

# An Ecospirituality of the *Kindom* of God



*Drawing on the  
Creative Power  
Inherent in the Cosmos to Subvert  
Modern Forms of Empire*

By Mark Hathaway





# Living in a Time of Crisis



- Crisis as both danger and opportunity (*wei-ji*)
- Live at a time of both unparalleled challenges and opportunities
- *What are some of the key challenges we perceive?*
- *What are some of the key opportunities?*



# Our time from a Cosmic Perspective



- One difficulty we have is seeing what is happening from a broader perspective
- Analogy of the frog placed in warming vs. boiling water
- One way to gain perspective is to step back and see the broad sweep of cosmic evolution, and particularly that of the Earth



# Cosmic Century



- History of Cosmos (15 B) = 100 Years (1 Y = 150 M)
- 30: Earth born
- 27: Life Emerged (Bacteria)
- (300 C vs. 13 C)



# Complex Life



- 7: Sex + Death
- 5: Multi-celled life
- 4: Nervous systems
- 3: Vertebrates
- 2.5: Dinosaurs, Flowers, Mammals



# The Cenozoic



- 5 months: Asteroid
- 11 days: Erect ancestors
- 6 days: Tools
- 1 day: Fire
- 0.5 day: Modern Humans



# Gaia: Living Earth



- Temperature lowered (ice ages), but Sun is 30% warmer
- Constant oxygen levels
- Constant salt levels
- Maintain conditions for life



# Humanity



- 00:40: Domesticate plants
- 00:20: Cities
- 00:02: Colonial Exploits:  
Widening gap rich-poor





# Last 10 seconds...



- Temp: +1 C (+2, 10s, +4 20s)
- Half of forests destroyed
- 65% arable land lost
- 10,000+ new chemicals
- 100,000's species lost (20s, 1/2)



# What have we gained?



The richest 20% of the world's population earns 150 times more than the poorest 20%.

The world's wealthiest 225 have a collective net 'worth' equal to the combined annual income of the poorer half of humanity

# Pace of Destruction



- Only 10s of 28 years of life
- Greatest mass extinction... (ecocide)
- Loss of species as desecration: Every creature is a book about God
- *Take a moment and reflect on what feelings this perspective evokes in you....*

# In the Midst of Empire



- One way to understand the interconnected systems that are destroying the Earth's capacity to sustain complex life while they also impoverish the vast majority of humanity is as a modern form of Empire
- Many parallels to the Imperial system at the time of Jesus, but also distinct in both its scale and sophistication



# Empire as Pathological



- Cancerous Growth and Maldevelopment: No need to redistribute the pie, just make it bigger.... But would require 5 Earths! (Eco-justice link)
- Corporate Rule + Military Power
- Parasitic Finance: Accumulation abstract wealth
- Monoculture of the Mind: Global consumer culture
- Power as Domination

# Perpetuating the Empire



- Three poisons (Buddhist psychology)
- Aversion (fear):  
Denial and Internalised Oppression
- Addiction:  
Consumerism, work, sex, substances
- Delusion:  
Despair – Empire as inevitable/natural





# Examples of the Poisons



- *Think back to feelings after the presentation of the “cosmic century”....*
- *Were you tempted to deny/downplay the seriousness of what we face, or to fall into despair?*
- *What are other ways that the “three poisons” paralyse us?*
- *How does empire actively use and reinforce denial, despair, addiction, and internalised oppression?*



# Basic Assumptions



We all hold basic – though often unconscious – assumptions about the very nature of reality. These assumptions influence our ability to perceive the problems we face. They may also limit our imaginations, making it more difficult to conceive of a path toward authentic liberation. Nonetheless, we seldom question these assumptions – in part because we may not even be aware that we hold them.





# Cosmology and Empire



- Need to understand empire as something that moulds our perceptions and basic beliefs
- Underlying empire, there is a kind of “imperial cosmology”
- What do we mean by “cosmology”?
- Can be defined as the exploration of the origin, evolution, destiny, & purpose of the universe.
- Ancient endeavour, related to religion and spirituality (see next...)



# The Cosmology of Domination



- Really, an “anti-cosmology” (Newton, Descartes...)
- World as Dead: Collection of Objects (atomism)
- Eternal, Deterministic/Random, and Purposeless
- Evolution: “Survival of the fittest” – private gain and competition
- Free to Exploit and Subdue Nature (and People)
- Pseudo-Cosmology of Consumerism
- Stripping world of meaning and spirit...

# From Empire to *Kindom*



- The *Malkuthakh d'bwashmaya* (or *d'Alaha*)
- Ruling principles... (feminine)
- Similar to Tao or Dharma
- Fruitful arm poised to create
- Coiled spring with the potential of Earth (pregnant possibility)



# Reading the Book of Life




- New insights into the nature of the cosmos can be a powerful source of inspiration for resisting and subverting empire.
- “Every creature is full of God. Every creature is a book about God.” (Meister Eckhart)
- In learning to “read” the cosmos, we can gain a better sense of the underlying purpose and evolutionary principles – revealing new aspects of the *Malkuthakh d’Alaha*





# The Cosmology of Liberation



- Matter transcended (*thinglessness*): Relationships are fundamental, not things
  - Complex causality (systems theory): Neither random nor deterministic
  - Symbiotic (cooperative) evolution
  - Gaia Theory: The Earth is alive
  - Purposefulness: The Anthropic Principle
  - Evolutional habits vs. eternal laws (morphic resonance-example rat or crystal)
  - The Cosmos as story and unfolding revelation
- 



# Questions...



- *What struck you as particularly important or generated a new insight for you?*
- *What draws you to more exploration?*
- *How do you experience the Cosmology of Liberation in your own life?*

2:50/2:57



# Inherent power



- Story of cosmos = hope
- Communion
- Subjectivity/Creativity (Autopoiesis)
- Differentiation
- Power inherent in cosmos
- Empire as profoundly “unnatural”



# Understanding *Kindom*



- No “environment” separate from ourselves
- What we do to the Earth, we do to ourselves
- 98% of our body’s atoms are exchanged every single year
- Over 50% of our body weight are other organisms
- True power comes from relationship, not separation





# Earth Story, Our Story



- We are children of the Earth
- Elements from supernova
- We are stardust...
- Need to Learn from the Cosmic Story



# Widening Compassion



[Human beings are] part of a whole, called by us the “Universe,” a part limited in time and space. [We] experience [ourselves], [our] thoughts and feelings, as something separated from the rest – a kind of optical delusion of [our] consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circles of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. (Einstein, *What I Believe*, 1930)

# Fostering Connection



- Lament... (pain connects)
- Mindfulness (meditation...)
- Compassion: Beyond bounds
- Reawaken wonder (beauty)
- See reality in new way: Alive



# Spiritual Action



- Unite action and spirit
- Sense of imagination
- Miraculous, magical
- Align ourselves with the power of the Cosmos





# Reflections on Spiritual Action



- *What are other practices that we can use to foster a sense of connection with each other, the Earth, and the Cosmos?*
- *What might be some creative examples of “spiritual action” which draw on the Cosmology of Liberation to confront, resist, and subvert empire?*

3:08/3:15

# Reawaken to Power



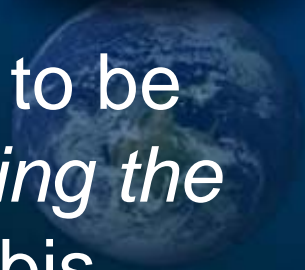
We are not lacking in the dynamic forces needed to create the future. We live immersed in a sea of energy beyond all comprehension. But this energy, in an ultimate sense, is ours not by domination but by invocation.

Thomas Berry

# Bibliography - General



- See the upcoming work by Mark Hathaway to be entitled: *The Tao of Transformation: Exploring the Ecology of Liberation* to be published by Orbis Books in spring of 2009



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- See also: [www.visioncraft.org/aramaic/index.htm](http://www.visioncraft.org/aramaic/index.htm) for six poetic renderings of the Aramaic Lord's Prayer by Mark Hathaway.





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