

Where is Mary Coelho trying to take us in

Awakening Universe Emerging Personhood: The Power of Contemplation in an Evolving Universe?

Here are the last five pages of her text, tweaked by Richard Fuller, 07/22/10.

THE ACTIVE AND FRUITFUL LIFE

The Integration:

Full participation in the ancient, unfolding universe,
a whole permeated with creative, interpenetrating numinous depth,
grants us great nobility and intrinsic worth.

The contemplative awakening is no longer just a reawakening to private, subjective knowledge of Abyss/God

and the action that comes from that;

the person is *simultaneously* brought into
intrinsic participation in the unfolding whole.

"those who have this experience of the identity of the human with the entire order of things
can be considered as possessing a complete human mode of being." (Swimme and Berry pp. 197-98)

Full expression of the unitive life would therefore include living in a sustainable manner,
so the Earth may continue to be fruitful.

We would no longer tolerate seduction into needless consumerism and waste production.

Several communities that integrate a contemplative spirituality and a sustainable manner of living are developing.

- At Genesis farm in Blairstown, New Jersey, the new story is taught, careful food preparation is taught, and organic food is grown by community-supported agriculture.
- A new monastic community, based on the revelations of the new story, is being founded in New England, under the leadership of a Catholic sister, Gail Worcelo.
- A family in Ohio is starting a community called greenfire, in which there will be both communal contemplative life and, as part of that contemplative life, an intention to live on the land, with Earth-healing and regenerating life-ways. (greenfirefarm.org/)

[An individual example of this integration can be found in] A woman once found great joy in cooking, but lost a sense of its importance when she learned it is seen by some as slave labor in a capitalistic society.

However, she could recover that joy and sense of value in the context of the new story,
when she recognized that as she cooked for her friends and family using wholesome food, "slow food,"
she was giving fresh expression to a beautiful, self-nourishing universe.

Many people leave their car in the garage whenever possible,
plant native species,
shop for local produce ...

This activism comes out of the kind of consciousness that is emerging from the new story and the contemplative tradition.

The integration may also be given expression in more costly ways.

In the mid-seventeenth century, Quaker **John Woolman** traveled extensively by foot and by horse as an itinerant minister to Quaker meetings throughout the eastern colonies.

It was the depth of communion with the suffering of his fellow human beings that led him to an early witness against slavery, which in turn shaped the future witness of the Society of Friends against slavery. When he walked long distances on foot instead of traveling by horse or carriage, it was by choice, in order that he might feel first hand the condition of slaves. In his travels he would customarily receive the hospitality of Quakers, some of whom owned slaves, but this caused "a difficulty . . . in [his] mind with respect to saving [his] own money by kindness received, which appeared to [him] to be the gain of Oppression." (Cady, p. 95) He sometimes left money for the slaves or gave it to them directly, and on one occasion he quietly left before the meal was served in the elegant home of a family he was visiting because it was attended by slaves. The family later freed their slaves, saying they could not continue to keep slaves "if they are going to cost the friendship of such a man as John Woolman." Earlier, in his life as a merchant, Woolman had refused to write wills if they provided for the passing on of slaves as part of the inheritance. In later years he began to wear undyed clothing, because the production of dyes was dependent on slave labor in the West Indies. This caused him great suffering, because the pale white color of his clothes made him conspicuous. He refused to ride long distances in carriages in England, because of the cruel exhaustion of the horses.

Rufus Jones, a twentieth-century Quaker leader, said of John Woolman:

"Here was a mysticism --and it was the type to which I dedicated my life-- which sought no ecstasies, no miracles of levitation, no startling phenomena, no private rapture, but whose overmastering passion was to turn all he possessed, including his own life, into the channel of universal love."

(Vining, p. 262)

Jones felt that a mysticism that did not find expression in creative serving remained incomplete.

A Second Axial Change: Ecozoic Consciousness

Crisis moments are a time of stupendous creativity that can draw forth great change. (Swimme 1990, p. 89)

Energies directed toward the preservation of the species and the Earth
are **emerging from a level below our rational preoccupations,**

so that

the changes in consciousness now glimpsed in many places are **not** just a frantic
grasping at straws

by worried residents of an Earth under great stress.

Ewert Cousins suggests that we are now involved in another axial change in consciousness occurring simultaneously all around the Earth. (See chapter 15.)

It is bringing about an unprecedented complexification of consciousness through the convergence of culture and religion." (Cousins 1992, pp. 7, 10)

When Thomas Berry identifies the twentieth century as the end of the Cenozoic Period (the last 67 million years, when the mammals flourished) and the beginning of the Ecozoic Period, he refers to a complex of issues that includes the change in consciousness brought by **the new story of the evolutionary universe.**

In the Ecozoic Era, humans will be present to the Earth in a mutually enhancing manner.

Berry is playing a key role in awakening us to the very great significance of the discovery that we belong to an evolutionary universe, which he sees as the context for a contemporary shift in consciousness in many disciplines.

Loyal Rue calls the story a

"wisdom tradition" tolerating a diversity of interpretations, yet a means for global solidarity and cooperation. (Rue, p. 136)

With more than 6 billion people living on the Earth and many ecosystems severely weakened or destroyed, it will be extremely difficult to shift to sustainable cultures.

Faced with major threats,

do we dare to recognize that there are signs of hope?

- Are not small communities and individual lives, however heroic, very fragile and nearly insignificant before the enormous, unprecedented devastation of the great wars of the last century?
- What of the vast numbers of migrants living in poverty on the periphery of large cities and
- the children dying daily of hunger?

Dare we believe that we are at a major evolutionary threshold?

Could it really be the case, as Teilhard de Chardin observed, that

"Today something is happening to the structure of human consciousness.

A fresh kind of life is starting"?

But it is a fact that now, in the context of the new universe story,

we are becoming aware of the power for transformation grounded in the inexhaustible fecundity at the root of reality in every region of the universe in this present moment.

Based on all that has been presented in the previous chapters,

I believe that we are indeed now offered a 'way of seeing' that allows us to **take heart and recognize the potential that lies within us and within the Earth.**

The evidence is there.

To think that the contemplative life with its inner realizations and its outer creative expression is insignificant is to fail to realize that **mind and mental events have a status matching that of the material world.** Many remarkable individuals have witnessed by their lives to the possibility of a fundamental change in human consciousness and to the possibility of joining in **a larger, creative, trustworthy order** to effect great change.

Besides, as Brian Swimme says,

the universe is addicted to surprise: How can we be without hope?

Joanna Macy, an American Buddhist and activist, considers it an

**“enormous privilege to be alive now, in this Turning,
when all the wisdom and courage we ever harvested can be put to use and
matter supremely.”** (Quoted in Ryan, p. 77)

In our direct participation in the point of creativity that produces things out of "nothingness,"
we find the freedom within which we are able to

choose to participate

in the building of a sustainable future.

We are placed right **in the heart of things** physically and **spiritually** in the 'present now.'

By becoming conscious of our full identity we find it

highly possible

**to choose ways of transforming our relationships with the Earth
and all its peoples,**

with our close human and other-than-human companions,

and with the institutions that govern and teach about these relationships.

Nelson Mandela included this poem, "**Let Your Light Shine**," in the speech he gave when he was inaugurated president of South Africa in 1994.

It speaks to the invitation we are offered to the contemplative life within the great evolutionary story.

It was read at the funeral of the college-age son of a friend.

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate

Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.

It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us.

We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, to be gorgeous, to be talented?

Actually, who are you not to be?

You are a child of God;

your playing small does not serve the world.

And there is nothing enlightened about shrinking

So that other people will not feel insecure around you.

We were born to make manifest the Glory of God that is inside us.

It's not just in some of us, it's in everyone

And when we let our own light shine,

We unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.

As we are liberated from our own fear,

Our presence automatically liberates others.

p. 375

THE ACTIVE AND FRUITFUL LIFE

The Integration

Full participation in the ancient, unfolding universe, a whole permeated with creative, interpenetrating numinous depth, grants us great nobility and intrinsic worth. The contemplative awakenIng is no longer just a reawakening to private, subjective knowledge of Abyss/God and the action that comes from that; in the light of the integration just developed, the person is simultaneously brought into intrinsic participation in the unfolding whole. It is true that only "those who have this experience of the identity of the human with the entire order of things can be considered as possessing a completely human mode of being." (Swimme and Berry pp. 197-98) Full expression of the unitive life would therefore include living in a sustainable manner, so the Earth may continue to be fruitful. We would no longer tolerate seduction into needless consumerism and waste production. Several communities that integrate a contemplative spirituality and a sustainable manner of living are developing. At Genesis farm in Blairstown, New Jersey, the new story is taught, careful food preparation is taught, and organic food is grown by community-supported agriculture. A new monastic community, based on the revelations of the new story, is being founded in New England, under the leadership of a Catholic sister, Gail Worcelo. A family in Ohio is starting a community called greenfire, in which there will be both communal contemplative life and, as part of that contemplative life, an intention to live on the land with Earth-healing and regenerating life-ways.

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The integration may also be given expression in costly ways. In the mid-seventeenth century, Quaker John Woolman traveled extensively by foot and by horse as an

itinerant minister to Quaker meetings throughout the eastern colonies. It was the depth of communion with the suffering of his fellow human beings that led him to an early witness against slavery, which in turn shaped the future witness of the Society of Friends against slavery. When he walked long distances on foot instead of traveling by horse or carriage, it was by choice, in order that he might feel first hand the condition of slaves. In his travels he would customarily receive the hospitality of Quakers, some of whom owned slaves, but this caused "a difficulty . . . in [his] mind with respect to saving [his] own money by kindness received, which appeared to [him] to be the gain of Oppression." (Cady, p. 95) He sometimes left money for the slaves or gave it to them directly, and on one occasion he quietly left before the meal was served in the elegant home of a family he was visiting because it was attended by slaves. The family later freed their slaves, saying they could not continue to keep slaves "if they are going to cost the friendship of such a man as John Woolman." Earlier, in his life as a merchant, Woolman had refused to write wills if they provided for the passing on of slaves as part of the inheritance. In later years he began to wear undyed clothing, because the production of dyes was dependent on slave labor in the West Indies. This caused him great suffering, because the pale white color of his clothes made him conspicuous. He refused to ride long distances in carriages in England, because of the cruel exhaustion of the horses. Rufus Jones, a twentieth-century Quaker leader, said of John Woolman: "Here was a mysticism --and it was the type to which I dedicated my life-- which sought no ecstasies, no miracles of levitation, no startling phenomena, no private rapture, but whose overmastering passion was to turn all he possessed, including his own life, into the channel of universal love." (Vining, p. 262) Jones felt that a mysticism that did not find expression in creative serving remained incomplete.

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in another axial change in consciousness occurring simultaneously all around the Earth. (See chapter 15.) It is bringing about an unprecedented complexification of consciousness through the convergence of culture and religion." (Cousins 1992, pp. 7, 10) When Thomas Berry identifies the twentieth century as the end of the Cenozoic Period (the last 67 million years, when the mammals flourished) and the beginning of the Ecozoic Period, he refers to a complex of issues that includes the change in consciousness brought by the new story of the evolutionary universe. In the Ecozoic Era, humans will be present to the Earth in a mutually enhancing manner. Berry is playing a key role in awakening us to the very great significance of the discovery that we belong to an evolutionary universe, which he sees as the context for a contemporary shift in consciousness in many disciplines. Loyal Rue calls the story a "wisdom tradition" tolerating a diversity of interpretations, yet a means for global solidarity and cooperation. (Rue, p. 136) With more than 6 billion people living on the Earth and many ecosystems severely weakened or destroyed, it will be extremely difficult to shift to sustainable cultures. Faced with major threats, do we dare to recognize that there are signs of hope? Are not small communities and individual lives, however heroic, very fragile and nearly insignificant before the enormous, unprecedented devastation of the great wars of the last century? What of the vast numbers of migrants living in poverty on the periphery of large cities and the children dying daily of hunger? Dare we believe that we are at a major evolutionary threshold? Could it really be the case, as Teilhard de Chardin observed, that "Today something is happening to the structure of human consciousness. A fresh kind of life is starting"?

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