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THE CONVERSION OF THE EARTH'S RESOURCES TO JUNK IS IRREVERSIBLE --- Second Law.

The next several circulars will deal with the human relationship to the natural world. The principal theme will be the origin and identification of "values". What is important to us is what determines the way we live, how we behave, what we count to be a virtue and what we think is flawed. It shapes emotional attitudes, provides us with life purpose, energizes action, consecrates suffering, integrates knowledge, guides education, tells us how to answer the questions of children, how to identify crime and punish criminals. "Values", in the words of Roy Anderson, far-seeing insurance executive, "is where it's at." Values tell industrialists and legislators, and executives, and laborers, and beggars and farmers where to put effort and what to aim for. They do not make men good nor take away the stupidities of life or make for unfailing warmth in human association, but do provide a context in which life can function in a meaningful manner.

The way in which life proceeds in the present day United States is a reflection of the values that guided us. Since it is a human thing to reflect on one's condition then reflection is what constantly occupies those hours when we are not actively engaged in the pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness. Reflection brings on judgement and critical review. Is what we are doing or what we have done good or bad? Maybe not so much that, as, did what we did conform to our idea of what is important and what is right? Do the results correspond to what we intended? Such critical examination is necessary to correct wrongs and to redirect misdirected effort.

But more basic than that is the necessity to examine values themselves so as to compare them, to evaluate them. That is, to judge values against some value standard. Are our values valuable? in a sense.

It is possible to make the statement that the primary role of the human is to act out his humanness, to try to understand what it is to be human, and having taken steps toward that understanding to seek to enlarge it step by step so as to be ever more human.

In The New Story, in a very difficult passage, Thomas Berry discusses the creation of values. He tells how religion has so focussed on the redemption mystique as to have missed almost totally the creation mystique so absolutely necessary to human comprehension of who we are and why. He tells of how the scientist has so focussed on objectivity as to have almost totally missed the mystical, the spiritual, the religious in nature, and so has missed the real and the whole because of his fascination with dissection and measurement. And he tells us that values are to be found through understanding Differentiation, Subjectivity, and Communion in nature. Values are to be found in the natural, in the cosmic/earth process that has produced us and has produced everything that is. Individuality in variety, interiority, and universal connectedness are where it's at. (Copies of The New Story are available on request).

To start with in this discussion of values it is good to get an idea of what a human is. The best source to go to with that question is Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, the French Priest, scientist, mystic, who wrote The Phenomenon of Man. It would be foolish to attempt

to summarize this book, but it can be put down that Teilhard finds that the human arises out of the natural process of evolution not only in body but in mind and soul also. His emphasis on the "within" of everything is the source of Thomas Berry's differentiation and interiority. Human significance is to be found in relation to the enduring and comprehensive process out of which the human arises. That's Thomas Berry's cosmic/earth process, the connection of everything with everything else. "The different branches of science combine to demonstrate that the universe in its entirety must be regarded as one gigantic process, a process of becoming, of attaining new levels of existence and organization which can properly be called a genesis or an evolution." That's Julian Huxley talking about The Phenomenon of Man. In a new and unique way Teilhard firmly, unmistakably and definitively places the human in the natural order.

Once the human is clearly seen to be of the natural order a series of implications becomes plain. The first thing that comes to mind is to deny that the human is a stranger on the earth, that he is enduring an exile, that he belongs in another world. It is not so. The human is at home. He belongs to the earth. He is related and very closely related to all the other animals, and to all the other forms of life and to the forms of non life as well. The anti-natural bias one encounters in Christianity can be dissolved and laid to rest. The picture of the world as demonic, the source of evil fleshly appetites, and animal instincts as a vale of sorrow and tears grows weak and disappears. The Franciscan embrace of all the earth creatures seizes us with an overwhelming sense of rightness and St. Thomas' statement "the Divine acts in everything that acts" strikes home.

What is called for is the necessity for the human to perceive of himself as a part of this becoming process to find out what his part in that process is and to participate fully with nature, with the earth, with God, in advancing toward the fulfillment of it.

That means that the problem is in finding out how to be human, which is how to be natural. The unique thing about the human is his capability for reflection, to know and to know that he knows. And what that adds to the natural process is conscious intelligence. The contribution the human makes to nature is the capability to guide the evolutionary process, to cooperate with it with an intelligence heretofore not involved. In the terms of the Riverdale Center for Religious Research, "In the human the earth finds its agent for self direction."

To find the place of the human in the earth community we turn to the naturalists and the poets and the American Indians. And that's where this series begins. If we want to commune with God we learn to commune with God's earth. For the spirit to soar it must have observed the soaring flight of the birds. To know what is the purpose of the human is to know what is the purpose of the natural world. And so that is what we study.

Henry Thoreau, John Muir, Aldo Leopold, Annie Dillard, Laren Eisely, Gary Snyder, Vine Deloria, are some of the people who will give us a picture of nature, and against it we can compare the terrifying assault against nature we witness.