

**THOMAS BERRY'S MYSTICISM: THE HUMAN COSMIC SELF
AND THE ETHICS OF COSMIC RESPONSIBILITY**

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MASTER OF ARTS IN PHILOSOPHY

JUVY SAPAL-REYES

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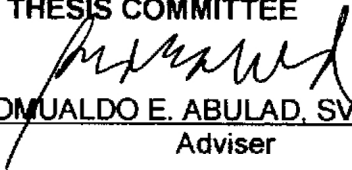
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This Thesis entitled "THOMAS BERRY'S MYSTICISM: THE HUMAN COSMIC SELF AND THE ETHICS OF COSMIC RESPONSIBILITY" prepared and submitted by JUVY S. REYES in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS IN PHILOSOPHY has been examined and is recommended for acceptance and approval for ORAL EXAMINATION.

THESIS COMMITTEE


BRO. ROMUALDO E. ABULAD, SVD, Ph.D.
Adviser



RYAN C. URBANO, Ph.D.
Member

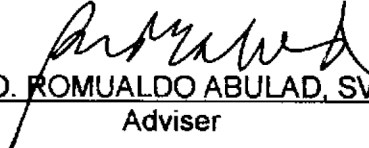

JERRY PESCADERO, M.A.
Member


MA. MAJORIE R. PURINO, Ph. D.
Member

PANEL OF EXAMINERS

Approved by the Committee on Oral Examination with a grade of PASSED


RYAN C. URBANO, Ph. D.
Chairman


BRO. ROMUALDO ABULAD, SVD, Ph. D.
Adviser


JERRY PESCADERO, M.A.
Member


MA. MAJORIE R. PURINO, Ph. D.
Member

Accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **MASTER OF ARTS IN PHILOSOPHY**.


RAMON S. DEL FIERRO, Ph.D.
Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

October 30, 2010
Date of Oral Examination

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When the wind is strong
The smoke, thick
The rain, heavy
And the road is muddy.

ABSTRACT

Ethics is directly concerned with life itself and in order to serve its purpose, it must deal with human life comprehensively and adequately. While traditional ethics proves to be adequate in addressing moral issues pertaining to human relationships, it can hardly deliver when confronted with matters larger than humanity. With the scientific findings and emerging philosophical speculations about the truth of beings' evolution and interconnectedness, as well as the pressing ecological crises confronted at present, traditional ethics' assumptions are seriously put to test. Hence, there is a need to widen the philosophical lens of ethics in order to view human life in the perspective of the cosmos

This paper examines Thomas Berry's views on the place of humans in the earth community, the intrinsic value of nature and the ethics of cosmic responsibility. It is found out that for Berry all beings in the earth community have intrinsic value derived from existence. Humans are cosmic beings so, they are ultimately connected – body and soul - with all other beings in the universe. The cosmic responsibility of human beings is grounded on their indebtedness to nature, their species' intrinsic function; the nature's intrinsic value and the cosmic justice.

In recognition of this, the paper recommends the shift from human-centered to cosmo-centered view of morality; the conduct of interdisciplinary dialogue about life in the academe; the inclusion of environmental ethics in the curricula of all academic programs, and the paying of serious attention by environmental groups and governments to the human activities' impact on the environment.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
TITLE PAGE		i
APPROVAL SHEET		ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT		iii
DEDICATION		v
ABSTRACT		vi
 CHAPTER		
1	INTRODUCTION	1
	A. Rationale of the Study	1
	B. Theoretical Background	4
	B 1 Thomas Berry, the Geologist	4
	B.2 Mysticism and Science in Berry	6
	B.3 Tracing Teilhard in Berry	8
	B.4 A New Ethics	9
	B.5 Humans, Non-humans and the Earth Community	12
	C. The Problem	16
	C 1 Statement of the Problem	16
	C.2 Significance of the Study	16
	C.3 Scope and Limitation of the Study	18
	D. Research Methodology	19
	E. Organization of the Study	20
	F. Definition of Terms	22
2	THE PLACE OF HUMAN BEINGS IN THE EARTH COMMUNITY	24
	A. Time, Events and Space in Berry's Universe	24
	Evolutionary Existence	28
	B. The Earth Community	31
	C. The Human Species	35
	C.1 As a Consciously Evolving Species	37
	C 2 As a Participatory Reality	40
	C 3 As a Cultural Being	43
3	THE INTRINSIC VALUE OF NATURE	46
	A. Unpacking Intrinsic Value	46
	A 1 Intrinsic Value vis-à-vis Instrumental Value	48
	A 2 Intrinsic Value and its Atmospheric Character	50
	A 3 Value Paradigm	52
	B. Berry's Notion of Value	54
	B.1 Principles of Existence	54
	B.2 Value as a Subject's Call to Another	63

	B.3 Intrinsic Function and Instrumental Value	66
	C. The Nature's Intrinsic Value	69
	C 1 Valuers	71
	C 2 Humans as Valuers	72
	C 3 Beings' Basic Rights	76
	D. Some Challenges to Berry's Notion of Value	77
4	ETHICS OF COSMIC RESPONSIBILITY	82
	A. Towards a New Ethics	82
	A 1 Traditional Ethical Bias	82
	A 2 Traditional Ethics' Leaking Boats	85
	B. Inquiry on Responsibility	90
	Moral Agency and Human's Response-ability	91
	C. Ethics of Cosmic Responsibility	96
	C.1 Grounds for Cosmic Responsibility	97
	C.2 Reinvent the Humans	105
	D. What Hope Remains	107
5	FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	110
	A. Findings	110
	A.1 Berry's Mysticism and Influences	112
	A.2 The Place of Humans in the Earth Community	113
	A 3 Intrinsic Value of Nature	114
	A.4 Ethics of Cosmic Responsibility	116
	B. Conclusion	117
	C. Recommendations	118
	C 1 Philosophy Students	118
	C.2 Ethics Teachers/ Curriculum Developers	119
	C 3 Policy Makers/ Environmental Workers	120
	REFERENCES	122
	CURRICULUM VITAE	128

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

A. Rationale of the Study

To an Ethics teacher, Ethics no doubt is a highly important undergraduate course. Such thinking goes unchallenged until one day, a student supposedly holding that same assumption raises a simple and unpretentious question. *why should we study Ethics at all?* This has provided the much needed stir in the way Ethics has been dealt with as an academic course in many Philippine Universities.

One cannot overemphasize the practical importance of ethics in human life. This was exactly what Socrates had in mind when he asked the question about how man should live. He implored humans to reflect on their lives as a whole because only through understanding it can they live meaningfully (Williams, 2006, p. 4). Thinking similarly, although the question was brought to a much smaller 'here and now' scale, De Finance (1991, p. 16) notes that there is nothing more important for humans than to know how to act in any given situation. But why are humans so concerned about living rightly or acting correctly?

The communitarian ethicists argue that whatever decisions a person makes will always affect others either negatively or positively, directly or indirectly (De Finance, 1991). Because of this condition, Confucius reminds everyone to cultivate his/ her sense of human consideration, that is, one must act in the way that he/ she wants others to act too (*Analects*, Book XV, Chapter XXIII). However, the environmental ethicists remind us that humans are not the only beings who exist in the world. They share the world with non-human beings - i.e.

plants, animals, and land. So, human decisions affect not only the human species but the individual beings, some particular species or the whole of nature (Berry, 1996).

Because of its practical importance, ethics has become a subject of discussion across time, culture, and groups. It has received lavish attention so that most if not all professional fields choose to attach ethics to their names. For instance, there are legal ethics, business ethics, engineering ethics, nursing ethics, and media ethics among many others. As a form of inquiry, ethics has played a significant role in major decision-making especially in cases when the decisions to be made will seriously affect humanity.

At present, ethics is employed to investigate on the environmental problems confronted by humans. Pollution in different life systems of the planet, forest denudation, soil erosion, siltation, global warming, overpopulation, food shortage, desertification, and water shortage – these are just few of the many interrelated, multi-faceted environmental problems in the world. Although these problems have been present for a long time already, for some reasons it is only recently that the ethicists seriously consider them

Reflecting on these environmental problems, off to the different camps the ethicists go. While some go in defense of animal rights, others expand their views to include the rights of the entire land community. While some are so convinced that the only way to solve the problem is for humans to have a change of heart and see their selves in intimate connection with the entire cosmos, others insist that environmental conflicts are nothing more than a problem with human ethics: the abuse of freedom and the unregulated conflicting interests of peoples and governments. It seems that the environmental ethicists are having some difficult time staying on a common ground and arriving at consensus