



The Dream of the Earth

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The Cosmology of Peace

The universe, earth, life, and consciousness are all violent processes. The basic terms in cosmology, geology, biology, and anthropology all carry a heavy charge of tension and violence. Neither the universe as a whole nor any part of the universe is especially peaceful. As Heraclitus noted, Conflict is the father of all things.

The elements are born in supernovas. The sun is lit by gravitational pressures. The air we breathe and the water we drink come from the volcanic eruptions of gases from within the earth. The mountains are formed by the clash of the great continental and oceanic segments of the earth's crust.

Life emerges and advances by the struggle of species for more complete life expression. Humans have made their way amid the harshness of the natural world and have imposed their violence

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on the natural world. Among themselves humans have experienced unending conflict. An enormous psychic effort has been required to articulate the human mode of being in its full imaginative, emotional, and intellectual qualities, a psychic effort that emerges from and gives expression to that dramatic confrontation of forces that shape the universe. This confrontation may give rise to "the tears of things," as described by Virgil, but its creative function would be difficult to ignore.

Thus while we reflect on the turmoil of the universe in its emergent process, we must also understand the splendor that finds expression amid this sequence of catastrophic events, a splendor that set the context for the emerging human age. This period of the human in its modern form that began perhaps sixty thousand years ago, after some two million years of transitional human types, roughly coincides with the last glacial advance and recession. The recession period is especially important since it was also the Neolithic period of permanent villages, horticulture, and weaving. Humans began establishing patterns of life controlled by intelligence and human decision, which impinged with progressive destructiveness on the patterns of the natural world.

A new violence was released over the planet. But if in prior ages the violence of the natural world was essentially creative in the larger arc of its unfolding, the violence associated with human presence on the planet remains ambivalent in its ultimate consequences. From Heraclitus to Augustine, to Nicholas of Cusa, Hegel, and Marx, to Jung, Teilhard, and Prigogine, creativity has been associated with a disequilibrium, a tension of forces, whether this be in a physical, biological, or consciousness context.

If these tensions often result in destructive moments in the planetary process, these moments have ultimately been transformed in some creative context. As human power over the total process has increased, however, and the spontaneities of nature have been suppressed or extinguished, the proper functioning of the planet has become increasingly dependent on human wisdom and human

decision. This dependence began with human intrusion into the natural functioning of the land, that is, with agriculture and the control of water through irrigation. Since then a conquest mentality has been generated coextensive with the civilizational process. The conquest of the earth and its functioning was extended to the conquest of peoples and their lands. The sectioning of the earth and its human inhabitants is a dominant theme in the story of the planet over these many years, until now more than 160 nation-states have established their identity.

These nations exist in an abiding sequence of conflicts that have grown especially virulent in more recent years as our scientific and technological skills have given us increasing control over the enormous powers contained in the physical structures of the earth. The destructive power now available is such that a change of perspective in every phase of earthly existence is required to understand what is happening on the planet and what is happening to the planet. For the first time the planet has become capable of self-destruction in many of its major life systems through human agency, or at least it has become capable of causing a violent and irreversible alteration of its chemical and biological constitution such as has not taken place since the original shaping of the earth occurred.

In our present context, failure in creativity would be an absolute failure. A present failure at this order of magnitude cannot be remedied later by a larger success. In this context a completely new type of creativity is needed. This creativity must have as its primary concern the survival of the earth in its functional integrity. Concern for the well-being of the planet is the one concern that, it is hoped, will bring the nations of the world into an international community. Since the earth functions as an absolute unity, any dysfunctioning of the planet imperils every nation on the planet.

After this concern for the integrity of the earth, the next concern is to see the human itself as an integral member of the earth community, not as some lordly being free to plunder the earth for human utility. The issue of interhuman tensions is secondary to

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earth-human tensions. If humans will not become functional members of the earth community, how can humans establish functional relationships among themselves? It is not exactly the question of whether the nations can survive each other, nor is it even the question of whether intelligent beings can survive the natural forces of the planet; it is whether the planet can survive the intelligence that it has itself brought forth.

My proposal is that the cosmology of peace is presently the basic issue. The human must be seen in its cosmological role just as the cosmos needs to be seen in its human manifestation. This cosmological context has never been more clear than it is now, when everything depends on a *creative resolution of our present antagonisms*. I refer to a *creative resolution of antagonism* rather than to *peace* in deference to the violent aspects of the cosmological process. Phenomenal existence itself seems to be a violent mode of being. Also, there is a general feeling of fullness bordering on decay that is easily associated with *peace*. Neither *violence* nor *peace* in this sense is in accord with the creative transformations through which the more splendid achievements of the universe have taken place. As the distinguished anthropologist A. L. Kroeber once indicated: The ideal situation for any individual or any culture is not exactly "bovine placidity." It is, rather, "the highest state of tension that the organism can bear creatively."

In this perspective the present question becomes not the question of conflict or peace, but how we can deal creatively with these enormous tensions that presently afflict our planet. As Teilhard suggests, we must go beyond the human into the universe itself and its mode of functioning. Until the human is understood as a dimension of the earth, we have no secure basis for understanding any aspect of the human. We can understand the human only through the earth. Beyond the earth, of course, is the universe and the curvature of space. This curve is reflected in the curvature of the earth and finally in that psychic curve whereby the entire universe reflects back on itself in human intelligence.

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This binding curve that draws all things together simultaneously produces with the inner forces of matter that expansive tension whereby the universe and the earth continue on their creative course. Thus the curve is sufficiently closed to hold all things together while it is sufficiently open to continue its creative emergence into the future. This tenuous balance between collapse and explosion contains the larger mystery of that functional cosmology which provides our most profound understanding of our human situation, even if it does not bring it within reach of our rational processes.

In this context our discussion of peace might well be understood primarily in terms of the Peace of Earth. This is not simply *Pax Romana* or *Pax Humana*, but *Pax Gaia*, the Peace of Earth, from the ancient mythic name for the planet.

We can understand this Peace of Earth, however, only if we understand that the earth is a single community composed of all its geological, biological, and human components. The Peace of Earth is indivisible. In this context the nations have a referent outside themselves for resolving their difficulties. The earth fulfills this role of mediator in several ways. First, the earth is a single organic reality that must survive in its integrity if it is to support any nation on the earth. To save the earth is a necessity for every nation. No part of the earth in its essential functioning can be the exclusive possession or concern of any nation. The air cannot be nationalized or privatized; it must circulate everywhere on the planet to fulfill its life-giving function anywhere on the planet. It must be available for the nonhuman as well as for the human lifeforms if it is to sustain human life. So it is with the waters on the earth. They must circulate throughout the planet if they are to benefit any of the lifeforms on the planet.

Second, we must understand that the Peace of Earth is not some fixed condition, but a creative process activated by polarity tensions requiring a high level of endurance. This creative process is not a clearly seen or predetermined pattern of action; it is rather a groping toward an ever more complete expression of the numi-

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nous mystery that is being revealed in this process. Groping implies a disquiet, an incompleteness; it also has the excitement of discovery, ecstatic transformation, and the advance toward new levels of integration.

This Peace of Earth is never quite the same from one period to another. In its prehuman period it is different from its expression in its human period. In its tribal period, too, this Peace of Earth is expressed in the ritual and poetry and patterns of living that are integral with the natural phenomena. The Peace of Earth in the classical civilizational period is articulated in a more elaborate human-earth and interhuman relationship. In the period of the great industrial empires, the Peace of Earth was massively disturbed in the plundering of the earth and the more deadly weaponry of war. At that time an effort was made to build a new world, functioning not by the ever-renewing spontaneities of nature, but by the use of nonrenewable resources. An effort was made to substitute a peace of human contrivance for the peace of an integral human presence to the earth community in its organic functioning. Now, in the early phases of the post-industrial period, the outlines of an integral ecological community appear.

A third aspect of the Peace of Earth is its progressive dependence on human decision. Presently this human decision is being made dominantly by the industrialized nations in both economics and politics. The severe tensions existing among the great powers are of a planetary order of magnitude because the resolution of these tensions is leading to a supreme achievement: the global unity toward which all earthly developments were implicitly directed from the beginning. This unity would be a final expression of the curvature of space: the return of the earth to itself in conscious reflection on itself.

A fourth aspect of this Peace of Earth is its hopefulness. Evidence for this hopefulness is found in the sequence of crisis moments through which the universe and, especially, the planet Earth have passed from the beginning until now. At each state of its develop-

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ment, when it seems that an impasse has been reached, most improbable solutions have emerged that enabled the Earth to continue its development. At the very beginning of the universe, the rate of expansion had to be at an infinitesimally precise rate so that the universe would neither explode nor collapse. So it was at the moment of passage out of the radiation stage: only a fragment of matter escaped antimatter annihilation, but out of that fragment has come the galactic systems and the universe entire. So at the shaping of the solar system: if the Earth were a little closer to the sun, it would be too hot; if slightly more distant, it would be too cold. If closer to the moon, the tides would overwhelm the continents; if more distant, the seas would be stagnant and life development could not have taken place. So with the radius of the Earth: if it were a little greater, the Earth would be more gaseous, like Jupiter; if a little less, the Earth would be more solid, like Mars. In neither case could life have evolved in its present form.

After the appearance of cellular life, when the original nutrients were consumed, the impasse was averted by invention of photosynthesis, upon which all future life development has depended. So it has been with the great story of life in its groping toward unlimited variety of expression; the mysteries of life multiply, but the overall success of the planet became increasingly evident, until the Neolithic phase of the human.

This story of the past provides our most secure basis of hope that the earth will so guide us through the peril of the present that we may provide a fitting context for the next phase of the emergent mystery of earthly existence. That the guidance is available we cannot doubt. The difficulty is in the order of magnitude of change that is required of us. We have become so acclimated to an industrial world that we can hardly imagine any other context of survival, even when we recognize that the industrial bubble is dissolving and will soon leave us in the chill of a plundered landscape.

None of our former revelatory experiences, none of our renewal or rebirth rituals, none of our apocalyptic descriptions are quite

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adequate for this moment. Their mythic power remains in a context far removed from the power that is abroad in our world. But even as we glance over the grimy world before us, the sun shines radiantly over the earth, the aspen leaves shimmer in the evening breeze, the coo of the mourning dove and the swelling chorus of the insects fill the land, while down in the hollows the mist deepens the fragrance of the honeysuckle. Soon the late summer moon will give a light sheen to the landscape. Something of a dream experience. Perhaps on occasion we participate in the original dream of the earth. Perhaps there are times when this primordial design becomes visible, as in a palimpsest, when we remove the later imposition. The dream of the earth. Where else can we go for the guidance needed for the task that is before us.