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egotistical and anti-social. The Mbuti do not cling to things and they do not fear death. The movement of the hunter-gatherer assuages the anxiety of self-awareness.

Berman recognized that we cannot simply return to a hunter-gatherer existence. "Living in the question," he argued, means living with the tension of universalizing thought and the tribal particular. It means reestablishing the material basis for resacralizing the Earth by lowering human population, living in smaller groups, actively controlling those who aggressively strive for power, and improving childrearing. For Berman it is the institutionalization of accumulation that breeds social hierarchy *and* the vertical conscious that separates heaven and Earth, which causes us to lose our home in the world.

David Johns

Further Reading

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See *also*: Ecopsychology; Pygmies (Mbuti foragers) and Bila Farmers of the Ituri Forest; Radical Environmentalism; Shepard, Paul.

Berry, Thomas (1914–)

From his academic beginning as a historian of world cultures and religions, Thomas Berry grew into a historian of the Earth and its evolutionary processes. He sees himself not as a theologian but as a "geologist." Berry began his career as a historian of Western intellectual history. His thesis at Catholic University on Giambattista Vico's philosophy of history was published in 1951. Vico was trying to establish a human historical science of the study of culture and nations comparable to what others had done for the study of nature.

Influenced by Vico, Berry gradually developed a comprehensive historical perspective in periodization and an understanding of the depths of our contemporary crisis due to the ecological destruction caused by humans. Eventually he saw the need for a new mythic story to extract humans from their alienation from the Earth. Berry described this alienation as pervasive due to the power of the technological trance, the myth of progress, and human autism in relation to nature. With his books, *The Dream of the Earth*, *The Universe Story*, and *The Great Work*, Berry aimed to overcome this alienation and evoke the energies needed to create a viable and sustainable future.

After completing his graduate work, Berry spent 1948–1949 in Beijing studying Chinese language, philosophy,

and religion. There he met Columbia professor and Confucian scholar, Wm. Theodore de Bary. Upon returning to the States they founded the Asian Thought and Religion Seminar at Columbia. Berry taught Asian religions at Seton Hall (1956–1960), at St. John's University (1960–1966) and at Fordham University (1966–1979). He founded a Ph.D. program in the History of Religions at Fordham and wrote books on *Buddhism* (1966) and on *Religions of India* (1971).

What distinguished Berry's approach to world religions was his effort not only to discuss the historical unfolding of each of the traditions, but also to articulate their spiritual dynamics and contemporary significance. Confucianism has had special significance for Berry because of its cosmological concerns, its attention to nature and agriculture, its interest in self-cultivation and education, and its commitment to improving the social and political order. With regard to Confucian cosmology Berry has identified the important understanding of the human as a microcosm of the cosmos. Essential to this cosmology is a continuity of being between various levels of reality – cosmic, social, and personal. Berry sees this as similar to the ideas of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Alfred North Whitehead, and other contemporary process thinkers.

Berry also drew extensively on Native American and indigenous traditions for rethinking the dynamics of human–Earth relations. Berry's appreciation for indigenous traditions and for the richness of their mythic, symbolic, and ritual life was enhanced by his encounters with the ideas of Carl Jung and Mircea Eliade. Jung's understanding of the collective unconscious, his reflections on the power of archetypal symbols, and his sensitivity to religious processes made him an important influence on Berry's thinking. Moreover, Mircea Eliade's studies in the history of religions were influential in Berry's understanding of both Asian and indigenous traditions.

In formulating his idea of the *New Story*, Berry is particularly indebted to the thought of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. During the 1970s Berry served as president of the American Teilhard Association. Berry derived from Teilhard an appreciation for developmental time. As Berry observes, since Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* we have become aware of the universe not simply as a static cosmos but as an unfolding cosmogenesis. The theory of evolution provides a distinctive realization of change and development in the universe that resituates the human in a vast sweep of geological time. With regard to developmental time, Teilhard suggested that the whole perspective of evolution changes our reflection on ourselves in the universe. For Berry, the *New Story* is the primary context for envisioning the immensity of cosmogenesis.

Berry also derived from Teilhard an understanding of the psychic-physical character of the unfolding universe. For Teilhard this implies that if there is consciousness in the human and if humans have evolved from the Earth,

then from the beginning some form of consciousness or interiority is present in the process of evolution. Matter, for both Teilhard and Berry, is not simply dead or inert, but is a numinous reality consisting of both a physical and spiritual dimension. Consciousness, then, is an intrinsic part of reality and is the thread that links all life forms. There are various forms of consciousness and, in the human, self-consciousness or reflective thought arises. This implies for Berry that we are one species among others and as self-reflective beings we need to understand our particular responsibility for the continuation of the evolutionary process. We have reached a juncture where we will determine which life forms survive and which will become extinct.

Berry's approach is comprehensive in terms of cultural history and world religions, while Teilhard's is scientifically comprehensive. These two approaches come together in Berry's book, *The Universe Story*, written with the mathematical cosmologist Brian Swimme. Together they relate the story of cosmic and Earth evolution along with the story of the evolution of *Homo sapiens* and the development of human societies and cultures. While not claiming to be definitive or exhaustive, *The Universe Story* sets forth an important model for narrating the Epic of Evolution.

The Universe Story was based on Berry's ideas first articulated in 1978 in an article titled "The New Story." As he pondered the magnitude of the social, political, economic, and ecological problems facing the human community, Berry observed that humans are in between stories. The coherence provided by the old creation stories was no longer operative, Berry asserted, proposing instead the new evolutionary story of how things came to be and where we are now as a comprehensive context for understanding how the human future can be given meaningful direction. Berry stated that to communicate values and orient human action within this new frame of reference we need to identify basic principles of the universe process itself. These, he suggested, are the primordial intentions of the universe toward differentiation, subjectivity, and communion. Differentiation refers to the extraordinary variety and distinctiveness of everything in the universe. Subjectivity is the interior numinous component present in all reality. Communion is the ability to relate to other people and all life forms due to the presence of both subjectivity and difference. Together these create the grounds for the inner attraction of things for one another. For Berry these are principles that can become the basis of a more comprehensive ecological and social ethics that recognizes the human community as dependent upon and interactive with the Earth community. This new ecological orientation suggests that humans are a subset of the Earth, not dominant controllers. In light of this perspective, nature is here not solely for our use but as grounds for communion with the great mystery of life.

This *New Story* arose from Berry's own intellectual formation as a cultural historian of the West, who also studied and wrote about Asian religions and indigenous traditions. His intellectual journey culminated in the study of the evolution of the universe and the Earth, which he saw as an epic story. Berry suggests that this story provides a comprehensive context for orienting human life toward the "Great Work" of our time, namely, creating the grounds for the flourishing of the Earth community.

Berry's idea of the universe story has been critiqued by those influenced by postmodernism as having the potential to be a dominating or hegemonic metanarrative. Their concern is that such a story may not allow for the inclusion of diversity. In particular, they feel that creation stories from various cultures will be lost within such a large-scale narrative of evolution. Berry's own studies and writings on other religious traditions suggest that he is sensitive to this issue; he suggests that the new story context gives a new validity and even more expansive role to earlier stories. Another critique arises from those concerned about using science as a basis for a unifying story inspiring human meaning. They see science (in combination with technology) as creating an objectifying view of nature, which robs nature of its sacred qualities and is thus partly responsible for creating the current environmental crisis.

On the other hand, Berry's influence has been widespread and diverse both within academia and beyond. This ranges from scientists such as mathematical cosmologist Brian Swimme, cell biologist Ursula Goodenough, animal behaviorists Marc Bekoff and Barbara Smuts, and geologists George Fisher and Craig Kochel. It includes ecological economists like Richard Norgaard and David Korten and ecodesigners such as Richard Register and David Orr. In the field of racism and environmental justice Carl Anthony and Barbara Holmes cite the importance of Berry's unifying vision of the story of the Earth. The deep ecologist John Seed, and others promoting the universe story as the "Epic of Evolution," such as the ecologist E.O. Wilson, also draw inspiration from Berry.

Berry has had a particularly strong influence with a large number of Catholic nuns and their religious orders. There is now an organization called "Sisters of Earth" which serves as an umbrella group for these nuns. One who has spearheaded Berry's ideas among these nuns is Sr. Miriam Therese MacGillis, the founder of Genesis Farm, a community-supported organic farm in Blairstown NJ based on the universe story. Various educational institutes have been established which have also been inspired by his ideas. These include two in Oakland, California; one directed by Matthew Fox and one by Jim Conlon. A journal called *EarthLight* also focuses on key aspects of Berry's ideas. For nearly 20 years at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York, Dean James Parks Morton was deeply influenced by Berry's perspective and invited

Berry to serve as a Canon at the Cathedral. At the same time, Paul Winter began to perform his Earth Mass and his solstice celebrations at the Cathedral also with enormous inspiration from Berry's writings and talks. Thus the range of people and institutions influenced by Berry's ideas is already significant and continues to grow as people seek a larger context for grounding their own work for the environment.

Mary Evelyn Tucker

Further Reading

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See also: American Indians as "First Ecologists"; Back to the Land Movements; Cathedral of St. John the Divine; Confucianism; Council of All Beings; Epic of Evolution; Fox, Matthew; Genesis Farm; Religious Studies and Environmental Concern; Seed, John; Swimme, Brian; Teilhard de Chardin, Pierre; Whitehead, Alfred North; Wilson, Edward O.; Winter, Paul.

SP Thomas Berry on Religion and Nature

Religion, we might say, is born of the awakening of human consciousness to some numinous presence experienced throughout the natural world, a presence that brings the world into being, sustains the world in existence, and enables the world to unfold in all its magnificence. In the midst of this florescence we awaken with an overwhelming sense of wonder as we look out over the landscape. There we see the meadows with their flowers, the forests with all their woodland creatures. We listen to the singing of the birds and feel the flow of the wind as it strikes our faces. All this is freely spread out before us for our delight and understanding even while it sustains and nourishes our physical well-being.

The awe we experience in our awakening consciousness is the beginning of the religious reverence and gratitude we experience for that abiding Presence that brought all this into being. From that primordial moment until the present, humans have understood this inner Presence as the guardian, the teacher, the healer, the source whence humans were born, were nourished both physically and spiritually, were protected and guided. It was the destiny to which we returned.

Over the centuries, human communities, from the tribal level to the great classical civilizations, have dedicated their high intellectual efforts to providing some understanding of, and some intimate relation with this Presence, in what we refer to as their "religion," the "binding back" or relating of all phenomenal reality to the origin and sustaining power whence it came.

These civilizations have dedicated their architecture, their arts, and their literature to providing rituals whereby we integrate our human activities into that great cosmic liturgy expressed in the daily and seasonal transformations of the natural world. Everywhere we find the human project validated by its intimate relation to this comprehensive context.

The meaning world of American Indians in a special manner revolved around nature rituals developed to bring this numinous Presence ever more profoundly into their lives. With the Plains Indians, their primary initiation ceremonial was the vision quest whereby the young person would fast and pray for four days at some isolated place, pleading for the understanding and the strength needed to deal with the challenges of adult life. At this time, the one fasting would receive some sign or some guiding vision that would determine the manner in which the difficulties of life should be dealt with throughout the future.

With the Iroquois, the Great Thanksgiving Ritual at harvest time was the high moment of their year's celebration. This occasion celebrated the covenant of the Great Peace in a ceremonial that confirmed the bonding together of the original five tribes of the Confederation. In this ceremony, expressions of gratitude were offered to the various natural forces at work in their lives: the Earth Mother, the Waters, the Fish, the Plants, the Trees, the Animals, the Birds, the Winds, the Sun, the Moon, the Stars. Then, at the end, final thanks were offered to the Creator whose benign Presence brought all things into being and sustained them throughout their existence.

With the Omaha peoples, the new-born child would be taken out under the sky and presented in turn to the Powers of the Heavens, the Powers of the Atmosphere, the Powers of the Earth, and the Powers within the Earth. In each case, the Powers would be addressed and then the birth of the infant would be announced with the petition that the Powers would protect and guide the child throughout the course of the child's life. In North America, the universe was a sacred space recognized by the Pipe Ceremony. In this liturgy, the Pipe was offered to the four directions, to the heavens above, and to the Earth below, a process establishing a sacred center where authentic community affairs were carried out.

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While such religious intimacy with the natural world found consistent expression with earlier tribal peoples, it was also found in classical civilizations: in the Near East, in the Asian world, and in the American civilizations of the Maya, Inca, and Aztec. In each case, the natural world was addressed, not as an "It" but in personal terms – as "Thou." In China, court rituals required that the emperor alter the color of his garments with each seasonal change. The music of the court was altered to suit the seasons. The emperor moved to the appropriate room in the palace. So we could outline the ceremonial sequence whereby the various communities integrated their human affairs with the daily and seasonal changes in the natural world.

Such integral association with the natural world is found also in the Christian world up through the medieval period. From the decline of Rome to the brilliant medieval civilization, the transition was carried out successfully by dedicated religious persons who integrated Christian belief and ritual with the great cosmic liturgy of the natural world. This was the force that created Western civilization from remnants of the Classical Mediterranean world combined with the energy and the traditions of incoming tribal peoples of central Eurasia.

Few civilizations have been so totally integrated with the great cosmic liturgy as was Medieval Europe. This integration we see with total clarity both in the architecture and symbolism of the great cathedrals and in the colorful rituals that were enacted there almost continuously. It is seen especially in the great poem of Dante Alighieri (1265–1321), *The Divine Comedy*. Here the natural world is seen as primordial scripture, a scripture predating the Bible. The opening language of the Bible itself repeats the creative words that brought the natural world into being. Only when there is a natural world can communication pass between the divine and the human. Indeed humans have no conscious interior spiritual world unless it be activated by the outer world of nature. The natural world and the divine, these were mutually explanatory. Thus the great medieval teachers began their writings with observations on how these two scriptures, the natural and the verbal, explain each other. This we find with special clarity in the brief essay of Saint Bonaventure entitled *The Mind's Road to God*. So, too, the daily ritual was coordinated with the diurnal cycle of the sun's rising and setting. Dawn and sunset, the rise and setting of the sun, the passing from night into day and day into night, these were recognized as moments of special presence of the divine and the human to each other. These are the intimate moments of the day when, as individuals or as families, we offer prayers of thanksgiving and petition to that primordial divine source whence all things come.

In the evening parents and children are especially intimate with each other.

The Christian liturgy, referred to as the "Divine Office" or the "Divine Worship," was considered the framing context for daily life. The word itself "liturgy" is derived from two words meaning "public work" or "public activity" because such recognition of the divine was considered society's primary daily activity. The carrying out of this "primary public work" was assigned principally to monks, men who, since early Christianity, had daily ritually chanted the psalms of the Bible and sung sacred hymns, composed later by persons such as Saint Bernard (1090?–1153) and Saint Hildegard (1098–1179). In this context, the term "work" has more affinity to artistic or musical production than to the activities of an ordinary day-laborer.

Besides the daily insertion of the human project into the day-night sequence, there was the even more dramatic seasonal cycle whereby the springtime renewal of life after the winter quiescence was celebrated throughout the society. This festival, known in the Western world principally as the Easter Resurrection festival, was determined in its time of celebration as the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox. The religious calendar of Christians depended on these dates determined by the position of the sun and the moon in relation to the Earth. The other most solemn Christian festival, known as "Christmas," was celebrated at the winter solstice, the time when the sun was lowest in the sky. The date celebrated is 25 December because that was considered by the Romans as the solstice moment. This was the time for celebrating the meeting of the divine and the human in the person of Christ.

While such moments of the diurnal and seasonal cycles in the natural world determine the larger context of religious celebration in much of the world, there are other more intimate aspects of personal spiritual life developed in intimate association with nature. In the Western world, for example, we find personalities such as hermits living in uninhabited regions regarded as sacred. In India, their counterparts are forest dwellers or homeless wanderers. In Buddhism there are also monks living in the depths of the natural world.

Even earlier shamanic personalities entered psychically into the profound depths of the natural world and there obtained guidance and healing for tribal communities in moments of stress, when they are hunting or when they are ill. While this activity of shamanic personalities is more primordial than the activities of later religious personalities such as the priest or sage or yogi or guru or prophet or saint, it does carry a deeply religious aspect.

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Few things stand out more plainly in our secular-based industrial civilization than the diminishment and neglect of both the religious life and the natural world. Religion is reduced largely to social work and personal pieties. Nature is reduced to decoration or vacationing or tourist entertainment. The natural world is swallowed up in big gulps by monstrous mechanized shovels that can lift an immense quantity of soil in a single scoop, all to do away with the natural contours of the land and prepare it for some building project or for laying down great quantities of asphalt for highways and parking lots. Wildlife is diminished both in its diversity of species and in its numerical count.

When we inquire as to just how such a situation antagonistic to religion could have arisen, we must go back to the fourteenth century, to the Black Death, a plague that struck Europe in the years 1347–1349, a period when, it is said, a third of Europe's population died in two years. The difficulty was that the people had no idea of germs. Since they had no idea of what was happening, they considered that some great moral fault had occurred. The world had become wicked. God was punishing the world. The great urgency was to do penance and be redeemed out of the world.

A penitential spirit spread over Europe. Spiritual preaching insisted on detachment from the natural world. New themes appeared in art, scenes where Christ is depicted with right arm raised, condemning began preaching the need for repentance for sin, for detachment from the natural world, a turning toward a spirituality of severe interior discipline. Then, the sixteenth century saw the rise of Protestant Puritanism. In the seventeenth century, Jansenism, the Catholic phase of Puritanism, appears throughout France and then throughout Europe.

An even more devastating assault on the natural world came with René Descartes (1596–1650) and his teaching that the world is divided between mind and matter. What is not mind is simply matter, to be known by mathematical measurement. In this manner, the entire natural world was desouled. The song of the birds became simply mechanism. The entire planet became a vast soulless edifice. The numinous Presence, formerly perceived throughout the natural world, disappeared. Biologists turned against any teaching of "vitalism" – the view that the natural world is an ensouled world, a world of living realities, a world of spontaneity and communication, a world of numinous Presence.

This situation set the stage for the industrial, technological, commercial, financial world to identify planet Earth as a vast natural resource to be used, not as an intimate presence to be communed with. Nothing remained of nature that could provide a basis for religious experience. The Great Cosmic Liturgy with its

daily elevation of life to sublime levels of participation has now been gone for four centuries. Even so, Western religious traditions have survived throughout, if in a diminished role. Ancient liturgies still proclaim the magnificence of the divine Presence throughout the universe. Yet now, in the opening years of the twenty-first century, as industrial civilization collapses on itself, we see that its amazing success has been more fragile, and its survival more transient than we expected.

The powers of nature begin to reassert themselves. Human communities everywhere are protecting remaining wilderness regions and fostering a return to the primordial world of nature. The saying of Henry Thoreau (1817–1862) is now heard more often: "In wildness is the preservation of the world." This return to the natural world is at the same time a manifestation of the survival of religion and a support for the renewal of religion throughout the Earth.

Even in the officially secular society of America there remain two moments when official recognition of a religious or some higher power is required in the public life of the society: the moment of induction into public office when the official must swear on the Bible, or to some higher power in the natural world, to faithfully administer the laws of the state. The second moment is in court when a witness must swear in reference to some transhuman reality to tell the truth in the witness to be given.

One other moment occurs here in America when we return to nature in its wilderness form, go to it for the healing of our inner world. Always there seems to remain in the human soul an awareness of some divine presence in the wilderness regions of the world, a presence that can provide relief from the anxieties of existence in an industrial dominated society.

Perhaps the person in America who best personifies the religious tradition of Western civilization in its most intimate relation to the natural world is John Muir (1838–1914). He spent the greater part of his life after 1860 wandering through the fields and woodlands of Northern California and recording his experiences there. Brilliant compositions, his writings can be considered so many songs to the indwelling sacred presence of the Yosemite Valley along the Merced River.

In 1892, this region was set aside, in the tradition of Yellowstone National Park, as too precious a region to endure the intrusion of developers. Along with all the devastation inflicted on the North American continent these, and some two hundred other natural regions of this continent, have been set aside to be kept in their natural state forever in recognition of the absolute need that humans have for such experiences of the natural world.

Thomas Berry