

## LIVING THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE, GRATITUDE, BEAUTY, COMPASSION, AND JUSTICE

By Jules Cashford

It is almost impossible to think about the legacy of Thomas and how to live it, or even any part of it, without seeing him standing before us with a mischievous twinkle in his eyes and a new thought for us to play with. So, pouring myself, as it were, a glass of “tequila sunrise with salt around the rim,” and imagining him holding one himself and laughing, I am reminded that whatever he was talking about, he always spoke in the language of love.

Whether he was throwing up his arms into the sky to reach the whole universe in one embrace, or tenderly reciting his poem to the children—“To All the Children”—or recalling his shimmeringly iridescent meadow which became his lifelong touchstone of what was good—“Good was what was good for the meadow”—he left us more in love with life than before, and especially, of course, more in love with our Earth, whom we share with all other forms of life.

This feeling permeates all his writing. So those who were not fortunate enough to have known him, or to have heard his rapturous talks, may also experience the joy and excitement and gratitude which shine out of the pages of his books in which he was always himself talking to you, personally, whoever the “you” may be, calling us to see the beauty in all life and to relate to everyone on Earth with compassion—all sheltered by the Great Jurisprudence—no one too small to be an essential part of the whole.

His legacy is obviously as indefinable as is the person himself, whose life’s work lives on in ways we can hardly see, let alone understand. And so there will be many legacies that he has left—as many as there are people to read his works—and all this will go on living a life of its own now he is gone, just as his own passion is continuing to inspire so many individuals and communities all over the world.

The legacy that I am aware of trying to live is the freedom to speak from the heart. I would want to suggest that Thomas changed the rational language of the Enlightenment into a new language of love.

And that he did this in such a way that his own language cannot be dismissed in Enlightenment terms as irrational, emotional, not “germane” to the argument, etc. By instinctively, and generously, assuming that our feelings are as loving as his own, he calls forth from us the best

of us, and this invites us to move beyond any lingering habits of thought we might have inherited and not yet transformed.

His own irresistibly unifying language allows us to see the radical defects in the current practice of thinking in oppositional terms from an exclusively rational point of view.

Hypotheses come not from reason but from imagination, as Thomas and Einstein knew. And yet the orthodox dualistic hypotheses of our world, which divide humans from the rest of nature, and, further, curiously assume that humans are in some way intrinsically superior to nature, are seldom scrutinized and called into question, neither by reason nor imagination: “Loss of imagination and loss of nature, they’re the same thing!” he once, unforgettably, boomed down the phone to me.

Thomas’s own hypotheses were as wide and generous as the universe. It was the “Great Jurisprudence”—whatever that may mean for each of us, which transformed all his language into love. Even when venturing into the legal world and defining Earth Jurisprudence—naming and numbering its “Ten Principles” with a precision that would pass muster in a court of law—he begins with the inherent lawfulness of the cosmos which sustains all beings within itself:

Rights originate where existence originates. That which determines existence determines rights.

Every component of the Earth community has three rights: the right to be, the right to habitat, and the right to fulfill its role in the ever-renewing processes of the Earth community.

Human rights do not cancel out the rights of other modes of being to exist in their natural state.

The planet Earth is a single community bound together with interdependent relationships. No living being nourishes itself.

Always he imagines the quality of life for every being of life. Everyone has a role. No one is depersonalized. This care of all life is ultimately love. And this is the language he would have us think in, and through, and towards each other, whoever that “other” may be.

If all, or even any, of us could embody this relationship to each other and to those who belong, like us, to the mystery of the universe, then would we not be following his supreme example and living his legacy of loving all our neighbors as ourselves?

Let’s drink to that!