

## The “Human Distinction”

The religious person and church community are products of the intentional process of refined thinking — what is “The Human Distinction.” The test of “human distinction” is refinement of thinking, how the person, the community conform personally and communally to divine expectations of faith, hope and love—what is nature’s pattern of symbiosis, God’s plan of Eucharistic purpose, and personal/ communal conformity in Christian Humanism. Evolution is the process of personal/ communal “perfecting” evolved in refined understandings of Godlikeness and refined Godlike living.

Refined thinking is the intentional process and “method” of evolving consciousness and civil/ religious reconciliation, expressed in the Latin phrase: cogitata perficiendo, cogitando sic perfecta; in shorthand, **COGITANDO SIC**.

<http://www.evolution101.org/Thinking%20Global.pdf>

The process of refining thoughts, ideas (cogitata perficiendo) is a process that refines a person’s talent for thinking (cogitando sic perfecta), for behaving in a human way, that is, in a way that chooses sustainable living in common—the requirement of faith.

In his posthumous book “The Christian Future and the Fate of Earth” (edited by Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, 2009, Orbis Book, Maryknoll, NY) Thomas Berry spells out four religious issues that are problematic for our times. The most problematic issue “facing the human community involves identifying the spiritual dynamics of the cosmological story given us by science... this last [issue] is the most difficult and the most needed“. The spiritual dynamic of cosmologic, scientific, human understanding is evolution, the process of the introspective refinement of thought and the ever refining process of thinking, the way of thinking and behaving rationally. Thomas Berry writes:

“Our present world situation and our future prospects [suffer] from a modern scientific account of evolution poorly understood, trivialized and basically rejected by religious traditions. Rejected for different reasons by different traditions the new evolutionary cosmology is refused by traditional Western religions because they are overly committed to a redemptive process and little interested in creation dynamics, the basis of the new scientific vision of reality... The new cosmological story... is a story of development, of time that needs in some manner to be validated from within. This is the story and the rhetorical context in which serious discussion of the future must take place... Within this context **a further story proper to the fourth phase is being born.**” (emphasis mine)

Descartes says: “I think, therefore I am.” We ask, “I am what?” The answer is, “I am human.” Fideism, the requirement of blind, unquestioned following, believing, produces mindlessness not mindfulness. Mindlessness destroys the personal distinction of what it means to be human. Fideistic religion defeats humanity because it defeats the human distinction of introspection, the spiritual dynamic of perfecting and exchanging thoughts.  
<http://www.secondenlightenment.org/The%20Tyranny%20of%20Religions.pdf>

Because I work at thinking, I am human—thinking is the “human distinction.” Thinking—what is rationality—distinguishes humankind from other life. Thinking and language, the ability to communicate thoughts/ ideas, go hand-in-hand in distinguishing what it is to be human. We might also say, because I can talk, I am human, for talking advances the

capacity for thinking. Talking and thinking together enable humanity as people and as individuals to work together thoughtfully, purposefully. When thinking and talking fail, the human distinction fails and humanity becomes frustrated, defeated.

Rationality is a process of personal/ interpersonal reflection/ communication. Reflection and thinking take place at two levels, at the individual level (introspection, thinking) and at the social level (interspection, communication). Introspection occurs in the individual mind, and interspection occurs in the social mind, in shared consciousness, in reasoning people-to-people. Personal and social rationality together build the fabric of faith, the weave of understandings that consistently sustains common wellbeing.

Internal dialog, introspective thinking, is the self-reflective mind talking its way through experiences and relationships—a process that refines thoughts and thinking. Thoughts are understandings, ideas that are tools of logic (rationality), the medium of intellectual exchange, transformation, and change. The evolution of sense, purpose and sensitivity comes with the evolution of thought. It is the “human distinction” that is being reborn even as life is; evolution’s generational story continues to be written, read and reread.

Religious fixation in fideism, in the static-centrist worldview, no longer has credibility; it is crumbling around us—this crumbling is part of the “upheaval” Berry refers to.

“The relentless development of cosmic unfolding is reaching a new level of reintegrative, reflective understanding... That we will succeed is to some extent assured by the whole past history... It is to some extent also assured by the course of human history with all of its agonies and catastrophic periods. We cannot expect to achieve anything substantial without upheaval... The future is also hopeful because of the integral, cosmological story available to us now for the first time.” ID, pp 6,7

In response to my essay “In Service to Religion” (Summer 1992 ), Thomas Berry wrote me: “Please excuse this brief response. I wish I could elaborate more fully. You have indeed set forth the fundamental vision needed for effective entry into the future. The quotes you use from my book I fully approve. I do hope that your vision will become effective on a broad scale throughout our society.”

<http://www.secondenlightenment.org/SERVICE%20TO%20RELIGION.pdf>