

The Bridge Between Thomas and the Ecozoic is the Ecocity

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Thomas Berry puts a human face on evolution, a human heart into the heart of time itself. Paradoxically, then, but in the manner of the multi-dimensional universe, it's hard to imagine a kinder, more loving person carrying a bigger intellectual stick. Ecozoic or else! Not only that, he has a drum-tight case behind that declaration.

It's hard to imagine a more beautiful vision of the Large self than he generously gives a world in desperate need. He brings it down to me and you and the small self that each of us is, and yet each of us is also so much, so magnificent and powerful...in the course of evolution. We, the pinnacle? Could be, but maybe the endpoint of the wrong kind.

How in his context, one wonders, with all our life-long genetic heritage on this planet—the real puzzle—how is it that we fleshy soft-bodied, small-in-fang-and-claw, smart and capable-of-moral-choice beings have turned into the great exterminators? We are even the angels of death for the climate system of Earth and for the steady building up of the lithosphere that is one of our biosphere's main jobs, our collective living organism's weightiest task, as its lightest is the building of "spirit." We are the most destructive force on the planet since the asteroid that plowed into the Yucatan Peninsula 65,000,000 years ago.

Thomas has an implied answer in the so-far failed insight that we really are at the opening of what could be the Ecozoic. *That* he describes as our most all-time-and-space-encompassing positive potential, and I think he is absolutely right. We could allow/create the Ecozoic, in partnership with all other life. For lack of this perspective he shows us in his telling of the Universe Story, humanity, except in regards to fellow humans and a few friends, fails to see the second flowering of the Earth after the Cenozoic began is the flowering of spirit that cyclically builds itself. By flowering of spirit, I mean to expand on Paolo Soleri's kindred thinking in the title of one of his books, *The Bridge Between Matter and Spirit is Matter Becoming Spirit*.

The physical world, Thomas says, has to be configured to provide the mechanism, apparatus, organism—whatever it is in physical form—that makes possible the functioning of physics, then chemistry, then biology, and then consciousness/conscience. Thomas drew from Teilhard de Chardin in declaring this insight. Soleri projected this insight deep into the way humanity builds, and I mean builds everything, and especially our largest artifacts of all, our cities. Finally, or at least next in evolution's pattern after life, after consciousness, then comes spirit. And it's evolving today, by God or otherwise, despite life-negating throwbacks like peace- and law-bashing national governments addicted to oil and habituated to violence.

In this soil, despite its sour spots, is growing the consciousness of further evolution from matter to spirit.

I see this, as I wrote before, as cyclical. Yes, the physical instrument has to be there, like the piano before someone can make the music, the body and brain before thought and associated art. But the spirit was there in the earlier music and the physical piano that evolved out of that when someone had the spirit of the music and the mastery of invention to make the first piano. Still, the principle—with both egg and chicken, neither really first—is that the physical and spiritual are inextricably linked and co-evolving in a way that has been, despite comets, volcanoes, asteroids and truly horrible governments and leaders, and disastrous habits of consumption I might add, relentlessly exerting its health and dynamic...evolving.

This point has been weak in Thomas's writing and speaking, to the best of my knowledge, though it is completely in sync with his "system," with what I think is the essence of the Universe Story. In my three or four nice long conversations with him scattered sparsely over the last 20 years, I've never had the slightest doubt that he sees those same connections of the physical to the spiritual. Nor did I see a hint that he would disagree about the importance of getting the city, town, village and their primary energy and transport system designed specifically to fit the Ecozoic.

My, shall we say gentle, criticism is that it is not enough to understand the thoughts involved here, which are as good as thoughts get, and continue life pretty much with the same physical commitments—say still owning a suburban house and driving a car. Instead we need to fight like hell to win the world for the Ecozoic, and if we are to win we will need to have a strategy in the battle that starts with the physical foundation in the way we build our cities, towns and villages so they become physically integral systems. Those total constructed and living environments are home and they are that big. They cannot be neglected, postponed. To be serious about Thomas's thought is to advocate and fight for ecocities.