

# Eucalyptus rubida

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Eucalyptus rubida is the dominant tree species at Glenburn. Its bark shines red at certain times of the year.

## The Ferment of Becoming

Look around and see what is happening to our world. Ferment is everywhere. The human is in trouble, the animals are in trouble, the earth is in trouble. The rhetorical question is always “What is going on”. There is no single answer to this question. It depends on what your worldview, your cosmology is.

Why do humans have restless hearts? To borrow the language of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin we could say that it was a sign of the universe in a ‘ferment of becoming.’ It seems that the Universe has been ‘becoming’ for the past 13.7 billion years, and has now reached the ‘restless heart’ stage. Everything serves a purpose in an intimately connected universe. Everything has a role in the continuously self-organising epic in which we participate. If we want to know our role in this epic, I think we have to ask our hearts this question but not expect an answer in grammatical English.

The scripting of the Universe Story is not set in concrete, except for the guarantee that what we have done in the past and what we do in the present constrains what we may do in the future. The hidden and mysterious agency that fuels our universe and that none of us knows precisely, manifests as an innate creativity and spontaneity present in our planet, that has brought us through several extinction processes to where we are on our beautiful blue-green paradise, and that has gifted us from the time when we were all stardust, engaged then in its own ‘ferment of becoming.’

There are two quotes there might be apposite here. One is from Teilhard de Chardin: “...everything is the sum of the past” and “...nothing is comprehensible except through its history.”

In one sense our bodies/minds carry the traces and results of the moment of the great flaring forth, the formation of stars and galaxies from the primordial interstellar dust, the cosmogenesis of elements in the heart of supernovas, the formation of Earth and the evolution of life. We are carrying the whole history of the past right here in the present. We are

dazzled by its beauty and integrity. After millenias of meditation on our world, science, culture, philosophy and religion has brought this story ever so more present to us in almost every aspect of its beauty and poignancy. The ferment of becoming continues as an epic story still striving for fulfilment.



The other quote is from process philosopher Alfred North Whitehead: “You can only interpret the past in terms of the present. The present is all that you have.” (*Body and Spirit - Lecture 3*) This is taken to mean, as Whitehead explains that as you are faced with interpreting the past it can only be dealt with satisfactorily if you bring to it your own contemporary metaphysical viewpoint. If you bring to it the same mindset in which it was established, then do not expect progress. Do not expect transformation.

Einstein and Thomas Berry remind us that the problems of the present cannot be solved by the same mindset that created it.

The American Indian tradition gives us an insight into the emergence of the human in the story of cosmogenesis. This tradition is extremely cosmological. Their clothes, tents and ceremonies expressed an attachment to the world that is rarely matched. Their place in

the scheme of things is expressed very poignantly in song:

*We make a road for the Spirit to pass over. (Passamaquaddy traditional song)*

The insight here is to give us a lead as to the role of the human in the progressive manifestation of Spirit, what Teilhard de Chardin named as ‘divinization.’ Brian Swimme, speaking about Teilhard de Chardin, in an interview entitled *The Divinization of the Cosmos* explains:

*God is present from the very beginning, but in an implicit form, and the universe is accomplishing this great work of making divinity explicit.*

The Passamaquaddy people see themselves as participating in this work in a unique way. I think this is also “*The Great Work*” of Thomas Berry. In this book Thomas is offering us a cosmology to help us define ourselves in this 21st Century.

Back in 1926 Teilhard de Chardin in the final paragraphs of his celebrated *The Divine Milieu* wrote about this creative ferment:

*Jerusalem, lift up your head. Look at the immense crowds of those who build and those who seek. All over the world, men are toiling- in laboratories, in studios, in deserts, in factories, in the vast social crucible. The ferment that is taking place by their instrumentality in art and science and thought is happening for your sake. Open, then, your arms and your heart, like Christ your Lord, and welcome the waters, the flood and the sap of humanity.*

This last page is well worth a read for those unfamiliar with his work. He wrote this at a time when the notion of the earth community was not yet well accepted in the West, and his work comes over as being somewhat human-centered. Thomas Berry’s contribution to the thinking of Teilhard with which he was very familiar, is to offer us a deeper connection to the more than human world and link it more closely to our consciousness of the sacred.

Trevor Parton

Photo: Hop Pea (Flinders Ranges)