

CES Monthly Musings

Issue 15, July 2008
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**Seeking integral community
in an ecological age**

“Ecozoic” means “house of life.” An “Ecozoic Society” means a society 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” is living the promise of the ecozoic.

In this issue: "A Report on Thomas Berry and the New Cosmology Conference," by Drew Dellinger; "Photo gallery of Thomas Berry and the New Cosmology Conference"; "Report on Awakening the Dreamer Symposium" by Nathan Rollins.

Thomas Berry and the New Cosmology

On July 17-20, the Sophia Center in Oakland, CA, hosted a conference called "Thomas Berry and the New Cosmology." Brian Swimme opened the gathering with a talk, chronicling his personal journey with Berry and elucidating the remarkable experience of being in the presence of a sage. One of the signs of a sage, said Swimme, is that, in their company, you recognize who you are. They awaken in you a fuller, deeper sense of self.

Swimme told a story of eating at Berry's favorite spot, the Broadway Diner in the Bronx. As the waitress refilled their coffee cups and walked away, Thomas said to Brian, 'There's no way you can repay her for that act. That isn't a monetary transaction. That's an infinite act of kindness. She has just poured her life into our lives.' Like Dante, perceiving the Divine in the person of Beatrice, Thomas Berry had the ability to see the infinity in an ordinary instant.

The next morning, Steve Dunn, a fellow Catholic brother in Berry's Passionist Order, shared some memories of knowing Thomas Berry for five decades. Steve recalled how Berry was fired, in the middle of the McCarthy era, from his first teaching job for teaching Karl Marx to college students. As a young seminarian in his twenties, Dunn and his colleagues were

discouraged from too much contact with Father Thomas, for fear they might acquire subversive ideas. Nevertheless, Steve Dunn would often visit Berry for confessions. One day, Steve came to confession in Berry's small room, which was filled with books stacked from floor to ceiling. Kneeling before the priest in accordance with tradition, Steve shared some problem that was weighing on his mind. After he had poured his heart out, Father Thomas said, "I have something that might be helpful to you." Berry rose and walked across his bed to reach a high shelf, but just as he put his hand on the book, he suddenly stopped and said, "You don't read Chinese, do you?"

This anecdote makes me think of how, decades later, Thomas Berry is offering us the deep wisdom of Earth, but we in the modern, industrial world have lost the capacity to read the language of the planet. Berry seems to know what guidance we need, if only we could understand the text of the living cosmos.

Sister Gail Worcelo reflected on Thomas Berry's mentorship of her, describing him as a man of profound courtesy, transparency and honesty, with no pretense.

On Friday evening, John Grim, another long-time student and friend of Berry, gave an impressive and erudite talk on Berry and Teilhard de Chardin as global prophets. Berry, said Grim, abides in reverence, like a yogi, even in the midst of immense challenges. Saturday morning I was honored to share my poem, "hieroglyphic stairway," before an excellent and inspiring talk by Mary Evelyn Tucker. "Cosmology is about the aliveness of the universe," Tucker said. She spoke of some formative influences on Thomas Berry, such as his earthy epiphany in a Carolina meadow, and the sense of rhythm--the daily rhythm of things--that monastic life gave him. "The meadow across the creek awakened him to the magic, and the monastery gave him a sense of the mystery," said Tucker.

On Friday and Saturday afternoons, I presented a workshop titled "Thomas Berry and the Poetry of the Cosmos." I shared some of the ideas I'd gleaned from Thomas during my 18 years of knowing him, and suggested that Berry's approach to the universe is fundamentally poetic.

On Saturday evening the Irish author Diarmuid O'Murchu presented on "Theological Implications of the New Among many interesting points, O'Murchu emphasized the subversive nature of Jesus' teaching and his rejection of hierarchical authority. He said that the phrase "kingdom of God" is a faulty Greek translation from the original Aramaic. In the language that Jesus spoke, the idea is more properly understood as 'reigning and ruling so that everybody is empowered to reign and rule.' O'Murchu cited an article from John Dominic Crossan in which Crossan states that "the kingdom of God" should be translated as "the companionship of empowerment."

All in all, it was a fabulous weekend of learning, and a moving celebration of the vision of Thomas Berry. Many thanks to Jim Conlon and all the folks at Sophia Center who organized the gathering. And infinite thanks to Thomas Berry for his sublime presence and gracious authenticity, and for helping us hear the voices of the cosmos in every breeze, in every leaf, in every star, in every smile.

Several speakers referenced the Great Red Oak that grew beside Thomas' home in Riverdale, NY, and Berry's deep affection for this magnificent tree. The dedication to Berry's masterwork, *The Dream of the Earth*, reads: "To the Great Red Oak, beneath whose sheltering branches this book was written." Many of us shared in Tom's sadness when this tree was cut down. What most folks don't know is that I have in my possession an acorn from this tree, which I gathered as a sacred talisman while visiting Thomas at Riverdale in 1995.

What the conference this weekend clearly showed is that the acorns of Berry's teaching are carried in the hearts and minds of many, many people. May the seeds of Thomas' vision and communion with the cosmos continue to blossom, for Earth, all species, and all of us.

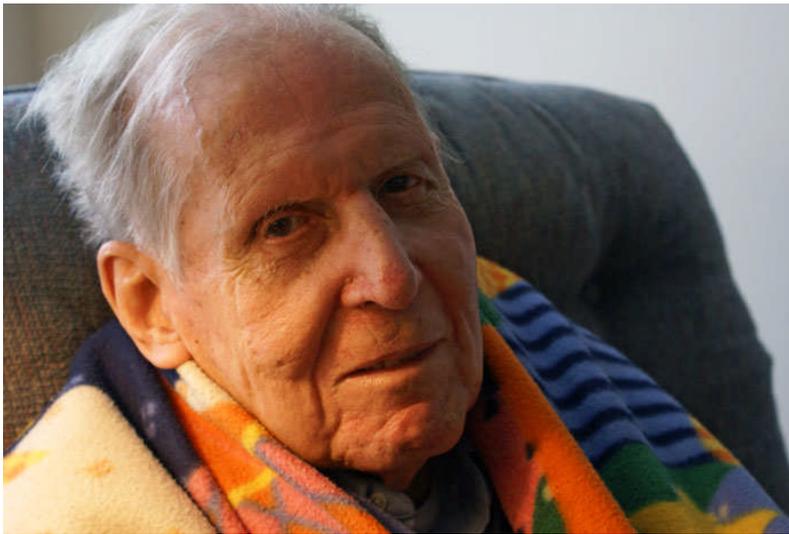
Drew Dellinger

Taken from his July 2008 web log with permission

www.drewdellinger.org

Photo Gallery of Thomas Berry and the New Cosmology Conference

The Sophia Center held its conference on "Thomas Berry and the New Cosmology" on July 18-21 in Oakland California.



Thomas Berry today.
(Picture copyright Caroline Webb 2008)

The View from the Northern Part of the San Francisco Bay

Ecozoic leaders and close associates of Thomas Berry – Fr. Stephen Dunn, Mary Evelyn Tucker, John Grim and Brian Swimme.

Reinventing the Human

Good Companions on the way.

Mary Southard and John Surette of SpiritEarth

Drew Dellinger – Love Letters to the Milky Way. Preparing Ph.D. Dissertation on Thomas Berry and Martin Luther King.
www.drewdellinger.org

New Center for Ecozoic Studies Colleagues—Caroline Webb of www.earth-community.org, and Allysyn Kiplinger, Ecozoic Center for the San Francisco Bay Area—together with Herman Greene

Report on Awakening the Dreamer Symposium

On July 26, Nathan Rollins, webmaster, and Herman Greene, President of CES, went to a three-hour version of the "Awakening the Dreamer Symposium" in Charlotte, NC. The conference is an exploration of four questions

- **Where Are We?** – an examination of the state of environmental, social and personal well-being
- **How did We Get Here?** – tracing the root causes that lead to our current imbalance
- **What's Possible for the Future?** – discovering new ways of relating with each other, with the Earth and looking at the emerging Movement for change
- **Where Do We Go from Here?** – considering the stand we want to be in the world and our personal and collective impact

This symposium is held on a regular schedule and in many places.

http://awakeningthedreamer.org/component/option.com_events/task,map/. You may also arrange to have a symposium held in your community. Here are reports by Nathan and Herman

Report by Nathan Rollins

I found the 'Awakening the Dreamer Symposium' a refreshing and thought-provoking introduction to the cultural and ecological costs of modern consumerism. Much of the

information may be very familiar to people active in the environmental and ecozoic arenas, but it provides a refreshing approach for newcomers and those who desire a renewal.

Herman and I attended a 3 hour session (the symposia are also available in 4 and 8 hour versions.) The symposium provides a mixture of videos and group discussions to awaken the audience to the debt accruing from our modern lifestyle. While the photographs and statistics function to jolt and 'awaken' the audience from their consumerist dream, participants are shown that good work is being done by individuals and organizations all over the world, and hope exists so long as one person holds on to their hope and dream for a better world.

Facilitators are being trained all over the country to lead these session, and I highly recommend looking at the organization's website (<http://awakeningthedreamer.org/>) to see if a symposium is being held near you. I believe it can be a wonderful opportunity to expose friends and family to this Great Work!

Nathan Rollins

Report by Herman Greene

I had heard about this symposium for two years but had not taken the time to go. When I traveled to the Thomas Berry conference at the Sophia Institute (see above), I went with the idea of developing a high quality "awakening program." I met with Drew Dellinger, among others, about this. Drew, who had been involved in the development of Awakening the Dreamer said that before I started on something new, I should go and experience the Awakening the Dreamer Symposium.

My experience of the symposium is that it was what I was thinking of and was far better than anything CES was likely to do independently. The Sophia Institue strengthened a conviction in me that the Great Work is so huge, we must work together. Where one group has something others can use, let's work together! I give my strong endorsement to the Awakening the Dreamer Program and will recommend people connected with CES consider hosting programs in their communities.

On a personal level, the symposium was moving to me. I especially found valuable its emphasis on environmental justice issues.

Herman Greene

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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.

If you would like to become a member of CES, you may do so by sending a letter to CES at 2516 Winningham Road, Chapel Hill, NC 27516 with your contact information and dues. Annual dues

are US\$30 (individual or family); reduced price, US\$20; outside U.S.A., Canada and Mexico, add US\$10. Sustaining Member US\$130. Contributions are welcome.

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