

CREATIVE AND INTEGRATIVE UNIVERSITY EDUCATION WITHIN A UNIVERSE AS EDUCATOR FOR THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

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This paper will argue for a type of university education that will enable students to make a meaningful living and at the same time contribute to the shaping of a sustainable global future for the planetary community. The premise of the argument is that to a large extent the current system of university teaching deals with inert matters grounded in an understanding of the non-human world simply being a collection of inert objects that we need to process through the industrial systems of our modern consumer societies. A more imaginative approach to university education will be required so as to contribute to a transformation of many of the assumptions and institutions in our human societies that have been identified as culprits for the rapid and large-scale decline in the quality of the natural environment.

In the 21st century, ecology and cosmology must inform education that aims at learning by doing. Teachers and students in the envisaged tertiary educational level will be engaged in a mutually beneficial learning process, stimulating and being stimulated to curiosity and imagination, and learning the art of applying knowledge creatively and integratively for one's personal ethical, spiritual, political, social, and ecological growth. The method of teaching must be open and participative, utilizing interactive technology and fostering freedom that works toward justice and peace. The end of such education is the self-development of the student through a variety of fields of learning and understanding. By knowing oneself and how one becomes within this emergent universe, one will also discover what is required to build a globally sustainable society.

Education for National Progress and Individual Profit

Contemporary philosophy of education identifies as one of the ends of education the contribution to the development and progress of the respective nation to which the educational institutions and their students belong. Students are to be formed into productive citizens of their respective nations.

For the last few hundred years the nation state has become the predominant articulation for organizing human societies around the globe. This concept developed in Europe and through the process of colonization reached practically all societies around the globe by the 20th century. This

socio-political development was accompanied by the concept of self-government by the people. Popular government in the western form of liberal democracy was to enable the individual to expand in personal freedom. The basic concepts of liberty and freedom informing the nations and their individual citizens have been the result of the major revolutionary processes in England, France and America in the 17th and 18th centuries. These are the democratic freedoms, and the limitless rights to private property and to economic profit. Fundamentally, they are the rights of individuals. The state must guard and protect these rights of all individual citizens. Nation states constitute themselves as associations of individuals through social contracts.

Through education the young learn how to participate in such liberal democratic nation states as responsible citizens while at the same time learning how to become successful in making a profitable living within this given paradigm. Through education the nation state establishes the historical identity of the society and communicates to its citizenry social, cultural, political, and economic ideals. And it is the sacred duty of the citizens to defend the national territory. The nation has become the integrating – indeed the sacred – community. The ‘Wealth of the Nation’ has become the foundational economic aspiration.

The nation state as integrating community emerged within a scientific-technological era that also came to shape the industrial civilization. Industrial civilization has become the dominant socio-political organization around the world for the last few centuries. This dominant industrial civilization with its mechanistic worldview was primarily concerned with technologies that helped in controlling the dynamics of the earth and exploiting its natural resources so that these resources could be channeled to the factories and turned into consumer items, thus increasing the wealth of a nation and the welfare of its citizens. The underlying dynamics has been guided by a quantitative and mechanistic understanding of the universe.

The universities have become the major educational institutions to form the minds of the young along the lines of an analytical reductionism and mechanistic science, if not materialistic scientism. They have been immersed in the general climate of analyzing the world about them. And in the process they have had their share of fragmenting it into its component parts that are perceived as the real building blocks of the universe. The universities have become a participant player in this power play to transform our human consciousness and our relationship to the natural world around, above and beneath us in an order of magnitude unknown to any civilization or culture before and outside the modern western culture.

A Shift in Modern Human Consciousness: From Communion to Control and Consumption

Among the obvious features that characterize the modern human consciousness is a sense of, if not duty, to control and manipulate the natural world and physical energies toward the service of human welfare. There has emerged a sense of urgency and a sense of sacred duty to overcome what is known as the human condition. The roots for such human longing can be discovered in the Judeo-Christian Tradition with both its “sense of historical developmental human time”¹ and with its prophetic and apocalyptic visions culminating in the ‘millennial dream’ expressed in the last book of the Bible, the Revelation of John. The millennium at the end of history is the experience of justice and peace in a state beyond the present historical human condition. Thomas Berry writes that

This millennial vision is the source of what may be the most powerful psychic energies ever released on the earth, psychic energies that have eventually taken extensive control over the physical functioning of the planet and are now entering into control of its biological systems.²

In its earlier historical expressions, the vision of a millennium of peace and justice was conceived of as something that concerned the human community only on a spiritual level independent, even apart, from the physical and natural world.

While the physical universe was fixed in its ever-renewing seasonal sequence, the human component of the universe was in a process of spiritual transformation in terms of a divine kingdom. Once this kingdom had attained its full expression within its earthly setting then the physical universe would have served its purpose and would be dissolved while the human would continue in some transcendent realm of blessedness.³

If such was the understanding of the functioning of the universe and the place of the human in relation to it until the European Renaissance, this perception began to change with the emergence of the empirical sciences in the 16th and 17th centuries as a result of a fundamental dissatisfaction of the Western mind regarding the basic views of the universe. No longer would the universe be viewed as an organic, animate and spiritual reality. From then on,

it would be understood as a rational system to be dealt with in a mathematical mode providing the human mind certainty and control. We associate these developments with the names Copernicus, Kepler, Bacon, Descartes, Galileo, and Newton. These scholars and scientists of the western world, i.e. Europe, had given birth to a shift in human consciousness and to a whole new world. It was the world of inanimate matter and objective realities in the service of human welfare.

Western consciousness had been liberated of any animating inner principle of the natural world that until then was self-evident to all cultural traditions. Left void of any inner vital principle and inherent quality, the natural world was now available for being subjugated into mere quantification. Descartes' modern philosophy has been a crucial factor in widening the alienation between the human and the non-human world, or what has come to be known simply as a dualistic world view. Rooted in ancient Platonic philosophy, reinforced through the Judeo-Christian distinction between the transcendental human destination for an eternal spiritual realm and the ultimate dissolution of the physical realities, and now solidly established in modern Cartesian philosophy, the natural world was reduced to a value-less objective canvass onto which the human mind was to project value of its own making. The glorification of the human was at the cost of the natural as there were no more inner – psychic or aesthetic - qualities left in the physical world.

From then on, the Western human mind was set on discovering how the physical energies and forces of the universe could be made available for human well-being. As the scientific understanding of the objective world grew, new technologies were invented whereby the humans could exploit the natural resources for human consumption and manipulate the natural environment for their own benefits, i.e. to be released from nature's violent dimensions that would cause much suffering to human life.

In its earlier phases of the Neolithic village cultures and the great classical civilizations, human experience and consciousness was primarily concerned with psychic energies through which the human would establish a meaningful rapport with the natural world and the realm of the divine. Through religious observances and rituals in myriads of cultural expressions, human communities and societies around the planet had assured themselves of the benedictions of spiritual forces that permeated the natural world. The numinous realm was a source of psychic energy and overall security as it was experienced as a means of divine communication and communion. This general sense of belonging to the universe was particularly true for those peoples whose sense of time was ordered by the great perennial seasonal and cosmic cycles. Life was not always benign, but through developing an inner

spiritual strength psychic energies were kept sufficiently high on a communal or societal level to face the challenges of life in a meaningful manner.

The Judeo-Christian tradition shifted human consciousness away from a cyclical mode of being toward the historical directional perception of reality as developing toward a future or eschatological fulfillment, some kind of a realm of bliss – the millennium which in its original vision was a purely spiritual reality.

The historical developments in the Western world that led to a greater assertion of human control and manipulation over the natural forces and physical energies brought about a shift in the human attitude in relation to the millennium vision. Divine grace as the agent to bring about the future realm of bliss was replaced by human effort as the instrument to achieve that future realization of paradise. Though the drive towards that future fulfillment was the same as in earlier periods of history, yet the methods have changed. Humans are the agents, science and technology the instruments. The goals had to be achieved through scientific progress and technological development. Science and technology had substituted the mystical experience of the divine that used to receive its vitality through an evocation of the natural world permeated by spiritual powers and through prayerful ritual invocation.

Transformation toward a New Human Consciousness: Responsibility for the Planetary Community

The above analysis of our present planetary condition and the general historical outline that has led to our present situation includes university education as a significant instrument in bringing the human venture and the earth process to this critical point in its evolutionary development. We find ourselves in a phase of discontinuity and disintegration. The forces that have brought the human venture to this situation of impasse have become more powerful as the extent of the 'technosphere' has diminished the planetary biosphere. And there seems to be no let-up in this industrial-consumerist fixation. To understand this attitude as addiction comes even closer to the truth of reality. Even if we wanted to, this modern myth of living in an industrial wonderland has such a strong hold on modern human life and society that any attempt to escape it will prove extremely difficult. But escape we must!

Who and what could provide the energy to fuel our will power to go through the transition phase from addiction to freedom? Who and what

would assist us to develop the discipline needed to endure the pain of withdrawal from a life of rather passively consuming the limited material resources of the earth toward a life of actively communing with the unlimited spiritual resources of the earth and the larger universe?

It has become quite clear that we have to re-evaluate and re-envision our ends of educating the young (and old) if we want to give them any hope and guidance for a meaningful future. And university education plays a leading role in this undertaking. Education must enable the young students to discover their creativity and empower them to put it to use for bringing about an integral human earth community. This can only be done when the earth, and ultimately the universe, becomes our educational guide.

We need a new philosophy of education. It must be a philosophy that understands the ends of education as something more than simply for individual personal growth and nationalistic techno-economic progress. If we envision any meaningful human mode of living in the future, whether individually or nationally, it can only be sustained by a flourishing earth community within a purposeful universe.

Is there any other more appropriate educational space in the universe adventure at the beginning of the 21st century than the university to have the universe as educator and formator of its most recent and most immature manifestation and phase of evolution, the human species? The university must claim as its primary purpose the creation of a life-giving 'noosphere' in harmony with the dynamics of the earlier phases of the creation process – the litosphere, the hydrosphere, and the biosphere, rather than being an instrument for a life disintegrating 'technosphere.'

University Education

Experience Engendering Excitement and Enthusiasm. At the university level of education, science must play a significant role in the educational efforts. At the university the students encounter science through the encounter with researchers. This meeting of minds to move the world is the primary justification for the existence of universities. It is the fertilization, even the cross-fertilization, of intellect and imagination for the invigoration and illumination of life! In the words of A. N. Whitehead:

The justification for a university is that it preserves the connection between knowledge and the zest of life, by uniting the young and the old in the imaginative consideration of learning. The university imparts information, but it imparts it imaginatively. ... A university

which fails in this respect has no reason for existence. This atmosphere of excitement, arising from imaginative consideration, transforms knowledge. A fact is no longer a bare fact: it is invested with all its possibilities. It is no longer a burden on the memory: it is energizing as the poet of our dreams, and as the architect of our purposes.⁴

Such common endeavor between those who have the life experience and those who can and must be excited and who can get enthusiastic about anything purposeful is even more needed today at the beginning of the 21st century than in the early decades of last century when A. N. Whitehead wrote these lines. All the more now when we face a critical impasse in our common creation story do we need imaginative and enthusiastic minds that illuminate the facts. Such imaginative illumination

... works by eliciting the general principles which apply to the facts, as they exist, and then by an intellectual survey of alternative possibilities which are consistent with those principles. It enables men to construct an intellectual vision of a new world, and it preserves the zest of life by the suggestion of satisfying purposes.⁵

The purpose of the university is to create an environment wherein the young can strengthen their imagination by discipline. It needs discipline to sustain imagination through one's life, i.e. to make it a sustainable development! It is a fact of life that those with the greatest potential for imagination, i.e. the young people, do not yet have the experience of life. Both, however, are crucial to develop wisdom, i.e. the power of making good use of knowledge, and in our consideration to make the best use of our knowledge for the common good, i.e. the entire earth community.

There is a crucial requirement in developing such sustainable imagination in the young, a requirement that our fast-paced world of instant success and of quick 'return on investment' would not allow to be fulfilled easily. It is an aspect of developmental psychology that we can more easily critique when we reflect on the plight of young children forced into child labor but pay little attention to in respect to our university students. The plight of the children forced to work at a young age is their being deprived of the play ground! Similarly, the plight of most of our university students is the failure to experience the university as their playground to hone their intellectual imagination and discipline, when

...the initial discipline of imagination in its period of youthful vigour requires that there be no responsibility for immediate action. ... [One] must be free to think rightly and wrongly, and free to appreciate the variousness of the universe undisturbed by its perils....The way in which a university should function in the preparation for an intellectual career ... is by promoting the imaginative consideration of the various general principles underlying that career. Its students thus pass into their period of technical apprenticeship with their imaginations already practiced in connecting details with general principles. The routine then receives meaning, and also illuminates the principles which give it that meaning...Thus the proper function of a university is the imaginative acquisition of knowledge. ... A university is imaginative or it is nothing – at least nothing useful.⁶

Applying these fundamental insights of A. N. Whitehead to our current planetary challenges, the primary-task of a university education would be to identify the fundamental principles that have been governing the evolutionary process of creation in all its phases of the emergent story and connect the details of our human micro phase story (history) with the macro phase story of the universe. To explore such connection for the future well-being of the planet and the ultimate purpose of the creation process ought to be the task of the interplay between the educator-researchers and students on a university campus. The campus must provide the environment of leisure and freedom from restraint, for excitement and for building up self-confidence where the mind “with experience of intellectual adventure”⁷ will meet the mind that can be excited and become enthusiastic about those issues of life that really matter in the larger arc of consideration. In that way education must be the “discipline for the adventure of life.”⁸

Expanding Cultural to Cosmic Anthropology. In terms of cultural anthropology, the university as the field (campus) where the experienced scholar meets the adolescent student ought to be understood as an initiation ceremony into the cosmic adventure of life. Little, however, do the ordinary college students know about such time-tested rites of initiation even after going through their required Anthropology 101 courses. Some might remember such rites as a needless and inhumane brutality in relation to the young generation of a tribal group. The respective knowledge about initiation rites in traditional societies is stored in libraries, computers and cyberspace but seemingly only brought out during annual conferences of anthropologists to be debated academically. Has any anthropologist ever thought about relating their knowledge about rites of initiation to the experience of campus

life in order to add value to university teaching? Would not that be an imaginative and creative way of expressing cultural wisdom as the mastery of knowledge?

Rites of initiation are institutions of traditional cultures through which the young people are being introduced to the adult responsibilities of their society. They must be released from their protective bonding with their mothers, leave childhood behind, pass through challenges that confront them with near-death experiences, and come out of such experiences a changed person. Passing through initiation makes them members of the adult society with corresponding responsibilities for the common good. Particularly experienced elders or mentors are assigned to assist them in their passage through trials and symbolic wounding until they emerge initiated into the wisdom of how to use their power for the common good or a Great Work and a Great Religion as they learn to realize that their life is not all about themselves. Modern western society and those emulated after it have abandoned this ancient practice. But when a culture and society sheds such venerable mythology, it is left with pathology – the pathology of individualism that psychologists and psychiatrist need to treat privately – mostly in vain!

Not only is the pathology of individualism among the elements we have inherited from the post-Enlightenment, scientific, technological and industrial-commercial western culture but our cultural coding itself has become pathological. The process by which our cultural coding is being passed on from generation to generation is called education. Modern secular education has become more

...an external conditioning than an interior discipline, more a training in manipulative techniques than initiation into religious rituals. The skills to be mastered were not the contemplative skills or imaginative capacities for dealing with numinous presence or with the aesthetic insight into the inner structure of reality; they were rather the skills needed by industry to bring forth the natural resources from the hidden depths of the planet, the skills to shape them in the manufacturing establishment and to make them available to a consumer-oriented society.⁹

The evolutionary process of creation has “genetically coded human beings toward a further transgenetic cultural coding whereby we invent ourselves in the human expression of our being.”¹⁰ With this genetically privileged position comes an equally great responsibility for the earth and

universe process that has gifted us with such powers, and toward their integral functioning. A great variety of cultural expressions articulate in their languages, social formations and functioning, ritual celebrations, and symbolic worlds their sense of reality and value, i.e. their worlds of meaning and purpose. These myriads of patterns of human self-invention are the fascinating material for the investigation of cultural anthropology.

From the larger perspective of the history of cultures and religions, Thomas Berry draws our attention to the fact that

this process whereby we invent ourselves in these cultural modes is guided by visionary experiences that come to us in some transrational process from the inner shaping tendencies that we carry within us, often in revelatory dream experience.¹¹

Over the millennia of human history both the daylight experiences relating the human to the phenomenal world as well as the nighttime or dream experiences of human communion with the numinous world have given shape to cultural articulations that carry within them the tendency for decay and disintegration. Bringing about new articulations of cultural integrity require a new listening to our genetic coding, a new contact with the earth and universe process out of which our cultural creations arise.

This is the situation we find ourselves in as we enter the new millennium. The western dreams and visions of creating a culture of freedom with access to unlimited physical energy and the availability of an abundance of material objects has trivialized the entire human adventure to the point not only of cultural decay but beyond that, to the point of devastation of the natural world. We have reached a point in our human history and the entire earth story at which the failure of the modern western cultural coding has become too obvious and detrimental to the entire creative universe process. Humanity as a species threatens a meaningful future and integral creation process. This challenges humanity to listen anew to its genetic coding and to re-invent itself at the species level in such a way that it can become a functional component part in and for the integral functioning of the universe process. We have to expand our cultural anthropology to and complement it with a cosmic anthropology.

Intellectual and Imaginative Initiation Experience. These observations lead us to the following considerations and challenges regarding university education. The university needs to be understood as the field (campus) where the experienced initiators meet the imaginative initiates and initiate them through a life-changing adventure with near-death experiences and symbolic wounding into a life of responsibility. The changes that need to be achieved

are the re-invention of their human understanding (anthropology) at the species level, and ultimately as the self-reflexive expression of the universe (cosmology). No longer would our academic anthropologists simply teach about initiation rites of historically and geographically remote and culturally exotic traditional cultures but become initiators and mentors themselves as cosmic anthropologists guiding the young generation into an experience of living beyond consuming – the experience of exhilaration, of communing with the universe about and within them in a mode of meaningful celebration.

In a further expansion of this concept, we could say that it would be the function of the university to become the new institutional and academic mode of an ancient social institution – the initiation process of modern society towards a radically altered, new and more mature human consciousness beyond individualism and nationalism and an enlarged sense of responsibility and guidance for the entire and integral earth community. Whereas in traditional societies the young had to be released from their protective bonding with their mothers, the university as initiation would have to release the young from their unhealthy and immature protective bonding with the nation or any other similar cultural matrix. Passing through the playfulness as well as rigors of university education in which their ultimate mentor or initiator would be the universe itself, the students would emerge as transformed in their consciousness. They would have a sense of belonging and new responsibility in fulfilling their human role for the common good of the entire earth community, of which they would now become mature and creative participants towards its integral functioning and fulfillment.

The Universe: A Celebration of Creation

To understand the universe as educator for the integrity of creation, we must learn to comprehend it in its ultimate nature. The most meaningful designation given it is that of “a celebration of existence and life and consciousness”¹² or similarly, “a single, multiform, sequential, celebratory event.”¹³

As humans we are genetically coded in a manner that urges us to participate in this grand process of mutual evocation to an increasing exuberance of life. As creatures of the universe emerging from the earth’s Cenozoic phase we are truly garden creatures. Of all the creative phases of the earth’s biosphere, the Cenozoic is the one displaying the most

magnificent, exuberant, and gorgeous expressions of the creative and evolutionary process of the universe adventure that far.

The grandeur of human consciousness and imagination, any meaningful spiritual depth experience and interior life experience has been, and is being continuously awakened and nurtured by this grandeur of the natural world about us. It is the colorful world of the flowering plants and insects, tropical rainforest and deserts, rainfall and typhoons, thunder and lightning, earthquakes and tsunamis, myriads of creatures swimming in the oceans and flying in the sky, snow-capped mountains and green valleys, meadows and creeks, rice fields and carabaos, sunrise and sunset, moon- and star-lit nights, living and dying, sound and silence – one grand audio-visual celebration of generous flaring forth originating in the ultimate mystery.

Generation after generation, beginning with the Paleolithic phase of the human venture, throughout its Neolithic village expressions, reaching a certain height of full realization in the classical civilizations, human communities have found meaning and purpose by participating and integrating themselves through rituals in this grand cosmic liturgy. This sense of belonging and commitment to the universe had been lost in the modern western mechanistic consciousness of technological rationality. This latest of the human phases has followed a completely different dream and vision than the cultures and civilizations before it. It is the dream of independence from, and its power to subjugate the forces of, the earth process that has brought it forth and the exploitation of its resources for a consumerist wonderworld rather than an integral creative and cosmic presence to the wider universe. It is the shift of consciousness from belonging to the universe to the universe belonging to us. This dream of unrestrained freedom from, and absolute power over, the natural world might turn into the nightmare of the planet.

There is a hopeful dimension to this development of science and technology to empower us for exploring and discovering the workings and laws of the natural world of earth and cosmos, and in relation to the appreciation of rationality, and the dignity of the human person to which the post-Enlightenment world challenges us. Yet it is an ambivalent development as long as we have not yet acknowledged our duties and responsibilities engendered by these new human powers in relation to the cosmic community.

That is where we are at this point in time. We have liberated ourselves from a childlike bonding with Mother Earth. The human adventure like a hero's journey now seems to be in the process of going through a rite of passage toward an altered relation with its primary matrix of life. For the benefit of both the human venture and the wider cosmic venture, it needs to lead to a more mature and mutually beneficial relationship. We might view

the modern western industrial phase of the human venture as the adolescent phase of carelessness and even recklessness in dealing with the gift of creation. We have been wasting the physical energies stored in the bowels of the earth without considering the real gains and losses incurred.

Yet we are learning, gradually and maybe ever so slowly, and we are coming to our senses as we are having difficulties breathing clean air, drinking clear and invigorating water, finding fertile soil to plant our crops, and listening to the birds during the day and the chorus of night creatures in the evening. Our presence on earth and in relation to the cosmic community will never be the same as before. We have changed the climate of the planet. Now we need to change our attitude and assume responsibility, so that the universe adventure can move into the future in any meaningful, creative and integral manner. It cannot be done anymore without science, or without technology. But neither will it succeed without the imagination and excitement of the human mind. Here lies the challenge of the university as playing field and training ground to re-invent the human on a species level through the creative interaction of the experienced elder and the excited youth as an integral member of the cosmic community.

The University: Celebrating Creation Time

All theory is only as good as its translation into practical applications. The issue at stake is an education at the university level that is creative and integrative, and acknowledging the universe as the overall educator forming its human expression towards an integral presence and functioning in the larger creation process.

What does the universe teach us? First and foremost does it teach us, that it is a dynamic and ordered reality. The Greeks called it cosmos. In the 20th century we finally came to understand scientifically that this cosmos is not a static reality. Rather, thanks to Einstein and Hubble, we now know this universe to be a cosmogenesis, as Teilhard de Chardin would refer to it. And its evolution as an irreversible, time-developmental, emerging and creative process is guided by three fundamental principles. These three principles are fundamental to all its phases of ordering, structuring and organizing the cosmic journey.

Differentiation. The first principle is the ordering principle of cosmogenesis – differentiation. Through time and space the universe process has displayed incredible creativity in bringing forth novel and fresh expressions of itself by groping toward ever new and diverse forms of

existence, be it on the micro- and macrophase physical level, on the mesophase level of the biosphere, or the cultural and religious expressions of the noosphere. The concern of environmentalists all over the planet to conserve the awe-inspiring and marvelous biological diversity within which humanity emerged is an indication of the deep longing of the evolutionary creative process to keep unfolding creatively and diversely, a longing the western consciousness has been denying for a long time. This can be seen in its industrialized and petroleum-based mono-cultural farming practices with all the detrimental long-term effects resulting from them.

Autopoiesis. The emerging cosmos is structured through the dynamics of self-organization or autopoiesis. The self or unifying principle is the source of spontaneity of any reality; it is its self-articulating power. Throughout its long process the potentialities for new and different future self-articulations have potentially been present in the previous and ultimately primordial realities. Differentiated autopoiesis or self-organizing powers do flare forth from a fecund emptiness or nothingness through mutual evocations. Everything emerges out of this psycho-spiritual as well as physical-material cosmogenesis.

There is a subjective, mystical dimension at the heart of every being in the universe. And every being, from the simplest atom to the most diverse tropical rainforest and most complex human consciousness is an autopoietic expression of the universe in its unfolding. The human being communing with the various forms of autopoietic expressions in multiform rituals is being energized to create works of arts, to engender more psychic energy in those who are being inspired by the beauty of human works, be they artistic and cultural, political and social, spiritual and mystic, or scientific and technological. The modern western human desire to possess and process the natural world around us as a collection of inanimate material objects for human exploitation and consumption is a failure of understanding of the highest order.

Communion. The cosmic adventure is organized by communion. "To be is to be related, for relationship is the essence of existence."¹⁴ Whatever exists in the universe is a component part of the web of relationships among autopoietic centers of creativity.

As Teilhard suggests, we must go beyond the human into the universe itself and its mode of functioning. Until the human is understood as a dimension of the earth, we have no secure basis for understanding any aspect of the human. We can understand the human only through the earth. Beyond the earth, of course, is the universe and the curvature of space. This curve is reflected in the

curvature of the earth and finally in that psychic curve whereby the entire universe reflects back on itself in human intelligence.¹⁵

The celebration of a creation time within the liturgical calendar of the church offers a good opportunity to relate the fundamental principles that govern the emerging creation process more closely to religious life. In the case of the Philippines with a majority Catholic and Christian population, brief mention will be made of these new efforts of the Christian ecumenical movement.

The attainment of justice and peace has been an integral part of a Christian social ethics. Yet, only recently has the concern for the integrity of creation entered into the awareness of such ethics. A 'Conciliar Process for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation' was initiated about twenty years ago by the World Council of Churches. The integrity of creation as a fundamental, even foundational concern, however, has not yet reached the hearts of the faithful, not yet gripped their imagination as something that is prior to the issues of social and economic justice and political peace. Among the reasons that explain this unconcern and lack of enthusiasm to show responsibility for the natural world and the entire earth and universe process is a lack of understanding of our true human nature and the creative role we need to play in the great work of an emerging creation.

The celebration of a Creation Time can become a powerful institution with the dynamics of the traditional rites of passage towards a new consciousness and greater sense of responsibility emerging from it. The church is a transnational institution. It is in the service of the Creator. Its primary allegiance is the Creator and what belongs to the Creator, i.e., the creation. Catholic universities in particular should offer the space and time for a sustained conversion process towards modes of living and working that are aligned with the dynamics of the story of creation as natural science and scholarship of cultures and religions are bringing them to our awareness at the beginning of the 21st century.

Advocating the celebration of a Creation Day and a Creation Time can be a creative and integrative element of university education as the practice has proven since I have begun engaging my Environmental Biology as well as my Catholic Social Teachings students in such activities during every first trimester for the past few years. These are the months leading up to September 1 which is more and more acknowledged as Creation Day in many local churches and Christian denominations, and the time till the second Sunday in October as Creation Time. It is an exciting engagement, with some of the groups of students unable to hide their fascination and

enthusiasm about this advocacy project despite – no, rather – because of the challenge, the purposefulness, meaning, and hope it offers and the new vision it provides them.

It is fascinating to realize as educator how creative and committed students are when they deal with issues that really matter, when they can immerse themselves in a Great Work that communicates to them that life is not just about themselves but rather about playing a joyful and creative role in a greater work. This immersion touches their cosmic heart and energizes it through the various forms of cosmic psychic and spiritual energies that permeate the universe. Young people who are not yet so caught up in the myth of economic and technological progress towards a wonderland of material abundance that suffocates one of the most vital energies – our hope – and in the process drains our physical energies, still have a stronger sensitivity for the more personal and psychic energies available through the mediation of the natural world.

Celebrating Creation Community and Communion with the Creator

From a Catholic position, it is the divine energy of the personal presence of the Creator still at work by lovingly and patiently alluring creation toward ever more beautifully diverse, complex, and yet more intimate communion among the individual mystical and autopoietic centers as well as with the Ultimate Mystery whence everything comes forth into existence and gropes toward in search for eschatological fulfillment as one created cosmic community! It is an exhilarating work of the highest order of magnitude to accept the challenge of being created in the image and likeness of God and commit oneself to giving birth to sustainable human communities and meaningful ways of life in the service of justice, peace and the integrity of creation. For this task, the universe itself is our great story teller, engaging both the human educator-researcher and the student in its autobiography. The university campus is the field to explore in an intellectually imaginative and playful way new visions for intensifying the community of creation and the communion of the creation with the creator in the emerging celebratory Epic of creation.

Endnotes

¹ Swimme and Berry, *The Universe Story*, 224.

- ² Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*, 28.
³ Swimme and Berry, *The Universe Story*, 225.
⁴ Whitehead, *The Aims Of Education*, 93.
⁵ Whitehead, *The Aims Of Education*, 93.
⁶ *ibid.*, 93.
⁷ *ibid.*, 97.
⁸ *ibid.*, 98.
⁹ Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*, 28.
¹⁰ *ibid.*, 200..
¹¹ *ibid.*, 201.
¹² Swimme and Berry, *The Universe Story*, 225.
¹³ *ibid.*, 264.
¹⁴ *ibid.*, 77
¹⁵ Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*, 219.

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