

The Chronicle (April 2013)

Our readers are invited to present their own reports of what they are paying attention to in the transition from economic-industrial ecological-cultural societies.

Herman Greene – The Sacred and Sustaining Values

Alice Loyd’s article in this issue made me think of sustaining values that would take us through difficult periods of transition related to the “end” of industrial civilization. I put end in quotes, because I don’t foresee an end of industry, meaning hard work, or industry, meaning mass—though perhaps not massive—production of goods, in any circumstances. What will end will be some of the things we have come to take for granted in the modern period: relatively stable climate, relatively bountiful wild nature, accelerating economic growth, abundant extractive, nonrenewable resources, open land and occupied land to be colonized, and the ability to control through domination and protect vast accumulations of wealth. On a more personal level what may not be taken for granted is abundant food, protected spaces, liquid fuels, well-functioning public spaces, utilities and infrastructure, and public health.

We know that all of this could be terrible, but we don’t know if it will be terrible. The general theme of this publication is that we are moving from an economic-industrial age to an ecological-cultural age, and that could be a good thing. It would, however, involve change. As with Plenty Coups, a change of necessity, not, at first, change of one’s own choosing.

Sometimes people will say, that we have to give people hope. Can you give someone hope? We know we can in part, and we know great leaders have transmitted hope. When they did so, however, it was in difficult times when the outcome was uncertain and what brought hope was a vision of a future and a re-calling of sustaining values.

Carolyn Toben in *Recovering a Sense of the Sacred: Conversations with Thomas Berry*,¹ drawing on Thomas Berry words, reminds us:

“The sense of the sacred is the heart of it all. . . .The sacred is that which evokes wonder, the natural world is that mysterious presence we refer to as the Divine. . . . Understanding and appreciation are activated within us which take us to the world of the sacred. That is what we have forgotten; that is what you are remembering. Only a sense of the sacred can save us. It has been said that, ‘we will only save what we love,’ I [Thomas Berry,] add, ‘and we will only love that which we regard as sacred.’”

¹Carolyn Toben, *Recovering a Sense of the Sacred: Conversations with Thomas Berry* (Timberlake Earth Sanctuary Press 2012).

There is a serenity and power that comes to us when we hold the Earth and all of its beings as sacred. When we do so, we are not alone. We share a sense of communion/unity with all, and we feel the presence of some power that transcends us and is acting with us.

Religious, spiritual and other values-based organizations regularly call on the sense of the sacred as a source of power and direction. Here are two beautiful statements of sustaining values that may guide us through this transition.

[Our Commitment to Accelerate the Great Transition](#)

[Water, from a Commercial Commodity to a Sacred Gift](#)