

ARE WE READY FOR “THE GREAT TURNING?”

Leaving no stone unTurned

What did David Korten leave out of his important work *The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community*? It is a key so important that if we do not address it and embrace it soon, our vision of Earth Community will remain just that—a vision with no chance of fulfillment. In a nutshell, Korten is imploring us to and believes we *can* Turn from living under the Empire cultural mindset of domination to living in Earth Community. Empire demands that cultures labor under a ruling elite which grows wealthier and more powerful as it finds more ways to exploit all others. Most of the world lives under the Empire model which requires war, the ravaging of nature, and the economic and political control of people and animals in order to flourish. Earth Community is organized around the principles of cooperation, mutual benefit, and partnership, and develops from the ground up, not from the top down.

Don't get me wrong. Every chapter of *The Great Turning* had me applauding. It is a wealth of inspiration that helps us to visualize what Earth Community can look like, to take action to make it happen before it's too late, and to believe we can do this.

But there is a chapter missing.

As we go about “saving the earth” from ourselves, we are each struggling in our own ways to rid ourselves of all vestiges of the dominator model. But, as we all know, all the systems—economic, educational, scientific, religious, agricultural, corporate, political—that have influenced us from birth, have been based on that model. As we work to transform our own personal worldviews to one of Earth Community, we find we must be constantly vigilant of our own thoughts, vigilant toward any anthropocentric vestiges which we still may unconsciously hold. As we stand with one foot in the new, not fully formed world of cooperation, love, and compassion and the other foot in the current world ruled by the dominator worldview, it is difficult sometimes to discern the source of our beliefs. But it is essential that we do so.

What is the missing chapter—the stone unturned—the last big questioning of the Empire authority? It is the Animal Chapter. Animal exploitation, including experimentation, fur farms, circuses, zoos, rodeos, and animal agriculture spring forth from the dominator worldview that claims we have a right to force our will upon other species and brutally enslave, confine, kill, and eat them. We can never *create* Earth Community until we face our complicity, our virtual agreement with this worldview, and put an end to the horrors of animal agriculture and animal exploitation. Einstein and Schweitzer both declared that humanity would never find peace until we ended our war against animals.

In the Earth Community we envision, no women will be stoned, no children will be sold into slavery, no one will starve because a giant corporation has taken their farmland. Imagine it. And may we keep imagining it right into being. But can we honestly believe that, while we work with all our hearts to eliminate domination of human beings that it is still ok to dominate animals?

If you catch yourself scoffing, looking down or away, or losing focus, you are not alone. This is the last taboo. It is the taboo, as Will Tuttle puts it, “against knowing whom you eat.” Most of us have never clear cut a forest, contaminated the sea with an oil spill, caught a million fish in drift nets and thrown half of them back as trash, killed a whale, owned slaves, stoned or burned a woman to death, or ordered the bombing of millions of civilians, but nearly all of us have, gone to a zoo, taken a baby cow's milk away from him or her, and caused animals to die so that we could eat and wear them. It's not something anyone wants to think about for very long. Korten mentions the “trance induced by the prevailing culture” [p. 84]. I submit that there are multiple trances, and one by one, we awaken from them. May we all awaken from the trance that has convinced us it is ok to dominate, kill, and eat animals.

As Korten said in his Summer, 2006, “Yes!” journal article, “Absent an understanding of the history and implications of this choice [between Empire and Earth Community] we may squander valuable time and resources on efforts to preserve or mend cultures and institutions that

cannot be fixed and must be replaced.” [p. 12] The institutions of animal domination cannot be fixed and made “more humane.”

Jim Mason, author of *An Unnatural Order: Why We are Destroying the Planet and Each Other—A Manifesto for Change* points out that the very act of capturing animals and controlling their lives signaled the beginning of the end of what appeared to be a goddess based, egalitarian, community worldview that recognized the sacredness of all life and the importance of cooperation for survival.

.Out of that age, a patriarchal elite class developed and began to relentlessly expand its territories and wealth with military power. Thus it was that domination of animals became a central building block of ravenous Empire.

Let us take a look at what we have done to animals as a culture within the Empire framework. In order to demonstrate our absolute power over them, we put them in zoos; we force them to perform tricks in circuses; we torture them in rodeos; we steal their fur, we confine billions of pigs, chickens, calves, turkeys, ducks, and other animals in conditions so crowded and fouled with their own waste that many of them die before slaughter; we take their babies away and ignore their cries; we castrate, debeak, dock tails and ears all without anesthetic. Human beings kill over 50 billion farmed land animals worldwide annually and an estimated 50 billion aquatic animals.

We may Turn part way, but we will be doing it knowing of our own hypocrisy, knowing that we are still clinging to one of the most powerful symbols and lusts of patriarchy, and going forward with a great soul sickness. Without a complete Turn, if we continue to do violence to innocent animals, we will continue to be off course, and I don’t know how much longer we can do that. If their children cannot inherit Earth Community, then sadly, I believe, neither can our children..

.We are each, in our own way, at this most critical time, doing what we can to bring Earth Community into being. The simplest, least time consuming, most revolutionary, most culture transforming, and most un-Empireish act any of us can take right now is to stop supporting the war on animals. This means we no longer eat them or steal their milk and eggs. This means we buy only cruelty-free products and refuse to support zoos, circuses, and rodeos. This means we gather them safely and gently into our circle of respect, compassion, and love; into our and *their* Earth Community. Living in this way expresses “the harmonious fulfillment of our inner seeing,” as Will Tuttle points out in his *The World Peace Diet: Eating for Spiritual Health and Social Harmony* (p. 293).

May we Turn in time. May we leave no stony thoughts unTurned. May we Turn with glad hearts knowing we have set all beings free from human domination. May all beings be free. May all beings live in peace.

© Judy McCoy Carman, M.A.

Author of *Peace to All Beings:*

Veggie Soup for the Chicken’s Soul

Co-founder Animal Outreach of Kansas

And Worldwide Prayer Circle for Animals

judycarman@myvine.com

www.circleofcompassion.org

www.animaloutreach-ks.org