

CALL FOR PAPERS AND PARTICIPATION

COLLOQUIUM ON THOMAS BERRY'S WORK: DEVELOPMENT, DIFFERENCE, IMPORTANCE, APPLICATIONS Sponsored by Center for Ecozoic Societies and Carolina Seminars of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill May 28-30, 2014, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

*"We cannot discover ourselves without first discovering the universe, the earth, and the imperatives of our being. Each of these has a creative power and a vision far beyond any rational thought or cultural creation of which we are capable.... We have no existence except within the earth and within the universe" (Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*, 1988).*

The year 2014 will be the 100th anniversary of Thomas Berry's birth and the 5th anniversary of his death. Berry can be considered one of the most important ecological thinkers and visionaries of his time. Berry's work has influenced thousands of activists in the United States and around the world. His thought is regularly cited in environmental ethics, environmental literature, and theology. Berry can also be credited with having developed the concept of the anthropocene *avant la lettre*; as he put it in 1988, "The anthropogenic shock that is overwhelming the earth is of an order of magnitude beyond anything previously known in human historical or cultural development.... We are acting on a geological and biological order of magnitude. We are changing the chemistry of the planet."

His work linked together ecology, spirituality, and religion, among other fields. He envisioned a transition to an entirely different era and civilization, far beyond any form of contemporary culture, as the only 'way into the future,' the Great Work needed in order to usher in an 'Ecozoic era.' He gave birth to three visible movements, the Universe Story movement, the Rights of Nature or Earth Jurisprudence movement, and the transition to an Ecozoic Society or Ecological-Cultural Civilization movement. Less visible but equally important were his contributions to bioregional movements, movements for a sentient or living Earth, and movements for the rights and wisdoms of indigenous cultures. He was also engaged in the reform of religious orders. He has been credited with beginning the spiritual ecology movement.

Though his influence and applications of his work have been many, his work has received limited critical review or attention. Our Colloquium is precisely based on the strong belief that it is imperative at this point *to engage critically and creatively* with the key aspects of Berry's thought, as contained in his published work, and to produce *thorough assessments of it* through scholarly and intellectual reflection and debate on the main dimensions of his work. Our Colloquium thus hopes to move from straight commentary and appreciation of Berry's work to the *critical reception and re-articulation* of his legacy as it bears on the real transitions needed. We see this process as a crucial ingredient in the very transition that Berry envisioned from our current disastrous path towards viable new life visions that make possible different organizations of society in the long run.

To this end, we call for contributions that will:

- Situate Berry's work within broader intellectual and social currents and contexts
- Review his ideas critically
- Assess his contributions to particular domains and establish conversations between Berry's work and other fields or thinkers
- Analyze the contemporary relevance and potential applications of his work
- Develop further his key concepts concerning the main elements of the transition(s).

Participation in the Colloquium should take the form of scholarly papers and analyses; other formats of presentation (e.g., performances, art work, and testimonies) will be considered if they conform with the overall thrust of the event, that is, the systematic and critical analysis of Berry's contributions to understanding the needed societal transitions.

Presentations may engage the following dimensions of Berry's work (note: these presentations might be approached from the perspective of your on specialty or discipline, e.g., anthropology, ecology, science studies, education, feminist theory, theology, and so forth):

- Berry's historical context (his personal context and the context given in his work), philosophy, sources, and impacts
- The New Story, Universe Story or Universe Stories
- Transition to the Ecozoic Era or ecological-cultural civilization(s)
- Reform of Institutions: Education, Government (including Earth Jurisprudence), Religion (including spirituality and the meta-religious mode), Economics (including the organic economy and living within limits), and Culture

Please send expressions of interest in participating to Herman Greene, President of the Center for Ecozoic Societies, ecozoicsocieties@gmail.com by February 18, indicating whether you want to a) present a paper (in which case, please include a brief title and abstract); or (b) participation only.

About Thomas Berry:

A Passionist priest, Thomas Berry was an ecologist, cultural historian and theologian. He grew up in Greensboro, North Carolina, and spent his last 14 years there. In the interim, he taught at the Asian Institute of Seton Hall University (1956-61); the Asian Institute of St. John's University (1961-1965); and finally at Fordham University (1966-1979), where he instituted the doctoral program in the history of religions. He inaugurated the Riverdale Center for Religious Research in 1970 and worked there until 1995. He served as President of the American Teilhard Society from 1975-1987. He authored, among other books, *The Dream of the Earth* and *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future*, and he co-authored with Brian Swimme, *The Universe Story: From the Primordial Flaring Forth to the Ecozoic Era*. He received his Ph.D. from Catholic University and eight honorary doctoral degrees from various institutions.

CONFERENCE DETAILS

These are the tentative details of the Colloquium. The final schedule and other details will be worked out as we hear from participants on their presentations and also their suggestions for the Colloquium.

Schedule

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	<u>Session 2</u> : The New Story or Stories	<u>Session 4</u> : Reform of Institutions
<u>Lunch</u> : Presentation on and discussion of Colloquium purposes	<u>Lunch</u> : Informal discussions	<u>Lunch</u> : Presentation on and discussion of Colloquium outcomes
<u>Session 1</u> : Berry's Historical Context, Philosophy, Sources, Impacts	<u>Session 3</u> : Transition to the Ecozoic Era and Ecozoic Societies	
<u>Evening</u> : Public Lecture on Thomas Berry's Work	<u>Evening</u> : Cultural Event	

Location

The Colloquium will be held at a location to be determined at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, North Carolina (UNC-CH).

Colloquium Fee

There will be no fee for the Colloquium (including meals) for presenters or participants.

People may, at their option, make donations to support the event and travel expenses of other presenters and participants.

Travel Expenses and Lodging

We presently do not have funding to pay for travel or lodging expenses. If this is a concern, please let us know.

We will do our best to arrange for lodging in local homes for those who request this.

Conference Organizing Committee

- Arturo Escobar, Kenan Distinguished Teaching Professor of Anthropology, UNC-CH
- Herman Greene, President, Center for Ecozoic Societies, Chapel Hill, North Carolina
- Michal Osterweil, Lecturer, Internship Coordinator, Curriculum in Global Studies, UNC-Ch
- James Peacock, Kenan Professor of Anthropology, UNC-CH, and past President of the American Anthropological Association
- William Peck, Bowman and Gordon Gray Professor of Religious Studies, UNC-CH (retired)
- Becky Coble, Coordinator of the Program on Integrative Medicine, UNC-CH (retired)

Additional Information

Contact Herman Greene, Center for Ecozoic Societies, 2516 Winningham Road, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 27516, USA. Email: ecozoicsocieties@gmail.com. Phone +1 (919) - 942-4358.