

INTRODUCTION

Writing this book has been something of a balancing act. It began simply enough as an attempt to tell a story. The story was about how an early traumatic event in my family caused a rupture that set me on a transformative spiritual path. As I began to tell some of the more difficult emotional aspects of this story, another part of me kept trying to assert itself. My head-centered, rational side wanted to erect a wall of protection. And so the balancing act became a dialogue between the intelligence of my head and that of my heart; between the power of ideas and the poetic sensuousness of experience; between feeling and thought, between the intuitive and rational side of my nature. The masculine and feminine principles within me, archetypal energies found within all of us, both wanted to be known. There is the masculine capacity to discern, to create and take action, and the feminine capacity to be still, to receive, to love, to intuit, and surrender to the sacred essence of nature. They each have their piece of the story. I found that to properly tell this story, I could neither reject nor segregate these two aspects of myself. I had no choice but to hold the tension between them and accept the paradoxes I found there. Once I did, a dynamic equilibrium and a kind of resolution began to manifest. Rather than a dualism, a synergistic relationship emerged.

Listening to the sacred intelligence of the body has become a lost art for many of us in our head-centered western culture. But finding ways back to that more intuitive way of knowing is to make our way back to a sense of belonging. Not long ago, this came home to me in a clear way. I had just had a massage and I was leaving for home, feeling pretty fine. On the narrow dirt path to the car was a fence lizard basking in the sun. They're quite common here in California. But as I slowed down to take in the lizard, I was suddenly transported back to my boyhood when

I kept a lizard as a pet. I was suddenly feeling the fascination of my ten-year-old self again, feeding the lizard, holding him in my hands, feeling the smooth cool flesh against my skin. Then, as I walked to the car, the minty smell of bay laurel took me back to the cool shade of a forest glade in summer where I played with my brothers, the earthy smell of leaves and soil all around us. I soon came to a guardrail alongside the parking area. The spot overlooked the athletic fields of the local high school. The baseball field and the football gridiron below were lush green and inviting. The voices of the players bantering floated up, punctuated by the crack of the bat. Again, I became my younger self, this time my baseball little league self in eighth grade, on the pitcher's mound, feeling the excitement of the game. As I turned to walk to the car, I was struck by the deep red paint gleaming in the sun. I felt a rush of delight inside me, the same captivation I had always felt when witnessing any of the intense color spectrum of precious gems, from ruby to emerald to amethyst. It was what inspired me to collect rocks throughout my childhood.

The massage had brought me out of the head and into a purely visceral experience of my surroundings. This is the intelligence of the body, an immediacy to the world that has more to do with feeling than idea. Even as I retrieved an older sense of myself as a boy in memory, I was fully in the present, feeling the numinous radiance within everything. I was literally sensing the world with new organs of perception, seeing with untainted eyes, hearing and feeling with the purity of ears and skin that were scrubbed of thought. The obstacles of naming and symbolic consciousness had momentarily shut down and fallen away. This state of mind was not simply regression to a more innocent state. It was the retrieval of an old joy from my internal landscape. And this is important for us in our modern culture as a balance to the complexities, drivenness, and cerebral tendencies that dominate most of our waking hours. I see body awareness, which is

our intuitive nature, as an integral part of the practice of spiritual ecology. This is our way through to transformation, a new, and yet very old way of being human that will form the basis for a new faith in the human. Qi gong, massage, a daily walk in silence, contemplative hiking, and meditation are all body prayers that have been part of my practice for encouraging the sacred intelligence of the body to come to the fore. When this happens, I am conscious, but in a much different way. I have emotional contact with myself and with the world. And with that contact, all of the naive forms of awareness the head is vulnerable to fall away. It is this constant dynamic tension between head and heart, thinking and feeling that made writing this book something of a balancing act.



When I use the phrase “spiritual ecology,” I often think of the word spiritual as describing the animating dynamic we feel in the web of relationships that is ecology. It has to do with our capacity to feel the sensuousness of nature as joy, wonder, terror, exhilaration. The body is the locus of this dynamic. There are two stories in this book where I describe running with another animal in a state of self-abandonment and play. One is with a harbor seal on a beach on the Pacific Ocean and the other with a Rottweiler dog in a cemetery in a prairie remnant in my home state of Iowa. They correspond to two states within me, one wild, the other partly domesticated. They were very different, but primal experiences where I was immersed in my body, the cognitive part of me in balance with, even subservient to, a heart-centered knowledge. The illusion of duality was dissolved, if only for a brief time, in a process of forgetting that helped me remember something beyond myself. They were both learning as well as healing experiences. They helped bridge a divide. One divide was kinetic, a severance of thought from the body; the other was ex-

istential, a mistaken belief that we are separate from the other-than-human world. Connection to the other in both of these experiences was a reconnection to myself, a return to heart-centered knowledge, an undervalued gift of play that energizes the imagination. Imagination and play are two sides of the same coin. They are activated simultaneously in a moment of communion. And communion is the energy needed not only to heal trauma but to create the future.

Spiritual ecology is at its essence non-dual consciousness, a bodily awareness of how integral we are with the web of life. And so, a practice of spiritual ecology has become, for me, a path of healing from trauma. This is true of personal trauma, which I describe in the early chapters, but cultural trauma as well, which unfolds in later chapters. That cultural trauma has its origins in what Thomas Berry called a “radical discontinuity” between the human and the other-than-human. This is “radical” in the sense of “having roots” (from the Latin *radicalis*), a severance so traumatic that we have nearly destroyed the most beautiful place in the universe as we currently know it, our garden planet. Because of this severance, our culture has suppressed our inborn ability to attune to the field of consciousness that we share with all life on Earth. Something is deeply wrong at the heart of my country. Our public education system has suppressed spirit. Our major religions have abandoned their capacity to induce awe. Our political system has lost touch with what it means to be truly human, and to act humanely toward each other. In other words, our capacity for love and connection is atrophied.

This is a good part of what is preventing our recovery from collective trauma. The despair underlying that trauma in the U.S. alone is everywhere evident. As I complete this book, mass shootings are an almost daily reality. The number of high schoolers contemplating suicide is nearing 20%, and nearly 10% of those have made an attempt. Addiction is rampant; the num-

ber of Americans in 2020 with Substance Use Disorder was 40 million, up from 20 million in 2018. Twenty nine percent of U.S. adults have been diagnosed with depression in their lifetime; thirty-one percent suffer from anxiety disorder. Political polarization is worse than any time in the nation's history, and we are experiencing an epidemic of loneliness and alienation. Long standing antagonisms are surging up into war in the Middle East, Ukraine, and elsewhere.

Another face of this alienation is the lack of a life-giving, cultural cosmology adequate to the challenges of our time, from species extinction and climate change to an increasingly toxic world and an ocean full of plastic. In a very real sense, the personal trauma experienced by my family was a result of similar feelings of alienation and loss of belonging to a community. The perpetrator of that personal trauma suffered from this greater sense of alienation in our culture as well, whether or not he was ever aware of it. And whatever the failings of the religious community of which we were a part, the loss of that community was still a traumatic separation for my family.

It doesn't have to be this way. Even the most seemingly solitary life is deeply communal. I've taken great solace and found healing power in solitude throughout the years, especially in the natural world. But I've never felt alone in nature. Solitude attuned me to my inner life, and the more strongly I felt that attunement, the greater was my sense of the sacred within all of nature. I've always been in non-verbal dialogue with the plants, animals, and landscapes that has given me a sense of belonging. Those encounters have both enriched my experiences in the human community and been enriched in the sharing of them through artistic expression in writing and music. These creative expressions weren't so much an attempt to develop artistic abilities, as they were to deepen my emotional contact with myself and the world. I was seeking to transcend

the naive constructs of reality perpetrated on me through religion and education. This was part of my healing from the rupture of community. In describing the personal trauma of myself and my family, the attempts at healing, including the missteps, I am telling the story as well of our larger cultural rupture and the need for healing. The Earth speaks to all of us in healing language, if we listen.

As Canadian physician and trauma researcher Gabor Mate explains, “Trauma is not the bad things that happen to you, but what happens inside of you as a result. Trauma is the psychic wound that we sustain. And healing is a reconnection with the authentic self.”¹ I found that this is true on both a personal and a societal level. The psychic wound we have sustained in our severance from nature can be healed by a connection to our larger ecological Self. I believe that the same spiritual transformation that happened on an individual level with me can be recapitulated on the collective level. But we need to generate a cosmology, a story of our origins and existence that is up to the task of that transformation.



This book is an interweaving of personal narrative in the form of mini-memoirs and what I call “landscape interludes.” The interludes are like winding vines on the trunk of a live tree, one that continues to thicken and furrow with time. The interludes and the narrative are symbiotic in a way, but mostly I use them in the spirit of inter-play, a type of improvisation meant to yield new articulations of spirit. The interludes are mostly lyrical explorations of both the outer landscapes of my life as well as my inner landscape. These landscapes correspond to the events, either directly or indirectly, with the time periods of my life and spiritual growth depicted in the

¹ The Wisdom of Trauma, documentary...

regular chapters. They progress from earlier accounts through the eyes of a young boy, growing in complexity throughout the book to reflect the maturation into adolescence, young manhood, and elderhood. In fact, the book as a whole complexifies, just as a human life or the universe complexifies as it unfolds.

There is another side of me to know before you reach the first chapter. I am a certified citizen naturalist with the state of California and I carry my scientific mind as well as my feeling self into the natural world. I have been a passionate birder for nearly forty years, faithfully cataloguing what birders call my “life list” of species. That more scientific part of me always wants to assert himself. I am rarely if ever without a pair of binoculars and a field journal close at hand. So in describing any given landscape in both the landscape interludes and the main narrative, I attempt to be as precise as possible in my description of the plants, animals, and natural landscapes.

The naturalist in me wants to name things, to note down, and remember. The spiritual ecologist in me wants to experience and feel, to witness a river, a mountain, a wetland without the word. To look honestly at my ecosystem of emotion—from anger, to grief, to regret, to joy, to love—without the content of the past. There is always this interplay throughout the essays in the book between the power of naming through symbolic consciousness and a felt, bodily experience of the natural world.

There is power in naming. To name and remember and imagine is at the root of our unique power as one species among many. As the poet Rainer Maria Rilke, wrote “Perhaps we are here in order to say: house, bridge, fountain, gate, pitcher, fruit-tree, window...*Here* is the

time for the sayable, *here* is its homeland. Speak and bear witness. More than ever the Things we might experience are vanishing.”² Another of my favorite poets, Emily Dickinson, offers us this:

*A word is dead
When it is said,
Some say.
I say it just
Begins to live
That day.*³

And yet there is a cautionary tale in Western culture’s overemphasis on naming things to the point of objectification and confusing the name with the essence of the named. My experience of the massage, bringing my body’s intelligence to the fore, had brought me also into the presence of the sacred. As I write in my essay, “The Kinglet at the Door,” about feeling the sacred essence of a tiny bird: “I hunger, as we all do, for home and place. I feel the pangs of longing for beauty, to never shut down my inner gateway to wonder, at being stunned or terrified.” To know this is to put words aside for a time and remember an older language that gives rise to what I think of as “cosmoriginal awareness” (more on this in Chapter 21). As powerful as our symbolic consciousness is, we must remember as well this primary ground of intelligence from which it has evolved. To forget that our intelligence flows out of this older wisdom would be to succumb to hubris. And as a species, we’ve had quite enough of that.



My pathway to healing has been fourfold, all having to do with connection: a sacred connection to nature; connection to a new story that has given me a sense of purpose; the cultivation

² Rilke, *Collected Poems*, Stephen Mitchell...

³ Emily Dickinson, *Collected Poems*, p. 218.

of creativity in my life that helped me process emotional and psychological aspects of trauma and to feel the radiance underlying everything; and connection to various communities over the years that have had a positive commitment to the future. This book explores each of these connections in various ways.

There are many pathways toward healing from trauma. Spiritual ecology has been a big part of mine, a road I still travel imperfectly, but with a heart full of intent. The characters you meet on the road of life—the angels, the friends, the villains, the clowns, the sages, the enemies—are all teachers, each presenting an opportunity to move toward wholeness, at least to the extent that we can be conscious of their import. Often, as with awareness around trauma, these insights don't come until some time has elapsed after the encounter occurs. Part of the spiritual work of a life is to unearth them. There are internal characters one encounters as well, the angels and demons within our own nature. And there are internal landscapes, emotional states elicited by natural encounters: I clamber over a high Sierra granite boulder tilted up by the forces of time, feeling the rough and gritty skin on the palms of my hands; I hear the clatter of tule reeds in the marshes; I feel the sting of icy wind on my face, out on the prairie in a bleak Iowa winter; I taste the salt of seawater as I fall back, blissful, into the surf of the Pacific; I shudder under the shadow of a passing vulture; or I return the gaze of a coyote and can tell by the light in her eyes that she has not mistaken me. These sensuous experiences all have an internal correspondence with my feeling self.

When I am confronted with thoughts or reveries that cause psychological pain (or pleasure), which can occur numerous times over the course of a day, I attempt to be immediately grateful. I try to see it as an opportunity to practice. I am reminded to be present, to observe. My

awareness sharpens, then the feeling dissolves into an internal energy. In short, it presents me with a pathway to grow spiritually, even if in the moment there is psychological pain. How can this not elicit joy? Over and over again I have a memory or I engage in imagining something or other about a situation. I make assumptions which cause me pain and separation because of the divisive nature of thought. And then I bring my full attention to the feeling behind the thought, and just observe, attempting to suspend judgment.

Sometimes, something amazing takes place. The feeling becomes like the tule fog that steals into our neighborhood here in Northern California, but then burns off by mid-morning under the attention of the Sun. It abates, and what is left is a feeling of serenity and strength. In this sense, through the power of attention, psychological pain is effectively dealt with differently from physical pain, a kind of an aspirin for the soul. Except that the eventual release is more powerful and joyful. This moment to moment practice reminds me that thoughts and feelings come and go in the face of the astonishing mystery in which we live.

This wasn't always the case for me. I was largely unconscious for years, only occasionally breaking through the illusions of my own thoughts. I had to learn it as a practice over time, and it is still imperfect, always a work in progress. "The imperfect is our paradise," wrote the poet Wallace Stevens, but "note that in this bitterness, delight." The domain of delight is what we find if we flow with the imperfect. This is an aspect of spiritual ecology, a practice of dancing with the imperfect in a spirit of acceptance and creativity.

What I've described in the paragraph above is the inner manifestation of a powerful tool for healing that I feel we all have at our disposal. But the practice of spiritual ecology is also a way of reconnecting to Earth's community of life, to the landscapes and geological formations

and rivers and forests of our home region and beyond. While there is indescribable beauty there, what we also encounter is the equivalent of our personal psychological pain, a wounded Earth, along with our own atrophied abilities to hear her voice. And yet, with the right quality of attention and intention, we can retrieve a deeper joy in reconnecting with what is most basic to our nature as human beings. This is the heart-centered way of knowing at the core of this book.



In this book, I share the story of my sister Kristin's kidnapping, a trauma that sent deep emotional and spiritual tendrils into my own life. Kristin's story is part of my story; her personal trauma was the family's trauma, her healing is my healing and that of my other family members; and our healing is part of society's healing from the rape and plunder of the Earth. But Kristin's story is also unique, not wholly my own story, and only she can fully tell it. By interviewing her and breaking the silence between us, I have attempted to relate her part of my story more authentically.

In telling this story, I present a number of teachers I have encountered along my path. Each gave me food for the journey, nourished me in unique ways, and challenged me to forge my own identity. Their commonality is a dedication to something larger than the small self, and that has allowed the circle of my own identity to expand beyond the narrow silo of the ego self identification to an identification as big as the universe. I was guided back to a connection with the web of life, but also to a cosmology, a way of making sense of the universe that returned me to a feeling of belonging. The right story, a functional cosmology, makes us feel guided and accepted in a larger community. It prevents loneliness, makes us feel a part of the grand theater of the universe.

A good part of my own story involved secrets and silence. When the silence was broken and my family began to see the truth, the wheels of healing began slowly turning. And they are still turning. For too long now, we humans in Western society have engaged in a deadly silence about what is destroying our world. Breaking the silence is the first step out of denial. There have been prophetic voices crying in the wilderness, people out there who have been doing this work of giving voice to the trauma and attempting to heal the rupture. Now it must become central to our path forward as a species. It's an attempt to deal with reality as it is. We can't be afraid of the truth. This is the ascendent archetype of the spiritual ecologist in our time.

I describe my personal method for confronting psychological pain mostly because it is a constant, moment-to-moment practice, not one in which one sets aside 20 minutes a day amidst the busyness of the day-to-day. This is precisely the way in which we need to confront, observe, feel, and transform our cultural rupture from nature and the community of life that support us. It is a moment-to-moment imperative, in my mind, to finding the purpose and empowerment needed to embrace what Teilhard de Chardin called a zest for living. It begins within each one of us, and yet it is a profoundly communal act. "If we have a trauma-informed society," says Gabor Mate, "we have a society that looks much more compassionate."

"In the Lakota tradition," he offers as an example, "when somebody gets ill, the community says 'thank you.' Your illness represents some dysfunction, some imbalance in our whole community, because we're not separate. Your body is not separate from your mind, and your mind is not separate from the rest of our minds. We co-create each other. Your healing is our healing; so thank you."⁴ There are so many people who have experiences that have induced

⁴ The Healing of Trauma, Gabor Mate. Citing the author Dr. Lewis Mehl-Madrona, a Lakota Sioux.

trauma in their lives. To the extent that we can listen, as in the Lakota tradition, to their stories and honor their, and our, need for healing, we can begin to move toward cultural wholeness.

Here is a summary of what's to come:

Section One, "Childhood," describes both the natural and religious communities into which I was born. Chapters 1 and 2, "The Dunes," and "Life in the Bubble," convey the embryonic world I grew up in, one with a protective membrane that was also a barrier in many ways, shielding me and my family from the larger culture in which we lived. The religious vision cohering this bubble sustained us, but also limited us. Then there was an event that caused a rupture of that bubble and a chain of events for my family and that profoundly changed the narrative of our lives.

Chapters 3 and 4, "Tornado," and "Rupture," portray both the trauma and the immediate aftermath.

Chapter 5, "Leaving the Fold," is an account of my family's departure from the religious bubble.

Chapter 6, "Creativity, Loss, and Risk" explores how creativity and loss have been an intricate and dynamic tension in the process of spiritual rebirth in my life.

Section Two, "Learning and Memory," tracks my own journey after the rupture and my attempts to rebuild and to re-educate myself.

Chapter 7 and 8, "Wildness and Domesticity," and "From Feral to Free Range," include my growing realization of the larger cultural rupture of humankind from the natural world, which has caused a form of collective trauma in all of our lives. The chapters also critique an educational system that aided and abetted a feeling of alienation from both nature and spirit.

Chapter 9, “Abroad,” relates my attempt to find meaning in my ancestral roots in which I describe visiting the Gothic cathedrals and the country of my family’s origin.

The section culminates in Chapter 10, “A Turn Toward Life,” describing my encounter with the life-affirming spirituality articulated by Matthew Fox as an inflection point that brought me full circle to a renewed sense of belonging and community.

Section Three, “A Trajectory of Healing,” explores different stages of healing the rupture of my youth.

It begins in Chapter 11, “The Transformative Power of Story,” with a look at how I came to realize how deeply the stories I grew up with have formed my inner landscape and my subsequent actions in the world. Powerful archetypes within my psyche have shaped my identity, usually in an unconscious way. Naming the archetypes and changing the story has been an attempt to change the trajectory of my life. This chapter foretells the final section on cosmology.

Chapter 12, “Secrets, Stories, and Deep Time,” shows the breaking of the silence in my family around the trauma-inducing event and relates personal and familial story to the deep time of our larger common evolutionary story.

Chapter 13, “Earth, Light, and Spirit” chronicles one particular form of creativity in my life, my editorship of a national magazine of spirituality and ecology. My work at the magazine, in its advocacy for a more compassionate human in kinship with all life, had a profound impact on my healing journey.

The final chapter of the section, “Spiritual Ecology—Practice and Archetype,” describes how I developed a practice of spiritual ecology over the years as a healing response to trauma.

This is a powerful moment to moment practice that can lead us back to self-realization and the

state of flourishing needed to cope with loss and crisis. I also outline what I see as the key characteristics of the Spiritual Ecologist, an ascendant archetype for our time. A conscious embrace of the energies of this archetype has potential for cultural healing.

Section Four, “A Life-Enhancing Cosmology,” is about a larger reintegration and creation of a new narrative of healing and wholeness in my life. It describes a cosmology that gave me a sense of coherence, an integrated worldview that in turn gave me a renewed sense of purpose and meaning that countered my feelings of despair about the world.

The chapter “Radiance: the Cosmos Within,” shows how I came to see that my personal creativity is in alignment with the creativity of the universe. With this came the realization that human creativity is nature manifesting through us and how it presents us with a choice as human beings. We can use it for good or ill.

Chapters 16 and 17, “A New Faith in the Human,” and “Cell and Membrane,” describes a living cosmology based in a comprehensive compassion and the Earth-based wisdom of spiritual ecology. This came out of the work of Teilhard de Chardin, beginning especially with my encounters with two individuals who are directly in his intellectual lineage, cultural historian Thomas Berry and evolutionary philosopher Brian Thomas Swimme.

Chapter 18, “A Dynamic Tension,” discusses the tensions I felt between Teilhardian cosmology and the American Transcendentalist tradition, especially Henry David Thoreau, and how I came to see them in dynamic dialogue instead of in contradiction.

Chapter 19, “The Sacred Feminine and the New Cathedral,” begins with a powerful dream I had of the Sacred Feminine and how this dream, as an encounter with the Black Madonna, helped me to begin resolving dualisms within me.

Chapter 20, “The Great Enamorment,” describes the power of love-in-action pervading the universe as the activating energy for creating the future.

The book culminates in the final chapter, “Awakening into a Sense of Future” and a short Afterword, “A Return to the Fold.”

Finally, I wrote the “Cosmic Fable” found at the end of the book as an attempt to express my internal landscape in mythic terms. This landscape is co-extensive with the natural world. There is ultimately no distinction.



This book doesn't attempt to catalog, as urgent as it has become, the widespread ecological disruption we humans are causing, from toxic pollution to acidification of the oceans, to the decimation of the Amazon rainforests and indigenous communities worldwide, to species extinction, and climate change. These and more are already being well-chronicled by others; we are faced daily with news of the destruction. They are symptomatic of our culture's rupture, our disconnection from the natural world which birthed us and gives us life. For those who wish to engage with the protection and regeneration of the planet, itself a kind of healing from trauma, there are numerous initiatives to join. (See the Appendix for a list and short descriptions of empowering initiatives for both education and activism.)

Nor does this book cover the field of trauma and recovery, except to illustrate its relevance to my own pathway. I have been greatly influenced by Gabor Mate and his work on trauma, addiction, social isolation, illness, and pathways for healing. A good deal of the recovery from trauma is balancing the prevailing influence of our head-centered culture with practices that connect us with the wisdom of the body. I have been greatly influenced as well by the work of

conscious embodiment author Philip Shepherd. While not specifically based in trauma recovery, he has developed meditations and practices that quiet our head-centered selves and focus on the wisdom of the body. He states in one of his video meditations: “The more you live in the head, the more anxious you feel because you’re disconnected from the grounded presence of the body. We live in self-consciousness because we live in the head. Self-consciousness is a divided state. The thing that the body most deeply understands is that it belongs to the world.”⁵ The sacred intelligence of the body had a good deal more to do with my healing than ideas because it gave me back a sense of belonging. My story is the making of spiritual ecologist from the energy of trauma, a spiritual rebirth that involved a balance of head intelligence and body intelligence.

Essentially, this book is a chronicle of my lifelong attempt to rekindle and sustain a religious mind. Not religion in the sense of dogma, creed, and God, but in the sense of a religious devotion to life, the cultivation of wonder and reverence, a renewed sense of the sacred, and an embrace of mystery and magnificence in the universe. As such it is my credo, an affirmation of life and faith. It is something of a hybrid of the rational and the sensual, but mostly it is a book that tells a story that is both highly personal and universal. Or, perhaps it is universal precisely because it is deeply personal. As Teilhard de Chardin wrote in *The Human Phenomenon*: “Are we not experiencing at each instant a universe whose immensity is being gathered up more and more simply within each one of us through the interplay of our sense and our reason?”⁶ Teilhard saw personalization in the universe as the internal deepening of consciousness on itself. As human beings, we are an embodiment of that deepening of consciousness in the universe. The more

⁵ Phillip Shepherd, “The Elevator and the Bond of Love,” video meditation.

⁶ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Human Phenomenon*, p. 184.

deeply personal we become, the greater our unity with a universe that is always seeking greater depth and complexity.

Finally, this book is not strictly speaking a memoir or an autobiography in that it doesn't attempt to chronicle all of the events, or even the key events, of a life. There are so many people, landscapes, and events I couldn't include, even if they have been very dear to me. It is instead one narrative strand from the life of one person whose story is both unique and universal. It is at the very least descriptive of what it means to be human, perhaps a new way of being human in a time of both great destruction and great opportunity. It's a narrative of how a life-giving cosmology can heal and of how the powers and graces of the natural world can sustain cultural and spiritual wholeness. It isn't inevitable, but rather a choice. The better we bring the gifts of science into dialogue with spirit into a meaningful cultural cosmology for our time and the future, the better informed our choices will be.

It's a humbling and harrowing privilege to be alive in our time, when we are presented with the greatest work ever: creating what Thomas Berry called mutually-enhancing relations with all life.