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Intercorporeality: An Invitation to *Being* in the Human-Body-Nature Relationship

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ABSTRACT

Human-mediated climate change and environmental degradation are real. Likewise, human health issues associated with modernity are becoming increasingly concerning. This paper presupposes the inter-relationship between these two burgeoning phenomena, and draws upon recent scholarship in the field of Religion and Ecology, and particularly the work of Thomas Berry (2006, 1999), as a means to critically analyze Judeo-Christian theosophy, an encoded meaning *animus* by which Westerners (largely), and Americans primarily, enact denial of the fullest expression of life – among one another and within the context of the natural world. I offer two broadly generalized and contrasting religious narratives, which together illumine widely variable cultural cosmologies. The first narrative is derived from indigenous peoples of the Amazon, as described by Wade Davis (2009). The second narrative emerges from the Judeo-Christian Biblical creation stories in Genesis Chapters One and Two, as described by Leon Kass (2003). Together, these narratives form a basis for developing understanding of encoded human behavior toward the human body, human *Being*, and the nature-body.

My thesis is that Western Judeo-Christian theosophy as it has been interpreted and expressed societally, serves, even in a largely secularized context, as the encoded meaning *animus*, which drives human behavior toward denial of the fullest expression of life. It is this theosophy that is herein scrutinized, which provides the context to consider other ways of *Being*. When juxtaposed with animist cosmogony, the Judeo-Christian cosmological denial of life becomes immediately apparent. Is there, however, a pre-immanent cosmology, one that is proto-logical, indeed, proto-symbolical? Importantly, the paper invites a response to these human and environmental issues by considering an enactive framework of embodied intersubjectivity – *intercorporeality* – as it relates to the embodied *Being-in-the-world* as well as *Beingness* embodied, embedded, extended and enacted (Rowlands, 2010) intercorporeally. Drawing largely on Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Husserl by way of David Michael Levin (1985) and J. W. Hayward, I propose here, a response that is less methodological than it is an examination of and invitation to experiential phenomenology and intersubjectivity – *intercorporeality* – to address human-nature well-being.

Keywords

climate change, human health, religion and ecology, cosmogony, cosmology, ways of being, ways of knowing, phenomenological Being, intersubjectivity, intercorporeality.

Introduction

We live in a world on the brink. To most people this is not news. What, however, does this statement about the world really mean? In other words: what *is* a world on the brink, and what does it *mean* to live in a world on the brink? How did we get here? And what are we to do about it, if anything? This paper is one response to these questions. There are obviously many responses. I consider here the existing scholarship emerging from the field of Religion and Ecology and invite an enactive framework of embodied intersubjectivity – *intercorporeality* – as a means to transform the human-body-nature relationship. The paper emerges from four assumptions. They are: 1) Climate change and human-mediated environmental degradation are real (Bauman et al., 2011). 2) Human and planetary well-being are intimately wed (Berry, 2006, 1999). 3) Religion matters (Bauman et al., 2011), and its semiotics perpetuate humanity's enacted dominion *over* body, *Being*, Other, and Nature (Stewart and Bennett, 1991). 4) The bodily *Being* essence is the genesis of inter-*Being* (Levin, 1985).

Background - Well-being gives way to *dis*-ease

Since the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962, human-mediated desecration of the natural world has been increasingly hard to deny (Peat, 2002). Carson brought to light effects of unmitigated industrialization on nature, specifically the “dangers of indiscriminate use of pesticides. Suddenly people realized that the idea of pollution did not apply simply to one lake or patch of woods, but to the entire environment” (Peat, 2002. p.157). Environmentalism was born to the American populace, and the notion emerged that ‘nature’ should remain forever pure. Still, the idea of nature was limited to a notion of something ‘out there’ (Peat, 2002. p. 157), separate from human existence.

Nature here refers to the life *animus* (Taylor, 2010) or the ‘soul’ (Berry, 1999, 2006, and Kass, 1999) of the earth's biosphere, which emerges, evolves from, and maintains its wholeness autopoetically prior to, in the midst of, and in spite of human existence. Nature also refers to the biological systems themselves. “These, the inner spirit and the outer form, are two distinctive aspects of a single mode of being” (Berry, 1999, p. 115). The biological systems include the local or regional ‘organs’ (metaphorically speaking) of the whole ‘body’ of the biosphere. Nature's ‘organs’ are the plants, animals, microbes, and minerals, which are intimately nested (Widhalm, 2011) and netted at the micro-, meso- and macro-ecosystem levels. Much like the organs of the human body, nature's ‘organs’ auto-regulate synchronistically as vital living aspects of the whole biospheric system.

Nature, as a whole living system is hereafter, therefore, referred to as the *nature-body* – a whole, living, biological and inspirited *Being* (see Taylor's (2010) depiction of nature animism as well as Berry's (2006) references to the ‘ensouled’ world). Others have coined the terms *earth-body* or *flesh-of-the-earth* to depict the nature-body. These terms, however phenomenological their origins, are limiting as portrayed, because they evoke ideas of matter primarily. Nature-body, however, is construed as the phenomenological coupling of biological matter with animus, which ‘forms’ the *Being* essence of nature (Kass, 1999). The phenomenological concept of nature-body is derived in parallel with Heidegger's *Dasein*, the *Being* of the human being in-the-world, and Merleau-Ponty's *flesh* of the body (Levin, 1985). Furthermore, human *Being* and nature *Being* are co-existent.

Nature-body ‘organs’ have historically been able to self-correct – to return to wholeness –

after a period of human contact. Likewise, the nature-body and humankind have autopoetically evolved co-extant in the context of the nature-body-human relationship – meaning, the nature-body and human beings have exerted a mutual co-evolutionary influence upon one another (Pollan, 2001). This mutuality of influence no longer exists. The nature-body is no longer able, by and large, to stay apace (Berry, 2006). Since the onset of industrialization, human beings increasingly impact the nature-body as a whole, which is now at the mercy of a force akin to ‘the human cancer’. This human cancer refers to the unforeseen malignant human enactment of burgeoning planetary industrialization coupled with unmitigated human population growth, a structural coupling that has engendered the effects of climate change. “We have become a death-dealing presence” (Berry as cited in Lazlo and Combs, 2011, p. 12). The impact of climate change is beyond yet the reach of the human imagination. The following limited list reveals, however, several effects: glacial and arctic melt and reduced snow accumulation that otherwise lend rivers; warmer and more acidic oceans; depletion of zooplankton – the basis of the marine food chain – by more than 70%; poisoning of air, fresh waterways and soil; the annual loss of millions of tons of topsoil; loss of wildlife habitat; loss of biodiversity; depletion of natural ‘resources’ and corresponding desecration of natural topography and waterways; and marginalization, extinction, and deprivation of the dignity of others – meaning loss of plant, animal and human ethnospheres (Davis, 2009, Berry, 2006).

Human health issues directly related to the modern lifestyle are by the same token, becoming increasingly rampant in the West, particularly in the United States. For the first time in the history of humankind, the life span of upcoming generation/s may not reach the life span of the current and most recent generations. These specific human health concerns are: surging rates of obesity, particularly childhood obesity; the myriad of correlating diseases associated with obesity, such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and liver and kidney failure; rise in cancers and diseases of the immune system; and alarming rates of emotional and mental illness. “One in five Americans is clinically obese and 60 percent are overweight, in part because 20 percent of all meals are consumed in automobiles and a third of children eat fast food every day. The [United States] manufactures 200 million tons of industrial chemicals each year, while its people consume two-thirds of the world’s production of antidepressant drugs” (Davis, 2009. p. 194-195). These health issues are specific to Americans, because the United States leads the world in ways of being, which contribute to them. As important, globalization fosters the migration of these health issues from the West to ‘developing’ countries. Such diseases of modernity are perpetuated in an egregious manner by the authority given to the industrialized food and medical systems, the life-denying effects of which will be amplified below.

The industrialization of food is a complex dynamic. It is a system of multiple economics, which has come to take on a life of its own. (By ‘life’, I am referring here to Varela and Maturana’s autopoiesis of systems as cited in Varela and Maturana, 1974). The multiple and subtle intricacies of such a system cannot be parsed out in detail in a paper of this length. There are, however, two enacted expressions of the industrialized food system that concern human-nature intercorporeality, meaning the human body, the human *Being*, and the nature-body relationship, or more specifically *intersubjectivity*. These aspects are the industrialization of farming and the factorization of edibles.

Industrialization of farming is an operating example of human dominion over nature. It is a profound example. Industrialization of farming relies on human engineering and stratagems that inhibit the nature-body its fullest expression of life *so that* human beings control outcomes on behalf of human objectives. In order to produce food on the industrialized scale using

conventional farming methods, human beings enact three basic farming modalities. First, they employ monocultural cropping on a vast scale. Second, they rely on inhibition and oppression of biodiversity - *weeds, bugs, pests, bacteria*. Third, they apply and administer false chemical 'nutriment' to soil and farmed animals - *petroleum-based fertilizers, and hormones*, respectively.

Industrialized farming is extractive farming. Nowhere in this system is there an expression of reciprocity. Nowhere do these methodologies mimic the rhythms, interdependence, and cyclical influence and effluence of the nature-body. Industrialized farming is a system of growing food that does not honor the local organs and *Being* essence of the nature-body.

In order for industrialized farming to be successful, it must poison the life it seeks to contain and overcome. Doing so poisons, in turn, the human body and robs it likewise of vital biodiversity. Robbing the human body of biodiversity despoils communion with multiple 'fruits' otherwise 'given' by the nature-body. The human body, in the context of industrialized farming, is *fueled*, not *fed*, by the industrial machine. Moreover, the nature-body and human body are bound by an overt oppression of life.

By the same token, factorization of edibles robs the human *Being* communion with life. Factory processed 'foods' are so far removed from the life force of the nature-body, rely so heavily on manufactured chemicals and a select few monocultural farmed grains and meats, that the human *Being*, in consuming these edibles, is confined to eating that which has been largely removed from the life-death-life cycle. The human *Being* is eating not of the fruits and flesh of the earth, but of the human fabricated simulation of 'food'. Factory edibles are a 'food' void of vital nutriment, which rely heavily and primarily on sugar, salt, manufactured chemicals, and fat, to provide an addictive, falsely profuse flavor, as well as a bounty of 'empty' calories. The human body cannot survive for long on this sort of diet without the onset of disease.

These two aspects of industrialization of food are given in a largely anthropocentric context. It is possible, nonetheless, by these depictions, to begin a thorough questioning of the parallel enactment of nature-body and human body oppression, notions of 'nutriment', and expectation from life. Similarly, a thoughtful examination of the industrialization of food foregrounds the following question: how is it, not merely that modernity removed eating from the life-death-life cycle of the nature-body, but that humanity determined this departure to be a worthwhile pursuit?

The health care system in the United States is as complex as the food system. Just as the industrialized food system demonstrates human dominion over the nature-body, the American healthcare system demonstrates human dominion over human *Being*. No one would deny that human invention as a creative force propels praiseworthy medical technology, the effect of which saves human lives. It is reasonable to consider for a moment, however, two dynamics at work in the American healthcare system that deny human integrity and dignity. One dynamic is the hierarchy inherent in western 'medicine'. The other dynamic is industrialized healthcare's reductivist tendencies. These two dynamics when coupled, while at work to save human lives, in effect, serve ironically to deny human life its fullest expression.

Western medicine displaces the human *Being* and gives authority to an outside other to oversee care of the body. The body is more typically 'treated' as an objective physical manifestation, which in the medical system, is not necessarily inhered with human *Being*. Knowledge of 'disease' and 'medicine', and care for the 'sick' or injured are placed in the hands of the medical doctor - an (historically male) authority figure. 'He' is presumed to 'know' what is wrong and how to fix it. This displacement iterates and cyclically perpetuates diminution of the intuitive knowing that emerges from *Being*. Displacement of care solely to the medical

establishment also removes from concern, the nurturing self-care that too, emerges from ontological *Being*. Iteratively, by the authority given to and taken by the western healthcare system, Westerners have forgotten how to care for themselves, and turn instead, to the ‘doctor’ to ‘fix’ the broken or diseased aspects of the body. Seen in this context, the body is construed as the means by which desires and objectives are daily met. When the body breaks, the healthcare system is available to ‘fix’ it and get people ‘back on their feet’.

Likewise, the reductivist post-Enlightenment approach to modern medicine relies on tests, measurements, and instrumentation to diagnose and treat illness, disease and injury. This approach presupposes pathos. Diagnoses are often considered singularly and not viewed as bodily expressions of a complex net of *Being* essence. Multiple diagnoses tend to fail at acknowledging a systemic or cosmological narrative. Medical or surgical intervention is applied to ‘treat’ the ‘problem’ or surgically ‘correct’ it. In this industrialized model, multitudes of sick people are triaged through a series of evaluative and treatment protocols, which have been determined standard by the larger establishment of medical authority. Ways of knowing and of healing the whole person are extricated from communion with *Being*.

These parallels among the human-body-nature triad reflect a human propensity to deny life, or to deny at least, the fullest expression of life. It stands to reason that there are basic philosophical assumptions and cultural beliefs at play, which permit the enactment of such formidable devastation of life (Stewart and Bennett, 1991). It stands to reason similarly that such assumptions and beliefs are enacted largely without an understanding of the interconnections among these expressions nor of their root cause/s.

Religion – foundations for progress, embeddedness, and shame

As a word, *religion* gets tricky. It construes “a broad range of meaning-making practices, institutions, rituals, belief systems, sacred texts, moral norms, taboos, and even philosophical reflection upon religion as a whole” (Bauman et al., 2011, p. 14). Religion may be considered one’s “‘ultimate concern’” (from Tillich as cited in Bauman et al., 2011, p. 15). Religion may serve as the recognition of “the universally human response of ‘groans and travails’ in the face of the world’s suffering” (from Suzuki as cited in Bauman et al., 2011, p. 15-16). Finally, religion may serve a set of social and cultural functions, by uniting a community, symbolizing a community’s collective history, or maintaining social order (Bauman et al., 2011).

Stewart and Bennett (1991) insist that belief needs encoded meaning in order for the belief to be perpetuated in action. Religion serves this ‘meaning’ animus. For the purpose of this paper, I offer two broadly generalized religious narratives, which together form a basis for understanding encoded human behavior toward the human body, human *Being*, and the nature-body. One narrative derives from indigenous peoples of the Amazon. This ‘indigenous’ narrative represents a generalization of indigenous cultural origin myths that are otherwise acknowledged as specific to individual cultures. Acknowledgement of these detail variabilities encapsulates the limitations of construing a generalized narrative. Certain themes emerge, however, which characterize a people’s behaviors enacted out of a certain body of beliefs.

The Judeo-Christian origin myths derived from Genesis chapters One and Two form the second narrative. Greek philosophical underpinnings are inherited within the Christian religious narrative (Berry, 1999). I note there are important narratives that are omitted, not the least of which are religious narratives that represent cosmologies emerging from Asian cultures. The creation myths below provide two spectral ends of a range of cosmologies, which make up the

whole of the human-body-nature cosmology. As such, they offer bookend lenses through which to critically analyze western metaphysics, notions of progress, and the mind-body dualism of the West. Similarly, by considering these narratives it is possible to construct an argument for phenomenological intercorporeality.

Wade Davis provides a hovering barometric starting point for juxtaposing two widely disparate narratives: “Our way of life, inspired in so many ways, is not the paragon of humanity’s potential... there is no universal progression in the lives and destiny of human beings” (2009, p. 195). Davis is referring to the vast ethnosphere of cultures that remain largely embedded in the nature-body. This ethnosphere is endangered of becoming extinct by the spread of western modernity, as well as by the effects of climate change (a direct result of progress).

Indigenous cultures represent ways of knowing and of being drastically contrasted with western societies. The magico-spiritual-religious cosmologies alive in these cultures reveal ways of being emerging from and embedded within a nature-body narrative. The origin myths of various Amazonian Indian peoples “always speak of a great journey from the east, of sacred canoes brought up the Milk River from the east by enormous anacondas” (Davis, 2009, p. 96). The ‘Milk’ River is the genesis of food, of eating, and of nourishing life. By comparison, the anacondas in the myth that follows are the source of life. As a fluid, inspired effluence, earth and serpents together form the basis for a living cosmogony. Davis (2009) writes:

On the heads of the anaconda were blinding lights, and in the canoes sat mythical heroes in hierarchical order: chiefs, wisdom-keepers who were the dancers and chanters; warriors, shaman and finally, in the tail, servants. All were brothers, children of the sun. When the serpents reached the centre of the world, they lay over the land, outstretched as rivers, their powerful heads forming river mouths, their tales winding away to remote headwaters, the ripples of their skin giving rise to rapids and waterfalls. (p. 96)

The serpents are metaphorically, dawn, womb and breast of the human body *and* nature-body as one. The anacondas are generative. There is both an animist and feminine tone to the snakes’ effusion, which thereby influences this cosmogony.

Emerging from the east, from the dark black of night, the anacondas bring forth dawn, the emerging light of day. As one body-being, s/he births life and humanity into the world, unfolds upon the earth as both flesh and veins, and commences the perpetual flow of life for all of earth and humankind. Serpent, nature-body and human *Being* are intimately woven as one being, breathing and feeding of the same life. This is a story of communion. At its heart is the phenomenological ‘goodness of being’ (Hayward, 1984). Human life emerges from nature-body. Nature-body embodied in the anacondas – venous river bodies – nurses humanity by way of the ebb and gush of seasons and the urging forth of life from both mouth and tale. This narrative encodes for its peoples the giftedness of life emerging from the nature-body. It is a tale that is infused with animism. As such, the peoples who live this story understand they are embedded in and one among all life of the earth.

It is tempting to condemn notions of hierarchy in this story as no different from cultural patterns in the West. It is important to note, however, the idea of equatibility, made explicit in the following sentence: “All were brothers, children of the sun” (Davis, 2009, p. 96). This statement answers our concern. Even as the peoples were arranged in hierarchical order, the follow-up to the order insists they were each of inherent value in the net of existence, and each

derived of the same source.

Eliade (1959) described the evolution of magico-spiritual-religious beliefs. The feeling of awe evoked by the mystery of life is met with the need for semiotic meaning. Animism, spiritualism and deism emerged subsequently. The evolution of spiritual hierarchy across eons is likewise reflected in the evolution of cultural hierarchy. As peoples established spiritual hierarchy, so too did they likewise differentiate humanity. It is important to realize in the context of this narrative, however, that the western contextual lack of exposure to and embeddedness within the semiotics emerging from this indigenous narrative challenge a true embodied way of knowing by westerners. The story reflects an embodied way of knowing that characterizes a culturally encoded meaning of the ‘hierarchy’ noted here, by peoples who live by this, an altogether different from westerners’, cosmology. In other words, while it is tempting to draw parallel criticisms of notions of hierarchy, it is also important to acknowledge western understanding is limited by western social construction (Gergen, 2009) and western cosmologies. The hierarchical order described above is acknowledged, though its meaning remains a matter of hermeneutics. The narrative is a salient juxtaposition, nevertheless, to the one that follows.

Thomas Berry (2006) coined “six transcendences” of post-Abrahamic, largely Judeo-Christian, theosophy. Together, they provide a foundation for encoding notions of progress, dominion over nature, shame, and hatred toward the human body. These ‘transcendences’ are belief in the following (Berry, 2006, p. 25-28):

First, a transcendent, personal, monotheistic creative deity – “the constellation of the divine in a personal transcendent order tends to desacralize the phenomenal world.

Second, the spiritual nature of the human – “the insistence that we do not form a single society with the natural world.

Third, the primacy of belief in redemption – a “belief that tells us we are not for this world.”

Fourth, the transcendence of the mind – “Descartes desouled the world...Until Descartes we had the sense that every organism was by definition an ensouled being.”

Fifth, transcendent technology – “allows us to transcend the basic biological law that every species should have opposed species or conditions that limit each species so that no one species could overwhelm the others.”

Sixth, a transcendent historical destiny – “our destiny is in some other world – namely, the transphenomenal world”.

A broadly historical and cultural interpretation emerges more idiomatically as follows: human beings are not destined for this world. There is another spiritual realm, which is the otherworldly domain of the Judeo-Christian monotheistic God. Human beings reside on earth in the human body as spiritual beings for only a short time. The human flesh is not to be trusted. Original sin – humankind’s downfall – is the result of desires of the flesh. Redemption of sin takes place in the otherworldly realm; meaning, salvation is in Heaven. Earth is given for purposes of human dominion. The human body will be discarded when the spirit is released. So

too will the need for the earth. Human ingenuity will prevail and provide the means on earth by which humanity will overcome nature, because humans alone – particularly men – have been bestowed the gifts of intelligence *and* the theologically indoctrinated power to do so (Bateson, 1994, Hayward, 1984).

This Judeo-Christian theosophy places first the foundation for progress. It is a worldview that couples primacy of belief in an otherworldly-after-this-incarnation redemption with belief in humankind's fall. The idea of progress is quite directly the result of a belief in a better tomorrow. In many senses, progress is “the working faith of our civilization” (in Lasch 1991: 43, as cited in Sztompka, 1993, p. 24). “Enchantment with ourselves and our supposed betterment of the human situation did not permit [however] a critical appraisal of just what we were doing in the larger pattern of earthly affairs” (Berry in Lazlo and Combs, 2011, p. 11). For the purposes of this paper it is clear that progress is enacted in the advancement of technologies, which progress the farming and food systems that will presumably continue to feed the burgeoning billions of human beings populating the planet. It is enacted thus in the rampant poisoning and depletion of organic vegetal, animal, human, and mineral life. Progress is enacted too, in the industrialization of healthcare.

Two narratives merge in the Judeo-Christian tradition, which collectively form a creation myth. Chapters One and Two of the Biblical Genesis provide the foundation for the Judeo-Christian cosmology. Of course, this cosmology is substantiated by other myths throughout the Bible. The stage is set, however, in the beginning. Chapter One of Genesis tells of the creation of earth, life and human beings by a God in the heavens above. Chapter Two tells of Adam and Eve in the earthly, though paradisiacal no less Garden of Eden. Woven as one, these narratives animate creation of life, of humankind, and foreshadow codes of moral conduct. In the “*first creation story*, ... the big cosmological and metaphysical questions - about the status of the lofty heavens, the being of the whole, and its ultimate origins and first causes - are all answered without even being asked, seemingly disposed of once and for all” (Kass, 2003, p.25). “In the beginning, God [‘elohim’] created the heavens and the earth” (Kass, 2003, p. 27). Dualism, hierarchy and authority are immediate. “The heavens and the earth, the high and the low, were *created*, and created *by God*” (Kass, 2003, p. 27). From the very first words, cosmogony is denied. God is demarcated as separate. His oversight and actions are responsible for conducting the creation of life, and for delineating heaven from earth. The narrative unfolds synoptically as follows (as cited in Kass, 2003):

DAY ONE: light appears, and day is separated from night

DAY TWO: the “firmament... named Heavens...separates the waters above from the waters below” (Kass, 2003, p. 29)

DAY THREE: dry land emerges as separate from terrestrial waters, becoming thus, ‘earth’ and ‘seas’, and vegetation is “put forth by the earth” (Kass, 2003, p. 29)

DAY FOUR: the lights in the Heavens appear

DAY FIVE: fish appear in the sea and birds in the open sky

DAY SIX: a) terrestrial animals appear, and after them, finally, b) “man, made in God’s

image, male and [then] female” (Kass, 2003, p. 29).

“This account... addresses *us*, as terrestrial beings and as seeing beings, looking around and about, and especially, up” (Kass, 2003, p.29). It also clearly places human beings at the pinnacle of God’s creation, and in the image of God, who is deemed by His very making, to be the highest of high.

The *second creation story* tells first how God formed ‘man’ from the dust of the earth and gave ‘him’ the breath of life. This is a different telling of the creation of humankind from the narrative in Chapter One. Human beings are not formed in the image of God in the second chapter of Genesis. Rather, man and woman together are formed of the earth and inspired by the breath of life. Humankind here is understood to be separate from God. The contradiction is important, because on the one hand, humankind is at the pinnacle of all of creation (Chapter One). On the other hand, humankind is lowly, made flesh of the dust of the earth, and distinctly inferior to the God of Heaven (Chapter Two).

The *second creation story* tells also of the Judeo-Christian belief in humankind’s ‘fall’ from God’s grace when Adam and Eve disobeyed God’s one command: “And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘From every tree of the garden thou mayest surely eat...; but of the tree of knowledge of good and bad, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die...’” (Kass, 2003, p. 62). God has issued a command. Disobedience of God is equated with dying, but dying of what, or to what, or when?

When Eve then Adam eat of the tree of knowledge they realize for the first time that they are naked. Kass suggests “the knowledge of good and bad is, to begin with, knowledge of nakedness. And not just the fact of nakedness, but its quality: nakedness is bad” (Kass, 2003, p. 67). Human shame emerges from the knowledge of nakedness, from in fact, the perceived ‘badness’ of nakedness. Innocence and harmony are lost; shame has emerged in their place. Moreover, the serpent in the Garden of Eden narrative is perceived to be male. As opposed to the generative feminine serpent in the Amazonian creation myth, the Judeo-Christian serpent is perceived as negative and destructive (Kass, 2003). While there are philosophical debates about the feminine vs. masculine qualities of the Judeo-Christian serpent (see Kass, 2003), emergent culturally encoded semiotics point to, even at present, the prevailing belief that the serpent in this narrative is a masculine antithesis of God. He is responsible for seducing Eve. “His slithering, sinuous, and utterly silent movements ... suggest cunning and wiliness” (Kass, 2003, p. 81). His interrogative cleverness sways Eve. “And the woman *saw* that the tree *was good for food*, and that it was a *delight to the eyes*, and a tree *to be desired to make one wise*, and she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat and gave also to her husband with her, and he did eat” (Kass, 2003, p. 87). Hereafter, humankind is self-conscious, aware of and ashamed of nakedness, presumed to be inherently bad, or at least unwhole and vulnerable, must hide flesh and sexuality, toil for food, and women must ache with the pain of birth – meaning human regeneration is forevermore the source of both longing and pain. Humankind has, in other words, lost a loss akin to the death of childlike innocence, wonder, ease, and harmonious existence with incarnate life (Kass, 2003).

These narratives and the interpretations thereof are explicitly abbreviated. Similarly, while it is certainly possible to consider other philosophical interpretations of each narrative, the point here is not to consider a multitude of metaphors in the narratives themselves, which otherwise lend a myriad of possibilities for poetic and philosophical interpretations. Rather, the point is to consider the effect of historical and culturally affixed interpretations heretofore, the culturally encoded meaning derived therein, and the broader behavioral expressions lent by these

interpretations. In addition, these two narratives juxtaposed, indigenous and Judeo-Christian, serve the purpose of evidencing the depth by which cosmologies guide human belief and behavior. In the indigenous narrative, a more generative unfolding of human life from animism and a recursive relationship between human beings and the natural world becomes evidence for supporting a peoples' embeddedness in place and reciprocity with the nature-body. In the Judeo-Christian narrative, on the other hand, human beings' separateness from and toil with the nature-body are immanent. In addition, flesh and sensate being are bad and not to be trusted. Death is as much a part of the Judeo-Christian creation story as the coming forth of life. God cannot be met here on earth. Human gaze is forever upturned toward the heavens and God.

Just as there are two (generally agreed upon) Biblical narratives that form the origin myth in the Judeo-Christian tradition, indigenous cultures similarly merge narratives. These narratives form a human-nature cosmological whole. Davis (2009) does not expound on a 'fall'. This does not mean such myths do not exist. Furthermore, elaborating here on the two Genesis chapters that tell of human creation, God's place, and humankind's perceived fall, is important because together they form a whole origin cosmology, which influences western theosophy. Amplification of these narratives serves therefore to clarify why religion matters and how it influences human behavior even in a secular context.

Another way - the body's recollection of being

The body's recollection of Being (Levin, 1985), as a phrase, recalls phenomenologically both body and *Being*. In this way, *the body's recollection of Being* re-members and revives body as being-in-the-world. Levin justifies an experiential phenomenology based on the contributions of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty. An enactive framework (Masciotra et al., 2007) of embodied intersubjectivity – intercorporeality, which entails the body's recollection of *Being* as its foundation, arises from the primacy of *Being* by calling forth relational *Being*. For human-nature intercorporeality to become a vital way of knowing and being, human bodily *Being* itself must be honored. Embodiment thus, is the ground of intercorporeality. Levin (1985) writes:

Between the Scylla of a persistent anthropocentrism and the Charybdis of a paralyzing fatalism which awaits the external grace of salvation, there is the route of an experiential phenomenology focused on perceptual and gestural capacities. Out of this method, I believe that some new understanding of human being, as a mode of bodily being-in-the-world, might begin, hermeneutically, to show itself. (p. 44)

Levin is calling into question Western theosophy and proposing a phenomenological methodology, which lends a reinterpretation of *Being*. This methodology relies on the mode of *Being* itself. Meaning is derived phenomenologically. This is not to say that phenomenologically experienced meaning cannot connote religious meaning. Rather it is to say that meaning, if it is to be understood as religious in a phenomenological context, emerges from the *Being* essence of being human. Religious meaning in this context is therefore, not embedded in a cultural narrative, which arises from a need to reify and unify a cosmological meaning of life and death. Nor is religious meaning split metaphysically from the *Being* essence of being-in-the-flesh. Rather, religious meaning resides in a bodily way of knowing, which is birthed by way of bodily being-in-the-world. Levin insists that the first understanding of *Being*, "and of ourselves in relationship to *Being*" (Levin, 1985, p. 8. Italics mine) is given by way of embodiment.

Reinforcing the limitations of Western metaphysics, Levin expounds on Heidegger who denies “thinking is the production of ‘mere thoughts’ in one’s head” (Levin, 1985, p. 45). To limit thinking to only cerebral processes “is to perpetuate the old metaphysical split between human being and the world” (Levin, 1985, p. 45). Western cosmology is evident here and challenged as limiting and dualistic. In a sense, Levin is foreshadowing an enactive framework of an embodied mind and enminded body (Masciotra et al., 2007). “The new way of thinking about the mind is inspired by, and organized around, not the brain but some combination of the ideas that mental processes are (1) *embodied*, (2) *embedded*, (3) *enacted*, and (4) *extended*... the 4e conception of the mind” (Rowland, 2010, p. 3). Rowland’s contribution to the new science of mind provides markers to construct an enactive framework for embodied intersubjectivity. An enactive framework begins with an invitation to phenomenological *Being-in-the-body*. It includes too, the fullest expression of enminded body as embodied mind.

What does ‘the body’s recollection of *Being*’ really mean? In other words, what does it mean to ontologically embody being-in-the-flesh and being-in-the-world? Heidegger responds to these questions most succinctly: “We do not ‘have’ a body; rather, we ‘are’ bodily” (Heidegger in Levin, 1985, p. 49). That ‘we are bodily’ is the starting point for recalling the body as the proto-ontological essence of *Being*. Here is where felt sense is attuned with awareness. Perception, thinking and understanding emerge from the level of being-in-the-body. *Being* is relatedness to being-in-the-body, and “bodying forth” opens into the clearing of *Being* (Levin, 1985, p. 55). *Being* is therefore ontological and recursive. Without a relatedness to being-in-the-body, human beings lose their essence. *Being* is therefore at risk of neglect or being squandered (Levin, 1985). This neglect toward *Being* is evidenced in western modernity.

The body’s recollection of *Being* emerges from ‘bodying forth’ into *Being*. In this way, the recollection of *Being* overcomes dualistic metaphysics, separateness, body-hatred and life denial, and hierarchical notions derived from Judeo-Christian cosmology. The human being opens to the wholeness of being-in-the-flesh. This ontological recollection of the flesh of *Being* is, at its most fundamental level, the reclamation of *Being*, which Judeo-Christian cosmology has managed to obliterate. Because the flesh is reconciled, the body’s recollection of being also returns to wholeness the masculine/feminine balance of being in the human body. Mind and flesh become again indissolubly one.

In as much as the Judeo-Christian cosmology obliterates the flesh and *Being* essence of being human, it likewise squanders the inherent value of the nature-body. If human beings are to reconcile the human-nature relationship, a phenomenologically embodied understanding of *Being* provides not only a new way of knowing, it also suggests the methodological framework that makes this reconciliation possible. It is by way of being-in-the-flesh that embodied intersubjectivity is engendered. An enactive framework thus begins with being-in-the-body.

Any mention of intersubjectivity is remiss without acknowledgement of Husserl’s contribution. Intersubjectivity emerges from embodiment, and relatedness transpires ontologically on the intercorporeal level. The 4e’s of Rowland’s enactive framework of mental processes provides a foundation upon which to consider a methodology of embodied intersubjectivity. The 4e’s of mental processes are: (1) *embodied*, (2) *embedded*, (3) *extended*, and (4) *enaction*.

Embodiment has been thoroughly described above as the genesis of a new way of knowing and being in the flesh. *Embeddedness* encourages an understanding of the human *Being* essence as embedded in the body, which is also enminded body (Masciotra et al., 2007). *Being-in-the-body* occurs at the micro-level of embeddedness. At the meso- and macro-levels, embeddedness

encourages awareness of being-in-the-world. Awareness of being-in-the-world resonates at the meso-level of place, Other, and culture. Awareness of being-in-the-world resonates at the macro-level as inter-being with the nature-body. *Extendedness* relates to inter-being too. The fluidity of interdependence is represented in extendedness of intercorporeal *Being*. Breath is extended by way of inspiration and expiration. The human body breathes the nature-body's extended *Being*, and returns breath as extended human embodiment. By the same token, the life-death-life cycle of eating is a representation of extendedness. Each life giving flesh to the being-in-flesh of another is intercorporeal extendedness. Finally, *enaction* is the perceptual and gestural intelligences arising from and co-extant with the other three 'e's (Rowland, 2010, Masciotra et al., 2007). Enaction is attuned with sensory awareness, and is the state of embodied *being-in-situation* in relationship with bodily-being-the-world (Masciotra et al., 2007).

An enactive framework of intercorporeality rests therefore, ontologically in the embodied *Being* essence. Relatedness to *Being-in-the-flesh* calls forth Rowland's 4e conception of the mind, and encourages ways of being and knowing that are embedded in the body and the larger sphere of the nature-body. Likewise inter-being is phenomenologically experienced intercorporeally as an extension of the enminded body-in-the-flesh; and the *Being* essence is enacted relationally. Idiomatically, *Being* arises from attunement to fully being-in-the-body. It is from this attunement, this somatic way of knowing and being (Widhalm, 2011), wherein relatedness to being human in the flesh is understood as the experience of being-in-the-flesh among the flesh of all life, including the nature-body. Embodiment heightens sensitivity. This sensitivity makes porous the membranes of separateness and lends to awareness of relatedness to being with other, including the nature-body as the living system that sustains all life.

Concluding thoughts

An enactive framework of intercorporeality attempts to rectify the human-body-nature relationship. This framework is not constructed upon an existing cosmology that otherwise attempts to reify meaning from the perceptions of existence. Rather, it is a framework that potentiates a new cosmology of *Being*, one which inspires intercorporeal meaning embedded in the human body, the *Being* essence, Other, and the nature-body. Intercorporeality is the relational meeting place of life. It occurs in the milieu of being-in-the-flesh. It acknowledges, by way of grappling with the corporeal essence of *Being*, the inter-relatedness of being that is situated in being-in-the-world. As such, it calls into question existing ways of knowing in western societies, and encourages another way of knowing and being, which is vital. In a certain sense, intercorporeality may be said to be proto-logical and proto-semiotic. It transpires in the undifferentiated fluidity of *Being*, which is difficult to define and delineate. Yet it is arguably known in some sense by every living being.

I have narrated a set of concerns that depict the parallel denial of life of the human *Being-in-the-body* and of the nature-body. Environmental degradation is a reality. Human health and the well-being of the natural world are inter-related. A response that considers the well-being of one is limited if it does not consider the well-being of all. Consideration for well-being of all includes the nature-body. Stated differently, anthropocentrism will not protect the well-being of humankind on a planet on the brink. If religion matters, and it does by its very encoded semiotics enacted societally, western theosophy is imperatively scrutinized when transformative change is to be viable.

An enactive framework of embodied intersubjectivity may be considered an 'inside-out'

approach to reconciling the human-body-nature relationship. The framework is as yet, limited conceptually by the fact that its definition and prescribed methodological enactment are evasive by the very means used to communicate it – language. *Being* is a difficult concept to adequately convey in the American language particularly, because America is a *doing* culture (Stewart and Bennett, 1991). But such a consideration is, nonetheless, a start.

I iterate. This paper offers a beginning formulation of ideas for an enactive framework of embodied intersubjectivity, indeed, intercorporeality, as I have defined it here. A specific methodology is not introduced. Rather, the objective of naming as interrelated a myriad of issues, complicated each in their own way, defining cosmologically factors that perpetuate these issues, and inviting a phenomenological framework in response, sets the stage for further examination of the issues, their roots, and the development of an experiential methodology, which emerges from the ideas illumined in this paper.

I began this paper with the following: we live in a world on the brink. The human body, human *Being* and the nature-body are a unified whole. What befalls a part ecospherically befalls the whole. If religion serves the function of encoding and embedding meaning among its culture, and if meaning is the semiotics of belief, it stands to reason that an examination of religion is a good starting point for attending to the human-body-nature relationship. A healthy response, however, does not stop with examination. A viable response on behalf of the well-being of people and the nature-body, is an active response (Bauman et al., 2011). To this end, this paper closes open-endedly, in a manner beseeching a felt-sense of human *Being* as vital to and dependent upon the human body-in-the-flesh and the nature-body. There are questions attendant to invoking an enactive framework of intercorporeality: what would it mean to invoke ontologically, prayer-in-the-flesh? By this, I don't mean prayer that emerges from ideas or belief in original sin, or prayer that is praying for salvation from sin-in-the-flesh. Rather, I am referring to the fundamental essence of *Being-in-the-flesh*, to which Hayward refers, the fundamental 'goodness of being' (Hayward, 1984). What would it mean to well-being if God, the Father, were re-symbolized as God, the *Being*, meaning, the *Being-in-the-human-flesh*? What if the dust of the earth, the spirit of breath, the essence of the nature-body were infused with the fundamental 'goodness of being' (Hayward, 1984)? Thomas Berry (2009, 2006, 1999), Brian Swimme (2011, 1992) and lengthening list of other leading scholars in the field of Religion and Ecology have provided a new universe and religion cosmology, which answers these questions theoretically. This paper is an invitation to expand new theory to practice.

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