

Community at the Heart of the Universe

by Jane Blewett

We belong to the earth, our first community.... Community begins for all of us, not in our family or ethnic group, not in our church or neighborhood, not in our nation or global belonging, but in the universe itself. From the very first instant of time-space unfolding, some fifteen billion years ago, community/communion was there.

Three primal laws blazed in the heart of the single fireball from which all matter/energy emerged. They govern all that is, all that surrounds us, all the manifestations of reality we perceive and all that ever will be. They enunciate the most fundamental values, urgings of the universe itself. Our efforts to explore the mystery, the gift and grace of community, begin there.

Differentiation.

The first primal law, *differentiation*, expresses itself in the utter difference of everything from everything else. Differentiation is so obvious and yet so foundational to even the possibility of existence. No two things are the same. Each is its own self, its own reality, insists on its own identity, separate from and different from any other. No two blades of grass are the same, no two hairs of our head, no two atoms. Twins may be called identical but they are two very different realities. The more deeply we come to know anything, the more the other distinguishes itself as differentiated and unrepeatably.

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Subjectivity.

A second law, *subjectivity* speaks to the interiority of everything, the inner reality, the numinous depths within out of which each makes Itself known to every other. Each leaf, each star, has an “inside,” gives expression to its own inner dynamic. Each reality manifests its inner being in a manner that is unique to itself and no other.



We know this so readily in the human community, we recognize the inner self that distinguishes each human being, but the same subjective uniqueness is present throughout the cosmos. There is a “within” in all.

Communion.

And the third law, *communion*, holds all this magnificent array together, binds all the differentiated interiorities in one cosmic whole, one community of all existence, embraces in so intimate a manner that nothing, no thing, being, person, is outside or exterior to this bond of community. Each belongs, all belong, by simply being. One might feel alienated at times, but one cannot finally be alienated in this sacred communion. This cosmic bondedness is at the heart of all that is, all life, all we experience, all we know. If we take a deeper look at this community in the earth around us, the discoveries overwhelm us.

It is present in the way we are united with the past. When a newborn infant emerges from the womb with a human form, a head and trunk, two arms, two legs, he or she is already linked to a common mammalian form that the earth invented and adapted over some 500 million years. This wriggling, squirming new life is a continuity, an ancient communal form, and this very form will shape all future expressions of the child, the tools it will use, the kind of habitat design, transportation methods, how it will carry out the human enterprise.

Or, another example—as the child takes within its own lungs a first gulp of fresh air, that air has already passed through the lungs of all the great men and women, the great black bear and the tiny chipmunk, all creatures that have breathed throughout history. The child is welcomed into the community of spirit-air, into the breath community of Sarah and Abraham, of Miriam and Moses, of Mary and Joseph, Jesus, Dorothy Day, Einstein, Siddhartha Gautama, Mahatma Ghandhi, Muhammad, Lao Tzu and countless others. And this new life will bring its own never-before-never-to-be-repeated breath of life for all future generations. I often ask myself at the end of the day, what have I breathed into the community of life this day? What has emerged from within me that will give life to future generations? Will the children of tomorrow, the young of every species, be blessed and graced because of what I have breathed into the community this day?

There is an urgency today to immerse ourselves once again as a human species within this larger community of all life, to bring to a new level of consciousness the mystery buried deep in our genetic code, the “belonging” that is in present in our first community. Without the wind and waves, the rain and reindeer, the solar rays and volcanic explosions, there would be no humans, we would not be. This earth community of which we are a part is ultimately as real and as essential as that.

We do not live except at the graciousness, at the creativity and munificence of the earth in its full community of life. It is a wisdom our ancestors knew, a wisdom we have largely lost. When they sang and danced the seasons, created ritual and celebrated the new moon, and welcomed the harvest they celebrated this grand communion of existence and gained strength to endure on earth’s terms. It is time, and past time, we draw upon the same primal urgings that spontaneously bring delight in the beautiful song of the wren (outside my window as I write), the graceful leap of the dolphin, the fresh smell of new-mown hay, the soft touch of “lamb’s ear” in the garden or when we thrust our hands into the soil to bury seed and wait in trust for the elements to work their incredible magic.

We need to come home to the total earth community, to hear, as our own, the cry of devastated forests and poisoned air, denuded soil and polluted rivers, species who no longer find habitat, indigenous peoples without their sacred lands, of a whole new class of environmental refugees, and of children without adequate food. In this all-embracing community of life there is no room for exclusion, for dismissal or denial. A sacred oneness permeates the whole fabric. We will live or die together. Let there be life.

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