

Sixth Extinction ?

MOVING BEYOND A FAST APPROACHING CRITICAL FORK IN OUR EVOLUTIONARY ROAD

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ADDENDUM

SOME CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS ON RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

In recent years biosphere degradation has been forcing many scientists and nonscientists to focus attention on the interacting dangers within the relationship between our human species and this planet. Many are concluding that we humans have become an ecological force contrary to biosphere stabilization and that this is so serious it could lead to our extinction. Renowned physicist, Stephen Hawking is now sounding the alarm. He has even predicted that we have less than 600 years before the planet turns into, as he describes it; “a sizzling fireball.” A chapter in this book supports his prediction. It references a 1972 World Bank report that notes

the possibility of a repeat of an extinction event like the Permian Triassic and goes into detail as to how this scenario would unfold.

Even with many scientists like Hawking raising the alarm, few among the general public are expressing concern. This has been particularly true in America. So a question is arising among the “those” who do understand: What is the reason for the public insouciance? Why is it we are only able to focus on the immediacy of our existence? Is it that as a species we are neurotically dangerous to ourselves?

Abrahamic religious belief underlies much of the world’s thought process and behavior. It set the foundation for many of the world’s political, legal, social and economic institutions. Can we find an answer here?

Keeping this in mind we will focus on the interaction between Abrahamic religious belief and planetary sustainability. We will attempt to answer these questions:

Are there human species survival non-survival implications underlying Abrahamic religious belief? The original implication was non-survival. (Apocalyptic) Are its beliefs now moving toward survival? If so, are they moving fast enough?

Many-but not all-of those of the Abrahamic faiths are coming to view their GOD not as their religions had first identified “HIM.” They are now envisioned their GOD as a form of transcendental intelligence underlying the passage of all life and nonlife from the “Big Bang” onward toward higher and higher complexity. This understanding has occurred largely as a result of knowledge gained from scientific discoveries made over the last 600 years as well as advances in theological and philosophical thought.

As this great debate carried on, two forms of modern thought emerged. One gave up on any form of “GOD” direction at all. Those with this thought are now being called Atheistic Reductionists. They eliminate religion altogether from the evolutionary process. They view the cosmos as devoid of subjectivity and meaning. What is just is. If it all goes down, it goes down. Another form of thought stayed with the idea of a GOD direction and transcendental GOD complexity, but not as originally scripturally understood. It held to the belief that our species is under the influence of a “GOD” power and that the purpose of our lives is to be integral to its implicit purpose. Today those with this form of thought see themselves as the responsible party to move

cosmic complexity forward toward that purpose. They also see our species as failing in this regard.

This has allowed them, at the same time, to continue to believe that this power has an awareness of their own actions and inactions. They do not agree with Albert Einstein as quoted below. They believe that this power is aware of and concerns itself with the fates and actions of each and every human being both while living and then gone.

Dr. Renato Bellu's quoting Einstein in *Chapter 10 Reinventing the Sacred in the Age of the Cosmos Part VI The war between the Rational and Irrational mind*

Albert Einstein

"I believe in Spinoza's God who reveals himself in the orderly harmony of what exists, not in a God who concerns himself with the fates and actions of human beings."

This book centers on the pressing question of whether those of the Abrahamic faiths, even those out-of-the-box thinkers outlined above, as well as the nonbelievers, understand to the full extent the challenge now facing human civilization. The following quotation from *Chapter 4 Human Civilization – The Future Part XI The ecological threat to/from Islam* deals with this.

"Judeo/Christian/Islamic belief is now being forced to adjust to the reality of an ecologically disintegrating planet with humans on it searching not for solutions restricted to their past, but built on new ideas within a thought process reaching beyond....Past religious belief in all three of the religions of Abraham will be made to measure its value against a new form of thought that encompasses the nonlinearity of all matter and non-matter in the context of human/planetary consonance-and survival."

This addendum began with a question about the Abrahamic religions: **"Are its beliefs now moving toward survival? If so, are they moving fast enough?"** The answer is "No." The reason is that in our world society Abrahamic belief in its original form continues to be a molder of large areas of world culture and the institutions in support of that culture. Also, Abrahamic belief institutionally controls the belief system and culture of roughly 1.5 Billion Muslims, a belief system and culture that remains rooted in the Abrahamic past. As a result, in one form or another Abrahamic belief continues to dominate the world's political, social and economic institutions as a mix of the ancient and modern.

About culture; the Canadian futurologist Ruben Nelson quoted in this book writes:

“All cultures, including our own in the 21st Century, take for granted that their construction of the world is the real world. The culture that forms us is not only comfortable for those that formed, it appears as being natural. It is the real way the real world is. Life as we know it is comfortable because our concave fits the convex of our culture.”

Most citizens of the world today accede to the existing foundational **concave/convex** mold that has been set for them. That includes those who think of themselves as not being within the mold. It also includes those who think they are moving away from the mold. For example, “Liberal” Pope Francis in his 2015 *Laudio Si* stayed in the mold when he spoke about environmental degradation. He left out reference to one of the most deadly planetary present and future dangers; namely exponential population growth. Also, his words about changes needed in our economic system were fuzzy at best. The same kind of criticism can also be made with respect to the conclusions of the members at the 2015 COP21 meetings in Paris. There was heightened awareness of the ecological problems, but no urgent call for radical change in the political/social/economic systems in their home countries. (The same can be said for subsequent meetings)

Nevertheless, and on a note of optimism; there has been some notable change among many. Following are four Roman Catholic deep thinkers who expressed in their time a contrarian view of much of Roman Catholic Church doctrine. They called for the Church to step out of its institutional mold:

Meister Eckhart (1260-1328)

Thomas Berry (1914-2009)

Thomas Merton (1915-1968)

Matthew Fox (1940)

Their breakaway can be expressed as a disavowal of the dominant Abrahamic belief that the God as defined in the Torah and the Old and the New Testament-and the Koran, is a god residing in some other dimension above and beyond Planet Earth.

Stepping back well before them and before that into the bronze/iron/agricultural age, this book goes into detail as to how an entirely different hominid understanding had been a part of our thought process from the beginning of human consciousness. And it suggests there are now signs we may be returning to that earlier understanding. Before our Axial Age we had defined the GOD mystery as GOD everywhere and in everything. GOD was inside of us and outside of us. GOD was inside all life and non-life and outside all life and non-life.

When did the understanding change? As this book explains, in Egypt and in the Levant there appeared what this author calls a “Rorschach test god”, that is a god-personification of the human mind; a metaphorical reflection of the best and the worst in each of us.

This book says that the Abrahamic god did not start out that way. As described in *Chapter 3 The Anthropomorphic God of Abraham*, the original Hebraic definition was not anthropomorphic. Here it is:

“When YHWH was revealed to Moses on Mt. Horeb/Mt. Sinai, this was not the definition. YHWH was *I AM THAT I AM*. (also translated as *I SHALL BE WHAT I SHALL BE*) Then, as the Nation of Israel moved forward in time, the definition began to change. He expelled Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. Then, in anger He brought on a great flood showing humanity that He would punish those who disappointed Him. Years later with the advent of Christianity, He would sacrifice His own son as expiation for the sin of man. One hundred years after that, He would have John in the Book of Revelation outline in gruesome detail how He will destroy all of humanity for a second time, allowing only a select few to join Him in eternity. Then in the seventh century with the advent of Islam, He continued to change. The original Hebraic definition was no longer undefinable; He had become a fearful, loving, controlling, punishing, judgmental god for all noncompliant Jews, Christians and Muslims, as well as all non-believers, He had become a capricious god hidden far off in the heavens.”

This Abrahamic understanding of god has led to sinister outcomes. One now looming in front of us relates to the ecological destruction of our planet.

The danger in this GOD belief is that among many adherents planetary destruction is of no concern. In the long run the planet is disposable. These religionists believe that we are all sinful, depraved human beings in search of salvation and that this salvation will come only to a select few at *the end of times* when their God will bring a fiery end to our planet. Such belief can have dire consequences. Today, many Christians and Jews, as well as Muslims, think that *the end of*

times is coming fast upon us. These believers think of humanity as living in a defeatist ecological conundrum. So they further reason; if my God will destroy our planet, why should I be concerned about Nature and the environment, why should I even listen to the dire predictions of the scientists? Who cares? It is all in God's hands anyway.

In order for human life to continue on this planet, these believers need to rid ourselves of how their **YHWH** is defined. If they do not, the dark side of their Freudian psychotic intentionality may become our planet's future reality. Freud's "id" (Not their GOD) will be proven to be their controller.

Finding a way out of this dilemma will call for a breakthrough in 21st century religious thought at all levels. As stated above, this is in fact occurring within some Abrahamic religious communities. But not fast enough.

Over the years there have been many such breakthroughs. They force us to abandon existing belief. We are left only with the new one. We saw this in early Judaism. Then with the presence of Jesus of Nazareth and his opposition to Temple orthodoxy and Roman hegemony we saw it again. But, as is often the case; the message later becomes ensnared in creeds and sacraments and rituals on the religious side and political legal structures on the social side, leaving only vestiges of the original thought breakthrough. This is typical of all such breakthroughs. The purity of thought becomes conscripted by adherents who then use that thought for their own advantage. This book gives a number of examples, even going back to ancient Egypt and the Pharaoh Akhenaten.

The first sign of such a cognitive breakthrough is now appearing on the horizon. The breakthrough is being defined by many individuals as an emerging cosmic consciousness revealing an underlying "Implicate Order." With recent advancements in the physical sciences, and particularly in the areas of quantum physics and cosmology, many scientists and nonscientists alike are beginning to recognize that there is such a thing as order in the Cosmos. They are making strides in attempting to define it. As noted in this book, David Bohm, the great theoretical physicist and colleague of Albert Einstein spoke of it in terms of an unbroken cosmic wholeness, with everything animate and inanimate having, as he described it; "an inseparable quantum interconnectedness" in a continuing process of cosmic "enfoldment" and "unfoldment."

Breakthroughs in thought such as these are marking the beginning of a transition from our present state of planetary ecological dysfunction into a state of planetary ecological accommodation.

This can even be described in Abrahamic terms as a “revelation.” *Homo sapiens* may be about to step out of its earthly shoes and into its Cosmic one. That transition implies the need for a restructuring of world political, social, economic and religious thought as well as human behavior so that our species can move toward Bohm’s “enfoldment” and “unfoldment.” Can it be achieved? It can, but humanity will have to view the planet and the continuance of all forms of life on it in an entirely different way from the way it has in the past. At the same time, it will have to abandon much of its past doctrinaire religious belief, as to a large extent this has been the glue pressing our species onto its past **concave/convex** perception of reality, a perception now become contradictory to its sustainability on Planet Earth.

Such a movement is now beginning to gain momentum. It was evident in the thought process of those four Roman Catholics noted above. It can be seen in the early writings of Enlightenment philosophers such as Spinoza. A breakthrough in America came with the so-called transcendentalists who openly challenged the doctrinaire religious orthodoxy of the time. Another breakthrough came with American “in-depth-psychologists” such as F.W.H. Meyers and William James. Their challenge to the then European school of reductionist behavioristic psychology soon gained momentum and led to the work of Carl Jung in Switzerland and others around the world in the form of a post-empirical behaviorist movement opening the field of transpersonal depth psychology.

This is not to say that the movement has sufficient momentum. Freudian atheistic reductionist behavioristic psychology placed limitations on the human psyche. Those limitations still prevail in much of social science academia. Dangerous flaws in such reductionist atheistic behavioristic psychology have in recent years lead to human pain and suffering for the entire world to see.

An understanding of a cosmic other dimensionality goes far back in time, as far back as the Upanishads and the Eastern thought that grew out of it. It can be seen in the Greek Platonic thought. It may have extended even further back as is evident in the Lascaux cave region of France discussed in this book.

With the discovery in 1945 of the “lost” Gospel of Thomas at Nag Hammadi, Egypt we can observe that Jesus was strongly influenced by such an esoteric form of thought. It is interesting to note that there is speculation among some scholars that a form of eastern thought could have come to Jesus in his formative years from contact with Roman intellectuals in Sepphoris, a model Roman city/town about five miles from where his family lived in Nazareth. Jesus may even have experienced Greek theater in the amphitheater there. Father and son may have been applying the father’s trade. (There is conjecture that his father was not a cabinet maker but a scaffold builder) So it is possible that Jesus as a youth could have spent much of his time there.

Author’s Note:

There is some debate among Christian “traditionalists” over Sepphoris having been an influence. Although archaeological studies have not successfully been able to date its precise condition during the first thirty years of Jesus’ life, we do know that it was a large Roman city and near his home; also a center for both Jewish and Roman intellectualism. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that Hellenistic and other thought was present among the local Jewish and Roman citizens.

Another possible influence on Jesus should be mentioned here. We do have some solid evidence of this. During the short period of Jesus’ ministry, Qumran Essene thought in one form or other existed throughout a wide geographic area beyond the colony at Qumran. It may have been an influence on Jesus during his formative years. In fact his cousin, John the Baptist, may have at some point been influenced by Essene thought. It was anti-Temple and in some respects what we would call esoteric. To quote from Stephan A. Hoeller in his book *Jung and the Lost Gospels Insights into the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Library*, p 38:

“There was only one organization in existence that could have served as the foundation for this rapidly developing structure, and it was the order of the Essenes. Centered in its monastic headquarters by the Dead Sea, but extending all over Judea and in all likelihood into Egypt, Rome and Asia Minor, the Essene organization served as a ready-made matrix on which the new Christian association of communities could be built.”

However one frames the mindset of those in and around Jerusalem at that time-and later on as Paul found when he finally reached Rome and came upon an already established Jesus community, there was an undercurrent of esoteric Essene as well as neo Platonic Greek and

Alexandrian thought existing beyond the doctrinal interior Temple Judaic Hebraic, and it had taken hold. It was laying the groundwork for the words of Jesus and its subsequent rapid spread.

The important observation here is this: There are indications now in our present age, as there were at the time of Jesus, that a new foundation is beginning to form. Many in the world today are joining in with the understanding that there is an all-inclusive material and non-material cosmic inner/outer dimensionality to this planet and to the Universe and within it an enfolding/unfolding order. Many are also concluding that our civilization in its present form socially, politically, philosophically, religiously and economically is not meeting the test of being a part of that order.

How do we become a part of it, at one with that order; *The Kingdom of GOD* as Jesus used the expression back then in the Gospel of Thomas? In that gospel Jesus pointed to a way for each of us to become part of an inner/outer cosmic determinative consciousness.

A word of warning: Jesus spoke of it in conditional terms. He used the words: *When you come to know yourselves*. He said that actualization calls for self-realization. Jesus was calling for no less than a metamorphosis of human thought on an inner-individual level in order for *The Kingdom of God* on this Earth to be revealed.

Observations here in this book on the work of the modern thinker Richard Tarnas show this same conditionality. Tarnas uses the word “participation” in the context of the “need” to partake in a unity waiting to be realized. He calls for this through contact with the creative process within “Nature.” He writes in his book—as quoted in *Chapter 6 Back to Lascaux Part II Richard Tarnas – Nature’s unfolding truth*

“From within its own depths the imagination directly contacts the creative process within nature, realizes that process within itself, and brings nature’s reality to conscious expression.”

We see the same train of thought from Jesus in the Gospel of Thomas:

(3) *The Kingdom of God is inside of you, and it is outside of you. When you come to know yourselves, then you will become known, and you will realize who you are.*

(77) I am the light that is over all things. I am all: from me all came forth, and to me all attained. Split a piece of wood; I am there. Lift up the stone, and you will find me there

This book throughout reflects the importance of the meaning of these two sayings of Jesus-and those of other great thinkers. Unfortunately most of the world is living and thinking well out of that mind frame.

Only a universal mind-change of earth shattering magnitude can save our species from impending extinction. Friedrich Nietzsche warned us about the dangers of our present insouciance. As quoted again and again in this book, he wrote in *The Gay Science*:

“The madman when he went into the marketplace to tell everyone the news of God’s death; those going about their business missed the significance. Nor did they recognize the extent to which they themselves were implicated.”

We need to understand that we are those there in that marketplace. We are the **implicated**.

In closing I will quote from Matthew Fox (Roman Catholic scholar noted above) in his book *A Way To God Thomas Merton’s Spiritual Journey* p.201 where he quotes Thomas Berry discussing the ideas of Thomas Merton. It centers on this same theme.

“There is a certain futility in the efforts being made, truly sincere, dedicated, and intelligent efforts-to remedy our environmental devastation simply by achieving renewable sources of energy and by reducing the deleterious impact of the industrial world. The difficulty is that the natural world is seen primarily for human use, not as a mode of sacred presence primarily to be communed with in wonder and beauty and intimacy. In our present attitude, the natural world remains a commodity to be bought and sold, not a sacred reality to be venerated....”

Can humanity change the way it thinks? There are signs that it can. Changes in the biosphere adverse to human survival are becoming the more visible. World thought is becoming aware of these changes. Larger and larger numbers are demanding that something be done. Many of those with religion and those not are coming to the realization that the natural world is not a commodity to be bought and sold. It is a sacred reality to be venerated. There is a growing realization among these many that the world economic system in place does not recognize that sacredness.

Here are a few last words from this author on how you and I possibly can begin to meet this challenge:

The cosmos is conscious. Lift up a stone, you will find it there. Gaze into the night sky, you will find it there. Split an atom; you will find it there. See a butterfly, you will find it there. Watch a spider, you will find it there. Look at the person next to you, you will find it there. Look at yourself, you will find it there.

You and everything in and around you, living and non-living, is bounded by this cosmic consciousness.

Within that consciousness is an implicate order. Within that implicate order is intelligence. Within that intelligence is endless and timeless cosmic creativity.

The sole purpose of your life from birth to death is to become a part of that endless and timeless cosmic creativity.

How you ask? First, you must rid yourself of society's validation. You must look for validation within and beyond yourself.

Then and only then will you be able to realize who you are and who you can become; not here one moment and then gone the next, but a part of endless and timeless cosmic creativity.

Then and only then will you find that you are not inconsequential.

Then and only then will you find a life purpose separate from the distractions that surround you.

Then and only then can your thoughts, your actions, your very being become the creative force they were meant to be.

Then and only then will you find your path, one where your life's possibilities are without limit.

Then and only then will you be able to connect with an intelligence both within and beyond your consciousness.

Then and only then will you begin to understand that you are singularly endowed with the ultimate privilege to be more than just another biological form of life on the planet.

Then and only then will you find the meaning of your existence.

My purpose in this book has been to open this possibility. I hope I have succeeded to some degree in doing so.

David Anderson