

Lineage and Legacy: My Intellectual Journey¹ in Twelve Parts
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1. Family, Education, Profession

Among the many areas of practical knowledge that I learned from my wife Ellen (she excels at kindness, relationships, meals, and clothes) perhaps the most important is her deep and sensitive understanding of the continuing influence of childhood. With this in mind, I am including a few reflections on the parts of my childhood that have clearly affected my learning, aspirations, limitations, and accomplishments.

By far the most important influence of my first six years was being at home with my mother. My primary early memory of my mother during my early childhood was her sadness. Two baby boys born between my brother Raymond (the youngest) and myself, died in infancy. My mother prayed for them and to them all of her life. One baby died when I was two and another when I was four. I offered to buy a baby for my mother from the local pharmacy. She considered Raymond to be a “gift.”

As everyone who ever met my mother eagerly attests, she had an amazing capacity for affection and friendship. Some of her grandchildren considered themselves better understood by her than by their own parents. It seems likely that all 22 of her grandchildren considered themselves to have been her favorite. Dozens of her children’s friends considered themselves part of her family. She surely loved her husband throughout the more than fifty years of their married life but it did seem to some of her children that because they were so fundamentally different she did not fully appreciate his devotion to her. It also should be admitted that she was partial to her four sons over her two daughters. In this respect, she unconsciously followed the example of her own mother who clearly favored her two sons over her only daughter. (My father was partial to his daughters, including their activities, education, and careers and, it seems to me, not at the expense of his sons.)

Although she had only an eighth grade education, my mother was a serious reader, especially books that seemed to her part of her Catholic faith. She was still talking on the phone, saying her prayers (for whomever was sick, sad, or in trouble), reading books and the *New York Times* when, at age 97, she died in our living room. In her last years she spent several months a year cared for most lovingly by my wife Ellen. From my mother I learned conversation, idealism, and romance; from my father I learned work, loyalty, and integrity.

In retrospect it is obvious that it was in order to have my mother’s attention that during the first few years of elementary school I stayed home “sick” more days than I attended. In addition to endless conversation, my mother embodied Irish Catholicism. Almost daily we walked a mile to the local church for mass. She had a passion for

¹ In 2011, I wrote this essay for a volume of essays by my colleagues in Philosophy, Cosmology, and Consciousness (CPP) but plans for the volume were abandoned. This updated version, December 2021, is for a course, *Karma and Biography*, that I will co-teach with Cathy Coleman, Spring 2022, my last semester. Most of the changes are references to dates.

confession. Jesus, Mary, and a host of saints were essential parts of my early life, and continued to be important to me through high school and college (when I read myself out of a commitment to the Catholic Church). In recent years, because of its blind teaching concerning sex and its injustice to women, and its irrational resistance to history, I have grown increasingly opposed to the Roman Catholic Church, but I credit my years as a practicing Catholic for a positive relationship to ritual and reverence, as well as to the significance of ideas. I am still interested in the ideas and experiences I first encountered in Catholic schools and at home (with my mother)—God, saints, angels, Incarnation, afterlife, New Testament, inspiring contemporary Christian writers, sacraments, community, sacred words and music, church spires, and stained glass.

My father, who worked as a mechanic at the Bell Telephone Laboratory in Manhattan for 45 years, was devoted to his wife and his six children. He believed in and practiced love, sacrifice, loyalty, and work. My brothers and I wrote, edited, and contributed to many books, but our father lived to 86 without having read a book. He built, rebuilt, and repaired. He cleaned the house and changed diapers; he also walked and patted crying babies. His mother had been kind to him and to his four siblings but she died when he was ten, leaving him with his father who was apparently not kind. As a result my father left home at 16. He attended the funeral of his father (from whom he had been estranged) on the very day that his first child, John, was born. My father consciously married the woman with whom he could be a husband and father like his own mother and not like his own father. To bring this about he became a tenant in the house, in Richmond Hill, Queens, NY, of his future wife and her widowed mother, who in effect became his own beloved mother as well as the kind and brilliant sole grandparent to his six children. One of my own favorite childhood memories was playing cards with Nana and listening with her to the New York Giants baseball game on the radio.

My primary memory concerning school and early education was an inability to read at grade level. It could not have helped that in the local Catholic school that I and my four older siblings attended (and where they academically excelled), my class for eight years had more than ninety children taught by one nun (who attended college on Saturdays), no assistant, and no time for special attention of any kind. Except for lunch and recess we copied off the board almost all day. I was definitely not a behavior problem (I was always referred to as “a good boy”) but I had an entrenched habit of going too fast. I was impatient and restless and had a habit of thinking that I was done when I wasn’t, that I had learned what I needed to when I hadn’t). But a more serious problem were my eyes.

From grade school through college I scarcely ever finished a reading assignment and I never finished a passage to be analyzed on an exam, including SAT and GRE. At Queens College I did not major in literature because I knew I would have been unable to finish the novels of Henry James or Dostoyevsky. During the year that I was writing my dissertation, I casually tried one of the machines in a reading school where Ellen was teaching. I scored at the elementary school speed. Because I habitually and unconsciously returned to the words I had just read, and regularly lost my place on the line, I read very slowly and probably with impaired comprehension. With the help of an optometrist and a patch that I wore for six months (while teaching college) I improved my stereopsis but still read very slowly. When I hear of a child having trouble with reading I immediately wonder about his or her stereopsis—not just vision, which is tested in school, but the ability to follow a line of print. A person might wonder how I studied and became something of an expert on two great thinkers, Sri Aurobindo (who wrote thirty

enormous volumes) and Rudolf Steiner (whose collected works total more than 300 volumes)? I read many books but very few from beginning to end.

As my best friend, Chuck, was a gifted athlete—playing in an over-50 league he hit a home run in Shea Stadium—I could have used better sight for hitting his pitches in stickball, but I was able to play a decent game of basketball. Here is proof of a beautiful friendship: we played one-on-one basketball almost every day after school and every Saturday without keeping score. I still have friends from high school, one of whom serves with me on the board of the Sophia Project (homes for mothers and children at risk of homelessness). Continuing this habit of friendship, almost all of my academic work, and especially my publications, have been in collaboration with friends.

My life as the fifth of six surviving children was deeply influenced by my oldest brother, John, who was brilliant, charismatic, and from an early age intensely devoted to his career and legacy. In his early adult years he was a celebrated professor at Queens College and father of five children with all of whom Ellen and I have had a close relationship. In his middle years John succumbed to alcoholism. With the help of AA, to which he was devoted for the last thirty years of his life, he heroically recovered from drinking. After moving to Texas A& M as a distinguished professor in the mid-1970s, he continued his scholarship and advocacy of American thought (and of much else, especially education and social justice). He tended toward various extremes before alcoholism, and certainly more so during; after his recovery, some of these same tendencies remained. Until the last year of his life at 86, he was an admired professor, writer, and lecturer, and continued to receive many academic awards. Throughout my life I have been in a complex, multi-layered relationship with John but I have always been grateful for ways that I have benefitted from his impressive academic talent and contributions.

Equally throughout my life from childhood to the present, two of my closest friends have been my older brother Joe, an educator and politician, founder-president and CEO of Coalition for Worker Education in New York City, and my younger brother Ray, an anthropologist and until recently, a professor of education at Stanford. Both Joe and Ray are beloved by all who know them. With Joe I share an interest in politics, and especially American political history from the founders to the present; with Ray I share an interest in music, American thought, education, politics, and a wide range of people. With both I share my work and their work. These brothers are to me and to literally hundreds of admirers models of practical intelligence and amazing kindness.

My two sisters along with my brother Joe and their grown children live in New York. My sister Mary started as a teacher and then worked in a bank. My sister Ann recently retired as director of social services for a nursing home. It might also be mentioned that none of my five siblings or their spouses share my spiritual interests—not in Christianity, religion generally, and certainly not in Rudolf Steiner. As my father once asked his wife: “How is it that we raised six children to be Catholic, only one is Catholic and one [me] might be something but no one knows what kind.” My four remaining siblings share a 56-member family. More than fifty of us attended the memorial for my grandniece, Maia Felisse McDermott, who was killed in 2010 at age 21 and more than thirty attended the memorial for John in 2018.

My wife Ellen and I acted in parish plays when I was 17 and she was 16; in one she was my sister, in another my mother. We married seven years later—in 1964 when

she was 24 and I was 25. We had a beautiful life in New York with many friends; for the past thirty years we have had a beautiful life in San Francisco with many friends. In addition to being an incurably generous wife, mother, and grandmother, Ellen has been a pottery teacher, a Waldorf nursery teacher, and for ten years, until 2011, assistant to the dean of Grace Cathedral. Ellen has endured two strokes, a craniotomy for an aneurysm at the base of the brain, breast cancer, and skin cancer, all of which, and more, she has managed with courage and grace.

Our son Darren was the deputy managing editor of the online Wall Street Journal before he was appointed a partner of The Brunswick Group; his wife Julia is a therapist for the deaf. They live in New York with their two daughters, Benna and Kate. Our daughter Deirdre, a nurse practitioner, and her husband Jan, an engineer, and their two children, Liam and Neve, live near us in San Francisco. These four grandchildren are an inestimable source of joy for Ellen and me. My parents, wife, children, and grandchildren have been my primary commitment throughout my adult life. In my experience, nothing, including serving as president of a graduate school for nine years, has been as profound, as satisfying, and as karmically right as my devotion to my family. I do not believe that such devotion to family is or should be true of everyone. There are many entirely different karmic situations and tasks, all important, and all excellent opportunities for personal (and spiritual) growth.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s I studied philosophy at Queens College (B.A.), Emory University (M.A.), and Boston University (Ph.D.). At Queens, although I majored in classics, I was deeply influenced by the philosophy faculty, including my celebrated older brother John. At Queens and at Boston University, and throughout our lives until 2009 I had the privilege of friendship with Patrick Hill who was brilliant, humorous, idealistic, a singer of Irish songs, a practitioner of dialogue, and an inspiration to all who knew him. In later years he was a professor of philosophy at SUNY/Stoneybrook and then provost at Evergreen State University. That Patrick is gone continues to fill me with deep sadness.

At Emory I wrote a masters thesis on Henri Bergson's *Two Sources of Morality and Religion* and at Boston University I wrote a dissertation on S. Radhakrishnan (a Hegelian-Vedantist). By these two research projects, a commitment to evolution of consciousness was already prominent, and would be extended by my subsequent study of the evolutionary philosophies of Sri Aurobindo, and the evolutionary esotericism of Rudolf Steiner. At Queens I first read Teilhard de Chardin, and in recent years, I have returned to him, though this time I am reading him after 35 years of reading Rudolf Steiner and anthroposophy. Mention of Teilhard automatically introduces the life-long influence of Thomas Berry, cultural historian, Christian-Confucian sage, and prophet of the Earth-Human community.

When I was 14, between meals while waiting tables at a local parish retreat house, I attended Thomas's informal seminar on Dante. I was one of his informal students through college; he officiated at our wedding and baptized our two children, the first of whom is named Darren Thomas. While teaching at Manhattanville College in the late 1960s I took Thomas's courses on Indian, Buddhist, and Chinese civilizations at St. John's University. I took his course in Sanskrit when he moved to Fordham University. He gave me a copy of the Bhagavad Gita when I began doctoral studies at Boston University. In 1975 Thomas arranged for me to take his place as a Fulbright professor at

the Open University (U.K.).² I continued as his friend but less so as his student as he went deeper into ecology and I went deeper into the study of Steiner and the administration of anthroposophical institutions.

At that time I had not yet seen the fact of ecological devastation or the possible contribution that anthroposophy could make to its forestalling. In 1990, when I came to San Francisco as president of the California Institute of Integral Studies, I developed a close friendship with Brian Swimme,³ one of Thomas's closest collaborators. As I then discovered, several CIIS colleagues, particularly Ralph Metzner and Charlene Spretnak, were deeply influenced by Thomas Berry. I slowly realized that in addition to being an exponent of Teilhard, Thomas himself was the Teilhard of the second half of the 20th century. In fall 2011 Brian Swimme and I co-taught *The Wisdom of Teilhard de Chardin and Thomas Berry*.

At Queens College I founded and edited *Triangle: A Journal of Religious Thought*⁴ in which I published an essay, "Toward a Creative Christianity," which recommends the following statement by Teilhard:

In each one of us, through matter, the whole history of the world is in part reflected.... [The human soul] is inseparable, in its growth, from the universe into which it is born. In each soul, God loves and partly saves the whole world which that soul sums up in an incommunicable way.⁵

Despite my having featured this passage, I was slow to appreciate the cosmological context of the human. At Emory, where I took a course on American philosophy with Charles Hartshorne, he responded to my class presentation on William James by calling me, "a mere humanist." At the time, as I considered "humanist" a compliment, this criticism was entirely lost on me.

I was appointed to teach philosophy at Manhattanville College, beginning Fall 1964, by Elizabeth McCormack who was then academic dean. Elizabeth remained an important influence on my career. In 1971 I left Manhattanville for Baruch College, CUNY. I never lost my affection for Manhattanville, but I thrived at Baruch where for twenty years I taught and intermittently chaired both the philosophy department and the program in religion and culture.

From 1970-75 I was a junior colleague and friend of Haridas Chaudhuri, founder and president of the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS). I had visited Haridas on my way home from India (and the Sri Aurobindo Ashram) in 1970. Together we edited and contributed to a special issue of *International Philosophical Quarterly* devoted to Sri Aurobindo. In 1983 I was offered, and declined, the position of president of CIIS; in 1990 I was again offered the position of president and accepted, but not until, and perhaps only because, Elizabeth McCormack introduced me to Laurance Rockefeller

² I was a faculty member for *Man's Religious Quest* (Open University, 1976) and co-created *Avatar: Concept and Example* (BBC 1976)

⁴ *Triangle* was modeled on *Cross Currents*. Joe Cunneen, editor of *Cross Currents* wrote the foreword. Eugene Fontinell, an editor of *Cross Currents* and a faculty member in Queens College philosophy department, served as faculty adviser. All two thousand copies sold out in two days.

⁵ *Triangle*, p.24.

who gave me \$5,000,000 for CIIS. Elizabeth served on the CIIS board for 17 years, and remained one of my most cherished friends until her death in 2020. In January 1991, Ellen and I then began a dramatically new life in San Francisco while I served as CIIS president, 1990-99. Since 2000, I have been a professor of Philosophy, Cosmology, and Consciousness, an interdisciplinary department for masters and doctoral degrees. This remarkable department which I chaired intermittently, was founded by my dear friend, Rick Tarnas. Here is its mission statement:

The Philosophy, Cosmology, and Consciousness program (PCC) offers a uniquely interdisciplinary curriculum that prepares students to articulate the evolutionary challenges facing the planet. Drawing on the history of ideas in philosophy, science, and religion, PCC courses help students examine how these traditions overlap and inspire us to develop new world views, and to lead initiatives to build a better world.

I consider myself extremely grateful that my six PCC colleagues—Rick Tarnas, Brian Swimme, Sean Kelly, Elizabeth Allison, Jacob Sherman, and Matthew Segall—are also among my closest friends. With mixed emotions, I have announced my plan to retire at the conclusion of the spring 2022 semester. I know that it will be painful to leave the PCC community.

2. Sri Aurobindo

In 1969, during the same week that I defended my dissertation on Radhakrishnan⁶ at Boston University, I was awarded a NDFL fellowship to study Indian civilization. I had already toured India with twenty professors in 1966 on a Fulbright Grant. The NDFL two-summer grant provided for study at Syracuse University, summer 1969, and study in India, summer 1970. At Syracuse, I heard a lecture on Indian nationalism that included a description of Aurobindo Ghose, the fiery Indian patriot who had been educated in England, then hunted by the British government of India, jailed for a year in Calcutta, and then retreated to Pondicherry, French India. Later during that same 8-week course I heard a lecture on Hinduism that included a description of Sri Aurobindo, a brilliant Indian poet, mystic, philosopher, and teacher of Integral Yoga. In those pre-Google days it required a trip to the Syracuse University library for me to establish that these references were to the first and second halves of one life. I immediately resolved to write a book on this amazing figure, and particularly on his journey from political revolutionary to mystic recluse.

I did not write that book but beginning in 1970 when I returned from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and Auroville, I became a prominent exponent of Sri Aurobindo. During the next five years I published several essays in scholarly journals on Sri Aurobindo, and in 1974 edited *The Essential Aurobindo*, still the primary introduction to Aurobindo's life and thought. Sri Aurobindo contributed important components of my spiritual vision and aspiration: I continue to hold his life and work, both on their own and in relation to the life and collaboration of Mira Richard (known since 1926 as the Mother of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram), to be a dramatic case of the working of karma. I also continue to practice his teachings on yoga, specifically Integral Yoga which affirms the three yogas of the Bhagavad Gita—knowledge, action, and love, obviously very similar to Steiner's teachings concerning the integration of thinking, feeling, and willing.

⁶ *Radhakrishnan's Comparative Philosophy* (1969).

Both Aurobindo and Steiner also set these three disciplines in the context of the evolution of consciousness. Sri Aurobindo envisions the establishment of divine, or supramental, consciousness on Earth; Steiner envisions the eventual (though not inevitable or easy) triumph of freedom and love. Even though anthroposophy has been my spiritual home since 1975, since I first encountered Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in 1969 I have been convinced that they constitute an advanced spiritual teaching and presence, one for which I continue to be grateful and consistently recommend to anyone who might benefit for their vision and discipline.

3. *American Thought*

I am often asked for my list of favorite philosophers. Although I have spent most of my academic life trying to be more Aristotelian (Steiner, after all, is best understood philosophically as a 20th century Aristotle), I am thoroughly Platonic—as were Aristotle and Steiner! So, of course, my favorite philosopher, especially to teach, is Plato, the unsurpassed dramatist of ideas. Jumping to the 20th century, my list is almost all American: Emerson, James, Royce, Whitehead, and Dewey. Among Europeans I would add Henri Bergson, Martin Buber, and Karl Jaspers. Among religious thinkers I would list the Gandhian tradition of exponents and exemplars of social justice: Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and Desmond Tutu. I continue to learn from Jung and Teilhard. The thinkers I prize most are those who are model of the philosophical, spiritual, social justice excellence. I consider Rudolf Steiner to be the preeminent teacher and servant of humanity of the present age.

Thanks to the influence of my oldest brother John, my life-long affinity with American philosophy dates to college. I assisted his editing of *Writings of William James* in 1968 and I have read all of his writings on American thought—though only very selectively the twelve volumes of the *Correspondence of William James* that he also edited. John was also an editor of the definitive Harvard edition of the *Works of William James* and it was thanks to him that I was invited to write the introduction to that edition of James's *Essays on Psychical Research* (1986).

By temperament, I am close to Emerson and Dewey (and the cheerful side of James) whereas my brother John identifies with the side of James that James himself, in his classic *Varieties of Religious Experience*, refers to as “sick-soul” whereas I am considered “healthy-minded”: I am Idealist and Transcendentalist to John's Naturalism and Existentialism; religious and spiritual to his adamant secularism. I want to emphasize that healthy-minded persons are also ‘acquainted with grief’: Emerson, Dewey, and Teilhard, are all examples of the “healthy-minded” temperament even though they all suffered the deaths of many loved ones and lived through periods of great personal loss. I love the stoicism of each, and although I admire and affirm the depth that the Jamesian “sick-soul” can experience, and certain insights that it would seem can come only from dark moments, I invariably identify with thinkers and writers of the “healthy-minded” temperament. This is not so much a choice as a fundamental psychic structure. I identify with Boswell's Johnson who reportedly said that he would have been a philosopher except that cheerfulness kept breaking in.

The writings of Emerson, James, Dewey, and Whitehead are sufficiently well known that in this essay of limited size I will note only briefly some of what I have learned from each. My attraction to Emerson is due to the beauty of his language, the spirituality of his perceptions, and his ability to show the reality and truth of imagination. I

inaugurated my study of Emerson while in college when I published an essay in the Queens College literary magazine entitled “Emerson: An Artist in the Medium of Theory.” I don’t think it is known what part of Emerson’s thought Steiner had in mind when he remarked that “the whole of anthroposophy can be found in seed form in Emerson.” I am convinced that the key to Emerson is also the key to anthroposophy: a person’s relationship with Spirit. Emerson teaches the active relationship of the soul to the Absolute, the unique human soul in relation to the transcendent. From this great truth it is a short step to Steiner’s characterization of anthroposophy: “a path of [free, loving] knowledge to lead the spiritual in the individual to the spiritual in the Universe.” Like Steiner, Emerson offers countless insights on how this relationship might be forged and he offered his life as an example of dedication to this task.

Whitehead’s reference to James as an “adorable genius” is apt: he was absolutely a genius, a Vesuvius of brilliant insights, a myriad-minded man, a world-class psychologist, philosopher, and psychical researcher. His *Varieties of Religious Experience* remains the unsurpassed *locus classicus* in its field. (In 1988 I taught an eight-week National Endowment for the Humanities course at Sarah Lawrence College entirely on the *Varieties*; we did not exhaust its riches.) I learned from James the stubborn fact of pluralism of perspective, an excellent introduction to postmodernism, particularly to what David Ray Griffin calls “constructive postmodernism.” Secondly, I learned the language of relations, a valuable introduction to Whitehead and Steiner and all forms of participation and Romanticism, and an excellent antidote to all forms of mechanism. And thirdly, I learned that psychical research requires patience.

Dewey, a democrat and philosopher of democracy, seems to me a model of personal and philosophic integrity and fidelity. All people, and especially children, would be safe if Dewey were in charge. Without Hegel’s Absolute, or James’s “Something more through which saving experiences come,” or Bergson’s privileging of intuition, Dewey was able to create a philosophy (in 80 volumes) that lent insight to every field of human endeavor—except religion. Of course he might have been more tolerant of institutional religion if the Catholic Church had not run a vendetta against him for his entire career. Dewey also made significant institutional contributions, including his co-founding the Association of American University Professors and his work on behalf of the League of Nations. James, a radical individual, is exciting to read and quote but he requires as a complement Dewey’s commitment to social context. Josiah Royce holds to the supreme value of the individual, the community, and the Absolute. He is the complement to both James and Dewey but, alas, his prose reads like a translation of Hegel.

Perhaps more than James, Whitehead himself is to be considered an “adorable genius”—brilliant in logic and mathematics, learned in the history of western thought, generous in his assessments, penetrating in his warnings, elegant in his solutions, and wise with respect to the great intellectual problems of his, and our, time. Despite his neologisms (which I have to relearn every time I return to him), Whitehead’s writings give us a philosophy vast in extent and careful in delineation. He offers one of the most helpful, and possibly true, descriptions of God—creative, beautiful, and good but limited in knowledge and power. I do have one serious problem with Whitehead: although I have read and heard arguments to the contrary, I remain convinced that Whitehead (like James) fails to provide an adequate account of the enduring human individual. I think we can extend Whitehead’s ontology to include subtle bodies (what Steiner calls the

etheric), but he fails to provide a basis for a Jungian *anima mundi* or a conception of individual identity that might pre- or post-exist this life.

It seems appropriate for me to add a word about the neglected classic American philosopher, Josiah Royce (1855-1916). Born in Grass Valley, California, in a community, as he said, a few years older than himself, Royce had the great good fortune to be selected by James to be his younger colleague at Harvard. Royce made contributions to the Idealist tradition in philosophy that would be worthy of exposition but instead I want to emphasize a completely novel, and still very significant idea—loyalty to loyalty. As anyone will attest who has taken a course in ethics or read even a single volume on ethics (e.g., a collection of essays by Peter Singer, the most significant contemporary ethicist), it is extremely difficult to establish a criterion for ethical, and especially unethical, behavior. Every criterion by which to show some behavior (such as torture, rape, ethnic cleansing, apartheid, or a holocaust) to be wrong, immoral, and needing to be opposed, seems to invite exceptions that are difficult to argue against without exception even though, intuitively, everyone in the conversation might agree to their being evil.

I want to suggest that Royce, perhaps alone, gives us such a criterion: an action (or thought) is immoral to the extent that it prevents other persons from realizing their own loyalty to loyalty. Note: not just opposition to the loyalty of others (which loyalty, e.g., to Nazism or Apartheid, could be to an unworthy cause) but opposition to the ability of others to serve loyalty itself in the process of loyalty to their respective causes. Nazis, servants of imperialism, torturers, and child abusers, are loyal to their causes and in so doing are disloyal to loyalty—they prevent their victims from practicing loyalty (and loyalty to loyalty). This is but one small part of Royce's vast and profound philosophy, and a part that seems to me worthy of careful consideration, and perhaps loyalty..

4. 20th Century Religious Thought

One of my favorite texts by a philosopher, and the one I often recommend for its ability to silence the current opposition between spirituality (strongly favored, for example, by CIIS and the New Age) and institutional religion (and particularly any form of orthodoxy), is to be found in the third chapter of Henri Bergson's *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*. In response to the competing claims on behalf of the institutional and historical religion on one side, and the mystical and prophetic, on the other side, Bergson writes:

We represent religion, then, as the crystallization, brought about by a scientific process of cooling, of what mysticism had poured while hot, into the soul of man. Through religion all men get a little of what a few privileged souls possess in full.

It was in response to this passage in 1963 that I first noticed that I favor bivalent, both-and, responses to dichotomies such as religion/spirituality, individual/community, Platonism/Aristotelianism, Enlightenment/Romanticism, Pragmatism/Idealism (James/Royce), Existentialism/Marxism, Buddha/Christ.

In the 1970s I spent several years writing a book that was to have been called "Seven Sages." It had as one of its aims to show the positive complementarity of religion and spirituality. This uncompleted book was to have one chapter each on Sri Aurobindo, Buber, Jung, Steiner, D. T. Suzuki, Simone Weil, and Thomas Merton, each of whom

seemed to me to offer a large corpus of written work in close relation to wise lived experience. I completed the first four chapters but not the last three (as a result of which the contract dissolved). I generated reams of notes on D. T. Suzuki but did not complete the chapter because I did not see the world primarily in monistic terms and was insufficiently schooled in Japanese culture. Similarly, I did not finish the chapter on Merton: although I was attracted by his writings on peace and justice, and by his *Asian Journal*, at that time I was not interested in dealing with the Catholic content of his thought. Finally, I did not finish the chapter on Simone Weil, the lone woman who seemed to me to meet my double criteria. I taught Weil's writings with evident affinity but in the end I dropped her from my pantheon because of her disdain for her body. My resistance to her asceticism was not based on her having died of malnutrition in 1943 while refusing to eat more than the soldiers captured behind enemy lines, but rather, in the tradition of the Cathars, on her negative regard for physical existence.

Were I to write that book now, I would publish the chapters on Buber, Aurobindo, and Steiner as they are. I would have to revise the chapter on Jung in the light of all that I have learned about Jung while teaching and conversing with my colleagues, Rick Tarnas and Sean Kelly, both distinguished Jungians. I would replace the incomplete chapter on Suzuki by one on His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Whereas I never became completely comfortable with Suzuki, I am very conversant with the rich pantheon, approach to meditation, and social justice teaching of the Dalai Lama. In the 1970s I was unwilling to finish the chapter on Merton but now, primarily due to Christopher Pramuk's, *Sophia: The Hidden Christ of Thomas Merton*, I am seriously reading Merton again.

I might replace Simone Weil by Madame Blavatsky (H.P.B.), co-founder and primary teacher of Theosophy from 1875 (when she and Col. Olcott founded the Theosophical Society in New York) until her death in London, in 1891, at age 60. As Sylvia Cranston shows in her comprehensive biographical study, HPB was an amazing esotericist, truly in communication with discarnate Indian and Tibetan guides, and not incidentally a source of 20th Century theosophical teachings of Alice Bailey and Rudolf Steiner. Unfortunately, HPB's two major works, *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine* do not make readily intelligible reading.

I would also want to write on Teilhard de Chardin primarily because I am in such strong sympathy with his emphasis on evolution, his case for the positive relation between science and spirituality, and on his own holiness while enduring three years in a trench on the front line during the First World War. Teilhard suffered the opposition to his writings by the Vatican and by his Jesuit superiors.

In the 2011 version of this essay, I wrote:

As I would be reluctant to increase the number of sages from seven to eight, and as I would want to write on at least one, and preferably two, 20th Century women, I predict that I will never write the book. And, it seems likely that the book I am writing currently, 'Unique Not Alone—Steiner and Others' will accomplish some of the same goals I set for 'Seven Sages.'"

Four years later, in 2015, I published a 430 book with a new title, *Steiner and Kindred Spirits*, with discussions of Emerson, James, Royce, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, Thomas Berry and Teilhard de Chardin, Martin Buber and C. G. Jung on evil, Dewey,

Montessori, and Steiner on education, Rachel Carson and integral ecology, the Goddess Sophia, and spiritual practice.

Another example of an entrenched either/or argument in philosophy and social science has to do with individual/community, to which I have long been convinced Martin Buber gives an excellent solution. In his classic *I and Thou*, Buber successfully claims the middle way between Marx's society over the individual and Kierkegaard's individual against society. According to Buber, human reality is made of relations (the hyphen between I-Thou), and relations require the initiative of each individual human being. But the source and result are not in only one direction: a generous society, community, and family are needed in order for the individual to make an authentic, self-creating, response to another. According to Buber, if I do not affirm you as unique, I myself do not emerge as an individual.

Human individuality is not given, it is created by a particular response to another, one that Buber named an "I-Thou" (also translated "I-You," probably less successfully). I am prepared to argue for the truth of his claim: one can fail to become an individual human by failing to respond from the unique depth of one's personhood to the unique depths of another. But one needn't fail: by reverence and affirmation of the other, a person can develop one's own personhood against all of the impersonal ("I-It") threats to our distinctively personal existence. As I explain below, writing two decades before Buber's *I and Thou*, Steiner developed a very similar position, and also developed it into a full-blown Romantic epistemology, ontology, and ethics—none of which detracts from Buber's exquisite, poetic, epigrammatic and influential *I and Thou*.

In the 1970s I read many books by and about Jung in preparation for the chapter on his thought in my "Seven Sages." As I concluded after reading that chapter several years ago, after not having looked at it for more than two decades, I was grateful that I had not published it! I did know enough to be publishing on Jung at that time. It was not until several years ago, when I taught a course on Blavatsky, Steiner, and Jung with Rick Tarnas, that I grasped the meaning and significance of Jung's account of synchronicity. Once one understands a synchronous event, especially one's own, as a wise revelation from the unconscious, Jung's case for the reality of the archetypes, myths, and symbols can more readily be understood, defended, and built upon. A true understanding of synchronicity restores to each of us, experientially and intellectually, the universe that is largely denied by the disenchanting cosmology of the dominant modern western worldview.

Along with 350 volumes by Steiner and a full library by anthroposophists, and works by Jung and Jungians, Tarnas's *Cosmos and Psyche: Toward a New World View* makes an excellent (perhaps the best) case for a reenchanting world view, one in which the unconscious as well as the conscious is alive, wise, and revealing (and when necessary, as in the case of denial, painfully so). Steiner did not work with archetypes quite the way that Jung did but he describes an even fuller, more complex world of living thoughts, patterns of meaning, myths, souls in the afterlife, angels, and a host of higher beings. It seems to me tragic that like so many great figures who miss other comparably great figures of their own time and culture, Jung and Steiner missed each other. I sometimes fancy that Rick Tarnas, Sean Kelly, and I are compensating in our courses and writings for the opportunity for complementarity that Steiner and Jung (as well as Sri Aurobindo and Teilhard) failed to realize.

5. Rudolf Steiner and Anthroposophy

As with most, if not all, great thinkers, Steiner is both original and has many sources. Esoterically, he is most indebted to Blavatsky, though not to other Theosophists. Philosophically, he is both a Platonist and an Aristotelian, and in debt to both Goethean natural science and German Idealism. One of the reasons for Steiner's continuing significance is precisely his synthesis of these and other perspectives traditionally regarded as antithetical. Another reason for his importance is his astonishing range of contributions—philosophical, scientific, intellectual history, evolution of consciousness, arts, social sciences, comparative religion, esotericism, and education. All of these works issue from his esoteric/clairvoyant ability, i.e., his ability to see and to know at levels of insight available only to highly evolved individuals such as Plato, Plotinus, Jesus and his mother, Mary of Madgala, John the Evangelist, Paracelsus, Swedenborg, Goethe and Emerson, and several of his colleagues, including Walter Johannes Stein, Ita Wegman, and Valentine Tomberg. I would like to think that if he were alive today he would especially appreciate the spiritual contributions of Teilhard de Chardin, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and, of course, His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Most of Steiner's important books, lectures, and practical works are subsequent to his experience of Christ in 1899 at age 39, after which all of his works are to some degree esoteric. Beginning at age 21, when he was appointed editor of the national edition of the scientific writings of Goethe,⁷ Steiner had enjoyed a successful career as a philosopher. Convinced that modern western thought and culture was suffering from a dominant, and deleterious, epistemology that prevented freedom of thought and action, he wrote a series of books, especially his foundational work, *Philosophy of Freedom*,⁸ in which he tried to show the way to a free thought (Part One) and a free deed (Part Two). All of Steiner's subsequent writings and lectures presuppose this double agenda: to think thoughts and to act in ways that unite one's unique karmic history with the spiritual world with which communication is possible and necessary.

Like many others, when I first encountered the more than 200 volumes by Steiner (in the anthroposophical library and bookstore on Madison Avenue), I was suspicious—how could one person be competent in so many fields? After lecturing and writing about Sri Aurobindo for five years, 1970-75, I moved smoothly to studying, lecturing, and writing about Rudolf Steiner. I thought then, and I think now, that I was transferring commitment from the preeminent Indian spiritual philosopher and teacher to the preeminent western spiritual philosopher and teacher. Steiner seemed to me then, and more so now, to be the most significant spiritual thinker of the modern West. Rooted as I am in the comparative study of religion—especially Hinduism and Buddhism—it is important to me that in addition to his hundreds of lectures on Christ, Steiner seems to have had direct experience of both Krishna and Buddha (and apparently not Mohammed), and offers an positive account of their elevated status and respective revelations.⁹

In his positive accounts of Krishna, Buddha, and Christ, as well as of other high beings, including archangels and tempters, Steiner was following in the western esoteric tradition opened by H. P. Blavatsky. Although serious followers of Blavatsky, particularly

⁷ Rudolf Steiner, *The Theory Implicit in Goethe's World View*

⁸ Rudolf Steiner, *Philosophy of Freedom* (1964); *Intuitive Thinking as a Spiritual Path* (1995)

⁹ Rudolf Steiner, *According to Luke*; Robert McDermott, *The Bhagavad Gita and the West*.

members of the Theosophical Society, tend to ignore Steiner—just as the Anthroposophical Society and anthroposophists ignore Blavatsky and the Theosophical Society—there is a direct line from Blavatsky to Steiner. There is no such line to or from Annie Besant, the head of the Theosophical Society while Steiner was head of the German Branch of the Theosophical Society. Had Blavatsky lived into the 20th century it seems likely that she and Steiner could have collaborated, as a result of which the history of Theosophy and Anthroposophy might have been very different

I started to read Steiner on my arrival in England, Fall 1975, on a Fulbright to the Open University. While in England I attended lectures almost every week at Rudolf Steiner House, and took a course in eurythmy. I began reading Owen Barfield at this time, and in 1983 taught a course with him, on *Saving the Appearances: A Study in Idolatry* and *What Coleridge Thought* at the Rudolf Steiner [summer] Institute. (When I asked him to inscribe my copy of *Unancestral Voice* with the comment that it was my favorite of his books, he acknowledged that it was his favorite as well.) While traveling to Cambridge University for the third meeting of the Esalen Conference on the Renewal of Philosophy in 1989 (one of the most important conferences I have ever attended), I spent my 50th birthday with Owen Barfield.

For the beauty and generosity of his mind, as well as for his articulation of anthroposophy, Owen Barfield is surely one of the thinkers I admire most. In *Saving the Appearances*, one hundred and fifty pages of clear, beautiful prose, Barfield exposes the epistemological mistake at the core of contemporary thinking, namely, the failure to overcome, by loving-thinking, the alienation of contemporary consciousness. Following Steiner, but also on his own terms, Barfield draws on Goethe and Coleridge in arguing against the dominance of mechanistic thinking and in favor of thinking that is characterized by affection and full participation. I especially appreciate Barfield's convincing description of the gradual loss of participatory thinking and the special responsibility of contemporary humanity to overcome the alienation that is its birthright. Barfield shows the many ways that Steiner's worldview and spiritual direction can help individuals and communities to attain spiritual insight needed for the survival of humanity and the Earth.

6. Religion and Social Justice

Gandhi's intuition of *satyagraha* seems to me one of the most convincing and consequential examples of Steiner's analysis of thinking and acting that is truly free, i.e., the initiation of a new series of thoughts and actions, one that would appear, certainly in retrospect, to be the ideal expression of Gandhi's destiny. In 1906, in Durban, South Africa, on his return from a trip to England, Gandhi was ordered to move from a first class to a third class railroad car. The railroad official was enforcing a law that governed grades of skin color; to his shock, Gandhi's class and profession proved to be of no consequence in this situation. Sitting on a deserted station after the departure of the train, Gandhi, perhaps for the first time, and certainly for the first time to such historical significance, suddenly identified with the victims of prejudice worldwide. This experience led him to formulate, exemplify, and expound, *satyagraha*, truth force, a break in an old automatic way of thinking and acting in favor of an entirely new, and free way. Until his death by assassination more than 40 years later, Gandhi experimented with truth and justice—thinking and action free from the restraints of the inherited and conventional in both thought and action.

Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. dared to initiate a new series of thoughts and actions in service of freedom and justice. As cited in the Presidential Medal of Freedom awarded to King posthumously, he “was the conscience of his generation”:

A southerner, a black man, he gazed on the great wall of segregation and saw that the power of love could bring it down. From the pain and exhaustion of his fight to free all people from the bondage of separation and injustice, he wrung his eloquent statement of his dream of what America could be.¹⁰

Similarly, could there be a more inspiring example of a new way of thinking and action than the Dalai Lama’s peaceful response to the Chinese holocaust of the Tibetan people? Drawing on his years of intense instruction in Tibetan Buddhist spiritual philosophy, his practice of meditation for four hours every morning, his unique (mysterious but surely significant) identification with Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva of wisdom and compassion, His Holiness the Dalai Lama suffers with the victims of Chinese oppression while at the same time showing to the Chinese, and to the entire watching world, his devotion to peace and reconciliation. As I wrote in my “Invocation to Sophia,” The Dalai Lama “holds Tibet as she [the mother of Jesus] held her Son.”¹¹

Surely, in decades and centuries to come, large segments of humanity will look back on this violent time and ask, “why did they not see that Gandhi, King, the Dalai Lama, Nelson Mandela, and Desmond Tutu” taught and exemplified the solution to endless slaughter?” Of course, it is the solution of Jesus as well, but the tradition stemming from Jesus, as Alan Jones, dean emeritus of Grace Cathedral has been heard to say, “fell into the wrong hands.” There are always wrong hands; what is amazing is the steady tradition of peacemakers—Buddha, Jesus, Francis, Gandhi, King, Dalai Lama. Three of these six were killed by fear-induced violence. I do not hold, as the media seems to, that religion is a primary source of violence. Hitler, Stalin, and Mao, all vigorous secularists, and their helpers, are responsible for the deaths of more than one hundred million victims. Religious institutions often collude with fear, hatred, and violence, but they are often on the right side of history.

Most of us, of course, are not destined for such a great role on the stage of history as Gandhi, King, the Dalai Lama, or Tutu. With limited capacities (not to mention sensible fear), what can we do to initiate a break in the chain of oppression? Victor Hugo might have been the first but not the last to observe that “the oppressed become the oppressors.” Here is a small but revealing example of an endeavor that is breaking the oppressive chains of poverty and violence: as the founding chair of the board of the Sophia Project, I have been privileged to observe Carol Cole, its founder and director, with the help of a live-in staff and the Waldorf understanding of the child, assist mothers and children, all severely abused and all formerly homeless, build personal capacities that have enabled them to reclaim their lives. Sophia Project has served 117 children, of 41 families, intensely for three years, and by follow-up for an additional three years, as a result of which not one of these families has returned to homelessness, thereby showing that a very tough chain can be broken by wisdom and compassion expertly, and patiently, applied. Sophia Project has been fabulously successful precisely because its staff gave the amount of time (along with a wise methodology and patient attention) that

¹⁰ In James M. Washington, ed., *A Testament of Hope*.

¹¹ *Steiner and Kindred Spirits*, 208.

is needed to heal deep pain and help a child (and mother) develop capacities for life in an economically unjust society.

7. *Institutions and Communities*

I am sometimes asked for advice based on the assumption that I gained some practical institutional knowledge (or know-how) serving in various administrative positions. At Manhattanville I was dean of the Class of 1971; at Baruch I was chair of the philosophy department for about a dozen years and assistant provost, 1980-82. My service on boards of trustees include the San Francisco Zen Center, International Transpersonal Association, and the Anthroposophical Society of America; president of the New York Center for Anthroposophy and of the Rudolf Steiner Institute (for 12 years); chair of the boards of Rudolf Steiner College and Sunbridge College. Except for my tenure as president of CIIS (1990-99), all of these were rather peaceful. It would be worth knowing why CIIS, like some other Bay Area graduate schools founded in the late 60s, had such a strong opposition to administration, and whether someone more experienced and more skillful—with more experience dealing with projection and shadow— could have exercised a more calming influence on an institution in permanent “white water,” or given to “white knuckle” oppositions, and psychological tsunamis— there are many apt metaphors for that institution in the years of its delayed maturation.

In 1984, at the invitation of Ralph White, the founding director of the New York Open Center, and still its guiding visionary, I delivered its first series of lectures. Entitled “Modern Spiritual Masters,” these eight lectures were delivered in the midst of construction equipment and unfastened boards. In the subsequent seven years, until I left for San Francisco in 1991, I delivered several dozen lectures on various philosophical and spiritual topics, and especially on various components of Rudolf Steiner’s thought. While these lectures were publicized in brochures sent quarterly to a mailing list of 75,000, in seven years I never met a student or faculty member at Baruch College who was aware of my lectures at the New York Open Center.

I am often asked how I understand those years, what did I learn, and whether philosophy, or spiritual teachings, were useful for administering. Briefly, I learned that as sympathetic as I considered myself to be in dealing with individuals and groups who wanted either what the school could not afford, or what I opposed in favor of some other initiative or value, I did not appear sufficiently sympathetic concerning their needs in that circumstance. I was apparently insufficiently communicative of my sympathy for those whose ideas, plans, and in some cases, livelihoods I blocked. I also learned that *karma-yoga* is invisible: although I really did try to practice a version of Gandhian selfless action—action without regard to the fruits that would come to me—individuals and groups gripped by fear were unable to see that motivation.

As we witnessed during the Obama administration, in a culture of distrust, opponents can regard even an enlightened endeavor as a destructive action motivated by selfish designs. Like Obama, as I observed him, I collaborated effectively with individuals who shared my ideals and vision but I was at a loss as to how to deal with individuals who would not, or could not, collaborate—not just with me, but with any one. I wish I had been able to distinguish those who were opposed to my ideas, plans, strategies, and those who were opposed to me (as they had opposed all previous administrators, all of whom had been fired). It appeared that much opposition in CIIS at that time issued from psychological needs and dysfunctional relations to others (not just

to me). I needed to know more about, and how to deal with, projection and shadow, and the obstacles presented by problems rooted in “families of origin.” I eventually learned that while honesty is essential, expression of honest negative opinions, particularly if clever and quotable, tends to be destructive.

I also learned what a significant difference one person, especially at the top of an organization, can make and, at the same time, how mistaken it can be to credit or fault one person with great success or great failure. I was overpraised for successes and vilified for failures over each which I had relatively little control. Finally, I underestimated fear on the part of all participants, myself included, or perhaps myself particularly. I was afraid that the institution would fail (as it almost did in 1997-98). Fortunately, thanks to my successors and the appointment of more accomplished faculty and students, “the old CIIS” is almost entirely past, replaced by a robust, healthy-minded, academically and financially successful institution.

8. The Karma of America

In lectures on “The Spiritual Mission of America” (a difficult title during the Bush and Trump administrations), and more recently lectures with the title “The Karma of America,” I often manage to insert a statement such as, “It takes considerable self-deception to invade a country and call it a discovery.” I have heard my brother Ray quote James Joyce: “Christopher Columbus who, as everyone knows, was the last man to discover America.” The presumption of the invaders compounds when the “discovery” is followed by a holocaust of the hundreds of thousands of Native inhabitants (the “First Americans”). The Euro-Americans were as wrong to see the land as virgin as the early Zionists were to consider Israel in the 1940s “A land without a people for a people without a land.” Both illusions were aided by the inability of the Natives of America and the Palestinians to have created a modern western nation state. The Europeans who settled the eastern shore of the United States, like the European Jews three centuries later, conveniently looked past the inhabitants and focused on their belief in a divinely sanctioned destiny.

Although its origin and history are marred by slavery and racism, a holocaust of the Natives, as well as a penchant for disguised imperialism, America nevertheless has an amazing root system—specifically having been founded primarily by six men of impressive if imperfect political wisdom—and several centuries of very specific impressive successes—and a lot of violence against slaves and Indians. Because it has made inestimable contributions to the ideals of freedom and democracy, and of immigration and multicultural co-existence, as well as to the struggle of other peoples to achieve freedom and various forms of democracy, the positive contributions and enduring significance of America overall is not in question. Surely, America’s performance is a mixed record but its ideas and ideals, from the founders to the present, with Lincoln and King at crucial moments between, suggest the truth of the evolution of consciousness. Slowly, inexorably, America is slowly, very slowly, meeting the challenges posed by the radical pluralism of peoples, languages, classes, aspirations, and especially religions.

As John Dewey affirmed, in the long run, with accurate information at hand, the peoples of America eventually seem to get it right. Despite the machinations of Vice President Cheney and Karl Rove, America in 2006 did not become Berlin 1935. Slowly but surely, racial and gender justice are making progress. Next, the country will awaken

to the rights of animals and the Earth. It seems to me that the karma—the essential task and contribution—of America, founded not on blood but on an idea, will yet exemplify the reconciliation of diverse peoples, values, skin colors, and beliefs. This paragraph, written in 2011, does not account for the enduring, pernicious influence of Trump.

9. Interreligious Conflict and Dialogue

I confess that the extent of arrogance, presumption, violence, and passion for imperialism of the United States has dawned on me only gradually, mostly due to the misdeeds of the Bush and subsequently, the Trump administrations. By contrast, even as an adolescent I knew there was something seriously wrong, in fact impossible, about a similar institutional presumption, namely, the Catholic Church's teaching that it was the sole way to salvation. In the category of nation, America, after all, only sinned by regarding itself as the best; in the category of religion, the Catholic Church regarded itself as the only one that is true and efficacious, the others being literally false, such that its adherents are spiritually doomed. Beginning in my teens, I noticed that my virtuous Protestant, Jewish, and atheist friends all gave the lie to the pernicious claim that there can be no salvation outside the Catholic Church.

I only slowly grasped the depth of the misogyny of the Roman Catholic hierarchy. Whereas, when I read myself out of the Catholic Church in college, I focused on what seemed to me theological and historical errors. In recent years I have moved from indifference concerning the false teachings of the Catholic Church, e.g., about sexual morality, to indignant opposition. The rights of women who stay loyal to the Church seem to me sufficient reason to oppose the Catholic hierarchy. I now think that 18th and 19th century Americans were right to be anti-Catholic: the Vatican is devoted to secrecy and its own interests, and at core is against freedom and democracy, and especially against the rights of women.

The American bishops have a positive record concerning social justice, e.g., concerning labor and the rights of the poor, but they absolutely fail to see that opposition to the ordination of women is a violation of social justice. Similarly, as Thomas Berry argued throughout his later life, the Catholic Church has failed utterly to recognize the rights of the Earth. The Church has not followed Thomas Aquinas's teaching on the inviolability of an informed conscience, nor does it follow Cardinal Newman's insights on the development of dogma. Despite the modernization attempted by the Vatican Council (most of which was undone by Pope John Paul II), the hierarchy of the Catholic Church has been waging doomed battle against the evolution of the entire world toward tolerance, democracy, and freedom. By contrast, Grace Cathedral, where my wife and I experience glorious liturgy celebrated by married and openly gay clergy, lives up to its slogan, "A House of Prayer for All People."

Because I often recommend Hindu texts such as the Bhagavad Gita, and teachers such as Sri Aurobindo and Gandhi, I am sometimes asked if I am a Hindu. Similarly, anyone hearing my outspoken devotion to His Holiness the Dalai Lama could easily assume that I am a Buddhist. If not a Hindu, and if not a Buddhist, why not? One reply, quite simply, is "karma." I am in the Christian-anthroposophical spiritual stream. Unlike spirituality (for which you don't have to show up), religion is social, and even tribal. Nowhere is this more true than in Jerusalem, which has experienced centuries of violence precisely because competing religions consider it sacred to their respective traditions. Where is the Mandela and the Tutu for Jerusalem? After reading Karen

Armstrong's *Battle for God* I could only hope for the institution of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission as an aid to reconciliation of Israelis and Palestinians. I also think it is the best way to deal with the illegal actions of the Bush and Trump administrations.

10. Religion and Ecology

I heard Thomas Berry lecture on Teilhard several times in the 1960s, but as those were the years when I was more interested in Hinduism and Buddhism than in Catholicism, I found Teilhard too Catholic for my enthusiasm. I failed to see his inspiring biography, his profound spirituality free of dogma, his convincing reconciliation of science and spirit, and his vision of evolution toward a higher synthesis. A few years later I found Sri Aurobindo who provided these same positive elements without fervent Catholicism, and subsequently Steiner who provided all that is to be found in Aurobindo plus Western practicality and a positive account of Krishna, Buddha, and Christ. On my return to Teilhard several years ago (for a course I was teaching on Knowledge and Nature) it might have been my Steiner-inspired perspective, or better judgment made possible by four decades of reading and teaching, that enabled me to see Teilhard in a new light (particularly as told in Ursula King's *Spirit of Fire: Teilhard de Chardin*). While I regret that Teilhard privileged the western, and primarily Christian, tradition in the evolution of consciousness (admittedly, as Steiner also does), but with the two fields in which he worked—the science of nature (specifically paleontology) and religion (specifically Roman Catholicism)—he forged a profound synthesis needed by both sides of this dichotomy.

In the United States, from the 1960s through the 1990s, Thomas Berry was Teilhard's foremost exponent both as founder and president of the American Teilhard Association and by virtue of his students, Brian Swimme with whom he wrote the *Universe Story* and the husband and wife team, Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim. As a result of many conversations, and by co-teaching with Brian courses on both Steiner and Teilhard, I am in a constant internal dialogue with what I call the Thomas-Swimme world view. Obviously, Brian's and Thomas's perspectives are not co-extensive or interchangeable—Brian is a cosmologist with his own world view and original insights—but they share one idea with which I have been in dialogue, namely, that for them the Universe, and particularly the Earth, rather than either the divine or the human, is the ultimate value.

Thomas and Brian see two sources of the mistaken anthropocentric world view: Abrahamic religions and secular humanism. I grant their argument that the Abrahamic religions have so valued the divine, and to a lesser extent the human, that they have insufficiently valued the Earth community. Because of the current, and no doubt continuing, devastation of the Earth, I enthusiastically support this critique. I also agree with them that ecological devastation is due equally to secularism, principally financial pressures exerted by governments and corporations (see for example Brian's *Hidden Heart of the Universe* and Thomas's *Great Work*.) With this agreement in view I now want to add that neither of these true and necessary critiques need imply the denial of divine spirit in some form (God, Brahman, Dao, etc.) and more specific expressions (Krishna, Buddha, and Christ).

For Thomas, and apparently for Brian, the origin, evolution, and purpose of the Earth community within the Universe is sufficient without reference to a divine source,

guidance, or end. In this regard, my thought might be closer to Teilhard than to either Thomas or Brian. They seem to me to attribute to the Earth the attributes of the Logos in the Prologue to John's Gospel. In contrast to this position which I take to be essentially pantheistic—and which I applaud as a counter to the excessive theism of the Abrahamic traditions—I hold to panentheism, the view that affirms the divine throughout the Universe (including the Earth's every cell and grain of sand) but not identical with or exhausted by the Universe. The divine preceded the Universe, permeates it, and will absorb its essential meanings. In my view, or hope, all consciousness will be preserved in what Whitehead calls the Consequent Nature of God.

While the topic of panentheism in contrast to both theism and pantheism is important to me, I want to emphasize that in terms of what is needed in the world today, it is a luxurious concern, and not to be given equal status with the positive influence that Thomas has exercised by his writings and relationships, and Brian continues to exercise on readers, students, and audiences, and decisively on me. Brian has very directly awakened me to the experience of living as an Earthly and Cosmic being. By his passion, intuition, and affection literally for the world—from planets to topsoil—he has enabled me to develop a working relationship to the cosmic in Teilhard, in Steiner, and in my daily life. This is a great gift for which I am grateful. In its depth and positivity it is comparable to all that I have learned from Rick Tarnas concerning the wisdom of the cosmos astrologically and archetypally revealed.

As Brian himself often acknowledges, it is Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim who rightly wear Thomas's mantle. They both directed the seminars on Religion and Ecology that produced the ten volumes that have effectively created a new field, Religion and Ecology. By their Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale (where they have joint appointments in Divinity and Forestry and Environmental Studies) they serve as the primary directors of this new field. Their work advances the two halves of Thomas's total career, the first half devoted to the study of world religions, the second to ecology. They both raised the concept of filial piety to an admirable level: John succeeded Thomas as president of the Teilhard Association, and Mary Evelyn edited the last three volumes of Thomas's essays published just prior to his death in 2009. Brian and Mary Evelyn have produced a film based on Thomas's vision, *Journey of the Universe*. Mary Evelyn, with Steven Rockefeller, is one of the authors of the Earth Charter. Clearly, I think the work of Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim is of the highest importance; I commend it to one and all. In 2019, Mary Evelyn, John, and Andrew Angyal published *Thomas Berry: A Biography*, an inspiring account of Thomas's life and thought.

Surrounded as I am by ecological thinkers—Brian Swimme, Sean Kelly, Elizabeth Allison in PCC, as well as John Grim and Mary Evelyn Tucker at a distance but always in my sight, I naturally wonder what I could bring to this truly great work. For some time, I have been convinced that the way to join Christianity and ecology is to advance the conception of the cosmic Christ found in the writings of Steiner, Teilhard, and Merton. Teilhard's Christology is rooted about equally in his own mystical experience of nature, of the Earth and the Universe, and in the Catholic mystical tradition. He is steeped in the New Testament, in the Fathers of the Church, in Aquinas, and Ignatius of Loyola. He sees Christ caring for the Earth, and active on behalf of Earth evolution. He sees the Earth and humanity struggling toward a fuller realization of the wisdom and love that is Christ. Teilhard does not quite reject orthodox Roman Catholic theism but he gives a much stronger emphasis on the intimate relationship between Christ and the evolution of the Earth than is usual among Catholic thinkers. (Merton

offers an inspiring account of Sophia as the expression of Christ in creation but I cannot find an explicit account in his writings of the evolution of consciousness.)

For Teilhard, God is throughout creation, guiding its evolution, and Christ is active on behalf of humanity and Earth. This conception of God is not pantheist: he does not limit God to His creation, nor Christ to the Earth. Teilhard is offering a spirituality that is both Gaia-centric and Christ-centric. Significantly, it is also Trinitarian: Father/Ground of Being, Christ/Logos, and Holy Spirit. The Earth, filled with Christ's love and aspiration, is to be revered and loved. Christ is not away, Christ is here, in the plants and animals, in the rivers and oceans, in photosynthesis, in humanity both individually and collectively, and in planets and stars. At his death in 1955, Teilhard did not know about ecological devastation but we can be sure that he would have offered profound antidotes.

Steiner's Christology is rooted more in esoteric research (the attainment of knowledge not accessible by usual ways of knowing) than in mystical experience (characterized more by union than by knowledge), but with respect to both Teilhard and Steiner, this otherwise valid distinction between mysticism and esotericism would seem to be unimportant. Steiner's experience of Christ, both in 1899 and, it seems, for the rest of his life, was characterized as much by love as by the search for secret knowledge, and Teilhard's experience of Christ, also throughout his life, was a kind of knowing. Teilhard's Christ mysticism was noetic and Steiner's Christocentric esotericism was humble, reverent, and devotional. Both offer a synthesis of love and knowledge with respect to the intimacy of Christ and Earth, a synthesis needed more than ever by Christians and by scientists. Steiner goes beyond Teilhard's Christology, and that of all other Christian thinkers, in that he claims in its etheric dimension (its life principle) Christ has returned to the Earth, surrounding it like an envelope. If this is true, it would be important for contemporary clairvoyant spiritual researchers and teachers to report on the mutual effect of the etheric body of Christ and the suffering Earth.

11. Looking Back

In retrospect, it is clear that I was blessed by a family characterized by love and effort. With my good start, and my wife Ellen's good start, we were able to create a new family that loves naturally, and strives to increase the capacity for love in others. Our four grandchildren similarly show the clear evidence of being raised by wise and loving parents. I have been blessed by an immodest number of friends, many of them inspiring, creative, and generous. Serving first as president and then on the faculty of CIIS has brought forth from me greater capacities than I had previously thought possible. Further, imagine the joy of working in the same department as one's closest friends. And it ain't over yet!

I live in gratitude to the natural world of the San Francisco Bay Area. Ellen and I live in an apartment in the Richmond district of San Francisco, ten houses from Golden Gate Park with a clear view of the Marin Headlands and the top of the Golden Gate Bridge. I often bicycle or walk to Ocean Beach, a mile and a half away. We live 30 minutes from Mount Tamalpais and Muir Woods, and three hours from Esalen. I appreciate every minute I spend in the natural world, and worry about its health for future generations.

12. Looking Ahead

This last section, "Looking Ahead," is unchanged from when I wrote it in 2011. Later events and ideas are included in "My Karmic Memoir, 2021."

Whether because the world, and specifically the Earth, is more precarious than when I was younger, or whether worry comes with age, I definitely worry more now than in earlier decades. I worry for my grandchildren, for my students, for homeless mothers and children, for overpopulation, for food distribution and access to water, for violence against the poor and powerless. How can I help? If there really would be only a few years until ecological devastation (or, as also predicted, worldwide financial collapse, or techno-war), there would be no point in continuing to learn about anything except the most effective ways to cope in the face of collapse of civilization and the natural world. As I am counting on a much longer period of decline, and perhaps a slow recovery to a different world, presumably with the help of wise human beings and guiding spirits, I think it is still worthwhile to write books that might contribute to the overall wisdom of the human community.

To this end, I plan to finish my next book, *Unique Not Alone—Steiner and Others* (due June 2012), which will expand some of the ideas in this essay, and then *Steiner on Buddha*, a companion to my *Bhagavad Gita and the West* (2009). I will continue to chair the PCC department and to teach such courses as *Krishna, Buddha, and Christ*, *Asian Spiritual Masters*, *Western Spiritual Masters*, *Steiner and Anthroposophy*, and *The Karma of America*.

As for a big picture, I have an indefinite but steady conviction that humanity and its influence will grow simultaneously more malevolent and more compassionate. There is a war underway for control of human consciousness. This is the ultimate dichotomy, one that can be reconciled only on the highest spiritual level, rather like Krishna holding the warring parties on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, or Gotama Buddha in the moment before his enlightenment confronting Mara, the tempter, or Christ's intensely active peaceful opposition to the power of evil in the midst of his passion and execution.