

To make this shift towards a “life-sustaining civilization,” we need a perspective that goes beyond anthropocentrism; we need to learn to “act our age” and so experience the vitality of our interdependence with past and future generations and to the entire cosmos.¹ “When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe.”² In this context, time is neither linear nor disconnected. In any place we stand in the present, we are physically standing on layers of centuries of evolution, what is called “deep time.” To recover this sense of deep time is to bring us back to gratitude, reverence and responsibility for all beings.³ For Berry and many religious leaders, the environmental crisis is spiritual and ethical. The situation is complex and would require nothing less than the participation and collaboration of all, bringing the resources that could address such a crisis.

Thomas Berry speaks of four wisdoms to draw from as guide for the future:

(1) the wisdom of indigenous people for whom the natural world is experienced with intimacy and sensitivity to the powers of the universe;

(2) the wisdom of women that joins the knowing of the body to that of mind, the soul to the spirit, intuition to reasoning, feeling consciousness to intellectual analysis, intimacy to detachment, subjective presence to objective distance;

(3) the wisdom of the classical traditions which are based on revelatory experiences, both transcendent and imminent, and the capacity of humans to participate in that world and achieve a mode of being;

and

(4) the wisdom of science which has shown that the universe has come to being in evolutionary transformations over a long period of time, from a lesser to a more complex structure and mode of consciousness.⁴

Indigenous peoples espouse an organic understanding of the cosmos and the community which extends beyond the human. Community is all of Creation, living and non-living, visible and invisible beings interconnected and interdependent. Mother Earth, the land and the oceans, all life is sacred. Sacredness is pervasive in all beings inviting all to reverence.⁵ The regard for the sacred is integrated into daily life and one carries a sensitivity to follow the rhythms of nature to live in harmony with the world of the spirits and with the entire Creation. Humans take from the earth only what is needed and nothing more, always grateful because

¹ Joanna Macy, “Deep Time,” <http://www.joannamacy.net> (accessed June 24, 2007).

² John Muir, quoted in “Interdependence,” (accessed September 21, 2007).

³ Sr. Mary Cecilia, 4.

⁴ Thomas Berry, *The Great Work* 7, 180.

⁵ Jojo M. Fung, S.J. *A Shamanic Theology of Sacred Sustainability: Church and Shamans in Dialogue for Liberative Struggle in Asia* (Jesuit Communications Foundation, Inc. Quezon City, 2014), 124.

nature provides all yet humans are not owners of nature. Geographical space is alive and can affect the human psyche, the lifeway, and practice.⁶

Religious traditions provide stories of who we are, what nature is, where we come from, where we are going and the kind of interrelationships we have with the Divine, among humans and with nature. Religions give purpose and meaning, unify communities towards a common goal with values that provide the ethical orientation of a society.⁷ Rituals are symbolic bodily actions that build personal and cultural identity. They facilitate the transmission of worldviews, values, attitudes, and through repetition, deepen spiritual insight opening persons to a transformation of consciousness. At the same time, rituals give shape to emotions and helps humans come to terms with major events in life. The rituals are often connected to cycles in nature and are expressed in sacred spaces chosen by communities. “Religious rituals model relations with material life and transmit habits, practices and attitudes of mind to succeeding generations.” The religious worldviews are primordial because they are a revelation of the first things and they propel and compel communities to take creative action.⁸ Studies of the history of peoples and nations show how a meta-narrative from religion can become a vision which inspires a movement for liberation. (Francisco).

Religions carry prophetic and powerful resources for transforming consciousness and behavior, but they also through the limited understanding of the situation and interpretation of their narratives, contributed to the present crisis. The complexity of this ecological situation challenges religions to reevaluate, reframe their own roles and commitments, as well as the interpretations of their narratives. Religions need to dialogue with the other narratives of today’s context. In doing so, religions can inspire, motivate, propel and model the reverence, the awe and the sense of the sacredness of nature, “to provide the transforming energies for ethical practices to protect endangered ecosystems, threatened species, and diminishing resources.”⁹ Religions can then provide the vision, the symbols, the ethical expressions where we humans can reimagine ourselves no longer as separate from the world but as tinkling within the context of the whole, in the constantly changing cosmos, conscious of our interdependence. May all beings have Life, the Fullness of life!

Cecilia Claparols. Towards une Eco Assumption.

⁶ John Grim, “Recovering Religious Ecology with Indigenous Traditions,” (Yale University School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, Yale Divinity School and the Interdisciplinary Center for Bioethics), 2-3.

⁷ Mary Evelyn Tucker and Duncan Ryuken Williams, eds. *Buddhism and Ecology* (Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions: Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1997) xvi.

⁸ Ibid., Lawrence E. Sullivan, xi.; William H. Swatos, Jr. ed. *Encyclopedia of Religion and Society*. Kieran Flanagan, “Ritual.”Bowden, John. *Encyclopedia of Christianity*. Oxford University Press, 2005.

⁹ Mary Evelyn Tucker, Ibid., xxi.