this paper is based are shown. The complete set of 37 slides can be downloaded from www.emergingecology.org/Documents/SpeciesLevelSlides.pdf.

Thomas's Foundational Wisdom

Thomas's clear statement of the historical mission of our time has provided a focal point for rethinking the practical actions and overall strategies appropriate for meeting the diverse and complex social and ecological problems of the 21st century. Thomas's often quoted challenge from *The Great Work* appears at the beginning of the chapter entitled "Reinventing the Human." He wrote, "The historical mission of our times is to reinvent the human—at the species level, with critical reflection, within the community of life-systems, in a time-developmental context, by means of story and shared dream experience."² The remainder of this paper is dedicated to parsing out the specific implications of each of the statement's phrases.

The first phrase of the quotation sets the overall scope of the contemporary challenge. The urgent work of these opening decades of the 21st century requires *reinventing the human—at the species level*. With electronic telecommunication and the expanding global economy, all of the citizens of Earth are becoming increasingly interconnected. They share each other's pains and frustrations, and they are aware of the gains, benefits, and intellectual achievements of their neighbors and those around the globe. Thus, the proposed changes in cultural perspectives must strive to be inclusive of each of the modes of social and religious expression that have carried society through the 20th century.

Over the past fifty years, Elaine, my wife, and I have traveled across five continents. We have lived in small villages and megapolises in Australia, Belgium, Egypt, India, and the United States. We have dined with leaders of multinational corporations and nationally elected leaders. We have dined in village homes where guest accommodations were highlighted by a rug carefully placed on the dirt floor. The seven billion human inhabitants of Earth present a wide and varied tapestry of desires, capacities, perspectives, and resources. No one image, statement, or generalization can capture the magnitude and grandeur of humans at the species level. The photo, taken at the Ville Parle train station near Mumbai, India,

2. Thomas Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999) 159.



Commuters at the Ville Parle train station near Mumbai, India.

captures a sense of the diversity, vibrancy, and interconnectedness of the human species moving into the 21st century.

Two other phases of Thomas's mission statement for humans on Earth capture my imagination. The injunction that the reinvention of the human species must occur *in a time-developmental context* provides a fruitful impetus for a substantive change in the collective imagination. For centuries, especially in the Western imagination, humans have understood that the world in which they find themselves was brought into being as a fixed and completed reality into which they must both individually and collectively fit. Holy books, wise leaders, and a host of cultural patterns and training programs have been devised to help people grow up to function in this created reality as smoothly as possible.

Yet, this picture of a created reality neither accurately describes the planet, nor does it provide an adequate framework in which to make the essential decisions regarding a productive presence of the human community within the larger eco-systems. Modern physical sciences, from astronomy to geology, have helped fit together the pieces of the fourteen-billion-year history of the universe. Within the

social sciences, psychologists like Ken Wilbur and a host of others have helped to clarify the developmental process of an individual's growth in consciousness as well as the general rise in consciousness of the species as a whole.

In 2005, a group of Thomas's supporters in Greensboro organized an art display of a series of tapestries crafted by a women's cooperative in South Africa. Thomas visited the exhibition with us. My picture of him viewing the portion of the universe story in which humans emerged remains one of my favorite candid shots—he looks like he's just a part of the journey. This set of tapestries represents one way to convey the message that we, all of us, live in a perpetually unfolding reality.



Thomas viewing tapestry by Kopanang Women's Guild during exhibition at Guilford College.

As the last phrase of Thomas's statement indicates, the final aspect of reinventing the human involves *story and shared dream experience*. The epic story of the fourteen-billion-year unfolding of the cosmos provides the larger context in which each of our particular actions and decisions has meaning and value. Those people committed to

reinventing the human at the species level will find countless ways to tell and retell this vitalizing story.

Another foundational aspect of Thomas's wisdom is that the institutions through which humans act together and thrive as societies must change their operational patterns. In the introduction to his chapter on "The University," he wrote, "The four basic establishments that determine human life in its more significant functioning: the government, the religious traditions, the university, and the commercial-industrial corporations...are failing in their basic purposes for the same reason. They all presume a discontinuity between the non-human and human modes of being."³ The third section of this paper will explore ways that the institutions will be impacted by the change of perspectives that Thomas proposed.

At this point in the paper, the important element in the discussion centers on the fact that the historical mission of our time is to re-invent the human at the species level *and* that the institutions through which humans function will be impacted by the same change in perspective. Thomas never underestimated the magnitude of the change that he was advocating. The level of newness he foresaw was on the order of magnitude of a geologic era. He realized that "This new period we identify as the Ecozoic era [is] a fourth biological era to succeed the Paleozoic, the Mesozoic, and the Cenozoic."⁴

Ecozoic Worldview Simplified

The question then becomes, how does one go about "reinventing the human at the species level"? In the previous transitions from one era to another, some species and life forms became extinct, and others began to flourish. Throughout the evolutionary history of all of our reptilian and mammalian ancestors, when living conditions became intolerable or new external situations provided previously unavailable resources and environments, some of the life forms transformed themselves. Birds' beaks changed shapes to crack nuts

3. Ibid., 72.

4. Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, *The Universe Story: From the Primordial Flaring Forth to the Beginning of the Ecozoic Era—A Celebration of the Unfolding Cosmos* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 242.

or new shapes of seeds, giraffes' necks lengthened to reach higher leaves—the examples are countless and well documented.

The human species is, however, different in that beyond our physical structure, we operate in a cultural context. During this particular transition on the universe's journey, instead of a physical mutation, a mindset or change in perspective is called for. As Thomas put it, "If the reorientation of the mind is not effected, then whatever remedy is proposed will not succeed in the purposes it intends."⁵ This "reorientation of the mind" can be called a change of worldview. Our times require a worldview adequate to the task of making sense of current wisdom and contemporary experience that guides actions in ways that have long-term viability for both our species and our planet. This worldview must also have ways to incorporate the great wisdom that the human species has accumulated in previous centuries.

I have been experimenting with simple ways to phrase the complex ideas presented by Thomas and others so that they can be remembered and are generally accessible to people of diverse educational and cultural backgrounds. I began formulating four concise statements in the year 2000. I put them into poetic form and sang it at a concert with Earth Mama that was attended by Thomas as a part of his birthday celebration in 2007. Later versions of the same statements⁶ form the foundation for my recently published book, *Through Three Portals: Helping Tomorrow Unfold*, which is a systematic approach to theology in the 21st century. Simply put, we can say the ecozoic worldview affirms that:

1. We live in an *emerging universe*;
2. We live among a *communion of subjects*;
3. We can experience *at-one-ness*; and
4. *All beings participate* in shaping tomorrow.

Emerging Universe

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5. Thomas Berry, *The Sacred Universe: Earth, Spirituality, and Religion in the 21st Century*, ed. Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim (Maryknoll, NY, Orbis Books, 2009), 169
 6. F. Nelson Stover, *Through Three Portals: Helping Tomorrow Unfold* (Greensboro, NC: Morgan Deniz, 2014), 9.

Throughout human history, “The story of the universe has been told in many ways by the peoples of Earth.”⁷ For centuries in India, holy ones and curious tourists have visited the Ellora Caves. These caves were hand carved by monks into solid mountains of basaltic lava. On the walls and pillars are intricate carvings that portray the birth of the cosmos from the minds of the gods.



Visitors to Ellora Caves view rock carvings from the 8th and 9th centuries

Several images pervaded the 20th century about the kind of universe in which the human species lives. People generally assumed that somehow or another all the things, powers, and properties of the known and unknown universe came into being at some time in the past and that the human quest involved figuring out how to most responsibly live with the given reality. Considerable scientific research and on-going human experience, however, began to call this picture of reality into question. Things do seem to change over time. Whether observing the surface of the moon, the shape of the galaxies or the general human condition on Earth, patterns of change and transition cannot be ignored.

7. Swimme and Berry, *Universe Story*, 1.

For a more adequate description of the universe, we can say we live in an emerging universe. All of the elements of any given moment work together creating tomorrow in an emerging universe. Change happens as new responses to given situations foster unique entities with new capacities. "In the Epic of Evolution, science becomes a path to wisdom."⁸

Consider the dogwood tree with its red nuts that provide food for the squirrels and buds that blossom into beautiful flowers in the springtime. Have the flowering plants been on Earth as long as the ferns? Probably not. Evidence shows that the flowering plants with their nuts and fruits are a relatively recent addition to the biosphere. Most likely, they, allowing the mammals to flourish, emerged around sixty-five million years ago. The flowering plants may have contributed to the demise of the dinosaurs who ate only ferns and grasses, which would have been crowded out by the more prolific and colorful hardy trees and flowers.

Even the human species has grown, developed, and been transformed over time. Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme have outlined the overall phases of the emerging universe in their book *The Universe Story*. Their narrative includes the human journey from foragers on the African savannahs through the populating of the planet to the rise of consciousness up to the present mode of being the dominant species on Earth. Such an understanding of an emerging universe, including each of us in the process, dramatically changes the fundamental questions facing each individual. The life question shifts from "How do I fit in?" to "How do I contribute to building the future?"

Communion of Subjects

That the universe is a communion of subjects rather than a collection of objects is the central commitment of the Ecozoic era.⁹ The tendency in previous centuries was to observe that the human species had achieved a level of consciousness and selfhood unachieved

8. Thomas Berry, *Evening Thoughts: Reflecting on Earth as Sacred Community*, ed. Mary Evelyn Tucker (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 2003), 125.

9. *Ibid.*, 243.

by other entities—and then to go on to assume that the other-than-human realm served only as resources for human fulfillment. Yet such a utilitarian approach unhelpfully belittles the non-human world. Trees, such as the majestic oaks, cannot be reduced to simply potential chairs or a quantity of future lumber for fine home construction. Each tree has its own set of rights and contributes to the overall health of the planet in its own particular way. Trees have tree rights, which are different from human rights, yet important in and of themselves.



Nelson and Tony, two subjects in communion.

We can experience the subjectivity of the non-human species in our pets. My dog, Tony, clearly makes decisions, has plans, and comes up with clever ideas of his own. He understands his role as one who keeps squirrels in the trees instead of the garden. We both enjoy walking in the woods and sharing the joys of a summer evening in the park.

When each part of the universe, each creature and entity on the planet, is viewed as a self with its own unique rights and responsibilities, then a new reverence arises. This deep connection calls one to revise his or her patterns of action that foster consumption and environmental degradation. Without this self-conscious affirmation of the rights of each particular entity within the Earth community, old modes of species extinction and rampant extraction of limited

resources will continue to prevail in individuals' economic decision-making as well as in developing national and international social policy.

Experience of At-One-Ness



Snowy sunrise, Greensboro, North Carolina

At one time or another, nearly everyone has woken up to face the spectacular majesty of new fallen snow or watched the sunrise over the ocean or a calm lake. These moments give a person the sense that a deep harmony pervades the universe and that this harmony engulfs them in tranquility. This sense of at-one-ness with *all that is* happens directly to most people sometime in their life. It may happen when walking alone through a bird-filled forest or while watching the silvery moon slide across a star-filled sky. The breaking down of the barriers of separation may occur in the depths of despair and frustration with self or others. Sometimes it happens in the midst of deeply collegial and interpersonal bonding.

Throughout all of Thomas's writings, he points to the wide variety of ways that the sacred shines through the natural world. Wonder

is that which arouses awe, astonishment, surprise, or admiration: a marvel, a feeling of glory.¹⁰ No matter how at-one-ness breaks through, knowing that such moments happen to each of us provides an important third foundational understanding of the 21st century. Both an individual's interior well-being and his or her exterior well-being make essential contributions to the overall well-being of each individual and the planet as a whole.

While this breaking of barriers simply happens, nonetheless individual and collective actions can enhance this mode of existence. One year in India, I met a young boy and his sister. They got all dressed up for me to take their pictures. All the gestures and verbal advice that could be conjured up failed to produce smiling expressions that provide for lasting photographic memories. Finally, I suggested that the boy put his arm around his sister—and then the smiles broke forth. Sometimes just the gesture of touching someone transforms the relationship and breaks the bonds of individual and collective separation. Other more formal methods, such as meditation and yogic practices, also foster the movement toward a space of living without boundaries in a world of distinct yet interrelated entities.

All Beings Participate

The final understanding undergirding a worldview adequate for shaping the 21st century is one that centers on the acknowledgment that each person, creature, and entity, consciously or unconsciously, participates in shaping the future. While the reality of this proposition has been true for eons, individuals and societies have only recently become aware of the fact that “Cosmogogenesis is structured by autopoiesis.... Autopoiesis is the power each thing has to participate directly in the cosmos-creating endeavor.”¹¹ In previous centuries, responsibility for influencing the future had often been relegated to the priests, politicians, and other learned leaders. In some societies, all responsibility for the shape of the days yet to come has been taken entirely out of the realm of human action and placed

10. Berry, *Sacred Universe*, 150.

11. Swimme and Berry, *Universe Story*, 75

in the hands of the gods who dwell beyond the bounds of everyday existence. In the 21st century, the impact of the human species on the future of the planet has become unmistakable. The implications for the consequences of the actions of each individual and community can no longer be externalized.

During 2013, Elaine and I spent two weeks in Costa Rica. While there, we visited an active volcano. Seeing the fuming cauldron at the



Volcano in Costa Rica

bottom of the mouth of the mountain dramatized that everything, even a volcano, is actively participating in shaping the future of the planet. This participation is not a maybe, sort of involvement—in fact, the decisions made and actions taken by each entity of society today shape the course of the future. This new future becomes the context in which the next generation makes decisions and lives out its existence.

The practical implications our active roles in shaping of the future is the subject of the next section of this paper.

Four Transformative Institutions

Moving forward, each of the major societal institutions will need to respond in new ways to put these foundational understandings into practice in ways that provide long-term sustainable patterns of human presence on Earth. The educational institutions will need to shift their curriculum to focus on becoming more universe referent by teaching students of all ages how the human and non-human realms interact. The religious institutions will need to find ways to provide meaning and significance to living in an emerging reality. The business institutions will need to readjust their values and incentives to deal with the realities of a non-petroleum economy as well as to include the environmental costs in their calculations. Finally, the political institutions will need to find ways for all entities of the Earth community to actively participate in making the decisions that shape the future of everyone—not just one gender or species.

The dominant educational institutions of recent centuries have focused on preparing students to thrive in an economy based on extractive manufacturing processes and consumptive life-style choices. The lessons taught were founded on principles that promoted the primacy of the human species within the larger natural world. These skills and perspectives have precipitated much of the present environmental crisis. The new basis of teaching in the 21st century will rely on universe referent perspectives in which students of all ages come to appreciate the way that the human and non-human worlds live in mutually enhancing relationships. This process can begin at an early age by teaching gardening and food-raising skills to primary school students so that negative stigmas attached to participating in the process of food production can be transformed into positive values.

At more advanced levels, science studies will focus more on understanding the complex interactions among the various species and how they change over time, rather than on memorizing particular details about a presumed static reality. At all levels of the educational process, the very framework in which the courses are taught needs to change in order to enable the students to play creative roles in the future-creating task. The universities must decide whether they

will continue training persons for temporary survival in the declining Cenozoic era or whether they will be educating students for the emerging Ecozoic.¹²



Pilot Mountain stone scape

Equally important, the curriculum taught in schools needs to adequately prepare the students to understand the long-term history of the planet and the bioregion in which they live. Earlier this spring my family made a visit to Pilot Mountain, about an hour from our home. While there, I encountered a young man looking attentively at the same windblown rock formation that I was viewing. We struck up a conversation, and I learned that he was taking a geology course at one of the nearby universities. We both agreed that the rock looked “pretty old.” I proceeded to ask him how old he thought the formation was. After thinking a minute, he surmised that the rocks were about eight to ten thousand years old. He was a bit surprised when I told him that I thought they were about fifty thousand times that old. This range of mountains on the eastern side of the Appalachian Mountains were standing here before the plates

12. Berry, *Great Work*, 85.

collided to first form the Appalachian range.

Knowing the geologic history of the area in which you live provides grist for appreciating the wonder and majesty of the creative processes that have been involved in forming the habitat in which you conduct your daily activities. This history also shapes the terrain and resources on which the future can be built.

The second set of global institutions in which substantial change is required to incorporate the changing common wisdom of the 21st century involves those institutions that self-consciously give meaning and significance to daily occurrences—the religious institutions of all cultures and societies. While most of the dominant religious practices include threads of insight about how to appreciate, affirm, and gain insight from the natural world, these aspects of the traditions have often been obscured and ignored. Historically, the Eastern religions have gotten stuck in literal interpretations of their mythic stories, and Western religions have removed their spiritual practices from activities that include encounters with the natural world. Both religions, like the universities, have separated themselves from active participation in and with the emerging planet.

Thomas proposed, “We need an ecological spirituality with an integral ecologist as a spiritual guide. The integral ecologist would understand the numinous aspect of a universe emergent from the beginning. The sequence of transformative events would be understood as cosmological moments of grace to be celebrated religiously with special rituals.”¹³ This reintegration is not some kind of return to an undifferentiated merger with the natural world in which humans, animals, and rocks have the same role and status within a kind of magical kingdom. Rather, this ecological spirituality comes on the other side of humans accepting their role as self-conscious actors in the drama of the emerging planet. This participation, on the part of humans, then takes on an added responsibility of implementing projects and programs that are mutually enhancing for all parties involved.

Many of the basic assumptions on which the rampant economic expansion of the 20th century was based are no longer tenable. “The story of the entire 20th century had been largely the story of petro-

13. Berry, *Sacred Universe*, 135-136.

leum, its discovery and use by humans.”¹⁴ Cheap petroleum energy that allowed transportation of goods and materials on a global scale is becoming merely a memory. Many other natural resources are at or near their maximum levels of cost-effective availability. The costs of removing and discarding waste products are no longer insignificant. New models of sustainable businesses at the national and local levels are becoming necessary, and prototypical examples are proliferating.



Oil well in an Illinois wheat field

One place that many people are beginning to change the ways of doing business involves cutting down the distance between food production and food consumption. This process involves finding ways to encourage people in each locale to participate actively in the food production process and then distribute their products nearby. In the early 1990s a nurse in Greensboro purchased some acreage south of town and began raising goats. Within a decade, Goat Lady Dairy was producing high quality goat cheese that has become a prized commodity at farmers' markets and local restaurants. Furthermore,

14. Berry, *Great Work*, 150.

annual open houses at the farm provide first-hand exposure to area children so that they come to appreciate the sources of the food they eat. Finding creative alternatives to exclusive dependence on fossil fuels also provides an important avenue for creativity and ingenuity in all.

Finally, attention needs to be given to the structures by which society makes decisions and through which it cares for itself. Many of the guiding principles of political institutions assumed an illiterate or uneducated population without real insight for making decisions about the future. The fact that politicians are increasing the use of town hall meetings indicates growing interest in involving citizens in deliberative processes. Over several decades teams working with the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) have developed a group “operating system” called *Technology of Participation* (ToP)[®]. ToP methods provide replicable, systematic processes for ensuring that those who will be affected by the outcomes of decisions are able to participate in shaping the plans and then working together in the processes of implementing change.

In addition to using decision-making methods that include all parts of the human community, our political institutions need to find ways to embody the reality that the human species does not function in isolation from the rest of the bio-systems of the planet. “We are not here to control. We are here to become integral with the larger Earth community.”¹⁵ This change of perspective will affect the kinds of laws that are enacted as well as the personal attitudes that inform daily decisions.



Topsail Island crab at home on the beach

15. Ibid., 48

A small example of the change that is required arises during family holiday vacations to the Carolina beaches. The signs near the beach may inform the tourist that the beaches are owned and governed by a particular municipality or private owner. In fact, the beaches are also the home of the crabs, pelicans, and fish. Ensuring that these creatures, too, have their well-being considered in the same urgency as the tourists provides a test for individual compassion and collective caretaking.

Fresh Operational Paradigms

The entire collection of Thomas's writings and his personal encounters with numerous students and audiences provide a careful historical analysis of the human journey up to and through the 20th century. They also contain a fresh vision for a new level of embodied consciousness on the planet. Figuring out the details of how to make the change from the terminal Cenozoic era to the beginning of the Ecozoic era is left to those who follow in Thomas's footsteps. In this last section of this paper, I will deal, briefly, with four clues—four helpful tools—that Thomas provided: *language patterns*, *personal development*, *lifestyle patterns*, and *worldview transformation*.

Language Patterns

Thomas understood that the divine manifested itself in and through the natural world. Furthermore, through communion with the natural world, one could come to know the divine. Putting this experience into words, however, required special kinds of attention. Often, much of the scientific community reduces the natural world to a series of measurable objects and then proceeds to develop specific descriptive word patterns to describe them. In so doing, many people turn the universe into a clock-like machine. This objectification of the natural world undergirds many justifications for extractive processes and environmental degradation.

As an alternative approach, Thomas wrote, "Analogy is the key to all human communion with the non-human, whether the divine or the natural world. The divine has ways of speaking that are not

human ways. So, too, do natural phenomena have ways of speaking that are not human language. The effort to reduce all wisdom to a univocal language is a primary error or failure of our times.”¹⁶ The historical religious traditions provide a wealth of metaphorical articulations of the divine-human interaction. An important task of awakened leaders in the 21st century is to see through the meaning of these metaphors and create fresh contemporary images and stories capable of evoking awe and wonder in the same way that the ancient stories did.

Part of the danger in this process arises from the illusion that science uses only univocal language, and since religion, presumably, uses exclusively metaphor and analogy, this approach is deemed less reliable and therefore less useful. In fact, both science and religion require both univocal and metaphorical language to convert experience into useful wisdom. Care must be taken to determine which kind of language is being used at any particular point in a discussion.

Personal Development

A second significant factor in the process of reinventing the human at the species level involves going beyond individual awareness and concern to considering the individual’s growth in the larger context of the planetary community. While this was not a major, specific focus of Thomas’s writings, we can get a clue for the scope of change that such a transformation would entail by considering the change that occurred when life moved from single-cell existence to multi-cellular existence. When this happened, cells got a different kind of message. “The generator of the message was Argos, a new creature. A new cause had appeared in the world, a power that could not exist but for the intimate communion of those particular cells, but a power that, once allowed to exist, immediately set to the task of ordering the community in new and surprising ways.”¹⁷

In my opinion, a change is needed from organizations of individuals chartered as corporations that are designed, primarily, to amass wealth and provide for the economic betterment of the

16. Berry, *Sacred Universe*, 145.

17. *Ibid.*, 110.

owners and managers, to formations of creative individuals acting out their common passions for the mutual enhancement of those involved and the planet on which they reside. This transformation, like the change from single to multi-celled creatures, will provide a new ordering of consciousness and provide a sense of community in new and surprising ways.



Tree planting: volunteers, politicians and professionals working together

Lifestyle Patterns

A third element for reinventing the human involves changing personal lifestyles from a consumer mindset based on the acquisition of manufactured goods to one devoted to undertaking significant activities moving toward enhancing both the human and non-human communities. As Thomas wrote, “I would suggest that we see these early years of the 21st century as the period when we discover the great community of the Earth, a comprehensive community of all the living and nonliving components of the planet.”¹⁸

For some people, returning to gardening, growing food, and planting trees may seem like a return to agrarian patterns of cen-

18. Berry, *Evening Thoughts*, 141

turies long past or from drudgeries no longer deemed appropriate. The futility, however, of seeking fulfillment from the acquisition of personal possessions has also become apparent to many people. Finding the appropriate balance between the need for materials for daily living and the pool of resources available to the human species within the larger Earth community offers a unique challenge to citizens of the 21st century.

Worldview Transformation

Finally, the task of reinventing the human at the species level involves formulating, propagating, and enabling the transition to a worldview adequate to the task of continuing the emergence of the universe as it takes conscious form on Earth. Initially, the human species woke to consciousness in the savannahs bordering the forests of Africa. For hundreds of generations, these bands of individuals wandered the globe in search of food and shelter. They learned the cycles of the weather, plants, and animals in each particular location. From the tapestry of their experience, they wove what might be called a forest worldview.

Between five and ten thousand years ago, groups of people began to harness the rivers to irrigate their fields. With this new capacity, agriculture began along the Yellow River in China, along the Indus River in India, along the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in Iraq, and in various places in the Americas. This new level of social order and human interaction with the natural world resulted in the creation of a farming worldview. New sets of stories and practices guided societies through this period.

With the rise of industrialization in the 18th century, means of mass production and the widespread extraction of fossil fuels and other important minerals fostered the growth of major urban centers sustained by international trade and commerce at previously unprecedented scales. Once again, the human species culturally recreated itself. By the close of the 20th century, the *factory worldview* had taken hold on every continent with wide-ranging capacity to fuel social imagination. At the opening of the 21st century, the downsides of this extraction-driven approach to life on the planet

are becoming apparent. "We are involved not simply with an ethical issue but with a disturbance sanctioned by the very structures of the culture itself in its present phase. The governing dream of the 20th century appears as a kind of ultimate manifestation of that deep inner rage of Western society against its earthly condition as a vital member of the life community."¹⁹

The previous sections of this paper have described what might be called the *formation worldview* for the 21st century. In this new mode of human interaction, individuals experience the beauty and wonder of the natural world and each other as they join in the common task of building the social forms to foster the perpetual unfolding of the ever-emerging universe. Accepting the task of reinventing the human at the species level involves understanding the magnitude of the challenge, setting out a vision of a new mode of human existence, modeling this possibility in credible ways, and enabling others to participate in this opportunity. Thomas helped set out the vision; those who follow have the opportunity of drawing on his wisdom to bring this new mode of existence into being.

I look forward to working with those committed to reinventing the human at the species level.

19. Berry, *Great Work*, 165.

Thomas Berry: Harbinger of a Communal Spirituality, Rooted in Earth and Cosmos as Revelatory

John Sullivan

Today, I wish to reflect on Thomas Berry's contributions to an emerging spirituality—or perhaps better, an emerging inter-spirituality, a spirituality that is multi-lingual, able to recognize that the Great Mystery has many names and no adequate name. A spirituality that is communal throughout.

Let me begin where Thomas began. Here is his story:

My own understanding of the Great Work began when I was quite young. At the time I was some eleven years old. [This would have been in 1925.] My family was moving from a more settled part of a small southern town out to the edge of town where the new house was being built. The house, not yet finished, was situated on a slight incline. Down below was a small creek and there across the creek was a meadow. It was early afternoon in late May when I first wandered down the incline, crossed the creek, and looked out over the scene.

The field was covered with white lilies rising above the thick grass. A magic moment, this experience gave to my life something that seems to explain my thinking at a more profound level than almost any other experience I can remember. It was not only the lilies. It was the singing of the crickets and the woodlands in the distance and the clouds in a clear sky. It was not something conscious that happened just then. I went on about my life as any young person might do. Perhaps it was not simply this moment that made such a deep impression on me. Perhaps it was a sensitivity that was developed throughout my childhood. Yet as the years pass, this moment returns to me, and whenever I think about my basic life attitude and the whole trend of my mind and the causes to which I have given my efforts, I seem to come back to this moment and the impact it has had on my feeling for what is real and worthwhile in life.

This early experience, it seems, has become normative for me throughout the entire range of my thinking. Whatever preserves and enhances this meadow in the natural cycles of its transformation is good; whatever opposes this meadow or negates it is not good. My life orientation is that simple. It is also that pervasive. It applies in economics and political orientation as well as in education and religion.¹

So from start to finish, an experience of the natural world with all its life-forms becomes normative. I shall return to this again. But before I do, let me introduce my notion of spiritually or, in our day, interspirituality. I shall do this by delving more deeply into what I call the “lake analogy.”

I begin with a fundamental distinction: (a) *between what is happening*, and (b) *how I am relating to what is happening*. Coming to awareness of such a distinction is often spoken of as awakening *the observing, listening witness self*. There is a mode of consciousness and a way of living prior to this awakening. There are modes of consciousness and ways of living that are possible after the observing, listening witness self awakens. The simplest framework I know likens the states of awareness to the levels of a lake.²

Let me invite you on a fantasy trip. Imagine that your core self detaches from your body and floats effortlessly out over your present city, out over a primal forest. In the distance, you see a lake. A gentle breeze stirs the waters. There are ripples on the surface of the lake. Suppose you touch down and become a ripple self. You think in ripple ways, with ripple worries, ripple concerns, making ripple comparisons. “Am I a good ripple? How am I doing compared to other ripples?” And so on. At this level of non-awareness, you are asleep in your life, enslaved by old habits, with no space between incoming stimulus and outgoing response—the very definition of being reactive. You are embedded in a collective trance and do not

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1. Thomas Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999), 12-13 (italics and bold added).
 2. For more detail on this lake analogy, see my book, *Living Large: Transformative Work at the Intersection of Ethics and Spirituality* (Laurel, MD: Tai Sophia Press, 2004), 58-62.

realize that this is the case.³

Now imagine that, on the surface of the lake, you continue your ripple life. However, a part of you detaches from your ripple self and descends into the lake, coming to rest at the mid-level of the lake. Call this “Going to Z.” Drawing the letter “Z” requires us to go from one level (the surface) to a deeper level—this is what the wisdom traditions call the observing, listening, witness self. So think now of Going to Z—to the midpoint of the lake. You are completely safe under the water. You breathe easily. You can turn in any direction, like an astronaut in weightlessness. You can let the water cradle you as if in a hammock. You can look up, from below, and see your ripple self on the surface caught in the cultural trance of fear and desire. Your gaze is a loving one. No harsh judgment. Rather you are filled with compassion for this “little you” who has served you diligently, if often unskillfully. You are watching yourself as a ripple, much as you would watch a cartoon version of yourself, with detachment and gentle humor, with love and compassion.

This middle-level-of-the-lake state is called the “observing self.”⁴ It invokes the part of you that, with practice, can observe not only *what is happening in the outer world*, but also (a) *how you are interpreting*, and (b) *how you are emotionally responding* to what is before you. In this way you become aware of both outer and inner weather. When you call forth this observing/listening self, you find you have some distance from your thoughts and emotions. You are not your thoughts; you are not your emotions. You generate thoughts; you generate emotions. You “have” thoughts and emotions; you are not identified with your thoughts and emotions. In the mode of observing, listening compassionate witness, you reduce the amount of clinging and condemning and identifying in your life.⁵ You notice

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3. As Socrates would say, you and I (at this stage) are doubly ignorant. We do not know what is real (ignorance #1) and we do not know we do not know (ignorance #2)!
 4. See, for example, Arthur J. Deikman, *The Observing Self: Mysticism and Psychotherapy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1982). In some traditions, this level of awareness is called “the witness self.”
 5. These are the three poisons of Buddhism, also known as our greed, our hatred, and our confusion or ignorance. The three poisons might also be rendered as our clinging, condemning, and identifying (identifying with less than we are at core).

your stories and notice your reactivity; you realize that they are only stories, only emotional states. You gain some freedom to shift your language and to choose your response.⁶ Meditation is a tested way of cultivating this observing, listening self.⁷

Now with your ripple self still on the surface and your observing self at the mid-level, imagine that again a part of you disengages and moves toward the depth of the lake. Here you move into darkness and navigate more by listening than by sight. You begin to hear longer rhythms as if the lake is connected to the great ocean and you are sensing deeper and more subtle currents. Perhaps, in an instant, you realize that all is water—the depth and the mid-level and the surface ripples. All is one and you are that! How foolish to think of yourself as separate! How clear at this moment that “yours” and “mine” are but marks on water.⁸

At the depth, we are companioned by the sages and saints, the mystics and poets, the great-souled ones, known and unknown. At the depth, we learn to live in a way that is more transparent to the great powers moving through us, ever-heeding the call of the great ocean.

At whatever our stage or season of life, we can begin by remembering: *Stop, Look, and Listen!*

First, STOP—Detach from the ripple level of life where we are

6. For more on these matters, see Chalmers Brothers, *Language and the Pursuit of Happiness* (Naples, Florida: New Possibilities Press, 2005).

7. The Zenrin Kushu likens meditative mind with a still lake with wild geese flying overhead. The wild geese do not intend to cast their reflection. The water has no mind to receive their image.

Such a wonderful image of meditative mind. Thoughts and sensations, desires and emotions are like the geese. They arise and fly over the mirror of meditative mind. The mind does not invite them in. The mind does not push them out. They come and go. We observe their comings and goings, their appearing and disappearing. We are not led to repress them. Nor are we led compulsively to act them out. Yet more importantly, we do not identify with the thoughts and emotions. We do not allow them to fill the entire screen of our consciousness. The observing/ listening self both what is occurring without and also how quickly we label the phenomena and how quickly with generate likes and dislikes.

8. These deeper levels of awareness move toward what mystics call “unitive consciousness.”

un-free and reactive. (Call this highly dualistic ripple state, “level Y.”)⁹ Here we are not free to choose our response; we are on automatic pilot, repeating the unexamined conventional wisdom/foolishness of our culture.

Second, LOOK—Go to the mid-level. Here we begin to experience some freedom to choose our response. We stop living only at the surface. We detach from identifying with the surface disturbances. We receive our life gratefully. We look at our cartoon selves caught in the tides of conventional opinion, conventional rules and roles and ideologies. We see our ripple selves with compassionate eyes, with compassionate hearts. “How interesting!” “There we go again!” And we love that little us! We look at what is happening in outside weather. And, with practice, we also listen to our inner conversations and emotional charges. We notice how we are labeling phenomena; we realize that we can shift our story. We notice how we are generating likes and dislikes; we begin to realize we can neutralize some of this emotional charge and then choose our response. We receive. We release. We return to who we are at the infinite depth.

Third, LISTEN—Realize that there are still deeper levels of union and communion. My wisdom chant goes like this: There are at least *two* ways to relate to *anything*, a small-minded way and a large-minded way. Choose large mind!¹⁰ We start by invoking the witness self.

No matter what age or stage of life we visit, we can convert life events to tasks and convert tasks to practices consciously undertaken and learned from.¹¹ The image of the lake connected to the great waters calls to us at each season or stage of life.

9. In a whimsical way, I think of the letter Y as reminding me of how dualistic the ripple level is!

10. This chant can be acted out. There are at least two ways (arms wide with fingers making a two sign) to relate to *anything*: A small-mind way (hands to head, head down) and a large minded way (head up, hands up and wide) Choose Large mind! Finger pointed forward.

11. Whether we are on the arc of ascent or the arc of descent bringing an observing/listening self to bear is the first step toward freedom—freedom to choose and to learn from choices. Finally, catching glimpses of the deeper oceanic forces helps us to remember how deeply we are interconnected. To see the whole in each holy particular person, creature, and event.

So, to summarize: I am using the term practice in a particular way—a way illuminated by the lake analogy. The term, as I am using it, includes the usual sense of practicing a sport, i.e., doing over and over what is required for mastery. Yet practice here invokes something more. We need to Go to Z, that is, we need to release from identifying with the surface events and commentaries. The first release is to actualize the observing/listening, compassionate witness self. Perhaps we may think of three R's:

- *Receive* life in abundance, gratefully.
- *Release*—in two steps: First release from the surface to activate the observing self—Go to Z. Move from the mind to the heart. Move to the midpoint of the lake. Second, having become aware of both outer events and how quickly we add interpretation and emotional reactions, release from those constricting stories and negative emotions that no longer serve.
- *Return* to the core of who we are and always have been—always loved, already forgiven, forever a part of all that is.

When we are awake and alert, we travel a path with a heart, a spiral path where time and the timeless intersect. It is a path where we can bring the mind into the heart and discover daily that “There is a polish for everything, and the polish for the heart is remembrance of the One.”¹²

Now, with this long prologue to set the context for thinking of spirituality, what does Thomas Berry bring to this? First, Thomas writes:

The earth itself is
the primary physician,
the primary lawgiver,

12. The saying: There is a polish for everything and the polish for the heart is remembrance of God—or “of the One” as I am rendering it—comes from the Prophet Muhammad. See Kabir Edmund Helminski, *Living Presence: A Sufi Way to Mindfulness and the Essential Self* (New York: Jeremy P. Tacher/Perigee Books, 1992), 67.

the primary revelation of the divine,
primary scientist,
primary technologist,
primary commercial venture,
primary artist,
primary educator, and primary agent in whichever other activity
we find in human affairs.¹³

Here we hear Thomas's declaration that Earth is the primary exemplar and teacher in every area of human concern. It is revelatory. So much so that Thomas came to call himself a "geologian." Earth—though now in the context of an evolving cosmos—is again at the center.

Spirituality always tends to union/communion—union with our deepest ground and highest goal. Communion with all our kin...of all species. Spirituality has not always been thought of as communal through and through. Far less has it been thought of as radically arising from love of Earth and all creatures. But Thomas certainly saw it thus.

The Vietnamese Buddhist teacher, Thich Nhat Hanh, coined the term "interbeing" in order to highlight this radically relational approach. He wrote:

If you are a poet, you will see clearly that there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper. Without a cloud, there will be no rain; without rain, the trees cannot grow; without trees, we cannot make paper.... So we can say that the cloud and the paper *inter-are*. "Interbeing" is a word that is not in the dictionary yet, but if we combine the prefix "inter-" with the verb "to be," we have a new verb, inter-be.¹⁴

I believe we can take this approach further. Call it the movement from the five seductive S's—to the five Illustrious Inters:

13. Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988), 107.

14. Thich Nhat Hanh, *Peace is Every Step* (New York: Bantam Books, 1991), 95.

1. from *scarcity*—to—*intersufficiency*;
2. from *separateness*—to—*interbeing*
(interconnection, interdependence)
3. from *seen only*—to—*interweaving of seen and subtle dimensions*;
4. from *short-term only*—to—*intergenerational time*;
5. from *superiority over*—to—*interdoing*
(intercollaboration with, or intersynergy)

The lake analogy emphasizes turning tasks into spiritual practices. Thomas does not present us with such practices. And this is a limitation. He does, however, lay the groundwork by coming from a cross-cultural frame, one that honors East and West and that has place both for the wisdom of first peoples and the teachings of the great wisdom ways that have arisen in multiple centers over vast stretches of time. And Thomas wished for new rituals, not only following the cycles of seasons, but also, as he points out in *The Universe Story*, the transformative moments in Earth's unfolding.

Furthermore, Thomas recognized that all of our enterprises and all of our systems of guidance are *semper reformanda*—ever in need of reform and renewal. Without this faiths of all sorts become rigid ideologies which then seek to resort to force and violence to win their way. The way forward is captured in what I call the Great Work mantra:

I do not do the Great Work for myself alone.
I do not do the Great Work by myself alone.
I do not do the Great Work by my own powers alone.

I wish to end my tribute to Thomas's view of interspirituality with a story from Rilke. The tale begins in a churchyard. The narrator is talking to a gravedigger.

"You know," he says, "in olden times people prayed like this"—he

spread his arm wide, involuntarily feeling his breast expand at the gesture.

In those days God would cast himself into all these human abysses, full of despair and darkness, and only reluctantly did he return into his heavens, which unnoticed, he drew down ever closer over Earth.

But a new faith began. As it could not make humans understand wherein its new God differed from their old one (for as soon as they began to praise him, they promptly recognized the one old God here too), the promulgator of the new commandment changed the manner of praying. He taught the folding of hands and declared: See, *thus* does our God wish to be implored.... Now when God next looked down upon Earth, he was frightened. Besides the many folded hands, many Gothic cathedrals had been built, and so the hands and the roofs, alike steep and sharp, stretched pointing towards him like the weapons of an enemy.... God turned back into his heavens, and when he saw that the steeples and the new prayers were growing in pursuit of him, he departed out of his domain at the other side and thus eluded the chase. He was himself astonished to find, out beyond his radiant home, a beginning darkness that received him silently, and with a curious feeling he went on and on in this dusk that reminded him of the hearts of humans.

Then for the first time it occurred to him that the heads of humans are lucid, but their hearts full of a similar darkness; and a longing came over him to dwell in the hearts of humans and no longer to move through the clear, cold wakefulness of their thinking. Well, God has continued on his way. Ever denser grows the darkness around him, and the night through which he presses on has something of the fragrant warmth of fecund clods of Earth. And in a little while the roots will reach out towards him with the old beautiful gesture of wide prayer. There is nothing wiser than the circle.¹⁵

15. Rainer Maria Rilke, "A Tale of Death and a Strange Postscript Thereto" in *Stories of God*, trans. M. D. Herter Norton (New York: W.W. Norton &

The key is this: the emergent will be communal through and through—like the communion of saints or the mystical body, a vast communion of the living and the dead and of all beings known and unknown. The emergent will not be me but a *we* vast as the universe and specific as each event or creature that comes to us.

I close with the poem “Wild Geese” by Mary Oliver:

You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
Are moving across the landscapes,
Over the prairies and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
Are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
The world offers itself to your imagination,
Calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting—
Over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.¹⁶

Company, Inc., 1932) 87-89 (modified for gender inclusiveness).

16. Mary Oliver, “Wild Geese,” in *Risking Everything: 110 Poems of Love and Revelation*, ed. Roger Housden (New York: Harmony Books, 2003), 6.

Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and the Ecozoic

Tim Toben

Editor's Note: In the evening of the second day of the Colloquium, participants gathered for a multi-media presentation. A recording of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony was played while Tim Toben's poem "Beethoven's 9th Symphony and the Ecozoic" was read. In the poem:

The Ecozoic begins in the fourth movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, when the first three movements collide and the orchestra nearly disintegrates. It is the moment in the Universe Story when the fifth global force, the humansphere, nearly destroys the symphony of life and then miraculously transforms it. At that instant, something happens that had never happened before in a symphony. A human voice rings out:

*O Freunde, nicht diese Töne!
Sondern laßt uns angenehmere anstimmen,
und freudenvollere.
Freude! Freude!*

*Oh friends, silence these sounds!
Rather, let us sing more joyous songs
Full of ever growing cheer
Joy! Joy!*

This poem was previously published in *The Ecozoic* 3 (2013):136-42. Please contact the Center for Ecozoic Societies for a copy of this poem.

Thomas Berry's "Communion of Subjects": Awakening the "Heart of the Universe"

Peggy Whalen-Levitt

Communion at the Heart of Reality

In *The Dream of the Earth*, Thomas Berry writes:

At present...we are in that phase of transition that must be described as the groping phase. *We are like a musician who faintly hears a melody deep within the mind*, but not clearly enough to play it through. This is the inner agony we experience, especially when we consider that the music we are creating is the very reality of the universe.

It would be easier for us if we would remember that the earth itself, as the primary energy, is finding its way both to interior conscious expression in the human and to outer fulfillment in the universe.¹

Thomas often uses symphonic metaphors to bring us to awareness of the transition that is occurring in the present moment. He helps us cultivate new ears to hear the melody making itself known. We faintly hear a melody deep within the mind:

- A melody of a universe unfolding in time
- A melody of a numinous mystery that resonates throughout the entire universe
- A melody of an unbroken bond of relatedness throughout the whole universe that is both spatial and temporal
- A melody of a bond of intimacy that holds all together in communion

1. Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988), 47 (italics added).

- A melody of ourselves as that communion becoming conscious of itself²

“This sense of communion at the heart of reality,” Thomas tells us, “is the central force bringing the ecological age into existence.”³

Just as we begin to hear with new ears what is coming toward us from the future, we also see a troubling paradox that Thomas observes. The human capacity to penetrate deeply into the physical structure of reality has, at the same time, distanced us from an intimacy with the universe. And this distancing has had devastating consequences for Earth, our home. This is “the inner agony we experience” as we grasp more deeply the co-creative role the human plays. Those who hear the melody ache with sorrow, while others seem deaf to the sounds.

Thomas speaks a warning, a wakeup call, which is a mantra for our time:

*The universe is composed of subjects to be communed with,
Not [a collection] of objects to be used.*⁴

Threaded throughout his writings, Thomas considers the patterns of cultural coding that have brought us to this place of dissonance. He applauds efforts being made toward cultural reform and he outlines his own pathways forward. *Always*, he call us back to the deeper realm of consciousness itself.

Reorientation of Mind and Inner Attitude

In *The Sacred Universe*,⁵ he writes:

Pragmatic efforts at establishing a viable way into the future

2. Ibid., 91.

3. Ibid., 121.

4. Thomas Berry, *Evening Thoughts: Reflecting on Earth as Sacred Community* (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 2006), 149 (italics added).

5. Thomas Berry, *The Sacred Universe: Earth, Spirituality, and Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

are urgently needed and invaluable. They are indispensable in any effort to deal with that future.

Even with the change in attitude that I am proposing, the details of implementation will be an essential aspect of any future program. I do not wish to diminish what is being done. I wish only to indicate that the basic difficulty lies deeper in the human mind and emotions than is generally recognized. If the reorientation of mind is not effected, then whatever remedy is proposed will not succeed in the purposes it intends.

So far, we have not been able to effect a major change in inner attitude.⁶

In so saying, Thomas recognizes that as long as we continue to perceive the world through the same lens that has brought us to this place, our well-intentioned efforts will have no lasting effect.

He speaks often of the psychic energy needed for transformation in our time and wonders where such energy will come from that is equal to the magnitude of the task before us. He focuses on the new sacred story as the source of this energy, but he also recognizes we have so far failed to imbue the story with its sacred dimension. Thomas emphasizes we must enlarge our consciousness to tell the story, hear the story, and live the story in its full sacred dimension.

Others have heard the call for “the reorientation of mind” of which Thomas speaks. Ecologist John Milton, speaking of well-intentioned efforts to reform institutions, writes,

By themselves [these efforts] won't bring about the penetrating changes in human culture that we need for people to live in true harmony and balance with one another and the earth. The next great opening of an ecological worldview will have to be an internal one.⁷

In *Spiritual Ecology, The Cry of the Earth*,⁸ Llewellyn Vaughan-

6. Ibid., 169.

7. Quoted in Arthur Zajonc, *Meditation as Contemplative Inquiry* (Great Barrington, MA: Lindisfarne Books, 2009), 15.

8. Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee, ed., *Spiritual Ecology: The Cry of the Earth* (Point

Lee recognizes the deep divide between spirit and matter that is at the heart of the ecological crisis:

Our present ecological crisis...is calling to us and it is for each of us to respond. This crisis is not a problem to be solved, because the world is not a problem but a living being in a state of dangerous imbalance and deep distress... There is action to be taken in the outer world, but it must be action that comes from a reconnection with the sacred—otherwise we will just be reconstellating the patterns that have created this imbalance.⁹

In *Spiritual Ecology: A Quiet Revolution*, Anthropologist Leslie E. Sponsel offers a history of those engaged with an inner “rethinking, refeeling, and revisioning of the place of humans in nature.”¹⁰ Let us look closely, then, at what Thomas has to say about the deep psychic shift that must take place in order for us to move from a view of the universe as a collection of objects to a relationship with the universe as a communion of subjects—a shift from “view” to “relationship,” from a spectator to communion. Thomas takes us back to Descartes’ writing as the decisive moment when humans as thinking subjects were split off from everything else as objects. In *Evening Thoughts*, Thomas writes:

The universe is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects. The devastation of the planet can be seen as a direct consequence of the loss of this capacity for human presence to and reciprocity with the nonhuman world. This reached its most decisive moment in the seventeenth-century proposal of René Descartes that the universe is composed simply of “mind and mechanism.” In this single stroke, he devitalized the planet and all its living creatures, with the exception of the human. The thousandfold voices of the natural world [thus] became

Reyes, CA: The Golden Sufi Center, 2013).

9. Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee, “The Call of the Earth,” in *ibid.*, 255-256.

10. Leslie E. Sponsel, “Prologue,” in *Spiritual Ecology: A Quiet Revolution*, ed. Leslie E. Sponsel (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2012), xiv.

inaudible to many humans.”¹¹

“Descartes,” Thomas says, “desouled the Earth, with his division of reality between mind and extension.”¹²

Thomas describes this rational mode of consciousness in the language of confinement. He uses words like *autistic*, *mute*, *deaden*ing, *paralysis*, *suffocation*, *mechanistic fixation*, *atrophy*, *pathology*, *alienation*, *dissatisfied* and *starved* to describe the human mind cut off from the deeper realms of reference and meaning. In *The Great Work* he writes:

We have, in the accepted universe of these times, little capacity for participating in the mysteries that were celebrated in the earlier literary and artistic and religious modes of expression. For we cannot live in the universe in which these celebrations took place. We can only look on, as it were, as at something unreal.¹³

Still, Thomas recognizes that the scientific period had a particular role to play in the evolution of consciousness that culminated in the story of a time-developmental universe, in a transition from cosmos to cosmogenesis, and in a revelation of the role of the human as that being in whom the universe reflects upon itself in a special mode of conscious self-awareness.¹⁴ Thomas holds the tension between these two polarities of rational consciousness—one devitalizing and the other full of awe and wonder—through which a third force emerges.

Unitive Consciousness

This third force is a new, unitive consciousness of the human being. In *The Great Work* he writes:

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11. Berry, *Evening Thoughts*, 17-18.
 12. Thomas Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999), 78.
 13. *Ibid.*, 17.
 14. Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, *The Universe Story: From the Primordial Flaring Forth to the Beginning of the Eozoic Era—A Celebration of the Unfolding Cosmos* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 1.

We are a pervasive presence. By definition we are that reality in whom the entire Earth comes to a special mode of reflexive consciousness. We are ourselves a mystical quality of the Earth, a unifying principle, an integration of the various polarities of the material and the spiritual, the physical and the psychic, the natural and the artistic, the intuitive and the scientific. We are the unity in which all these inhere and achieve a special mode of functioning. In this way the human acts as a pervading logos.¹⁵

He clearly recognizes, however, these human capacities have been marginalized throughout the modern period of scientific/rational/Cartesian consciousness. In *Evening Thoughts* he writes:

Narration of this sequence has required the immense effort of scientific investigation of these past few centuries. It has necessitated the setting aside, for a while, of the spiritual, the visionary, intuitive, imaginative world in order to probe as deeply as possible into the visible, material, quantitative world, the measurable world, the world that could be expressed in the language of calculus, the great instrument of the scientific endeavor.¹⁶

Cultivation of Capacities

To midwife a new unitive consciousness, the spiritual, visionary, intuitive, and imaginative worlds need to be invited back in. Thomas gives us a feeling for the human capacities that must now be cultivated to release us from our confinement and allow us to enter more fully into communion with Earth. Here, Thomas quotes William Blake, who asked: "What do you see when you look out over the landscape? Do you simply see the sun rising or do you see the flaming forth of the deep mystery of the universe?"¹⁷

A close reading of Thomas's writings reveals these capacities that

15. Berry, *Great Work*, 174-175.

16. Berry, *Evening Thoughts*, 56.

17. Berry, *Sacred Universe*, 149.

must now be cultivated:

A capacity for humility
A capacity for surrender
A capacity for courtesy
A capacity for gratitude
A capacity for reverence
A capacity for compassion
A capacity for veneration
A sense of the sacred, a sense of the numinous
A sense of mystery
A capacity for wisdom
A capacity for awe
A capacity for wonder
A capacity for revelatory experience
A capacity for presence
A capacity for listening
A capacity for intimate rapport
A capacity for mutual presence
A capacity for communion
A capacity for reciprocity
A capacity for conscious reflection
A capacity for nurturing
A capacity for celebration
A capacity for spontaneity
A capacity for creativity
A capacity for ecstasy
A capacity for praise
A capacity for joy
A capacity for fulfillment

In his book, *Living Presence*, Kabir Helminski reminds us of the full potential of the human who has embraced such capacities:

We have subtle subconscious faculties we are not using. In addition to the limited analytic intellect is a vast realm of mind that includes psychic and extrasensory abilities; intuition; wis-

dom; a sense of unity; aesthetic, qualitative, and creative capacities; and image-forming and symbolic capacities. Though these faculties are many, we give them a single name with some justification because they are operating best when they are in concert. They comprise a mind, moreover, in spontaneous connection to the cosmic mind. This total mind we call "heart."¹⁸

Thomas extends this understanding of the "total mind" from the human heart to the "heart of the universe," understood through the Chinese word *hsin*. Thomas writes:

Hsin is written as a pictograph of the human heart. It should be translated by a single word or a phrase with both a feeling and an understanding aspect. It could thus be translated by saying that humans are the "understanding heart of heaven and Earth." Even more briefly the phrase has been translated by Julia Ch'ing in the statement that humans are the "heart of the universe." It could, finally, be translated by saying that humans are "the consciousness of the world," or that humans are "the psyche of the universe." Here we have a remarkable feeling for the absolute dimensions of the human, the total integration of reality in humans, the total integration of humans in reality.¹⁹

In his essay "The Meadow across the Creek,"²⁰ Thomas tells a story and gives an image of how, when he was eleven years old, a "heart of the universe" experience brought awareness of the universe as a communion of subjects, and became a touchstone for his future thinking and actions. At the end of the essay he writes:

We might think of a viable future for the planet less as the result of some scientific insight or as dependent on some socio-

18. Kabir Edmund Helminski, *Living Presence* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam, 1992), 157.

19. Thomas Berry, "The Spirituality of Earth," *The Ecozoic: Reflections on Life in an Ecological Age 1* (2008): 4.

20. Berry, *Great Work*, 12-20.

economic arrangement, than as participation in a symphony or as renewed presence to some numinous presence manifested in the wonderworld about us. This was perhaps something I vaguely experienced in that first view of the lilies blooming in the meadow across the creek.²¹

The “heart of the universe” participates in the symphony of the universe in both its spatial and temporal dimensions. The “heart of the universe” hears the melody of a bond of intimacy that holds all together in communion. The “heart of the universe” hears the melody of the human being as that communion becoming conscious of itself.

Where These Capacities Are Being Cultivated

Where in our culture are these capacities for the “heart of the universe” being cultivated? New terms are arising, such as *heart-mind*, *heartfelt thinking*, *heart-mind entrainment*, *nondual thinking*, *putting the mind in the heart*. There is a rise of communion consciousness, particularly in the realm of contemplative ways of knowing. Here are some examples:

First, I call attention to the work of Douglas Christie, Professor of Theological Studies at Loyola Marymount University in California and author of *The Blue Sapphire of the Mind: Notes for a Contemplative Ecology* (2013).²² Christie writes on the essential importance of *contemplative ecology*:

Our ecological commitments, if they are to reach mature and sustainable expression, need to be grounded in a sense of deep reciprocity with the living world. And...this sense of reciprocity must be cultivated over time, in a process of deepening awareness and growing ethical maturity rooted in practices akin to those long cherished in the great spiritual traditions of the world—*contemplative* practices, oriented toward helping us

21. *Ibid.*, 20.

22. Douglas E. Christie, *The Blue Sapphire of the Mind: Notes for a Contemplative Ecology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

see and inhabit and tend to the world fully and deeply.²³

Christie recognizes the practice of seeing deeply into the living world as a moral and spiritual activity that dissolves dualistic thinking and restores a sacred sense of the whole. “The question,” Christie says, “of what it is to become aware of oneself as alive in the living world and how to cultivate this awareness for the sake of that world remains one of the most pressing spiritual concerns of our time.”²⁴

Second, I note the work of Arthur Zajonc, Professor of Physics Emeritus at Amherst College, former Director of the Academic Program of the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society, former President of the Mind and Life Institute, and author of several books, including *Meditation as Contemplative Inquiry: When Knowing Becomes Love* (2008)²⁵ and, with Parker Palmer, *The Heart of Higher Education: A Call to Renewal* (2010).²⁶ Working closely with the contemplative traditions of Rudolf Steiner and Buddhism, Zajonc has worked tirelessly to legitimate a shift from “knowledge as power” to “knowledge as love” in the academic world. These words, written by Zajonc, could easily have been written by Thomas:

The native peoples of all continents live within a tradition that fosters an awareness of the sacred being of nature and therefore a reverence for her. Our environmental groups largely lack the consciousness of the Earth as Mother; we have much to learn from our indigenous brothers and sisters in this regard. In deepening our relationship to nature by moving from wonder and awe to reverence, we meet nature not as a physical mechanism but as a moral and spiritual agent. While science will protest that we are merely projecting our moral inclinations onto nature, we can inwardly sense the emptiness of that assertion. Every civilization except ours has understood that

23. Ibid., 21.

24. Ibid., 6.

25. Arthur Zajonc, *Meditation as Contemplative Inquiry: When Knowing Becomes Love* (Great Barrington, MA: Lindisfarne Books, 2008).

26. Parker J. Palmer et al, *The Heart of Higher Education: A Call to Renewal* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010).

we are not the only moral agents in the universe. Our survival depends on setting aside such self-centeredness and acknowledging the agential or “being” character of the world around us. It is then possible to feel true reverence toward nature, our fellow human beings, and towards those beings or Being who have always been active within her.²⁷

Through a meditative practice based on humility and reverence, Zajonc opens the possibility of listening to Earth for guidance, one of the primary principles of Thomas’s work.

Third, of signal importance is the work of Robert Sardello, founder of the School of Spiritual Psychology, Co-Founder and Fellow of the Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture and former Head of the Psychology Department at the University of Dallas. With the publication of *Facing the World with Soul: The Reimagination of Modern Life* (1992),²⁸ Sardello jostles our habitual ways of thinking about caring for the world:

I am suggesting that political, social, ecological, and technological programs (and all other imaginable kinds of programs) will not alter the condition of the world one wit; they only rearrange what is already given into new patterns into which we are inserted as onlookers, strangers.²⁹

Drawing upon the archetypal psychology of James Hillman and others, Sardello works with silence, concentration, meditation, image-making, and contemplation to develop the interior presence of heart with Earth. Over the course of more than twenty years, these practices have culminated in a four-part course of study, “Contemplative Living with Earth”³⁰ and the publication of

27. Arthur Zajonc, *Meditation as Contemplative Inquiry*, 56-57.

28. Robert Sardello, *Facing the World with Soul: The Reimagination of Modern Life* (Great Barrington, MA: Lindisfarne Press, 1992).

29. *Ibid.*, 9.

30. The four parts are “Dying Awake, Coming Alive: A Contemplative Spiritual Quickening of the Soul,” “Heart Initiation: Developing Incarnational Contemplative Presence,” “Contemplative Listening: Bodily Presence with Soul,” and “Contemplative Action: A Handbook of Non-Doing Doing.”

Heartfulness (2015).³¹

Fourth, of profound significance is the work of Cynthia Bourgeault, PhD in Medieval Studies, author, Episcopal priest, hermit, a founding Director of both The Contemplative Society and The Aspen Wisdom School, and current faculty member of the Living School with Richard Rohr, James Finley, and others at the Center for Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Through her wisdom writings and contemplative practices, Bourgeault fosters a new level of evolutionary consciousness based on a shift from the dividing, separating mind to a consciousness that experiences the universe as “an emergent symphony of wholeness—a delicious inter-abiding where every part is precious and particular but only makes sense when it takes its place within the whole.”³² This new consciousness is based on a heart-mind entrainment that perceives through coherence and connection, and can be cultivated and stabilized through the contemplative practices of kenosis (holding openness), abundance (sensing fullness), and singleness (perceiving from wholeness).

Douglas Christie, Arthur Zajonc, Robert Sardello, and Cynthia Bourgeault collectively create a considerable field of psychic energy today for actualizing the universe as a communion of subjects. Through contemplative practices, they provide pathways for the deep psychic shift that Thomas calls for within the human soul. These are everyday practices that move us from the dividing, separating mind to an awakening of “the heart of the universe.”

Thomas recognized the deep promise of contemplative ways of knowing. In *The Sacred Universe*, he speaks of a creative newness arising from contemplative traditions:

As we seek to escape from the wasteland about us, we witness these ancient springs once again flowing with cool water capable of sustaining us on the next phase of our journey.

See “Contemplative Living with Earth,” accessed August 27, 2016, http://reneecoleman.net/?page_id=1159.

31. Robert Sardello, *Heartfulness* (Gainesville, TX: Goldenstone Press, 2015).

32. Cynthia Bourgeault, (lecture, Co-Creation Conference Greensboro, NC, May 2, 2014).

Contemplative traditions are renewed, prayer is again a source of wisdom, and the healing power of silence is rediscovered. As the need for a more mystical relationship with the Earth becomes more widespread, education could become an initiation into a wisdom tradition rather than simply an acquisition of factual data.³³

And Thomas also acknowledges that a “sense of the sacred requires recovery of ourselves, a return to the depths of our own being. We must in some manner,” he says, “manage the whole existence in terms of the authenticity of our own deeper self.”³⁴

The Work of the Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World

On October 12, 2000, a new non-profit organization, which was to become the Center for Education Imagination and the Natural World, initiated a program at Timberlake Earth Sanctuary in the foothills of North Carolina with a program featuring Thomas Berry and Richard Lewis, Founder of the Touchstone Center for Children in New York City. Called “The Biological Imperative: Nature, Education and Imagination,” this was the beginning of a work for educators and children situated in the authenticity of the deeper self rather than in factuality about the natural world.

Berry’s opening remarks that day were illuminating and gave those of us involved with the new center a way forward:

The capacity of presence is so important. When I was eleven, we moved from one side of town to the borders of the other side of the town when Greensboro was 18,000 people. The destiny of the children and planet is going to depend on us to respond to their deeper mode of being. In 1926, just a few years before the Depression, we were building the new house and I went there and there was an incline down to the creek. I was a wanderer and a brooder. I was a solitary in a sense. I knew I couldn’t

33. Berry, *Sacred Universe*, 64.

34. *Ibid.*, 55.

make it in a commercial world and survive. It was too unacceptable. I would have died in some sense.... A meadow was there. The grass was growing and the crickets were chirping... an extraordinary view of a meadow and the white lilies. It remained in my mind and it developed into a referent, like this place [(gesturing at Timberlake Earth Sanctuary)] could be to children. It became normative. Whether the woodland, the meadow, the creek, it was something very sublime. I think when a child sees a butterfly, there's some kind of ecstasy. The natural world is there to present the numinous aspect of existence.

Once I was in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine where there was a meeting of people: Lame Deer, a Sioux Indian was there; Zen master Roshi, Edgar Mitchell, and me. We had a meeting on technology. The Zen master and Edgar Mitchell argued that technology is indifferent, it is just how we use it. Lame Deer and I argued no. Lame Deer mentioned the Cathedral. As beautiful as all of this was, the Sioux needed the sky above to draw in everything from the four directions, above and below. *You establish yourself with the universe before you do anything.*

Black Elk is a patron saint of mine. His vision was profound. He was ill as a child in a coma and a vision occurred. He came out of the coma and it was six years before he would speak to the medicine man of his vision. The culmination of the vision can be read to establish a community of what we are all about. Loren Eiseley is my next patron saint....

My childhood dream is what has guided my life...of what it should be...what I should strive for...what I should do. Particularly in relation to children. That's why I've been dedicated to children. Imagination has to be activated by the natural world. I would push things back from the biological imperative to the *primordial imperative*; to the universe itself and within the universe, *the human participation at the deepest level of the universe is our gift of imagination, but our imagination has to be activated by the natural world.* So this goes with the fact that it's one thing, a self-activating process. The universe gives us the imagination

and it imprints the imagination.³⁵

So began our work for educators and children at the Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World, work guided particularly by these words he spoke that day:

- *The capacity of presence is so important.*
- *The destiny of the children and planet is going to depend on us to respond to their deeper mode of being.*
- *You establish yourself with the universe before you do anything.*
- *My childhood dream is what has guided my life...of what it should be...what I should strive for...what I should do. Particularly in relation to children. That's why I've been dedicated to children.*
- *The human participation at the deepest level of the universe is our gift of imagination, but our imagination has to be activated by the natural world.*

Being and becoming, cosmos and cosmogenesis, meet in Thomas's fuller account of "The Meadow across the Creek" in his book *The Great Work*.³⁶ A moment of cosmic consciousness became the reverberating touchstone for the new cultural coding that Thomas was to bring to expression in his life and work. The "communion of subjects" was born there—the place of reciprocity, mutual presence and intimate rapport between the imagination of the universe and the imagination of a child.

All the work of the Center is formed in the image of a communion of subjects, from governance, to staff development, to the formation of programs for educators and children; and all the work of the Center begins with *presence*, establishing ourselves in the natural world as primary.

In our programs for adults at the Center, we are preparing for a deep change of heart, a deep psychic shift in the culture at large...

35. Thomas Berry, (in conversation during program on "The Biological Imperative: Nature, Education and Imagination," Timberlake Earth Sanctuary, Whitsett, NC, October 12, 2000) (italics added).

36. Cited above in footnote 20.

one educator at a time. We believe the change that is needed in our time cannot be achieved through sweeping movements, curriculum change, or further exchange of information. Thus in our two-year program for educators called the “Inner Life of the Child in Nature,” we focus in the first year on the development of the capacity for inner presence to the natural world, and in the second year on the creation of individual practices that are diverse and generative like the universe itself.

This is a new social form for working with educators based on the assumption that a shift in consciousness within the educational realm will come only through an inner transformation of the educator, through an honoring of the soul/spirit of the educator as a core value, and through the creation of a community of educators who support and inspire one another on the threshold of a new consciousness for our time—a consciousness that moves us beyond a view of the natural world as a collection of objects into an experience of the natural world as a communion of subjects.

In our programs for children, we also focus on eco-contemplative practices that bring children into a deep inner relationship with the natural world. Over the past sixteen years, we have cultivated ways of working that:

- Foster a deep awareness of the sacred presence within each reality of the universe.
- Nurture an attitude of awe, wonder and reverence.
- Nurture a capacity for inner presence to other modes of being.
- Cultivate a soul-attitude of loving attention.
- Develop the imaginal capacity to feel a bond of intimacy with the world.

Our work also requires inner development on the part of our staff, all of whom have graduated from the Center’s Inner Life of the Child in Nature Program.

Listening to the Voices of Children

It seems fitting to end this presentation on Thomas Berry with the voices of children.

One day in early December, a fifth-grade child came into communion with a raptor in flight through our beholding practice. These are the words she wrote at day's end:

Peace Eagle

By Ruby

Soaring past the trees
Halting at its beautiful home
I hope you are protected, and if shot
there are fees. You did not make
much noise, but still amazed all
the girls and boys. I wanted to fly
up there with you but instead I stood
by and observed with my eye. But
afterward I hopped up on a rock and made
sounds just like the birds. Later on
complete silence crept on in and I
heard you remote and thin.
You are a beauty.
You are a Peace Eagle.

During one of our Poetry of Nature programs, an eighth grader wrote the following poem as he sat in his solo sit-spot on an Earth sanctuary trail:

Bridge

By Sebastian

so soft
the spirit trickles down
filling me
quenching my thirst

the spirit flows from the tops of trees
it scrapes across rocks
below the water of the creek

it soothes
filling everything with its sound
so perfectly imperfect
so quietly brilliant

I want to leap
leap
into its arms

I leap
it catches me
holds me

I fall
deeper and deeper
until we are one

the tree's spirit is my spirit
the bird's song my own

and I stay perfectly silent
under the stars
and the light of the sun

Thomas Berry would have recognized such moments of communion as moments of fulfillment, but also as moments where the universe awakens to itself through the child as “heart of the universe.” “This,” he says, “is the beginning of poetry and music and literature. It is the beginning of cosmology, of philosophical reflection, of moral perception, of theological insight. It is the beginning of the Epic of Evolution.”³⁷

Finally, I'd like to invite you to enter inwardly into the following

37. Berry, *Evening Thoughts*, 118.

account of an Earth Walk with a Title I public school fifth grade class, written by Marnie Weigel, one of the Center's Earth Guides:

This was my third group, and the spring season. Everything was in bloom and budding. The earth sanctuary was alive with sounds of bird songs, crickets, and frogs. Tadpoles were hatching in the pond, and there were babies being born all over the Earth sanctuary. My group walked along the Timberlake Trail. I decided to guide them on a solo walk on a moss-covered part of the trail. I invited the children to take their shoes off and carry them as they slowly walked on the soft moss. Most of the children took their shoes off with delight. I said, "Notice the sounds beneath your feet and all around you as you walk. Can you walk on the path in silence even beneath your feet? Notice the air on your arms and your face as you walk." I started down the trail first. Noticing, silence, and walking barefoot will slow you to walk at nature's pace. I noticed the coolness of the moss under my feet. Some parts of the trails were dry and some were really wet. I noticed the softness of the earth. There was a comforting, calm, and balancing feeling I noticed as I walked along. I noticed the bluet wildflowers growing out of the moss, delicately dancing along the path and defining it for me. When I reached the end of the moss on the path, I stopped and sat on the ground and waited to watch the children as they slowly made their way down the path. I love to see the expressions on their faces as they get closer to the end of the solo walk. There is a peaceful happiness in their expressions. Linda sent each child one at a time down the trail to me. When they each arrived they sat on the ground with me to put their shoes back on. I was making a sun mandala with pebbles on the moss to mark the end of solo walk for the day. The children were drawn in by the mandala and watched the mandala come to life. I invited them to add to the mandala. I remember looking up each time a child would approach and smiled to invite them to join us sitting along the path. I noticed Savon walking down the path with an interesting expression on his face as he approached the group. When he sat down, he had a look

about him that was as if he was trying to put into words his experience on his solo walk. He shared, “I had a strange feeling come up from the Earth through my feet. It was an energetic feeling.” He later described this to the Earth Walk group when I opened the moment for sharing and reflecting. He looked up to the sky and said, “It was like the spirit of the Earth moving up through my feet into my body. It was like a dream.”³⁸

These communion experiences return children to the origin and authenticity of their being and give deep hope for the future. They return us, ultimately, as Thomas Berry writes, to

The dream of the earth. Where else can we go for the guidance needed for the task that is before us?³⁹

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38. After each of the Center's programs for children, our staff meets to reflect on the day and write field notes on the children's experiences. This description was written by Marnie Weigel after an “Awakening to Nature” program at Timberlake Earth Sanctuary on April 22, 2014.

39. Berry, *Dream of the Earth*, 223.

In the Darkness Grows the Green: Thomas Berry's Contribution to Contemporary Theological Conversations Concerning Human Suffering

Catherine Wright

Introduction

The eco-theological work of Thomas Berry spans several decades and includes several ground breaking texts such as *The Dream of the Earth* (1988),¹ *The Universe Story* (1992),² and *The Great Work* (1999).³ In these texts and numerous other articles and essays, Berry provides a set of foundational ideas and principles for the transition from economic-industrial civilization to ecological-cultural civilization. In 1987 Berry wrote an article for *Cross Currents* that offered twelve principles for reflecting on the universe, and among these he formulated his crucial fifth principle: “The universe has a violent as well as a harmonious aspect; but it is consistently creative in the larger arc of its development.”⁴ This fifth principle is not systematically addressed in any of his texts, but nevertheless it is interwoven into Berry’s cosmology. Only in the final chapter of

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1. Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988).
 2. Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, *The Universe Story: From the Primordial Flaring Forth to the Beginning of the Ecozoic Era—A Celebration of the Unfolding Cosmos* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994).
 3. Thomas Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999).
 4. Thomas Berry, “Twelve Principles for Reflecting on the Universe and the Role of the Human in the Universe Process,” *Cross Currents* 37, no. 2-3 (1987): 176-177. This list is repeated in Thomas Berry, “Twelve Principles For Understanding the Universe and the Role of the Human in the Universe Process,” in Anne Lonergan and Caroline Richards, eds. *Thomas Berry & the New Cosmology* (Mystic: CT: Twenty-Third Publications), 108-09.

several of his texts does he explicitly engage this idea of violence and creativity inherent to cosmogenesis. For example in the chapter “The Cosmology of Peace” in *The Dream of the Earth* he grapples with the struggle and violence inherent to Earth’s creative processes.⁵ Also in *Befriending the Earth*, Berry engages the coupling of suffering and grace,⁶ a theme he continues, albeit briefly, in *The Great Work*.⁷

To flesh out and develop Berry’s fifth principle and re-imagine human suffering, several preliminary tasks need to be undertaken. The first task is to explore classic theological interpretations of human suffering and connect them to the cosmology out of which they came. Next, one must articulate how humanity can awaken “to the numinous powers present in the phenomenal world”⁸ and become well-versed in Earth’s many bio-spiritual narratives. To accomplish this, a synthetic and historical portrait of the emergence of “Earth literacy” in both science and theology needs to be articulated. This portrait will use as its many hues, the many narratives of all Earth’s subjects—from the galactic to the quantum levels of life. The third and final task is to construct a new ecological theological anthropology (ETA) from the Earth-centered terminology, metaphors, images, and narratives provided by humanity’s newly acquired Earth literacy. This novel framework, which my research has determined to be a four-pillared structure, will describe our relation with Earth and God and inter-human relations in new ways. This in turn will enable more fruitful theological engagement with the mystery of human suffering.

This tri-fold set of tasks is too extensive to completely explore here; it is the undertaking of my doctoral thesis project (2014). For this essay, however, one vital aspect will be explored: the ancient kenotic-kinetic animating cosmogenesis that is the cornerstone of a distinctly ETA. This term, kenotic-kinetic, will be introduced to develop what Berry articulates in his fifth principle. It will also be proposed that when human sufferers appreciate the ancient kenotic-kinetic animating cosmogenesis, they will be better able to under-

5. Berry, *Dream of the Earth*, 216-223.

6. Berry and Clarke, *Befriending the Earth*, 131-142.

7. Berry, *The Great Work*, 196-201.

8. Berry, *Dream of the Earth*, 211.

stand how their personal human suffering is intimately connected to, and held in a dynamic tension with, the macrocosmic suffering, sacrifice, and grace manifest in the larger creative arc of the sacred universe story. This is a new horizon of hope that Thomas Berry is guiding humanity toward.

Four Pillars of an ETA

As Berry realized, we are in between stories, and our evolutionary Earth context has yet to become the living matrix out of which our understanding of God, creation, and the human creature emerges—including the experience of suffering.⁹ When Earth began to become the context (rather than merely the content) of scientific endeavours, we developed what environmentalist David Orr called “ecological literacy”—the shift towards a truly “ecological consciousness” and affectivity that allows an individual to merge their “landscape” with their “mindscape.”¹⁰ When this ecological literacy is situated within the larger 13.8 billion year universe story and the spiritual dimensions of Earth subjectivity are attended to,¹¹ then a new planetary

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9. *Ibid.*, 123-37. Berry affirms this when he indicates that our greatest need is to create a functional cosmology (cultural coding), told in its physical dimension by science, that tells of the numinous and consciousness dimensions from primordial moment. To achieve this, Berry indicates that new cultural coding must emerge from the source of all coding, namely divine revelation expressed in the “curvature of the emergent universe.” This new sensitivity to, critical appreciation of, and participation in the universe story is the foundation for total range of human activities in the Ecological Age, including ethical engagement with the mystery of human suffering.
 10. David W. Orr, *Ecological Literacy: Education and the Transition to a Postmodern World* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), 86.
 11. Mary Evelyn Tucker, “Education and Ecology: Earth Literacy and the Technological Trance” in *Teilhard in the 21st Century: The Emerging Spirit of Earth*, ed. Arthur Fabel and Donald St. John (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2003), 95-96. Tucker uses the term Earth literacy in her essay. She indicates that the basis of Earth literacy is the appreciation of human intimacy with the Earth and argues that human beings are “a planetary species that can move toward the enhancement of life or its radical diminishment for future generations.” *Ibid.*, 90. Ursula King, “Earthing Spiritual Literacy: How to Link Spiritual Development and Education to a New Earth Consciousness?” *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 31, no. 3 (December 2010), 258. King attends

consciousness—or Earth literacy—emerged. Thus, humanity began to imagine our bio-spiritual Earth as our “primary source” of intelligibility and value in both our planetary and human ecologies—including religion.¹²

Once “Earth literacy” or planetary consciousness emerged in religious studies, Berry was able to use these new literary tools (e.g., language, metaphors, and images offered by Earth’s many narratives) to direct how humanity engaged the three fundamental mediations: the significant relationships between the human and the Divine; between humans; and between humans and the rest of creation. He argued that while humanity has given due attention to the mediations between humans and the Divine and between humans, we have neglected the third mediation, namely, the important relations between humanity and the rest of creation.¹³ By addressing the atrophied relationship between humanity and Earth a new theological anthropology—an ETA—can be constructed. Thus contemporary eco-theologians, those tooled with a robust Earth literacy, have been able to offer three pillars to an ETA: Eschatological Hope; Intrinsic Worth of Creation; the Numinous-Cosmic Communion.¹⁴ In addi-

to this in more detail by her nomenclature “earthing spiritual literacy” and argues that when our spirituality is rooted in Earth we can discover “the zest for life that fosters the flourishing of people and planet.” Thus King employs the term “earthing” and “spiritual” to represent a coupling of the spiritual and biological in her understanding of literacy. This bio-spiritual understanding of Earth grounds what the term Earth literacy represents in this thesis.

12. Berry, *Dream of the Earth*, 88.

13. *Ibid.* We are entering into a period that might be identified as the period of the Third Mediation. For a long period the divine-human mediation was the dominant context not only of religion, but of the entire span of human activities. Then, for some centuries of industrial classes and nation-states, a primary concern has been inter-human mediation. Now the dominant mediation can be identified as earth-human mediation. The other two mediations will in the future be heavily dependent on our ability to establish a mutually enhancing human-earth presence to each other.

14. Some ecotheologians who have contributed to establishing these three pillars include Thomas Berry, Elizabeth Johnson, Larry Rasmussen, Dieter T. Hessel, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Mark Wallace, Sean McDonagh, Matthew Fox, Ursula King, Mary Evelyn Tucker, John Grimm, Gordon Kaufman, Catherine Keller, James Nash, Ilia Delio, Heather Eaton, and many others. This is not an exhaustive list but a snapshot of some significant

tion, my research into human suffering has revealed that Berry's fifth principle speaks of a fourth pillar to an ETA: Kenosis as the Kinetic of Cosmogensis.¹⁵

Kenotic-Kinetic

Contemporary conversations concerning suffering have demonstrated that Berry's attention to the violent and harmonious character of our unfolding universe has often inspired others to do the same. It has at the very least contributed to a shift in modern theological discourse toward a deeper appreciation of the coupling of novelty and cruciformity inherent in Earth's creative processes.¹⁶ For example, philosopher Holmes Rolston III writes poignantly of the cruciformity inherent to our constantly complexifying, evolutionary world: "Biological nature is always giving birth, regenerating, always in travail. Something is always dying and something is always living on.... This whole evolutionary upslope is a calling in which renewed life comes by blasting the old. Life is gathered up in the midst of its throes, a blessed tragedy lived in grace through a besetting storm."¹⁷

Christian contributors.

15. As will be demonstrated later in this essay, these two adjectives are coupled to represent the movement of receptivity that animates cosmogenesis. It is dynamic (kinesis) sacrificial creativity (self-giving and self-building kenotic disposition) that motivates this unique nomenclature.
16. Robert John Russell, "Groaning of Creation: Does God Suffer with All Life?" in *The Evolution of Evil*, ed. Gaymon Bennett et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 120-121. Russell presents a brilliant literary exposition of the coupling of the creative and cruciform. See also: Jay McDaniel, *Of God and Pelicans: A Theology of Reverence for Life* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989); Denis Edwards, "Every Sparrow that Falls to the Ground: The Cost of Evolution and the Christ-Event," *Ecotheology* 11, no.1 (2006): 103-123; Jay McDaniel, "The Passion of Christ: Grace Both Red and Green," in *Cross Examinations: Readings on the Meaning of the Cross Today*, ed. Marit Trelstad (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 196-210; Ilia Delio, *The Unbearable Wholeness of Being: God, Evolution and the Power of Love* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books 2013); Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).
17. Holmes Rolston, "Kenosis and Nature," in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, ed. John Polkinghorne (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2001), 58-59.

Biologist Ursula Goodenough also writes of the costliness of Earth's innovation: "Death is the price paid to have trees and clams and birds and grasshoppers, and death is the price paid to have human consciousness."¹⁸ Theologians Niels Gregersen and Gloria Schaab affirm that this cosmic suffering can be imagined as part of the birthing woes of nature's "unstoppable creativity,"¹⁹ and Elizabeth Johnson attests that "without pain, no further exploration of life's potential forms; without death, no new life. These afflictions arose as essential elements in a tremendously powerful process that created and continues to create the magnificent community of life on this planet."²⁰ Thus Berry's fifth principle, a foundational piece of the sacred universe story, requires that theological attention be paid to how the shadow side of our creative, unfolding universe is never uncoupled from the creative. Both the violence and harmony of creation must be substantially addressed within eco-theological discourse in order to have meaningful interpretations of, and responses to, human suffering. I propose that the phrase "kenotic-kinetic" does just this.

The nomenclature "kenotic-kinetic" is novel, but I join these two adjectives as a literary way to represent the dynamism of cosmogenesis—kinesis—and the sacrificial receptivity at the heart of cosmic creativity—kenotic. The term *kenotic* is derived from *kenosis*, the unique movement of Christ's pure receptivity and self-emptying, and Christ's consequent self-affirmation as the second person of the Trinity. In Paul's second letter to the Philippians, both movements (affirmation and emptying) are articulated in tandem: the dynamic

18. Ursula Goodenough, *The Sacred Depths of Nature* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1998), 151.

19. Niels Henrik Gregersen, "The Cross of Christ in an Evolutionary World," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 40, no. 3 (Fall 2001), 198. Schaab imagines God as transcendent Mother birthing "the incarnate cosmos through the immanent creativity of the cosmos itself." Gloria L. Schaab, "Midwifery as a Model for Ecological Ethics: Expanding Arthur Peacocke's Models of "Man-in-Creation," *Zygon* 42, no. 2 (June 2007), 491.

20. Johnson, 185.

of descent or self-emptying²¹ and ascent or self-affirming.²² Thus in his self-emptying Christ affirmed his true self: “born in human likeness” and “Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”²³ However, due to our finite nature, humans and other-than-humans are unable to achieve kenosis per se. We do, however, participate in the cosmic kenotic disposition that is uniquely manifested by Christ. The Incarnation can be our gateway for glimpsing the kenotic self-affirming/self-emptying receptivity of the Trinity, and this is reflected, albeit dimly, in the dynamic of costly creativity that is animating cosmogenesis.²⁴ *Kenotic* is a term that engages both the shadowy and luminescent aspects of cosmogenesis within its unique dialectic of self-actualization and self-giving (for example, creativity and cruci-

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21. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Phil. 2:5-8 (NRSV).
22. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Phil. 2:9-11 (NRSV).
- 23 Phil. 2:7, 11.
24. Robin Ryan, *God and the Mystery of Human Suffering: A Theological Conversation across the Ages* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2011), 287. In his exploration of Elizabeth Johnson’s theology with respect to human suffering, Ryan indicates Johnson affirms that “the self-emptying that is affirmed of Christ in the New Testament (Phil. 2:6-11) is characteristic of God from the beginning of creation.” Thus, cosmogenesis is the process of God is emptying Godself kenotically, making space, i.e., *zimzum*, for that which is non-divine. Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1992), 234. This, Johnson asserts (via the work of her teacher William Hill), is not unlike what Aquinas affirms in his description of the relationship between God and creation. See also William J. Hill, *The Three-Personed God: The Trinity as a Mystery of Salvation* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1982), 76, n.53. *Zimzum*, also *tsimtsum* (Heb., ‘contraction’). Jewish kabbalistic doctrine. The kabbalists taught that, in order that creation could take place, God had in some sense to make a space for it.” John Bowker, “Zimzum,” *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* (1997), <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O101-Zimzum.html>.

formity; harmonious and violent).²⁵ Each of Earth's subjects—each in their own way according to their unique nature—participates in this cosmic dialectic that couples creativity (self-affirmation) and cruciformity (self-emptying) modelled on the Incarnation and the Trinity.

The term *kinetic*²⁶ was chosen in order to be faithful to the inherent dynamism of cosmogenesis understood theologically as *creatio continua* and *concursum*, as in God's ongoing creative activity in the history of the universe that enables and nurtures creation's own creative impetus.²⁷ This term pays theological attention to the evolutionary or dynamic nature of our cosmos and identifies the tension or force generated by creation's "powerfully pulsing drive, to become something more;"²⁸ namely, the creation of newness or the emergence of novelty arising from the disintegration or destruction of the old. This kinetic is what animates cosmogenesis. This cosmic movement toward differentiation and complexity requires a descriptive term that is associated with movement or dynamism, and thus the term *kinetic* is apt.

25. Both self-actualization (i.e., creation, growth, development, flourishing) and self-giving (i.e., destruction, disintegration, diminishment, extinction) can occur at the individual level (i.e., self) but also occurs at the community and planetary level. This novelty could also occur at the morphological, behavioral, or psychological level.

26. Kinetic is derived from the Greek term *kinein*, meaning "to move" and is defined as relating to or resulting from motion, <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/kinetic>.

27. Johnson, *Ask the Beasts*, 183. Johnson indicates that although God is continuously creating, "God does not act like a bigger and better secondary cause determining chance atomic events, or initial conditions of chaotic systems, or genetic mutations. Rather, divine love empowers the structure of creation which operates with its own integrity.... God lets the world be what it will be,...not intervening arbitrarily in its evolution but participating, lovingly, in its becoming."

28. *Ibid.*, 184. Johnson insists that the emergence of novelty in our evolutionary world can only occur "because it has been endowed by its Creator with an inner tendency, a quiet, powerfully pulsing drive, to become something more."

Fourth Pillar of an ETA: Kenosis as the Kinetic of Cosmogenesis

For this pillar of an ETA, the term kenotic-kinetic recognises the inextricable coupling of self-emptying or self-sacrifice (manifest as loss of identity, death, diminishment, and disintegration associated with entropic events) with genesis, innovation, and the emergence of newness. Each member of our Earth's communion participates in this cosmic dialectic due to our emergence from and participation in cosmogenesis. Thus a kenotic disposition is part of our genetic and/or cultural coding²⁹ but is revealed in different ways.³⁰ The kenotic-kinetic describes the incalculable suffering and death that is a natural and necessary component of our universe's 13.8 billion year history of genesis—the bringing of newness and harmony out of death, disintegration, violence, and destruction. The question remains, however: How does this connect with human suffering?

If the kenotic-kinetic is the animating force of cosmogenesis, then every created subject—including humans—in the cosmic 13.8 billion year history is intimately connected via their kenotic disposition. However, this cosmic dialectic of violence and harmony

29. Berry, *Dream of the Earth*, 195-196. Berry speaks about genetic coding as the norm of reference and inherent authority. The invention of our cultural coding (human cultural constructions) is secondary and dependent on the imperative of our biological genetic coding.

30. There are many examples of this cosmic kenotic disposition and the following only names a few: the self-giving of the first stars during a supernova offered the matter for the creation of new life forms; solitary hydrogen atoms with unique forms and functions lose their individual identities as hydrogen and couple with oxygen to form an innovative new molecule—water; a carrot's disintegration and ingestion (i.e., entropic experience) enables the transfer of energy and materials within a complex food web; a predatory bacteria sacrifices motility and independence for a new symbiotic relation within a eukaryotic cell and enables an innovative form of life (mitochondria) to emerge; a male praying mantis is consumed by his hungry partner after copulation to nourish her and the fuel the gestation process; the second, "backup" pelican chick is displaced from the nest and left to die to ensure the survival of the other chick. See: McDaniel, *Of God and Pelicans*, 19-21; the painful procedure of donating human bone marrow potentially enables a human person battling leukemia to live and prosper; the death and disintegration of a human body releases vital molecules and minerals back to Earth's life-systems.

is expressed in a variety of ways, and thus nomenclature must be employed that can differentiate between the many experiences and expressions of the kenotic-kinetic. Pre-sentient beings experience the kenotic-kinetic when they participate in entropic events—events of disintegration and loss of identity. When a rock undergoes disintegration to become sediment in a stream or a star explodes creating and distributing new elements and molecules, or when hydrogen bonds with oxygen and loses its individual identity as a hydrogen molecule to become water, these are expressions of the sacrificial-creative kenotic-kinetic. Sentient beings, however, are not only participating in the kenotic-kinetic, but some are also aware that they are experiencing the kenotic event. The evolution of physiological and behavioural capacities in sentient beings to detect, interpret, and respond to noxious, painful, or lethal stimuli or threats enables sentient beings (even those without a central nervous system) to resist both that which thwarts well-being and that which prevents the seeking of its fullness of being. Earth literacy in science has revealed how even our very distant biotic cousins such as *Paramecium* (unicellular eukaryotic organisms) display a tendency to avoid negative stimuli and move away from noxious or less than optimal environmental conditions. Advances in plant physiology have shown us that many plants have generalized defence mechanisms to detect and avoid pathogens.³¹ Earth's sentient, self-conscious creatures also participate in Earth's creative-cruciform cadence in ways that are appropriate to their evolutionary heritage and unique ability to be both aware of this participation and communicate this awareness. After primates diverged from other mammals 85 million years ago and early bipeds (such as *Homo habilis*) emerged approximately

31. For more information concerning *Paramecium* and avoidance behavior see: Eric Russell, "The Biology Classics: *Paramecium*—Behavior," accessed April 2014, www.ebiomedia.com/the-biology-classics-paramecium-behavior.html. For information concerning plant growth and defence mechanisms against stressors, see Peter H. Raven and George B. Johnson, "How Plants Grow in Response To Their Environments," in *Biology*, 6th ed. (Columbus, OH, The McGraw Hill Companies, 2001), 807-836, http://www.mhhe.com/biosci/genbio/raven6b/graphics/raven06b/other/raven06_41.pdf. Video depicting the rolling up of a leaf of a *Mimosa pudica* plant in response to wind pressure or touch, see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k_rLb5v5nIM.

two million years ago, Earth's creative processes continued, giving rise to even further complexification of this hominid genera: more pronounced encephalization and larger body sizes; more developed central nervous systems; more complex behavioural adaptations to stimuli. This augmentation of pleasure and pain receptors, larger brain size to process this information, and new coping skills (including language and social skills) allowed for novel expressions of Earth's cadence of violence and harmony (again, kenotic-kinetic). As a result, when *Homo sapien sapiens* emerged approximately 200,000 years ago, a new level of innovation in how the kenotic-kinetic was expressed also emerged—that is, human suffering. Thus the kenotic-kinetic succeeds in identifying how a great proportion of suffering in creation is tragic, undeserved, disconnected from sin, and outside the “theological grid of guilt and punishment.”³²

Earth-literate artisans of science and theology have offered new ways of appreciating intrinsic worth, purpose, subjectivity, and connectivity inherent to our universe. They are also beginning to reveal a kenotic-kinetic that interconnects the cosmos in time and space, animating the costly, creative cosmic processes. This new appreciation will broaden how the term suffering is employed, enable new ways of understanding the connectivity within our planetary communion of compassionate subjects, and deepen how theology articulates God's presence, transforming power, and compassionate love for our world today. Reawakening to our participation in the kenotic-kinetic pulsating through the cosmos will be a painful and humbling experience because we have spent centuries denying our rootedness in, and emergence from, Earth. The kenotic-kinetic decentralizes humanity's experience of suffering as the only form of suffering (or the only morally valuable form) and repositions human suffering within a larger cosmological context. In return, however, this new appreciation of the cosmic kenotic-kinetic will strengthen humanity's acuity to the unique manifestations of the kenotic-kinetic in pre-sentient and sentient beings, and the interconnectedness and interdependency of all who are subjects dwelling in Earth's

32. John Haught, “Evolution and the Suffering of Sentient Life,” in *The Evolution of Evil*, eds. Gaymon Bennett et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 203.

many ecosystems.

It is important to note that a unique facet of human nature is our capacity to choose not to embrace this inherent kenotic-kinetic and attempt, in vain, to reject or deny our participation in this innate dynamic. Today, distorted belief in our ability to deny, transcend, or ignore this inherent kenotic disposition has been fueled by what Berry calls our “deep cultural pathology”—a consumeristic, industrial-driven, technological entrancement.³³ This “mythic addiction” has devastated our world. Another attribute of this “psychic fixation” is that it has compounded the experience of human suffering; the entrancement has disconnected human sufferers from both the creative and cruciform cadence of the sacred universe story. As a result, humans are disconnected from Earth as a profound and powerful source of healing and transformation. The kenotic-kinetic confronts this pathology and inspires hope rather than paralysis; the sacred universe story unceasingly supplies humanity with moments of transformation, harmony, and grace that emerge from sacrifice, violence, and death. This essay asserts that by becoming attuned to the sacrificial-creative cadence of creation (via a robust Earth literacy) human sufferers understand, in ways far deeper than merely an abstract, intellectual comprehension, how all subjects in Earth’s planetary communion participate in the universal dynamic of self-actualization and self-giving.

This new cosmological context or horizon of meaning for engaging the mystery of human suffering can help cultivate more adequate descriptions and interpretations of that suffering, as well as more compassionate responses to suffering in our midst. More specifically, theological Earth literacy contributes much depth to how we understand the uniquely human expression of the kenotic-kinetic by connecting the human kenotic disposition with the loving movement of self-actualization and self-giving that ground the doctrines of creation, Incarnation, the Trinity, and the resurrection. Thus when humanity becomes fully “literate” to the sacrificial-creative cadence of the sacred universe story and embraces its participation in this eternal dialectic of violence and harmony, human sufferers are promised much hope—that death is not the end and we are

33. Berry, *Dream of the Earth*, 38.

never “godforsaken.” The cosmos is eternally narrating how profound moments of transformation, new life, harmony, and grace are inextricably coupled with suffering, disintegration, violence, and death. This is the wisdom at the heart of Berry’s fifth principle.

Conclusion

If the “Great Work” articulated by Thomas Berry is to reinvent the human in the twenty-first century, then this process must include more adequate descriptions, interpretations, and responses to human suffering. This is the instruction of Berry’s fifth cosmological principle. To achieve this objective, we must cultivate an openness to Earth as a primary source of revelation. We must adequately and faithfully appreciate the shadowy, violent side of our constantly creative, evolutionary world. This essay engaged Berry’s principle in new ways in order to reorient theological discourse concerning the mystery of human suffering. The reorientation involves moving away from merely reiterating traditional interpretations of suffering (atonement and expiation for sin) toward a deep theological appreciation of the cruciformity and creativity inherent to the entire 13.8 billion year history. Our sacred universe story has made the narrow, purely retributive understanding of suffering untenable as the predominant way of comprehending human suffering. In addition, this myopia—a symptom of our cultural pathology—has contributed to the social apathy, cultural intolerance, private piety, and blissful ignorance that is destroying Earth’s many human and other-than-human ecologies.

The fortitude needed to address the suffering in our world today will come from the immense psychic and spiritual energy of the sacred universe story. It is cultivated by embracing wholeheartedly our intimate participation in the ancient cosmic cadence: the kenotic-kinetic.³⁴ Those who choose to courageously follow God of the cosmic cross and travel beyond traditional anthropocentric horizons of meaning for suffering, can become witnesses to the green that grows in the darkness that is never overcome. This, I believe, is what Thomas Berry meant when he asserted that the universe “has a

34. *Ibid.*, xi, 42, 131, 161, 187.

violent as well as a harmonious aspect; but it is consistently creative in the larger arc of its development.”

Human sufferers, those deeply formed by Earth-literacy, are able to recognize their immersion within the ancient and sacred, powerful and costly, kenotic-kinetic animating cosmogenesis—a recognition that brings comfort, strength, and hope in their dark night of the soul. This awakening affirms how the universe is an interwoven communion of compassionate subjects—rather than an atomised collection of anaesthetised objects.³⁵ It is this truth that can lead human sufferers “away from despair and into the light.”³⁶

35. Thomas Berry is well known for his statements “The universe is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects,” and “The human is derivative, Earth is primary.” The depth of meaning behind these quote is the subject of his many texts. For the purpose of this essay I have added “compassionate” and “atomised” and “anaesthetised” to this phrase.

36. Elizabeth Dreyer, “Suffering in Christian Life and Experience,” *Suffering and the Christian Life*, ed. Richard W. Miller (New York: Orbis Books, 2013), 144.

Author Biographies

Mike Bell, MA

“Developing Thomas Berry’s Functional Cosmology in the Trenches by Means of Story and Shared Dream Experience”

Mike Bell is a community organizer, a former member of the Passionist Order, and was a close friend of Thomas Berry during his lifetime. He has a MA in Communications from the University of Wisconsin and a MA in Theology from St. Paul’s University, Ottawa, Ontario.



Christopher Key Chapple, PhD

Professor, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, California

Douglass Hunt Lecturer

“Five Oriental Philosophies, Religions of India, Buddhism: Seminal Works of Thomas Berry”

Christopher Key Chapple, PhD, is Doshi Professor of Indic and Comparative Theology and founding director of the Master of Arts in Yoga Studies at Loyola Marymount University. He began graduate studies with Thomas Berry in 1976 at Fordham University, where he completed courses with Berry in History of Religions, Buddhism, Native American Spirituality, Confucianism, and the Apollonian and the Dionysian. Berry served on Chris’s PhD committee for his dissertation *The*



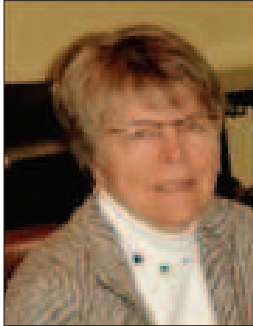
Concept of Will (Paurusa) in the Yogavasishta. He served as Assistant Director at the Institute of Advanced Studies of World Religions and Adjunct Lecturer at SUNY Stony Brook before joining the LMU faculty in 1985. He has published more than 20 books and 150 articles. He serves on the advisory boards of the Forum on Religion and Ecology (Yale), the Ahimsa Center (Pomona), and the Jain Studies Centre (SOAS, London).

Anne Marie Dalton, PhD

*Professor Emerita, Saint Mary's University,
Halifax, Nova Scotia*

Douglass Hunt Lecturer

“The Intellectual Legacy of Thomas Berry”

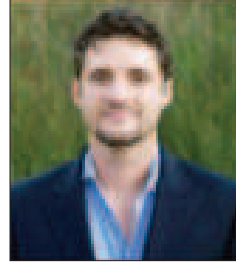


Anne Marie Dalton, PhD, is Professor Emerita at Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia where she taught Religion and Culture, Religion and Ecology, Religion and Gender, and Religion and International Development in the Department of Religion. She is the author of *A Theology for the Earth: The Contributions of Thomas Berry and Bernard Lonergan*, and *EcoTheology and the Practice of Hope*. She is a contributor to *The Intellectual Journey of Thomas Berry: Imagining the Earth Community*. At Fordham University she studied under Thomas Berry. She holds a BSc and BEd from Memorial University, an MA from Fordham University, and a PhD from Catholic University of America.

Drew Dellinger, PhD

“Thomas Berry & Martin Luther King, Jr.:
Cosmology, Ecology, and Social Justice”

Drew Dellinger, PhD, is an internationally known writer, poet, speaker, and teacher. He is author of the award-winning poetry collection, *Love Letters to the Milky Way*, and the upcoming book, *The Mountaintop Vision: Martin Luther King’s Cosmology of Connection*. In 1991 he created and taught the course “New Cosmology: The Universe Story,” one of the first college-level courses in the United States on ecology, worldviews, and the work of Thomas Berry. In the mid-90s he created “The Cosmic Narrative,” one of the first multimedia presentations of the story of the universe based on the work of Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme. He received *Common Boundary* magazine’s national Green Dove Award for this work in 1997, and in 2007 his presentation was turned into the film *The Awakening Universe*, which he co-created and co-wrote. As a consultant, he was a core developer and designer of the Pachamama Alliance’s “Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream” symposium, now used in 78 countries and 18 languages. He holds a PhD from the California Institute of Integral Studies. www.DrewDellinger.org

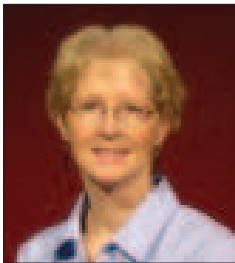


Heather Eaton, PhD

*Professor, Saint Paul University, Ottawa,
Ontario*

Douglass Hunt Lecturer

“The Intellectual Roots of Thomas Berry’s
Proposal and the New Story”



Dr. Eaton is a Full Professor of Conflict Studies at Saint Paul University, Ottawa, Canada. She has authored and edited numerous books including *Advancing Nonviolence and Social Transformation: New Perspectives on Nonviolent Theories with Lauren Levesque* (2016), *The Intellectual Journey of Thomas Berry: Imagining the Earth Community*, editor (2014), *Ecological Awareness: Exploring Religion, Ethics and Aesthetics* with Sigurd Bergmann (2011), *Introducing Ecofeminist Theologies* (2005), and *Ecofeminism and Globalization: Exploring Religion, Culture, Context* with Lois Ann Lorentzen (2003). She is involved in conferences, workshops, teaching and publishing on these areas. Her recent work explores the intersection of religion, science, evolution, and ecology; peace and conflict studies on gender, ecology, religion; animal rights; and nonviolence.

Matthew Eaton, PhD

“Communion and Chiasm: Articulating the Unthought-of Aspects of Thomas Berry’s ‘Communion of Subjects’ and Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s Phenomenology of Perception”

Matthew Eaton earned his PhD in theology at the University of St. Michael’s College of

the University of Toronto. His dissertation, *Enfleshing Cosmos and Earth: An Ecological Christology of Deep Incarnation*, explored the expanded relevance of incarnation theologies, as understood within continental philosophical frameworks, for life and ethics within the Anthropocene. He has published numerous articles on eco-theology, Christology, and the thought of Emmanuel Lévinas, and is currently co-editing a collected volume entitled *Encountering Earth: Thinking Theologically with a More-Than Human World*. Matthew is a post-doctoral teaching fellow at Fordham University, The Bronx, New York.



Renée Eli, PhD

“Body, Being, and the Emerging Ecozoic: Thomas Berry’s Relevance to Modern Medicine”

Renée Eli holds a PhD in Transformative Studies with a concentration in Consciousness Studies from the California Institute of Integral Studies. Her manuscript-in-progress, which offers an ontology of life that proposes to shift attitudes toward flourishing, explores the expressiveness of the body and of life itself. Renée was recipient of a doctoral research fellowship from Esalen Institute’s *Center for Theory and Research*. She serves on the Educator Council Board for the Center for Education, Imagination, and the Natural World; the Advisory Board for UNC Asheville’s Master of Liberal Arts and Sciences program; and the Editorial Advisory Boards of the Society for Consciousness Studies’ academic journal, *Consciousness: Ideas and Research for*



the Twenty First Century, and the Center for Ecozoic Societies' journal, *The Ecozoic*.

Herman Greene, JD, DMin

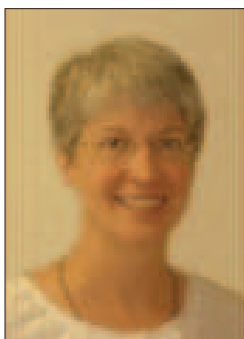
“Introduction to this Issue”;
“Taking Thomas Berry’s Thought Seriously”;
and “Does Thomas Berry Provide a Foundational Set of Principles for the Transition to Ecozoic Societies?”



Herman Greene is President of the Center for Ecozoic Societies. He serves on the Boards of Directors of Toward Ecological Civilization and the International Process Network, as well as on the Advisory Boards of the Center for Process Studies and the Institute for the Post-Modern Development of China. He conducts a part-time practice in corporate, tax and securities law through Greene Law, PLLC. He holds graduate degrees in Spirituality and Sustainability, Law, Theology, and Political Science. He is the author of the forthcoming book *The Challenge and Promise of Ecological Civilization*.

Nancy Hardy

“Living Into Thomas Berry: Prophet of a New Story”



Nancy Hardy is a theological/cosmological activist. Once a Franciscan monastic, she is now an integral, inter-religious, creation-process Franciscan Unitarian Universalist, a permaculture teacher, and member of a local intentional community where she lives with her husband,

Albert. She is currently studying Lakota ceremony and cosmology in the Woptura Oglala Sioux lineage and is dedicated to helping to build and restore healthy villages.

Thomas Keevey, MA

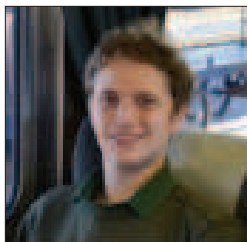
“Thomas Berry, CP - The Passionist Heritage in the Great Work”

Thomas Keevey, a native of Philadelphia and currently lives in Ewing, New Jersey, with his wife, Catherine. Tom earned Masters' degrees from St. Michael's College in New Jersey, the University of Ottawa in Canada, and the Catholic Institute of Paris, France, where he also pursued doctoral studies in Liturgy. He has specialized in ritual, symbol, worship, and environmental studies. He lived and studied with Fr. Thomas Berry, Passionist, cultural historian, and theologian of the Earth. After years of Passionist community and ministry, executive management, and teaching at St. John's University, Queens, New York, he worked until retirement in the New Jersey Division of Criminal Justice, Office of Victim-Witness Advocacy, which provides services to those who are victims of crime. His office was actively involved in assisting New Jersey victims and their families after the disasters of 9/11.



Malcolm Kenton

“From Demonic Dream towards a New Story: Reflection on Thomas Berry’s Instructions for Reorienting the Human Project”



Malcolm Kenton is a native of Greensboro, North Carolina, and was fortunate to be one of Thomas Berry’s last students. He is a writer, researcher, photographer, videographer, and communications professional with interests in sustainability—particularly in terms of transportation—and engaged citizenship. He is a 2008 graduate of Greensboro’s Guilford College with a BA in Political Science and Environmental Studies. In 2016 he completed an MA in Transportation Policy from George Mason University. He currently resides in Washington, DC, where, as a consultant to a passenger rail operations contractor and to a travel consumer advocacy organization, he contributes his talents to advancing a balanced, efficient transportation system for the 21st century based on a robust network of passenger trains. He is a freelance contributor to *Trains Magazine*.

Allysyn Kiplinger, MA

“Naming a New Geological Era: The Ecozoic Era, Its Meaning and Historical Antecedents”



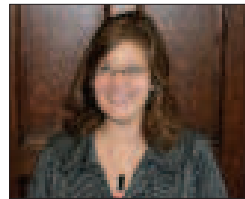
A native of the San Francisco bay area, Allysyn Kiplinger is the editor of *EcozoicTimes.com*, a news source and resource center for the emerging Ecozoic era. Two dogs and one cat grace her life. She is a “maker of things”. Self-employed since graduating from university, she has been a printer and an ecological renovator

of old houses, and is currently a landlord and natural soap maker. She studied Anthropology at UC Berkeley (1985, BA), environmental philosophy at Schumacher College (1992-93), and new cosmology at California Institute of Integral Studies (1994-96, 2001-04, MA) with Brian Swimme.

Abigail L. Loft, PhD Candidate

“What Cry Can Bring a Healing? Christian Resurrection in the Work of Thomas Berry”

Abigail Loft is a PhD candidate at the University of St. Michael's College in the University of Toronto. Her research focuses on developing an eco-theological anthropology through the lens of Christian resurrection. Her other research interests include Christology and eschatology.



Dennis O'Hara, PhD, MDiv, DC, ND

*Professor, University of St. Michael's College,
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Douglass Hunt Lecturer

“Earth as Primary Healer?”

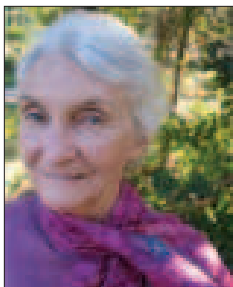
Dennis Patrick O'Hara is an associate professor and the director of the Elliott Allen Institute for Theology & Ecology at the Faculty of Theology at the University of St. Michael's College in the University of Toronto. He is also an associate member of the graduate faculty at the School for the Environment at the University of Toronto. In addition to teaching courses in ecological theology and ethics at the



Toronto School of Theology, he has worked for the World Health Organization and Health Canada where he prepared policy positions and research papers. Prior to becoming a theologian, he practised as a chiropractor and naturopathic doctor.

Eve Olive

“Rudolf Steiner and Thomas Berry:
Anthroposophy and the Ecozoic”



Eve Olive has been a student of the work of Rudolf Steiner for over 50 years. She has a degree in Architecture from the University of Natal in Durban, South Africa, where she grew up. Her second profession is eurhythmy which she studied in Dornach, Switzerland, and New York. Eurhythmy is an art of movement that makes visible the gestures inherent in the sounds of language and music. Poems can be performed. Eve taught for many years at the Emerson Waldorf School in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, which she helped found and design. She is the editor of *Cosmic Child: Inspired Writings from the Threshold of Birth*, which includes several of her poems.

James Peacock, PhD

“Personal Reflections on My Journey of
Teaching Thomas Berry”



James Peacock is emeritus Kenan Professor of Anthropology and Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He received a BA from Duke

and a PhD from Harvard. He is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He has received various grants and awards including Guggenheim, Rockefeller, the Thomas Jefferson award at UNC, the Franz Boas award of the American Anthropological Association, Citizen of the World by the International Affairs Council, North Carolina, Johnson Award for Teaching, and the Massey Award for public service. He has served as Chair of the UNC Faculty Senate, Chair of the Anthropology Department, and Director of the University Center for International Studies. He served as President of the American Anthropological Association. His field research was primarily in Indonesia and Appalachia. His publications include *The Anthropological Lens* (Cambridge University Press, revised edition 2001, Chinese edition 2009), and two books published in 2007: *Grounded Globalism: How the U.S. South Embraces the World*, and *Identity Matters: Ethnic and Sectarian Conflict*. Recent activities include Co-Director, Duke-UNC Rotary Center on Peace and Conflict, and Chair of the Board, Worldview.

Shirley Pevarnik, MLA

“The First Earth Church”

Shirley Pevarnik has a Masters of Liberal Arts in Creation Spirituality from Naropa University. She has studied with Brian Swimme at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco, Matthew Fox at the University of Creation Spirituality in Oakland, and is a certified instructor of Joanna Macy’s work.



She was a close friend and student of Thomas Berry. She lives in New Mexico and Arizona where she has started many Ecozoic study groups and hosted Joanna Macy workshops. She has been an instructor at Western New Mexico University and the First Born Program where she helped young people to obtain their High School Diplomas and learn they are the universe becoming conscious of itself. She continues to study and share about the universe story and all of its myriad insights and implications for our challenged world.

Sheri Ritchlin, PhD

Douglass Hunt Lecturer

“Being Cosmos: The Human Relationship to Cosmos in Thomas Berry and Confucius”



Sheri Ritchlin received her PhD from the California Institute of Integral Studies under the guidance of Professors Yi Wu, Brian Swimme, and Richard Tarnas. Her dissertation was *The Return of the Sage: A New Cosmology Meets the Way of Heaven and Earth in the I Ching*. She is the author of *One-ing* and *Dream to Waken*, and has contributed chapters to *The Epic of Evolution: Science's Story & Humanity's Response; Science, Wisdom & the Future*; and *The Spirit of a Woman: Stories to Empower and Inspire*. She has published articles in *Parabola Magazine*, *ReVision*, and the Institute of Noetic Sciences journal, *Shift*. Her new book, *A Farm in Marin: Portraits in Time from Pangaea to Point Reyes*, will be released in fall 2017. Her website is www.sheriritchlin.com.

Michael Ross, PhD Candidate

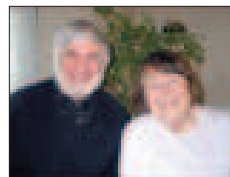
“Ecstasy of the Earth: Some Implications of Thomas Berry & Cosmogogenesis for Sexual Ethics”

Michael Ross is a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Theology at the University of St. Michael's College in the University of Toronto, where he recently designed and taught a course on *Laudato si'*. Michael's research explores the intersection of ecotheology and sexuality. He lives in London, Ontario, Canada.

**Jim Schenk, MSW, MTh**

“Thomas Berry's Influence on a Thirty-five Year Evolution from Story to Action”

Jim Schenk served as the director of Imago, an ecological education organization in Cincinnati for 28 years. He was involved in beginning the Enright Ridge Urban Eco-village, where he currently lives with his wife, Eileen. He has an MA in Theology and an MSW in Social Work. He edited the book *What Does God Look Like In an Expanding Universe?*, which includes interviews with Thomas Berry. He coauthored the book *Starting Your Urban CSA, A Step-by-Step Guide*, and is finishing a book on Enright Ridge Urban Ecovillage, which looks at a way to ecologically rejuvenate our cities.



David Schenck, PhD

“Cosmology and Wisdom: The Great Teaching Work of Thomas Berry”



David Schenck is trained in religion and philosophy, with an emphasis in phenomenology and bioethics. He is co-author of two books that consider ethics and healing in health-care from an empirical perspective, *Healers: Extraordinary Clinicians at Work* and *What Patients Teach: Everyday Ethics of Healthcare*. Director of the Ethics Program at the Medical University of South Carolina, he is also a clinical ethics consultant, with over 20 years' experience working in hospitals, clinics, and hospices.

F. Nelson Stover, MDiv

“At the Species Level”



F. Nelson Stover is a cultural engineer. He led human development training programs for two decades. For another two decades, he designed and implemented computer software for professional associations in North Carolina. A collection of his poems, *The Rocks Sang Om*, was published in Nepal in 1999. In 2014 he published *Through Three Portals: Helping Tomorrow Unfold*. He and his wife, Elaine, received the Greensboro Public Library's 2012 Thomas Berry Award for their work in making Thomas's work more available. He is now President of Emerging Ecology, a non-profit committed to promoting a worldview for the next generations' solutions. He leads courses on contemporary social issues and the individual journey to profound consciousness. His

lectures and writings focus on foundational principles and practical actions relevant for developing a mutually enhancing relationship between the human and non-human worlds.

John Sullivan, PhD

“Thomas Berry: Harbinger of a Communal Spirituality Rooted in Earth and Cosmos as Revelatory”

Dr. John G. Sullivan, a native of Newport, Rhode Island, holds two earned doctorates: a JCD from the Lateran University, Rome, Italy, and a PhD in Philosophy from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He has a triple focus for his work. First, he is Powell Professor of Philosophy Emeritus at Elon University and was Elon’s first Distinguished University Professor. He retired in August 2006 after 36 years at Elon. Second, he has a long-time relationship to Tai Sophia Institute in Laurel, Maryland (now the Maryland University of Integrative Health). Third, he has been involved with Second Journey, a nonprofit organization in Chapel Hill that focuses on the possibilities of later life. He is author of five books: *To Come to Life More Fully* (1991); *Living Large: Transformative Work at the Intersection of Ethics and Spirituality* (2004); *The Spiral of the Seasons* (2009); *The Fourfold Path to Wholeness* (2010); and *Integral Living: Embracing the Four Seasons of Life as Daily Practice* (2014). His abiding interest is the place where philosophy, psychology, and spirituality—East, West and beyond—intersect and mutually enhance one another.



Tim Toben

“Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony and the Ecozoic”



Tim Toben and his wife Megan are the co-founders and leaders of Pickards Mountain Eco-Institute, which is dedicated to healing the Human-Earth relationship through Earth Literacy and Local Economy. As an energy and environment advisor to North Carolina Governor Perdue, he was Chair of the North Carolina Energy Policy Council and a member of the North Carolina Legislative Commission on Global Climate Change.

Peggy Whalen-Levitt, PhD

“Thomas Berry’s ‘Communion of Subjects’: Awakening the Understanding Heart”



Peggy Whalen-Levitt, PhD, is the Director of The Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World in Greensboro, North Carolina. Working closely with Center founder Carolyn Toben and cultural historian Thomas Berry, Peggy has been deeply engaged in the formation of a work for educators and children, based in intuitive, imaginal, and contemplative ways of knowing, that recovers the inner vision of a society in harmony with nature. She holds a PhD in Language in Education from the University of Pennsylvania, where she co-created a graduate course of study in childhood imagination. She has written widely on aesthetic communication in childhood and is the editor of *Chrysalis*, the Center’s journal, *Only the Sacred: Transforming Education in the*

Twenty-first Century (a Chrysalis reader), and the Center's Emergence Series published in 2015. Peggy coordinates the Center's program for educators called "The Inner Life of the Child in Nature: Presence and Practice."

Catherine Wright, PhD, MDiv

"In the Darkness Grows the Green: Thomas Berry's Contribution to Contemporary Theological Conversations Concerning Human Suffering"

Catherine Wright, BSc, BEd, MDiv, PhD (Regis College, Toronto School of Theology and the Elliot Allen Institute for Theology and Ecology). In 2014 Catherine joined Wingate University, North Carolina as an Assistant Professor in the Religion and Philosophy Department. Currently, she specializes in senior level ethics courses. She has crafted several new religion courses including Ecotheology and Christian responses to the Mystery of Suffering, as well as sophomore community/civic engagement courses on ecojustice and ecoliteracy. Her writing concentrates in the areas of ecotheology and contemporary Christian ethics. Her book, *Creation, God and Humanity: Engaging the Mystery of Suffering within the Sacred Cosmos*, will be published in November 2017 by Paulist Press.

