THE CENTER FOR REFLECTION ON THE SECOND LAW
announces its
FALL CONFERENCE 1990
November 16, 17, 18

PHILOSOPHY AND ECONOMICS IN THE ECOZOIC AGE

The Purpose and Practice of Being Human

Philosophy by Thomas Berry
Economics by Alfredo L. de Romaña

This fifth conference by CFRSL seeks to address the real problems our society faces with some down to earth talk about how we got into the mess we are in and how to work our way out of it. The problem exists on two levels, perceptual and practical. We examine both.

THE CENTER FOR REFLECTION ON THE SECOND LAW
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PHILOSOPHY AND ECONOMICS IN THE EMERGING ECOZOIC AGE

THE PURPOSE AND PRACTICE OF BEING HUMAN

Tightly focussed, Thomas Berry’s message may be put: “Human behavior must be conformed to Earth dynamics. Human well-being is conditioned on the well-being of the Earth. If the human endeavor is to succeed, the Earth process, the life process, must be a success.” That is the physical/material reality. Its truth becomes ever more evident as the wreckage of the Earth proceeds. If the water is undrinkable, the air unbreathable, the soil sterile, the human becomes extinct.

Underlying this physical/material reality is a spiritual/psychic reality just as surely evolved out of the Earth. For if there is spirituality in the human it has its origins in Earth spirituality. Thomas has been working on redefining the human in these terms for decades. “The human is the being in which the universe reflects on itself in a special mode of consciousness. It’s not that we know the universe, the universe knows itself through us. The universe created its mirror of itself in the human.”

But, all of this reinvention of the human goes for nothing unless we learn to provide for ourselves in a way complementary to Earth systems. “An increasingly articulate critique” of the prevailing growth-oriented economics is impressing itself on a lot of thoughtful people. Alfredo L. de Romana, Peruvian architect/economist has just come into view from Montreal where he now resides. His critique of accumulation-intensive, growth-economics is devastating and his proposals that small scale response to economic problems can work is persuasive. He insists on the realism of his approach.

Community based economics accomplishes more than just a better solution to providing for human needs. It provides a wholesome society and encourages the kind of creativity which makes for fulfillment in one’s work. It cures alienation. It makes the human worker a worker for creation, responsible for the condition of things where the worker lives. It makes for bioregional identity; makes for joy in the flourishing of the natural endowment. It is an economics joined with philosophy in providing purpose and practice for being human.

SPEAKERS

THOMAS BERRY, onetime doorman at the Passionist Monastery Jamaica, Long Island, New York; onetime professor in the Department of Religion at Fordham University; student of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin; Earth theologian; lover of oak trees; author of THE DREAM OF THE EARTH; has developed over the last four decades a new way of understanding what Creation is about and how the human fits in it. Together with scientist Brian Swimme, he is just completing a new book, THE STORY OF THE UNIVERSE. His concern is for the whole of the Created order, an integrated system which must succeed or fail as a system. Western humanity, having placed itself above and apart from the rest of Creation, is about to bring on the failure of the Earth and the end of the life story. If we change the way we understand our presence in the earth we can change the way we live in it. There is no one better qualified to talk about the purpose of being human than Thomas.

Alfredo L. de Romaña is a Peruvian, an architect and economist. He is multi-disciplinary in both an academic and applied context. He does fundamental research in economic, social and political theory; does fundamental and applied research and consultation in urban self-help housing: architecture, planning, management, financing and policy.

For the last ten years he has been working on a three part essay titled The Emerging Alternative to Industrial Society: THE AUTONOMOUS ECONOMY. The first two parts of this essay have been published by Monchanin Cross-Cultural Centre in their journal INTERCULTURE, Issues 104 and 105. Thomas Berry was impressed and passed copies to CFRSL,
whereupon we decided to invite him to be a principal at our Fall conference this year. The following gives some of the flavor of his essay:

As the old era dies, we can look back upon it with serenity and distance, appreciating its benefits but also recognizing its horrors. Only then can we turn our eyes to the new times with the excitement and joy of the new possibilities, rather than with apprehension in the face of the unknown. For the first time in history, the fate of the earth itself is in question, as very dark clouds indeed gather on the horizon. Yet ecological sustainability and socio-economic harmony are possible, and the “good life,” which today is denied to both tepid overconsumers and frustrated underconsumers, is a perfectly realistic prospect within our grasp. But this will require a fundamental social mutation — movement towards radically new forms of social organization. And further on: Local solutions to global problems have always appeared to me as an authentic movement of social renewal. (pages 18 & 19, Part 1)

THE PROGRAM

Friday November 16
4:00 Registration
6:00 Dinner
6:00 Welcoming Circle and Introductions
7:30 The Context of the Conference
   The Philosophy of the Reinvented Human
8:00 Comment - Alfredo de Romana
8:10 Open discussion
9:00 Celebration - Tenth Birthday CFRSL

Saturday, November 17
Breakfast 7:45, Lunch Noon, Supper 6:00 (Vegetarian)
9:00 The Practice of Being Human - A Critique of Accumulation-Based Economics and How to Replace It
9:30 Comment - Thomas
9:45 Open Discussion
10:30 Walking – Conversation – Workshops – The workshops will pertain to regional and home successes in self-reliance and fulfillment.
12:00 Lunch
1:30 The Small Scale Solution – The Autonomous Society – Vernacular Economics and the Informal Sector – Alfredo
2:00 Comment – Thomas
2:15 Open Discussion
3:00 Walking – Conversation – Repeat Workshops
7:00 Post Industrial Civilization - Thomas & Alfredo
8:00 Open discussion
9:00 Around the Fire with Amy Hannon

SUNDAY, November 18
9:00 Sunday Circle
   Open Microphone.
   Closing remarks - Alfredo & Thomas
11:45 Closing Circle and Lunch

Workshops

Housing – Architect Alfredo L. de Romana is a specialist in housing. “There now exist architectural and management methods based on vernacular techniques, that could cut the employment income conventionally required for unsubsidized access to mortgage free home-ownership, to one fourth of its present amount.” Skilled craftsman Mark Marcopolos will participate.

Gardening – Zach Ralston

Composting – Dan Schellenberg

Meditation – Jim Gorman

Art – Carmen Elliott

Sponsors

The Other Economic Summit - North America (TOES)
Jean and Joseph Berry    Gabriel Berry
Peter Todd    Clay Stalmaker
Nadia Saad, World Bank Roger Corless
Bill Holman    Jane Sharp
Jim Lewis, Episcopal Diocese
Charles Mulholland

CAMP NEW HOPE

Camp New Hope, located on NC 86 north of Chapel Hill lies nestled among 165 acres of rolling pine and hardwood forest. This retreat/conference center has two freshwater lakes, basketball and volleyball courts, nature trails and boasts many other recreational facilities for individuals, families and groups of 200 or more in the rustic cabins. An excellent kitchen staff provides delicious meals in the modern dining hall.

Camp New Hope is 2.5 miles from I-40 exit #266 and 3.5 miles from I-85 exit # 165

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