Seeking integral community
in an ecological age . . .


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The “Ecozoic Era” is a time of mutually enhancing relationships among humans and the larger community of life.

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The “Great Work” is living the promise of the ecozoic.

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In this issue: “Awesome China,” “China’s Environmental Issues,” “China’s Interest In Ecological Civilization,” each by Herman Greene.

AWESOME CHINA

As I go through my pictures of my recent visit to China (June 17 to July 3), I become aware of what an incredibly rich experience I have had. I wish I had the writing power of Carl Sandburg as he described Chicago, “The City of the Big Shoulders,” in its many dimensions, for China too is an awesome place of power and beauty. It is also possibly the most important country in the world in terms of the future of human impact on the environment. The environmental issues in China are covered in an article below. China’s interest in “Ecological Civilization” is discussed in a third article below.

Well first of all, China is people, lot’s of people. Officially there are about 1.3 billion people in China, but many say China’s population is undercounted and already exceeds 1.5 billion. Asia as a whole accounts for 60% of the world’s population. It’s hard to visit Asia today and not come away with the feeling that this is where the future of the world is being shaped.
Before my first visit to China in 2002, I thought of it through old images I had seen in books while growing up. (This was my fifth trip in eight years.) Actually China is quite modern. I haven’t been everywhere, but Shanghai is the most modern city of which I know.

Shoppers in Shanghai

The picture below is of the financial district of Shanghai named the “Bund.” To speak of the Bund in China is like speaking of Wall Street. The old buildings are from the British colonial period, a period of shame for the Chinese.

The Bund

The river that runs through Shanghai is the Huangpu River. On the other side of the river from the Bund is the new section of Shanghai known as Pudong. It didn’t exist until 1990 and now has over 1.5 million people. Shanghai has the world’s largest concentration of skyscrapers and, at 20 million people, is one of the world’s most populous cities.
Pudong

Pudong is the location of Shanghai’s international airport. There is a maglev train from downtown Pudong to the airport, which extends over about 30 kilometers (20 miles).
When I traveled on the train, we reached a speed of 431 KPH. (If you look closely below you can see the speed posted in the train car.) The 20-mile trip to the airport, from start to finish, took five minutes.

I wondered many times whether Shanghai was a dream fulfilled or what Thomas Berry calls the “distorted dream of an industrial paradise.” It is difficult to see how development of this type meets the test of sustainability, but the same can be said of New York City and London. The issue of the model for development is a global one.

The main purpose of my trip was to attend the conference on ecological civilization in Hainan Province, City of Sanya.
Here is Dr. Chen, head of the Center for the Study of Hominology at Beijing University (China’s Harvard). Hominology is the study of human development from a Chinese Marxist perspective.

What Chinese Marxism is is a whole subject in itself. I discuss this, among other things, in the paper I gave for the conference, “The Human Was Not Meant to Fail.” (This paper is attached to this issue of Musings.) Dr. Chen is a beautiful person and a fine intellect. He represents the finest qualities of China.

I was delighted that I was able to arrange for Wolfgang Sachs and Arran Gare to come to the conference. They have a great deal to say about the meaning of ecological civilization.

Wolfgang Sachs, author of The Development Dictionary, Planet Dialectics, and Fair Future.
Arran Gare of Swinburne University in Australia, author of Nihilism, Inc.: Environmental Destruction and the Metaphysics of Sustainability, and Environmental Philosophy.

There were about 15 invited foreign scholars. I was honored to speak for them at the opening ceremony.

The beach at Sanya, a city being developed as an international tourist destination. The conference was held in Sanya.

From Sanya I traveled to Beijing. My key objective there was to meet with Lu Feng, Professor in the Department of Philosophy at Tsinghua University (Harvard’s MIT) and President of the Chinese Society of Environmental Philosophy. We had talked for years about putting together a conference in China. I did meet with him and we began planning for a conference to be held in 2011 on the same topic as the Sanya Conference, Ecological Civilization.
While visiting with Lu Feng, I learned that Ecological Civilization has two meanings. One is a civilization to succeed industrial civilization. The other is one aspect of Hu Jintao’s, “Harmonious Society.” Hu Jintao, President of China and General Secretary of the Communist Party, came to power in 2002. China had experienced tremendous economic growth in China, but was wrought with social, political and environmental problems. In a famous 2007 speech, Hu Jintao called for scientific development of China and the harmonious society. The aspects of this society are political civilization, social civilization, spiritual civilization, material civilization and ecological civilization.

I spoke to a small group of graduate students at Tsinghua University, and on another day to a larger group of students at Beijing Forestry University. A highlight of my visit to Beijing Forestry University was meeting Dr. Zhen Lin, who is Secretary of the Chinese Society of Environmental Philosophy and also Head of the Institute of Green Administration and Environmental Policy. As you can see, he is quite young to hold such prominent positions. He is undertaking a massive study of the history of forests in China, the largest ever.

I also met with Dr. Ming Lee of the Psychology Department of Beijing School of Forestry. Dr. Lee is an expert in Chinese traditional medicine, and he has translated Ken Wilbur’s *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality: The Spirit of Evolution* into Chinese.
The next stop was Wuhan, a city of 9,000,000 in central China. As one moves out of Beijing and Shanghai and other Eastern (coastal) cities, the cities show more wear. One begins to feel the weight of Chinese development. I was originally planning to attend an international environmental conference in Wuhan, but the protective measures for the H1N1 virus caused a postponement of the conference.

I went to Wuhan anyway and joined the Chinese Society of Environmental Scientists Convention.

Health authorities checking temperatures on my airplane upon landing in Shanghai. Approximately 20 passengers were detained (those who were suspects and the people seated near them), presumably to be quarantined for seven days.
The conference in Wuhan was in Chinese, so I could only get a flavor of what was going on. Plus, it was truly a conference for environmental scientists. The reason I went to this conference anyway was to meet with Li Shiyan who has worked so much with CES in China. Li Shiyan wrote and published a book _Go to Ecozoic_ and set up the Center for the Study of the Ecozoic and Society at Shenyang University of Science and Technology. She has also translated several of my articles and arranged for their publication in such journals as _Studies in the Dialectics of Nature_, and _Future and Development_.

Li Shiyan teaches environmental philosophy.

My final stop was in Xiangfan, a city of 5,000,000 about 200 miles west of Wuhan. I went there to visit Professor Cao Jing. (In China the family name comes first and the given name second. Women keep their maiden names even after marriage.) Cao Jing translated _The Great Work_ into Chinese. To the best of my knowledge 5,000 of the books were printed, and as of today about 1,000 remain in the inventory of the publisher. I was pleased to learn during my visit to Tsinghua University that a student had checked out the book from the Tsinghua University library. This meant to me that the book had received, at least, some circulation among universities in China.

Professor Cao of the Institute of Theological Aesthetics of Xiangfan University. Professor Cao teaches religion and ecology and was the translator of Thomas Berry’s _The Great Work_, which was published in China by San Lian Press.
Cao Jing had told me of her interest in translating other works, and I went to Xiangfan to speak with her about this. She is especially interested in translating Mark Elvin’s *The Retreat of the Elephants: An Environmental History of China*. This is a superb book, a 500-page treatise. We will also consider translations of other books by Thomas Berry.

I also visited in Xiangfan because I wanted to see a “typical,” inland Chinese city, and I wanted to visit rural areas and villages of China. No pictures can typify all of China, but these images below are familiar to me after visiting China several times. I offer them as something of a portrait of everyday life in Chinese cities.

**Wuhan, China.** This is typical of new apartment construction in major cities in China. China has shown me that density alone is not the key to urban development. China has plenty of density. China has more than 170 cities with populations over 1 million and three megacities with populations over 10 million (Shanghai, Shenzen and Beijing). China plans to move an additional 350 million people from agrarian areas to cities by 2030, more than the entire population of the United States.

**Xiangfan, an older industrial city.** The city has a history of 2,800 years.
Xiangfan. Buses are the most common means of intercity transportation and play a large role in intracity transportation.

Bikes, scooters and various three-wheeled vehicles are also important modes of transportation. Still, China has become the world’s largest auto market with 14,000 new cars a day being put in service, 1,000 cars a day in Beijing alone.
There is so much more to report. I'll leave it here for now . . . perhaps to be continued in the next Musings.

Prayers to Buddha for success in the national college entrance exams.

Awesome China.

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CHINA’S ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

In preparing for the conference on ecological civilization, I gathered information on China’s environmental concerns and impact. These are presented in an attached document called “China’s Environment.”

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CHINA’S INTEREST IN ECOLOGICAL CIVILIZATION

Given what China is facing, it’s not surprising that the Chinese would take the lead on ecological civilization, even if the common understanding of that term for the Chinese is not clear and it’s meaning for the world isn’t either. The key idea was presented in the invitation to the Sanya conference in the following way:

The world of 21st century suffers from many increasingly serious global social problems: population explosion, resource shortage and depletion, environmental degradation, polarizing of rich and poor, etc. All these problems, together with the recent financial and economic crisis, pose unprecedented threats to the future of human race. Many scientists and scholars have reached consensus that ecological civilization is the only correct choice to continue human survival and development. But opinions differ on questions such as what ecological civilization is and how ecological civilization can be realized. Thoughtful theoretical studies on ecological civilization are urgently needed, so that feasible measures can be put forth and consensus of international community can be reached, to promote the achievement of this goal.
This last sentence I hope will become a mandate for the Center for Ecozoic Studies. It is closely aligned with the Center’s mission of “offering a vision of an ecozoic society.” The Center intends to contribute to this effort by providing thoughtful theoretical studies on ecological civilization by making ecological civilization the focus of the issue of The Ecozoic to follow the issue with Thomas Berry tributes (which we now expect to publish in August). The Center will also join an effort to have a second conference on Ecological Civilization in China in 2011.

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The mission of CES is to offer a vision of an ecozoic society and contribute to its realization through research, education and the arts.

To become a member of CES, send a letter to CES at 2516 Winningham Road, Chapel Hill, NC 27516, USA, with your contact information and dues. Dues for each calendar year are US$30 (individual or family); outside USA, Canada and Mexico, add US$10. Sustaining Member US$130. Contributions are welcome.