

Eucalyptus rubida

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Comment je Crois - How I Believe

Readers of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin will recognise this as the title of a work by him (1969). Everyone comes to a point in their lives when they must needs re-examine and either confirm their beliefs or adjust or reject them. In the case of Teilhard the process of evolution so possessed him that it became a touchstone for virtually all of his thinking. For Thomas Berry a very significant part of his early life was his observation of a field of flowers:

It was an early afternoon in May when I first looked down over the scene and saw the meadow. The field was covered with lilies rising above the thick grass. A magic moment, this experience gave to my life something, I know not what, that seems to explain my life at a more profound level than almost any other experience I can remember. (The Great Work)

There have been similar points of striking awakening in my own life, that has had the effect of pulling me up short and realigning my thinking.

One has been the thinking of Thomas Berry, crystallised for me in the notion that we are the mode of the Universe come to conscious awareness over billions of years. This was reinforced for me by the work of Brian Swimme and Australian ecologist John Seed in his work *Thinking like a Mountain*.

Again there was the marvellous metaphor of Clarissa Pinkola Estes in *We Were Made for These Times*:

When a great ship is in harbour and moored, it is safe, there can be no doubt. But that is not what great ships are built for.

Estes urges us to go out and 'mend the part of the world that is within our reach'. The great cosmological question "What is the role of the human?" is answered to some extent in the words of the above quotes. However we all bring a history of cultural beliefs with us, and each of our interpretations will be different.

For Teilhard his answer was heavily Christological and he saw a convergence of all humanity towards the Cosmic Christ, under the influence of Omega as the great attractor, Omega being the ever present creative element of the Universe that both directs

and draws the movement of evolution. Thomas Berry and his colleague Brian Swimme jointly wrote an epic *The Universe Story* (1992) where the human was placed in the story of the Universe as a whole, showing our connections in the process and giving us a cosmological role into the future.

There was never a time in the story of the universe when everything stood still; never a time when the great creative force that binds the universe took pause for a breath, even though in the scriptures God is supposed to have rested on the seventh day. Maybe we are like the little eucalyptus seed that looks for all the world to be just dust,



but is just waiting for the right conditions to grow into the largest flowering plant ever known

Brian Swimme suggests that we were made for wonder, and this sits very comfortably with me as I have been walking, planting, writing, hiking and loving my way through life. I have taken time to pause and cherish the things I have been given. We all love many as-

pects of life, but we need to give them the time of our attention. I once wrote these playful few lines:

Soul

My Love, I made the world again for you this morning.

*As I walked everything spoke to me
Asking me to give them a share*

Of my soul

*The sore-legged magpie said
"Please give me some seed or I will fly away;
Your compassion gives meaning to my life"*

Wallaby looking at me from a few metres away said

"Smile at me please, speak to me,

Or I will hop away

And sulk all day in the bushes

For want of love"

Tree said to me

"My brother Wind is rustling my branches

And I need your ears to listen to this

So God can hear my morning prayers"

Little flower hidden in the bush says

"Today I have bloomed for you;

I am waiting for you to give me some soul

So that I might have soul also" Sept.2007

Wonder is there for the taking, and time invested in it will nurture Spirit in us and equip us for the tasks of our times. Each of us can expect that we will be suited for some special task, however simple or world-shaking. The Poet Rainer Maria Rilke in his Spanish Trilogy speaks lyrically of the simply beautiful:

the shepherd's daylong work seem possible to me...

and, as he stands there, noble. Even now a god might

secretly slip into this form and not be diminished.

'How I Believe?' is an important question for all of us. When we speak, it needs to be our deepest self who is speaking and not just the words of our culture coming out of our mouths. This is hard work, but in times of rapid change we cannot risk being left behind. Our Western world is in great need of a completely new worldview that is holistic, inclusive, relational, compassionate, loving ... Trevor Parton

Photo: Unconcerned wallaby in the vegetable garden - contact!