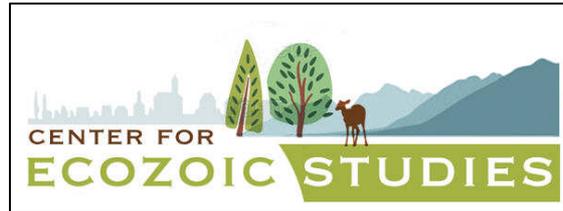


CES Monthly Musings

October 2009
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*Seeking integral community
in an ecological age*

“Ecozoic” means “house of life.” An “Ecozoic Society” means a society of life.

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

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

In this issue: [Partial Correction—The Ecozoic #3 on “What is Ecozoic?” – Invitation for Submissions](#), by Herman Greene; and [Reflections on the Thomas Berry Award and Memorial Service: Earth Is Primary, the Human Derivative](#), by K. Lauren de Boer.

PARTIAL CORRECTION—THE ECOZOIC #3 ON “WHAT IS ECOZOIC?” – INVITATION FOR SUBMISSIONS

In the September *Musings*, we announced that the next issue of *The Ecozoic* would be on “ecological civilization/life-giving community.” After further consideration, we have decided the issue will instead be on “What is Ecozoic?,” though one can imagine that one might address ecological civilization and life-giving community in answering this question.

Those of us who have been touched by Thomas Berry know what he talked about is related to, but not the same as, “sustainable development.” We know he taught about the post-industrial age, but he did not mean the “information age.” His message is grounded in cosmology and ecology, but he did not mean the same as scientific cosmology or scientific ecology. He spoke of the divine and of spirituality, even of a meta-religious mode, and yet he avoided pinning down religious doctrines, forms and practices.

He said moving into the Ecozoic Era was the Great Work of our time, but “**What is Ecozoic?**” . . . to you?

Send us your response (essay, story, poem, art or music) by email to ecozoic@mindspring.com, or mail a printed copy to Center for Ecozoic Studies, 2516 Wittingham Road, Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27516, USA. If you have questions, you may call us at 919-942-4358.

The deadline for submissions is January 4, 2009. (If you expect to make a submission, please email us and let us know.)

Herman Greene
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REFLECTIONS ON THE THOMAS BERRY AWARD AND MEMORIAL SERVICE: EARTH IS PRIMARY, THE HUMAN DERIVATIVE (Saturday, September 26, 2009, Cathedral of St. John the Divine, New York City.)

As I walked through the massive front entrance of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, I knew I was passing through a portal. It wasn't just that the cathedral was a sacred space and was so inspiring in its soaring arches and stained glass. It was as much *why* we were there and who we were. It was passage into sacred time as a community drawn and held by a common passion. There were familiar faces of colleagues and friends from my years as editor of *EarthLight* magazine, but many more were faces I did not recognize. We were all there to honor the passage of our greatest elder . . . to celebrate his life, perhaps to begin to glimpse a way to carry forward his work on Earth.



The program began with a processional and with dancers weaving through the crowd, trailing banners that symbolized life on Earth and the water planet. Organ strains pulsed through the cavernous space.

As people began to speak, I began to identify a unifying theme throughout: To find the wisdom to go forward, we need to go back; back to a more primal knowledge, to the source of our identity as a species.

Mary Evelyn Tucker, scholar at Yale's Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale, spoke from her long history with Thomas – first as student, then friend, colleague, and editor of his writings. Even with the impressive scope of his intellect and depth of his knowledge as a cultural historian, she said, he never lost touch with a more primary consciousness, what she called “migratory” knowledge. By way of illustration, she spoke of the red knot sandpiper which breeds far in the northern Arctic. After they hatch and are old enough to fly, the young sandpipers begin their migration, preceding the adult sandpipers. Even so, the young birds follow the age old routes and stop off where sandpipers have always stopped. They know without learning it from their parents. They draw on their genetic inheritance.



Thomas drew on that kind of knowledge, bred in the bone, never lost touch with it, she said. And more importantly, he found a way to share it, along with his more scholarly insights. It occurs to me that this is what might be what drew so many to his writings. They touched on something

age old and lost within us. (I recently gave a copy of *Dream of the Earth* to a colleague of mine in water conservation at the water utility where I currently work. He said that after years of environmental work and feeling burned out, this book has changed his life and given him renewed energy for his work.) In a related vein, Miriam MacGillis of Genesis Farm spoke of one of Thomas's deepest insights that it was our genetic coding we need to consult for guidance, that cultural knowledge is not enough.

Brian Swimme provided both humorous and insightful stories about Thomas. He spoke of a time early on in his relationship with Thomas when Brian was excitedly telling him that what he really wanted to do was to reach “enlightenment.” Thomas looked at him and said, “Okay...but why aim so low? What is really more important for the human, at this time in history, is to create mutually enhancing relations with the non-human Earth community.”

He also related a story of being at a conference with Thomas and others which focused on a discussion of the role of the Hero down through human history, including what heroes are there today, what heroes are needed? After observing what Brian said was a remarkable summation of all that was said at the

conference, Thomas began speaking about Earth's biodiversity. He ended his summation by calling attention to a singing bird outside and said, "That singing bird is the hero of the New Story."

On another occasion, Brian was passionately telling Thomas, over a cup of coffee in a café, that he had figured out the source of the problem in industrial society and what needed to be done. We don't truly account for the cost of anything, he said. If the price we pay for things were brought into sync with the true costs, we would consume much less and we would stop the assault on the natural world. Thomas was silent for a while, then brought Brian's attention to the waitress. He said her act of bringing them a cup of coffee was one of infinite generosity. Further, he said, it took the entire universe to bring them the



cup of coffee in front of them. "Brian," he said, "you will never be able to fully pay for that cup of coffee."

Paul Winter was there and played an awesomely beautiful saxophone solo that broke me open. His music also seemed to be a journey back to a more primary knowledge through sound. I looked upward and around and thought of Thomas's image of the throat of the

wolf howling, so like the soaring cavern of the cathedral. It was an image that many evoked during the service and is also the image on the cover of a new anthology of writings on Thomas produced by Herman Greene (who was present at the service) and friends at the Center for Ecozoic Studies. The

anthology is a moving tribute to Thomas Berry by dozens of people from all walks of life.

What I noticed throughout the service was a realization that Thomas represented an older, deeper, more primary source of wisdom, one we need so much today. He brought that out in people, gave expression to the unexpressed in so many of us, made us feel less alone, less alienated, perhaps a little less sorrowful and more hopeful about what we can do about the desecration of the planet.

A few days after I returned from the service, I was experiencing some despair over what I considered to be some key failures in my life. I was grieving lost opportunities, times when I was overcome by fear and shrank back from truly engaging with life, regretting decisions and actions that seemed shortsighted as I thought back on them. I was trying to give expression to all of this to Diana, my partner. She listened, then simply asked me, "What would Thomas tell you?" I was silent for a while, and then it came to me: go to the Earth for guidance. Trust the universe, because you are the universe trying to give birth, through you, to one more strand of its diverse expression. There is no need to be afraid.

Then Diana asked me, "And what does the Earth tell you?" After a few moments, what came was so clear. It seemed like the kind of older wisdom that so many were referring to in the memorial for Thomas. Let me share my response as a poem:

THE EARTH SAID

Be like a tree. Stay rooted in the dream.



*Give yourself fully to the changing seasons.
There is a time to leaf and flower,
A time to release and be dormant.*

*A tree doesn't worry or fret
about whether it is an oak or a
bay laurel,
a sycamore or an elm.
It gives itself fully to its
aliveness.*

*A tree doesn't worry about
success or failure,
because they don't exist.
They are only concepts in the
mind.
Be like a tree. Hold your limbs
upward
to beseech the sky.*



I am grateful for the healing vision Thomas has given, both for my own healing and for that of the larger culture. May it endure for generations to come.

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For more on the Thomas Berry Award and Memorial visit
http://www.thomasberry.org/Award_and_Memorial/Program.html

A slideshow of photographs of the events from various contributors can be found at
<http://news.webshots.com/slideshow/574953470fZxRiy>

Further details on Thomas Berry and the events described here are available at
<http://www.thomasberry.org>



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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.

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