

\$5.00 US

The Ecozoic Reader

CRITICAL REFLECTION, STORY AND SHARED DREAM EXPERIENCE
OF AN ECOLOGICAL AGE



“The historical mission of our time is to reinvent the human—at the species level, with critical reflection, within the community of life systems, in a time-developmental context, by means of story and shared dream experience.”
—Thomas Berry

A publication of the
Center for Ecozoic Studies

Volume 3, Number 3
2003

The Great Work

We are about the Great Work.

*We all have our particular work—some of us are teachers,
some of us are healers, some of us in various professions,
some of us are farming.*

We have a variety of occupations.

*But beside the particular work we do
and the particular lives we lead,
we have a Great Work that everyone
is involved in and no one is exempt from.*

*That is the work of moving on from a terminal Cenozoic¹
to an emerging Ecozoic Era² in the story of the planet Earth...
which is the Great Work.*

- Thomas Berry

¹ Our current geo-biological era, the Cenozoic Era, began 65,000,000 years ago following the mass extinction of dinosaurs and many other species. Now Earth is undergoing another mass extinction of plant and animal species, this time caused by the impact of human activity on the community of life systems. The Cenozoic Era is ending.

² That another geo-biological era will follow the Cenozoic Era is not in question. What is in question is whether humans and other forms of life as we know them will continue to flourish. Will we achieve a viable mode of human presence on the Earth? The “Ecozoic Era”—a time of a mutually enhancing relationship of humans and the larger community of life systems—represents the hope that we will.

Thomas Berry—A November Feast

On his 89th birthday-November 9, 2003

By Tom Keevey

Birthdays—special marks in time
 New life in the universe,
 Amazing events, bursting forth
 A multitude unknown, all diverse.
 Tall trees, winding rivers,
 Powerful whales, a little bee,
 Stars, comets, laughing humans
 All parade around the galactic clock
 Take leave of their place in time
 Pass beyond, eternity perhaps
 Absorbed, alone, cosmic rock.

Autumn days, harvest moon
 Shifting leaves, a November day
 Marked by nine, life for Thomas
 The dream begins, so opportune.
 A prophet who dares one day
 Retell Earth's story, universe story.
 North Carolina, strong and loving family,
 A wondrous meadow, all fashion
 A great spirit, mind and soul.

Years of discipline, nights of brooding
 Religious life, Passionist abodes
 St. Thomas, life-long friend
 Chardin, Jung, all native peoples
 Touch his heart, the dream takes shape.
 Far off China, nearby universities
 Censures, restrictions, dark struggles
 At last, sanctuary, a Riverdale haven.
 Towering oak, majestic Hudson
 Students, scholars, everyone a friend
 Receive the dream, must tell the story.



Carolina now welcomes home
Historian and dreamer, teller of tales.
Years consecrated to planet Earth
Pleading, warning of greed, mostly males.
How celebrate a passionate eighty-nine?
“The Great Work,” our task, commune with life!

O Thomas, mystic and keeper of the story
To native peoples, teacher and Grandfather,
Always revealing the beauty of divine glory
Encompassing a blue Earth, a vast universe.



Affectivity in Classical Confucianism*

By Thomas Berry

In Confucianism we perceive a consistent and all-pervading emphasis on the affective life of the human community. This emphasis on the feeling, emotional aspect of life was considered of primary importance in sustaining a human form of existence. Indeed the awakening consciousness of the Chinese in the classical period consisted largely in a growing awareness of the intimate relationships that bind us to each other and the need for cultivating this aspect of our lives. This became the very substance of the Chinese tradition, for while there were other cultural forces at work in Chinese society, Confucianism provided the dominant cultural form of the society, the basic human ideals, the political structure, the social discipline, the educational institutions, the style of life.

Thus from an early period Confucianism established itself as one of the dominant life styles governing human existence in the Eurasian world up until the present. Taoism and Buddhism in China offered no such integral life program or cultural form to the people as Confucianism offered; they lived within the context provided by Confucian teaching. Legalism offered an alternative organizing program, but it sought to achieve its objective by imposition of external force rather than by human attraction; for this reason it was rejected by the Chinese shortly after it came to power.

According to Confucian teaching, a mutual attraction of things for each other functions at all levels of reality as the interior binding force of the cosmic, social and personal life. More than most traditions, Confucianism saw the interplay of cosmic forces as a single set of intercommunicating and mutually penetrating realities. These forces, whether living or non-living, were so present to each other that they could be adequately seen and

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**Editor's Note:* This essay was originally published in Tu Weiming and Mary Evelyn Tucker, eds., *Confucian Spirituality* (World Spirituality vol. 11A) (New York: Herder & Herder, 2003), and is reprinted with permission.

understood only within this larger complex. Not to appreciate this comprehensive vision of the world is to miss the numinous quality of Chinese life. Because of the intensity with which the Chinese experienced this interior, feeling communion with the real, they set themselves on perfecting themselves and the universe by increasing this sympathetic presence of things to each other within a personal and social discipline rather than by intellectual analysis. Indeed the Confucian ideal of knowledge was that of an understanding heart rather than a thinking brain.

Confucianism was less interested in the principles of physical causality than the Greeks, less oriented toward transcendental reality than the Hindu, more willing to accept the temporal mode of human life than the Yogic and Buddhist traditions. The primary concern was for the manner in which we share our human existence by affectionate service to each other, by our mutual sympathies in time of suffering. There are many places in the corpus of Confucian writings where comprehensive statements are made concerning the formation of human community in its various forms: In the Great Plan proposed in the Book of History, in the Seventh Chapter (Li Yun) of the Book of Ritual, in the Third Appendix of the Book of Changes, in Chapters 22 to 31 in the Doctrine of the Mean, in the Great Learning, in Chapter 44 of Tung Chung-shu's consideration of the Spring and Autumn Annals, in the Explanation of the Diagram of the Great Ultimate of Chou Tun-i, in the Western Inscription of Chang Tsai, in the Commentary on the Great Learning by Wang Yang-ming, These are only a few of the many classical expressions of this profound intercommunion of Heaven, Earth and humans. Almost every short essay on the interpretation of life in the Confucian traditions makes reference to this framework and derives its basic principles from these sources.



The cosmos is encompassed in the human, the human in the cosmos. Each discovers itself in the other. But the final concern is with the common bond of the truly real which is found in the mutual attraction which pervades the multiplicity of things, and establishes this multiplicity as an ordered universe, as a cosmos. This

highest ontological attraction of things to each other in the Confucian tradition can be indicated quite simply by the word “communion.”

In this context the role of the individual human becomes especially significant; for the cosmic is not simply the dimension of humankind, it is the larger dimension of the individual human person. In this enlarged experience of the individual are all those qualities of the universe itself. While this exalted ideal of personal-cosmic communion was thought of primarily as an experience of the sage-kings of ancient times and of a few later sages, it was so deeply enshrined in the tradition as the basic human ideal that it became the encompassing context within which we saw most clearly the meaning of our existence and the cosmic function that we fulfilled. It is this macrophase of the human that makes of the human a Third together with Heaven and Earth, a designation as ancient as the Book of History, but which is further developed in the teaching of classical Confucianism. Within this context we can identify several communities within which humans live their lives: (i) the supreme community of Heaven, Earth and humans, (ii) the pan-human earth and political community, (iii) the friendship community, (iv) the family community, and the personal community of each of us within ourselves. Since all of these communities are founded on the bonds of affection that we bear to each other, discussion of our affective lives can best take place within this differentiation of communities and the corresponding differentiation of the human communication that takes place within this variety of life context.

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The Affective Life of the Human Community

(i) The Community of Heaven, Earth and Humans

First there is the community of Heaven, Earth and humans. Heaven itself, the highest conception of Confucian tradition, is seen as a quiet Providence communicating itself to all beings, fostering and protecting them. The basic virtue of both Heaven and Earth is not precisely any entitative attribute but “the bringing into existence.”¹ In the writings of Tung Chung-shu we read: “Benevolent love (Jen) is situated in Heaven, for Heaven is love itself

¹ Book of Changes, Appendix III, 2:1/8.

(himself Jen).”² Protecting, sustaining, transforming and giving life to every creature, Heaven brings them to their fulfillment. Whoever beholds this heavenly presence must recognize “its infinite and inexhaustible love (Jen).” In response to this affection we who receive from Heaven our existence must also receive from Heaven “its loving qualities and ourselves be loving.” Because we have received such inspiration from Heaven, we can then fulfill with proper affection all our duties to others, especially to our own parents and the other members of our family, for we have a heart that is “loyal, trusting, compassionate and kind.”³ In another statement on this basic Confucian teaching, the Book of Ritual indicates that as a Third in the Trinity, with Heaven and Earth, humans attain a brilliance enabling us to enlighten all Earth.” The highest insight of this phase of Confucianism is the awareness of humans, as “the understanding heart of Heaven and Earth.”⁴ Thus the human function is to provide that affectionate quality as well as the human mode of consciousness that perfects the trinitarian community achieved on this ultimate plane of being.

(ii) The Pan-Human Earth and Political Community

The second community is the pan-human community of Earth, the community of all within the four seas, of all under Heaven. To the cultivation of this public community Confucian thinkers devoted a major part of their attention. This community is the special object of affection from Heaven itself which cares for the human community directly through the natural world, inwardly by identifying its voice with the voice of the people, and socially by providing a ruler who is himself the Son of Heaven. In caring for the human community, the ruler is to model his actions on the care which Heaven manifests for all things, on the affection of parents for their children, and on the concern he has for his own being. The ruler, in a special manner, is to be Father and Mother of the People. Failure of the ruler to fulfill his function in a benign and loving manner invalidates his rule; he becomes subject to removal in favor of someone who will fulfill this role. Just as the ruler has a dominant part in the good order of the society as the cosmic center in whom the planes of reality intersect in a special manner, so also he is the dominant cause of disorder in the society. The Book of History is an account of the dialectic of transition from one to the other, with all the attendant good and evil consequences.

² Chun –chiu fan-lu, 44 11:5b.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Book of Ritual, 7:3.

Thus the two central moments in the Book of History are the convulsive moments of transition from the Hsia to the Shang and from the Shang to the Chou. These equate with changes from a period of oppression of the people to a period of concern for the people. The establishment of the Chou rule under the guidance of the Duke of Chou represents the decisive moment of renewal and rebirth for the Chinese people, the introduction of all those ideals of the human quality of life that have marked the Chinese tradition ever since. As narrated in the Book of History this event transpired under the guidance of “Shang-Ti,”⁵ God himself. The great accusation directed against the Shang rulers was that they did not understand the suffering of the people, they turned to their own ease. The achievement of King Wen when he came to rule was that “he esteemed and protected the lower classes of the people, he was gracious and good to widowers and widows.”⁶

The dehumanization of the Hsia and Shang dynasties has been the subject of reflection by the Chinese throughout the centuries. These events were the mirror in which the changing moods of historical existence could best be seen: the tragic tendency in all regimes to pass from high human ideals of community to a situation in which the rulers hardened their attitudes, gave in to their own satisfactions, and abandoned the people to their suffering. At such moments Heaven made its own judgment known in a direct fashion. An injury to a person is an injury to Heaven, especially when the injury is to the community and when the ruler has indulged himself to the neglect of the people. There are not two orders of the real, there is only the one order encompassing the various modes of expression on the different levels of creaturely existence. Any break or corruption manifested in any phase of this universal order was a fault in the whole that could not be endured.



⁵ Book of Documents, to-shih chapter 5, p. 54.

⁶ Ibid., Wu-i chapter 10, p.57.

For the Chinese it was not sufficient for this to be stated in abstract terms. It was necessary that the historical reality of earlier times be seen within this paradigmatic scheme and meditated on. Chinese history at this time is written within a pattern much as biblical history was written, within a pattern revealing that God is the guide of the people. The basic concern of God in Israel and of Heaven in China is that justice be done, that the community be fostered, that the lowly be protected, that the suffering receive compassionate care. When the ruler-people bond was broken, then the ruler-Heaven relationship was broken, divine judgment was executed and a new and compassionate regime was installed.

The ideal of proper concern for the people was manifested by King Wen who “looked upon the people as if they were wounded.”⁷ This compassionate awareness of the suffering nature of existence, this feeling for those on the lower levels of prestige with fewer resources and less talents—for the elderly without children, for children whose parents had died, for widows and widowers, is among the more striking features of the early Confucian tradition. The admonition of the Emperor Shun to his ministers had been, “Be gentle with those far off and gracious to those nearby.”⁸ The ancient kings were held up by Mencius as rulers having “a compassionate heart;”⁹ unable to witness the suffering of others, they were moved to heal the affliction of the people whenever this was discovered. The emperor Yu considered that “if anyone in the empire drowned, it was as if he himself had drowned him; if anyone starved in the empire, Chi considered that he himself had starved him.”¹⁰

This ideal society of the classical period was evoked in the Confucian imagination during a period of social disorder and projected into the past as a reality that had existed in some primordial moment in society. Later, during a period when the whole world seemed to be “drowning”¹¹ so far as its human qualities were concerned, this ideal society was further elaborated by Mencius. Although this society was more dream than reality, it fulfilled for the Chinese a necessary function: It expressed what a truly human mode of social-political life should be; it judged the existing order with some depth of

⁷ Mencius, 4B:20.

⁸ Book of Documents, Yao-tien chapter 27, p. 6.

⁹ Mencius, 2A:6.

¹⁰ Mencius, 4B:29.

¹¹ Mencius, 4A:17.

insight; it provided hope and guidance sufficient to sustain the Chinese civilizational effort over the centuries.

There is no need to think that the Chinese ever expected to attain the full reality of the vision in any earthly, historical regime. There was, however, a realization that, unless this vision found expression in some manner, the human quality of life was imperiled, not simply for the moment but, possibly, for the entire future. That the Confucian teachers stated the ideal so clearly, that they correctly identified the moral-spiritual means toward that end, that they evoked such effort from the society, all this is evidence of the human depth of their thought. Mencius saw the issue with clarity when he pointed out the need for persons in community to share in a common affective life, especially in the joy and the sorrow that pervade our existence: “When the ruler finds his joy in the joy of the people, then the people find their joy in his joy; when the ruler is sorrowful over the sorrow of his people, then they are saddened in his sadness. Delight on occasion will extend throughout the society; on occasion sorrow, too, will extend everywhere. By this communal sharing of their feelings, the ruler will certainly succeed in his rule.”¹² There is only one alternative—decline in this community of human feeling and the diminishing of our capacity for communal sharing, with disastrous consequences: “When love and righteousness are thwarted, beasts will be led to devour humans and humans will devour each other.”¹³ The tenor of chaos on the one hand and the inspiring vision of harmony on the other, both were needed to sustain the effort required to save the social order from disintegration and to foster development of that human quality of life of which humans were capable.

(iii) The Friendship Community

The friendship community, as a third community, is a community highly appreciated and wonderfully developed in Confucian tradition. It is referred to in the first of the *Analects* with a simple exclamation of joy; “How delightful to be with friends who have come from afar!” Friendship is also the subject of a memorable passage of the *Book of Changes*; “People united, at first cry out, weeping; but afterwards they laugh Two persons inwardly united in their hearts are superior to any restraint of iron or of bronze: their words, responding to the intimate feelings of their hearts, are

¹² Mencius, 1B:4.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 3B:9.

pleasing, like orchid fragrance.”¹⁴ The conditions for true friendship are also enunciated in the passage of the Analects concerning young people who when at home should be devoted to their parents and when away from home respectful to their elders. Sincere and truthful, they should “overflow in love for everyone”¹⁵ and develop an intimate attachment to the good. As with the other phases of the Confucian life program, there was a need to ground friendship deep in our moral lives, to make of this one of the central features in the daily self-examination, as we see in the teacher Tsang who considered three main points: “faithfulness in dealing with others, sincerity in association with friends, fidelity in carrying out the teachings of the master.”¹⁶

But while there are many instances of such observations and concern for friendship in the Confucian canon and in the writings of Confucian teachers, the friendship community is less mentioned in discussion of the weighty sequence of communities that passes from the universal cosmic order to the political order, to the state, the family, and the individual. This friendship community is, however, most important in fostering some of the deepest of all human experiences precisely because it is neither ritualized, nor politicized, nor intellectualized, nor subject to family obligation. It belongs to the order of the greatest freedom and creates a unique intimacy of its own. It is simply that attachment individual persons and small groups of persons have for each other and the joy they have in their sharing of life and thought and feeling. So we have the fascinating episodes in the life of Confucius and his disciples. While this was not simply a community of equals but a fellowship under the guidance of a master, it was essentially a free association with a rare intimacy, generosity and joy.

Where this friendship community comes to its fullest expression is in the poets, from the Book of Poetry throughout the entire course of Chinese literature. Even in the poetry of one so given to solitude and personal reflection as T’ao Ch’ien, there are passages of the deepest feeling in relation to the friends and neighbors with whom he came into contact in such a casual way. Yet the warmth and intimacy created, the human feeling for each other creates an atmosphere rich in the friendship quality of human relationships. So in his poem to the Prefect Ting of Ch’ai-sang, T’ao Ch’ien speaks of their

¹⁴ Book of Changes, Appendix III, 1:8.

¹⁵ Analects, 1:6.

¹⁶ Analects, 1:4.

outings together “where we talked and we gazed, to give relief to our sorrows.”¹⁷ In his wandering with friends he never tired, and the day he saw a friend leave, “the wine cup held no joy.”¹⁸ With T’ao Ch’ien most often the theme was that of moments of joy tinged with poignant reflections on the evanescent character of human existence; all this was an intimate communion of thought. While there are endless expressions of sorrow at partings, there are also the joys of meeting and moments of unrestrained laughter while draining cups of wine. It is not easy to say which was more intoxicating, converse with friends or the cups of wine. But often enough it was simply the talk of friends late into the night. So with Tu Fu in his poem for Vice-Prefect Yen with whom he had established an intimate friendship; “Nothing seemed to matter then, and my whole life seemed to be filled with never-ending bliss.”¹⁹

Beyond this intimacy of friendship with others on a simple human, feeling basis, there is also the compassionate feeling for the suffering. It would be too much to say that the Chinese were in fact more sensitive and helpful in this regard than other peoples; but what does come through in their essays and reflections on human life is a unique awareness of the interior movements of compassion in the human heart and the tendency to help those in need. While other peoples often sought for the indwelling divine presence within humans, the Chinese sought in the human mode of being the most authentic reality. It was the capacity for sympathy for others rather than any type of knowing that provided the specific identity and highest perfection of the human quality of life. Feeling and knowing, however, were not opposed to each other, for in reality these were simply two forms of one thing,



¹⁷ Hightower, James, tr., *Poetry of T'ao Ch'ien*, 26.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁹ Hung, William, tr., *Tu Fu: China's Greatest Poet*, 191.

the communion we have with each other and the communion we have with all the universe.

Many are the writers on this subject and many the instances that can be quoted, especially in the later Neo-Confucian period. Chou Tun-i was so sensitive that he would not permit the grass outside his window to be cut lest he cause hurt to a living being. Wang Yang-ming could explain how people experience pain whenever any living being is pained or even when the rocks or tiles are shattered. Chang Tsai, who was concerned more with human suffering, could speak of all those who are tired, weary, weak, crippled or ill, all who are without family, without brothers or children or wives or husbands, as his brothers in a very special way since they have no one to whom they can turn for help. No one, however, in the long course of Chinese thought reflected on this sympathetic experience so profoundly or so clearly perceived in this compassion of the human heart an authentic revelation of the real in one of its most essential qualities, more than Mencius.

One of the reasons why Mencius is the supreme thinker in the classical Confucian tradition is because he, in all his writings, as King Wen in his rule and Ch'eng Mao in his meditation, "looked upon the people as if they were wounded."²⁰ Inwardly sensitive to the hurt of others and perceiving that other men, even those without great moral qualities, were immediately moved at the sight of innocent suffering, Mencius found the essential goodness of humans manifested by this compassion, a goodness that parallels the instinctive goodness of parents and children for each other and also the goodness that Heaven shows for the human order of Earth. Upon these three observations, Mencius founded his entire teaching concerning the goodness not only of human nature, but also of the entire existing order of things. If there was a destructive aspect of things, if there were wicked men and wicked rulers, this came not out of the order of things but out of a distortion and rejection of this order.

The order of goodness, love and compassion is immediate, easy and mutually beneficial for humans; wickedness is secondary, deliberate, and mutually harmful. We tend to goodness as water tends to flow downward. Yet in fact we often "do violence to ourselves,"²¹ we "throw ourselves

²⁰ Mencius, 4B:20

²¹ Ibid., 4A:10

away,”²² we have “lost minds,”²³ we have abandoned “the mind of the child.”²⁴ The tragedy is that “The path lies in what is near and we seek for it in what is remote. The work lies in what is easy, and we seek for it in what is difficult. If each of us would love our parents and show the due respect to our elders, the whole world would enjoy tranquility.”²⁵ For, indeed, the sage is “no different from anyone else.”²⁶ “Confucius did nothing exceptional.”²⁷ The feeling of compassion is in every person in the very substance of their being for it “is not infused into us from without,”²⁸ it arises from the most basic tendencies of our nature. There is no lack of natural power or of the interior impulse: “Nor is there any greater joy than to be aware of being humanly authentic on self-reflection.”²⁹ The great need then is simply for us to release ourselves up to those sublime movements within us that produce the greatest human deeds and bring forth our full perfection in ourselves and in our relations with others: “The great person in his speech does not consider whether or not he will be believed nor does he, in his acts consider their efficacy. He considers only that righteousness be there.”³⁰ All this is so marvelously easy because “The great person is one who does not lose his child’s heart.”³¹

The path lies in
what is near and we
seek for it in what
is remote.

Perhaps the single greatest illustration of not losing the child’s heart can be found in the poet Tu Fu. He illustrates to an extraordinary degree the fulfillment of those basic instincts for good and compassion for others. In his poem “Five Hundred Words from Chan-An to Feng-hsien,” Tu Fu presents the difficulties that he had experienced while away from home during years of warfare, and his sorrow on discovering that his little son had died of starvation while he was away. Yet he wrote at the end of the poem: “I am one of the privileged, free from taxation, and exempt from the draft. If my lot is so bitter, that of a common man must be worse. When I think of those whose

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 6A:11

²⁴ Ibid., 4B:12

²⁵ Ibid., 4A:11

²⁶ Ibid., 6A:7

²⁷ Ibid., 4B:10

²⁸ Ibid., 6A:1

²⁹ Ibid., 7A:4

³⁰ Ibid., 4B:11

³¹ Ibid., 4B:12

property has been seized, and of those recruited to garrison the far frontiers, my anxiety rises like a flood to inundate even the Southern Mountains, with mad swells utterly impossible to abate.”³² Again, on the occasion when an autumn gale had torn off the thatched roof of his house he wrote about how the cotton quilt of his bed was damp and chill and torn inside because of the children moving about so restlessly. The roof was leaking, there was no place in the house that was dry. But even in the midst of such discomfort, he could think of building a huge house with numberless rooms to shelter others in a similar situation. He ends with the moving statement: “Oh, if I could only see this house suddenly appear before my eyes, let my hut be smashed, let me die alone in exposure and I shall die content”.³³

(iv) The Community of the Family

The fourth community, the family, is the primordial community of human affection; without it nothing human would have either existence or significance. If we have mentioned these other communities first, it is to provide a setting in which the family community can be seen in its origin and meaning, for it is in the home and by the love manifested there that we learn “love for one another.”³⁴ Neither the higher community of the ontological trinity, nor the political community exist separately. Each is the perfection of the other. Together they constitute the unique and harmonious fulfillment of the human quality of our lives: yet of them all, the family, in Confucian tradition, is the primary community in which the humanization process takes place. The two words that are of special significance here are *ch'in* and *hsiao*. Both of these indicate the intimacy of family affection, but here we will consider especially *hsiao*, or filial devotion, for special comment. Filial devotion and service to parents are designated as the supreme dynamic of the universe: “Filial devotion is the interior pattern of Heaven itself, as well as the ultimate norm of Earth and guide of the people. When humans respond to this norm then they also follow the design of Heaven and Earth, which leads them by the brightness of Heaven and the benefits of Earth; then the whole world is at peace.”³⁵ Filial, devotion then is the evocation within the human heart of a quality found in the supreme reality of Heaven itself; for this reason it becomes the “root” of all those human qualities of life which are designated in the term “Jen.”

³² Hung, op. cit., 89

³³ Ibid., 172

³⁴ Hsiao Ching, 12

³⁵ Ibid., 3

The response of filial devotion, however, is not evoked so much by the immediate presence of Heaven but immediately by the warmth and affection bestowed upon the infant by its parents. For this reason the father, representing both parents, is exalted as “counterpart of Heaven,”³⁶ even as the king is exalted to that status in terms of the world community. But while this heavenly model is used in reference to the family, the family model is used in reference to Heaven. These reciprocally clarify each other, mirror each other, and become a norm for each other. If the father is the counterpart of Heaven, then Heaven is the counterpart of the father. Together these various communities establish that larger functioning community of communities, mutually identifying, mutually supporting, mutually humanizing, and mutually present to each other throughout the entire extent of the real.

No virtue, even that of the sage, is considered greater than filial devotion; indeed it is from the experience of love in childhood that the holy sages were able first to experience, then to understand, and finally to teach this virtue: “The sage, because of his love for his parents taught love.”³⁷ This later developed into a capacity for establishing the proper relation with public authorities: “The father-son communication is derived from the heaven-given nature, also the prince-minister relation.”³⁸ Finally there is the fact that love is related to the bestowal of life. To bestow life without love is not considered possible: “Parents originate life, no relation, is superior to this; they bestow care and affection, no concern is greater.”³⁹

Among the basic reasons for exalting the family community, and the great virtue of filial devotion associated with this community, is because at the sacred moment of birth, the first moment of existence, the instinctive movement of the infant is to turn toward its parents with a sense of total need and to receive from parents not only the first existence itself nor simply the bodily nourishment, but also the affection that it needs for its continued existence. This intimacy, so essential to the very existence of the child, must forever after remain the first and most absolute fact of its being; everything else is derivative. In speaking of filial devotion then, it is no wonder that the

³⁶ Ibid., 9

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

Book of Ritual, appreciating the full depth of this mystery of our human mode of being, speaks of filial devotion simply as the authentic manifestation of an instinctive tendency. This “does not come down from Heaven, it does not come forth from the earth, it comes simply from human feeling.”⁴⁰ It is little wonder then that the Doctrine of the Mean tells us that the greatest of virtues, *Jen*, is to be identified with the human mode of being, and that “its supreme manifestation is in loving parents;”⁴¹ or that the Book of Ritual says that we “should serve [our] parents as we serve Heaven, and that we should serve Heaven as we serve our parents.”⁴²

(v) The Community of Individuals Within Themselves

The fifth community is the community of the individual person within himself or herself, the harmonious indwelling of the phenomenal ego in the deeper interior self. Because the full development of an authentic self is a basic requirement for the development of the other communities, there is constant mention in Confucian thought of the need for turning inward and reflecting on a person’s own thoughts, desires, and actions. There was need for daily renewal based on this interior examination. Thus the entire Confucian teaching can be considered as a tradition of personal self-cultivation, as the art of self-awareness, as a mode of self-discipline. The purpose of all this was to become one who immediately and instinctively, without hesitation or reasoning, spontaneously manifests in his or her actions an authentic human personality. As we are told in the Great Learning: Only the good person is capable of rightly “loving and hating others.”⁴³ Only such a person can sustain the larger human order of society for both cultural, and political order rest on the individual person: “The root of the empire is in the state, the root of the state is in the family, the root of the family is in the person.”⁴⁴ Later, the short chapter from the Book of Ritual entitled “The Great Learning” was taken out of this classic and made into a separate work in its own right because it correctly identified the pattern of dependence throughout the entire human order, beginning with the universal human order and passing to the lower communities, until the final term of dependence was arrived at deep within the human personality. Everything in the society, then, depended on the cultivation of this ultimate support. “From the emperor

⁴⁰ Book of Ritual, 32:10

⁴¹ Doctrine of the Mean, 20:5

⁴² Book of Ritual, 24:18

⁴³ Great Learning, 10

⁴⁴ Mencius, 4A:5

down to the ordinary person, everyone in the society must consider the cultivation of the person as the root of a humanly valid social order.” It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of this short essay in the course of Chinese intellectual, spiritual, cultural and political history, an importance it still maintains for all who would understand the Confucian life program.

Although so much emphasis was given to the family community, the movement of Chinese reflection went down into this still deeper and more radical source in the determination of human affairs, the human heart and its most interior tendencies. There was an obvious need to cultivate the entire order of things there where the ultimate dynamic of human affairs has its origin, in the individual person. The strife and devastation, in the political order and the suffering it had caused already by the sixth century B.C.E. convinced thinking people that the supreme need was to develop humans worthy of that designation. This is the entire significance of Confucius who shifted the nobility title of *chun-tzu* from a political to a moral/spiritual/human designation and undertook the work of creating authentic human personalities in his followers. Confucius understood the inter-relation of the various forms of community that have been here outlined, he saw that each depended on the others, that each had to be fulfilled in and through the other; but he also saw that the point of entry into this complex of interpenetrating communities must be the individual person. In a warring period when the surrounding world was going up in the flames of inter-state conflict, when none of the rulers were willing to respond to his teaching, when a new barbarization threatened the world, Confucius committed himself to the shaping of the historical destinies of humankind by educating individuals capable of showing forth those rich and sublime human qualities latent in the depths of their being, qualities summed up in the single word, *Jen*. Before they could carry out such a work they had first to show forth in themselves those qualities of which they were speaking.

That he had himself accomplished this is evident from the picture of Confucius that his disciples left for posterity, which became ever afterwards the model of what might be considered as a truly human mode of being. What is remarkable in the teaching of Confucius is its wonderful softness, gentility, quietness, modesty, restraint, compassion along with an inner firmness and resilience derived from personal discipline; its penetration into the truth of things, without iconoclasm or Puritanism or excessive rigor; its

fatherly quality, its serenity, its sureness. No fear, nor anxiety; simply the teaching of an authentic human being capable of that affectionate attitude toward others indicated by the virtue of *Jen*, which he once defined simply as “loving others.”⁴⁵

Confucius understood that the answer to barbarism was not in some violent social effort, some external discipline or even some intellectual insight. It lay rather in the human style of our personal bearing, in our capacity for establishing a mutual presence with others, in fostering a tradition of service for the community. This had to begin where life began, in a home filled with family affection. This was the primary and irreplaceable school for the individual, the place wherein lay the security that would enable the finer human qualities to find their expression, where the capacity for responding to those profoundly human instincts could be developed. Everything in later life would depend upon this sensitivity to the tendencies felt in the deep stillness at the center of our human mode of being. Since Confucius himself could only indicate the broader outlines of his teaching it was not until the time of Mencius that this sensitivity to the most secret wellsprings of human thought and feeling could be spoken of with any fullness.

When Mencius did arrive on the scene and begin his teaching, he was able to present a vision and an experience of humans that remains a monument to this type of reflexive insight. He often spoke of the need of people to reflect on themselves and on their deeds, knowing that if this were done we would discover there a compassionate heart that could not bear to observe the suffering of others.⁴⁶ We would also discover there the “shoots of goodness”⁴⁷ that only needed cultivation to produce a truly human person. Once these instinctive tendencies were recognized as guides to the authentic way of human life, the distinguishing human quality of the quality of our being, as that which identifies the human over against the sub-human world, then a basis was established on which we could appeal to individual persons and to rulers to exert their energies toward a social harmony where individuals, communities and rulers share in common the joys and sorrows of earthly life. It was all a question of humanizing from within, convincing the human community that our nature is good. We have basic instincts emerging

⁴⁵ Analects, 12:22

⁴⁶ Mencius,

⁴⁷ Ibid.

from our nature that are infallible guides toward a fitting human existence, and the way of life indicated by the very nature of things was a simple and easy way. If somehow humans had lost their minds, had distorted the tendencies evident in childhood, this could be corrected. Until then, we would only do violence to ourselves individually and to others, causing infinite damage to the community and unlimited suffering to the people.

The Transforming Quality of *Jen*

After presenting these various forms in which the affective life of humans is lived according to Confucian tradition, we might indicate that one of the most distinctive aspects of this tradition is its concern for the development of the human quality of life in its infra-temporal, infra-human setting. Within this setting, the most exciting experience available to us is the discovery of the distinctive modality of our own existence and the manner in which, precisely in virtue of this human mode of existence, we enter into communion with all that is and bring to the entire universe of existences our own special transforming presence: "Everything is complete within us."⁴⁸ The special transforming quality, the special communion that we establish with the real is identified by the word *Jen*. This special way of feeling, of sympathetic communication, this mode of presence is an experience in which all the world is expressed in its human meaning and humans discover the wonders of themselves throughout the entire world. As thought of in the Confucian tradition, this experience is fulfilled in a kind of cosmic ritual, the enactment of a choreography participated in by the stars in the heavens, by the seasons of earth, by all living things, and finally by humans in and through whom this mighty performance comes to conscious expression. This expression that attains articulate form in the Book of Ritual sought to strengthen the individual and distinctive qualities of things while bringing each thing more intimately into communion with everything else. Thus there are two basic demands upon the human individual: first our self-identity as human; secondly our communion with the larger society and beyond that with the universal order of things. Both of these are indicated by the term *Jen*, for *Jen* is *man*,⁴⁹ and the basic fulfillment of *Jen* is attained in communion with others on this extensive scale. These two functions, self-identity and presence to others, are eventually one, for communion is a process whereby we discover our larger self, not within the limits of our own

⁴⁸ Ibid., 7A:4

⁴⁹ Ibid., 7A:4

individual being, but in others, who establish with ourselves a more complete self in which each of us attains fulfillment. This process of communion with others and the consequent fulfillment of our being has no limits other than the limits of the real itself. The supreme obstacle to this communion is found in the self-isolation of the individual, our inability to respond properly to others, our closing off from the family and social order in favor of a self-centered and self-limiting existence. This closing off involves either a deliberate rejection of the tendencies of nature or neglect in cultivating these tendencies. The result is our alienation from our own authentic self and a break in the family community, the political community, and the entire ontological order; the cosmic ritual itself is interrupted.

That this alienation within ourselves and the consequent disturbance of the universe community occurs on such an extensive scale, that it causes so much suffering, always remained a difficult problem within the Confucian tradition. The basic solution offered was to establish, firstly, a ritual order of life in which the basic virtues would be cultivated according to a set style of conduct, not simply by indicating in general terms how the cultivation should take place, but by providing specific training in these disciplines of individual, family and social living in a meaningful ceremonial context; and, secondly, a humanistic tradition for education of the young that would center on our understanding of ourselves and the manner in which our human

If the critique is offered that both of these programs are utopian in their basic orientation, the Confucian answer is simply that we ourselves are utopian in the very structure of our being.

qualities are developed in an overall scheme of reality. In both instances, in the ritual participation as well as in the humanistic education, the principal attention is given to cultivating our feeling life, the governing principles of our human mode of being.

If the critique is offered that both of these programs are utopian in their basic orientation, the Confucian answer is simply that we ourselves are utopian in the very structure of our being. The virtue of Jen is utopian in its distinctive qualities. Heaven and Earth are utopian in their most primordial functioning. Nature is utopian in the very dynamics of its functioning. Yet to the great Confucian teachers who knew as much as anyone of the chaos in human affairs and who saw people reject the most elementary human aspects of their existence, this utopian consciousness and the humanizing activities it

evoked were the only things that could sustain us in the authentic mode of our being. Not to be hardened by struggle, not to become cynical, not to engage in counter violence of dehumanizing dimensions—these required the endurance shown by the long sequence of teachers from the days of Confucius himself. They were sustained in their position not simply by their valor in face of opposition, but by a conviction that the ultimate constructive forces at work in the world could not finally be overcome. The dynamics of Heaven and Earth, the forces within our *hsing* (our nature), the dominant tendency emanating from this source, *Jen*, were situated in an inviolable depth of the human; they had their own gravitation that could never be removed, the gravitation to an interior, mutual, subjective presence with others in a state of communion, the ultimate goal and fulfillment of the virtue known as *Jen*. So long as one human being remained capable of response to another human being, there was hope for a human order of life in the fullness of its meaning.

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My Mother Has Breast Cancer

By Richard Arnold

“Nurse stumps”
the natives call them,
relics from the ravages
of nature and hacking man
with deep scars
in thick dead bark—
but also a thin living layer
of tissue on top

where seedlings cling and root,
future big trees and stumps.
Behind my house is one,
an ancient cedar hulk

with three young hemlocks
holding on. I come here often,
stand quietly watching
by the nurse stump.

Today it’s raining in the woods.
Silver drops hang like tears
at the branch tips of the tiny
green hemlock seedlings.

I reach out,
give them a gentle shake,
place my other hand on the old stump,
wondering will Someone’s hand
Be touching her.



The Great Understanding from Black Elk: The Door to “the Power of the World”

By Bill Packer

“**N**othing can live well,” said Black Elk, “except in a manner suited to the way the Power of the World lives and moves to do its work.”

And as he spoke of understanding, I looked up and saw the rainbow leap with flames of many colors over me.

Black Elk Speaks, John G. Neihardt

In 1977, I sold my fishing boat and left the sea. I then traveled to the mountains of Oregon where I found and read the book *Black Elk Speaks* by John G. Neihardt. This book is the life story of an Oglala Sioux Indian who had a great vision when he was nine years old. His vision foretold the dawn of a beautiful new world that he would “make live.” Stating repeatedly that Black Elk would be used to save a sickly, stricken Earth, his great vision foretold that he would cure all earthly ills through an understanding that would appear at the old age of the third generation, Black Elk being the first. Beyond the old age of the fourth generation (people now in their forties and fifties), all the world was beautiful and green with all fruits growing and all things kind and happy.

I didn’t like the book when I first read it. Soon after reading it, however, I searched back through its pages for something I seemed to remember. I found the passage and memorized it, calling it “Black Elk’s Law”: *Nothing can live well except in a manner suited to the way the Power of the World lives and moves to do its work.* Now Black Elk’s Law seemed terribly important to me. I thought about it constantly, and through Black Elk’s Law, I began to see a higher power that wouldn’t allow what we were doing to Earth to live well. Human beings weren’t in control at all. We simply couldn’t make what we were doing live well. We couldn’t make civilization live well. No matter how hard we tried, we couldn’t solve the problems. There was a higher power that ruled by allowing nothing to live well that was unsuited to its way: nature’s way.

In the beginning, I could only examine the world outside of myself through Black Elk's Law. I looked at all the problems in the world and I saw them as the inescapable consequences of human activity that was somehow unsuited to "the way" and therefore couldn't live well. But then I realized that Black Elk's Law didn't just apply to the world outside of myself. It applied to my feelings and emotions as well. My feelings and emotions couldn't live well unless my judgments, motives and desires were somehow suited to "the way." Now Black Elk's Law delivered me to a teacher inside that spoke through my feelings and emotions. The degree to which they did or didn't live well was proportional to the degree to which my judgments, motives and desires were suited or unsuited to nature's way.



During the next few years, this new understanding of Black Elk's Law taught, guided, and humbled me. It helped me to gain the power of understanding over many of my ignorant judgments, motives, and desires. I quickly began to know, from the deepest place inside me, that Black Elk's Law was the root foundation of universal law. It revealed a flawlessly perfect natural government: nature's government. It also led to the discovery that human beings had miraculous powers of compassion: nature's secret. And it led to the discovery that nature was God, that the creation was also the Creator. What follows is an explanation of nature's government, nature's secret, and nature's God.

There is a great Law . . . a Law that must carry a profound message to the whole human race. This Law will be brought forth in America, will be given to the world, and then all may know the way to Eternal Life. All the so-called human laws or mental laws are mistakes in that they do not define the true governing law of the Universe and all things therein.

*Life and Teaching of the Masters of the Far East, vol. 1,
Baird T. Spalding.*

And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.

Lk. 16:17 KJV

Nature's Government

"Nothing can live well," said Black Elk, "except in a manner suited to the way the Power of the World lives and moves to do its work."

Nature rules by allowing nothing to live well that is unsuited to its way. That's the law. Whatever is unsuited to nature's way simply cannot live well. The first sentence in The Declaration of Independence states that we are "to assume among the powers of the earth the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle [us]." "The laws of nature and of nature's God" govern us through our feelings and emotions and by natural response to our actions and every involvement. We are held subject to the law that allows nothing to live well that is unsuited to nature's way. By upholding this law, nature governs, and the obvious human problems that exist throughout the world are evidence of nature's absolute ability to ensure that nothing unsuited to the proper balance and growth of humankind be allowed to remain free from difficulties and threatening feedback. Problems such as acid rain, ozone layer deterioration, and nuclear waste hazards can be seen as demonstrating nature's ability to call the unsuited to light. Nature simply tells us what is unsuited by whatever doesn't live well. Only as human actions become more in tune with nature's way, can the natural world respond to our actions in a more supportive and trouble-free manner.

For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. Human feelings and emotions are part of nature's system of cause and effect. The human body is perfectly equipped as teacher, helper, and guide. To understand what human feelings and emotions mean is to understand nature's most personal and direct method of council. Only as human judgments, motives, and desires become more in tune with nature's way, can human feelings and emotions become more expansive, loving, and peaceful, for nothing can live well (including our feelings and emotions) except in a manner suited to nature's way. It could be said that through human feelings and emotions the human body speaks a pure and universal language that tells us exactly how it feels about whatever we are judging, desiring, or being motivated by, either consciously or subconsciously. If shyness is the feeling, then the human body may be saying, "Examine your motives, because your selfish motivation makes me feel shy." If fear is the emotion, then the body may be saying, "Check out your judgments, because your judgment of that person makes me feel afraid." If hate is the emotion, then the message may be, "I hate

something you're judging. You're judging that group in such a critical and unkind way that I hate it."

Human feelings and emotions are, of course, already and always at work teaching in our lives, but attention to this reaction system in the body assists one to grow in understanding of that which is suited or unsuited to harmonious natural life. Attention to this inner guidance creates for the person a personal inner school of self discovery.

"Nature's Government," Bill Packer, 1983/1984.

Difficulties and obstructions throw a man back on himself. While the inferior man seeks to put the blame on other persons, bewailing his fate, the superior man seeks the error within himself and through this introspection the external obstacle becomes for him an occasion for inner enrichment and education.

The I Ching, Wilhehn/Baynes.

Nature's Secret

"Nothing can live well," said Black Elk, "except in a manner suited to the way the Power of the World lives and moves to do its work."

Each thing in the natural world is designed and created to do certain natural work. Trees produce oxygen. Bees pollinate blossoms. Each living thing has a function and it functions as part of nature's body. Through its unique and special forms of life, the creation actually lives and moves to do all of the work that keeps Earth living and growing. Human beings also have a certain natural work to do. Through human beings, the creation is prepared to grow beyond the primitive and barbaric state of its failure to care for each part of itself in a way that is just, loving, and compassionate. Nothing should lead a life of pain and suffering. Nothing should cry out unanswered in sorrow. And so nature has produced human beings, through which nature is prepared to come to the aid of all creatures in need. Through human beings, the creation is prepared to take more loving and compassionate care of itself. Miraculous powers lie within the capabilities of humankind, nature's agents of concern beyond the self.

But since human beings seem to be engaged in destroying both themselves and the environment, it might appear that the human family has no value as part of the natural world. The true value of the human race can

only be realized, though, by understanding its function. If, through a lack of understanding, an electric hand saw were used to pound nails, drive screws, and sew cloth, its true value as a tool would lie hidden and unrealized. The same is true for human beings. The true value of the human race lies hidden and unrealized, for nature's human family has yet to discover its magic as the compassionate caretaker of all living things. Human beings are designed and created to accomplish the work of love and compassion, and no other human work can remain free from troubles and difficulties. The time will come when human beings will increase the creation as no other creature has ever done. Each human being will love to such a selfless and compassionate degree that the human family will manifest unbelievable powers of compassion, and these powers will blossom the human family into the shielding tree of life through which the creation will live and move to shelter all children of Earth. The human nation will stand in the center of all nations, "a cane to walk with and a people's heart."

*Behold the circle of the nation's hoop, for it is holy, being endless,
and thus all powers shall be one power in the people without end.*

Black Elk Speaks, John G. Neihardt

*Behold I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all
be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last
trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised
incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

I Cor. 15:51-52 KJV

A deep and sincere prayerful desire to open the heart and to feel deep compassionate sadness for any earthly suffering is one of nature's secret ways to achieve miraculous compassionate power. A prayerful desire to feel that is deep enough and sincere enough will activate a compassionate energy center in nature's human body, triggering a chain reaction of ever-increasing compassion. Once this chain reaction is in process, any miraculous act conceived by the mind to address the suffering will reactivate the compassionate energy center further, triggering a chain reaction of ever-increasing miraculous power. The creation wants nothing on Earth to lead a life of pain and suffering, no living thing to cry out unanswered in sorrow. For that reason, and because the creation forever creates an ever more superior creation, the creation has produced human beings through which

nature is prepared to come to the aid of all creatures in need, to establish a compassionate new world.

Human beings are a giant step forward in the compassionate evolution of life on Earth. Through its human powers of compassion, the creation is prepared to manifest a more just, loving and compassionate state of existence. Nature's sacred body needs human beings in order to care for each part of itself in a more just, loving and compassionate way. The most miraculous power imaginable lies hidden and unrealized. This power is the secret of nature's human body and the key to the compassionate transformation of life on Earth.

If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

Mt. 17:20 KJV

There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known.

Mt. 10:26 NIV

Nature's God

"Nothing can live well," said Black Elk, "except in a manner suited to the way the Power of the World lives and moves to do its work."

Part of the understanding foretold in Black Elk's "Great Vision" involved the Creator appearing with a "visible face." Near the end of his vision, as Black Elk was going back to Earth from the cloud and rainbow tepee, the Creator spoke these words. They were sung by the rising sun.

With visible face I am appearing.

In a sacred manner I appear.

For the greening Earth a pleasantness I make.

The center of the nation's hoop I have made pleasant.

With visible face, behold me!

The four-leggeds and two-leggeds, I have made them to walk;

The wings of the air, I have made them to fly.

With visible face I appear.

My day, I have made it holy.

The living body of the Creator is the living body of the creation, living and moving through all life and existence and existing simultaneously as both creation and Creator. Through the trees and as the trees, the Creator lives and moves to produce oxygen. Through the bees and as the bees, the Creator lives and moves to pollinate blossoms. Each living thing is a sacred and precious part of the Creator's body. Each creature on Earth does some of the natural work necessary to keep the Creator's body healthy and creating. Through all living things, and through the expanding and evolving in space of all parts of the whole universal creation, the eternal Creator/creation lives and moves to do its work.

The creation is also the Creator. The evolutionary process is also the creative process. The creation wasn't just created, but the creation continues to create, continues to evolve with more planets and suns being born all the time. Even here on Earth, the creation keeps creating. New forms of life have always appeared. Throughout millions of years, new creatures have been born. Some people believe that the Creator, which many people call God, is not the creation but is somehow separate from it. They believe that God is spirit or love, but to reduce God to any one thing, failing to realize that God is the whole of which all life and all attributes are a part, is to promote a relationship of separation and alienation. Land, water, earth, body, mind, spirit, love, compassion: everything is part of the whole. No separation can be made.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.

Mt. 22:37-38 KJV

Loving and putting the wilderness creation and all of its interdependent creatures and ecosystems first is loving and putting the Creator first. We have to love and put the Creator first with all our hearts, souls, and minds, for nothing else can live well. This is the truth, the life, the way, the law, and the ruling foundation of our relationship to the Creator that many people call God. Is it possible that nature is God? Is it possible that human beings can never effectively and realistically love and put God first with all their hearts, souls, and minds, until they truly come to know that in the passage above Jesus spoke of the whole living creation? Is it possible that our relationship with God all boils down to loving and caring for the whole living Earth, all

its plants, all its animals, and all its people? The creation and the Creator are one, And the creation forever creates on ever more superior creation, for the creation is the Creator.

What is missing?

“Nothing can live well,” said Black Elk, “except in a manner suited to the way the Power of the World lives and moves to do its work.”

All that is missing, all that is wrong, is that we’ve never understood the right teacher, the right leader, the right government. In blameless ignorance of the inescapable natural leadership that already exists, we’ve struggled along as best we could, suffering the serious consequences, not only of inferior teachers, leaders, and governments, but of inferior judgments, motives, and desires as well.

All that is missing, all that is wrong, is that we’ve never been taught, guided, and humbled by the one and only authority that could deliver us to discover and understand our function as part of the natural world. Blind to how we fit into the natural scheme of things, we are simply innocent victims of a lack of understanding.

All that is missing, all that is wrong, is that we’ve never come to understand the God of Earth spoken of in Chapters 10 and 11 of Revelation. To love and put God first we must come to know that God will allow no other gods. If we are here to love and serve God, then God’s identity needs to be established.

And through Black Elk’s Law, the leadership (Nature’s Government), the function (Nature’s Secret), and the deity (Nature’s God) have come to be understood and explained in preparation for the establishment of a compassionate new world, a new world foretold in Black Elk’s Great Vision and in countless other prophecies and visions.

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away . . . Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more

pain, for the former things are passed away. . . . Behold, I make all things new.

Rev. 21:1-5 KJV

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the suckling child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

Isa. 11:6-9 KJV

“A good nation I will make live. This the nation above has said. They have given me the power to make over.”

“On Earth a nation you shall make live, for yours shall be the power of the white giants wing, the cleansing wind.”

“You shall walk upon the Earth, and whatever sickens there you shall make well.”

“With this on Earth you shall undertake anything and do it. It was the daybreak star herb, the herb of understanding, and they told me to drop it on the earth. I saw it falling far, and when it struck the Earth it rooted and grew and flowered, four blossoms on one stem, a blue (or black), a white, a scarlet, and a yellow; and the rays from these streamed upwards to the heavens so that all creatures saw it and in no place was there darkness.”

“Behold this day, for it is yours to make.”

“And it shall happen yonder that hundreds shall be sacred, hundreds shall be flames! Behold!

Black Elk Speaks, John G. Neihardt

The Power of God's Prayer

By Bill Packer

For many years I've concentrated on a prayer that leads to miraculous powers of compassion: "Compassion First For All Living Things. Please open my heart. Please help me to feel." But I could never pray very consistently. My busy mind would always take me everywhere else. Then my son taught me how to still my interfering mind so I could pray more effectively. He told me, "Don't try to stop or oppose the mind, but just sit back and watch what the mind is thinking or doing and it will stop."

A week later I was praying better than ever before: "Compassion First For All Living Things. Please open my heart. Please help me to feel." For three days I kept repeating the prayer, over and over and over. Then suddenly, from the deepest place inside of me, there came a soft, humble, sincere voice, that was God's voice, not mine. And God was praying to me: "Compassion First For All Living Things. Please open my heart. Please help me to feel."

I sat there stunned, listening to God's soft, sincere, humble voice, repeating the prayer over and over. Then suddenly I burst into uncontrollable tears of love for a God so humble as to be praying to me.

During the next two weeks, God prayed to me about a dozen different times. By the end of the two weeks I knew, from God, that human beings were the heart of God's living body, the creation. I also knew from God that the thing God wanted me to do was to keep praying God's Prayer, and to still my busy conditioned mind that would forever, it seemed, keep me doing everything else.

So I've been doing my best to pray God's Prayer ever since. But it isn't easy in a world full of distractions. It seems I have to get away by myself in the wilderness in order to seriously concentrate on the prayer.

"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you."

Isa. 60:1 KJV

I am writing this paper on Easter Sunday, 2003, because now I know that praying God's Prayer as a single-minded way of life, is so suited to God's way—nature's way, the Great Spirit's way—that it summons the Father (Jn. 14:6) within, who speaks through our dreams: teaching us, guiding us, correcting us, directing us, and delivering us ever more closely to the Christ we all are. (Jn. 14:20, 12; Mt. 17:20.) I invite you to join me in walking this walk and praying this prayer in the wilderness.



Not Apart

By Sue-Anne Solem

I am a part of all
I am not apart
I join with birdsong at sunset:
A woodpecker's call and drill
A wood thrush's melodious trill
I am in them
And they are in me
I feel the hard, moist ground beneath me
The air breathes the trees
The slow progress of gentle water
A cardinal dips and sips
All is soothing, moving
And I, too, move
Among multicolored rocks
And coarse sand
Pollen forms a wispy scum
On the water
Two owls call to one another
A hawk cries overhead
Fragrance of honeysuckle permeates all
All is praising life
We are not apart
We are a part



Thomas Berry's Earth Spirituality and Earth Jurisprudence

By Andrew J. Angyal

Cultural historian Thomas Berry has devoted his career to understanding how Western religion and culture have failed to sustain a nurturing relationship between humans and Earth. In his major works—*The Dream of the Earth*, *The Universe Story*, and *The Great Work*—he traced the Western spiritual estrangement from Earth implicit in the growth of modern technological culture. Berry calls for a new cosmology, expressed in a “New Story” or mythic consciousness that will reunite humans with the creative energy of the universe and overcome what he views as our destructive spiritual estrangement from the source of life. Berry’s work offers both a conceptual framework for understanding how this Western cultural estrangement has come about and a means of overcoming it through the “new cosmology.” Inherent in Berry’s work is a reunification of science and religion through an “Earth Spirituality,” an incarnational spirituality, an affirmation of the spiritual potential of matter, and a reflection on how we treat the material world. Berry calls himself a “geologist,” not a theologian, meaning, I believe, that he is concerned with the divine as it is manifested in the processes of Earth and the universe, not with God “in the heavens” outside the universe. By so designating himself he reflects the focus of his spirituality.

In his paper, “The Spirituality of the Earth,” published in *The Riverdale Papers*, vol. V, Berry expresses his vision of a spirituality that is not merely appreciation of Earth as an object; but as a subject endowed with its own interior spirituality. He writes of the maternal and nurturing principle of Earth that is the source of our existence and our spirituality. Earth, he says, is “endowed with a spiritual mode of being,” Earth is not merely an object of spiritual regard (“The Spirituality of the Earth” 1).

In disregard of this awareness, Western Christianity has become an increasingly redemption-based rather than a creation-based religion. Further, Western science and religion are understood as dealing with separate realities and the social impact of religion and ethics has diminished in comparison with modern science. Berry believes we are currently undergoing a transformation in our geo-biological system as the result of our industrial

culture that is bringing about a mass extinction of species and ending the Cenozoic Era of Earth's history that began 65,000,000 years ago after the death of the dinosaurs and many other species. "The central pathology that [is leading] to the termination of the Cenozoic," Berry asserts, "is the radical discontinuity between the human and the nonhuman" (*The Great Work* 80).

Yet the very science that has enabled this devastation has also provided what amounts to a "new revelation" in its understanding of the origins of the universe, the evolutionary development of nature, and the emergence of human beings and culture. A new common ground for science and religion

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has become possible with this evolutionary understanding of an emergent universe. Berry calls for a new spirituality in which "[s]ubjective communion with Earth, identification with the cosmic-Earth-human process, provides the context [for] our spiritual journey." ("The Spirituality of the Earth" 16). "Our spirituality itself is Earth-derived," he observes. "If there is no spirituality in the Earth, then there is no spirituality in ourselves" ("The Spirituality of the Earth" 1). The language of redemption-oriented spirituality, he believes, has ceased to be effective in our contemporary world and has divided humans and from the creation-

based dynamics of Earth. Building upon the insights of Teilhard de Chardin, Berry argues that "the Earth has an intrinsic spiritual quality from the beginning" and that "this spiritual quality finds a distinctive expression in the human mode of being" ("The Spirituality of the Earth" 3).

"For Berry, the primary problem facing humans today concerns the human attitude that we as a species are somehow essentially disengaged from the Earth on which we live and that our destiny is to bend nature to our purposes" (Kinsley 172). The story or myth that continues to drive this goal of human domination of the Earth is a secular version of the old millennial dream of Christianity, a version in which God will rule the Earth and peace, harmony, and justice will prevail, brought about, however, through human science and technology. But this destructive myth of a technological wonderland in which nature is bent to every human whim is turning Earth into a wasteland and threatening human survival. Western spiritual traditions have not been able to impede these lethal tendencies, but have encouraged them as part of God's plan for human domination of Earth, and these

traditions have understood human destiny as primarily involving a heavenly spiritual redemption (Kinsley 173). The Western religious traditions “are also seriously deficient in not teaching more effectively that the natural world is our primary revelatory experience” (*The Great Work* 75). The Logos or reason of science must be balanced with a healthy, life-affirming Mythos, or Story, embodying a poetic and spiritual appreciation of the Earth. With their preoccupation with redemption and their neglect of creation, modern religious traditions are unable to offer a spirituality adequate to experience the divine in ordinary life or in the natural world. Not only is the loss of the sacred a notable deficiency in modern religion, but “an absence of the sacred is the basic flaw in many of our efforts at ecologically or environmentally adjusting our human presence to the natural world,” according to Berry (“Foreword” 18). As Loren Eiseley has warned, science alone will not save the world.

An authentic new global Earth spirituality lies in the “Universe Story,” the story of cosmogenesis, the unfolding of cosmic creation through a sequence of irreversible evolutionary transformations that led to our life on Earth. “There is enormous potential religious value in the new story of the universe, but Christianity still cannot accept this story as its own sacred story,” Berry observes in *Befriending the Earth* (27). Our traditional Judeo-Christian story of creation is outmoded and prescientific, but as a culture we have been unable to accept the “New Story” that science has given us, despite the best efforts of popularizers such as Carl Sagan. The recent rise of religious fundamentalism has made it even more difficult for the three great monotheistic religions to accept a science-based Earth spirituality. The sense of God as transcendent and separate from creation is one of the chief difficulties of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Berry would like to recapture a sense of the immanence of the Sacred in the world. We are at a moment of transition, according to Berry, in which we need a new vision to carry us from the terminal Cenozoic into a new Ecozoic Era.

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According to Berry, Earth is the primary source of our spiritual energy, which needs to be expressed in a nurturing and healing mode. We need a spiritual vision of human life grounded in the biological processes of the

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planet and integrated with every other terrestrial life form. We need a new understanding of human nature as the “understanding heart of the universe” or “the consciousness of the world” (“The Spirituality of the Earth” 6). The

Chinese have a concept of human nature as the *hsin*, “the understanding heart of Heaven and Earth” (Ibid. 6). We need to renew our communion with the spiritual forces out of which we were born. As Berry repeatedly states, “the universe is a communion of subjects rather than a collection of objects” (*Universe Story* 243). In *Dream of the Earth*, he observes that beyond our genetic and cultural coding, humans need “to go into the Earth, as the source whence we came, and ask for its guidance, for the Earth carries the psychic structure as well as the physical form of every living being upon the planet” (195).

Science has given us a story of a time-developmental universe in which humans are related to all other forms of life, but this has not yet penetrated into our religious and mythic consciousness. Or perhaps it *was* there, among indigenous peoples, but it has been suppressed by the monotheistic religions. Perhaps this communion can come about through the emergence of new spiritual metaphors, poetry, and liturgies, or in a personification of the Earth itself as a numinous presence—as Gaia or the divine feminine, Mother Earth—or in a new understanding of our “coming of age” as a species, but it must result in a spiritual transformation that leads us to take responsibility for the well-being of the planet. The problem lies in our anthropocentric worldview, but can we outgrow it? Our preoccupation with our human needs alone has become dysfunctional and needs to change.

Berry’s new Earth spirituality, grounded in a new cosmology, will encourage the growth of universal compassion and empathy for all forms of life. There is great potential for altruism and biophilia in our recognition that we are all created from the same physical matter. Humans will come to understand that they are but one manifestation of the dynamic creative energy of the cosmos, which Dante and Rumi called Love and which draws everything into itself. A new Mythos of the Earth will envision humans as one species in the great community of life and will emphasize the interconnectedness of all life.

In a recent interview in *Caduceus* entitled “The Mystique of the Earth,” Thomas Berry expands the concept of Earth spirituality as Earth community. First of all, he emphasizes that “human health is a subsystem of the Earth’s health. You cannot have well humans on a sick planet” (2). He restricts his use of the word spirituality, observing that “we talk about spirituality, but first of all humans are not spirits. That’s why I don’t use the word ‘spirit’ or ‘spirituality’ much. ‘Spirit’ has no inner reference to body, or to matter. We are ensouled beings. The soul is that vital principle in a living organic body, and all living beings are ensouled beings” (2). The difference is that “humans have an intelligent soul, a soul that is capable of reflecting on itself and on the deeper aspects of the universe”(2). Thus “the universe knows itself in us”(2).

Our problem is that because humans have assumed that anything nonhuman is of lesser value, we have created a human governance that only benefits us rather than the larger community of life. We have failed to recognize that we are but a subset of a larger integral Earth community of life. Our laws privilege human rights and private property rights at the expense of the rest of life. “If there are no rights and no protections for anything that is not human, then we establish a predator relationship”(2). When we begin to consume everything that is not human, we risk losing our humanity, which can only be defined in the context of a comprehensive Earth community. What we need is to develop “an integral human order *within* the order of the planet earth” (3). Such a change in human thinking would involve a virtual reinvention of the human, which Berry has called for in *The Great Work* (159-165).



In *The Great Work*, Berry identifies the four human institutions that need to change to facilitate the transition to the Ecozoic Era—government, religion, the corporation, and the university. Universities need to teach the

Universe Story and make ecology the centerpiece of their curricula. Humans need to learn that they are genetically related to all other life and that our future depends upon the well-being of the planet. In *The Great Work*, Berry discusses the necessary reforms in all of these major institutions, but he has observed that the single most devastating document for the nonhuman world has been the American Constitution, with its exclusive emphasis on human rights (74). Some of the most interesting applications of Berry's ideas have emerged in the area of environmental law, and among the most promising of these developments is a new Earth jurisprudence.

Some of the most interesting applications of Berry's ideas have emerged in the area of environmental law, and among the most promising of these developments is a new Earth jurisprudence.

Berry recognizes how difficult it will be to establish a conceptual foundation for legal rights for the nonhuman world, but we have to reframe our thinking, as Aldo Leopold has said, and learn "to think like a mountain" (*A Sand County Almanac* 140). We have to expand the resources of our language and find new conceptual expressions for nonhuman rights. Berry's articulation of the nonhuman world's fundamental right to exist reflects both a "Deep Ecology" perspective and his theological training in Thomistic philosophy, since he often makes recourse to natural rights arguments. His outline of "The Origin, Differentiation and Role of Rights" (1/1/01) provides an important conceptual foundation for environmental law, based on his assumptions that the right to exist is innate for the nonhuman world because it is grounded in the universe, not in any act of human law. There are ten basic

precepts in Berry's original "Rights" statement, and although he has recently published a shorter version of "Rights of the Earth" in *Resurgence* (2002), I am presenting the original, more comprehensive version:

1. Rights originate where existence originates. That which determines existence determines rights.
2. Since it has no further context of existence in the phenomenal order, the universe is self-referent in its being and self-normative in its activities. It is also the primary referent in the being and activities of all derivative modes of being.
3. The universe is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects. As subjects, the component members of the universe are capable of having rights.

4. The natural world on the planet Earth gets its rights from the same source that humans get their rights, from the universe that brought them into being.

5. Every component of the Earth community has three rights: the right to be, the right to habitat, and the right to fulfill its role in the ever-renewing processes of the Earth community.

6. All rights are species specific and limited. Rivers have river rights. Birds have bird rights. Insects have insect rights. Difference in rights is qualitative, not quantitative. The rights of an insect would be of no value to a tree or a fish.

7. Human rights do not cancel out the rights of other modes of being to exist in their natural state. Human property rights are not absolute. Property rights are simply a special relationship between a particular human "owner" and a particular piece of "property" so that both might fulfill their roles in the great community of existence.

8. Since species exist only in the form of individuals, rights refer to individuals and to their natural groupings of individuals into flocks, herds, packs, not simply in a general way to species.

9. These rights as presented here are based upon the intrinsic relations that the various components of Earth have to each other. The planet Earth is a single community bound together with interdependent relationships. No living being nourishes itself. Each component of the Earth community is immediately or mediately dependent on every other member of the community for the nourishment and assistance it needs for its own survival. This mutual nourishment, which includes the predator-prey relationships, is integral with the role that each component of the Earth has within the comprehensive community of existence.

10. In a special manner humans have not only a need for but a right of access to the natural world to provide not only the physical need of humans but also the wonder needed by human intelligence, the beauty needed by human imagination, and the intimacy needed by human emotions for fulfillment. (1/1/01)

Thomas Berry's vision of a mutually enhancing Earth community in which the rights of all subjects are respected involves an enormous paradigm shift from the present anthropocentric, mechanistic, reductionistic, and exploitative ways of thinking about the nonhuman world. Berry envisions



Earth as having its own intrinsic goodness, irrespective of how humans may benefit or profit from it, not merely as a collection of raw materials or natural resources to be exploited. His vision will entail fundamental changes in human ethics, law, and government. The difficulty will be in translating these general principles into more specific policies and programs.

“Governance at all levels occurs within a framework established by laws,” notes Cormac Cullinan, because “laws are embedded in society and reflect the perspectives of the dominant societies that made them” (“Justice for All” 37). The American Constitution was designed to protect personal human rights and private property rights, not to protect the natural world. It reflects an outmoded eighteenth century view of the natural world and hence has helped to legitimize the continued exploitation of the world. As Cormac Cullinan notes,

“Fundamentally changing our governance systems will require more than reforming existing laws or making new ones. We need to take a long hard look, not only at our legal systems, but, more importantly, at the legal philosophies that underlie them. Only by creating a vision of an ‘Earth Jurisprudence’ will we be able to begin a comprehensive transformation of our governance system”(Ibid 37).

Jonathan Swift remarked that “vision is the ability to see the unseen.” Thomas Berry's Earth spirituality offers a new vision of a mutually enhancing Earth community, a vision which could permit us to reconceive the basic institutions of government, religion, education, and business, and

from which a genuine Earth jurisprudence might eventually emerge. Promising work has already been accomplished by Cormac Cullinan's *Wild Law* (Siberink, 2002), Mike Bell's work with Inuit self-governance and restorative justice, the Gaia Foundation's Earth Jurisprudence meetings, and Vandana Shiva's ten principles of Earth Democracy.

Thomas Berry's "Great Work" of reconceiving the human role based on Earth spirituality and Earth jurisprudence has had a promising beginning . . . its promise illumines the future.

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Basic Elements

By Ann Hutt Browning

Earth, think of Earth as home.
 We start as stardust, our Earth in the sky,
 In ether air. We shift stones and shape wood;
 We cultivate our bread, meat, fruit,
 Our lives, in Earth as in the sky.
 Dust to dust, "to dust thou shalt return,"
 Our body's home, soil handfuls thrown
 Onto shaped wood lowered into earth, dirt, soil.

Air, think of air as home.
 Our souls ride air currents,
 Downdrafts, updrafts,
 Eagle feathers sustain our flight from sky
 To Earth, from dust to air.
 We fill our lungs. We breathe
 Between solid soil and airy sky,
 Our wandering, wanton through-the-air home.

Fire, think of fire as home.
 We gather in inglenooks, lit by flames,
 Protected from cold air.
 We heat water, we drink tea of joyful light,
 We sip hot cups of fired sorrow.
 We kindle the fires of love each day.
 Fire cleanses the insides of our minds,
 Fire consumes that which we cannot bear.



Water, think of water as home.
Before birthing we breathe womb water.
Water blossoms the earth, quenches fire,
Feeds the cells of our bodies.
We dream-float the meanings of our lives.
Water nourishes beans, wheat, rye.
We drink, we bathe, we cleanse our souls.
We bring water to every child.



Errata

We wish to acknowledge the following documentation errors in the article “American Global Hegemony Versus the Quest for a New Humanity” by Preston M. Browning, Jr., which appeared in *The Ecozoic Reader*, Vol. 13, No. 2.

1. P. 13, paragraph 3, reference is omitted for the Boutrous Boutrous-Ghali quotation. Footnote should read: Quoted in Fritz Hull, ed. *Earth and Spirit: The Spiritual Dimension of the Environmental Crisis*. (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1993), 8.
2. P. 10, paragraph 3, quotation marks omitted for quotation from Christopher Lasch: "pleasure becomes life's only business . . . merely immoral."

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The purpose of the Center for Ecozoic Studies (CES) is to contribute through education, research and the arts to the realization of the Ecozoic Era. CES emphasizes critical reflection, story and shared dream experience as ways of enabling the creative advance needed to bring into being a new mode of human civilizational presence, and also discerning the practical steps leading toward the Ecozoic. CES is dedicated to the principle that we live in a meaningful, continuously evolving universe. In such a universe, the Ecozoic Era is a process concept—not something to be arrived at, but rather something ever to be created. Its hallmarks are inclusiveness, interdependence, and appreciation; communion, differentiation, and subjectivity; and sensitivity, adaptability, and responsibility. It crucially involves more just and cooperative relationships among humans, as well as transformed relationships of humans with the larger natural world.

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The Ecozoic Reader

Volume 3, Number 3

2003

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