

CES Monthly Musings

March 2011
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*Seeking integral community
in an ecological age*

“Ecozoic” means “ Earth’s community of life.” An “Ecozoic Society” is a life affirming society.

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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” of our time is to bring into being the Ecozoic Era.

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In this issue: “Zen Calmness” by Jaime Vergara; “To Life: Reflections on the Vernal Equinox, March 20, 2011, 7:21 pm, EDT,” by Hope Horton; and “Last Year’s Leaves,” by Maria Termini.

ZEN CALMNESS

We have followed the still unfolding crisis in Japan after the 8.9 Richter scale tremor, the strongest quake ever to shake the nation, and the subsequent tsunami that sent ten-meter high waves ten kilometers inland in Honshu, leaving the tarmac of the Sendai International Airport under water, a local hospital still standing as the only refuge for some 300 persons in an area of totally collapsed structures, and ten thousand people from one village still remaining unaccounted for. The aftershocks are adding damage and discomfort, and the nuclear meltdown in the Fukushima reactors is terrifying.



Not unlike humankind’s previous relationship to “flat earth,” which we now know to be spherical, and calling the experience of sundown as “sunset” when the earth actually turns, we never really consider land mass as floating tectonic plates on magma, but to appreciate how strong the earthquake was in Japan, portions of northeast Japan moved east toward the United States by eight feet and the axis of the planet itself shifted by ten inches!

Zen Japan has shown a remarkable face of solid calmness. News reports portray a nation intentionally going through the motions of a rehearsed drill in the midst of the surprising destruction that trails the wake of this disaster. The vaunted train system, one of the most sophisticated rails in the world that connects

Kagoshima in south Kyushu to Wakkanai of north Hokkaido, shut down for a time, along with its metro systems, at least, in the urban centers of Honshu. People undaunted, bought bicycles and pedaled home, while some just trudged and walked in the cold.

We had a major life turn to make in 2002, and we took a week retreat late January before the cherry blossoms, took the train from Narita to Sapporo in Hokkaido on the eastern corridor through Sendai, and returning on the western route through Akita and Niigata to West Tokyo. The cultivated and manicured countryside was a scene to behold, the tidiness of the trains and orderliness of its people, a welcomed respite.

Though signs of juvenile vandalism through graffiti were evident in metro structures, and the surprising sight of homeless tents on blighted display outside the Shinjuku municipal center, the orderly Japan of our previous acquaintance, of nature both physical and societal disciplined into the level of art on terrain and population, was still very much and unmistakably alive! Majestic Mt. Fuji reigned as Hokusai's rowers navigated the towering waves off Kanagawa.

It is with deep appreciation that I recall that solitary week almost a decade ago, but as I watch today the deluge of painful unraveling that characterizes the land of the rising sun, only the sound of silence is appropriate to express our profound sorrow of the innocent suffering unleashed.

A people's tragedy, however, has awakened humanity's empathy. Though its economy is one where its GNP far exceeds its GDP,¹ which has barely grown over the last two decades though ascending into international eminence, it has shown an economic arrangement where the concern for humanness matters. Wrangling in the Diet notwithstanding, Japan projects a country with a human face.

Its virtues of simple elegance on cuisine and decor, lifestyle and landscape, custom and technology, its thrust towards moderation on all things in its post-WWII demeanor, has endeared it in many parts of the world; though bearing the stigma of Nanjing and Pearl Harbor, it also suffered the mushroom cloud brunt of Little Boy and Fat Man over the skies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In both cities, the suicide cliffs of Saipan and Tinian are not unknown.

Japan's Emperor heeded the winds of change violently exploded on the southern skies, and terminated hostilities; the nation took this nuclear kamikaze and domesticated it for peaceful use. Now, the ice and the fire, the heat and the water, Mother Nature's yin-yang elemental force comes calling again on Nippon's door.

Presbyter and poet Ellie Stock wrote the following not too long ago:

*What do I call what calls from the deeps,
that pulses through stars and quickens heart's beat,
that surges through waves and cleanses with fire,
emerges from dust and breathes soul's desire?
What do I name what mocks human pride,
that bends the tree of life, sustaining being's tide?*

It is with Zen calmness that we join Japan and the rest of the world in daring to give a name to that which emerges from the deeps, whether from the bowels of Earth, or from the deep abyss of the battered human soul.

¹ "Gross National Product (GNP) is often contrasted with Gross Domestic Product (GDP). While GNP measures the output generated by a country's enterprises - whether physically located domestically or abroad - GDP measures the total output produced within a country's borders - whether produced by that country's own firms or not." Wikipedia contributors, "Gross national product," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Gross_national_product&oldid=419481402 (accessed March 20, 2011). Thus, Toyota cars produced in the United States increase the GNP of Japan but not its GDP.

The world joins that call of the deeps as the search continues for those who perished in the Tōhoku region and steps are made for the morrow. There is solidarity afoot in a world concurrently grieved by the Gaddafis and Tahrir Squares. But the ebb and flow of global reconciliation fills the air, and I, in this archaic season of Lent and awakening spring, smell the scent of transformation, in faith, hope and love.

With T.S. Elliot and Zen calmness, I sing:
*Quick now, here, now, always--
 A condition of complete simplicity
 (Costing not less than everything)
 And all shall be well and
 All manner of thing shall be well...*

Jaime Vergara writing from Shenyang, China



Jaime R. Vergara recently completed five years of teaching Social Studies to 6th graders in one of the public schools in the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands in the west Pacific. A regular contributor to the Opinion section of the Saipan Tribune, Vergara cuts a wide swath with a broad Indo-Sino-Malay ethnic tradition rooted in his Pinoy upbringing, along with the spirit pilgrimage of the Judeo-Christian secular monk, in a world about to be “glocalized.”

TO LIFE: REFLECTIONS ON THE VERNAL EQUINOX, MARCH 20, 2011, 7:21 PM, EDT

*The Spider Woman took some earth and mixed it with some saliva and molded it into two beings. Then she covered them with a cape made of a white substance which was the creative wisdom itself, and she sang the creation song over them.
 Hopi creation story*



Spring Wisconsin Style

When I visit Madison, I stay with my dad and stepmom in their condo located on the border of the Pheasant Branch Conservancy. There is a 4-mile trail loop that goes through forest, prairie, and wetland landscapes, in sequence. My habit is to walk the trail each day after breakfast.

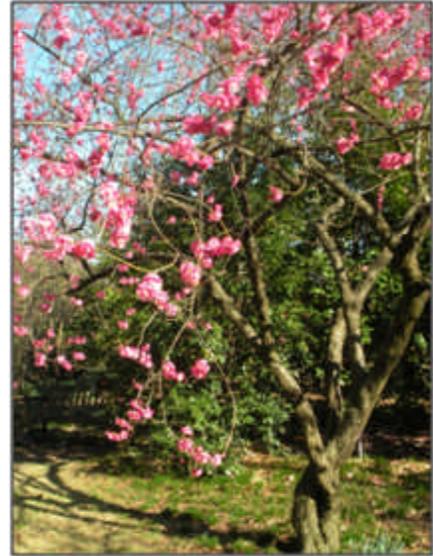
Today, on the brink of spring, the trail was treacherous, layered with the frozen imprints of yesterday’s footsteps and dusted with snow. The grass was coated with frost and tinged with pink and blue sparkles of light. It made for a loud walk, my boots crashing and crunching and skidding over the icy crust. But my footsteps, thunderous as they were, did not drown out the symphony of bird song erupting from all around me. The chirps, trills, honks, caws, purrs, pulses, and melodies poured out over the landscape like a current of music, and I was breathing harmony.

Birds are the harbinger of spring. But who is to say that they are not also its cause and creator? That deep beneath the earth, seeds and bulbs tremble, open, rise and sprout on the wings of song? That trees bud, leaf, and branch to the rhythm of warblers, and hibernating animals rouse themselves to join the chorus? For anyone who has seen videos on how sound begets intricate patterns and shapes in sand, powder, and water, it’s not such a fanciful thought.² Rather it begs the question: what came first, the chicken or the cluck?

² *The science of making sound visible is called cymatics. For an excellent and eloquent exploration into “the substance of things not seen, see http://www.ted.com/talks/evan_grant_cymatics.html*

I was born in early April, and perhaps for this reason my mother gave me a copy of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* on one of my childhood birthdays. I was too young to be interested in much more than the pictures, but I held onto that book and eventually read it. And now that sobering title comes to mind every year at this time, when the sounds of spring surround me from the rushing water and rustling wind to the calls of the wild and the riffs of the songbirds. It makes me, for one more year at least, all ears.

One night a while back, I woke abruptly and got out of bed. Somewhere between the impulse and the movement, it struck me that it was the force of life moving through me that animated my limbs and activated my heart and lungs. This sudden thought transformed an action so automatic as to be mundane into a miracle. It is life that spirits through my veins, inflates my chest, and fills it with joy. And I take it completely for granted, just like I assume that the sun will rise and that winter will end.



Sprina North Carolina Style

In the spring, life erupts from Earth like music from an instrument. This year, catch the beat and dance to its tune. Drink, l'chaim, to life.

Hope V. Horton



Hope earned a Doctorate of Music in French Horn from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and has worked as a professional musician for over 25 years. She also holds a Master of Science degree in Counseling Psychology with further training in Internal Family Systems psychotherapy. She studied the Well-Springs work with Kay Ortman and became a Certified Advanced Energy Healer. She studied sound healing with the Kairos Institute of Sound Healing, Jonathan Goldman, and Saruah Benson. In her private practice, she integrates sound, energy, and spiritual healing.

LAST YEAR'S LEAVES



Oak Leaf, Maria Termini, watercolor, 12" x 9"

Last year's leaves lie in matted clumps throughout this forest where no one else wanders in delight in late summer. Perhaps the mosquitoes still sting but not as much to bother my personal enchantment with the green of things present such as this year's leaves, moss, vines and quivering pine needles.

Last year's leaves will soon be layered over with this year's leaves, dancing down precisely when the weather tells them to. Surefooted seasons race in graceful time, while my life flows on. Each year is a layer of hope, memories, celebration, and pain, knitted together, fused like last year's leaves, merging into the imperfect tense of life, my life is woven rich and strong like dirt.

Maria Termini

Maria Termini is a writer, musician, and artist. Her memoir, *Solitude and Splendor: Living in the Schoolhouse*, available on www.amazon.com, tells the story how she followed her dream of living alone in an old, one-room schoolhouse in the rugged wilderness of western Maine and discovering the wonder of it all.. Her essays and poetry have been published in the *Ecozoic Reader*, *Newton Magazine*, *Spare Change*, and *Spirit of Change*. She earned a B.A. and M.F.A. from Catholic University in Washington, DC, and has taken other courses at Boston University, The Cambridge Center for Adult Education, Interface, The Kaji Aso Studio, The New England Conservatory, National Training Labs, and Andover-Newton Theological School. Her work can be seen at www.mariatermini.com.

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