The Great Work


CH. 1 – The Great Work

“HISTORY IS GOVERNED BY THOSE OVERARCHING MOVEMENTS that give shape and meaning to life by relating the human venture to the larger destinies of the universe. Creating such a movement might be called the Great Work of a people” (Berry, 1999, p. 1).

“The Great Work now, as we move into a new millennium, is to carry out the transition from a period of human devastation of the Earth to a period when humans would be present to the planet in a mutually beneficial manner” (p. 3).

“In reality there is a single integral community of the Earth that includes all its component members whether human or other than human. In this community every being has its own role to fulfill, its own dignity, its inner spontaneity. Every being has its own voice. Every being declares itself to the entire universe. Every being enters into communion with other beings. This capacity for relatedness, for presence to other beings, for spontaneity in action, is a capacity possessed by every mode of being throughout the entire universe” (p. 4).

“So too every being has rights to be recognized and revered. Trees have tree rights, insects have insect rights, rivers have river rights, mountains have mountain rights. So too with the entire range of beings throughout the universe. All rights are limited and relative. So too with humans” (p. 5).

“The Great Work before us, the task of moving modern industrial civilization from its present devastating influence on the Earth to a more benign mode of presence, is not a role that we have chosen. It is a role given to us, beyond any consultation with ourselves. We did not choose. We were chosen by some power beyond ourselves for this historical task” (p. 7).

“We are, as it were, thrown into existence with a challenge and a role that is beyond any personal choice. The nobility of our lives, however, depends upon the manner in which we come to understand and fulfill our assigned role” (p. 7).

“Yet we must believe that those powers that assign our role must in that same act bestow upon us the ability to fulfill this role. We must believe that we are cared for and guided by these same powers that bring us into being” (p. 7).

“Our own special role, which we will hand on to our children, is that of managing the arduous transition from the terminal Cenozoic to the emerging Ecozoic Era, the period when humans will be present to the planet as participating members of the comprehensive Earth community” (p. 7-8).
“We might observe here that the Great Work of a people is the work of all the people. No one is exempt. Each of us has our individual life pattern and responsibilities. Yet beyond these concerns each person in and through their personal work assists in the Great Work. Personal work needs to be aligned with the Great Work” (p. 10).

“We cannot doubt that we too have been given the intellectual vision, the spiritual insight, and even the physical resources we need for carrying out the transition that is demanded of these times, transition from the period when humans were a disruptive force on the planet Earth to the period when humans become present to the planet in a manner that is mutually enhancing” (p. 11).

CHAPTER 2: The Meadow Across the Creek

“Whatever preserves and enhances this meadow in the natural cycles of its transformation is good; whatever opposes this meadow or negates it is not good. My life orientation is that simple. It is also that pervasive. It applies in economics and political orientation as well as in education and religion. That is good in economics” (p. 12).

“The universe was the world of meaning in these earlier times, the basic referent in social order, in economic survival, in the healing of illness. In that wide ambience the Muses dwelled, whence came the inspiration of poetry and art and music. The drum, heartbeat of the universe itself, established the rhythm of dance, whereby humans entered into the entrancing movement of the natural world” (p. 12).

~ People had deep experiences of the numinous dimensions of the universe before the industrial revolution

“This experience we observe even now in the indigenous peoples of the world. They live in a universe, in a cosmological order, whereas we, the peoples of the industrial world, no longer live in a universe” (p. 14).

~ We live in a Disney world and in worlds of concrete and steel.

“Here I would suggest that the work before us is the task not simply of ourselves but of the entire planet and all its component members. While the damage that has been done is immediately the work of humans, the healing cannot be the work simply of humans any more than the illness of one organ of the body can be healed through the efforts of that one organ. Every member of the body must bring about the healing” (p.20).

“We might think of a viable future for the planet less as the result of some scientific insight or as dependent on some socioeconomic arrangement than as participation in a symphony or as renewed presence to some numinous presence manifested in the wonderworld about us. This was perhaps something I vaguely experienced in that first view of the lilies blooming in the meadow across the creek” (p. 20).
CH. 3: THE EARTH STORY

~ Berry calls for a new understanding of the planet Earth
~ Earth was born out of the larger processes of the universe
~ Earlier times – Chinese world – The human and the cosmic responded to each other. Human activities were coordinated with the cycle of the seasons
~ experience of one’s self as one body with heaven and Earth and the myriad of things (Wang Yang-ming)
~ Black Elk, Lakota Sioux, Black Elk Speaks – When 9 years old he had a vision culminating in a vast cosmic dance evoked by the song of the black stallion in the heavens
~ a sense of the sacred dimension of the universe

~ mystical traditions: Hildegard of Bingen, Richard of St. Victor, Meister Eckhart, John of the Cross

~ Christianity – liturgy that connected human praise with the numinous moments of the dawn and sunset and with the transitions of the seasons (medieval Benedictine & Cistercian monasteries)

~ Christians had a deeper commitment to the historical order than to the cosmological order. This led to the concept of the natural world as being there primarily for “use” rather than as manifestation of some numinous presence.

~ Berry asks: “How can we obtain the psychic energies needed to disengage from our plundering industrial economy?

~ Berry speaks of a spiritual capacity in matter (p. 25). “Mind and matter are two dimensions of the single reality that comes into being in an immense diversity of expression throughout the universe by some self-organizing process” (p. 26).

~ Cosmogenesis: “a universe ever coming into being through an irreversible sequence of transformations moving, in the larger arc of its development, from a lesser to a great order of complexity and from a lesser to great consciousness.

~ At every level there is a basic tendency toward self-organization.

~ The primordial emergence was the beginning of the Earth story and of our story. Everything is related.

~ Cenozoic Era – wildly creative period – humans emerged on the scene

~ Neolithic Era – new social structures, weaving and pottery, domestication of wheat and rice, sheep, pigs, cattle, horses, chickens and reindeer, the village.
Humans are integral with the universe

“In ourselves the universe is revealed to itself as we are revealed in the universe... every being in the universe articulates some specific quality of the universe in its entirety. Indeed nothing in the universe could be itself apart from every other being in the universe, nor could any moment of the universe story exist apart from all the other moments in the story. Yet it is within our own being that we have our own unique experience of the universe and of the Earth in its full reality” (p. 32).

CH. 4: The North American Continent

“In these opening years of the twenty-first century we find ourselves here on this continent, known earlier as Turtle Island, now known as North America. To live here in any acceptable manner, we should know something about this continent and its distinctive features, for only in this manner can we know where we are or understand our authentic role in this context” (p. 33).

~ 250 million years ago – This continent came together with other land masses to form Pangaea.
~ The Appalachian Mountains – where the continents met – final uplift.
~ 200 million years ago the continents rifted apart
~ 220 mya – 65 mya – Mesozoic Era (dinosaurs)

~ immensely creative time – flowering plants, trees, birds
~ 67 mya – massive extinctions, followed by trees, flowers, birds, animals
~ Bering Straits – land bridge crossed by humans
~ The Isthmus of Panama connected North & South America
~ Indigenous peoples of N & S America are beginning to be accepted into the historical narrative, having influenced history economically, politically, intellectually and spiritually
~ Indigenous peoples – pharmacology, creation of languages (linguistic diversity), spiritual intimacy with the land, political competence, arts, literature, dance, poetry, ritual

Question to John Smith by the chief of the Powhaten confederacy: “Why do you take by force what you may have quietly by love? Why will you destroy us who supply you with food? What can you get by war...”. We are unarmed and willing to give you what you ask, if you come in a friendly manner and not with swords and guns, as if to make war upon an enemy” (p. 38).

“This presence of native peoples to the numinous powers of this continent expressed through its natural phenomena expresses an ancient spiritual identity. The Iroquois peoples communed with these powers under the name of Orenda, the Algonquian as Manitou, the Sioux as Wakan. Every natural phenomenon expressed these sacred powers in some manner. To be allied with these powers is primary and necessary for every significant human endeavor on this continent” (p. 39).
~ Iroquois Thanksgiving ceremony – can last for days. Gratitude for each aspect of the natural world. Final exhortation of gratitude: “Now our minds are one.” The binding ritual whereby the five original tribes of the Iroquois confederacy established their unity. (p. 40).

“The moment when the Europeans arrived on the North American continent could be considered as one of the more fateful moments in history, not only of this continent but of the entire planet” (p. 40).

~ Disrespect for and exploitation of the land – “...the invading peoples were disturbing the basic structure and functioning of the continent” (p. 43).

~ species extinction: auk, passenger pigeon, buffalo, etc.; religious antagonisms

**Clash between Europeans and indigenous peoples of North America ~**

“As seen by the Europeans the continent was here to serve human purposes through trade and commerce as well as through the more immediate personal and household needs of the colonists. They had nothing spiritual to learn from this continent. Their attitude toward the land as primarily for use was the crucial issue.

- This attitude was not only the clash of two human groups with each other over some land possession or some political rule, it was a clash between the most anthropocentric culture that history has ever known with one of the most naturecentric cultures ever known.
- It was the clash between a monotheistic personal deity perceived as transcendent to all phenomenal modes of being and the Great Spirit perceived as immanent in all natural phenomena. It was the clash between a people driven by a sense of historical destiny with a people living in an abiding world of ever-renewing phenomena.
- It was the clash of a people with certain immunities to tuberculosis, diphtheria, and measles with a people devoid of such immunities.
- Over the centuries it became the clash of an urban people highly skilled in industrial manufacturing with a tribal people skilled in hunting and farming who could still appreciate the integral relations that exist between the human community and the natural world.”

“We might well brood over these scenes until we come to some depth awareness of what has happened and begin to dream again, this time a more coherent dream of an integral community of the human and all those other-than-human component members of the North American continent” (p. 47).

**CH. 5: The Wild and the Sacred**

“If such moments as dawn and dusk, birth and death, and the seasons of the year are such significant moments, how awesome, then, must be the present moment when we witness the
dying of the Earth in its Cenozoic expression and the life renewal of the Earth in an emerging Ecozoic Era. Such reflection has a special urgency if we are ever to renew our sense of the sacred in any sphere of human activity. For we will recover our sense of wonder and our sense of the sacred only if we appreciate the universe beyond ourselves as a revelatory experience of that numinous presence whence all things come into being. Indeed, the universe is the primary sacred reality. We become sacred by our participation in this more sublime dimension of the world about us” (p. 49).

“The universe carries in itself the norm of authenticity of every spiritual as well as every physical activity within it” (p. 49).

Spiritual and Physical ~ “The spiritual and the physical are two dimensions of the single reality that is the universe itself. There is an ultimate wildness in all this, for the universe, as existence itself, is a terrifying as well as a benign mode of being. If it grants us amazing powers over much of its functioning we must always remember that any arrogance on our part will ultimately be called to account” (p. 50).

Wildness ~ “The beginning of wisdom in any human activity is a certain reverence before the primordial mystery of existence, for the world about us is a fearsome mode of being. We do not judge the universe. The universe is even now judging us. This judgment we experience in what we refer to as the “wild.” We recognize this presence when we are alone in the forest, especially in the dark of night, or when we are at sea in a small craft out of sight of land and for a moment lose our sense of direction. The wild is experienced in the earthquakes that shake the continents in such violence, so too in the hurricanes that rise up out of the Caribbean Sea and sweep over the land” (p. 50).

“Wildness we might consider as the root of the authentic spontaneities of any being. It is that wellspring of creativity whence come the instinctive activities that enable all living beings to obtain their food, to find shelter, to bring forth their young; to sing and dance and fly through the air and swim through the depths of the sea. This is the same inner tendency that evokes the insight of the poet, the skill of the artist, and the power of the shaman. Something in the wild depths of the human soul finds its fulfillment in the experience of nature’s violent moments” (p. 50).

“Only if the human imagination is activated by the flight of the great soaring birds in the heavens, by the blossoming flowers of Earth, by the sight of the sea, by the lightning and thunder of the great storms that break through the heat of summer, only then will the deep inner experiences be evoked within the human soul” (p. 55).

“The natural world demands a response that rises from the wild unconscious depths of the human soul. A response that artists seek to provide in color and music and movement… The response that we give must have a supreme creative power, for the Cenozoic Era in the story of Earth is fading as the sun sets in the western sky. Our hope for the future is for a new dawn, an Ecozoic Era, when humans will be present to the Earth in a mutually enhancing manner” (p. 55).
CH. 6: The Viable Human

**Natural Resources ~**

~ “...the industrial, commercial, and financial corporations are in possession of the planet; either directly or indirectly, with the support of governments subservient to the various corporation enterprises” (p. 60).

~ the planet has been reduced to a resource base for consumer use in an industrial society is already an unacceptable situation.

~ “Our more human experience of the world of meaning has been diminished in direct proportion as money and utilitarian values have taken precedence over the numinous, aesthetic, and emotional values.”

~ “...any recovery of the natural world in its full splendor will require not only a new economic system but a conversion experience deep in the psychic structure of the human. Our present situation is the consequence of a cultural fixation, an addiction, an emotional insensitivity, none of which can be remedied by any quickly contrived adjustment” (p. 60).

**The Law ~**

~ the basic orientation of the law is toward personal human rights and toward the natural world as existing for human possession and use.

~ “To the industrial-commercial world the natural world has no inherent rights to existence, habitat, or freedom to fulfill its role in the vast community of existence. Yet there can be no sustainable future, even for the modern industrial world, unless these inherent rights of the natural world are recognized as having legal status.” (update: Bolivia has granted legal rights to the natural world)

~ [Thomas Berry used to often say that the Earth is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects.]

~ “The Earth belongs to itself and to all the component members of the Earth community” (p. 61).

~ “Each earthly being participates in this cosmic celebration as the proper fulfillment of its powers of expression” (p.61)

~ To achieve a viable human-Earth situation, a new jurisprudence is needed.
“Within this context the various components of the Earth—the land, the water, the air, and the complex of life systems—would each be a commons. Together they would constitute the integral expression of the Great Commons of the planet Earth to be shared in proportion to need among all members of the Earth community” (p. 61)

“Justice would consist in carrying out this complex of creative relationships.

Language

“Progress” – central value word – increase in scientific understanding, personal & social development, better health and longer life

Progress has resulted in degradation of Earth; “The Earth is a kind of sacrificial offering” (p. 62).

“...the language in which our values are expressed has been co-opted by the industrial establishment and is used with the most extravagant modes of commercial advertising to create the illusory would in which modern industrial peoples now live” (p. 63).

Need for rectification of language – profit; patriarchy

Need for social justice

Education (related to notion of “Earth Democracy” in EcoJustice Education)

Purpose – “to enable persons to be “productive” within the context of the industrial society. A person needs to become literate in order to fulfill some function within the system...” (p. 64).

“In this new context of a viable human mode of being, the primary educator as well as the primary lawgiver and the primary healer would be the natural world itself” (p. 64).

“The integral Earth community would be a self-educating community within the context of a self-educating universe. Education at the human level would be the sensitizing of the human to those profound communications made by the universe about us... The Earth would be our primary teacher in industry and economics...(p. 64).

Medical Profession

must consider its role in the context of the Earth process

“A healing of the Earth is a prerequisite for the healing of the human. Adjustment of the human to the conditions and restraints of the natural world constitutes the primary medical prescription for human well-being” (p. 67)
“Our quest for wonderworld is making wasteworld. Our quest for energy is creating entropy on a scale never before witnessed in the historical process.

“The media and advertising are particularly responsible for placing the entire life process of the human in a situation wherein producer and consumer feed back into each other in an ever-accelerated process. Presently we experience on a world scale an enormous glut in many basic products, along with unmatched deprivation in the vast numbers of peoples gathered in the shantytowns of the world” (p. 68).

Recovery of symbols ~

Four symbols – the Journey, the Great Mother, the Cosmic Tree, and the Death-Rebirth symbol – “constitute a psychic resource of enormous import for establishing ourselves as a viable species in a viable life system on the planet Earth” (p. 70).

~ The Journey ~ “The archetypal journey of the universe can now be experienced as the journey of each individual, since the entire universe has been involved in shaping our individual psychic as well as our physical being from that first awesome moment when the universe emerged” (p. 69).

~ The Great Mother ~ the maternal aspect of the universe, especially in the Earth. “Once this symbol is recovered the dominion of the patriarchal principle that has brought such aggressive attitudes into our activities will be mitigated” (p. 70).

~ The Cosmic Tree ~ gives expression to the organic unity of the universe, especially Earth.

~ Death-Rebirth Symbol ~ relevant to the cosmic process of continuing transformation.

[Note: for more on how these symbols might function in the Ecozoic Era, see Ch. 15 – “The Dynamics of the Future.”]

Education and Religion ~

~ “...should be especially sensitive in discerning what is happening to the planet and the value of these symbols in restoring a certain integrity to the human process” (p. 71).

~ guide our sense of reality; provide our life interpretation

~ “...should awaken in the young an awareness of the world in which they live, how it functions, how the human fits into the larger community of life, the role that the human fulfills in the great story of the universe, and the historical sequence of developments that have shaped our physical and cultural landscape” (p. 71).

~ should communicate some guidance concerning the future
“We must recognize that the only effective program available as our primary guide toward a viable human mode of being is the program offered by the Earth itself. Both education and religion need to ground themselves within the story of the universe as we now know it through our empirical ways of knowing. Within this functional cosmology we can overcome our alienation and begin the renewal of life on a sustainable basis. This story is a numinous revelatory story that could evoke not only the vision but also the energies needed for bringing ourselves and the entire planet into a new order of survival” (p. 71).

CH. 8 – Ecological Geography

“Geography is an integrating study of the Earth in its comprehensive extent as well as in its various regional integrations” (p. 86).

Earth ~

❖ “...is a single reality composed of a diversity beyond all understanding or description” (p. 86).
❖ “...has remained coherent and creative throughout the vast period of its development” (p. 86).

The interaction of species (10 to 20 million) with their geographical location constitutes a major phase of land formation.

Then came the human, with the power to shape according to its own design.

Humans have their identity within the within the geographical context in which they have found themselves (p. 88).

“Eventually the achievement of a truly human way of life came to be judged by the extent of control over the geological structure, the vegetation, and the wildlife-forms in the region and their use for human purposes” (p. 88).

Humans had a sense of the spirit powers present throughout the geographical region.

In recent times what we have failed to realize is that “in the particular place of their dwelling the well-being of the Earth was a necessity for their own well-being and fulfillment” (p. 89).

Are humans an invasive species? ~

“In some sense the human refuses to accept any particular niche, for the basic function of a niche is to set limits to the activity of a species. In this sense the human refuses to accept limits imposed from without or even from within its own being. By bringing humans into existence the Earth has created a supreme danger to all other components of the Earth community because the human can invade the region of other species with a unique range of freedom” (p. 91).
Law of limits – “Survival of any group of living beings in relation to other groups depends on the recognition of limits in the actions of each group” (p. 91).

~ Every species should have opposed species or conditions that limit them so that no single species or group of species overwhems the others (p. 92).

~ Humans must learn to self-limit (p. 92)

~ Our industrial system – “an effort to escape from the constraints of the natural world” (p. 93).

~ Critique: “We have created an artificial context for our existence through mechanical invention and the extravagant use of energy. In this process we have so violated the norms of limitation, so upset the chemical balance of the atmosphere, the soil, and the oceans, so exploited the Earth in our use of fossil fuels, that we are devastating the fertility of the planet and extinguishing many species of wildlife. We no longer live within the organic, ever-renewing world that is the natural context of our existence” (p. 93).

~ Alienation from the natural world ~
“This psychic world of no attachment, no intimacy, is also the world of no fulfillment...While we expect our place to give itself to us, we have no sense of giving ourselves to our place” (p. 94).

~ The role of ecological geography ~
We need to understand the Earth in all its diversity if we are to know how humans are to be present to the planet in a mutually enhancing manner – Earth literacy.

~ “What is needed is geography as an intimate study” (p. 98).

~ “Only intimacy can save us from our present commitment to a plundering industrial economy” (p. 99).

CH. 13: The Petroleum Interval

“THE STORY OF THE LATE NINETEENTH AND THE ENTIRE twentieth century has been largely the story of petroleum, its discovery and use by humans, and the social and cultural consequences in human society. The story of the twenty-first century will be the story of the terminal phase of petroleum and the invention of new patterns of human living in relation to Earth’s resources in the post-petroleum period” (p. 150).

“Our efforts in every field of human activity, in economics, social structures, legal enactments, education, scientific research, in spiritual and religious life all need to be directed toward this restructuring of human life in a more integral relationship with the planet. This relationship will enable us to survive in a state of well-being in the post-petroleum period” (p. 151).
Now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, there is widespread agreement that by of the petroleum on the planet will be exhausted, leaving a planet unable to support the way of life developed during its period of abundance. (Peak Oil and Global Climate Change)

Toxic residue saturates the biosystems of Earth, devastating the forests, adversely affecting organic life everywhere.

In this chapter Berry discusses the history of the petroleum, the many byproducts of oil, including plastics and the petrochemical industry, and their effects on the environment.

**Global climate change** ~ [Although Thomas Berry does not discuss it back in 1999, except for a few words on p. 157, were he alive today this surely would have been a focus of his discussion on the effects of the fossil fuel industry.]

Conclusion: The modern industrial world has failed to align its own functioning with the functioning of planetary forces on which it depends (p. 157).

We need to consider how the extraction and use of petroleum or coal effects the functioning of the planet and what will happen then the forces of nature can no longer fulfill their role in the integral functioning of the planet (p. 158).

The petroleum interval is coming to an end within the lifetime of many living on the planet today. We need to prepare for a future without petroleum.

The Transition Town initiative does this. Also explore 360.org.

**CH. 14: Reinventing the Human**

“**WE MIGHT DESCRIBE THE CHALLENGE BEFORE US BY THE following sentence. The historical mission of our times is to reinvent the human—at the species level, with critical reflection, within the community of life-systems, in a time-developmental context, by means of story and shared dream experience**” (p. 159).

We need to reinvent the human at the species level because the issues we are concerned with seem to be beyond the competence of our present cultural traditions, either individually or collectively.

“What is needed is something beyond existing traditions to bring us back to the most fundamental aspect of the human: giving shape to ourselves. The human is at a cultural impasse” (p. 160).

Radical new cultural forms are needed. These new cultural forms would place the human within the dynamics of the planet rather than place the planet within the dynamics of the
human” (p. 160)....we need to reinvent the human within the community of life systems (p. 161).

**Needs:** to teach new skills, new jurisprudence, critical reflection, to reinvent the human within the community of life systems, understandings of bioregions, time-developmental context (p. 161-162)

**Bioregions** ~ “As the functional units of the planet, these bioregions can be described as self-propagating, self-nourishing, self-educating, self-governing, self-healing, and self-fulfilling communities. Human population levels, our economic activities, our educational processes, our governance, our healing, our fulfillment must be envisaged as integral with this community process” (p. 161).

3 **basic principles of the cosmological order:** differentiation, subjectivity, communion (p. 162)

Our present course is a violation of each of these three principles in their most primordial expression.

**Differentiation:** “Whereas the basic direction of the evolutionary process is toward constant differentiation within a functional order of things, our modern world is directed toward monocultures. This is the inherent direction of the entire industrial age. Industry requires a standardization, an invariant process of multiplication with no enrichment of meaning. In an acceptable cultural context, we would recognize that the unique properties of each reality determine its value both for the individual and for the community. These are fulfilled in each other. Violation of the individual is an assault on the community” (p. 162).

**Subjectivity:** “As a second imperative derived from the cosmological process, we find that each individual is not only different from every other being in the universe but also has its own inner articulation, its unique spontaneities. Each being in its subjective depths carries that numinous mystery whence the universe emerges into being. This we might identify as the sacred depth of the individual” (p. 162).

**Communion:** “The third cosmological imperative indicates that the entire universe is bonded together in such a way that the presence of each individual is felt throughout its entire spatial and temporal range. This capacity for bonding the components of the universe with one another enables the vast variety of beings to come into existence in that gorgeous profusion and yet comprehensive unity we observe about us. From this we can appreciate the directing and energizing role played by the story of the universe” (p. 163).

**The New Story ~**

“This story that we know through empirical observation of the world is our most valuable resource in establishing a viable mode of being for the human species as well as for all those
stupendous life-systems whereby the Earth achieves its grandeur, its fertility, and its capacity for endless self-renewal” (p. 163).

“This story, as told in its galactic expansion, its Earth formation, its life emergence, and its self-reflexive consciousness, fulfills in our times the role of the mythic accounts of the universe that existed in earlier times, when human awareness was dominated by a spatial mode of consciousness” (p. 163).

“We have moved from cosmos to cosmogenesis, from the mandala journey toward the center of an abiding world to the irreversible journey of the universe itself, as the primary sacred journey. This journey of the universe is the journey of each individual being in the universe” (p. 163-164).

“The labor and care expended over some billions of years and untold billions of experiments to bring forth such a gorgeous Earth is all being negated within less than a century for what we consider “progress” toward a better life in a better world” (p. 164).

The shared dream experience (p. 164)
*emphasis on creative process, personally and in terms of the universe
*we have passed through a cosmological period of experimentation, groping
*in both cases, it is a feeling or imaginative process, which might be described as “dream realization”

“The universe seems to be the fulfillment of something so highly imaginative and so overwhelming that it must have been dreamed into existence. But if the dream is creative we must also recognize that few things are so destructive as a dream or enthrallment that has lost the integrity of its meaning and entered an exaggerated and destructive manifestation” (p. 165)

“At such a moment a new revelatory experience is needed, an experience wherein human consciousness awakens to the grandeur and sacred quality of the Earth process. This awakening is our human participation in the dream of the Earth, the dream that is carried in its integrity not in any of Earth’s cultural expressions but in the depths of our genetic coding. Therein the Earth functions at a depth beyond our capacity for active thought. We can only be sensitized to what is being revealed to us. We probably have not had such participation in the dream of the Earth since earlier shamanic times, but therein lies our hope for the future for ourselves and for the entire Earth community” (p. 165).

CH. 16: The Fourfold Wisdom

A fourfold wisdom is available to guide us into the future: (p. 176-177)

1. Indigenous wisdom ~ extends back into the Paleolithic period
2. The wisdom of women ~ flourished throughout the Neolithic Period
3. *Urban classical literate traditions* ~ began about 5,000 years ago; most powerful force in human cultural formation, until challenged by...

4. *Scientific tradition* ~ in its beginning phase

~ Berry explores the history and contributions of each tradition

**Conclusion:**

~ We need all of the traditions – each with its own distinctive achievements, limitations, distortions, and special contributions toward an integral wisdom.

~ Each of these traditions is experiencing a renewal.

~ We are recognizing the value of indigenous traditions and that the human project belongs to both men and women.

~ The tradition of Western civilization must withdraw from its efforts to dominate Earth.

~ The epic of evolution – the contribution of science toward the future

~ The Great Work: “The guidance, the inspiration and the energy we need is available. The accomplishment of the Great Work is the task not simply of the human community, but of the entire planet Earth. Even beyond Earth, it is the Great Work of the universe itself” (p. 195).

**CH. 17: Minutes of Grace**

“As we enter the twenty-first century, we are experiencing a moment of grace. Such moments are privileged moments. The great transformations of the universe occur at such times. The future is defined in some enduring pattern of its functioning” (p. 196).

“The present is one of those moments of transformation that can be considered as a cosmological, as well as a historical and a religious moment of grace” (p. 196).

~ Berry reviews moments of grace in the universe story and human history

~ In the 21st century we are experiencing another moment of grace, with greater magnitude than ever before. Everything is at stake.

“We are also altering the great classical civilizations as well as the indigenous tribal cultures that have dominated the spiritual and intellectual development of vast numbers of persons throughout these past five thousand years. These civilizations and cultures that have governed our sense of the sacred and established our basic norms of reality and value and designed the life disciplines of the peoples of Earth are terminating a major phase of their historical mission. The teaching and the energy they communicate are unequal to the task of guiding and inspiring
the future. They cannot guide the great work that is before us. We will never be able to function without these traditions. But these older traditions alone cannot fulfill the needs of the moment. That they have been unable to prevent and have not yet properly critiqued the present situation is evident. Something new is happening. A new vision and a new energy are coming into being” (p. 198).

~ We only have a brief period in which to reverse the devastation of the Earth.

~ So often in the past, catastrophic moments are creative moments.

~ The transition into the 21st century is a moment of grace – a unique opportunity.

CONCLUSION:

~ “We see quite clearly that what happens to the nonhuman happens to the human. What happens to the outer world happens to the inner world. If the outer world is diminished in its grandeur then the emotional, imaginative, intellectual, and spiritual life of the human is diminished or extinguished” (p. 200).

~ “Without the soaring birds, the great forests, the sounds and coloration of the insects, the free-flowing streams, the flowering fields, the sight of the clouds by day and the stars at night, we become impoverished in all that makes us human” (p. 200).

~ a new mystique of the Earth is developing

~ Our present moment of grace – a transition to the Ecozoic Era.

~ “The mythic vision has been set into place. The distorted dream of an industrial technological paradise is being replaced by the more viable dream of a mutually enhancing human presence within an ever-renewing organic-based Earth community. The dream drives the action” (p. 201).

~ Moments of grace are transient moments. “The transformation must take place within a brief period. Otherwise it is gone forever.”

HOPE: “In the immense story of the universe, that so any of these dangerous moments have been navigated successfully is some indication that the universe is for us rather than against us. We need only summon these forces to our support in order to succeed. It is difficult to believe that the purposes of the universe or of the planet Earth will ultimately be thwarted, although the human challenge to these purposes must never be underestimated” (p. 201).