

Earth as Our Primary Healer?

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Having practised as both a chiropractor and naturopathic doctor for many years as well as having taught at colleges for both of these professions, I was intrigued when my subsequent theological studies included works of Thomas Berry's assertions on human health. Berry argues not only that "we cannot have well people on a sick planet,"¹ but that "medicine in [the ecological age] would envisage the earth as primary healer. It would also envisage integration with earth's functioning as the primary basis of health for the human being."² My doctoral thesis in theology would attempt to weave strands from my earlier health-related professional studies and practices in healthcare with my theological research to fashion a better understanding of the spiritual dimension of human health.

With a cultural historian's ability to comprehend the complexities of long swathes of human history, Berry understood how cosmologies and religions provide the context for human cultures to frame the meaning of their existence. Accordingly, when the scientific understanding of our universe story switched from a heliocentric alignment of one galaxy to a continuously expanding, irreversible, evolutionary cosmogenesis of billions of galaxies, Berry discerned that there was a pressing need to better understand how this new context might help us to reawaken to the meaning of our existence. This need was all the more pressing since the attitudes and values we had discerned from our previous cosmology had provided a context for the devastation of Earth. More specifically, we had been operating from a dysfunctional state of mind that had permitted us to ravage the planet upon which our lives were dependent; and coming to this realization, we had not only continued our pathological prac-

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1. Thomas Berry and Thomas Clarke, *Befriending the Earth: A Theology of Reconciliation*, ed. Stephen Dunn and Anne Lonergan (Mystic, Connecticut: Twenty-Third Publications, 1991), 100.
 2. Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Books, 1988), 104.

tices but even intensified them, thereby contradicting one of the most basic principles that govern the behaviour of all life forms—self-preservation. Berry prescribed the removal of the dysfunctional cosmology that had schooled us into this crisis, and the adoption of a more functional cosmology. Without the implementation of a new cosmology and an understanding of its implications—i.e., a new context—it would not be possible to remedy the aberrant behaviors and values—i.e., the content—that were laying waste to the planet.

This approach of first gaining a correct understanding of context prior to focusing on content is typical of a holistic approach, especially as used in holistic medicine. Generally speaking, the word holistic “reflects a concern for wholeness, a desire for integration, and an attempt to understand the connections between the various aspects that constitute a given reality.”³ Commonly, holism is distinguished by four principles, namely that (1) entities and systems in the universe exist as unified wholes; (2) the parts of a whole are dynamically interdependent and interrelated; (3) a whole cannot be comprehended through an isolated examination of its constituent parts, no matter how many parts are added and/or studied; and (4) the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.⁴ Holism pursues the integrated, interactive whole of the reality being considered.

In Western medicine, it has often been thought that one could take a reductionistic approach to healthcare and transform it to a holistic approach by paying attention to the psychological, social and/or spiritual needs of the patient. In reality, this simply adds more silos to an already atomistic approach. Holism is about context; adding more content to a reductionistic model does not transform it into a holistic contextual model. In holism, one begins with the big picture or story—in other words, the context—and then focuses on specific content, coming to understand that content in terms of its relationship with the whole. If one wishes to take an integrated approach to a problem or to address a systemic or global problem,

3. Wilkie Au, “Holistic Spirituality,” in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, ed. Michael Downey (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 488.

4. Dianne E. Cmich, “Theoretical Perspectives of Holistic Health,” *Journal of School Health* 54, no. 1 (1984): 30-31.

then one needs to begin with a clear understanding of the context of the issue. In healthcare, this means beginning with the question “who is this patient?” before answering the questions “what is her/his complaint and diagnosis?”

This is not a new approach. As noted in the Hippocratic treatise on *Airs, Waters, and Places*, which Western medicine has claimed as a foundational text for modern medicine, Hippocrates (ca. 460-370 BCE) insisted that human health required a balanced state of equilibrium between the physical body and mind, and between the person and the *external environment*.⁵ These were all considered to be mutually dependent in a reciprocal and vital relationship; human health was judged to be inseparable from, dependent upon, and nourished by the environs—a position that parallels Berry's assertions noted above. Hippocrates would advise his student physicians that, prior to meeting with a patient, they should assess the environs within which that patient lived. How were the agricultural fields in the community; were the soils robust or depleted? How were the waters; were they flowing or stagnant? How was the air; was it too heavy or too active? Only then could a physician understand who the patient was in order to then begin a consideration of a particular ailment; only then could the visit begin once context had been discerned before content.

Turn the clock forward a couple of thousand years and we can hear a debate between the physiologist and physician, Claude Bernard (1813-1878), and the developer of microbiology, Louis Pasteur (1822-1895). Pasteur argued that the cause of disease was the invasion of the body by germs. Hence, to cure diseases it was only necessary to discover ways to kill the germs, which Pasteur had already done for a few diseases through the use of vaccines. Bernard, however, argued that the human not only adapted to the external environment, but had a *milieu intérieur*. This interior “terrain” represented both the body's ability to adapt to its external environment and its vitality to repel infectious bacteria. Bernard asserted that if the interior environment of our bodies or if our vitality were compromised, then we could not optimally withstand infections that threatened our health

5. René Dubos, “Hippocrates in Modern Dress,” in *Ways of Health*, ed. David S. Sobel (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979), 206-207.

from outside. If the “ecosystem” of our body was less than optimally healthy, then the bacteria that were ever present and regularly repelled by our body’s defences could take advantage of that weakness and cause illness. To some degree, Bernard’s position parallels Berry’s approach to health. Just as we cannot have healthy people on a sick planet, we cannot be healthy when our *milieu intérieur*—our internal ecosystem or inner planet—is sick.

The success of Pasteur’s vaccinations against several infectious diseases soon settled the public debate in Pasteur’s favour. His victory in that debate influenced the direction of Western medicine as it sought to isolate the single offending cause of each disease so that the cause might be eradicated; and, thus, the germ theory of disease was born.⁶ Content—the invading germ or malfunctioning organ—became the focus; context—the health of the whole person and her/his situation and relationship with the environment—was no longer pertinent. I suspect that Berry would have cheered for Bernard in that debate.

Berry’s early study of the long arc of human history and cultures prepared him for his later study of the longer arc of the universe story. In the case of the former, he had studied shifts in human cultures as well as the reasons for those shifts. With his study of the new universe story, he identified the profound dysfunctionality of our current time, both in its cosmological vision and its operative values, and the necessity to update the former to reinvent the latter. Like a good holistic practitioner, Berry began with the contextual questions of “what is our cosmology and its implications?” and “who is Earth?” before seeking to diagnosis the ills of particular human behaviours or actions that were birthed by a dysfunctional cosmology.

With this larger context in mind, I’ll now review Berry’s discussion of health at a contextual level, including the notion of Earth as primary healer. Then, I’ll recall his more particular focus on the profession of Western medicine. Berry’s discussion of Western medicine will then be considered, following the holistic model of rearticulating the particular or content within the understanding of the

6. While Louis Pasteur did not originate the doctrine of specific etiology—that honour is perhaps best claimed by Pierre Fidèle Bretonneau (1778-1862—he and Robert Koch (1843-1910) were perhaps its leading proponents.

context, within the context of cosmogenesis. Finally, a consideration of the strengths and constraints of Berry's approach will follow.

In an early articulation of Berry's "Twelve Principles for Reflecting on the Universe and the Role of the Human in the Universe Process" principle seven asserts that "the earth, within the solar system, is a self-emergent, self-propagating, self-nourishing, self-educating, self-governing, self-healing, self-fulfilling community."⁷ Although the principle speaks of Earth's self-healing rather than health, each of the other attributes can be understood to contribute to a dynamic of health for Earth and for its transformation. The principle also states that "all particular life-systems must integrate their functioning with this larger complex of mutually dependent earth systems."⁸ This is because "there is only one earth community, one economic order, one health system, one moral order, one world of the sacred."⁹ Since Earth would establish the primary conditions for human emergence, well-being and perdurance, and since Earth "can do without humans" but "humans cannot do without Earth," Berry would conclude that "the earth is primary; humans are derivative."¹⁰ By extension, Earth is our primary healer.

That is, recognizing the intercommunion among all the living and nonliving systems of the planet, and even of the entire universe..., medicine...would envisage the earth as primary healer. It would also envisage integration with earth's functioning as the primary basis of health for the human being. The role of

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7. Thomas Berry, "Twelve Principles for Reflecting on the Universe and the Role of the Human in the Universe Process," *Cross Currents* 37, no. 2-3 (1987): 176. See also: Thomas Berry, "Twelve Principles: For Understanding the Universe and the Role of the Human in the Universe Process," in Anne Lonergan and Caroline Richards, eds., *Thomas Berry and the New Cosmology* (Mystic, Connecticut: Twenty-Third Publications, 1990), 108.
 8. Ibid.
 9. Thomas Berry, "The Ecozoic Era," Eleventh Annual E.F. Schumacher Lecture. Great Barrington, MA. October, 19, 1991, accessed November 21, 2015, <http://www.centerforneweconomics.org/publications/lectures/berry/thomas/the-ecozoic-era>.
 10. Thomas Berry, "A New Era: Healing the Injuries We Have Inflicted On Our Planet," *Health Progress* 73, no. 2 (1992): 63.

the physician would be to assist in interpreting the earth-human relationship and guiding the human community in its intercommunion with the earth, with its air and water and sunlight, with its nourishment and the opportunity it offers for the expression of human physical capacities...In the emerging ecological age, the age of the growing intercommunion among all the living and nonliving systems of the planet,...medicine in this context would envisage the earth as primary healer. It would also envisage integration with earth's functioning as the primary basis of health for the human being.¹¹

Our genetic coding bonds us with this intercommunion of Earth. On the personal level, Berry notes, it "brings about a healing whenever we sustain any physical injury.... It provides the ability to speak and think and create. It establishes the context of our relation with the Divine. All this is carried out by the spontaneities within us."¹² On a species level, Berry states, "we must reach far back into the genetic foundations of our cultural formation for a healing and a restructuring at the most basic level" so that we reform our cultural coding in ways that reintegrate us into the intercommunion with Earth;¹³ that is, in ways that are mutually enhancing for us and the rest of the Earth community.¹⁴

Berry paid particular attention to the ways that "our plundering industrial economy" has disrupted the very biosystems of Earth upon which our well-being depends.¹⁵ Consequently, he asserted

11. Thomas Berry, *Dream of the Earth*, 104.

12. *Ibid.*, 196.

13. *Ibid.*, 210-211.

14. *Ibid.*, 212. Cf., "The Earth is primary and the human derivative.... The first concern in every field of human endeavour must be the integration with the Earth community. If this community is diminished in its well-being, then every particular being within the Earth community is so diminished. Yet we try to be healthy on a sick planet, through medical technologies. We try to advance the gross national product in economics, while diminishing the gross Earth product. Absurd." Thomas Berry, "Art in the Ecozoic Era," *Art Journal* 51, no. 2 (Summer 1992): 48.

15. Berry, "A New Era," 60. Cf., Thomas Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999), 108.

that humans must heal the ecosystems that they have damaged,¹⁶ and live in ways that are deeply integrated within Earth's systems and mutually enhancing for both humanity and the planet if they wish to flourish.¹⁷ Therefore, Berry states, our sciences and technologies also need to be "coherent with the integral functioning of the natural life systems. We...need sciences that understand the natural world, not simply through analytic, reductionist, quantitative, or mechanistic approaches, but through the holistic, qualitative, and organic modes of functioning of the natural world within a self-organizing universe."¹⁸

More specifically for healthcare, Berry declares, "future healthcare professionals must envisage their role within this larger context, or their efforts will fail in their basic objective. Although until recently healthcare providers could ignore this larger context, such neglect can no longer be accepted.... Even with all our medical technologies, we cannot have well humans on a sick planet. Planetary health is essential for the well-being of every living creature."¹⁹

Like other professions, Berry notes, the tendency in Western medicine "is to enter into a 'Technozoic' era, an era when we would depend even more extensively on the scientific skills we use to impose our mechanistic processes on the earth's biosystems. We tend to increase our skills in manipulative processes rather than increase those subjective and evocative processes whereby living creatures

16. Berry, "A New Era," 63.

17. Thomas Berry, "The Dream of the Earth: Our Way into the Future," *Cross Currents* 37, no. 2-3 (1987): 212.

18. Berry, "A New Era," 63.

19. *Ibid.*, 60. Cf., "The greatest lesson healthcare professionals can learn is that the health of the earth is indivisible. If the air, the water, the soil, and the plants, grains, and animals that provide our food are in distress, then human health will not be sustained for long. Containing the toxins produced through our chemical industries and through our energy systems and processing organic wastes back into the earth are ultimately of profound concern for individuals, government, the legal profession, educators, and religion, as well as for the healing professions. Yet healthcare professionals have their own immediate concern with the consequences of these disorders for the earth's functioning. To an increasing degree, many human illnesses are either caused by or aggravated by environmental disorders." *Ibid.*, 62.

achieve integral well-being. Living beings are not machines."²⁰

Seeking to expand the horizon for the practice of medicine, Berry affirms:

The profession of medicine must now consider its role, not only within the context of human society, but in the context of the Earth process. A healing of the Earth is a prerequisite for the healing of the human. Adjustment of the human to the conditions and restraints of the natural world constitutes the primary medical prescription for human well-being. The medical profession needs to establish a way of sustaining the species as well as the individual if the human is to be viable as a species within the community of species.²¹

But how will Western medical professions undertake such an enormous and fundamental conversion and transformation from a reductionistic focus on content to an integrative, holistic focus within a cosmological context? Not surprisingly, Berry has a suggestion for the new way of thinking that might be adopted, if not much to say about the practical steps to bring about the transformation. He notes:

While our universities have gone through many transitions since they first came into being in the early medieval period, they have never experienced anything like the transition that is being asked of them just now. The difficulty cannot be resolved simply by establishing a course or a program in ecology, for ecology is not a course or a program. Rather it is the foundation of all courses, all programs, and all professions because ecology is a functional cosmology. Ecology is not a part of medicine; medicine is an extension of ecology. Ecology is not a part of law; law is an extension of ecology. So too, in their own way, the same can be said of economics and even the humanities.²²

20. *Ibid.*, 62.

21. Thomas Berry, *The Great Work*, 66-67.

22. *Ibid.*, 84.

I have met very few medical physicians who truly grasp this notion when I present it to them, and even fewer who agree with it at any level. I think that part of the obstacle is the elitism that is schooled into professionals and the relative place of ecology in the hierarchy of academia. For most physicians, it is one thing to say that medicine must understand its principles and practices within a cosmological context; it is a much more humbling and therefore somewhat offensive suggestion to say that “medicine is an extension of ecology.” Too often, ecology is understood as merely the study of the relations of organisms to each other and to their physical surroundings, and what has that got to do with human diseases? Berry views ecology on a larger more dynamic scale, so the conversation tends to trip over a disconnected use of the word “ecology.” While it might be possible to overcome this obstacle through a shift in language and images, it is important to note that the disconnect between Berry’s prescription for the profession of Western medicine and the profession’s reception of his perspective is more complex than mere confusion over the word “ecology.”

To shift from anthropology to “earthology” and cosmology, Berry has suggested that we “learn from the primal, indigenous peoples of the world who from the beginning have recognized this larger context of human affairs.”²³ With this in mind, let me quote Jack D. Forbes (January 7, 1934–February 23, 2011) who was born in Long Beach, California of Powhatan-Renapé and Lenape descent. Like Berry, Forbes often writes with words that are both evocative and provocative.²⁴ Forbes says of indigenous peoples,

For us, truly, there are no ‘surroundings.’ I can lose my hands and still live. I can lose my legs and still live. I can lose my eyes and still live. ... But if I lose the air I die. If I lose the sun I die. If I lose the earth I die. If I lose the water I die. If I lose the plants and animals I die. All of these things are more a

23. Berry, “A New Era,” 63.

24. For example, see: Jack D. Forbes, *Columbus and Other Cannibals: The Wetiko Disease of Exploitation, Imperialism, and Terrorism* (New York, NY: Seven Stories Press, 2008).

part of me, more essential to my every breath, than is my so-called body. *What is my real body?* We are not autonomous, self-sufficient beings as European mythology teaches.... We are rooted just like the trees. But our roots come out of our nose and mouth, like an umbilical cord, forever connected with the rest of the world."²⁵

Forbes' words evoke an image that succinctly captures Berry's declaration that it is not possible to have healthy people on a sick planet. He also reminds us that our bodies are not limited to what Alan Watts has described as our "skin-encapsulated egos;"²⁶ our bodies are not strictly demarcated from the environs we inhabit, but instead are in a continuous discourse with the same.

In a more cosmic vein, I would also invoke what might be called Ecozoic vitalism. Stated in its broadest terms, vitalism is the theory or belief that life processes cannot be entirely explained via their physical and chemical phenomena alone. According to the proponents of vitalism, life processes also arise from and contain a non-material vital principle or vital force which not only organizes or orders that particular entity into a recognizable being, but also connects the entity with the greater order or intelligibility of the universe. The micro order of the entity ought to be properly aligned with the macro order of the universe. There is an intelligibility to the universe, and the principle that orders the person is the principle

25. Jack D. Forbes, "Indigenous Americans: Spirituality and Ecos," *Daedalus* 130, no. 4 (2001): 291.

26. Joanna Macy, "The Greening of the Self," in *Dharma Gaia*, ed. Allan H. Badiner (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1990), 53. Cf., Arthur J. Fabel, "Environmental Ethics and the Question of Cosmic Purpose," *Environmental Ethics* 16, (Fall 1994): 312. Michael Zimmerman quite rightly reminds us that "ego consciousness, which is necessarily dualistic, is a major achievement in human evolution." However, he also observes that ego consciousness is characterized by its tendency to differentiate and dissociate itself from the body, from nature and from woman. And regrettably, while rationality and ego consciousness emerged together in the history of the human, the latter initially defined but now confines the former. Subsequently, any further emergence into cosmic or interrelated consciousness tends to be perceived as irrational. See: Michael E. Zimmerman, "Quantum Theory, Intrinsic Value, and Panentheism," *Environmental Ethics* 10, no. 1 (1988): 13, 15.

that orders the universe. Life is not reducible to a mere concoction of physical and chemical reactions but is the process of becoming more than the sum of its parts, guided by this ordering vital principle.²⁷

Over the centuries, vitalism's popularity has waxed and waned, and its core principles have been articulated in various ways, often in response to the mysteries and persistent questions of that time. Nevertheless, there are arguably several core tenets of vitalism that can enhance our current understanding of human health whether it is associated with ecosystem health or contextualized within a cosmological vision.

A healthy response to the stressors that we daily experience—e.g., the everyday micro-injuries that assail us or a continually changing environment—involves the innate intelligence of the body's self-regulatory mechanisms selecting sufficiently adaptive responses without compromising individual integrity. Innate intelligence also accomplishes such mundane tasks as regulating our breathing, digesting our food, and repairing and replicating our tissues. This innate intelligence is an internal, intrinsic wisdom of the body that acts as the healer within, manifesting the natural healing power of the body (the *vis medicatrix naturae*). Our innate intelligence includes our genetic coding that has emerged through the processes and experi-

27. It has been argued that the discovery of DNA successfully displaced notions of vitalism. This might be true if vitalism was understood only within narrow parameters for bringing life out of matter, but contemporary vitalists tend to envision vitalism within a larger horizon of meaning that includes a teleological cosmos guided by an ordering principle, *logos*. For various perspectives on vitalism, see: Richard A. Hutch, "Health and Healing: Spiritual, Pharmaceutical, and Mechanical Medicine," *Journal of Religion and Health* 52, no. 3 (2013): 955-965; Ana M. Ning, "How 'Alternative' Is CAM? Rethinking Conventional Dichotomies Between Biomedicine and Complementary/Alternative Medicine," *Health: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the Social Study of Health, Illness & Medicine* 17, no. 2 (2013): 135-158; Tom Vinci and Jason Scott Robert, "Aristotle and Modern Genetics," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 66, no. 2 (2005): 201-221; Susan Oyama, "Biologists Behaving Badly: Vitalism and the Language of Language," *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences* 32, no. 2/3 (2010): 401-423; and, Hilde Hein, "The Endurance of the Mechanism: Vitalism Controversy," *Journal of the History of Biology* 5, no. 1 (1972): 159-188.

ments of cosmogenesis.²⁸ Our genetic coding not only guides our unprompted responses to life's adventures, affecting how we will grow, flourish, heal, speak, think, create and procreate, but it also bonds us to the Earth's ecosystems in ways that are mutually enhancing, since our genetic coding has emerged from within Earth's evolutionary creativity.²⁹ Berry has associated these spontaneities and our genetic coding with the numinous mystery from which the universe emerged and that continues to guide cosmogenesis.³⁰

Some authors have argued that an evolutionary consciousness or innate intelligence seems to be working in cosmogenesis. That is, evolutionary processes seem to be driven by a type of energy or intelligence that might be described by Henri Bergson's *élan vital*, Teilhard de Chardin's psychic or radial energy, or Ilya Prigogine's self-organizing forces.³¹

More primal or elder cultures were conscious of our embeddedness "in a place and a history, in the rhythms of climate, in the contours of a landscape" and the power of the environs about us.³² Earth and its life forms and systems were "consistently experienced as not only alive but also sentient, a great Being with whom we [could] communicate and exchange energy."³³ Because a person was con-

28. Innate intelligence and genetic coding are not identical. An example illustrates how they are different. Suppose that both a salamander and I have a toe amputated during an injury. The bleeding at the site of our wounds will gradually cease because the innate intelligence of our respective bodies preserves our existence by healing wounds. However, the salamander will grow a new toe while I will have to be satisfied with a healthy stump. The genetic coding of the salamander is sufficiently evolved to manufacture new limbs while mine is not. The innate intelligence of the salamander causes the new toe to grow, but only because its genetic coding has prescribed how this can occur. The innate intelligence is the genetic coding in action.

29. Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*, 196, 199, 200-201, 208.

30. *Ibid.*, 47-48; Berry and Clarke, *Befriending the Earth*, 52, 77-78, 196-197.

31. A. Stikker, "Evolution and Ecology," in *A New Medical Model: A Challenge for Biomedicine?*, ed. H. Balner (Amsterdam: Swets & Zeitlinger, 1990), 85.

32. Theodore Roszak, *The Voice of the Earth* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 76.

33. Joan Halifax, "The Third Body: Buddhism, Shamanism, and Deep Ecology," in *Dharma Gaia* 23. See, also: Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), 11-13.

sidered to be formed by and within an organic relationship with the planet, a transactional bond, an ongoing dialogue and a creative co-existence with the biosphere and its inhabitants had to be maintained. To break faith with that relationship would not only have been an irrational act, it would have violated the sacredness of such an intimate, life-generating, and life-sustaining bond.³⁴

Health practitioners who recognize this more holistic integration of factors contributing to human health also recall that the human body is inherently directed toward its own repair, growth and maintenance. These Ecozoic vitalists recognize that the body's innate intelligence—and not their actions *per se*—is ultimately responsible for the healing of the body's ills. It is this innate intelligence that orders each person's body into its unique existence.³⁵ Henry Lindlahr, a physician and naturopathic doctor from the turn of the 20th century, using the language of his time, described this innate intelligence in terms of a vital force that animates the body.

This [vital] force, which permeates, heats and animates the entire created universe, is the expression of the divine will, the 'logos,' the 'word' of the great creative intelligence.... It is this supreme power and intelligence, acting in and through every atom, molecule, and cell in the human body, which is the *true healer*, the 'vis medicatrix naturae' which always endeavors to repair, to heal, and to restore the perfect type. All that the physician can do is to remove obstructions and to establish normal conditions within and around the patient, so that 'the healer within' can do [its] work to the best advantage.³⁶

When Evelyn Underhill wrote her landmark book, *Mysticism: The Preeminent Study in the Nature and Development of Spiritual Consciousness*, in 1911, she argued that vitalists were so focused on the world of becoming that they neglected the world of being. I

34. Halifax, 23; Roszak, *Voice of the Earth*, 76-79.

35. Michael Murray and Joseph Pizzorno, *Encyclopedia of Natural Medicine* (Rocklin, California: Prima, 1991), 6.

36. Henry Lindlahr, *Nature Cure* (Chicago: Nature Cure Publishing Co., 1924), 26 (Lindlahr's emphasis).

would argue that a vitalist in the Ecozoic era would blend being and becoming rather than holding them in reductionistic isolation. This ecozoic vitalist, who shares the mystical sensibility of St. Francis of Assisi, knows the Sun and Moon, Fire and Water, Earth and Air, as brothers and sisters, and knows that numinous mystery is in all and all is in numinous mystery.³⁷ At the same time, the Ecozoic vitalist will recognize that the order and intelligibility of the universe, the wisdom of creation, the logos, has a source that both precedes and surpasses its phenomenal manifestation. If the universe story is a meaningful adventure going somewhere, then it presumably has both a significant source and a meaningful goal, and that source and goal might be considered to be the ultimate mystery, the *Logos*, from which all that is comes.³⁸

As Thomas Berry observes, “awakening in the depth of human psychic awareness [is] a sense of ultimate mystery and how ultimate mystery communicates itself” from beyond the confines of the phenomenal world. As we increasingly renew our awareness of the universe as a revelatory experience, as a manifestation of the presence of the divine, we are becoming attentive to “a special interior depth of awareness” arising beyond ourselves yet from within creation and ourselves.³⁹ Just as all of creation, although both diverse in its variety and unique in its individual manifestations, is joined in a common story, so also is our diverse experience of the numinous united by the unity of the source of that experience and the unity of the one who knows that experience.

Berry's genius provides us with an extraordinary understanding of context, a context that both addresses the critical issues of our time and offers a way into the Ecozoic era. His writings are more brief on the particularity of our responses within that context, i.e., the content, but that is our task, especially when it comes to reinventing institutions and professions, including those dedicated to health.

37. In 1979, St. Francis of Assisi was named by Pope John Paul II as the patron saint of the environment.

38. Cf., Berry, *Dream of the Earth*, 196-197, 200; Berry and Clarke, *Befriending the Earth*, 73.

39. Berry and Clarke, *Befriending the Earth*, 7.