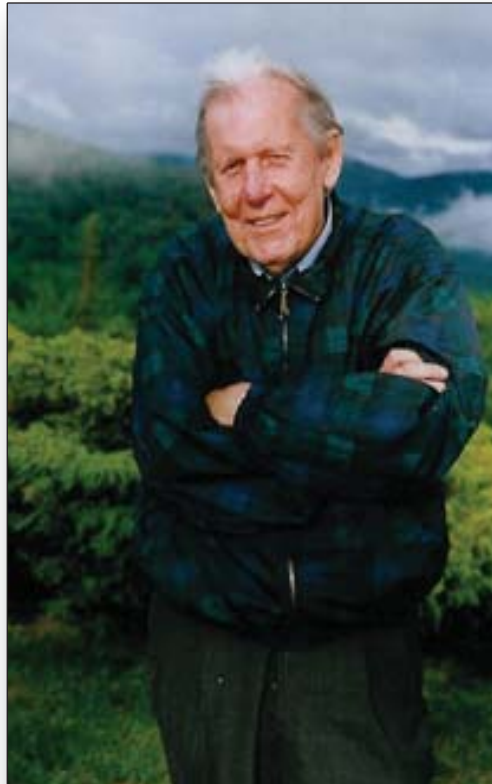


Minding Nature

expanding our natural & civic imagination

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Thomas Berry (1914-2009)

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Minding Nature

expanding our natural & civic imagination

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Please address letters to the Editor, inquiries and comments to our editorial office:

Center for Humans and Nature
109 West 77th Street, Suite 2
New York, NY 10024
(212) 362-7170
(212) 362-9592 fax
info@humansandnature.org

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Hamlet at the Helm

BRUCE JENNINGS

The news from Denmark is not encouraging. The King's claim to the throne rests on dubious moral foundations. The Prince vacillates, desperately trying to ferret out the truth before he acts, seeking political resolve in epistemological certainty. Courtiers jockey for position and advantage. Meanwhile the people and the land groan under the weight of a disordered state and injustice. Catastrophe and barbarism are massing forces near the border.

Shakespeare's timeless story may turn out to be, one hopes, too dark a lens through which to view the recent meetings in Copenhagen, but the tragic vision is tempting, nonetheless, and hits close to home on all too many points. As we witness the current struggles by global princes to respond to the pronouncements of scientists ("are they honest ghosts?") and to set meaningful limits to unsustainable economic forces and interests, indecision so deep seated that it amounts to a paralysis of political and moral will is darkness visible. Hamlets are at the helms throughout the world. The timetable of the challenges facing us and the timetable of our collective capacity to respond are tragically out of joint.

As I write this toward the end of December, President Obama and other key world leaders have managed a positive spin at the last, but surely no one can avoid the conclusion that serious action steps and commitments that should have been taken were not taken and do not seem within reach for the foreseeable future. Much critical political and moral argument will be needed in 2010 to spur more resolute and successful global action. Each nation and political culture in the world needs to take a hard look at its own internal dynamics and its fundamental commitments regarding ecological governance. The forces blocking an action consensus among nations lie within nations, at least to a significant extent.

A recent analysis by New York Times reporter John M. Broder provides insight for that task within the United States (What's Rotten for Obama in Denmark" *New York Times* December 13, 2009, p. WK 1; 4). For good or ill, the US role in determining how successfully the world can avert climate change catastrophe will be huge. But the political commitment to exercise this leadership and to pave the way for other countries to act does not exist in Washington thus far. The worst outcome of Copenhagen is arguably inaction; but close behind would have been agreement on a new international treaty with teeth. Why? Because the US Senate would not ratify it, just as it would not ratify Kyoto in 1997. "The Senate is split on global warming policy," Broder points out,

into numerous factions divided by ideology, geography and economic interest. And that's just the Democratic caucus. Republicans are nearly united in opposition to the kind of legislation that would be needed to match Mr. Obama's ambitions [reducing emissions 17% below 2005 levels by 2020]. Without Senate action...Mr. Obama's promises are merely that, almost certainly not enough to persuade other nations to commit to greenhouse gas reductions.

President Obama is trying to do an end run around the lack of consensus in the Senate,

and one important means was provided by the recent finding of the Environmental Protection Agency (E.P.A.) that green house gases pose a threat to human health and welfare. Again Broder comments: “E.P.A. regulation is the trump card that the administration is holding if Congress continues to dither. But Mr. Obama has repeatedly said that he much prefers a messy Congressional compromise. Trying to remake much of the economy by regulatory fiat is certain to become entangled in years of litigation.”

A year ago, candidate Obama said of climate change: “Delay is no longer an option. Denial is no longer an acceptable response.” Broder concludes his piece by noting that Copenhagen would end with an interim political deal to keep talking about a binding treaty next year, and that is just what did happen. “Delay, it turns out,” he remarks dryly, “was the only option.”

The articles in this issue of *Minding Nature* address, in various ways and on different levels, the question of how the requisite conditions of political and moral will can be mobilized so that a new sustainable global political economy can emerge in time. Can the kind of interest group liberalism that Broader describes in the US respond to this challenge successfully? And, more soberingly still, can any type of democratic governance do so? Can the progressive vision of thinkers like Aldo Leopold, John Dewey, and others remain alive? Can the solution to a malfunctioning (or overly sluggish) democracy be, not a non-democratic authoritarianism, but instead an even more grassroots, participatory democracy? Or will this be the Chinese Century?

Drawing on and reminding us of Leopold’s progressive emphasis on methods of collaborative, community based conservation during the depression, Samuel Snyder provides a detailed case study of watershed management and conservation in northeastern Tennessee that took participants and groups along the spectrum from conflict to consensus. A critical review of the politics of US environmentalism by Dana Beach adds detail and dimension to this problem.

The newly emerging field of conservation psychology, which is tailor made to address precisely questions of this kind, is introduced by Susan Clayton, one of the leading researchers in the field.

And in my own article, written as a part of the new CHN research project on Ecological Political Economy, I pose the question of how substantial limits on individual freedom, corporate behavior, private property rights, and carbon intensive economic growth can be achieved relatively rapidly and systematically.

Another level of this challenge is not merely political but fundamentally metaphysical and spiritual. Indeed, as an interesting recent work by Susan Neiman suggests [see box, p. 35], the political and the metaphysical are not so very far apart after all. One seminal thinker who would have concurred is Thomas Berry, who died this past year. To remember his influential voice and his remarkable thought, we devote a section to his work. Mary Evelyn Tucker contributes a brief intellectual biography of Berry, which spans his wide-ranging career as a cultural historian, a student of comparative religions, and as an environmental thinker. Remarks made at the memorial service for Berry by Tucker and John Grim are also reprinted here. Finally we are pleased to publish a brief interview with Berry conducted by Nicholas Tuff in 2006.

Finally, in their brief reflections, Jill Schneiderman and Brooke Hecht bring together the spiritual, the natural, and the ethical. While others hurried by, the Samaritan took time away from his pressing business and journey to perceive what his real business was and attend to it. In Judaism, pauses that have us step back from business punctuate the rhythms of the world and the human relationship with God.

For the new year, let us hope that the outcome of Copenhagen was not a delay after all, but a short sabbatical—a pause that renews, revitalizes, rekindles our resolve.



*Bruce Jennings is Director of Bioethics at the Center for Humans and Nature
and the Editor of Minding Nature*

Collaborative Conservation: Leopold's Land Citizenship in Coal Creek

SAMUEL SNYDER



On Saturday 14 July 2007, roughly 20 residents of Briceville, TN (formerly known as Coal Creek), along with volunteers from nearby Knoxville gathered for the 2007 Annual Coal Creek Summer Bug Hunt. Those from Knoxville were members of the local chapter of Trout Unlimited (TU) and the Coal Creek Watershed Foundation (CCWF). By counting fish, invertebrates, and assessing water quality, they were gauging the success of their

efforts to restore a degraded stream and improve the health of the entire watershed. For seven years, their work in the Coal Creek watershed had ranged from stream clean-ups to stream bank stabilization, and native species restoration to community education and advocacy.

Over the course of my participatory fieldwork, I came to understand the work of the CCWF in the Coal Creek Watershed of Tennessee as a successful embodiment of what some have labeled “collaborative conservation”¹. Despite contemporary popularity of the concept, Aldo Leopold was an early visionary of collaborative, community-based conservation, as is evident in his vast writings on forestry, community, land health, and his famous “land ethic,” and through his work as a forester in New Mexico or professor in Wisconsin, and his involvement in the Coon Valley Conservation initiative.²

As an example of collaborative conservation, the work of the CCWF is unintentionally carrying on the legacy of Aldo Leopold. As Leopold argued in other contexts, and I will show here, the CCWF is successful because it is truly participatory, taking into consideration the needs and values of the local ecosystem and human communities. Leopold believed collaborative forms of conservation are most successful when they foster values and affections

of devotion to the common good of the community. Successful conservation efforts must operate beyond science and economics, but must also foster values and tethered to both civic and ecosystem goals.³

Thus, in this article, I evaluate the work of the CCWF by drawing on insights from Leopold, as well as contemporary approaches to environmental ethics and collaborative conservation. In so doing, it will become evident that the legacy of Leopold continues to thrive as communities, such as those in the Coal Creek watershed, attempt to address both land and community health. Moreover, a review of a contemporary case-study reveals that Leopold remains the standard through which we should evaluate the success of adventures in collaborative conservation.

Early adventures in collaborative conservation

Donald Snow, a professor of environmental studies at Whitman College, explained that the concept of collaborative conservation represented a “new face of American conservation as we enter the twenty-first century.” While there is no single defining strategy, the concept, in theory and practice

emphasizes the importance of local participation,

sustainable natural and human communities, inclusion of disempowered voices, and voluntary consent and compliance rather than enforcement by legal and regulatory coercion. In short, collaborative conservation reaches across the great divide connecting preservation advocates and developers, commodity producers and conservation biologists, local residents and national interest groups to find working solutions to intractable problems that will surely languish unresolved for decades in the existing policy system.⁴

While Snow noted that the concept represents the vanguard of twenty-first century conservation, collaborative attempts at conservation certainly pre-date the twenty-first century.

Environmental conflict often emerges as “false dilemmas,” which occur when groups assume that moral or value decisions have only two possible outcomes, with an either/or set of options.

Aldo Leopold’s odyssey as a forester in Arizona and New Mexico, professor in Wisconsin, and civil servant throughout his career is a long and inspiring one which commenced as an outdoor enthusiast, hunter, birdwatcher, and angler, and culminated in his famous articulation of the “land ethic” in *A Sand County Almanac* (1949).⁵ As Leopold biographer Curt Meine explained, “the range of Leopold’s experience was immense,” and this is true of his legacy as well.⁶

By 1933, Leopold had left his forestry career in the American southwest and was fully enmeshed in his work as professor at the University of Wisconsin. However, despite the move, his work in New Mexico, including his time working for the Albuquerque chamber of commerce, impacted his thinking. He was impressed by the civic spirit of the community.⁷ In Wisconsin, he worked through the University’s agricultural extension service, which “conceived the university not as an insular community of scholars, but as an institution whose walls extended to the borders of the state.”⁸ Networking with Wisconsin farming communities he sought to address issues ranging from wildlife on farms, managing cropland, or restoring and controlling erosion prone areas.

In the Coon Valley of southwestern Wisconsin, Leopold encountered a “maze of picturesque valleys and ridges,” that were “highly susceptible to soil erosion.”⁹ Here was farmland that had, over the course of its use for farming, ranching, and timber harvest, lost its fertile

soil and structure, resulting in erosion, flooding, and crop declines.

In the wake of the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression, Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal initiatives created the Soil Erosion Service (SES) within the Department of Interior.¹⁰ According to Meine, “the goal of the SES was not just to save soil, but to reverse the tradition of disintegrative land use that wasted it in the first place.”¹¹ This demanded coordination at federal, regional, and local levels with federal agents, university experts, and local farmers. The Coon Valley of southwestern Wisconsin became the first soil conservation area and project of the SES.¹² Leopold was engaged from the beginning.

Through collaborative efforts (federal support, education, and local initiative), the project in Coon Valley

sought to return the local landscape into a collectively balanced system of land use on both public and private land. Farmers voluntarily worked together to improve the health of their watershed through new farming approaches ranging from contour plowing to strip cropping and livestock management, as well as restoration of gullies and riparian areas.¹³

Leopold deemed the initiative successful because it “seemed closer to [his] ideal of land health, than he had seen throughout his career.”¹⁴ Leopold suspected “that the Soil Erosion Service, perhaps unwittingly, has recreated a *spiritual entity* which many older conservationists have thought long sense dead.”¹⁵ Leopold had in mind a particular working of society toward a greater good—one that incorporated both civic concern and ecological awareness. By keeping that same vision of society in mind, we too can judge the success of other adventures in collaborative conservation, particularly as they seek to change cultural mentalities that led to traditions of disintegrative land use in the first place.

Coal Creek: from prosperity to poverty

The community of Briceville, formerly known as Coal Creek, sits in the middle of the Coal Creek watershed in Anderson County of northeastern Tennessee, roughly 40 miles from Knoxville. Despite its impoverished nature today, it is an area rich in history of Welsh immigrants, coal

mining, and battles for social justice.¹⁶ After the Civil War, coal powered the industrial revolution as America worked toward post-war rebuilding. According to historian Karen Shapiro, “the physical accessibility of southern coal attracted numerous investors” and burgeoning coal companies. The state of Tennessee, and Anderson County in particular, “beckoned along with the rest of the previously unexploited Appalachian coalfields.”¹⁷ Amidst this development, Anderson County prospered significantly in the early post-bellum years. Local progress and success also led to the growth of community institutions that served to “cement a camaraderie and civic consciousness” that would emerge again and again over time.¹⁸

However, as industry shifted elsewhere and mining without proper mitigation took its toll on the landscape, the region saw significant declines in both land and community health. By 2000, Briceville suffered from struggling community infrastructure, health care, and jobs. The community has had a mentality that youth were more likely to go to jail than graduate from high school. Barry Thacker and Carol Moore of the CCWF, explained that in 1990 roughly 66% of adults in Tennessee had graduated from high school, compared to 17% of adults in Briceville. Moreover, merely 0.5% of students from Briceville would go on to graduate from college (Moore, interview: 16 July 2007; Thacker, interview: 16 July 2007). Amidst these social problems, the area’s mining history culminated in considerable ecological neglect.

Coal Creek forms the largest tributary to the Norris tail-water of the Clinch River, and therefore influence water quality for the entire watershed. Situated in the middle of Tennessee coal regions, Coal Creek has a history where “copious coal laden silt washed down, resulting from more than a century’s mining upstream and sewage runoff and excess sedimentation,” and impacted the water of the entire watershed.¹⁹

Beyond water quality, stream bank erosion, illegal waste and junk dumping, and regional pollution also caused considerable flooding in the watershed. Flooding had become so prevalent that community members “used to sit up every time it rained, hoping the creek would not rise into their homes” (Thacker, interview: 16 July 2007). Those who lived near Coal Creek feared for their lives and homes. This, then, was the state of the Coal Creek watershed in 2000, when the idea for a collaborative conservation project emerged in the minds of concerned trout anglers.

Where the trout spawn: the birth of the Coal Creek Watershed Foundation

According to Barry Thacker, the story of the CCWF began 5 February 2000, as group of fly fishers associated with Trout Unlimited (TU)²⁰ discussed potential trout restoration projects in the area. They were primarily concerned with restoring degraded spawning grounds for rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*). Thacker directed their attention to Coal Creek, a stream he grew up fishing and had witnessed decline in quality over the years (Thacker, interview: 16 July 2007). And although Coal Creek supports trout in its lower, colder reaches, upstream water quality had limited the range of trout higher-up in the watershed.

Therefore, Thacker and other TU volunteers established the Coal Creek Clean Stream Initiative (CCCSI), with the goal of improving watershed water quality. Although the original goals were tied up in trout, they would soon shift as volunteers began to understand how the health of a fishery was inextricably connected to the health of the entire watershed, human community included. They would learn, as Leopold taught, that land health and human good were inseparable.²¹ After all, Leopold wrote in “Planning for Wildlife,” that “stable land is essential to human welfare.”²² However, learning this lesson was not easy, as their plans for river restoration caused local controversy.

Addressing local values: moving from conflict to collaboration

Throughout his career, Leopold recognized the difficult, yet essential nature, of collaboration for successful conservation. As he stated in the context of Coon Valley, “land is better off when all cooperate than when all compete with each other.”²³ Problems arise when each party desired different goals, ends, and aims. The goal, then, was to demonstrate the inseparability of personal interest, land health, and the common good. On Coal Creek, self-interest threatened to roadblock the project before it gained traction.

Environmental conflict often emerges as “false dilemmas,” which occur when groups assume that moral or value decisions have only two possible outcomes, with an either/or set of options.²⁴ On Coal Creek, the false dilemma took the form of “people versus fish.” Individuals were “set,” failing to see beyond their own, needs, habits, or values. When attempting to creatively “break set,” one must understand that while disputes may have simple beginnings, they have a tendency to explode into serious environmental conflict.²⁵ The CCCSI Master Plan states:

In the initial proposals of the CCCSI, the original

goal was simply to make Coal Creek and its tributaries suitable trout habitat for spawning trout. CCCSI was established to perform the work required to apply for a grant from the Office of Surface Mining to ameliorate mine runoff into Coal Creek and reclaim abandoned coal mine lands in the Coal Creek watershed.²⁶

Despite efforts to include other local interests, the CCCSI met a “false dilemma” largely because their mission statement addressed fish habitat first.

Early in the project, locals greeted the CCCSI with picket signs and angry protests (Thacker, interview: 16 July 2007). As Thacker recounted, “Folks told me in no uncertain terms that they had far bigger problems than trout.”²⁷ Although the community wanted a clean creek, they did not see how cleaning a stream for fish could help them.

Various values, interests, and concerns can drive a practiced conservation ethic. The goal, then, is to understand how values can evolve from narrow to broad; from self to watershed.

For example, a local leader, the late Reverend Roy Daugherty, advocated clean-up, but did not want funds to go to the CCCSI. “I am opposed to trout fishing taking precedence over the safety of citizens,” he explained. “I don’t think one penny should be given to anybody else until we have the safety we deserve. We are in an emergency situation up there. We need relief yesterday.”²⁸ Despite criticism, Thacker sought to “break set” and began by sitting down with Daugherty and the other community members to assess their concerns.

In response, Thacker listened to local concerns and created a context for the creation of collaborative community values. “By building partnerships and involving community residents the organization has instilled a sense of activism and stewardship in the watershed that will provide the fuel and human capital.”²⁹ In this process, Thacker learned he needed local buy-in. As he said, “you gotta do what people care about” (Thacker, interview: 16 July 2007). Listening to the needs of the community—from adequate dental care, educational aid, as well as the conditions of the creek—gave Thacker a new set of goals,

and more importantly, “a groundswell of support” (ibid). With growing community involvement, Thacker dropped the name CCCSI to re-form the Coal Creek Watershed Foundation (CCWF).

The name shift demonstrated that “What started as an attempt to make the creek suitable as a trout-spawning waterway had evolved from water quality issues to improving the quality of life in the Coal Creek Watershed.”³⁰ With a new vision, Thacker set out to acquire the funds for local, collaborative watershed conservation.

The value of game: from economics to inspiration

Over time, Aldo Leopold eschewed economic arguments in favor of preserving wildness and ensuring land health. However, at times he recognized the practicality of tethering arguments for preservation of native species to utilitarian concerns, such as economic perspectives. After all, in his *Game and Fish Handbook* (1915), he noted “The [economic] value of game lie in its variety as well as its abundance.” When it came to game management, Leopold believed that scientific arguments should win the day, as economic arguments were usually inadequate and shortsighted. However, he also noted that “it of course goes without saying that economic feasibility limits the tether of what can or cannot be done for the land.”³¹ His point here is not that economic arguments should trump, but conservation or land management depends upon adequate funding and social backing.

Similarly, even if the ultimate goal of the CCWF was not economically motivated, they realized their work needed sufficient economic support. In order to secure these funds, Thacker turned to the Federal Abandoned Mine Land Trust, which set aside funds to restore and clean up land and waters near abandoned mines. However, he also knew that simple economic arguments would not necessarily guarantee funding. Coal Creek needed a unique story to stand out and improve the odds of funding.

He believed that trout provided the perfect angle. Recognizing that the Coal Creek watershed covers an area of 39 square miles and holds more than 30 miles of potential trout spawning area, Thacker told an audience of county commissioners, “I am a trout fisherman, I fish the Clinch River, but the Clinch River is limited and Coal Creek has the potential to fish like other streams in the Smoky Mountains.”³²

In his office he explained that trout are special, exist in unique places, and therefore can provide gateway foci for larger watershed projects. Because trout require cold, clean stream habitats, many fisheries biologists including famed researcher Robert Behnke, have argued that trout

are an indicator species akin to a “canary in the coal mine: [they are] the first species to succumb to environmental degradation.”³³ Thacker built on this argument. Moreover, with fly fishers and trout enthusiasts donating well over 618,000 volunteer hours annually for groups such as TU, Thacker recognized the volunteer potential for on-the-ground conservation work in his watershed (Thacker interview: 16 July 2007).³⁴

From river health to human welfare

Just as Leopold recognized the connections between land health and human good when he noted that “Stable (i.e. healthy) land is essential to human welfare,” so too did Thacker.³⁵ In interviews, Thacker repeated that “what is good for trout, is in turn good for the community: a healthy watershed” (Thacker, interview: 16 July 2007). If trout were the way into this project, the future of a healthy watershed also depended upon a healthy community. Building on these ideas, and funded through successful grants, the work could now begin.

Drawing more than 130 volunteers, the CCWF’s first major event, “Deadwood Removal Day” held on 24 June 2000, was bigger than anyone imagined, as they set out to address the community’s number one concern: flooding. By clearing trash, debris, and dead wood from the pilings of thirteen old railroad bridges, the CCWF hoped their efforts would allow the creek to more effectively absorb the heavy rains the community feared so much. The CCWF also engineered several bank stabilization projects which not only repaired stream bank structure and prevented flooding, but have provided great trout habitat.

With the new and improved river structure, it was not long before the area faced what locals described as a “100 year storm.” Just as hoped, the water remained within the stream banks for the first time in recent memory, leading one thankful resident to proclaim, “Look Up! O Briceville, Fraterville, and Beech Grove. See how faith and fellowship can move mountains or even change a creek.”³⁶ What Leopold called a “spiritual entity,” local residents in Coal Creek categorized as “faith and fellowship.”

The CCWF was off to an auspicious start. Local journalist Bob Fowler reflected, “Thacker has managed to help unite two apparently disparate groups into the Coal Creek Watershed Foundation through a coordinated attempt to address and ultimately resolve several thorny quality of life issues involving Coal Creek.” The project was gaining traction. After starting with stream health, they turned their attention to human health.

Briceville and the Coal Creek watershed lacked basic medical and dental infrastructure. Therefore, Coal Creek

Health Day was the second major event. On 26 October 2001, the CCWF converted the gymnasium of the Briceville School into an impromptu dentist office. Coal Creek Health Day provided the perfect inaugural moment for reopening the Briceville People’s Health Clinic. Building on early successes, the first annual Coal Creek Health Day raised and delivered more than \$17,000 in health services donated to the community, as TU members who were physicians volunteered a good portion of the medical services (Moore, interview: 16 July 2007).

The way Dr. Hirosho Toyahara, a retired heart surgeon, fly fisher, and TU volunteer, recalled, Thacker urged the volunteers, “Boys, you can’t fish everyday!” However, Thacker admitted the group hardly needed prodding. As he elucidated

For many children, it was the first time they had seen a doctor or dentist. It was very rewarding to be able to help them . . . and to begin teaching them basic things they could do to improve their health.³⁷

These basic points on community health, however, extend well beyond the healthy teeth, eyes, and hearts. They include the ecosystem also.

Ecosystem health and civic engagement

Today, there is no shortage of literature noting the increasing disconnection between humans and the natural world. Among recent scholarship exploring a “deficit” of nature, Richard Louv’s *Last Child in the Woods* (2005) lamented the “rapidly advancing technologies” that are creating a cultural milieu where “students spend less and less of their lives in natural surroundings” causing their “senses to narrow, physiologically and psychologically,” which then “reduces the richness of human experience.” Alienation from nature, it seems, might not only be detrimental to the human psyche, but also to society and, therefore, to nature.

Environmental philosopher David Orr lamented that education increasingly disengages students from nature rather than bridge the gap. Teaching styles and approaches need to foster “ecological literacy,” by creating opportunities to connect students to nature and encourage a “sense of place” where students “can see, touch, and experience nature in a variety of ways.”³⁸ In “The Role of Wildlife in a Liberal Education,” Leopold preceded these arguments by insisting that culture and community depend upon “our understanding of the land and its life.” Education should guide one “to see the land” and the human place within

it.³⁹ For Leopold, integrating ecological knowledge into the classroom of the arts, economics, or sciences, presented an opportunity to link civic and land health in education.

Back at the Coal Creek Health Day, as volunteers performed medical check-ups, Charlie Saylor and John Thurman, ecologists for the Tennessee Valley Authority, gave Coal Creek a medical examination of its own kind. While assessing the “health” of Coal Creek, they simultaneously taught local students about the importance of connecting water health to public health. This exercise enacted Leopold’s belief that “Conservation is a state of health in the land-organism. Health expresses the cooperation of the interdependent parts: soil, water, plants, animals, and people. It implies collective self-renewal and collective maintenance.”⁴⁰

Leopold had in mind a particular working of society toward a greater good—one that incorporated both civic concern and ecological awareness. By keeping that same vision of society in mind, we too can judge the success of other adventures in collaborative conservation.

The children were learning basics of ecological literacy. “Seeing the local youth embrace their stream as an indicator of health,” Thurman explained “is gratifying in so many ways” (Thurman, interview: 15 July 2007). Participating in several of the CCWF events, including the 2007 Health Day, I witnessed this enthusiasm first hand. Children crowded around tables with water tanks, pointing out different bugs such as mayflies, stoneflies, and caddis larvae, or admiring the various fish like shiners, darters, chubs, and even a few bass.

Teachers lauded these events because they connected classroom discussions with tangible issues. Moreover, they praised the CCWF for inspiring and motivating the students. While watching students chase bugs and point out fish, teachers explained how students always looked forward to Health Day or other CCWF events. Through these programs, the CCWF used experiential, hands-on education to teach students the “value of participation in and service to the life of the community.”⁴¹ Seeing the carryover, the CCWF decided to reward community youth who embodied civic and environmental engagement.

In 2001, the CCWF initiated the Coal Creek Scholars Program to increase the number of Briceville students attending college. Between 2002 and 2009 the CCWF has awarded 22 separate college scholarship funds of up to \$10,000. Through these donations, the CCWF is investing in the long-term viability of the watershed. As of the

writing of this article, Amy Duggar, one of the first Coal Creek Scholars, recently graduated from the University of Tennessee with a Masters in Social Work.

Being a Coal Creek Scholar means demonstrating citizenship and leadership in the community. Recipients of the scholarships enacted civic and environmental concerns by leading trash pick-ups, organizing community safety watch programs, or initiating recycling in the area. Through this work, the Coal Creek Scholars, through the CCWF, are unwittingly upholding the legacy of Leopold.

Leopold worked with an eye for the public interest and “appealed to a larger sense of community and a widely shared set of public values.”⁴² The educational mission of the CCWF encapsulates this attention to civic detail. However, the work of civic engagement in Coal Creek, as

Leopold had taught in other contexts, is always tethered to land health. Therefore, the work of the CCWF has fostered environmental and community values that are complimentary; where collective interests in a healthy landscape secured more than trout habitat or college scholarships. Here was the creation of a long lasting civic obligation.

On Scholars Day, scholarship recipient Amy Duggar addressed this civic obligation by reminding students to be proud of their home and heritage. If civic engagement is crucial for developing a sense of place, the CCWF and the Coal Creek Scholars all maintained that understanding community history is equally crucial, particularly in a region rich in Welsh culture, not to mention coal mining accompanied by wars and disasters.

The unraveling of history

History teaches many lessons of human successes and human failings; each worthy of serious attention. Throughout his career, Leopold articulated the importance of understanding both ecological and human history as essential for working toward land health and community welfare. He is most noted for his musings on ecological history and evolution. For example, in “A Marshland Elegy” Leopold paid homage to the history and journey of the sand hill crane.

The cranes stand, as it were, upon the sodden pages of their own history. . . . Our ability to perceive quality in nature begins, as in art, with the pretty. . . . This much, though, can be said: Our appreciation of the crane grows *with the slow unraveling of earthly history*. . . . When we hear this we hear no mere bird. We hear the trumpet in the orchestra of evolution. He is the symbol of our untamable past, of that incredible sweep of millennia which underlies and conditions the *daily affairs of birds and men*.⁴³

He believed the unfolding events of history revealed the relationship between nature and humans. Humans, too, were “fellow voyagers with other creatures in the odyssey of evolution” This knowledge, Leopold believed, should give us “as sense of kinship with fellow creatures; a wish to live and let live; a sense of wonder over the magnitude and duration of the biotic enterprise.” In each project the CCWF has sought to connect to the many streams of history.

The history of the Coal Creek watershed is a rich one. The mountains of Appalachia tell their own story of deep, unfolding time as well as the human relationship to them as humans struggled to make a living off of the land, build community, and recognize the potentially negative impacts this relationship might have. As environmental historian Elizabeth Marshall noted, where natural resources provided the source of progress for those in this region after the Civil War, progress also “left mountains gouged, forests denuded, and land and water polluted and brought little economic benefit to the localities affected.”⁴⁴ The Coal Creek watershed is just such an area where progress took its toll. However, through the work of activities like restoration ecology, humans can, as restoration ecologist William Jordan III has written, reclaim their relationship with the land, heal the wounds caused by progress, and rebuild community relations.⁴⁵ In their work of watershed restoration, the CCWF has turned to a treasure trove of inspiring history that includes both social and ecological degradation and renewal. Most inspiring for the CCWF is a series of events known as the Coal Creek Convict Wars of 1891 – 1892, which historian Karen A Shapiro called “a new south rebellion.”

According to Shapiro, the Coal Creek Convict Wars constitute one of the “one of the great labor battles between the Civil War and the turn of the century.”⁴⁶ These wars, or skirmishes, responded to lost jobs and lower wages that resulted from a convict-lease system, which allowed state governments to lease prisoners to private mine companies

as cheap and abundant labor. The state put prisoners to work building railroads, mining coal, constructing dams, logging timber, and growing tobacco, corn, or cotton. This cheap, convict labor meant that free miners often lost their jobs. In 1890, responding to lost jobs and deteriorating labor conditions, regional miners took matters into their own hands to “protect their families from economic depravation and regain what they considered their most fundamental rights—as coal miners, Tennesseans, and Americans.” By 14 July 1891 their resistance efforts culminated when free miners marched on the mines to free the convicts and reclaim their jobs.

I will not dwell on the details and instead direct the reader to a thorough treatment of the Coal Creek Wars in Shapiro’s book. What is important, however, is the power of this history for the current work of the CCWF and the people of Briceville. On the Coal Creek Wars Shapiro reflected that

This episode exposes both a profound sense of new possibilities in the American South and the often cruel legacies of that region’s embittered past. It also demonstrates that in the post-bellum South, as in so many other historical contexts, the actions of men and women could unleash a very different future from the one they expected or for which they hoped.

Shapiro’s point captures the work of the CCWF where they have worked to “unleash a very different future from the one they expected or for which they hoped for.” Such a comparison has not gone unnoticed. Thacker ruminated that “like their ancestors, the current residents of Coal Creek are banding together. This time however, their mission is to improve the health of the Coal Creek Watershed.” (Thacker Interview. 16 July 2007. Knoxville, TN) And, as Allen Comp observes:

The organization [the CCWF] has adopted the same spirit of the miners who banded together and drafted a plan for the abolishment of convict mine labor practices. They are forming a restoration plan and have begun the important work of restoring Coal Creek themselves.⁴⁷

The work of the CCWF has encouraged this collective sense of possibility and belonging. Tom Braden, the principal of Briceville Elementary School, praised the CCWF by highlighting the importance of celebrating these historical moments because they teach “the kids about the past and point them toward the future.”⁴⁸ While the

younger members of the community are the focus of these initiatives, young and old have been inspired to participate in clean-ups, health days, bug hunts, the creation of a new park, the restoration of 120 year old church, or restoration of native fish. Reflecting on this work, the late Revered Daugherty noted

What happened here was wonderful and uplifting. We stepped back in time in order to help a community move ahead. We used a practice of our forefathers, neighbor helping neighbor to help themselves . . . building something more precious than a historical trail. *We built fellowship and a belief in ourselves and others.*⁴⁹

Many involved in the CCWF agree that “fellowship” is crucial for the future success and sustainability of their work. I agree, and it is the same “spiritual entity” that Leopold mentioned regarding the adventure in cooperative conservation in Coon Valley. Now some might disagree with my placement of Leopold’s legacy within a context and cultural movement that includes coal mining. However, the lesson here has little to do with the mining and everything to do with the work of collaborative community restoration, which would be crucial in the context of Coal Creek, for a later evolving conservation ethic.

From “love of sport” to a “conservation ethic”

At the end of *Game Management*, Leopold mused that a “conservation ethic” is a “motivation” that emerges from “love of sport” and is capable of expanding into a broad range of action.⁵⁰ Leopold saw throughout his life how nature-based experiences potentially expand one’s ecological awareness and ethical concern for the natural world. Love of sport was the source of Leopold’s “land ethic.”

The move from “love of sport” to “land health” captures the unfolding story of the CCWF. In interviews and conversations, Thacker has admitted that he initiated this project out of his “love of sport” for fly fishing and trout. “I started working in Coal Creek for purely selfish reasons,” he noted, “I wanted wild trout...” (Thacker, interview: 16 June 2007).

For some, Thacker’s approach might be problematic. First, his concerns for wild trout were, in part, tethered to an anthropocentric desire to catch them. However, this initial interest, broadened into a larger conservation ethic, or concern for land and watershed health.

Environmental ethicists often debate the sources of our

ethics. However, as scholars engage the practiced dimension of environmental ethics, the life’s work of Leopold or stories of groups like the CCWF provide important lessons to ponder. Here we see that various values, interests, and concerns can drive a practiced conservation ethic. The goal, then, is to understand how values can evolve from narrow to broad; from self to watershed. Values can, in many cases, emerge from our experiences with nature; “they are the products of transactions between humans and nature in particular social situations and ecophysical contexts,” such as fly fishing or ecological restoration.⁵¹ In these cases, what is important is the process by which these values might find action in the forms of participatory, community-based conservation.

What is good for trout, is in turn good for the community: a healthy watershed.

Like Leopold moved in his life from “love of sport” to the “land ethic,” the CCWF went from trout to the entire watershed. By thinking like a watershed, they addressed conflict while fostering complimentary environmental and community values; where collective interests in a healthy landscape secured more than trout habitat or college scholarships, but the very type of “spiritual entity” Leopold believed was imperative for sustaining both human and watershed health.

Finally, just as over-use and unsustainable farming techniques degraded Coon Valley; similar neglect, over-use, and improperly managed mining degraded Coal Creek. However, both saw recovery thanks to an inspired, collective, and collaborative spiritual entity. In both, river banks again held water and maintained structure, the community rebuilt and prospered in new ways, and in both Coon Creek and Coal Creek, community members could once again fish for trout.⁵²

It is safe to say that if Leopold physically worked in Coon Valley, his legacy worked through Coal Creek and the CCWF. And more importantly, the long and varied legacy of Leopold serves as an important benchmark against which we might evaluate the successes and failures of contemporary adventures in collaborative conservation such as those unfolding in the Coal Creek watershed or elsewhere around the country.



Notes

1. Aldo Leopold, "Coon Valley: An Adventure in Cooperative Conservation." [1935]. In Susan Flader and J. Baird Callicott. *The River of the Mother of God and Other Essays by Aldo Leopold*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991, pp. 218-233.
2. Susan Flader, "Thinking Like a Mountain: Aldo Leopold and the Evolution of An Ecological Attitude toward Deer, Wolves, and Forests." Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. 1974; Susan Flader, "Building Conservation on the Land: Aldo Leopold and the Tensions of Professionalism and Citizenship," in Ben A. Minteer and Robert E. Manning, eds., *Reconstructing Conservation: Finding Common Ground*. Washington, DC: Island Press, 2003, pp. 115–132; . 2003; Curt Meine, Aldo Leopold: His Life and Work. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988; Julianne Lutz Newton,. *Aldo Leopold's Odyssey: Rediscovering the Author of A Sand County Almanac*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2006.
3. Leopold, Coon Valley," and *A Sand County Almanac And Sketches from Here and There*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1987 [1949].
4. Donald Snow, "Introduction." In Brick, Philip, Donald Snow, and Sarah Van De Wetering, eds. *Across the Great Divide: Explorations in Collaborative Conservation and the American West*. Washington, DC: Island Press, 2000.
5. While many highlight the importance of Leopold's land ethic as stating that "a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity and beauty of the biotic system; it is wrong when it tends otherwise," it is important also to recall that he wrote that the land ethic was a "product of social evolution because something so important as an ethic is never 'written'" *A Sand County Almanac*, pp. 224 - 225.
6. Meine,. *Aldo Leopold*, p. xi; See also Susan Flader, "Thinking Like a Mountain: Aldo Leopold and the Evolution of An Ecological Attitude toward Deer, Wolves, and Forests." Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974.; Julianne Lutz Newton,. *Aldo Leopold's Odyssey: Rediscovering the Author of A Sand County Almanac*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2006; and Baird Callicott, *In Defense of the Land Ethic: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1989.
7. Meine, *Aldo Leopold*, p 166.
8. Meine, *Aldo Leopold*, p 309.
9. Meine, *Aldo Leopold*, p 313.
10. Meine, *Aldo Leopold*; Newton, *Aldo Leopold's Odyssey*.
11. Meine, *Aldo Leopold*, p 313.
12. Meine, *Aldo Leopold*, p. 313; Newton, *Aldo Leopold's Odyssey*, p. 155.
13. Meine, *Aldo Leopold*, p. 314.
14. Newton, *Aldo Leopold's Odyssey*, p. 155.
15. Aldo Leopold, [1942]. "The Role of Wildlife in a Liberal Education." in Susan Flader and J. Baird Callicott. *The River of the Mother of God and Other Essays by Aldo Leopold*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991, p. 223; emphasis added.
16. I recognize that this is a region that is fraught with a long history of struggles over racial and cultural justice and continues to wrestle with that history today. However, there are many small moments of social justice which bear recognition and celebration, as well as careful scrutiny. This story contains some of those small moments.
17. Karin A. Shapiro, *A New South Rebellion: The Battle Against Convict Labor in the Tennessee Coalfields, 1871 – 1896*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998, p. 16.
18. Shapiro, *A New South Rebellion*. P. 30.
19. Francis Hamilton Oates,. "Getting Their Feet Wet." *Clinton Courier News*, 18 July. 2007.
20. Trout Unlimited is a nationally recognized organization dedicated to coldwater conservation, with more than 150,000 volunteers organized into about 400 chapters from Maine to Montana to Alaska (<http://www.tu.org/about-us>. Accessed 19 August 2009).
21. Ben A. Minteer, *The Landscape of Reform: Civic Pragmatism and Environmental Thought in America*. Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 2006, p. 139.
22. Aldo Leopold, [1941] "Planning for Wildlife," in Callicott and Freyfogle, *For the Health of the Land: Previously Unpublished Essays and Other Writings*. Washington, DC: Island Press, 1999, p. 194.
23. Aldo Leopold, [1942]. "The Role of Wildlife in a Liberal Education." in Susan Flader and J. Baird Callicott. *The River of the Mother of God and Other Essays by Aldo Leopold*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991, p. 219.
24. Anthony Weston, *A 21st Century Ethical Toolbox*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 179 – 181.
25. See James E Crowfoot and Julia M. Wonolleck, *Environmental Disputes: Community Involvement in Conflict Resolution*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1990, pp. 13-15.
26. Coal Creek Watershed Foundation. 2000. "Master Plan." http://www.coalcreekaml.com/master_plan.htm, Accessed 1 July 2007.
27. Tim Zink, "Success on the Stream: Reviving Coal Creek Tennessee." *Trout*. Winter 2004, 44.
28. Bob Fowler, "Coal Creek Floods County with Problem" *Knoxville News Sentinell/Anderson County Insert*. 23 April 2000. AC 1-2.
29. Allen Comp, *Hope and Hard Work: Making A Difference in the Eastern Coal Region*. Davis, WV: Canaan Valley Institute, 2001, p. 7.
30. Bob Fowler, "Coal Creek Watershed Day 2000 to Sreamline Efforts to Clean Up the Area" *Knoxville News Sentinel*, 23 April 2000.
31. Leopold, [1949] *A Sand County Almanac And Sketches from Here and There*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 225.
32. Zink, "Success on the Stream: Reviving Coal Creek Tennessee." *Trout*. Winter 2004: 44.
33. Robert Behnke, "Forward." *Cutthroat: Native Trout of the*

- West. Patrick Trotter. Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 1987.
34. Trout Unlimited, "Protect, Reconnect, Restore, Sustain: Trout Unlimited Annual Report." [2007]. http://www.tu.org/atf/cf/%7BED0023C4-EA23-4396-9371-8509DC5B4953%7D/TU_2007AnnualReport.pdf. Accessed 09 September 2009.
35. Leopold, [1942]. "The Role of Wildlife in a Liberal Education," in Susan Flader and J. Baird Callicott. *The River of the Mother of God and Other Essays by Aldo Leopold*, p. 300.
36. Roy Daugherty, "More Precious than any Historical Trail," *The Clinton Courier*, May 5, 2001.
37. Zink, "Success on the Stream: Reviving Coal Creek Tennessee." *Trout*. Winter 2004: 45-46.
38. David Orr, *Ecological Literacy: Education and the Transition to a Postmodern World*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992, p. 89.
39. Leopold, [1942]. "The Role of Wildlife in a Liberal Education." in Susan Flader and J. Baird Callicott. *The River of the Mother of God and Other Essays by Aldo Leopold*, p. 301-02.
40. Leopold, [1942]. "The Role of Wildlife in a Liberal Education." in Susan Flader and J. Baird Callicott. *The River of the Mother of God and Other Essays by Aldo Leopold*, p. 300.
41. Minter, *The Landscape of Reform*, p. 31.
42. Minter, *The Landscape of Reform*, p. 146.
43. Leopold, [1949] *A Sand County Almanac And Sketches from Here and There*, p. 96.
44. Elizabeth Marshall, *Lord, We're Just Trying to Save Your Water: Environmental Activism and Dissent in the Appalachian South*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2002, p. xi.
45. William A. Jordan, III, *The Sunflower Forest: Ecological Restoration and the New Communion With Nature*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.
46. Shapiro, *A New South Rebellion*, p. 10.
47. Comp, *Hope and Hard Work*, p. 16.
48. Zink, "Success on the Stream: Reviving Coal Creek Tennessee." *Trout*. Winter 2004: 60.
49. Roy Daugherty, "More Precious than any Historical Trail," *The Clinton Courier*, May 5, 2001; emphasis added.
50. Aldo Leopold, *Game Management*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1933, pp. 420 - 423.
51. Ben A. Minter, *The Landscape of Reform*, p. 7.
52. Newton, *Aldo Leopold's Odyssey*, p. 156.

Samuel Snyder is John Daniels Fellow at the National Sporting Library in Middleburg, VA. A longer version of this article, which will explore the role of spiritual and cultural values in the work of Leopold, collaborative conservation, and Coal Creek, Tennessee will appear in The Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature, and Culture.

Telling the Story of South Carolina's ACE Basin Conservation: CHN presents a new documentary in 2010

One criticism of the conservation and environmental movements is that they do not provide positive visions for the future. An extremely large expanse of land has been protected in South Carolina's ACE Basin (the Ashepoo, Combahee and Edisto Rivers) and this decades long effort provides a vision for the future by inspiring similar conservation efforts locally and in other states and regions. Led by staff members Bruce Coull and William Bailey, the Center for Humans and Nature is nearing completion of a new documentary video entitled *Common Ground: The Legacy of the ACE Basin*, which tells the story of this successful conservation effort and of the community leaders and far-sighted land owners who made it happen. *Common Ground* includes interviews with key participants and also captures the area's natural beauty. The film was produced in cooperation with the University of South Carolina's Media Services Department.

Common Ground is expected to be ready for screening in early 2010. The Center for Humans and Nature will exhibit this film both within South Carolina and nationally, so that a broad audience can hear the messages that emerge from this conservation story. The documentary will also be available on the CHN website.

Can Psychology Help Save the World?

SUSAN CLAYTON

9n thinking about how to address environmental challenges, many people overlook the relevance of psychology. But whether we focus on causes of the problems or on their consequences, people are relevant: human behavior, human attitudes, human well-being, and human interactions. The field of *Conservation Psychology* has arisen in an attempt to integrate and publicize the psychological theory and research that are relevant to understanding

and promoting the connections between humans and the natural world.¹ The goal of Conservation Psychology is not only to study the interdependence between humans and nature, but also to encourage a healthy and sustainable relationship. Conservation psychology includes contributions from all the subfields of psychology: e.g., clinical psychologists can explore the therapeutic effects of exposure to nature, in general and for troubled populations in particular; developmental psychologists look at the significance of early exposure to nature on the formation of an enduring environmental empathy and ethic; cognitive psychologists research the ways in which we perceive environmental changes and threats; physiological psychologists investigate the impact of environmental toxins on behavior and brain function; and social psychologists study the role of nature experiences within a social context, and ways in which social factors promote or inhibit pro-environmental behavior.

Human behavior—how we reproduce, consume, and utilize geographical territory—has contributed to global climate change, desertification, pollution, and the loss of biodiversity, and human behavior will have to help us mitigate and adapt to these problems. Thus the involvement of behavioral science is critical. Attitudes that

are insufficiently invested in nature are often suggested to be the reason why people don't engage in the kinds of sustainable behaviors that are needed. But it would be wrong as well as simplistic to infer that people don't care about nature. Indeed, surveys show that people place a very high value on nature and often accord it moral and/or spiritual significance.² Conservation psychology can help to understand the complex sources of environmental attitudes and behavior.

Two facts about human behavior, simple but often unexamined, provide an important foundation for this project. One is that behavior is a function of multiple causes, many of which are irrational and/or outside conscious awareness. This means that people do not always know what's good for them, and even when they do they may not act on it; logical argument about the importance of addressing environmental threats is not enough to affect behavior. A second is that behavior is susceptible to change. Patterns of behavior that may seem like inevitable consequences of "human nature" are nevertheless malleable, responding to both unintentional and intentional influence. Even something as fundamental as reproduction shows huge variability across social and historical contexts. An understanding of the core influences

on behavior can allow for positive interventions to promote a healthy human-nature relationship.

As part of human behavior, we need to consider human perceptions. Reactions to environments and events will depend on how those environments and events are perceived and interpreted. Are they even noticed? People overlook a surprising amount of information, as has been dramatically demonstrated through studies showing, for example, that a large proportion of people can miss a gorilla or a unicyclist that is clearly within their field of vision. Peter Kahn has referred to “environmental

People who anticipate environmental crises that they have no ability to prevent or forestall will, in many cases, just stop thinking about it. Another common response to fear is to respond by affirming the correctness of one’s own system, values, and lifestyle in a process of self-validation and system justification that can, paradoxically, lead to greater consumption of environmental resources. Thus, people need to be provided with positive means to manage their fears and affirm their identities, perhaps by being given ways to protect nature and steward their own valued places.

Recognizing the interdependence of social and environmental ties suggests that we should encourage social policies and institutions that include interactions with the natural world as a fundamental part of a society.

generational amnesia” to describe the fact that people are frequently unaware of the extent of environmental damage and degradation that they witness.³ Once something does attract our attention it is still screened through interpretive filters. The extent to which environmental problems, such as climate change, are perceived as a threat is determined by many factors beyond the information that is available.

In general, the impact of attitudes on behavior is overestimated. Much of a person’s typical daily behavior is performed mindlessly, according to habit, social norms, and/or immediate situational influences. Thus when looking for specific behavioral changes, it may be best to ignore attitudes entirely and focus on the other predictors. Studies have shown that energy use, for example, can be drastically reduced if energy conservation seems to be normative. In a recent experimental study, Nolan et al. were able to reduce energy use among California homeowners by providing information about the (lower) energy use of a typical homeowner.⁴ The effect of this information was stronger than the effect of a message based on environmental protection or even self-interest. At an even more basic level, sustainable behaviors such as recycling are strongly affected by how easy they are to do. Reminders and feedback, and to a lesser extent incentives, also have a powerful impact on pro-environmental behavior.

In the long term, of course, we don’t just want to create small behavior changes. We want people to rethink and prioritize their relationship with nature. Thus it is important to understand the reasons for the apathetic or even hostile attitudes some people have toward environmental initiatives. Some of these reasons include fear and denial.

Another influence on environmental attitudes can be clearly seen in the political polarization of environmental issues in the U.S.: Republicans are far less likely than Democrats, for example, to believe the science behind climate change. Attitudes have implications for human interaction, and in this case environmental attitudes and behaviors can serve as a mark of group identification. Some people may express opposition to environmental initiatives not because they don’t care about the natural environment but because they do care about the political group with which they are associated and that group has come out against the initiative. (The same is true, of course, on the other side of the debate.) Similarly, pro-environmental behaviors such as taking the bus, or using a clothesline, have consequences for the social label that one receives that can be stigmatizing. So environmentalists have to try to avoid taking positions that line up too closely with existing social divisions, and emphasize, instead, the shared values that can be agreed upon by all of the groups involved.

Conservation psychology is not only concerned with the ways psychology can contribute to protecting the natural environment, but also with how attention to the natural environment can contribute to psychology. In particular, psychology has always had a goal of promoting research, and the applications of research, in order to enhance human welfare; to increase human welfare, we need to recognize how intimately connected it is to the natural environment. It is well known, for example, that environmental toxins can have direct impacts on human health. Less visible are the possible effects on mental functioning. A large body of research documents the detrimental effects of lead, mercury,

and PCBs on cognitive functioning and sometimes social behavior. Environmental problems will ultimately have an indirect effect on the well-being of everyone on the planet: global warming and overcrowding affect social behavior and intergroup conflict; opportunities for interaction with animals and nature affect emotional well-being and stress reduction. Promoting human welfare while ignoring threats to the natural environment may be like putting on a raincoat as one's ship goes down in a storm. When the World Commission of Economic Development report defined sustainability as a goal, they explicitly linked the two goals of environmental health and human development, including attention to human as well as environmental welfare.

At the core of psychology lies the person. Underlying the field of conservation psychology is the question of how individuals make a connection to the natural environment, how it becomes a fundamental part of who they are. Why does this matter? Issues that are relevant to our sense of self attract more attention, arouse more emotion, and connect to other aspects of our life more than issues that are less personally significant. They are also more likely to motivate attitude change and behavior. People make this connection to nature in a variety of ways, from the often minor ways in which aspects of the environment are used to represent a positive image of oneself—I have the most beautiful garden, I have bought an acre of the rainforest, I have adopted a stretch of highway—to the deeper connections represented by the love of some natural entity, be it a tree, a lake, or an animal.

Experiences with the natural environment shape our individual identities, telling us who we are as individuals and how we relate to other aspects of the natural world. This has implications for our individual actions, our perceived moral obligations toward nature. Am I a steward of nature? A child of mother Earth? Or simply a consumer of natural resources? Identities describe roles or relationships toward others, and roles and relationships define responsibilities.

Also, we need to recognize that although the prototypical “experience” of nature is solitary, the connection to nature is part of who we are as social beings. Individual experiences with nature are highly structured by public policies that enable or restrict such experiences—are there parks nearby, or not? What are the local programs I can get involved in? Do I feel a strong sense of community identity, in which case I'm more likely to care about preserving the local community? Social influences structure our interpretation of nature. The Grand Canyon was originally considered a horribly desolate wilderness, but now we all “know” that it is beautiful. Empty lots in a community can similarly be considered either oases or wasted space.

Recognizing the interdependence of social and environmental ties suggests that we should encourage social policies and institutions that include interactions with the natural world as a fundamental part of a society. Such institutions would include both formal and informal educational environments, conservation organizations, urban and non-urban parks, and any other mechanisms that present people with environmental knowledge and experiences. These experiences, which develop a relationship with nature within a social context that directs and supports the relationship, may be predictive of attitudes, behavior, and even fundamental beliefs about fairness with regard to environmental issues. Thus, while the natural environment provides psychology with a deeper understanding of human nature, psychologists should provide educators, environmental policy-makers, and conservationists with the information to support their work in sustaining the human experience of nature.



Notes

1. See S. Clayton and A. Brook,. Can psychology help save the world? A model for conservation psychology. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, 5 (1), (2005): 87-102; S. Clayton and G. Myers,. *Conservation psychology: Understanding and promoting human care for nature*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2009; and C. Saunders, The emerging field of conservation psychology. *Human Ecology Review*, 10, (2003): 137-149.
2. W. Kempton, J. Boster, and J. Hartley,. *Environmental values in American culture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995.
3. P.H. Kahn, Jr., *The human relationship with nature*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999.
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Susan Clayton is Professor of Social Psychology at The College of Wooster and is coauthor of Conservation Psychology: Understanding and Promoting Human Care for Nature (2009)

Beyond the Social Contract of Consumption

BRUCE JENNINGS

9 begin with the premise that eventually—soon, within two generations at most—natural limits will require radical transformations in human institutional structures, cultural traditions, and individual behavior. These transformations will affect the freedom and material standard of consumption of billions of people in the most powerful countries (economically and militarily) in the world today. Some of the states involved have authoritarian

and elite-controlled governance structures; others are more liberal and democratic. But no government in the highly carbon consumptive parts of the world can be indifferent to the conditions of its own normative legitimacy among its own people; no government can simply ignore the direct interests and needs of at least its middle and working classes. No matter how steep its sides or how narrow its pinnacle, each pyramid of power and wealth rests upon its base.

In that sense both authoritarian and democratic governance face, to some degree, the requirements of normative legitimation in mass societies. The social contract that provides a measure of stability can be seen as one in which the demos has given elites political control in exchange for the promise and performance of economic growth and material consumption. Let us call this the “*social contract of consumption*.” The history and the practicality of this social contract corresponds roughly to the era of fossil carbon based technologies and energy systems of the last 300 years.

If new forms of energy can be made relatively inexpensive, then the new social contract of the future may continue to be something like the social contract of consumption. That could spare us some of the difficult

social transformation I envision, but such a technological fix could also spell disaster for biodiversity and ecological resilience, quite apart from the problem of climate change. However, more likely in fact is the scenario of much more expensive energy, a lower material standard of living, and a curtailed consumptive pattern of behavior for that portion of the world’s population that are now the most affluent. That would be us.

If the fossil fuel era is coming to an end for natural reasons beyond our control, then the social contract of consumption will have to give way to a new contract, a compact with new terms—a new constellation of legitimacy, a new foundation for both contentment and commitment, a new basis for political and social stability. For want of a better term, let me call this the “*social covenant of ecological trusteeship*.” I should like to pose two questions for our discussion: First, how can we move from the old contract to the new covenant, from consumption to conserving trusteeship, from using up to sustainably using? Second, the social covenant of ecological trusteeship can take either an authoritarian or a democratic form, in comparison to the present governance system of liberal representative democracy and growth centered political economy.¹ Can we devise a way to make the governance that follows

from the new covenant the latter rather than the former: make it democratic in a thick and robust sense rather than authoritarian? Can our sustainable political future go with Rousseau and be governed by ecological democratic citizens; or must we go with Plato and be governed by ecological philosopher-Kings? Or with Hobbes, and be governed by a unitary sovereign power in an ecological Leviathan state?

As I say, the covenant of trusteeship may come in two forms: The first is a relatively autocratic or oligarchic form in which the base gives authority and obedience to the elite in return for ecological security; protection from the horrors of catastrophe and collapse. The second is a more deliberative and directly participatory form of constitutional democratic republic in which a consensus building process from the bottom up sets general principles and goals, while professionals and other expert elites are given the technical function of determining laws and regulations (and the police power to enforce them) to secure ecological integrity, sustainability, and security. In this version of the covenant of trusteeship contentment and commitment come, not from material hedonism, but from a communally and relationally rich quality of life. As

How can we move from the old contract to the new covenant, from consumption to conserving trusteeship, from using up to sustainably using?

Hobbes and Rousseau well understood, the authoritarian covenant of ecological trusteeship can be sustained by fear and self-interest, but for how long? The democratic form of this covenant requires something much more difficult, but perhaps more lasting—it requires a transvaluation of values; an expansion of the moral and the civic imagination, and, in short, civic virtue.

Either by fear and the desire for security or by principled normative commitment and an internalized sense of what is good and fulfilling in life—one way or the other, this new covenant will provide legitimacy and stability even in the face of much less material affluence than the old social contract of consumption has provided in the fading halcyon days of cheap carbon energy.

Following Habermas, I want to look at the problem of governance in a ecological political economy from a particular point of view: I see this problem as fundamentally a challenge for the mechanisms and institutions of political

will formation in contemporary states.

Liberal representative democracy is a form of democratic governance prone to incrementalism and preservation of the status quo, or at least great continuity of expectations and practices. Does the time scale and the response horizon of interest group democracy fit with the time dimension of the current ecological crisis? Can it produce policies and social changes that will reduce GHG levels below 350 ppm by 2030? If not, what form of governance will produce the necessary public will and compliance? What type of new institutional structure for governance (not simply government itself, but also the penumbral process of the political culture, the news media, and the civil society) will be able to act in the thoroughgoing and relatively rapid ways necessary?²

I believe that two concepts in particular must be explored to cast light on this problem of democratic will formation under a social covenant of ecological trusteeship. They are literacy and citizenship.

Ecological literacy

The challenges posed by biospheric ethics, biodiversity conservation, and climate change cannot be met without a greater investment in, and emphasis on, ecological literacy. I intend “literacy” here as a term of art that carries a special meaning. Literacy literally refers to the ability to read, and difficulty reading and other linguistic barriers obviously hamper one’s access to the information and understanding necessary for effective citizenship and democratic decisionmaking. But just as the challenge is broader than this, so too the concept of literacy involves more than the provision of information. Literacy means both the ability to understand one’s relationship to the human and biotic context and the power to act to protect and promote the quality of those relationships. To be sure, our society is rapidly becoming increasingly demanding in the way it requires individuals to master specialized information and complex technical knowledge. Yet the acquisition of skills is a necessary but not a sufficient condition of ecological literacy. It does little good to equip people with functional skills, but then leave them in an unjust or coercive social milieu that makes it difficult to turn those skills into effective capacities or makes it impossible to engage in action that will promote and protect ecological health.

Hence, the critical function of the concept of literacy is not to identify flaws or shortcomings of particular individuals or of particular communities. Individuals and communities that currently lack effective literacy seek access to the skills and information necessary and will attain them if given an opportunity to do so. The critical

function of the notion of ecological literacy is to focus on the institutional context and the conditions of social power within which individuals and communities share information about environmental and conservation issues, understand the meaning of that information in their lives, and deliberate and debate with others how the natural environment should be used and for what purposes. In other words, ecological literacy must be understood as a “capacity,” or “capability,” which is a property not of the individual taken in isolation, but of the individual in the context of a social space that provides effective resources, rights, and freedoms. A capacity relies on the possession of effective freedom and rights by the individual and on a surrounding social and educational system that supports the development of that freedom.

In short, literacy is empowerment, not simply a response to instruction. The absence of ecological literacy among large numbers of Americans bespeaks a systemic and structural flaw in our society.

Ecological citizenship

Now let me turn to the concept of citizenship. Literacy as empowerment is related to citizenship in a particular sense. Here citizenship is *not* best understood as a bundle of rights that may or may not be exercised at the personal discretion of the individual (such as the right to vote). Instead, citizenship is best understood as an active freedom that involves a particular set of practices, forums, skills, and opportunities. Citizenship is not like a commodity or possession one owns and uses (or not); citizenship is a form of life, a kind of social being that one can cultivate and pursue. In an authoritarian society the opportunities to cultivate that form of life may be severely truncated or even non-existent. In a democracy these opportunities must be open as a matter of right to virtually all adults.

It may well be that familiar approaches in environmental education, such as personal instruction and information sharing, will not suffice. And the movement in the EU to enhance democratic environmental governance by creating an enforceable right of access to information about environmental effects of governmental and corporate activities may only be a first step. Ecological literacy may require the creation of active “publics” that seek out knowledge in the process of engaging in civic action as well as the provision of information to individuals. Ecological literacy may require community organizing and the deliberate creation of enhanced “social capital” or civic renewal no less than it requires the services of trained professionals to provide counseling. In short, ecological literacy may require, as its complement and supplement,

some new forms of ecological citizenship.

A democratic steady state?

Let’s consider the concept of citizenship in more detail. I think it is important to distinguish between what I will call *the citizen as rational-choice consumer* and the *citizen as deliberative trustee*. The basic distinction here is between: (1) a form of political and social behavior that involves the calculation of individual self-interest or group interest and the creation of a strategy to devise the most rational means to protect and fulfill those interests; and (2) a form of political and civic behavior that involves deliberation, either in a group setting or as a solitary individual, to orient oneself to the common good.³

A few words of reminder about what Dewey called the “faith of democracy.” The basic principle of democracy is that the moral authority of government rests on the active, informed consent of the governed. What all varieties of democratic theory have in common are the value of respect for persons as free and equal agents and the value of being a member of a *community of mutual care and respect*. The legitimate exercise of power must rest on the consent of the governed because ultimately no one knows better than the governed what is in their own best interest and in the common good. All voices and all value orientations should be heard. No competent adult should be excluded from the practice of consent if he or she is willing to assume the responsibilities of membership or citizenship; the assumptions of natural superiority and hierarchy that accompany non-democratic ideologies are absent in democracy. A basic faith in the intelligence and perceptiveness of the common person pervades democratic thinking. And this can potentially have a spill over effect in reducing the anthropocentric or at least anthro-hierarchic orientation toward the human ecosystemic surround.⁴

Again, the core notion of democracy is that law and public policies are ethically justified and legitimate to the extent that they emerge from the reasonable deliberation of free and equal citizens who will be significantly affected by them. As the understanding of citizenship has been privatized during the era of the social contract of consumption, the deliberative element has been narrowed to a representative (in theory) elite, and as practiced by elites, the very notion of *deliberation* has been reconceptualized and transformed into a discursive practice that is quite different, namely, *bargaining*.

Liberal representative democracy thus pitches citizenship at two levels: first, for large numbers of people, the selection of representatives, and second, for a much smaller number of activists and organized interest groups,

engagement in the political bargaining process, that is, a system of interest-group negotiations to determine the distribution of various kinds of resources, tangible and symbolic. The governance challenge ahead resides in the fact that this type of democracy is no longer sufficient. An adequate response to the governance of biodiversity and climate change, if it is to remain democratic in any meaningful sense, will require retrieving, reinvigorating, and nurturing the stream of deliberative democratic citizenship as an alternative to rational-choice consumerism (of candidates or issues) and to the politics of bargaining among representative elites and interest-groups which magnify and project the mentality of consumerism.

Rational-choice consumerism manifests itself most obviously and directly in our private lives as consumers of both economic and political commodities that we perceive meet our private interests—whether it is the purchase of a new car or the passage of a policy of governmental deregulation and tax cuts for the top quintile of the population. As the latter examples indicate, consumerism

mind as he or she imaginatively reconstructs the give and take with fellow citizens in a group setting. A decision reached through the dialogue of deliberation is not a personal or individual decision, strictly speaking, although each individual may share in the decision. It is a collective or common decision in the sense that it grows out of a process that has revealed a common good and a common resolve.

With decisions to consume, by contrast, the individual consults his or her own interior preferences, desires, goals, and personal values and makes a decision based on the principle of realizing one's own self-interest through the act of consumption. The give and take of reasons does not assume the form of a dialogue in this case because even if others have given you their opinion or their advice about what to decide, those views are treated as external information (advisory opinions) only. The ultimate decision will be an individual decision taken by the individual alone as the final best judge of his or her own values and preferences.

Citizenship is not like a commodity or possession one owns and uses (or not); citizenship is a form of life, a kind of social being that one can cultivate and pursue.

cuts across the economic/governmental or private/public boundary line. Rational-choice consumerism effects how we interact with each other in political communities and attempt to influence government on matters of policy and law. Indeed it is the conventional wisdom in political science and in practical politics that this self-interested, “what’s in it for me?” approach is the necessary and proper orientation to take. The rational-choice consumer and the “private citizen” become one and the same. In this, the privatization remains; the citizenship, the civic dimension, gets erased.

The two orientations of deliberative citizen and rational-choice consumer can also be contrasted in terms of the basic social and psychological orientation that informs them. Deliberative citizenship is essentially a dialogic, collective activity, while the consumer orientation is essentially monologic, and solitary. When one deliberates, one engages in a dialogue of arguments and counter-arguments, reasons and counter-reasons, with others. This dialogic character of deliberation is obvious when it is done in a town meeting or at some other community gathering; it may not be quite so obvious, but still remains the case even when an individual is alone thinking through a problem. An interior dialogue takes place in the person's

This is true no matter what the object being “consumed.” It could be a product or commodity. Or it could be a candidate's platform, character, or views which are made the object of choice and consumption by casting a vote for the candidate at election time, or deciding to donate money to a campaign, or even a decision to actively make phone calls or hand out leaflets. All of these are acts of citizenship as a form of consumption and consumerism, rather than citizenship as a act of deliberation.

It is not my argument that self-interested orientations should be entirely purged in human social life. I doubt that it would be possible and, if some past attempts at “thought reform,” and “reeducation” are any guide, it would not be desirable. Individual autonomy and the freedom to support policies that benefit your interests are longstanding values not only of the liberal representative democratic tradition, but also of the participatory democratic tradition. Social revolutions that have made a concerted attempt to eliminate consumerism and self-interest from political (and even private) life have ended by betraying democracy and imposing frightful forms of dictatorial and totalitarian rule. The problem is not the presence of self-interest in politics; the problem arises when *only* consumerism and self-interest are present. Hence the need to make a place

for both the stance of consumerism and deliberation.

Civic renewal and ecological literacy (understood as a form of empowerment and not simply as information or instruction) depend upon the capacity to see and to make connections.⁵ Civic engagement feeds on the imaginative capacity to see beyond the limits of one's own situation and experience. Publics or communities are formed when a significant number of people develop that capacity and orient it in the same direction. To form a public is thus quite different from creating an interest group. A public is constituted by a perception of a shared or common good, not by a strategic alliance based on overlapping private interests.

The medium through which this perception of the common good of both human and biotic communities arises may take several forms. It is founded on shared or widespread experiences of a certain kind; such as the experience of struggling to gain recognition and respect for nonhuman nature in a stressed and overextended local economic system. Such experiences are then filtered through existing forms and patterns of cultural meaning and collective understanding. This interpretative activity takes place at all levels and fills the interstices of a neighborhood's or an ethnic community's life. It is at work in conversations among women shopping at the market, and men on lunch breaks or in social gatherings. It is at work in houses of worship and service clubs. It is at work in political meetings or other kinds of civic assembly.

Finally, these shared experiences form the basis for what might be called public judgments by being discussed and shared with other members of the community through a participatory process of deliberation. In deliberation, the ordinary discourse of story telling—more precisely, the attempt to make sense of what is happening by assimilating it to familiar cultural paradigms—is focused by the exchange of reasons and justifications for one's position. It also involves a concerted attempt to assess the significance of what is going on and, if deemed appropriate, to take some kind of collective action in response to the problem. Judgment and deliberation are activities of democratic citizenship par excellence. They build and exercise the moral and the civic imagination.

From I to We

Can the notion of individual human interests be salvaged in a post-fossil carbon age by redefining it? Can it come to be identified with sustainable modes of living? Or will the post-fossil carbon age also be a post-liberal and post-individualistic age in which the concept of interests is not merely transformed and redefined but actually

overridden and subordinated to a marginal place in our moral and political lives? It is overweening at present, to be sure, but for how much longer?

At least we can say this much. It is unrealistic to expect that the virtues of deliberation and an orientation toward the common good will be the natural starting point for most of the people who come to democratic community meetings and who keep coming and stay involved. By and large, the consumerist orientation is going to be very strong—if not dominant—at the grassroots level, at least at the outset. People will invest their time in such a process only if they feel that they will benefit from it and that it will serve their interest. This is particularly true of a minority community that may feel especially disenfranchised, marginalized, and alienated from the mainstream political system and civil society.

If the main challenge of authoritarian rule is exercising power without unsustainable coercion, the challenge facing the deliberative side of citizenship is how to create its spark—its dialogic civic virtue—in the first place, and how to develop and reinforce it over time? What are the kinds of institutional settings and structures that will lead a group of people naturally and normally out of the consumerist stance and into a mode of deliberation? Out of monologue and into dialogue? It is hard to get anyone to participate in much of anything these days; significant barriers of time, mistrust, and hopelessness must be overcome. But it is probably easier to motivate people when you are able reasonably to appeal to their interests than it is to promise them the very hard work of coming to think, see, and imagine in new ways. Yet, if I am correct in thinking that the future governance of an ecological political economy will need a sense of the common good and dialogic interaction, this is precisely what ecological literacy and ecological citizenship ask of us. Only thus can we manage the transition from the social contract of consumption to the social covenant of ecological citizenship successfully.



Notes

1. *Actually existing democracy.* The mainstream framework of democratic governance consists of interest group pluralism and representative democracy. Within this framework, democratic institutions are responsive to individual interests, concatenated or organized by the formation of various group structures that compete for the attention of popularly elected officials. Their competition in this regard consists both of the market place of ideas and the market place of campaign contributions, and other financial incentives for public officials. Modern societies

are too large and complex to be governed by direct participatory mechanisms; democracy consists essentially in the right to vote and free and fair competition among candidates and parties for the support of self-interested voters. This form of democratic theory, of course, bears a striking resemblance to the orientation of mainstream economic and market theory, and no wonder, because for at least fifty years there has been much cross-fertilization between the two fields, so much so that many now consider political science to be a sub-field of economics. One of the most famous works of political science in the last half-century was Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*.

2. The principal alternative to interest group liberal democracy is a mode of democratic governance generally known as deliberative democracy. It differs from interest group democracy in some fundamental respects. It challenges the primacy of a rather utilitarian and materialistic notion of interests as the basis of the psychological and moral dimension of a democratic polity. It also argues for both the feasibility and the normative justification of a more participatory form of democratic citizenship. Not passive electoral consumers, but active democratic trustees. However, it is not clear how deeply the theorists of deliberative democracy challenge some of the fundamental assumptions about individualism, autonomy, and the aggregative nature of social utility, the public interest, or the common good. Whether deliberative democracy is the appropriate governance model to correspond to ecological economics and to the new covenant of ecological trusteeship remains to be seen.

3. Traditionally conservation efforts have been viewed as a function of the state in keeping with its part of the social contract of consumption, both economic and aesthetic consumption. This top-down conception of conservation has recently been supplemented—if not supplanted—by a greater emphasis on working with affected communities to build their own conservation promoting and problem solving capacity. Living in a vital, well-functioning human community itself seems to have positive affects on the value people place on conserving the biotic community. I believe the reverse is also true. Hence the values of biodiversity conservation, more sustainable patterns of living, respect for rights, equity, social justice, and enhanced quality of life as an active participant in collective activities—these values are all intertwined. Meanwhile, the new challenges of biospheric ethics are beginning to generate a grassroots movement of its own, partly made up of activists and partly made up of those with various religious, political, and environmental concerns about the destructiveness of the social contract of consumption. This grassroots movement brings conservation into the domain of democratic political theory.

4. It must be said that while democracy respects and values all groups, not all groups value democracy. The ideals of equality, inclusiveness, and solidarity do not fit well with the traditional beliefs and practices of many religions and cultural groups. So initiatives to promote ecological citizenship, particularly those that are based on a deliberative procedure, may not be readily

embraced. The reasons for this reluctance may be insightful and deep. They may go beyond the sheer complexity of the subject matter, and its seeming distance or irrelevance to the community. And they may go beyond historical mistrust and suspicion that some communities feel about something that is perceived to be brought in by outsiders. In addition, there may be a sense that the purpose of these meetings is not only to inform or empower the members of the community, but also to transform them morally and politically. This suspicion is not without foundation.

5. Reflections and conceptual analyses such as these strike some as quite far removed from the practical issues. I submit that they are not. Conceptual clarification and theoretical analysis can relate to work on the ground, so to speak, the various experiments in community involvement and grassroots participation that are being developed, often in a rather seat-of-the-pants fashion, as the projects go forward. Like the *bourgeois gentilhomme* in Molière's play who did not know that he was speaking "prose," there is often a telling connection between what community groups are doing and general values and strategies that many other democratic and civic groups and thinkers have attempted before. To discuss the concept underlying such a strategy or value, therefore, is to place the activity in a historical and cultural context; it is to tie present efforts to those of the past, and it is to point beyond present activities toward future possibilities. Civic conservation professionals can abet this insight by working closely with citizen deliberators and supporting them with forms of technical expert knowledge. Moreover, analysis and clarification of the conceptual framework implicit in various civic activities make it possible to draw connections between aspects of a problem that appear to be disparate and unconnected.

Bruce Jennings is Director of Bioethics at the Center for Humans and Nature and is Editor of Minding Nature.

REMEMBERING THOMAS BERRY

In this special section we commemorate and honor the work and teaching of Thomas Berry (1914 -2009), a leading historian of culture and religion and one of the most significant ecological thinkers of our time.

Biography of Thomas Berry

MARY EVELYN TUCKER

To fully understand Thomas Berry's presentation of the New Story it is helpful to highlight some of the major intellectual influences on his life and thinking. In this way we can more fully appreciate the nature and significance of the New Story itself. In this intellectual biography we will first discuss Berry's studies of western history, Asian traditions, and indigenous religions. We will then describe the early and sustained influence of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin on Berry's philosophy of evolutionary history. Finally, we will outline some of the major features of the New Story as Berry has described it.

From human history to Earth history

It is significant to see Berry's contributions initially as a cultural historian whose interests have spanned both Europe and Asia. He did his graduate studies in western history and spent several years living in Germany after the Second World War. In addition, he read extensively in the field of Asian religions and history. He lived in China the year before Mao came to power and published two books on Asian religions, which have been reissued from Columbia University Press (*Buddhism and Religions of India*).

From this beginning as a cultural historian Berry has moved in the last twenty years to become a historian of Earth. Berry sees himself, then, not as a theologian but as a geologist. The movement from human history to cosmological history has been a necessary progression

for Berry. He has witnessed in his own life time the emergence of a planetary civilization as cultures have come in contact around the globe, often for the first time. At the same time, the very resources for sustaining such a planetary civilization are being undermined by massive environmental destruction.

It is out of these kinds of concerns for the future direction of human-Earth history that Berry has developed the New Story. Indeed, The Universe Story which Berry has written with Brian Swimme represents a fruitful convergence of his interests in both human history and evolutionary history. Berry's aim is to evoke the psychic and spiritual resources to establish a new reciprocity of humans with Earth and of humans to one another. As Berry has frequently said, there can be no peace among humans without peace with the planet. This, in short, is the intent of the New Story. The underlying assumption is that with a change of worldview will come an appropriately comprehensive ethics of reverence for all life. With a new perspective regarding our place in this extraordinary unfolding of Earth history will emerge a renewed awareness of our role in guiding the evolutionary process at this crucial point in history.

Historian of Western intellectual history

Thomas Berry began his academic career as a historian of western intellectual history.¹ His thesis at Catholic University on Giambattista Vico's philosophy of history was published in 1951. Vico outlined his philosophy in *The New Science of the Nature of the Nations* which was first published in 1725 after some twenty years of research.² Vico was trying to establish a science of the study of nations comparable to what others had done for the study of nature. Thus he hoped to make the study of history more "scientific" by focusing on the world of human institutions and causation.

At the same time, Vico intended to demonstrate how this new science should manifest a "rational civil theology of divine providence." In other words, Vico wished to show that providence was at work not only in sacred history but also in "profane" history. Consequently, pattern and

order are operative and discernible in history. Moreover, in contrast to Descartes' concentration on rationalization Vico emphasized the poetic wisdom and creative imagination needed for the future.

In his study, Vico used large, sweeping categories to describe major historical periods since the time of Noah and the flood. Looking at human history from a macrophase perspective he identified three ages: the age of the gods, the age of the heroes, and the age of men. Corresponding to each age are different kinds of customs, laws, languages, arts, and economies embracing quite distinctive cultures. Moreover, in each stage a different human faculty dominates, namely, sensation, imagination, and intellect.

In the first period, the age of the gods, a theocratic government supported by mythology prevails. In the second period, the age of the heroes, an aristocratic government dominates along with class conflict and slavery. In the third age, the age of humans, democracies appear and the power of reason and human rights emerge. Vico sees this cycle as recurring at different points in human history as we move from myth to rationality and from savage to civilized states. In each of these periods the role of natural or poetic wisdom and intuition has been crucial in founding institutions which have given rise to the nations. Yet the movement through history is punctuated by disintegration and dissolution. Vico called these the periods of the "barbarism of reflection." In passing through such phases of entropy history moves toward a "creative barbarism of sense."

Vico's thought has clearly been seminal for Berry. This is evident in several respects: the sweeping periodization of history, the notion of the barbarism of reflection, and the poetic wisdom and creative imagination needed to sustain civilizations. With regard to periodization, Berry has defined four major ages in human history namely, the tribal shamanic, the traditional civilizational, the scientific technological, and the ecological or ecozoic age. He observes that we are currently moving into the ecozoic era which he feels will be characterized by a new understanding of human-Earth relations. Nonetheless, he acknowledges that we are in a period of severe cultural pathology with regard to our blind yet sophisticated technological assault on the Earth. In other words, we are in a time of a "barbarism of reflection". Vico's description of people in the midst of such a barbarism is uncannily reminiscent of contemporary western societies:

... such people, like so many beasts, have fallen into the custom of each man thinking only of his own private interests and have reached the extreme

of delicacy, or better pride, in which like wild animals they bristle and lash out at the slightest displeasure. Thus no matter how great the throng and press of their bodies, they live like wild beasts in a deep solitude of spirit and will...³

To extract ourselves from this cultural pathology of alienation from one another and destruction of Earth Berry calls for a New Story of the universe. By evoking such a deep poetic wisdom he feels we may be able to create a sustainable future. He calls for reinventing the human at the species level which implies moving from our cultural coding to recover our genetic coding of relatedness to Earth. By articulating a new mythic consciousness of our profound connectedness to Earth we may be able to reverse the self-destructive cultural tendencies we have put in motion with regard to the planet.

In so doing we will create the-basis for long range economic and ecological sustainability. This is, no doubt, the best hope for moving toward more equitable and just societies. This coming together of environmental concerns with social justice issues is at the heart of the broadened perspective of the New Story. Without such an enlarged picture of our historical past and our planetary roots it is more difficult to chart our way into a viable future. In the west, especially in the twentieth century, individual alienation, despair, ennui, and destructiveness has continued to spread with a deteriorating sense of communal ties or ethical responsibilities to the natural or human worlds.

Above all, then, the New Story provides context and perspective for implementing the specific kinds of social, political, and economic changes that will be needed to sustain and foster life on the planet. It's intent is not simply to tell a story that is comprehensive and personally enriching. It is also to provide a basis for change. The assumption is that when one's worldview shifts to understand the interrelatedness of all life one's ethics likewise will be affected to work for human justice and environmental sustainability.

Influenced by Vico, then, Berry has developed a comprehensive historical perspective in periodization, an understanding of the depths of contemporary barbarism, and the need for a new mythic wisdom to extract ourselves from our cultural pathology and deep alienation. Berry has described contemporary alienation as especially pervasive due to the power of the technological trance, the myth of progress, and our own autism in relation to nature. With the New Story and the Dream of Earth Berry hopes to overcome that alienation and evoke the energies needed to create a viable and sustainable future.

Historian of Asian thought and religions

When Berry set out for China in 1948 on the boat leaving from San Francisco he met Wm. Theodore de Bary, now considered to be one of the premier scholars in Asian studies. De Bary was on his way to China as a Fulbright scholar of Chinese studies. Berry intended to study language and Chinese philosophy in Beijing. Their time in China, while fruitful, was cut short by Mao's Communist victory in 1949. After they returned to the States they worked together to found the Asian Thought and Religion Seminar at Columbia. De Bary helped to establish one of the nation's seminal programs in Asian studies at Columbia. In addition, he supervised numerous translation projects of individual texts and edited six volumes published by Columbia University Press on the Sources of Indian, Chinese, and Japanese Traditions, respectively. The friendship between de Bary and Berry has lasted nearly 45 years with many collaborative projects and exchanges of ideas on Asian thought.

Berry began his teaching of Asian religions at Seton Hall (1956- 1960) and St. John's University (1960-1966) and eventually moved to Fordham University (1966-1979). He also offered courses at Columbia, Drew, and the University of San Diego. Berry's graduate program in the History of Religions at Fordham was the only one of its kind at a Catholic university in the United States. It lasted for over a decade and at its height in the early 1970s it attracted more students than any other division in the theology department. Its graduates are now teaching at colleges and universities throughout the United States. During these years Berry wrote numerous articles on Asian religions in addition to two books, one on *Buddhism* (1966) and the other on *Religions of India* (1971).

What was distinctive about Berry's approach was his effort not only to discuss the historical unfolding of the traditions being studied, but also to articulate their spiritual dynamics and contemporary significance. This made his classes and his writings on Asian religions remarkably stimulating and memorable. Equally important in his approach has been his balance in highlighting the distinctive contributions of both the western traditions and the Asian religions. In addition, he has had a long-standing appreciation for the spirituality of indigenous traditions in both Asia and the Americas.

In a short monograph written over 25 years ago and published in 1968 Berry demonstrates the originality of his interpretations of the spiritual dynamics of Asian religious thought. Titled "Five Oriental Philosophies"⁴ he describes the phenomenological essence of each tradition

as well as outlines its historical unfolding. He includes Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Zen in his discussions. Before multiculturalism was fashionable he speaks of the need to include Asian thought in textbooks entitled "World Philosophy." His concern for embracing pluralism and diversity of thought is eloquently expressed:

Diversity is no longer something that we tolerate. It is something that we esteem as a necessary condition for a livable universe, as the source of Earth's highest perfection... To demand an undifferentiated unity would bring human thought and history itself to an end. The splendor of our multicultural world would be destroyed.⁵

In describing the original impulse of the principal Asian systems of thought Berry succeeds in highlighting a significant dimension of their spiritual essence and avoiding layers of complexity which tend to obfuscate rather than clarify. A few examples will illustrate his phenomenological method which he later supplements with a historical discussion of the development of the particular tradition.

Of Hinduism he writes: "Hinduism is founded in a most intensive experience of divine being. It is an experience of the One beyond all Multiplicity..."⁶

Of Buddhism he observes: "Buddhist thought originates in an unusual experience of the sorrows of time. No abiding reality is here, no lasting peace, no fit condition for human life. The first and final wisdom is to recognize the insubstantial nature of all things."⁷

Of Confucianism he notes: "Confucian thought originates in the experience of an all-embracing harmony of the cosmic and human orders of reality. This intimate relationship between the cosmic and the human is expressed and perfected in an elaborate order of ritual and etiquette which, in a certain manner contains and harmonizes both the cosmic and the human."⁸

Of Taoism he reflects: "Taoism arises from an experience of the dynamic force immanent in the universe which gives order and life and meaning to all reality and which in China is known as the Tao. This experience is not radically different from that which produced the Confucian tradition of thought, but while the Confucian scholars gave their attention to the moral qualities of the Tao and to the social and political structure of society, the Taoist visionaries turned to the contemplation of the Tao itself and the mysterious manner in which it wrought the succession of changes in the universal order of things."⁹

Of Zen he writes: "... the total effort of Zen is to keep the intellectual and cultural life of humans in a state of elemental simplicity with all the vigor that is associated

with the spontaneous and instinctive.”¹⁰

These examples may help to illustrate the breadth of historical, cultural, and religious perspective that Berry brings to the development of his idea of the New Story. He spent several decades studying both western and eastern intellectual history before arriving at his comprehensive vision of the Universe Story. He has been able to appreciate the deep spiritual impulses and devastating human sorrows which have given rise to the world's religions. From this perspective he has been able to discern what spiritual resources we need to utilize for creating a multicultural perspective within the Earth community.¹¹ Tolerance of diversity of religious ideas is comparable to protecting diversity of species in the natural world. For Berry human diversity and biological diversity are of a continuous piece.

Perhaps the most significant Asian tradition for Berry's thinking has been Confucianism. He has written numerous articles on Confucianism and the Chinese tradition at large. He has noted that in East Asia: “Confucianism provided the dominant cultural form of the society, the basic human ideals, the political structure, the social discipline, the educational institutions, the comprehensive style of life.”¹² Its influence is not limited to China, but has been strong in Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Vietnam, Hong Kong, and Singapore as well.

Confucianism has been important because it emphasizes the cosmological dynamics of the universe in which Heaven, Earth, and human form an interconnected triad. As Berry frequently says, for the Chinese, the human is the “understanding heart” (*hsin*) of the universe. Thus the role of the human to be in harmony with nature is critical and the responsibility of the rulers and ministers to establish benevolent government is essential.

As humans cultivate themselves they begin to affect the larger social and political order. At the heart of such moral and spiritual cultivation is education. Confucianism has an optimistic view of human nature as essentially good and capable of self improvement through education. Personal self transformation will thus result in social transformation.

For Berry, Confucianism has had significance because of its cosmological concerns, its interest in self-cultivation and education, and its commitment to improve the social and political order. With regard to cosmology Berry has identified the important understanding of the human as a microcosm of the cosmos. Essential to this cosmology is a “continuity of being” and thus a “communion” between various levels of reality—cosmic, social, and personal. (This is similar to the ideas of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Alfred North Whitehead, and other contemporary process

thinkers.) He writes:

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 compenetrating realities. These forces, whether living or non-living, were so present to each other that they could be adequately seen and understood only within this larger complex... Because of the intensity with which the Chinese experienced this interior, feeling communion with the real, they set themselves on perfecting humans 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 and understanding. Indeed, the Confucian ideal of knowledge was that of an understanding heart rather than a thinking brain.¹³

Confucianism has remained for Berry a dynamic, vitalistic tradition with important implications for current environmental philosophy. Berry notes, however, that there is a disparity between theory and practice in the case of China. He recognizes that China, like many countries, has been involved in deforestation and desertification over the centuries. Furthermore, the contemporary record of China on the environment is far from ideal. Nonetheless, the comprehensive cosmological framework of Confucian thought can be a valuable intellectual resource in reformulating a contemporary ecological cosmology with implications for environmental ethics.

Indigenous religious traditions

In addition to a remarkable ability to appreciate the diversity and uniqueness of the great “world” religions, Berry has a lively interest in and empathy for Native religions. He taught several courses at both Fordham and Columbia on American Indian religions and has published a number of articles on the topic. He encouraged his graduate students to write dissertations in this area and several of them have been published.¹⁴ He has been warmly received by various Native groups, including tribes on the northwest coast and the Cree and Inuit Indians in northeastern Canada who have been struggling against the massive James Bay hydroelectric project. Overseas he has spent time with the Tboli people in the southern Philippines.

In addition to his own research, writing, and teaching in the field of Native American religions, Berry's appreciation for Native traditions and for the richness of their mythic, symbolic, and ritual life has been enhanced by his encounters with the ideas of Carl Jung and Mircea Eliade. Jung's understanding of the collective unconscious, his reflections on the power of archetypal symbols, and his sensitivity to religious processes has made him an important influence on Berry's thinking. Moreover, Mircea Eliade's studies in the history of religions has been enormously useful in Berry's understanding of both Asian and Native traditions. This is due in large part to Eliade's ability to interpret the broad patterns of meaning embedded in comparable symbols and rituals across cultures.

Within this larger framework of interpretive categories, then, Berry is able to articulate the special feeling in Native traditions for the sacredness of the land, the seasons, and the animal, bird, and fish life. Native peoples respect Creation because they respect the Creator. They have a deep reverence for the gift of all life and for human's dependency on nature to sustain life. They have perfected some of the ancient techniques of shamanist, ritual fasting and prayer to call on the powers in nature for personal healing and communal strength. They have cultivated an ability to use resources without abusing them and to recognize the importance of living lightly on Earth. This is not to say that Native peoples were the ideal ecologists, either. As in the Chinese case, abuses certainly have occurred. However, for Berry these two traditions (Confucian and Native American) remain central to the creation of a new ecological spirituality for our times.

The first peoples, then, are not merely to be romanticized or idealized as a segment of the past. Rather, their way of life may have much to teach us as we are learning, rather painfully, the limits of natural resources and the consequences of mindless growth. In developing a spirituality of Earth as part of the New Story clearly we will be returning to examine the rich symbols and rituals in the Native American religions. The principal question will no doubt be how to appreciate and understand these symbols and not simply appropriate them as some New Age groups have sometimes unwittingly done.

The New Story: Teilhard's influence

In formulating his idea of the New Story Berry is much indebted to the thought of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. In particular, Berry has derived from Teilhard (and from other writers such as Loren Eiseley) an enormous appreciation for developmental time. As Berry writes frequently, since Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* we have become aware

of the universe not simply as a static cosmos but as an unfolding cosmogenesis. The theory of evolution provides a distinctive realization of change and development in the universe which resituates us in a huge sweep of geological time. With regard to developmental time, Teilhard suggested that the whole perspective of evolution changes our understanding of ourselves in the universe. He writes:

For our age to have become conscious of evolution means something very different from and much more than having discovered one further fact... It means (as happens with a child when he acquires the sense of perspective) that we have become alive to a new dimension. The idea of evolution is not, as sometimes said, a mere hypothesis, but a condition of all experience."¹⁵ For Berry the New Story is the primary context for understanding the immensity of cosmogenesis. It is similar to what Loren Eiseley refers to as *The Immense Journey* (1946) or *The Firmament of Time* (1960).

From Teilhard Berry has also derived an understanding of the psychic-physical character of the unfolding universe. This implies that if there is consciousness in the human and if humans have evolved from Earth, then from the beginning some form of consciousness or interiority is present in the process of evolution. Matter for both Teilhard and Berry is not simply dead or inert, but a numinous reality consisting of both a physical and spiritual dimension. Consciousness, then, is an intrinsic part of reality and is the thread that links all life forms. There are various forms of consciousness and, in the human, self-consciousness or reflective thought arises.

Berry has also obtained from Teilhard an appreciation for his law of complexity-consciousness. This suggests that as things evolve from simpler to more complex organisms, consciousness also increases. Ultimately self consciousness or reflection emerges in the human order. The human as a highly complex mammal is distinguished by this capacity for reflection. This gives humans a special role in the evolutionary process. We are part of not apart from Earth.

For Teilhard and for Berry, then, the perspective of evolution provides the most comprehensive context for understanding the human phenomenon in relation to other life forms. This implies for Berry that we are one species among others and as self reflective beings we need to understand our particular responsibility for the continuation of the evolutionary process. We have reached a juncture where we are realizing that we will determine which life forms survive and which will become extinct. We have become co-creators as we have become conscious of our role in this extraordinary, irreversible developmental sequence of the emergence of life forms.

Yet Berry has also critiqued Teilhard's overly optimistic

view of progress and his apparent lack of concern for the devastating effect that industrial processes were having on fragile ecosystems. He has pointed out that Teilhard was heir to a western mode of thinking which saw the human as capable of controlling the natural world, usually through science and technology. Teilhard's challenge to "build the Earth" reflects some of the unrestrained optimism of humans whose faith in science and technology had no bounds. This overly anthropocentric and blindly optimistic view is something Berry has frequently critiqued.

In addition, Berry has noted Teilhard's surprising lack of appreciation for Asian religions or indigenous traditions despite his long residence and extensive travel in Asia. His attachment to the unique revelation of Christianity and his criticism of Asian religions is reflective of the contemporary theology of his times. It may also be explained as the absence of the opportunity for communication with Chinese scholars of traditional Chinese religions while he resided in Beijing. This may have been due to language barriers, wartime constraints, or lack of time or interest due to other scholarly commitments.

Berry's approach, then, has been much more inclusive in terms of cultural history and religion, while Teilhard has been remarkably comprehensive scientifically. These two approaches have come together in Berry's book written with the mathematical cosmologist, Brian Swimme and called *The Universe Story*.¹⁶ Here for the first time is the narration of the story of the evolution of the solar system and Earth along with the story of the evolution of the human and of human societies and culture. While not claiming to be definitive or exhaustive *The Universe Story* sets forth a model for the telling of a common creation story. It marks a new era of self-reflection for humans, one that Berry has described as the "ecological age"¹⁷ or the beginning of the "ecozoic age."¹⁸

In telling the story of evolution Berry has also tried to keep his language not exclusively Christocentric as Teilhard did. Berry's intent has been to appeal not only to the Christian community but beyond. He is aware of the barriers theological language sometimes creates in the secular world, particularly among environmentalists and people of different faith commitments. He hopes to appeal to a wide variety of individuals who are responsive to the paradigm shift in worldviews that is beginning to take shape in human consciousness. It is a shift that transcends religious or national boundaries and helps to create the common grounds for the emergence of an Earth community.

The origin and significance of the New Story

Berry's ideas on the New Story began in the early 1970s as he pondered the magnitude of the social, political, and economic problems we were facing in the human community. His articulation of the need for a new orientation and direction was motivated by his deep concern for the almost suicidal path of humans in their destruction of Earth and in their violence and indifference to one another. The need for a New Story or a functional cosmology, then, arose not as an abstract idea, but as a response to the sufferings of humans in a universe where they saw themselves as deeply alienated.¹⁹ This alienation was, no doubt, a particular experience of the west in the post war years as expressed in existentialist philosophy, the death of God theology, and the theater of the absurd. Nonetheless, the spirit of disaffection, ennui, and alienation has spread to other parts of the world due in part to western cultural influences. Berry's New Story provides an important antidote to this disillusionment and despair. It creates, above all, a new context for connection, for purpose, for action. It is an idea with direct implications for providing the human energy needed for positive social, political, and economic change.

Berry first published the "New Story" in 1978 as the initial booklet of the *Teilhard Studies* series in 1978. It was published nearly a decade later by Cross Currents. It was revised slightly for its publication in the *Dream of the Earth* in 1988. Berry originally subtitled the work "Comments on the Origin, Identification and Transmission of Values." The story, then, is intended to be a new orientation and perspective which would provide a moral basis for action. In other words, it is seen as a comprehensive basis for nurturing reciprocity between humans and for fostering reverence between humans and Earth.

Berry opens his essay by observing: "We are in between stories." He notes how the old story was functional because: "It shaped our emotional attitudes, provided us with life purpose, energized action. It consecrated suffering, integrated knowledge, guided education."²⁰ This context of meaning provided by the old story is no longer operative. People are turning to new age novelties or to religious fundamentalism for orientation and direction. However, neither of these directions will ultimately be satisfying. We are confronted with dysfunctionality in both religious communities and in secular societies. Berry proposes a new story of how things came to be, where we are now, and how the human future can be given some meaningful direction. In losing our direction we have lost our values and orientation for human action. This is what the New Story can provide.

Berry cites the Black Death of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as a watershed in the development of

western thought. On the one hand, there arose the believing redemption community while on the other there emerged the scientific creation community. The division between these two has remained strong down to the present. In fact, in our own time the split between the creationists and the evolutionists has been quite heated. On the other hand, there is also emerging a new dialogue between science and religion which is attempting to overcome this dichotomy.

With the spread of the Black Plague in Europe there arose a need to have the intervention of supernatural forces to mitigate the awesome power of death. Because of the vast numbers of people who died (between 1/3 and 1/2 of the population) Christianity embraced a strong redemption oriented theology. To be redeemed and saved out of this world of suffering was the hope held up for all believers. To be assisted in this redemption from suffering by the power of Christ's suffering and death was the aim of the Christian message. Something was lost in this exclusive focus on redemption. Creation theology was subsumed under redemption theology. As Berry wrote: "The primary doctrine of the Christian creed, belief in a personal creative principle, became increasingly less important in its functional role. Cosmology was not of any particular significance."²¹ Berry claims that the Christian Story is a sectarian story. It is no longer the story of Earth or the integral story of humankind.²²

On the other hand, the scientific, secular community sought to remedy the terror of natural events by studying the processes of Earth itself, rather than seeking supernatural intervention. The heavens and Earth were studied with the aid of the telescope and microscope. The scientific endeavor was aided by the 18th century Enlightenment philosophers' celebration of reason and the sociologists' articulation of the progress of the human mind. The biological understanding of development which began in the 19th century was a significant addition to this. It is now being completed by the astronomer's and physicist's exploration of the expanding universe.

The significance of the sense of developmental time for the New Story should be highlighted. The Copernican revolution changed our whole sense of our spatial orientation in the universe. No longer was Earth considered the center of reality. In a similar manner, the Darwinian revolution is altering our sense of time. For the first time it is dawning on human consciousness that Earth is part of an irreversible developmental sequence of time. In other words, life has evolved from less complex to more complex forms. Species did not always exist as they are now; they are derived from early life forms. In other words, "Earth in all its parts, especially in its life forms, was in a state of continuing transformation."²³ This is the first implication

of the New Story: we live not simply in a cosmos but in a cosmogenesis.

Secondly, as this reality of developmental time begins to dawn on the human community (although still fiercely resisted by creationists) a realization of the subjective communion of the human with Earth likewise begins to be felt. As Berry expresses it: "The human emerges not only as an Earthling, but also as a worldling. We bear the universe in our beings as the universe bears us in its being. The two have a total presence to each other and to that deeper mystery out of which both the universe and ourselves have emerged."²⁴ This subjective presence of things to one another is one of the most distinctive features of Berry's thought. In *The Divine Milieu* Teilhard writes of this interior attraction of things in the following passage: "In the Divine Milieu all the elements of the universe touch each other by that which is most inward and ultimate in them."²⁵ Berry has suggested that the importance of the awareness of the subjective dimension of the universe story cannot be underestimated. Indeed, he writes: "...the reality and value of the interior subjective numinous aspect of the entire cosmic order is being appreciated as the basic condition in which the story makes any sense at all."²⁶

Berry states, then, that to communicate values within this new frame of reference of the Earth story we need to identify the basic principles of the universe process itself. These are the primordial intentions of the universe towards differentiation, subjectivity, and communion. Differentiation refers to the extraordinary variety and distinctiveness of everything in the universe. No two things are completely alike. Subjectivity is the interior numinous component present in all reality also called consciousness. Communion is the ability to relate to other people and things due to the presence of subjectivity and difference. Together these create the grounds for the inner attraction of to the presence of subjectivity and difference. Together these create the grounds for the inner attraction of things for one another. These are principles which can become the basis of a more comprehensive ecological and social ethics that sees the human community as dependent upon and interactive with the Earth community. Only such a perspective can result in the survival of both humans and Earth. As Berry has stated humans and Earth will go into the future as one single multiform event or we will not go into the future at all.

Berry closes his essay on the New Story with a powerful passage evoking a confidence in the future despite the tragedies of the present. He writes:

If the dynamics of the universe from the beginning shaped the course of the heavens, lighted the sun

and formed the Earth, if this same dynamism brought forth the continents and seas and atmosphere, if it awakened life in the primordial cell and then brought into being the unnumbered variety of living beings, and finally brought us into being and guided us safely through the turbulent centuries, there is reason to believe that this same guiding process is precisely what has awakened in us our present understanding of ourselves and our relation to this stupendous process. Sensitized to such guidance from the very structure and functioning of the universe, we can have confidence in the future that awaits the human venture.²⁷

This then is Berry's New Story, born out of his own intellectual formation as a cultural historian of the West, turning toward Asian religions, examining indigenous traditions, and finally culminating in the study of the scientific story of the universe itself. It is a story of personal evolution against the background of cosmic evolution. It is the story of one person's intellectual history in relation to Earth history. It is the story of all of our histories in conjunction with planetary history. It is a story awaiting new tellings, new chapters, and ever deeper confidence in the beauty and mystery of its unfolding.



Notes

1. For a comprehensive discussion of Berry's philosophy of history see John Grim, "Time, History, Vision" in *Cross Currents* Vol. XXXVII, Nos. 2-3, 1987, pp. 225-239.
2. The second edition was published in 1730 and the third edition in 1744 six months after Vico's death. The third edition is available in a revised edition translated by Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970).
3. *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, p. 381.
4. Thomas Berry, *Five Oriental Philosophies*, Albany: Magi Books, 1968.
5. *Five Oriental Philosophies*, pp. 45-46.
6. *Five Oriental Philosophies*, pp. 8-9.
7. *Five Oriental Philosophies*, p. 15.
8. *Five Oriental Philosophies*, p. 21.
9. *Five Oriental Philosophies*, p. 28.
10. *Five Oriental Philosophies*, p. 28.
11. For a comprehensive view of resources within the traditional world religions and within contemporary ecological perspectives see M.E. Tucker & J. Grim, eds. *Worldviews and Ecology*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994.
12. Thomas Berry, "Affectivity in Classical Confucian Tradition," in *Confucian Spirituality* vol. 1 ed. by Mary Evelyn Tucker, New York: Crossroads, 2003, p. 96.
13. "Affectivity in Classical Confucian Tradition," pp. 1-2.
14. See for example John Grim, *The Shaman*, Norman: OK: Oklahoma University Press, 1988.
15. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Science and Christ*, New York: Harper & Row, 1968, p. 193.
16. Published in 1992 by Harper San Francisco.
17. See Berry's essay with this title in *The Dream of the Earth*, San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988.
18. Berry has written an unpublished essay with this title.
19. For a discussion of Berry's project of articulating a functional cosmology see Brian Swimme, "Berry's Cosmology" in *Cross Currents* Vol. XXXVII, Nos.2-3, 1987, pp. 218-224.
20. Thomas Berry, "The New Story," *Teilhard Studies* no. 1, Chambersburg, PA. Anima Press, 1978, p. 1.
21. "The New Story," *Teilhard Studies*, p. 2.
22. "The New Story," *Teilhard Studies*, p. 3.
23. "The New Story," *Teilhard Studies*, p. 4.
24. "The New Story" as revised in *The Dream of the Earth*, San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988, p. 132.
25. *The Divine Milieu*, New York: Harper & Row, 1960, p. 92.
26. "The New Story" in *The Dream of the Earth*, p. 135.
27. "The New Story" in *The Dream of the Earth*, p. 137.

Mary Evelyn Tucker is a Senior Lecturer and Senior Scholar at Yale University where she has appointments in the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies as well as the Divinity School and the Department of Religious Studies. She is a co-founder and co-director, with John Grim, of the Forum on Religion and Ecology.

A Conversation with Thomas Berry

INTERVIEWED BY NICHOLAS TUFF

NT: *There's the Christian Creation Myth that God created the World in 7 days. There is the various Indigenous Creation Myths. Then, there is the Universe Story which you and Brian Swimme developed. How does the Universe Story fit in with the Christian cosmology as well as the indigenous perspectives and those of other religions?*

TB: Well, the Universe Story that Brian Swimme and I put together was the story as understood by the scientific world. The scientific world has been able to examine and to identify the stages through which the Universe has passed in some billions of years... perhaps 4 ½ billion years. In telling the story, Brian told the first part and I told the second. The first half was in telling the story of the pre-human and I told the human story.

There are several ways in which you can approach the telling of how the Universe came into being. The scientific story is the account that emerges from an examination of the Universe as it communicates to us at the present time. It is a technical story as told by measurement and number and the whole procedures of the [scientific method], understanding the sequence of events that leads us to present time, which tells us something about the mechanics of the Universe, but doesn't say anything about meaning. Science, for instance, yields us no idea of how to use Science. We are not using Science very wisely. As sometimes they say of Science, the scientists can count the vibrations of the instruments, but they cannot hear the music. So the aspect of the Universe that is communicated with the scientific program is a very limited thing, but then there is science as an aid to cosmology

Cosmology means, "understanding the Universe."

In terms of meaning or value and in terms of guidance, [Science] cannot help us with the essential things that are needed, except by telling us the mechanics of how things function. It can help us with medicine. It can help us with communications. It can help us by giving us the means to travel, but it cannot guide us in how to use these instruments.

There is another way of understanding the Universe—the way in which we experience the wonder and the majesty and the awe of the Universe and we turn to language. Language is our way of understanding the Universe. Science in this sense doesn't give us a meaningful language. It gives us language as measurement but not as meaning so the great need, as I expressed once at an event for the Academy of the Advancement of Science. AAA had a conference at the Museum of Natural History in New York. I ended a series of 20 talks. I ended it with a very simple way of thinking about science and cosmology. Of course, we've lost cosmology. We still have religion, but we've lost cosmology. That's really the challenge and difficulty of present—our loss of the Universe. The Universe, presupposing the existence of human kind depends on some kind of Creative Principle. The Creative Principle is first and the Universe is derivative. But for the human understanding, the Universe is first and the Divine is sequential. That is... we go from the Universe to the Divine. So the Universe is First in every way... first in our Knowledge of the Divine of human life and its meaning, in governance... in everything. Cosmology is very important. When we got Science, we lost cosmology, because science began to think that only science gives you the reality of things. Everything else tends to be imagination or religious belief, whereas science has this precision and exactness about what it is about to tell a person. This sense of the universe is really what is missing. Science needs to be a function within a cosmology. When Science thinks it is a cosmology, science will destroy the planet. When Science functions within an acceptable cosmology, it becomes wisdom.

Science can be very helpful in telling us the details about things, like the resolution of the problems like global warming. In this case, a scientific approach is needed. This capacity to limit our use of the natural world is necessary, but is not sufficient. It doesn't help with the basic problems which have to do with our understanding of how the Universe functions and our human adaptation to these principles which we get through our humanistic sciences.

At the present time, we either say something is scientific or that it is religious. If we don't resolve things as science, we say that they are religious.

NT: *What is the deepest problem in education?*

TB: What I am concerned with is establishing an appreciation of Universe as Universe, not as a function of the affective way of economics because that keeps the children caught in the absence of cosmology. There is only one way to escape that.

Why do you want the children to walk in the woods? Why do you want them to experience the rain and the wind and the dawn and the sunset and the whole amazing flurry of existence. The reason is to awaken in the child of [a sense] who they are. And the context in which their life unfolds. So life needs to unfold by all these powers of the Universe, particularly with community relationships. The integral relatedness of the Universe will be preserved. When you have a Universe, religion is possible. That's one of the basic things. The wonder of the universe is so vast and overwhelming, beyond human thought. You can't make a tree from origin. To bring existence into the diversity of what exists.

The Universe is composed of three aspects: Identity, Diversity and Community. There is no particular value of sameness. Sameness doesn't add anything. Sameness is a value simply to accommodate what exists but there's no enrichment... numerically, sure, but not as a mode of being. These three aspects made the Universe. That is what the child needs to be educated by. To be is to be unique. People are not the same. I remember when I was ten years old that I had heard a child [tell] his parents that he liked some of the kids better than others and this concerned me so I asked mother, "Do you like some children better than others?"

Immediately, without hesitation, my mother said, "I feel closest to the one who needs me the most." This idea of fostering the identity, diversity, and community: a child is qualitatively different in nature. Here's something you will need to think about: Being is an analogy. It's like this indifference to say a thing exists.

One of my main latest interests was law. Every being has rights. People have figured out human rights; animals and birds and rocks and rivers [also] have rights. Everything has rights. How could everything have rights? Well, it's an analogy. A tree needs tree rights. A bird needs bird rights. The rights of a tree are no good for bird. Everything gets its rights by the same source: that which brought them into being. To say that something exists is true, but not the same.

A person needs to learn how to be different, to develop their own individuality, and talents. Identity requires an inner core of meaning independent of everything else, and also needs relatedness with everything else and needs to be different. The difference needs to be bonded with relatedness. It needs to be identical, distinct, and needs to identify with otherness so that you make community. And that's education. Humans need to develop as humans. They are different from other modes of being and need to be identified as different, but then they need to relate to other modes of being in a positive way that's beneficial for everybody. So the child needs to relate to otherness in a positive way and so it creates community. It is this sense of the Universe is what is lost. We have so exaggerated the value of the human so that instead of relating positively, we are relating negatively in an exploitative way to otherness.

NT: *So would you say that is our greatest challenge?*

TB: Our greatest challenge is to fulfill those three roles. (Identity, Diversity, and Community). Our greatest challenge is not simply as individuals, but also as a species. Species need to relate to other species, and humans need to relate to the other modes of being because We are nothing without everything else. If you damage the outer world, you damage the inner world. You cannot succeed when you are harmful to the other species. It is a losing game if you are harmful to the surrounding world.

NT: *When you are speaking of this, I am reflecting how much indigenous communities have to offer us.*

TB: Indigenous communities, at their best, are fulfilled [in these three roles]. Indigenous communities have this intimacy of relationship and understand the roles that people play. Again, that's the value of roles—of people being trained to fulfill a certain role. It's all for the good that we aren't fixated to overly specified roles in our education, but on the other hand, it is regretful that a person grows up with no particular skills to their larger life purpose.

NT: *So offer them tools.*

TB: Offer them tools, but also strengthen their vision, whereby they can fulfill their own inner spontaneities that they inherited with their life program.

NT: *I am curious what you think about what is going on*

today, with the Bush administration, with the wars in the Middle East, etc.?

TB: I think it belongs to an age of ultimate devastation... I believe I put it in my book, *A Dream of the Earth*, that what is happening is that we making the Planet Earth uninhabitable by anything. We are just devastating Planet Earth... and I don't know of any other species that has had this effect on other species. There are conditions... of physical, biological conditions that disturb the life systems of species, but the idea of something like THIS happening... I just don't know.

What I say is that we have gone through three phases of life. The Paleozoic, the Old Life period, which terminated several hundred million years ago, 220 million years ago, when 95% species became extinct. The Middle Life Phase, the Mesozoic, terminated 75 million years ago... and that's when the Dinosaurs died out when some 60 % of all species became extinct. Then it was the Cenozoic, which was the recent life period. We are terminating the recent life period after some 75 million years, and, I suggest that we are entering an "Eozoic Era." We are leaving one phase and entering another. We are entering the fourth biological age.

What I am suggesting... We have to restore some kind of Human-Earth relations. It's the only remedy I know. That's where the problem is. That's where the remedy is.



Nicholas Tuff is an educator at the Taos Country Day School in Taos, NM and runs an independent video production company called Bearheart Productions. This interview was conducted on June 28, 2006.

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Reflections on Thomas Berry

JOHN GRIM

Rather than one image of Thomas, I hear his laughter. That sound activates images from our first meeting in 1968 all the way to the week before he went, as the Crow Indians say, to the “other-side camp.” When I met Thomas, I was unsure how to name him because he was a “fatherly priest,” a “doctorly academic,” and a “mister” to whose discipline I was submitting myself. No problem, as I found out, he simply said: “Call me whatever you want.” This was not a teacherly trick to bring me to my own voice—well, it was that too—but more important to me, it was an opening to friendship.

Like so many of you here, Thomas was my friend and friendship was a deep realization, a deep teaching in Thomas’ understanding in which one encountered authenticity in oneself by encountering the Other. Now, one great teacher in a French lineage [Levinas] remarked that: “We are all held hostage by the Other”—that is a powerful insight into interdependence with reality. Thomas’ insight into friendship with another, however, arose out of his reflections on “authenticity,” or *cheng*, in Chinese thought and especially Confucianism.

I dare not wander too deeply into that tradition with such auspicious scholars of Confucianism among us, but I believe Thomas set before me that day an opportunity to see something of myself. Something I yearned to show him, to show you. That is, friendship which acknowledges difference. Not hierarchies of differences that are restrictively vertical and increasingly elite, but ones that are ever-expansive in maturity and reaching-out in compassion. Not differences generated from self-interest and fact learning, but differences that flow from our cosmological emergence—the stillness abiding at the heart of reality. This is a teaching Thomas could transmit with a laugh.

With all of you who knew Thomas, then, I narrate a story. A different story, yet, our story, and they all evoke a meeting with this remarkable man. Such a story might recall his laughter when he told of having left a book manuscript in a taxi when he arrived early in his journey here in New York. Standing utterly perplexed on the street corner wondering what to do, he tells of the taxi having made its way around the block returning to him, returning his hand-typed work. And he laughed with the delightful return of it all.

My favorite story is one I usually take some time to tell, stretching it out so that all its delicate memories of emotions, sites, smells, and sensitivities ripple over the telling like a stream on rocks. The short version will do today: I was writing a dissertation, it was the first week of the golden year in 1977-78 when I lived at the Riverdale Center of Religious Research with Thomas, Brian Brown, Valerio Ortolani, and others. I was in that morbid state only dissertation writers can fathom—utterly lost for words and incapable of silence on almost any subject.

I had gone into the woods next to the Center where some pheasants lived and their smell was a comfort to a Dakotan transplanted to the Bronx. I came back and set to repairing a leather couch in the Sunroom using some lingering talents from a former summer’s work. When Thomas came in, he sized up the situation immediately. He laughed and asked me what I was doing. Mumbling, I nodded towards my stitching. He sat down in a chair nearby and, as if talking to no one in particular, reflected on Dante’s leave-taking from Virgil in the Purgatory section of the Divine Comedy. “It was so difficult for Dante to contemplate leaving his guide, Virgil. He was crestfallen, and Virgil called to him: “Lift up your beard! Crown and mitre yourself over yourself!” I looked up and we laughed together.

At the end, Thomas’ thought contracted and he kept a mnemonic device—a sheet on Western/Christian History—to activate his powers of recall and story. Yet, sometimes no device was necessary and that old laughter blanketed his cold shoulders and he played with its corners like a youngster feeling secure in changing realities. So it was when we visited him in his room in Greensboro, North Carolina. “How are you! Fr. Thomas,” we would inquire; and he would smilingly respond, “Halfway.” “Halfway?” we wondered. “Halfway to paradise,” he laughed.

Or again, “How are you Thomas?” and he tilted his head to say, “Not as well as I’d like, but better than I

deserve.” He’d laugh with his trick. Or again, and this is the response I hear today. ”How are you Thomas?” And he looked up so whimsically saying: “You know in China, they say that age brings wisdom: I just don’t know what happened to me!” May your laughter rain down on us like Dharma, may your laughter be a beacon call of authenticity, may your laughter crown and mitre us over ourselves once again.



This is a presentation delivered by the author at the Thomas Berry Memorial Service at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, in New York City, September 26, 2009.

John Grim is a Senior Lecturer and Scholar at Yale University. He is Coordinator of the Forum on Religion and Ecology with Mary Evelyn Tucker, and series editor of “World Religions and Ecology” from Harvard Divinity School’s Center for the Study of World Religions.

Reflections

MARY EVELYN TUCKER

We welcome you today to this special Cathedral, a place of such beauty and grandeur that it beckons us to a larger life journey. It calls us, as did Thomas here on many occasions, to the journey of our greater self toward new human-Earth relations.

This is the journey that Thomas invited us into and it is why we celebrate with one another as fellow travelers. We can recognize in the many faces gathered her today a sense of the shared journey. We have chosen a common path because Thomas showed us the Way. In his writings and in his talks he has lit up the path—illuminating it for

us and for those who will come after.

Because of Thomas Berry we are fellow pilgrims who are bound together in a moment of grace—a historic time that is requiring of us a monumental response. This is a time of great ecological devastation with crushing social consequences and unknown affects on the future of life itself. We need little reminder of what pressing challenges such as climate change and species extinction bring us together.

But in the midst of these grave and growing challenges we draw strength and indeed courage from the journey of Thomas himself.

Coming out of the south Thomas experienced the great rhythms of nature’s beauty before development swept away the meadow across the creek. Finding his way forward to study western history at Catholic University in Washington. Moving beyond the west in his journey to China where he encountered the great religious traditions of Asia. Finding his way to Europe as an army chaplain after the war. And then back to the United States to discover his path into teaching. Finally, in his 60s, after so much reflection and anguish, he arrived at his understanding of the New Story. There is hope for all of us in that such creativity takes time! And we can observe, although he did not speak of them, that each one of these migrations in his journey presented significant challenges.

—His professors at Catholic University did not understand the breadth of his interests and insisted that he completely rewrite his thesis.

—His time in China was cut short by Mao’s take over in 1949 and he had to flee the country.

—His desire to teach was not initially affirmed by his religious order.

—His history of religions program was not fully embraced or continued by the Theology Department at Fordham.

—The Riverdale Center of Religious Research was discontinued after a quarter of a century and the 400-year great Red Oak was cut down.

And yet amidst these obstacles and setbacks his movement to largeness of soul was palpable. Thomas never succumbed to bitterness or cynicism, even a few years ago when he taught himself to read again after suffering a stroke. Rather, he embraced his life journey with humor, in the company of friends, enriched by wine and music on the sun porch at Riverdale. And for some 25 years he sustained us all, along the banks of the Hudson River, across from the 200 million year old cliffs of the Palisades, under the great red oak where we would gather with him to watch the blazing sunset.

Through our graduate studies and early teaching there

was Thomas ready to go to the Broadway dinner, opening up the Center for our monthly Teilhard lectures, moving through his immense library with his generous give away spirit: “Take this book, you will need it” was his mantra. And how poignant it was when generosity overflowed in his 80th year. Together we dismantled his splendid library of some 10,000 books sending them, like a shamanic dismemberment, to scholars all over North America.

How can one capture the immense journey of such a person who was always giving away—his time, his Riverdale papers, his ideas, his affection. He was present to each of us—making us all feel like his companions on the way.

This, then, is a person of the great Tao—the Way beyond name or form, as the Taoists would say. He is a sage in the Confucian sense—forming one body with Heaven, Earth and the 10,000 things. He is the Cosmic Person, the Mahapurusha of the Vedic Hymns of early Hinduism. He is the Renaissance man of the West who embraced, like the drawing on the Award program suggests, the whole Earth community.

But more than anything he is a person whose journey was defined by a migrating intelligence. By this I mean, with all of his erudition he remained close to the intuitive ways of knowing that permeate our living world. And this more than anything is what inspired us. His primal intuition that this is indeed a *Sacred Universe*, that *The Dream of the Earth* has yet to be realized and that we could join with him in *The Great Work* for our time.

For Thomas’ wisdom is like the vast imprinting in the world of migrations—like that of the red knot sand piper who journeys from the southern tip of South America, Tierra del Fuego, to the northern regions of Canada, James Bay. This migration of some 6000 miles is punctuated by a stop over for feeding on the horseshoe crab eggs in the Chesapeake Bay—energy for the great journey.

But the real miracle occurs when, after giving birth to their young in the great forest of northern Canada, those fledglings find their way back by themselves preceding their parents on the long flight home. Stopping in the Chesapeake Bay, feeding on the horseshoe crab eggs they return at last to Tierra del Fuego.

Such profound intuitive sensibilities—guided by wind and wave, sun, moon and stars—reside deep within the living worlds. And it is these sensibilities that Thomas remained close to his whole life, thus giving us the possibility that in the midst of great challenges we also would find our way home once again.

His promise is that the Earth community will embrace us too as fellow travelers.

This is our hope.

This is his legacy.

This is now our shared journey, bound as we are by the migrating ways of knowing whereby we have found one another.



This is a presentation delivered by the author at the Thomas Berry Memorial Service at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, in New York City, September 26, 2009.

Mary Evelyn Tucker is a Senior Lecturer and Senior Scholar at Yale University where she has appointments in the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies as well as the Divinity School and the Department of Religious Studies. She is a co-founder and co-director, with John Grim, of the Forum on Religion and Ecology.

“Of all the things in the world that need changing, metaphysics may not be high on your list of priorities. . . . Whether or not you acknowledge it is immaterial; indeed the tendency to overlook metaphysical dependencies only make them deeper. For they determine, among other things, what you hold to be self-evident and what you hold to be possible; what you think has substance and what you can afford to ignore. People who resist cynicism are called idealists because they don’t believe the world as it’s given to us exhausts reality as a whole; they are convinced that ideas, too, have force and consequences. Hope is abased on, or undermined by, a metaphysical standpoint.”

Susan Neiman, *Moral Clarity: A Guide for Grown Up Idealists*, (Orlando, FL: Harcourt Trade Publishers; 2008), pp.26-27.

Contemplating Sabbatical

JILL S. SCHNEIDERMAN

It feels, and indeed is, impossible to write down these words without singing the words to the Byrds' tune "Turn, Turn, Turn," which is based on the book of Ecclesiastes. In fact, I had to put down my pen and sing them. They feel joyous, to turn my own phrase.

I remember the first time that I learned that the words for the song came from the bible, Ecclesiastes in particular. I was sitting in Steve Gould's History of Earth class, listening to him lecture about time's arrow and time's cycle, linear and cyclical time, the subject of the book on which he was working at the time. It opened my mind to the possibility of finding wisdom in the Bible. It was a startling recognition for me because up until that point I thought of religion as a source of oppression, mostly.

I guess there is some poetry to the fact that I am now rereading Gould's relatively uncelebrated *Time's Arrow, Time's Cycle: Myth and Metaphor in the Discovery of Geological Time*

(1988). This book above all others has been my academic bible since I first encountered Steve twenty-five years ago as a graduate student. His consideration of deep time along with other fundamentals of geology, such as the igneous nature of basalt, has fueled my teaching and thinking over the past quarter century.

Sabbatical years run from one Rosh Ha-Shanah to the next. And here I sit, erev Rosh Ha-Shanah, the biblical beginning of my sabbatical year, thinking about time and shmita (the biblical sabbatical year), Jubilee year and meditation. How am I to use this time? Though I haven't consulted it recently, my institution's faculty governance is probably spare in describing the purpose of sabbatical leave. And this is not my first, not

my second, nor merely my third sabbatical, so one might ask, why do I wonder about it? In fact, I've been thinking about this sabbatical as my Jubilee year sabbatical. As scholars more qualified to speak on this matter than I have pointed out, sabbatical has a biblical origin rooted in rest and spiritual regeneration.

According to Genesis, God created the earth and all its life in six days, and on the seventh day God rested, hence the seventh day as a Sabbath, a day of rest. Additionally, other books of the old Testament describe the sabbatical year, the seventh year of the seven-year agricultural cycle mandated by the Torah for the Land of Israel, in which tillers of the earth let the ground lie fallow, debts are forgiven, slaves are freed. I wonder how many

To every thing there is a season,
and a time to every purpose under heaven:
A time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant; and a time to pluck up that which is planted;
A time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to breakdown, and a time to build up;
A time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance
A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
A time to get, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to cast away;
A time to rend, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence and a time to speak;
A time to love, and a time to hate;
a time of war, and a time of peace

— Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8

of my academic colleagues recognize the biblical origin of sabbaticals every seventh semester or every seventh year (for those of us fortunate enough to be faculty at institutions that offer them). I've questioned a few of my colleagues about this and it has escaped the attention of most whom I've asked. Of course, I'm faculty at a religiously unaffiliated institution. Perhaps it's different at Jesuit and other religious institutions of higher education.

For me, this sabbatical year has special significance. I've not had seven sabbaticals but this year I am fifty years old. According to the Bible, the sabbatical year was originally part of a 50-year cycle of which the climax was the Jubilee year when all land was returned to its ancestral owners and Hebrew slaves who had chosen to remain in service after the biblical six-year maximum were released. It feels right to me to plan to spend this special sabbatical year resting and contemplating time.

A Contemplative Practice Fellowship from the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society enables me to undertake this project, if one should even call it that, because the fellowship validates the endeavor. I'm reading about time; returning to the season of my earliest intellectual coming of age; considering directional time and cycling time; trying to understand how different cultures and religious/spiritual traditions have lived with it; hoping to find a way to develop a course on the subject as I promised the Center; and looking for ways to address with my colleagues the problem that University of Washington information technology professor David Levy refers to as "no time to think."

There's irony in making something of a sabbatical. The Googling I've done to see what others have written about the origins of academic sabbaticals leads me to a paucity of papers—a

bit of history, a bit more about harnessing employees' potential and utility for an institution or business. Most everything I read moves quickly beyond what seems to me to be the essence of sabbatical: renewal of spirit and intellect as they seek meaning and value in life.

I sit and stare at the orange and green photograph of a robed Thai monk gazing pensively across a small, still lily pond. A photographer friend and colleague gave me the photo more than a decade ago and it has traveled with me from the west coast of the U.S. to east, from house to dorm faculty apartment to house as if accompanying me because it would one day be significant beyond its attractive color and composition. It's my purpose to sit, to be still, during my Jubilee sabbatical, and see what arises. I'm bolstered by having removed myself from the United States to accompany my spouse on her Fulbright to the University of the West Indies in Barbados, the country in the western hemisphere with the oldest known synagogue founded in 1654 by Sephardic Jews fleeing persecution in Brazil. Physically away from demands of colleagues and expectations of students, I'm facilitating this opportunity to let the terrain of my mind lie fallow, to meditate to see what arises. This is the convergence of my contemplative practice fellowship and my sabbatical year. So to all my colleagues beginning sabbatical, and to all my dear ones, *l'shana tova*, let the sweet new year begin.



Jill S. Schneiderman is Professor of Earth Science at Vassar College and 2009-2010 Contemplative Practice Fellow, Center for Contemplative Mind in Society

Bursting the Green Bubble

DANA BEACH

The environmental movement has always needed constructive criticism. When Ted Nordhaus and Michael Shellenberger's article, "The Death of Environmentalism," was published in 2004, I suspect many people read it, as I did, hoping for insightful analysis and direction. I was intrigued by the garish overstatement of the title and hoped at least for an iconoclastic rant in the vein of the ever-entertaining and occasionally visionary James Kunstler (*The Geography of Nowhere*, *The Long Emergency*, et al).

Instead, "The Death..." delivered a warmed-over, and poorly organized, rehash of earlier, legitimate criticisms. The environmental movement is not inclusive enough. It views the issues in a balkanized manner. It has no unifying vision. Its language is overly technical. It has not sought out powerful political allies. It has not framed issues in terms of common American values. All of this was fair enough, but it was nothing that hasn't been said at conferences over the past twenty years.

What was largely missing was Nordhaus and Shellenberger's prescription for success. Instead of providing game-changing insight about a new environmentalism risen

from the ashes of the old, “The Death of Environmentalism” was simply a pretentious gripe session.

With “The Green Bubble” (New Republic, May 20, 2009), Nordhaus and Shellenberger continue the franchise, taking environmentalists to task for limousine-liberal hypocrisy, “cheery utopianism,” Ludditism, anti-modernism, ingratitude, and just being a lot dumber than the article’s authors are.

The title is, of course, a play on the recently burst economic bubble. The authors report, to no one’s surprise except apparently their own, that enthusiasm for environmental causes ebbs and flows in loose correlation with economic conditions.

In “The Green Bubble” we are once again given a selective history of the environmental movement, the beginning of which the authors peg as the 1969 fire on the Cuyahoga River in Cleveland. Most historians would probably consider 1962 a better date, with the publication of Rachel Carson’s “Silent Spring.” But since Nordhaus and Shellenberger’s goal is to trivialize environmentalism, the Cuyahoga River fire reaction provides a more compatible beginning than the publication of Carson’s masterpiece.

The history is rife with logical slights of hand. A favorite of the authors is *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*—“after this, therefore because of this.” To whit, they note that in 2008 polling numbers indicated weakening support for environmental initiatives and, “Soon thereafter, Shell announced it would halt its investments in solar and wind power.” This is convenient to their thesis, but a more reasonable explanation is that falling energy prices made solar and wind less attractive investments than when prices were higher. In fact, as is the case with any social phenomenon, public interest in, and media coverage of, environmentalism waxes and wanes.

Take Britney Spears, for example. The history “The Green Bubble” presents is not of environmentalism, but, at best, of popular media coverage of environmental issues.

Ted Nordhaus and
Michael Shellenberger.
“The Green Bubble,”
New Republic, May 20,
2009.

An honest and rigorous review would reveal that for the past forty years, environmental activity and affiliation have trended upward and outward. In the 1970s, national groups like the Sierra Club, the Natural Resources Defense Council, Environmental Defense Fund, the National Wildlife Federation and others established a solid presence in Washington, buoyed by millions of members nationwide. They focused primarily on passing, improving and defending federal environmental laws protecting clean water and air, recovering endangered species, handling hazardous waste and managing change on the coast.

In the late 1970s and 1980s, state and regional environmental groups formed around issues that were closer to home, including forest and river protection, local agriculture, environmental impacts on human health, land use, environmental justice and transportation. A few of these groups, like the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, exceeded some of the nationals in membership and budget. Collectively, they represent tens of millions of people encompassing virtually every facet of America, from rural farmers opposing factory hog operations to urban families fighting municipal garbage incinerators.

The land trust movement, in particular, exploded as the fastest growing sector of conservation, with more than one thousand new organizations launched over the course of a few decades.

By the late 1990s, the movement had so grown in size and scope that it was difficult to tell exactly where the constituency started or stopped. Consider, for example, the Chicago Metropolitan Planning Council, the Sierra Business Council, or the Brookings Institution’s Metropolitan Program. Are these environmental initiatives with a business and planning component, or business agendas with environmental planning components? Would the Urban Land Institute’s smart growth program, inspired by the smart growth movement, be considered an environmental or a planning effort? Are Van Jones’ efforts to put the unemployed to work on energy efficiency economic development or environmentalism? The answer is that these all represent a more fully realized environmental movement that has now converged with, absorbed, and been transformed by other disciplines and constituencies.

The first sentence in “The Green Bubble” reductively states, “Sometime after the release of An Inconvenient Truth in 2006, environmentalism crossed from political movement to cultural movement.” The “more complicated story” that Nordhaus and Shellenberger promise, but fail to tell, is that environmentalism has been a cultural movement for 40 years. Today it is a mature, diverse, pervasive, deeply ingrained part of American society. Its successes and failures are far more interesting, and important, than the stereotype-laden critique of hypocritical, upper-middle-class professionals in “The Green Bubble.”

Nordhaus and Shellenberger don’t, or can’t, distinguish between fads (Sports Illustrated’s Green Edition),

political negotiation (on cap-and-trade legislation), and broad social trends. The authors are, however, adept at rhetorical subterfuge. In both “The Death of Environmentalism” and “The Green Bubble,” they construct a straw man representing the green movement and then beat him to a bloody pulp.

They define “greens” as “liberal upper-middle-class professionals,” a group for whom they have particular disdain. The article takes as a proxy for the green movement “urban hipsters,” “suburban matrons,” “liberal professionals,” “American elites,” “upper-middle-class liberals,” and the ever-appealing target, “Prius owners.” (So determined are they to prove their point about the vacuity of green culture that they cite a survey proving that Prius owners are motivated more by status than by fuel savings. The survey company, CNW Marketing Research, is the same organization that argued that a Prius consumes more energy over its life than a Hummer H3.)

This critique is neither enlightening nor accurate, but about one third of the way into the article the authors entice us with the prospect of an earth-shattering revelation, on the order of, say the latest piece from Malcolm Gladwell. The retrenchment of environmental attitudes, they pronounce, is not caused by “economic pressures alone... It is a more complicated story... about modern American life itself.”

What profound insight have they discovered? Documented by a string of carefully selected factoids and anecdotes, the authors lead us to the following conclusions: (1) the poor are not happier with less; (2) some people derive personal satisfaction from environmentally responsible consumption, but (3) individual efforts to conserve, such as switching light bulbs and growing home gardens, will not by themselves curb climate

change; (4) higher fossil fuel prices will hurt some people more than they will hurt others, particularly in areas that rely more heavily on coal, and, (5) “politics will always involved conflict, contradiction, and compromise.” Gladwell this is definitely not.

The authors deploy a similar reductionist approach to the current environmental debate. Echoing Dick Cheney, they spend a fair amount of ink demolishing “personal virtue” as a motivation for environmental behavior. They belittle the “grand significance” and “fresh urgency” of “screwing in light bulbs inflating tires, and weatherizing windows.” Green consumption, epitomized by the Prius buyer, is “positional consumption,” undertaken to distinguish “one as elite.” The burst bubble, they argue, has flushed out the hypocrisy and fickleness of those who must now make “virtue of necessity” (saving money), instead of “necessity of virtue” (saving the planet). Environmentalism has now become little more than frugality.

They smugly rip writers Colin Beavan and Michael Pollan who, they claim, previously touted environmentalist as offering “not just a smaller carbon footprint but a better life” but, in the post-boom economy, sell it as simply as a “thrifty way to make ends meet in a difficult economy.”

Nordhaus and Shellenburger excel at presenting false choices. “It is easy,” they write, “to point out the insignificance of planting a garden, buying fewer clothes, or using fluorescent bulbs... but the ecological irrelevance of these practices was beside the point. What downscalers offered was not a better way to reduce emissions, but rather, a way to reduce guilt.”

It is apparently inconceivable that downscalers, gardeners, CFL buyers and the like were interested in both

reducing emissions and reducing guilt. And it is a testament to the author’s naïveté that they have no inkling that guilt, or ethical responsibility, or personal virtue, or whatever we call the array of human emotions that underlie action, is a prerequisite for change, both individually and collectively.

The most ridiculous pronouncements the authors save for last. “The problem,” they reveal, “is not that most greens are elites, per se, but rather that too few of them acknowledge the material basis for their ecological concern and that too many reject the modern project of expanding prosperity altogether.”

Perhaps the authors are not reading the same national news the rest of us are. Virtually the entire conversation about energy has emphasized putting people back to work through green jobs, increasing disposable income by reducing household energy bills, creating new economic development opportunities through new energy technologies. It is, in short, almost entirely about “expanding prosperity altogether.”

“The Green Bubble” hits a low point in journalistic integrity with the assertion, “It has become an article of faith among many greens that the global poor are happier with less and must be shielded from the horrors of overconsumption and economic development—never mind the realities of infant mortality, treatable disease, short life expectancies and grinding agrarian poverty.” The authors provide no evidence, no citations, not even a single tortured anecdote, to defend the statement, simply “proof by assertion.”

If this article and its predecessor were just a flash on a blog, they would not warrant a response. But at least one national pundit, George Will, has taken their pronouncements to heart and given them, if not credibility, at least broad editorial coverage. When

he is not writing rhapsodically about our national pastime, baseball, Will issues Tourettian diatribes against action on climate change.

It is unfortunate that Nordhaus and Shellenberger have given Will and others like him fresh grist. They could do so much more, because there is room for improvement in the “green movement,” and there has never been a more urgent time for rigorous examination and course correction.

The authors’ web site, www.thebreakthrough.org, contains substantive and timely commentary on the current climate proposals pending in Congress. This kind of constructive engagement (in spite of the blustery self-importance of the organization’s name) is particularly helpful as we chart a course toward a more responsible energy future. In contrast, “The Green Bubble” is an unfortunate distraction from that work.



Dana Beach is Executive Director of the Coastal Conservation League in Charleston, SC.

CHN BOOKSHELF

A regular feature calling attention to important books and articles that CHN staff, board, and collaborating scholars are reading and recommend. Quot libros, quam breve tempus.

Ulrich Beck, *World at Risk* (Polity Press, 2007)

Stewart Brand, *Whole Earth Discipline: An Ecopragmatist Manifesto* (Viking, 2009)

Susan Clayton and Gene Myers, *Conservation Psychology: Understanding and Promoting Human Care for Nature* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009)

Anthony Giddens, *The Politics of Climate Change* (Polity Press, 2009)

Denis Noble, *The Music of Life: Biology Beyond Genes*. (Oxford University Press, 2006)

J. Rockström, W. Steffen, K. Noone, A. Persson, F. S. Chapin, III, E. Lambin, et al. “Planetary boundaries: exploring the safe operating space for humanity,” *Ecology and Society* 14(2): 32. 2009. Online at: <http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol14/iss2/art32/>. Also accessible at: <http://www.stockholmresilience.org/download/18.8615c78125078c8d3380002197/ES-2009-3180.pdf>

Arundhati Roy, *Field Notes on Democracy: Listening to Grasshoppers* (Haymarket Books, 2009)

Stephen Spratt, Andrew Simms, Eva Neitzert, and Josh Ryan-Collins, *The Great Transition* (NEF [the New Economics Foundation], 2009). Online at: <http://www.neweconomics.org/publications/the-great-transition>

Nicholas Stern, *The Global Deal: Climate Change and the Creation of A New Era of Progress and Prosperity* (Public Affairs, 2009)

Tyler Volk, *CO₂ Rising: The World’s Greatest Environmental Challenge* (MIT Press 2008)

There is no 'Last Word'

BROOKE HECHT

I begin with a caveat, one given by Wendell Berry this past October to a crowd of 2000 gathered to hear him read some of his writing in Madison, Wisconsin. "There is no Last Word," Berry said. In that spirit, I offer these thoughts.

As I write this, it is almost Christmas. Perhaps more than 2 billion people worldwide are liturgically anticipating the life of an unborn child, a child who comes so "that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10)

What is life? And what about its abundance?

I recall a blustery winter night when I was invited to give a lecture at the Lutheran School of Theology in the midst of the University of Chicago campus. After a journey through heavily falling snow, I was met by several dozen divinity students, gathered to learn about ecology and evolution.

One of the things I wanted to share that night was my understanding of the interconnectedness among living things. The science on the relatedness between humans and chimpanzees, for example, has become widely accessible. What amazes me about these studies is not just the percentage of relatedness between humans and various living things (which is remarkable), but that there is relatedness at all. We share the stuff of life, not just with chimpanzees, but with daffodils and yeast. While we sometimes do not easily recognize other living creatures as kin, we are all intimately related.

There is relatedness, and then there is relationship. Our interconnection with the rest of life goes beyond genetics—family ties, so to speak. To me, this is one of the deeply beautiful revelations of evolutionary history. We are not only related to the rest of life, but also we are in relationship with it. Over time and across space, organisms shape one another and the world around them, just as they themselves are shaped by these interactions. The upshot of this is not necessarily "survival of the fittest," as most people assume. In fact, as evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould has noted, the process of evolution shifts between forgiving periods where there is only "elimination of the worst" and more bleak periods of "survival of the fittest."

What may come as a surprise is that we humans are shifting the evolutionary trajectory away from the more forgiving path, putting life on the harsh road of survival of the fittest. And with that comes abundant suffering of life. Viewing the history of humanity within the evolutionary context does not free humans from moral considerations, but on the contrary forces us to face our responsibilities to the rest of life and the relationships we are shaping within it.

We humans have a moral obligation to address the critical changes to the system of life we are affecting with respect to climate change, stratospheric ozone, land use change, freshwater use, biological diversity, ocean acidification, nitrogen and phosphorus inputs to the biosphere and oceans, aerosol loading and chemical pollution. These are the nine "tipping points" recently outlined by the Stockholm Resilience Centre that are shifting life as we know it. (For a review of these issues, see "Tipping Towards the Unknown," <http://www.stockholmresilience.org/planetary-boundaries>) We humans are responsible for creating these tipping points and the accompanying negative relationships they create within the web of life.

When I finished my lecture, one of the students asked, “What do you want us to do with this information?” It was a great question; I didn’t have an answer. So, I stumbled on with a few sentences and then responded to several more questions. Suddenly, it came to me how I wanted

A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. “Look after him,” he said, “and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.” Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?

Excerpt from the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-36)

to answer. I told the students I would share some of my core beliefs about Jesus. I could see their curiosity piqued.

Jesus broke down barriers in ways that were unthinkable to the spiritual elite of his day. St. Paul distilled the radicalism of Jesus’ teaching in the following way: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). What did I want the students to do with what I shared about ecology and evolution? Jesus broke down barriers among different kinds of people, including all people in God’s love. In the same way, I hoped these emerging faith leaders would break down barriers to love within the greater web of life. I hoped for a time when our care for the poor, tired, and hungry would be extended to the entire family of life. The Good Samaritan came to mind, and I told them I hoped we would begin to be neighbors to the plants and animals with whom we share this life journey, with whom we share both relatedness and relationship.

In this season, as we anticipate the birth of a child who comes to bring abundant

life, let us expand our definition of “life” and how we will protect it.

Let us redefine ourselves as well—more humbly, not lording ourselves over the landscape but recognizing our place within it, as kin and neighbor to life.



Brooke Hecht is President of the Center for Humans and Nature

The Center for Humans and Nature

Our Mission: To explore and promote moral and civic responsibilities to human communities and to natural ecosystems and landscapes.

