

Earth Age

A NEW VISION
OF GOD,
THE HUMAN & THE EARTH



Lorna Green

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A New Vision of God,
the Human and the Earth

by
Lorna Green



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*For Graham Hitchins
who gave me the strength*

*The earth never tires
The earth is rude, silent, incomprehensible at first
Nature is rude, silent, incomprehensible at first
 Be not discouraged, keep on, there are divine
 things well envelop'd
I swear to you there are divine things more
 beautiful than words can tell.*

—Walt Whitman

Preface

Martin Heidegger, earlier in this century, defined a human being as “the animal metaphysicum,” the metaphysical animal.

For some time I have wanted to write a *Metaphysics* which could be read by everyone, and yet still stand in the venerable tradition of the philosophers. It has taken me twenty-seven years to find out the structure of Being. Here it is, in terms all can understand.

I wish to extend my thanks and appreciation to:

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The oldest friends of my life: Cynthia Szego, who shares my contemplative path, for teaching me the needs of my Pisces soul; Timothy Gibbon, who always spoke the truth from her own realist perspective; Dorothy Blake—"Midnight Blue, those treasured thoughts of you . . ."—for being the climbing companion of my life.

"We have been friends together." Yes.

Finally, I acknowledge my greatest debt of all, and the deepest love of my life: the living Silences of the Earth, in which I have brooded much of this work. To them: Honor and Praise. May they always be there to heal the wounds in the human soul.

As for me? I nest in the rock. "By Thy sweet scents draw me." The singing heart is the true guide to life.

All peace,

Lorna Green,
Margaree Valley
Nova Scotia
Canada

Contents

Preface.....	vii
Foreword by Thomas Berry	1
Introduction.....	7

IDEAS AND PRACTICES

The Significance of the Earth for Metaphysics.....	17
<i>The Agony of the Earth</i>	17
<i>Metaphysics</i>	19
<i>Directions</i>	21
<i>Diagnosis</i>	24
<i>New Beginnings</i>	26
The New Story of Modern Physics.....	28
<i>Classical Science</i>	28
<i>The New Story</i>	30
<i>Deeper Meanings</i>	32
<i>Tom Berry's Twelve Principles</i>	35
<i>Limits of Science: The Unexplained Explainer</i>	39
<i>Limits of Science: Our Essential Selves Are</i> <i>Separable from Our Bodies</i>	42
<i>Limits of Science: We Are the Keys to the Universe</i>	45
<i>The Anthropic Principle</i>	51
<i>Knowing, Scientific and Otherwise</i>	54
<i>New Wineskins for New Wine</i>	57

A Story of Beginnings.....	61
A New Universe	63
A New Heaven.....	70
<i>Incarnation</i>	70
<i>"Chance and Necessity" versus "Design"</i>	73
<i>God the Beloved</i>	76
<i>Creation and Creator</i>	79
<i>Touching God</i>	81
A New Earth	86
<i>Earth Is a Living Being</i>	88
<i>Earth Is a Conscious, Spiritual Being</i>	89
<i>Earth Is a Divine Being</i>	91
<i>An Earth-Centered Perspective</i>	93
The Spirituality of the Earth.....	100
<i>New Ideas about Plants</i>	100
<i>New Images for Animals</i>	101
<i>Who Are the Trees?</i>	104
A Touch of Metaphysics	107
<i>The Meaning of "Reality Is Spiritual"</i>	107
<i>All Is One</i>	113
<i>The Answer to Stephen Hawking's Question</i>	116

SPIRITUALITY

A New Humanity	123
<i>We Are the Animal Who Celebrates</i>	124
<i>We Are Earthlings</i>	125
<i>We Are Fragments of Spirit</i>	127
<i>Heart-Consciousness</i>	129
<i>Inner Child</i>	131
Afterword: Portrait of the Metaphysician	135

Foreword by Thomas Berry

We are presently at a unique moment in the story of the planet Earth. This is not simply a human historical moment, but is a transformation moment for the entire complex of life systems on the planet. The human has developed a profound cultural pathology that is leading the human to plunder the planet and exhaust its physical as well as its biological resources without consideration for the limits of capacity for self-renewal. Because this has never previously been experienced by the Earth we do not know its full consequences, or the length of its endurance.

We do know, however that it cannot continue indefinitely. For the immediate future the human seems to be developing into some strange form of adaptation to its own self-created environment. Already the devastation inflicted on the surrounding world is bringing about an interior devastation within the human itself. With the loss of the outer experience of these various life forms and the natural phenomena that surround us, the inner imaginative experience of humans is being diminished. The sublimity of existence, the range and grandeur of our poetry and music, the entire aesthetic and spiritual experience, all these are becoming more limited—the inner hunger of soul is not satisfied.

Yet a pervasive mood of denial has settled over the western world, especially, for it is precisely in the western world that the difficulties have originated and are being fostered. The universities, those central institutions for providing directions

and a sense of values for society, give little indication in their scientific-technological, or their liberal-humanistic, or their political-economic teaching, that they are aware of what is happening. The jurisprudence of our society is thoroughly supportive of the devastation.

This denial goes with a certain autism, an incapacity to recognize or respond to anything outside the human and the supposed human benefit. The surrounding world is a collection of objects to be exploited as fully and as rapidly as possible, with no understanding that nature is an ever-renewing process while mechanistic processes do not in any manner renew themselves. Mechanistic energy is completely entropic. All our massive production has a minimal period of use and is then set aside on the unnumbered junk heaps that exist throughout the planet, or dispersed into the air, or poured into the sea.

This pervasive autism leaves the human with little capacity for experiencing the universe as primarily a communion of subjects rather than as a collection of objects. That communion and reciprocity are the way to life, and exploitation the way to death, is beyond the understanding of a society caught so deeply in its own fixations.

The problem is how to cure the autism: how to establish an education for reciprocity rather than for exploitation; how to bring human communities to function as integral members of an Earth community that will prosper or decline together; how to establish an interspecies jurisprudence as well as an interhuman jurisprudence.

These are the issues that Lorna Green addresses here. She proposes that we reestablish that primordial intimacy between humans and the natural world that we observe in the indigenous people of the world, an intimacy with all the living creatures and all the physical phenomena that constitute the integral reality that we refer to when we speak of the Earth. For every member of the planet and all its natural phenomena exist only in relation to the other members.

Yet it is not only the powers of Earth but the powers of the universe that deserve our reverence, for beyond the Earth the universe itself is the ultimate community of existence. In the

phenomenal order only the universe is self-referent. Every other being is universe-referent. Only the universe is a text without context. Every other being exists in the universe context.

Every power in the universe is needed if humans are to have any integral mode of being or if humans are to survive with any degree of fulfillment. The “powers” that govern the world include these vast powers beyond the Earth. These are spiritual as well as physical forces. We need to recover this intimacy with “all our relations.”

We might renew those cosmological rituals whereby we integrate our human activities with the great liturgy of the universe. Of special significance is the presentation of newborn infants to the powers of the universe, as the Omaha Indians do, asking their guidance and protection for the infant throughout the course of its life.

There are the voices also. For every being has its own distinctive voice, its own individual voice. The primary law of the universe is that there should exist no two identical beings or two identical voices. Peoples of the twentieth-century industrial world have never, for the most part, heard the voices about them—the voice of the winds, of the mountains and rivers, the voice of the woodlands and the meadows and all the living creatures that inhabit the land and the sea and fly through the air. If they had, they would surely have responded with the awe and reverence that the peoples of the Earth have known from paleolithic times.

In this, indigenous peoples of the world have been wiser than we have been. Although they lived exposed to the elements and were less protected from the heat and the cold, they lived in a larger, a more expansive world, the world of the stars and all the heavenly and earthly phenomena. They communed with spirit powers more vast than we conceive of.

They had a life of the soul that has been diminishing considerably both for ourselves and our children, by the sterile electronic gadgetry of our times, gadgetry that seldom permits us to have any significant presence to the universe about us. With all the beclouded atmosphere of the city around them the children never see the stars, or else they see them only in a misty

haze where they can hardly distinguish one from the other. The lighted cities have replaced the starry heavens.

Even the nature films that are shown on our electronic screens are distant, non-threatening, unreal. As Augustine once noted: a picture of food does not nourish. Worst of all, perhaps, is the Disney World substitution of cuddly animals for the challenging presence of creatures in the grandeur of their full personalities in their native habitats.

Until this final decade of the twentieth century there may have been some excuse for what has been happening. Our commercial and industrial society might have been considered some vast experiment into the possibilities of human control over the natural order of the planet. After all, nature herself had placed within the Earth the capacities for all the energy and its uses that we have discovered. If there was petroleum in the Earth, why not use it as energy for our transportation, for fertilizer, for fabrics, for plastic implements, for energy to run our dynamos? Why not make for ourselves a magic world that we would create and control for ourselves, however it affected the other modes of being about us?

Even this would clearly have been insulting to the dignity of the living creatures about us. To dam the rivers on the scale we have done was obviously an insult to the rivers, to tear the mountains apart for their minerals, to clear-cut the forests, to exhaust the soil with excessive demands on its productivity, to ruin the immense fecundity of the oceans of the world; even to think of this creates a revulsion in any sensible person. But to have done all this, and now to observe the consequences in our air and water and soil and living forms with a certain impassive countenance, this obviously is to be seized by a mental distortion beyond anything we have known throughout the centuries.

How address an issue of such magnitude? That is the question that the author of this study has done. She has articulated the nature of the challenge that we confront and has given us a way of responding to the challenge. Her response comes from her own lifetime experience of extensive study, meditation, and living with the land. She has heard the voices. She has known

the spirit forces that surround us. She has endured the chill of winter and the heat and irritations of summer. She has shared in the lives that are lived by all the wild creatures. She has activated within herself something of that wild vision that exists in the unconscious depths of the human psyche, the vision experienced by the shamanic personalities that have guided the destinies of peoples since humans first appeared in the margins of the woodlands and the waters of Earth.

Lorna Green is someone to be listened to.

Introduction

Every day our newspapers and magazines carry fresh stories of ecological disasters. We read about the destruction of the rain forest, pollution of the oceans and the atmosphere, the extinction of species. The list is endless.

For the most part we are reacting piecemeal to the crises. Wilderness buffs challenge logging companies, environmentalists tackle big corporations. It is “them” against “us,” and divisions run deep.

We need a larger framework in which to comprehend what is happening. We need to understand that it is our collective way of life as a whole that is destroying the Earth. And we need to understand that at the center, the heart of our way of life, with influences rippling out in all directions, is a framework of ideas, a mind-set, a certain way of seeing, evaluating, valuing, which is based on a false view of the universe. We have not been at home in the universe for quite some time.

The Greeks, just 2500 years ago, lived in a comfortable little world with the Earth at the center of the universe, the sun, planets and stars revolving around the Earth in great circles. In such a world, everything human beings did had importance and significance in the scheme of things.

Not so, ourselves. In a scant 2500 years, modern science has totally revised our notions of the universe. The Earth is no longer the center of our universe; even the sun is no longer the center. Instead, our sun is a rather ordinary star, the Earth is a rather