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Where we are right now, according to many of the people I read, is at the end of a four hundred year old pattern of thinking and behavior. Morris Berman calls it the Cartesian era, named after Rene Descartes who best articulated the drive to revise the very way one organized thinking itself, in order to conquer nature and make it the servant of the human. It was certainty that Descartes sought, and he believed that certainty could only be found through measurement and quantification. Thus, was the Scientific Revolution launched. Bacon and Gallileo and Newton and hosts of others produced the science but the thought process was described by Descartes. Understanding could be achieved only by reducing the whole to its component parts and finding out how, mechanically, the thing worked. Thus, the terms "reductionist" and "mechanistic" are used to designate the age that began in the seventeenth century and still describe the dominant way of thinking in our own time.

But just as Bacon and Descartes seemed to know that a new age was in formation as they wrote and lectured, so do many today feel sure that another new age is beginning. The new prophets see the old structure crumbling, the fabric unravelling, the glue losing its power to hold;

The alienation and futility that characterized the perceptions of handful of intellectuals at the beginning of the (20th) century have come to characterize the consciousness of the common man at its end. Jobs are stupefying, relationships vapid and transient, the arena of politics absurd. In the vacuum created by the collapse of traditional values, we have hysterical evangelical revivals, mass conversions to the church of the Reverend Moon, and a general retreat into the oblivion provided by drugs, television and tranquilizers. We also have a desperate search for therapy, by now a national obsession, as millions of Americans try to reconstruct their lives amidst a pervasive feeling of anomie and cultural disintegration. An age in which depression is the norm is a grim one indeed.

Perhaps nothing is more symptomatic of the general malaise than the inability of the industrial economies to provide meaningful work . . . these figures are American in degree, but not in kind. Poland and Russia are world leaders in consumption of hard liquor; the suicide rate in France has been growing steadily. . . if America is the frontier of the great collapse, the other industrial nations are not far behind. . . we are witnessing the inevitable outcome of a logic that is already centuries old and which is being played out in our own lifetime.

Morris Berman. The Reenchantment of the World.

Similarly, wrong perceptions of the real world result in the madnesses so many organizations seek desperately to correct. The alteration of the nuclear strategies of the US and the USSR, adventurism in Central America, the slaughter of whales, the destruction of wilderness and wildlife, etc., should be seen as subgoals to the overall necessity to accelerate the move into the new age. The insanity which is perceived and acted upon by the nuclear freeze movement is a result of the failure of reductionist theory to comprehend the principle of communion; the principle that unites in real identity everything to everything; that makes all life forms and life support systems into a single coherent whole, the earth community. The war fever so assiduously nourished by the trillion dollar military-industrial machine is necessary to sustain the willingness of the citizenry to bear the burden, and to ignore the promise of a new age. Without the perceived

external threat, internal contradictions will get the attention they deserve and the ecological danger will take its proper place in the forefront of vital concerns. When and if that happens the growing feeling that the human is a natural being involved intimately in the earth and its processes will have a chance to get the following needed to bring about wholesome change. This center applauds and supports the many antiwar, and prolife movements that are represented by wilderness, wildlife, air, soil, and water societies, but feels it necessary to say that the evils these societies seek to correct grow mostly out of the flawed way of thinking that we inherit from Rene Descartes and company. These movements could unite under a single banner which would proclaim that we are all earthlings and that the preservation and enhancement of the planetary process is what matters most to us.

Allen Drengson at the University of Victoria in British Columbia laid out a table in Environmental Ethics, Spring 1982, that will assist you in telling the difference between what he calls Technocratic (Berman calls it Cartesian) and the Planetary-Personal.

Technocratic	Planetary-Personal
Machine Metaphor	Organic Metaphor
Reductionist	Holistic
Linear	Multidimensional
Nature as instrumental	Intrinsic value in things
Dead matter	Living matter-energy
Growth	Development
Quantitative	Qualitative
Discrete things	Fields and processes
Knowledge as power	Understanding and wisdom
Technology as Power	Appropriate Technology
Having	Being
Machine Paradigms	Ecological Paradigms
Mastery of Nature from outside	Mastery of Self
Specialism	Cultivation of whole person
Training skills alone	Education balanced ,
Corporation	Community
Machine planet	Gaia (Living planet)
Science vs Religion	Science and religion interact

I want to squeeze in a word about religion, it being so fundamental to human understanding and action. Christianity, it seems to me, has got to get its house in order on the matter of nature and of the earth and the earth process. I am strongly of the opinion that Lynn White is absolutely right in laying the roots of the ecologic crisis at the door of Christianity out of which arose a contempt for the earth as a hostile and even evil place which God meant to be conquered and subdued and to be escaped from eventually.

The greatest spiritual revolutionary in Western history, St. Francis, proposed what he thought was an alternative Christian view of nature and man's relation to it; he tried to substitute the idea of the equality of all creatures, including man, for the idea of man's limitless rule of creation. He failed. Both our present science and our present technology are so tinctured with orthodox Christian arrogance toward nature that no solution for our ecologic crisis can be expected from them alone. Since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious, whether we call it that or not. We must rethink and refeel our nature and our destiny. The profoundly religious, but heretical, sense of the primitive Franciscans for the spiritual autonomy of all parts of nature may point a direction. I propose Francis as a patron saint for ecologists. The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis. Lynn White. Science March 1967.

August 25
7:30 p.m. - Discussion of the Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Letter.