

Twelve Principles for Understanding the Universe and the Role of the Human in the Universe Process

by Thomas Berry

1. The universe, the solar system, and the planet Earth, in themselves and in their evolutionary emergence, constitute for the human community the primary revelation of that ultimate mystery whence all things emerge into being.
2. The universe is a unity, an interacting and genetically-related community of beings bound together in an inseparable relationship in space and time. The unity of planet Earth is especially clear: each being of the planet is profoundly implicated in the existence and functioning of every other being.
3. From its beginning, the universe is a psychic as well as a physical reality.
4. The three basic laws of the universe at all levels of reality are differentiation, subjectivity, and communion.
5. The human is that being in whom the universe attains reflexive consciousness of itself.
6. The Earth, within the solar system, is a self-emergent, self-nourishing, self-educating, self-governing, self-healing, self-fulfilling community. All particular life-systems in their being, their nourishment, their education, their governing, their healing, their fulfillment must integrate their functioning within this larger complex of mutually dependent Earth systems.
7. The genetic coding process is the process through which the world of living evolves, educates, and rules itself. The great wonder is the creative interaction of the multiple codings among themselves.
8. At the human level, genetic coding mandates a further trans-genetic cultural coding by which specifically human qualities find expression. Cultural coding is carried on by educational processes.
9. The emergent process of the universe is irreversible and non-repeatable in the existing world order. The movement from non-life to life on the planet Earth is a one-time event. So, too, the movement from life to the human form of consciousness. The movement from the simpler to more complex cultural forms is also, most likely, irreversible on the larger time scale.
10. The historical sequence of cultural periods can be identified as the tribal-shamanic period, the classical civilizational period of the great religious cultures, the scientific-technological period, and the ecological period.
11. The main human task of the immediate future is to assist in activating the intercommunion of all the living and non-living components of the Earth community in what can be considered the emerging ecological period of Earth development.
12. Functionally, the great art of achieving this historical goal is the art of intimacy and distance, the capacity of being to be totally present to each other while further affirming and enhancing the differences and identities of each.