

Eucalyptus rubida

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A Spirituality Born out of the Stars

There is a language that we are yet to learn, a language that does not reflect our disconnection from the world, but a language that we can use to access the deeper genetic roots that come from our evolutionary past on Earth, and our inherited pre-genetic roots that come from the sublime events that exploded from the first instant of the Universe.

Everything we have, cherish and sometimes fear has come from what we might call the Earth process, the life process, the human process. More starkly, the title of this essay arises from the wisdom of Thomas Berry quoted by Jason Kirkley on the fly-page of his book *The Salmon in the Spring*.

We need a spirituality that emerges out of a reality deeper than ourselves, a spirituality that is as deep as the Earth process itself, a spirituality born out of the solar system and even out of the heavens beyond the solar system.

What does this mean? I suggest that we are moving out of a mind-set that saw us as something special on the surface of the earth, put there by divine ordinance and to subject the world to our needs and convenience.

Occasionally as I walk or drive along I see and hear a flock of cockatoos, sometimes close, sometimes distant. They are a bird hard to ignore and they tell me more about myself as well as about how we are related. We both came from the same sub-phylum of chordates which is, of course the vertebrates. They are of the Class Aves, and we the Class Mammalia. But we are definitely not unrelated. We probably came from the same little chordate that set up the descendency we both belong to.

I have always been fascinated by the words of distinguished biologist Edward O Wilson:

The properties of the electron cannot be finally announced until their end product, the mind is understood

Right down to the level of the electron we now know a lot about our physical evolutionary history, but in the area of mind and consciousness we are infants, particularly in the West where we have had so much dependence on a dogmatic

written tradition and a deficient mental consciousness.

Is it possible to see ourselves, our mind and our spirituality as having come out of the Earth? Our spirituality is an expression of the creativity of Earth. It might be recognised as the zest for life that underlies and powers the evolutionary process. We are the expression and the form the process



of life has turned up in its mysterious wisdom. Is there a better wisdom than to regard, as a sacred divinity, the Earth and the Earth process that has mothered us into existence.

God does not dwell in the heavens. Divinity rather is the ground of our being, and we its manifestation, each of us in our unique way. This is not pantheism. Neither is it panentheism. Both these concepts arise from the concept of a distant and estranged personal deity.

Indigenous peoples had and still have an overarching respect and veneration for life and land that perplexes western thinking. Identity with the land, we in the west have really only glimpsed in recent years. For example people like John Muir in the United States began the push for National Parks in the late nineteenth century. At the present time concern for the species, land and eco-

systems is endemic and on the rise.

Everyone has the chance to be in this momentous movement by joining a group or supporting them, or by individual action writing to lawmakers. This is the external manifestation of a spirituality born of our love for the forest, or our deep sadness when a species is threatened, or when we fear for the greater peril of the world we see as mother to our life, and many other lives.

This kind of spirituality is born from a deep appreciation of our ancestry in deep time and an intimacy with all that lives and breathes - animal, vegetable, and yes even mineral. Our body is full of minerals. Where before we might have said our spirituality was Ignatian, for example, we might now take a line from indigenous people and say we are Forest People, or River People, or People of the Plains. Indigenous art and dress and both written and oral tradition is full of cosmological symbols and ideas that nourish their spirituality. I think the West has a fair way to go to embed this new cosmology in their culture, but do this we must. If we do not then we risk a life of further alienation from the greater world we could have.

It may be evidenced by a renewed respect for home food growing. Maybe we will celebrate solstice and equinox in traditional or by homemade ceremony. We might visit the outback, which has become a privileged space for our Australian consciousness. Poetry might flow from our pens or we might put to use our ability to do nature writing.

For each of us spirituality needs to be rooted in our respective experience and perception of what is sacred. For many in these times, love for the Earth and our sacred connection to all it means will provide this rootedness.

Earth is mother, home and destiny for all of us. It can be our heaven or our hell. These are both mythic ideas of what might and might not be in the drama and joy of living.

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Photo: Possum (alias Mary White)