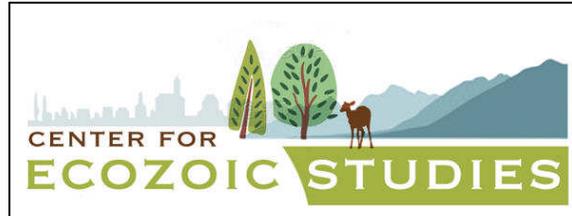


CES Monthly Musings

June 2011

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*Seeking integral community
in an ecological age*

“Ecozoic” means “house of life.” An “Ecozoic Society” is a vibrant community of life.

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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: “July Issue of *CES Monthly Musings*: New Format, and Focus on Reframing CES”; “Identity and Difference: On Being Hungarian, American, Christian and Buddhist,” by Les Muray; and “Mutually Enhancing Relations: *Buck* the film, and the Orangutan and the Hound,” by Herman Greene

JULY ISSUE OF CES MONTHLY MUSINGS: NEW FORMAT, AND FOCUS ON REFRAMING CES

The July issue of this magazine will come out in a new format. Further the focus of that issue will be on the work done on reframing CES by the CES Board. Stay tuned for the news!

IDENTITY AND DIFFERENCE: ON BEING HUNGARIAN, AMERICAN, CHRISTIAN AND BUDDHIST

For years Thomas Berry Spoke of “differentiation, subjectivity, and communion” as being the “three basic laws of the universe at all levels of reality.” Then, in the last couple of years of his life, this trilogy became “Identity, Difference, and Unity,” which he called the “basic structure of the universe.” The short autobiography below beautifully illustrates “Identity and Difference.” Everything strives to create and realize an identity. In a sense this is what subjectivity is all about. Difference is similar to diversity. I heard Thomas say many times in those last years, “Sameness does not mean anything. Difference is what matters.”

Herman Greene

Like all of us, I am a person of multiple identities. Being an immigrant and having grown up in three countries (and having lived briefly in a fourth), this gets complicated with multiple ethnic, national, cultural, linguistic, and religious identities.

I was born in Budapest, Hungary in 1948, shortly before the country became Communist and the People’s Republic was declared. A Stalinist regime that ruled through terror reigned



during my early childhood. My father was arrested on the very day that Stalin died and was imprisoned for nine months. Two years later, he was imprisoned for three months. The fate of political prisoners like him depended on the outcome of post- Stalinist power struggles.

I spent the first eight years of my life in Hungary. I finished first grade and started second grade there. At an early age, I imbibed Hungarian culture, music, literature, and history. My parents took me often to museums and places of historical significance. They would take me for daily walks through Budapest. Like many European cities, Budapest is filled with squares, large and small, most of them named after a historical person whose statue was prominently displayed in the square. I asked my parents about lives and histories of the people honored by those statues. In addition, my father read poetry and literature to me; I listened to Hungarian music on the radio and learned to play it on the piano. Moreover, it goes without saying that I loved (and I still love) the rich Hungarian cooking on which I grew up.



Following the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, my parents and I escaped to Yugoslavia (my father was born 1 ½ km. from the Croatian border), where we lived in refugee camps for four and a half months, after which time we got permission to go to France. We lived in France for two years. I became (and remain) a Francophile, lover of French cuisine, movies, and devotee of the ideals of the French Revolution. French became my second language.

After two years, in August 1959, my family came to the United States . . . to the Boston area to be more precise. I was ten years old and did not speak a word of English. My Americanization was very quick—not only did I learn the language, I started to eat hamburgers, listening to rock 'n roll music, and, perhaps most telling of all, rooting for the Boston Red Sox (baseball) and the Boston Celtics (basketball), something I have done ever since regardless of where I have lived.

Much as I did in Budapest, Paris, and Versailles, I loved to go to historical places in the Boston area. I came to love American and American history. I internalized the noblest American ideals of and aspirations toward democracy—and was particularly anguished when I saw evidence of my adopted home falling short of those ideals and aspirations.

As I was becoming increasingly Americanized, my mother tried to keep a Hungarian island in our home. We always spoke Hungarian at home and for the first year or so my father would read Hungarian poetry and literature. With the passage of time, instead I imbibed the culture of America, such as western movies, like *Rawhide* (with Clint Eastwood), and cartoons, like *The Flintstones*. I appreciated Hungarian culture and history, and I was proud of my Hungarian origins. But I just plain wanted to be an American—like my friends. My parents were stricter than most American parents. In addition, my father had an incorrigible Henry Kissinger-like accent while my mother spoke broken English.



No matter how much of a Hungarian island my mother tried to keep, I came to realize that it could not help but be a hybrid of American and Hungarian. We all felt varying degrees of comfort in both worlds. My mother started to cook hamburgers once a week—with Hungarians spices!

As I took on a more American identify, I came to realize I had a special connection with Hungarians—we shared a language, a culture(s), history, especially if one was of the “’56-er” generation, a world into which it was very difficult for most Americans to enter. I came to identify myself, and still do, as a Hungarian-American with a fluid, dynamic, ever changing identity.

When I started going back to Hungary in the early 1990s and started reading more of the history and literature of Hungary, the more pronounced this dual identity became. And when I moved back to the Boston area in 2001, my Hungarianness, memories of my parents, my Americanization all converged. The creative synthesis of my multiple national and ethnic identity continues.

Part of my multiple identity is my rootedness in the Christian tradition. I was raised amidst the colorful pageantry of Hungarian Roman Catholicism. Both of my parents could be described as nature mystics in different ways. My mother combined that nature mysticism with a sacramental mysticism. My father, a devotee of Henri Bergson, was an intuitionist who sought a reasonable faith compatible with science. He had been a Roman Catholic priest in Hungary; his Roman ordination was accepted in The Episcopal Church in 1966.

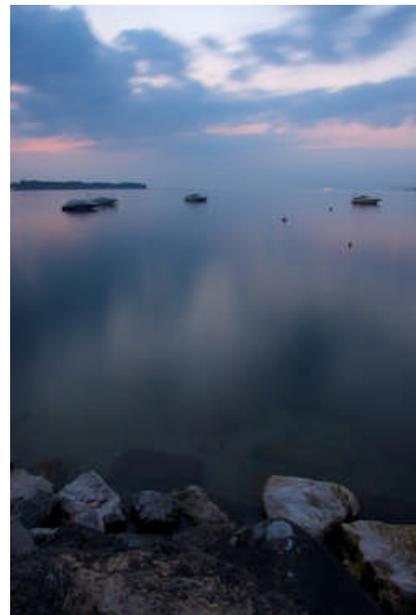


Although I went through a brief phase in college when I was not sure what I believed in, I came back to a more mature version of Christianity through my reading of such philosophers and theologians as Nicholas Berdyaev and Paul Tillich. As a student, I discovered Alfred North Whitehead's process thought and found in it a compelling vision for the modern world and a way to make sense of my Christian roots.

Although I have Christian "roots," (like my father, I am an Episcopal priest), I also have wings: an openness to the new, to traditions other than my own. I feel perfectly comfortable in appropriating insights from other traditions. For example, internalizing aspects of Native American views of the land and approaches to the non-human natural world are integral to my Christianity.

Even more important has been my exposure to Buddhism. Although I am a poor practitioner of Buddhist meditation, I have been so influenced by Buddhist notions of the self, the no-self, quite similar to the view of the self in process thought, that I find it far more compelling than Western views of a substantial self. Moreover, I have a hard time conceiving of God as anything but Emptiness and Jesus as the incarnation of that Emptiness, the embodiment of the Divine Compassion that embraces all of life.

In process thought and Buddhism, the self is a momentary self that creatively synthesizes data from the past and reaches out to the possibilities of the future. As I constitute myself in continuing moments of experience, I am creatively synthesizing my Hungarianness, my Americanness, my Christianity, and sort of a Buddhism into a rich hybrid, a colorful tapestry that reflects the adventure of the universe and its constituent parts in miniature.



Do you see the rocks in the image on the right? They are like the building blocks of the self at each moment? Do you see the open horizons toward the top? They are the future.

Do you see the self which lies between them? . . . I don't either. Maybe it's the water. Buddhists say that the self is not an entity among entities in the past or future. It is the process of conrescence. It is fluid, like water. You cannot grab onto it, but it is who you are. Buddhists also say that the water has a kind of inner peace to it, even as it unfolds in a spirit of adventure. A calmness. Sometimes I feel this, too. With all the hybridity, there is also a peace which surpasses understanding. Maybe it is the beauty of life itself. Maybe it is God.

I've been concreating all my life. I will until I die . . . and maybe even after that. This is the wisdom of no-self. It is the wisdom of not-knowing things, and not always needing to know. It means being a self in process, always becoming new, always beginning, but somehow at peace in the beginnings. Whitehead speaks of this peace as Peace. That's a nice word. Kind of Buddhist. Kind of Christian. Maybe even a little Hungarian.

Les Muray

(Leslie A. Muray, Ph.D., teaches philosophy and ethics at Curry College in Massachusetts.)

MUTUALLY ENHANCING RELATIONS: *BUCK* THE MOVIE; AND THE ORANGUTAN AND THE HOUND

Thomas Berry wrote that the Great Work of our time was to move from a terminating Cenozoic to an emerging Ecozoic Era—in human terms to move from “the period where humans were a disruptive force on the planet Earth to the period when humans become present to the planet in a manner that is mutually enhancing.” (*The Great Work*, 11) Thomas Berry spoke and wrote again and again of “mutually enhancing” relationships between humans and the larger community of life, and also, by his example, of such relations among humans. So we might consider where we can find good examples of mutually enhancing relations.

We offer here two: The first is *Buck*, a movie about Buck Brannaman, how he trains horses and how he trains the people who care for them. For years people have sought to “break” horses and have used restraints to train them for horse shows. Buck suffered an abusive childhood and he said that helped him to understand the horses. He turned tragedy into mutually enhancing relationships. Not everyone who reads this magazine will approve of horse riding, but anyone will be able to see the remarkable connection Buck has with horses. If we take Berry’s late version of his trilogy—identify, difference and unity—we can see two very different identities in unity. This is an ecozoic transformation of human-animal relations. Further Buck’s philosophy of how to relate to translates readily into interpersonal relations. See www.buckthefilm.com, or better yet, see the movie.

The second is the orangutan and the hound. This online video shows mutually enhancing relations among species . . . and some pretty understanding and appreciative humans as well. <http://5thworld.com/Paradigm/Postings!/Wisdom/OrangutanAndHound.html>

Mutually enhancing relations.

Herman Greene

The mission of CES is to offer visions and understandings, through dialogue, of ecozoic societies and contribute to their realization through research, education, art, and action.

To become a member of CES, send a letter to CES at 2516 Winningham Road, Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27516, USA, with your contact information and dues. Dues for each calendar year are US\$35 (individual or family); outside USA, Canada and Mexico, add US\$10 if you wish to receive print copies of *The Ecozoic*. Sustaining Member US\$135.

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You may pay your dues online at www.ecozoicstudies.org.

Contributions are welcome.