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THINKING ABOUT RULES AND STRATEGIES

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The corporate world organizes and directs a huge proportion of the total human work available in pursuit of corporate success and with little regard to its effect on Earth's ability to function. Whereas work ought to be directed toward integrating humans into the life community and achieving a satisfactory relationship with Earth, it is not so directed. This represents a huge failure of our society and our world. For surely it is our obligation to make a comfortable fit of the human community into the Earth community as a whole..and here we are ruining Earth's suitability for habitation by humans as well as the other creatures. That's why I say the crazy people are in charge.

We have subordinated our minds to the will of the corporations who have convinced us that their growth and prosperity represent our best interests when in fact it does just the opposite. It's not the corporation, it's the life system which must succeed. The flourishing of the corporate world, the world of manufacturing and sales and junk piles and toxic wastes and soil loss and stripped forests and poisoned air and water have caused us to abandon good sense and embrace onrushing catastrophe. Our best interests lie in the success of the Universe, the success of Earth, the success of the life system as the necessary condition for the success of the human. If Earth is to succeed its functioning systems must be protected and preserved over the ages. But over the past two millennia and more, beginning perhaps with the Greek philosophers, Western humans have regarded themselves rather than the Universe as the primary system. Thomas Berry made this point at a seminar recently. He traces our social misalignment back a lot farther than to Francis Bacon's work in the sixteenth and seventeenth century's. He finds that *it is only the indigenous peoples who have lived in the Universe*. "Civilized" peoples, it appears, are human-centered. They live in a human world. It is this anthropocentrism that has led to the deep, deep cultural pathology which, for one thing, permits the alien and hostile domination Big Business holds over the entire world.

We have a society that believes its ultimate fulfilment is to be found in acquisitions and consuming. The corporations so dominate every aspect of life that we allow ourselves to be defined by the messages they pump into our minds every minute of the day. The corporations own the land and the resources of the land; they own the means of production and the means of satisfying basic needs; they influence the education processes; they practically own the universities; they dominate the political system; they own nearly every avenue into our minds and they control the flow of information; they own nearly all the Beautiful People. Most especially they own the TV and have managed to bring

about a situation where individuals sit in isolation in front of the TV, individual "units", addressed one-on-one by Kindly Mother Big Business. "KMBB is your friend. We want you to be happy and so we provide you with all this wonderful stuff out of the goodness of our warm and friendly hearts. To appreciate us properly it is your duty to buy. Get to the shopping center.

The lonely, brain crippled products of our schools persuaded by the multitude of brain-dead economists and toe-the-corporate- line teachers and preachers give up critical thinking and so our forests disappear, and our soil washes away and our air and water are poisoned and the beautiful, beautiful wildlife, so essential to the health of our souls, is driven to extinction and Earth, gorgeous beyond measure, is given over to the plunder and the waste of the money-makers in a throw-away society.

How are we going to change it? It is our work to transmit the message that our present path is the road to death and that it can be changed. People must recognize that the human system is a subsystem of the larger Earth system which is a part of the Universe system. Thomas Berry emphasizes the essential role of cosmology in the determination of one's place in the system.

The Universe, the cosmos, is the text without a context. Everything exists within the Universe which is primary, out of which it all derives. We live in this cosmology, this cosmogenesis. The massive error that brings us into our desperate situation is our belief that the human is separate and apart from the rest of creation rather than a subsystem to the larger Earth system. Please read *THE UNIVERSE STORY* by Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry. Cosmology as primary story is its message. It is cosmology the Genesis story is inadequate to.

Suppose we try to lay out a few general rules.

- Cosmology is our story. It tells us who we are and where we are and gives us a context for living full and complete lives as members of an integrated community which includes all things. Live with your story as guide.
- Good people are known by the fewness of their wants; bad people by the multiplicity of them. Take as little as is needed. Leave as much as possible. Therein lies wealth.
- Reciprocity: give back in repayment for what you take.
- We are a community, a life community as well as a human community. The common good is paramount.
- Virtue fosters life; Greed and selfishness, vice, destroys life.
- Work must accomplish something worthwhile. The objective must be to minimize all work which changes earth stuff from one condition to another. The less an ecosystem is altered the more fully it functions.

- The human role is to celebrate the Universe.

And perhaps we could try to outline some strategies

- The primary strategy is to convince ourselves that the rules really obtain and must be followed. A new set of commandments is needed. They would lead to a harmonizing of human activity with Earth functioning; the sponsorship of wilderness and wildlife and clean water and clean air, retained soil; as well as other goals in common with the whole life system.
- An early objective must be to break the hold the corporations hold over our world. I believe that can be done simply by following the rules for living. The corporate world requires massive buying, If people are not indulging themselves in corporation rewarding consuming the corporations will fail. But the massive economic and social crisis that would result from the changes must be prepared for. In this regard, it seems to me that the International Society of Ecological Economics (ISEE) might take this on as its primary task, to invent the new system for distribution of goods and access to the market. I believe a system can be invented that rewards workers for restoring the functioning of the ecosystems rather than plundering them; preserving wealth rather than turning it into junk.
- Extensively revise the way we organize work. This goes hand in hand with the strategy described above. What is surely true is that there is a huge capability in the human population to do work. It is human work wrongly understood and directed, which has brought on the destruction we observe on every side. Human work could be employed in restoration. Returning damned rivers to their original functioning; cleaning up toxic wastes; returning road beds back to wilderness; restoring wetlands and forests; the preservation of top soil are some projects that come to mind.
- As a much needed initial project with great symbolic value let us launch a program to deny the timber industry access to the National Forests.
- It seems possible to me that colleges and universities might take on the task of cataloguing all the work that needs to be done, bioregion by bioregion, to make the human habitation of the land compatible with the land and the life systems that belong there.
- Liturgists might get to work on designing suitable celebrations for the Ecozoic Age. In this regard The Cosmic Walk has been invented as a means of commemorating the Story in drama and dance and music. Miriam Therese MacGillis at Genesis Farm at Blairstown, New Jersey invented it. It is simple in outline but it evokes a marvellous elaborating creativity. Wind a rope or cord, maybe 200 yards long, in a spiral, outdoors preferably, and have it symbolize the fifteen billion years of the Universe. Let the inner, beginning point represent the Primeval Flaring Forth, perhaps

with a flame. Then mark off points to represent happenings along the way. (There is a listing of important milestones in *The Universe Story*.) Then tell the story in your own way. Write for a copy of a larger outline. We performed this liturgy at our annual conference at Camp New Hope, outside, on a cold rainy Sunday morning. A dramatic work of art was created and the story told in moving religious beauty.

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