

Insurgence:

The Key to the Great Work of Our Time

(A Soulcentric View of Thomas Berry's Work)

Bill Plotkin

[In *Thomas Berry, Dreamer of the Earth: The Spiritual Ecology of the Father of Environmentalism*, edited by Ervin Laszlo and Allan Combs, Inner Traditions, 2011, pp. 42 – 71.]

Thomas Berry told us that in order to invent new sustainable human cultures we must root our efforts not in our rational minds but in revelatory visions that sprout from the depths of the human psyche and from our encounters with the mysteries of the natural world. He coined the word “insurgence” to refer to this descent to soul that, with good fortune, ignites visionary experience, which in turn guides transformational action. After several decades studying the traditions and religions of peoples throughout the world, Thomas concluded that culture-improving measures sourced in any of our existing traditions would be insufficient as a response to the exigencies of the twenty-first century. He advised us that solutions fabricated with our rational minds arise from the very worldviews and values that produced our current planet-wide impasse in the first place.

If Thomas was correct — and I believe he was — then we must not only question everything about our contemporary Western cultures but also reconsider much that is believed, even among our most progressive thinkers, about how to extract ourselves from our current culture-caused catastrophes. When Thomas spoke about the necessity of “reinventing the human — at the species level,” he truly meant just that and not something less, such as rationally designing healthier versions of the cultures we already have. He called upon us to remake *ourselves*, not just our economies, governments, educational methods, religions, and energy-producing technologies. Thomas exhorted us to return to the original psychic and ritual processes by which healthy cultures come into existence and sustain themselves. He provocatively suggested that doing so requires “the shamanic dimension of the psyche itself.”

Thomas discussed these things most explicitly and thoroughly in the title chapter of his watershed 1988 book, *The Dream of the Earth*. Significantly, this chapter's subtitle, "Our Way into the Future," is the very phrase he chose again to subtitle his subsequent book, *The Great Work*, and it is the title he selected for the first chapter of *Evening Thoughts*. Here's the extraordinary paragraph in which he wrote of inscendence:

[W]e must go far beyond any transformation of contemporary culture. We must go back to the genetic imperative from which human cultures emerge originally and from which they can never be separated without losing their integrity and their survival capacity. None of our existing cultures can deal with this situation out of its own resources. We must invent, or reinvent, a sustainable human culture by a descent into our pre-rational, our instinctive resources. Our cultural resources have lost their integrity. They cannot be trusted. What is needed is not transcendence but "inscendence," not the brain but the gene.ⁱ

I want to explore here what Thomas meant by inscendence, its relationship to "the dream of the Earth," why he felt the "descent into our pre-rational, our instinctive resources" is critically important, and how it contrasts with and complements other, more infrastructural approaches to cultural change. Then I want to inquire into his use of the phrase "the genetic imperative" and thereby throw into relief his view of the relationship between nature, soul, and culture. Finally, I want to investigate one of Thomas' signature phrases, "the spontaneities within us," how these spontaneities can guide us, and their relationship with inscendence and soul.

It's not a coincidence I've chosen to write about this "inscendental" (but not in the least incidental) dimension of Thomas' work. The descent to soul has been the central theme of my own writing and the goal of the wilderness experiences in which I have guided others for 30 years. During my interview with Thomas in March 2006, I was particularly intent on learning more about what he meant by inscendence and what techniques he recommended for evoking this experience. His response took me by surprise: "I mean the work you do, Bill." Although disappointed I wasn't likely to learn more about his view of inscendence beyond what he had already written, I was also both honored and gratified that he understood my efforts in this way.

(Thomas' awareness of my work derived from my 2003 book, *Soulcraft*, for which he wrote the foreword.)

Inscendence and the Dream of the Earth

In his books, what did Thomas tell us about “inscendence”?

In *The Dream of the Earth*, Thomas called for a new “cultural coding,” which I have understood to mean root patterns, seed ideas, or consciousness shifting images that might animate healthy, creative, sustainable cultures of the future. And he told us exactly where to find such catalysts:

The new cultural coding that we need must emerge from the source of all such codings, from revelatory vision that comes to us in those special psychic moments, or conditions, that we describe as “dream.” We are, of course, using this term not only as regards the psychic processes that take place when we are physically asleep, but also as a way of indicating an intuitive, nonrational process that occurs when we awaken to the numinous powers ever present in the phenomenal world about us, powers that possess us in our high creative moments. Poets and artists continually invoke these spirit powers, which function less through words than through symbolic forms.ⁱⁱ

We need to remember 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.ⁱⁱⁱ

This intimacy with our genetic endowment, and through this endowment with the larger cosmic process, is ... the role of the shamanic personality, a type that is emerging once again in our society.

More than any other of the human types concerned with the sacred, the shamanic personality journeys into the far reaches of the cosmic mystery and brings back the vision and the power needed by the human community at the most elementary level.^{iv}

Consider, then, the following phrases as Thomas' composite definition of *inscendence*:

- “a descent into our pre-rational, our instinctive resources”
- “revelatory vision that comes to us in ... ‘dream’” [whether we are asleep or awake]
- “an intuitive, nonrational process that occurs when we awaken to the numinous powers ever present in the phenomenal world about us”
- “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”
- “journeys into the far reaches of the cosmic mystery [to bring] back the vision and the power needed by the human community at the most elementary level.”

To distill even further, we might say that Thomas' *inscendence* is a conscious connecting with any of the following: “instinctive resources,” “revelatory dream experience,” “vision,” our own “inner shaping tendencies,” “the numinous powers of the phenomenal world,” or the “cosmic mystery.” Quite a list! What do they have in common?

First of all, these are the realms of human experience most ignored by the mainstream in Western and Westernized cultures. Interesting. And not a coincidence. Mass culture labels these realms “mystical,” often with a pejorative or disdainful connotation and with an attitude of superiority. In contrast, many nature-based traditions and our own innate human intuition tell us these realms dwell at the very heart of the world, at the very core of life, that they centrally inform our humanity. Indeed, these are the dwelling places of the sacred.

Second, all of Thomas' instances of *inscendence* lie outside the realm of what the conscious mind controls. *Inscendence* occurs when human consciousness makes contact with and is transformed by a mystery beyond its own ken. The key to our survival and evolution, Thomas told us, lies not in our consciousness but in our conscious connection with what lies beneath it.

There's also one apparent *lack* of unity among these realms of experience. They straddle what conventional Western science and philosophy consider a definitive divide, an uncrossable border. The first four (instinct, dream, vision, shaping tendencies) would be deemed, by dualistic thinking, as "inner" and the final two (the phenomenal world, the cosmos) as "outer." But wait. The first four are more accurately identified as qualities of the person (not *in* the person) and the latter two are of the world (and not at all independent of the observing person). All of them are *in the world*.

In other words, the experience of inscendence, which Thomas said is our source for new cultural codings, can occur through our deep imagination and also through our capacities of perception. For example, we can encounter the numinous — the sacred or holy — in dreams (one mode of the deep imagination), and we can encounter it in the "phenomenal world about us." This is to say that the numinous is as much a dimension of the human as it is of the world more generally. The dream of the Earth lives in and through us as much as it does in and through the rest of creation. We can access the Earth's dreaming psychologically (intrapsychically) as surely as we can perceive with our senses how the dream of the Earth permeates all of terrestrial nature. As Thomas reminded us, the human is part and parcel of this world, not an alien visitor. Indeed he wrote that we are "a mode of being of the universe as well as distinctive beings in the universe."^v We are "that reality in whom the entire Earth comes to a special mode of reflexive consciousness. We are ourselves a mystical quality of the Earth, a unifying principle, an integration of the various polarities of the material and the spiritual, the physical and the psychic, the natural and the artistic, the intuitive and the scientific."^{vi}

The Cartesian cleaving of spirit from matter, mind from body, and inner from outer — that partitioning of the world and our selves into pairs of disparate domains — is one way Western culture has undermined our full experience of the reality of both our selves and the world in which we live. But we no longer need think or talk this way. We no longer need separate ourselves from the world. We no longer need de-soul the world in this way. It's high time we returned home, to once again participate fully in what Thomas called a "communion of subjects," the Earth community, in which "every organism [is] by definition an ensouled being."^{vii}

A third motif running through Thomas' composite definition of *inscendence* is his insistence that our primary path to healthy human culture is *not* by means of our rationality. "Our way into the future" cannot be identified by our strategic minds, cannot be discerned through our capacity for deduction, our ability to figure it out or to rationally agree upon a reasonable course of action. Even blue-ribbon panels of the best minds of our generation are not going to save us.

Accepting this limit to our rationality might feel like a blow to our human pride. After all, our rationality is a good candidate for what distinguishes us as human. So we confront here an irony arising like a specter or a terrifying god from the very core of our existence: Our human rationality is not what *made* us human and will not by itself enable us to correct our course or become *better* humans. Our rationality itself comes from somewhere other than our rationality. We did not invent ourselves. And we cannot rationally *reinvent* ourselves — at least not a healthy, sustainable version of ourselves. But we can, Thomas told us, reinvent ourselves nonrationally. And must.

Our rational, strategic minds are designed (brilliantly) for implementation, for making things happen, for fashioning the tools, edifices, social practices, and institutions of our daily lives. Our strategic minds, in short, determine *how* to do things. But they are not designed for determining *what* is truly worthwhile to do in life. The latter is the role of what Thomas referred to as our "inner shaping tendencies" or, as we shall see, the "human soul" or the "spontaneities within us."

This is what I hear Thomas saying when he writes that healthy cultural codings derive from what he calls "our genetic coding," not from our rational minds, not from "the brain." Inscendence is a route to the "pre-rational," the "nonrational," or the "transrational." He says it all three ways. For us to survive as (rational) humans, we must seek guidance from something that comes before our rationality, or that transcends it: "If we will the future effectively it will be because the guidance and the powers of the Earth have been communicated to us, not because we have determined the future of the Earth simply with some rational faculty."^{viii} This last sentence is well worth reading at least twice, perhaps even posting above our desks, in our job descriptions, and at the entrance to our universities, especially by those of us who believe we can simply reason our way out of our current dilemmas. This applies to deep ecologists, socialists, green-industry promoters, and

peace activists as much as it does to true believers in capitalism, “just wars,” and technological fixes.

Rather than with our rationality, the way we rediscover the Earth’s dream for the human (or receive an update on this ever-evolving dream) is, Thomas wrote, through our own capacity to dream. When we are physically asleep, we refer to such experiences simply as dreams, but when we are awake, we might speak of visions or numinous experiences or, as I prefer, encounters with the soul or encounters with the great mystery (Thomas’ “cosmic mystery”).

It is only by means of revelatory vision that we can nourish or revitalize our full humanity. And only by becoming fully human do we participate wholly in the dream of the Earth — Earth’s dream for itself, which is Earth’s way of participating in the dream of the universe.

Conversely, when we collectively lose touch with the dream of the Earth, we become estranged from our human destiny and become “the affliction of the world, its demonic presence,”^{xix} a “destructive pathology”^{xx} on this planet. Eventually we reach a terminal condition, the one in which we now in fact find ourselves: a terrestrial presence that threatens the survival of most of Earth’s life forms. Suicidal, biocidal, geocidal.

Thomas asked, rhetorically, “How and why did our present devastation of the Earth happen?”^{xi} His answer was “transcendence” — in fact, six transcendences. Two among these are “a transcendent, personal, monotheistic creative deity,” whose existence “tends to desacralize the phenomenal world” and suppresses or evicts “the feminine Earth-dwelling deities”; and the transcendental contention that we humans are “spiritual beings” and consequently “do not form a single society with the natural world,” resulting in our tragic alienation from “the visible world.”^{xii} Thomas, who we must remember was a Christian monk, coined the word *inscendence* to indicate our path of descent into a viable future, a path that contrasts with the transcendent trajectory ascended by Western civilization within its “biblical Christian humanist matrix.”^{xiii}

Thomas told us there are times in life when as individuals we must descend to our instinctive resources in order to reinvent ourselves. And there are times when our species, collectively, must do so. Now is very much such a time.

Rainer Maria Rilke concurred with the inevitability of the downward spiritual journey. He turned to the metaphor of summer's end. When the easy-sailing, easy-living times naturally draw to a close, we must descend, he wrote, like tree sap going to ground in the fall:

... The weeks stood still in summer.
The trees' blood rose. Now you feel
it wants to sink back
into the source of everything. You thought
you could trust that power
when you plucked the fruit;
now it becomes a riddle again,
and you again a stranger....^{xiv}

Inscendence is this "sinking back into the source of everything," during which we must learn to trust our unknowing and during which we no longer belong to the world in our old ways, "a stranger" again. There, in the presence of "the source of everything," we hope to be suffused by and informed by what Thomas called "the guidance and the powers of the Earth."

Rilke reminded us:

...If we surrendered
to earth's intelligence
we could rise up rooted, like trees....^{xv}

Consider "rise up rooted, like trees" to be a fabulous image for a sustainable human culture. How do we achieve it? We begin with a descent. Doing so is as natural as falling:

How surely gravity's law,
strong as an ocean current,
takes hold of even the smallest thing
and pulls it toward the heart of the world....^{xvi}

“Earth’s intelligence” — the dream of the Earth, the pull of its numinous gravity — draws us down toward “the heart of the world.” By means of this communion, we can re-member ourselves, enabling us, when ripened, to “rise up rooted, like trees.”

Healthy cultures from all times and places have invented a great variety of rituals and practices to help their developmentally-ready members descend to soul. Different kinds of consciousness shifting technologies are employed as a component of these practices, ranging from fasting, trance rhythms and dancing, entheogens, dreaming, prolonged solo wandering, ceremonial sweats, breathwork, yoga, and extreme physical exertion.

Inscendence practices, in essence, support the individual to cooperate with, to surrender to, the pull of the dream of the Earth, also known as the call of the soul. This descent is experienced as a psychospiritual dying. We must die to our old way of belonging to the world to enable us to uncover something radical, something new, something we could never have rationally deduced, something that our lives depend on.

For the past 30 years, my colleagues and I at *Animas Valley Institute* have been shaping and employing contemporary, Western, nature-based practices for inscendence. We call this work soulcraft, as described in my book of that title. But 30 years is close to nothing. For the past *hundred thousand years or more*, humans have invented and employed related methods and have told their stories of descent through the oral literature we call myths. From *Soulcraft*:

The Greeks told the tale of Orpheus, the fabulously skilled musician who traveled to Hades to find and revive his dead bride, Eurydice. He succeeds at the rescue but then, as he leads her back to the daylight world, loses her again (and this time forever) when he disobeys the gods by turning around to make sure she is still there.

Persephone, the daughter of the fertility goddess, Demeter, is abducted by Hades, the lord of the dark underworld, to be his bride. Eventually, Zeus sends Hermes to rescue Persephone (with only partial success: she must spend one-third of each year below).

The Anglo-Saxon Norsemen told the story of the hero-warrior Beowulf, who descends into a dreadful swamp to do battle with the monster of all monsters, Grendel's mother. Beowulf slays the beast but returns as part monster himself.

From the ancient Sumerian world comes the myth of the goddess of heaven, Inanna, who descends to the netherworld to confront her dark sister, the goddess Ereshkigal, who kills Inanna and hangs her corpse on a peg. Two mourners are sent to Ereshkigal by Enki, the god of waters and wisdom, and secure Inanna's release, but Inanna must send a substitute to take her place in the netherworld.

The Nubian people of Saharan Africa recount the story of a young woman who, because of her beauty, is spurned by the other women of the village. In her despair, she descends to the bottom of a river, a very dangerous place, where she encounters a repulsive old woman covered with horrible sores who asks the young woman to lick her wounds. She does and is thereby saved from the monster of the depths. She returns to the village with great gifts.

Such myths and stories are found in countless cultures. They imply we each must undertake the journey of descent if we are to heal ourselves at the deepest levels and reach a full and authentic adulthood, that there are powerful and dangerous beings in the underworld who are not particularly friendly or attractive, and that we are forever changed by the experience. In contemporary Western cultures, we live as if the spiritual descent is no longer necessary; we live without realizing that the journey is meant for each one of us, not just for the heroes and heroines of mythology.^{xvii}

Thomas is clear that "the challenge before us ... the historical mission of our times, is to reinvent the human — at the species level,"^{xviii} but other changes — infrastructural modifications that can be rationally figured out — are also essential in the relative short-term. Reinventing the human by way of inscendence is going to take several generations — and each community, nation, tribe, or people that survives the twenty-first century will necessarily do it in their own distinctive way. But there are numerous societal changes that must be made in the next couple of decades. We no

longer have enough time to rely on inscendence alone. Humanity must learn very soon to become a well-mannered team player in the Earth community, an integral participant in the web of life, using no more than what Earth can replenish and discarding only what can be easily and safely assimilated. We must, for example, eliminate environmental poisons, vastly improve the Western diet, minimize our use of fossil fuels, substantially decrease our need for energy, invent and implement renewable energy sources, save our remaining forests and plant new ones, radically rework the way we charter corporations, learn to educate young people in ways that enable them to take their place as contributing members of the Earth community, teach government leaders the arts of negotiation and social justice (i.e., real peacemaking) and empower them to actually use these arts (for example, imagine the U.S. Congress if ...), create better games than war, and redesign our political, judicial, and electoral systems so as to create true democracies and, eventually, biocracies.

Revelation: For the One or the Many?

Did Thomas mean we each must individually inscend/descend, seeking a personal vision that would enable us in our unique way to help create a healthy, sustainable culture? Or did he mean that one or a few gifted individuals in each society must descend and return with a vision that can inspire and redirect an entire culture? Or both?

Most of Thomas' references to dream experience or revelatory vision seem ambiguous on this point. But there are exceptions. For instance:

This intimacy ... with the larger cosmic process is not primarily the role of the philosopher, priest, prophet, or professor. It is the role of the shamanic personality, a type that is emerging once gain in our society.

More than any other of the human types concerned with the sacred, the shamanic personality journeys into the far reaches of the cosmic mystery and brings back the vision and the power needed by the human community at the most elementary level. The

shamanic personality speaks and best understands the language of the various creatures of the earth.

So far in this passage, it seems he meant the realm of vision to be the domain or mission of the presumably rare individual in a society, the “shamanic personality.” But then in the very next sentence:

Not only is the shamanic type emerging in our society, but also the shamanic dimension of the psyche itself. In periods of significant cultural creativity, this aspect of the psyche takes on a pervasive role throughout the society and shows up in all the basic institutions and professions.”^{xix}

Whether or not the healthy societies of the past were replete with mature members who experienced and embodied revelatory vision, I believe, along with Thomas, that this is both possible and necessary in this century if we are to successfully reinvent the human. Sustainable societies, at this turning point in human and Earth’s evolution, will come about through neither human rationality nor the vision of a few individuals alone, but through the “pervasive” emergence of “the shamanic dimension of the psyche.” Although the vision of the one can catalyze the many, the vision of each is needed to build the new cultures.

Additional indications that Thomas understood revelatory vision as the opportunity, if not obligation, of all mature people:

[E]ach individual is not only different from every other being in the universe but also has its own inner articulation, its unique spontaneities. Each being in its subjective depths carries that numinous mystery whence the universe emerges into being. This we might identify as the sacred depth of the individual.^{xx}

The natural world demands a response that rises from the wild unconscious depths of the human soul. A response that artists seek to provide in color and music and movement.^{xxi}

Through my study of human development and visionary experience, I have grown certain that every human is born with the potential and promise of the true artist. All of us have been designed by nature to mature into our full humanity as visionary artisans of cultural evolution. We are each born with a wildly creative destiny. But this birthright does not come with a guarantee of fulfillment. The realization of our individual soul identities depends largely upon the vitality of cultural practices that prepare us for the eventual experience of inscendence. When such cultural practices are forgotten or degraded, few realize their destiny and society as a whole disintegrates and lapses into what Thomas termed a “destructive pathology.”

One final distinction must be explored related to this question of revelation for the one or the many: Was Thomas calling for visions that uniquely guide individual lives, or about shared visions for guiding an entire culture? It turns out he was writing about both. But between the publications of *Dream* (1988) and *The Great Work* (1999), Thomas seems to have retreated somewhat from his emphasis on inscendence — in the sense of the pre-cultural and pre-rational guidance we receive individually from dream or revelatory vision. In *The Great Work* and in *Evening Thoughts*, he gave greater emphasis to the importance of collective or shared vision. For example, from *The Great Work*:

The historical mission of our times is to reinvent the human — at the species level ... by means of story and shared dream experience.^{xxii}

Unfortunately he left us without an elaborate explanation of “shared dream experience.” But there are sufficient clues. For example:

At such a moment [of cultural pathology] a new revelatory experience is needed, an experience wherein human consciousness awakens to the grandeur and sacred quality of the Earth process. This awakening is our human participation in the dream of the Earth.^{xxiii}

[T]he foundations of a new historical period, the Ecozoic Era, have been established in every realm of human affairs. The mythic vision has been set into place. The distorted

dream of an industrial technological paradise is being replaced by the more viable dream of a mutually enhancing human presence within an ever-renewing organic-based Earth community. The dream drives the action. In the larger cultural context the dream becomes the myth that both guides and drives the action.^{xxiv}

Apparently then, by “shared dream experience” Thomas meant collectively held aspirations or ambitions, not individual inscendence that results in a revelatory vision of how to personally contribute to life, whether or not in resonance with a shared vision. He meant “mythic vision” or cultural “myth,” the zeitgeist of a people, the defining spirit of a cultural era — in particular, a mythic vision ignited by our collective awakening to “the grandeur and sacred quality of the Earth process.” By “story and shared dream experience,” Thomas was evoking the dream of the Earth, the universe story, and the vision of a new historical period he called the Ecozoic Era.

Although awakening to “the grandeur and sacred quality of the Earth process” is a transformative experience for people of Western and Westernized cultures, perhaps even a spiritual watershed and certainly a necessary component of our cultural therapy, this ecological illumination is distinct from the numinous encounter with the mysteries of one’s own soul, one’s particular way of participating in “the Earth process.” Evoking our more general participatory consciousness — “our human participation in the dream of the Earth” — is what Thomas meant by our awakening to “the grandeur and sacred quality of the Earth process.” This “dream of a mutually enhancing human presence within an ever-renewing organic-based Earth community” arises not from inscendence but from sustained experiential immersion in the more-than-human world, or from simply being raised in a nature-based culture, or from participation in rituals rooted in an appreciation of the sacredness of nature’s forms and rhythms, or from how the ecological stories, myths, and perspectives communicated by awake others resonate with and arouse our own innate intuitions of our full membership in the Earth community — both the joys and obligations thereof.

The urgency of “revelatory vision that comes to us in those special psychic moments, or conditions, that we describe as ‘dream’” seems to receive less emphasis from Thomas after *Dream*. But instances of inscendence are not entirely absent in *The Great Work*. For example:

The architect who looked out over the fields south of Paris and saw, through the mist of the future, the Chartres Cathedral must have experienced a moment when the wild and the sacred came together in a single moment of vision.^{xxv}

“Moment[s] when the wild and the sacred [come] together in a single moment of vision”: here we have another evocative characterization of inscendence.

“The Genetic Imperative”

Beginning no later than *Dream* and continuing through his later essays, Thomas referred often to genetics. In particular, as we’ve seen, he distinguished between our “genetic coding” and our “cultural coding.” He noted that to become fully human, we’ve always depended, since the opening of the human story, on the guidance of both kinds of codings. He emphasized, however, that our genetic coding is primary and foundational and that our cultural codings — our “cultural traditions”^{xxvi} — are derivative of our genetic coding. In particular, he was ardent that in recent centuries our Western cultural codings have lost so much of their integrity that we must now fully turn to “the genetic imperative from which human cultures emerge originally”.

I want to explore here what Thomas meant by “genetic coding,” because I believe it is something rather more psychological, spiritual, and mysterious than what biologists intend by the phrase. In particular, I believe Thomas meant what might be more accurately and aptly referred to as *the human soul’s code*, which is, in essence, nature’s design for our species, or what I’ve come to call our *nature coding*. When referring to genes, Thomas was thinking, writing, and speaking as an eco-theologian and as a mystic, not as a natural scientist. Many contemporary people, especially scientists, might be confused or misled by Thomas’ references to genetics. An attempt at clarification is in order.

Let’s take a look at how Thomas elaborated upon his understanding of genetics:

The genetic coding that gives to the human its species identity is integral with this larger complex of codings whereby the universe exists, whereby the earth system remains coherent within itself and capable of continuing the evolutionary process. To remain viable a species must establish a niche for itself that is beneficial both for itself and for the surrounding community. The difficulty generally with this proposal is that our genetic endowment is considered to be a mere physical determination of our being, not also our richest psychic endowment, our guiding and inspiring force, especially when the cultural process has entered into a destructive pathology.^{xxvii}

For Thomas, then, our “genetic coding” gives shape to our psyches as much as it does to our bodies; it enables us to establish an ecological niche for ourselves in dynamic partnership with other species; and, most significantly, *it guides and inspires us*. I am struck by the fact that this is much the way we depth psychologists speak of the soul. The possibility that this is in fact how Thomas, too, understood “genetic coding” is further revealed in the following passage.

We must find our primary source of guidance in the inherent tendencies of our genetic coding. These tendencies are derived from the larger community of the Earth and eventually from the universe itself. In Jungian terms, these tendencies identify with those psychic energy constellations that take shape as the primary archetypal forms deep in the unconscious realms of the human. Such forms find expression in the symbols of the Heroic Journey, Death-Rebirth, the Sacred Center, the Great Mother, the Tree of Life.^{xxviii}

If the “inherent tendencies of our genetic coding ... *identify with* [my emphasis]... archetypal forms deep in the unconscious realms of the human,” then Thomas’ “gene” might as well identify with the soul. Even more clearly and explicitly:

Through the archetypal symbols of the unconscious, the symbols of the Great Journey, Death-Rebirth, the Cosmic Tree, and the Sacred Center we establish vital contact with those underlying energies that guide and sustain the human soul. These energies find expression especially in our dreams.^{xxix}

Having thereby closed the gap between the soul and his conception of genetics, Thomas next integrates soul and nature more generally:

Through these symbols, interior energies that sustain the human venture and the entire civilizational process are renewed. Ultimately these symbols reflect the powers of the Earth both in their ever-renewing seasonal significance and in their irreversible evolutionary transformations.^{xxx}

I invite you to carefully examine these statements with me: Thomas held that the “inherent tendencies of our genetic coding ... identify with” the unconscious “archetypal forms,” which are symbols that “guide and sustain the human soul,” “renew the human venture,” and “reflect the powers of the Earth.” For Thomas, our “genetic imperative” is, in essence, the soul’s guidance. And clearly for Thomas (as for me), the human soul is an element or dimension or mode of the Earth itself and emerges therefrom. The realms of the soul and nature are coextensive. And both function in part through what Thomas referred to as our “genetic endowment,” a phrase which we can now understand he used in an eco-psychological way or, indeed, as a concept of what I have come to call eco-depth psychology.

In my view, to speak of the collective human soul is to speak of the place that humans occupy as a species in the ecology of Earth — or are at least *meant* to occupy. The function of a healthy culture is to support humans to occupy their proper and authentic ecological niche and to do so sustainably, gracefully, and imaginatively — perhaps even beautifully — which is to say in mutually beneficial compatibility with other species. As Thomas put it, “To remain viable a species must establish a niche for itself that is beneficial both for itself and for the surrounding community.” A healthy culture enables us “to be present to the Earth in a mutually enhancing manner.”^{xxxix} A culture that fails to do so has entered “a deep cultural pathology”^{xxxix} or “a profound cultural disorientation”.^{xxxix} At such times, Thomas counsels, we must look for primary guidance, not from our own traditions or those of any other culture, but from the realm of dream — both individual revelatory vision and the greater dream of the Earth.

How do we access the dream of the Earth? Thomas' three main suggestions are: through individual revelation, through the archetypes of the human unconscious, and in the stories of the Earth and universe. The latter stories are revealed to us through modern science when its findings are embraced in their full spiritual and mystical significance ("where human consciousness awakens to the grandeur and sacred quality of the Earth process").^{xxxiv}

We must note that by the word *universe*, Thomas does not mean anything like a Newtonian mechanism, a mere "collection of objects," but rather a self-organizing "communion of subjects" resulting from an extraordinarily creative process. The universe itself, Thomas writes, "seems to be the fulfillment of something so highly imaginative and so overwhelming that it must have been dreamed into existence."^{xxxv}

As an additional indication that Thomas understood genetics through a much larger lens than most biologists, and the universe more holistically and mystically than most scientists, notice that he saw the reach of "genetics" extending well beyond Earthly life: "The universe is a unity, an interacting and genetically related community of beings bound together in an inseparable relationship in space and time."^{xxxvi} The etymological root of "genetics" is "gen," which means "kin." In this sense, "genetically related" is somewhat redundant: "related as kin." "Gen" also means "that which produces." So when Thomas wrote, "We must go back to the genetic imperative from which human cultures emerge originally," he might as well have said, "We must go back to that which produces human culture originally," which begs the question: Well, what *does* produce human culture originally? I prefer Thomas' answers: "the powers of the Earth" or "the dream of the Earth." To me, these answers are much more appealing, meaningful, and actionable compared to "our genetic coding." More on this below.

My reading is that Thomas understood "genetic coding" to actually be part of the means by which the souls of living beings (and thereby the Earth) function. This seems to be revealed, for example, in one of his remarkable, lyrical passages from *The Great Work*. He wrote that anyone who has wondered about "the stars, the ocean, the song and flight of birds, the exquisite form and activities of the various animal species, or the awesome views of the mountains and rivers and valleys" must have

some sense of an inner spontaneity, a guiding principle, a consciousness, a transmaterial presence manifested throughout the material embodiment, an ordering principle observed in any living being that enables the complexity of the DNA in the genetic process to function in some coherent fashion. While no sense faculty can experience it directly and no equation can be written to express it, our immediate perception tells us that there is a unifying principle in the acorn that enables the complex components of the genetic coding of the oak tree to function as a unity — send down roots, raise the trunk, extend the branches and put forth leaves and fashion its seeds, then to nourish all this by drawing up tons of water and minerals from the Earth and distributing them throughout the entire life system. That such a vast complexity of functioning should have some unifying principle, known traditionally as the “soul” of the organism, is immediately evident to human intelligence.^{xxxvii}

In other words, it is the soul — “the unifying principle” of a living being — that, in Thomas’ view, enables the gene “to function in some coherent manner.” In addition to enabling the gene, the soul guides a living thing in part *through* the functioning of the gene. Genetics was employed by Thomas as one part of an explanation of how the soul operates. But, as Thomas implicated in the above paragraph, the soul is primary, the gene a means for the soul’s embodiment, a means enabled by the soul itself. The gene is an agent of the soul, an agent capacitated by the soul. The gene, as a biological concept, helps to explain how; it does not tell us what actually happens or why.^{xxxviii}

Now perhaps we can more fully appreciate the relationships that Thomas elucidated between human revelatory experience, the dream of the Earth, and what he referred to as our “genetic coding.” In the following passage, he encapsulates these relationships. As you read this you might join me, if you’d like, in substituting “souls” for “genetic coding”:

At such a moment [of profound cultural disorientation] a new revelatory experience is needed, an experience wherein human consciousness awakens to the grandeur and sacred quality of the Earth process. This awakening is our human participation in the dream of

the Earth, the dream that is carried in its integrity not in any of Earth's cultural expressions but in the depths of our genetic coding. Therein the Earth functions at a depth beyond our capacity for active thought. We can only be sensitized to what is being revealed to us. We probably have not had such participation in the dream of the Earth since earlier shamanic times, but therein lies our hope for the future for ourselves and for the entire Earth community.^{xxxix}

Our participation in the dream of the Earth — by way of revelatory experience, or inscendence — offers our only long-term hope for the future. The dream of the Earth, after all, is the matrix from which we originally emerged as a species. We must now return to these roots. Note, too, that Thomas emphasized again in this passage that the dream of the Earth is not something we can deduce or figure out. It is “beyond our capacity for active thought.” It is either revealed to us (by the Earth itself or by our souls), or we do not come to know it at all.

“The Spontaneities within Us”

Among the uncommon words Thomas liked to commonly use, one of my favorites is *spontaneities*. In its first appearance in his “Dream of the Earth” chapter, Thomas wrote that our genetic coding guides us “throughout the entire course of our existence, a guidance manifested through the spontaneities within us.”^{xl} By exploring what Thomas meant by *spontaneities*, we might reach a deeper understanding yet of Thomas' concepts of “genetic coding” and “the dream of the Earth” and how they guide us.

But first a necessary interlude: Thomas emphasized that our genetic coding is not actually our only source of guidance in the absence of healthy cultures. He identified two other realms with scope and significance even greater than our genes:

Beyond our genetic coding, we need to go to the earth, as the source whence we came, and ask for its guidance, for the earth carries the psychic structure as well as the physical form of every living being upon the planet. Our confusion is not only within ourselves; it

concerns also our role in the planetary community. Even beyond the earth, we need to go to the universe and inquire concerning the basic issues of reality and value, for, even more than the earth, the universe carries the deep mysteries of our existence within itself. We cannot discover ourselves without first discovering the universe, the earth, and the imperatives of our own being.^{xli}

By implication, this last item, “the imperatives of our own being,” must be a reference to “our genetic coding,” but by denotation, the phrase seems much closer to “the spontaneities within us” — indeed nearly a synonym, but with an added sense of urgency. This is one reason I say it’s actually these spontaneities, not our genetic coding, that are the primary phenomena of guidance found within the human sphere — and that Thomas understood it this way, too. But there are other reasons for this conclusion:

For example, let’s ask: How exactly do we “go to” our genetic coding for guidance? Is this accomplished the same way we go to the Earth or the universe?

First, the Earth: Much of Thomas’ writing and teaching inspires us to be guided directly and experientially by the Earth — to open our senses, feelings, imagination, and thinking to the “wonder and grandeur of life.”^{xlii} One example:

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

All these phenomena of the natural world fling forth to the human a challenge to be responded to in literature, in architecture, ritual, and art, in music and dance and poetry. The natural world demands a response beyond that of rational calculation, beyond philosophical reasoning, beyond scientific insight. The natural world demands a response that rises from the wild unconscious depths of the human soul. A response that artists seek to provide in color and music and movement.^{xliii}

Thomas gives us here a gorgeously expressed instance of how Earth guides us by way of our imagination, feeling, and sensing. But Earth also guides us through a blend of our careful sensing and thinking. For instance, by observing closely the ways each Earth creature is in relationship to the others in its environment and to the Sun, Moon, plants, waters, landforms, and air, we can (and do) learn much about our own “role in the planetary community.” And in offering our imaginative attention to the nonhuman world, we sometimes catch the wind of a story unfolding there — a story that might eventually evolve into a myth — a tale that offers profound guidance for our human lives.

Earth also guides us directly by way of the other animals, those who appear to us when we are awake and those we encounter in our dreams. Sometimes animals show us the way home, teach us about healing plants, or give us songs to learn and sing. They show us how to renew our fragmented world. Plants sometimes guide us, too, in both our dayworlds and nightworlds. As does the wind, which connects us to all other creatures.

And how does the universe guide us? The answer is at the very core of Thomas’ lifework and can be found throughout his writings. For example:

The greatest single need for the survival of the Earth or of the human community in the twenty-first century is for an integral telling of the great story of the universe. This story must provide in our times what the mythic stories of earlier times provided as the guiding and energizing sources of the human venture.

... The three basic tendencies of the universe at all levels of reality are differentiation, spontaneous self-organization, and bonding. These tendencies identify the reality, the values, and the directions in which the universe is proceeding.^{xliv}

It seems clear enough, then, how the Earth and the universe guide us. But what about our genetic coding? How do we seek *its* guidance? Are we to analyze the sequencing of our DNA to gain ecological, cultural, psychological, or spiritual direction? Would the microbiological details of

our genetic code tell us how to proceed in creating a sustainable culture? I think not. I don't believe Thomas had in mind anything so literal, biological, or objective. In whatever way our genetic coding physiologically influences or shapes us (can we even really say "guides" us?), it certainly doesn't provide us direction in the same sense that the Earth and universe do.

Apparently, Thomas understood it this way, too. When it comes to how our genetic coding guides us, he suggested we attend not to DNA sequencing but to the "spontaneities within us," which "*carry out*"^{xlv} the guidance of our genes:

We have ultimately no other source of guidance [other than these spontaneities] that possesses such inherent authenticity or which can function so effectively as a norm of reference in our actions. In earlier times these spontaneities were considered as revealing the natural law, the ultimate inner norm of guidance for human conduct, since they are the human phase of those instincts that enable a bird to build its nest, find its food, and discover its migratory route. Ultimately these instincts come from that mysterious source from where the universe itself came into being as articulated entities acting together in some ordered context.^{xlvi}

Thomas' "spontaneities within us," then, are our instinctive human ways of perceiving, thinking, feeling, imagining, speaking, and acting — ways of knowing and behaving that are not rationally deducted or consciously chosen but come to us "naturally."^{xlvii}

Notice, too, that if our spontaneities are our instincts, and if inscendence is "a descent into our pre-rational, our instinctive resources", then inscendence is a way to identify and reclaim the spontaneities within us. This is why, for Thomas, inscendence is our means to "invent, or reinvent, a sustainable human culture."

In his discussion of cultural transformation, the particular human instinct, or spontaneity, that Thomas highlighted is "dream vision":

The dream comes about precisely through the uninhibited spontaneities of which we are speaking. In this context we might say: In the beginning was the dream. Through the dream all things were made, and without the dream nothing has been made that has been made. While all things share in this dream, as humans we share in this dream in a special manner. This is the entrancement, the magic of the world about us, its mystery, its ineffable quality.^{xlvi}

This magic of the world about us, the dream of the Earth, is what activates our most profound human creativity. What's more, our most imaginative works of art

derive from the visionary power that is experienced most profoundly when we are immersed in the depths of our own being and of the cosmic order itself in the dreamworld that unfolds within us in our sleep, or in those visionary moments that seize upon us in our waking hours. There we discover the Platonic forms, the dreams of Brahman, the Hermetic mysteries, the divine ideas [discussed by] Thomas Aquinas, the infinite worlds of Giordano Bruno, the world soul of the Cambridge Platonists, the self-organizing universe of Ilya Prigogine, the archetypal world of C. G. Jung.^{xli}

The imaginable collective works of art that would constitute sustainable human cultures sometime in the future (like some cultures of the past) are those that would emerge from the dreamworld, cultures that would gradually take shape through the embodied visions of countless individuals. Such individuals, whom I call visionary artisans of cultural evolution, are the humans who each find a way to inscend — to “descen[d] into a more primitive state”¹ — and return with a piece of Brahmanic dream, Hermetic mystery, archetype, and so on, with which to build a never-before-seen component of an emerging sustainable culture.

Are the spontaneities within us, our instinctive resources, different than the guidance of the Earth and universe? Thomas said no, the spontaneities of both the Earth and the human derive from those of the universe:

The universe is so immediate to us, is such an intimate presence, that it escapes our notice, yet whatever authenticity exists in our cultural creations, is derived from these spontaneities within us, spontaneities that come from an abyss of energy and a capacity for intelligible order of which we have only the faintest glimmer in our conscious awareness.^{li}

We might conclude, then, that “the spontaneities within us” are the ways we perceive, think, feel, imagine, speak, and act when we inhabit our authentic role in the world, the true place or niche for which nature designed us, individually and collectively, or as Thomas wrote, “our role in the planetary community.” For me, *soul* is another word for this true place, role, or niche. (“Ultimate place” is the two-word definition of soul I suggest in *Nature and the Human Soul*.^{lii})

Genes, Place, Soul, and Nature Coding

All the above considerations form my basis for concluding that genetic coding, as biologists mean this phrase, is one aspect (the microbiological aspect) of how a DNA-based creature comes to exhibit the spontaneities that it does. But the spontaneities themselves are the primary phenomenon of interest when we speak about the way nature designed a living thing to be and act, while the phenomenon of genes is one part of Western science’s explanation of how these spontaneities are passed from one generation to the next.

But genes are, in any case, only *one* part of this explanation. More generally, we might explain that our human spontaneities are what they are as a consequence of the *place* we have in Earth’s ecology. We take the form we do and have the instincts and spontaneities we have because of the place we inhabit, our ecological niche. And, like every other member of the Earth community, our niche shifts and adjusts — or at least ought to — in relation to the activities of all other members of the Earth community. It’s not simply or primarily about genes.

The idea that a thing is what it is by virtue of its relationship to all other things is at least as old as the Buddha’s 500 B.C.E principle of dependent co-arising or interdependence and as modern as the notion, from general systems theory, of mutual causality.^{liii} As Thomas himself declared,

“Nothing is itself without everything else.”^{liv} And: “Each being of the planet is profoundly implicated in the existence and functioning of every other being of the planet.”^{lv}

Place itself has a profound and primary effect on the nature of things. “Place” is not a mere description devoid of explanatory value. A thing is what it is and takes the shape that it does as a function of its place, role, or niche within its environment. A thing’s place is the totality of relationships it has with all other things. Each environment is what it is by virtue of all the things in that environment and their relationships to one another.

How does our ecological place or niche determine our human form and spontaneities? Through relationship: our interactions with all the other creatures, plants, waters, air, and landforms. And these relationships gradually shift due to our behavior vis-à-vis all these others and theirs in relation to us. We adjust and adapt our behavior as a function of what we perceive, learn, need, value, and intend.

In recent decades, even the explanatory value of the gene has been significantly amended due to the intriguing wrinkle from the relatively new field of epigenetics: The expression or manifestation of a gene is now known to depend upon microbiological factors influenced by environmental and physiological events and processes. In other words, the effect a gene has on physiological form or behavior depends upon the presence and action of other elements in the environment. Everything is what it is by virtue of its relationship to everything else. Even the genetic manifestation of identical twins begins to diverge no later than birth.

I want to propose here that “genetic coding” is not the best way to identify what contrasts with our cultural coding; a clearer and more inclusive phrase, I believe, would be our “nature coding.” By *nature coding* I refer to the ways in which our ecological niche (our place) and our own unconscious psyches influence our human form and tendencies. Our nature coding is how the Earth is dreaming us, even how the universe is doing so, independent of any conscious beliefs we have about ourselves.

Another way of referring to the influences of place and psyche, an alternative to *nature coding*, is *soul*. Our place, after all, is the soul's ecological manifestation, and psyche is the soul's psychological manifestation. Or said another way: Place or niche is how we experience the soul ecologically; numinous image or core identity (sense of our true self) is how we experience the soul psychologically.

Our genetic coding is part of how our nature coding operates, or one means by which our souls function.

With this concept of nature coding, I feel we can restate one of Thomas' central ideas, as follows:

Our cultural coding, when healthy, derives from our nature coding. It's not that culture is unnatural, but that it's a second-order coding, one that we design (unlike our nature coding), and one that can diverge from our nature coding if we're not careful. Our nature coding is primary and foundational. Even our human ability to design our cultural coding is given to us by our nature coding. To become fully human, we require a healthy cultural coding in addition to our nature coding. But — and this is Thomas' point — if our cultural codings deviate from the guidance of our nature coding, then our cultures themselves become the greatest threat to our survival, as we are now witnessing throughout the world. Cultural coding is necessary for humans to survive and mature, but not just any cultural coding will do. To keep our cultures vital, we must, in every generation, modify them by returning to their source in our nature coding. And when our cultures have entered a “destructive pathology,” we must reinvent our cultures from the ground up by an even more extensive version of the same process. Thomas' word for this process of re-aligning culture with nature is “inscendence”: the descent to soul.

If we substitute the word *soul* or the phrase *nature coding* whenever Thomas wrote of “gene,” “genetic endowment,” or “genetic coding,” we might obtain a more accurate and useful reading.

Human Development from the Perspective of Inscendence

Human development is our most fundamental need in our current global mission: the Great Work of reinventing the human and relearning to embrace the dream of the Earth.

If reinventing the human depends upon inscendence, then human development must be a primary focus of our efforts at cultural transformation, for only developmentally mature individuals are able to experience inscendence and benefit from it. Inscendence is as psychospiritually challenging and risky as it is ecstatic and necessary for maturation beyond psychological adolescence.^{lvi} Inscendence is the path to soul encounter. This encounter is what bestows the guiding vision for a lifetime, the mythopoetic template for personally belonging to the world in the way that the Earth and one's soul desire. Belonging to the world in this way is to contribute to the evolution and sustainability of one's culture — the sure sign of a true adult.

My estimate is that less than 5% of people in current Western and Westernized societies ever reach true adulthood.

Although human development is no more urgent a need than the infrastructural changes discussed earlier, it is our most *fundamental* need. The cultivation of authentic adulthood and genuine elderhood goes far beyond any modifications in how we generate energy or conduct business, agriculture, and politics. We need contemporary cultural codings that allow our full humanity to once again blossom. We need new, widely adopted practices for parenting children, educating them to become full members of not only a family and culture, but, equally important, of the Earth community as it exists in their particular bioregion. We require new, much more effective ways of supporting teenagers to uncover and embody their most authentic selves and, when ready, to learn the arts of inscendence so that they might explore the mysteries of nature and psyche and eventually, with good fortune, receive a vision revealing their unique place, role, or niche in the Earth community. By embodying this role, they become authentic adults, deeply imaginative artisans of cultural evolution.

We also need in each society a significant number of mature adults who have been called by the spontaneities within them to serve as guides to the initiatory rituals of inscendence.

And we need true elders, like Thomas Berry, to oversee all of these endeavors as we make our way into the very uncertain and enormously auspicious future.

Despite our dire times, Thomas was hopeful to the end about our prospects. He derived his hope from the story of the universe itself:

In the immense story of the universe, that so many of these dangerous moments have been navigated successfully is some indication that the universe is for us rather than against us. We need only summon these forces to our support in order to succeed. Although the human challenge to these purposes must never be underestimated, it is difficult to believe that the larger purposes of the universe or of the planet Earth will ultimately be thwarted.”^{lvii}

ⁱ Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988), pp. 207–8.

ⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

^{iv} *Ibid.*, p. 211

^v Thomas Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999), p. 57.

^{vi} *Ibid.*, pp. 174-5.

^{vii} Thomas Berry, *Evening Thoughts: Reflecting on Earth as Sacred Community* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 2006), p. 26.

^{viii} *Ibid.*, pp. 173-4.

^{ix} Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*, p. 209.

^x *Ibid.*, p. 208.

^{xi} Berry, *Evening Thoughts*, p. 25.

^{xii} All quotes in this sentence are from *Evening Thoughts*, pp. 25 – 27. The other four transcendences are the belief in redemption (“we are not for this world”), the Cartesian transcendence of the mind (over matter), technology that allows us to transcend natural biological limits to our numbers, and the belief that our human destiny is in some other world.

^{xiii} *Ibid.*, p. 25.

^{xiv} Rainer Maria Rilke, *Rilke’s Book of Hours: Love Poems to God*, trans. Anita Barrows and Joanna Macy (New York: Riverhead Books, 1996), p. 95. (from “Dich wundert nicht des Sturmes Wucht”)

^{xv} *Ibid.*, p. 116. (from “Wenn etwas mir vom Fenster fällt”)

^{xvi} *Ibid.*, p. 116. (from “Wenn etwas mir vom Fenster fällt”)

^{xvii} Bill Plotkin, *Soulcraft: Crossing into the Mysteries of Nature and Psyche* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2003), pp. 11-12.

^{xviii} Berry, *The Great Work*, p. 159.

^{xix} Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*, pp. 211-2.

^{xx} Berry, *The Great Work*, p. 163.

^{xxi} *Ibid.*, p. 55.

^{xxii} *Ibid.*, p. 159.

-
- xxiii Ibid., p. 165.
- xxiv Ibid., p. 201.
- xxv Ibid., p. 53.
- xxvi Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*, p. 194.
- xxvii Ibid., p. 208.
- xxviii Berry, *The Great Work*, p. 160.
- xxix Ibid., pp. 171-2.
- xxx Ibid., p. 172.
- xxxi Berry, *Evening Thoughts*, p. 23.
- xxxii Ibid., p. 17.
- xxxiii Berry, *The Great Work*, p. 165.
- xxxiv Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*, p. 165.
- xxxv Berry, *The Great Work*, p. 165.
- xxxvi Berry, *Evening Thoughts*, p. 145.
- xxxvii Berry, *The Great Work*, p. 79.
- xxxviii In another, later essay, Thomas defines soul as “the primary organizing, sustaining, and guiding principle of a living being.” This appears to be an elaboration and further differentiation of “unifying principle.” (from his foreword to *Soulcraft*, 2003, p. xiii)
- xxxix Berry, *The Great Work*, p. 165.
- xl Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*, p. 195.
- xli Ibid.
- xlii Berry, *The Great Work*, p. 115.
- xliii Berry, *The Great Work*, p. 55.
- xliv Berry, *Evening Thoughts*, p. 145. The universe’s guidance is also described in Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, *The Universe Story: From the Primordial Flaring Forth to the Ecozoic Era — a Celebration of the Unfolding of the Cosmos* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992) and in Brian Swimme, *The Hidden Heart of the Cosmos* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996).
- xlv “Carry out” are his words, but my emphases. From *Dream*, p. 196: “... the organic functioning that takes place in our sense functions; ... our capacity for transforming food into energy; ... our thought, imaginative, and emotional life ... healing whenever we sustain any physical injury ... [the capacity to] experience joy and sorrow ... the ability to speak and think and create ... the context of our relation with the divine. All this is carried out by the spontaneities within us.”
- xlvi Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*, p. 196.
- xlvi The quote in the previous footnote shows that this list (“perceiving, thinking,” etc.) is what Thomas had in mind.
- xlvi Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*, p. 197.
- xlix Ibid., pp. 197-8.
- ^l Ibid., p. 201.
- ^{li} Ibid., p. 195.
- ^{lii} Bill Plotkin, *Nature and the Human Soul: Cultivating Wholeness and Community in a Fragmented World* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2008), p. 40.
- ^{liii} See Joanna Macy, *Mutual Causality in Buddhism and General Systems Theory: The Dharma of Natural Systems* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991).
- ^{liv} Personal communication, March 16, 2006.
- ^{lv} Berry, *Evening Thoughts*, p. 145.
- ^{lvi} *Nature and the Human Soul*, describes the eight life stages of ecocentric/soulcentric human development. *Soulcraft* focuses specifically on the descent to soul, which is primarily associated with the fourth of the eight stages.
- ^{lvii} Berry, *The Great Work*, p. 201.