

A Sense of Direction

Mary Ocken

Thomas Berry has given me a sense of direction. I know now where we (as a human species) need to be heading. We could not replace what had not been working until we knew where we wanted to go...and actually visualize what it looks like. It is as if all the various interests related to sustainable living over the years—ecological lifestyles, voluntary simplicity, deep ecology, sustainable housing and green building, intentional communities, permaculture, new cosmology, wilderness therapy, bioregionalism, ecopsychology, wholistic health...on and on—now are all gathered together on one great ship-like vessel, which is all given a direction...and it is called the Ecozoic Era.

With this direction, we now also know the role of the human within this context and we have a greater sense of purpose for our species—our Great Work. Indeed, the wheels are rolling, facilitating the Great Turning.

Further, Thomas has helped me and countless others really know themselves *as* Earth. To know that I am fully made of the stardust elements created in the belly of our grandmother star, elements that were so radically transformed in supernova! I've become conscious of what it means to be that part of the Universe which "reflects on and celebrates itself." And because of this knowledge, I recognize that destruction and loss, still embedded in my cells, are necessary components to change and growth. Catastrophic circumstances have confronted life in the past, and so we know it is possible to reinvent ourselves. We can act on behalf of all life on this planet, doing our best to recognize and maintain the viability and integrity of the more-than-human world.

While it all seems so daunting, and our species chances are (by scientists's predictions) rather slim, I'm given hope: hope in the immense creativity of the human in a time of great need. We can act with clarity and conviction, knowing the direction is clear and defined. Perhaps it is not too late for us to preserve the human species, so that conscious self-reflection as it appears in the human may continue into yet unknown realms of reflection. This is my hope.

Thank you Father Berry—I am forever changed by your ideas—planted so firmly, with deep roots reaching deep into the very body of Earth.

Mary Ocken is an environmental educator, community organizer, and founder of the Lifestyle Education Committee of Sierra Club Rocky Mountain Chapter. With the Earth Literacy Companions of the Colorado Piedmont, she helped host "Exploring a New Cosmology" 10-day immersion in 2002, offering a presentation on the South Platte Bioregion. She now lives in Durango, CO, and is organizing discussion circles with the NWEI's books as well as speaking on topics of New Cosmology, Ecopsychology and Sustainability with regional Unitarian Universalist fellowships and regional environmental groups including Durango Nature Studies and the Sustainability Alliance of Southwest Colorado.