

“Twelve Principles”

Summary

In this lecture from 1984 Thomas sketches out "Twelve Principles for Understanding the Universe and the Role of the Human in the Universe Process", which, in their scope, touch on many of the foundational ideas central to his thinking and life work.

- 1. The Universe, the solar system, and the planet Earth in themselves and in their evolutionary emergence constitute for the human community the primary revelation of that ultimate mystery whence all things emerge into being.*
- 2. The Universe is a unity, an interacting and genetically-related community of beings bound together in an inseparable relationship in space and time. The unity of the planet Earth is especially clear: each being of the planet is profoundly implicated in the existence and functioning of every other being of the planet.*
- 3. From its beginning the Universe is a psychic-spiritual as well as physical reality.*
- 4. The three basic laws of the Universe at all levels of reality are differentiation, subjectivity and communion. These laws identify the reality, the values and the directions in which the Universe is proceeding.*
- 5. The human is that being in whom the Universe activates, reflects upon and celebrates itself in conscious self-awareness.*
- 6. Earth, within the solar system, is a self-emergent, self-propagating, self-nourishing, self-educating, self-governing, self-healing, self-fulfilling community. All particular life systems in their being, their sexuality, their nourishment, their education, their governing, their healing, their fulfillment, must integrate their functioning within this larger complex of mutually dependent Earth systems.*
- 7. The genetic coding process is the process through which the world of the living articulates itself in its being and its activities. The great wonder is the creative interaction of the multiple codings among themselves.*
- 8. At the human level, genetic coding mandates a further trans-genetic cultural coding by which specifically human qualities find expression. Cultural coding is carried on by educational processes.*
- 9. The emergent process of the Universe is irreversible and non-repeatable in the existing world order. The movement from non-life to life on Earth is a one time event. So too, the movement from life to human form of consciousness. So also, the transition from the earlier to the later forms of human culture.*
- 10. The historical sequence of cultural periods can be identified as the tribal-shamanic period, the Neolithic village period, the classical civilization period, the scientific-technological period and the emerging ecological period.*
- 11. The main human task of the immediate future is to assist in activating the inter-*

communion of all the living and non-living components of Earth's community in what can be considered the emerging ecological period of Earth's development.

12. Functionally, the great art of achieving this historical goal is the art of intimacy and distance.

The Twelve Principles for Understanding the Universe were subsequently revised by Thomas Berry and are published in *Evening Thoughts* (Sierra Club Books and University of California Press, 2006; reprinted by Counterpoint Press, 2015) Edited by Mary Evelyn Tucker.