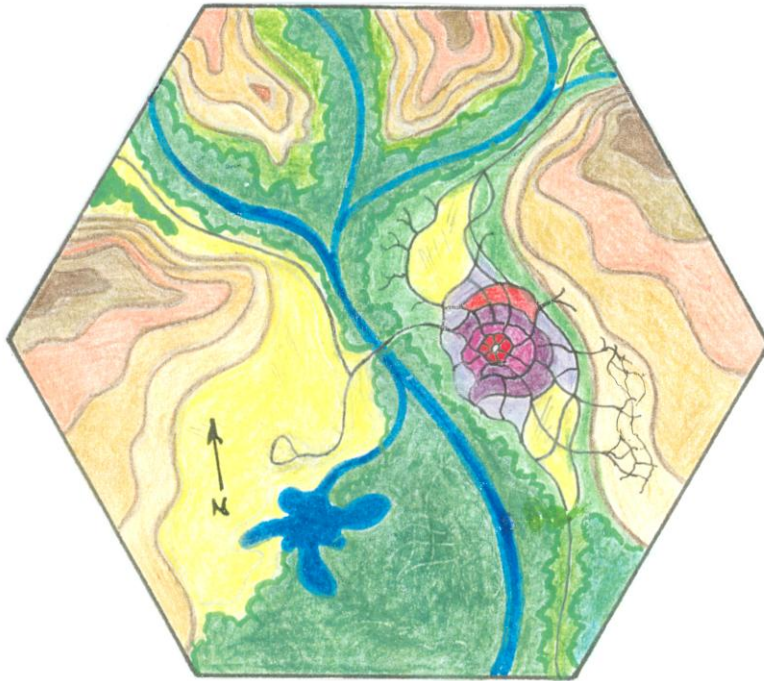



The Evolution of an Ecovillage Potential



E. Christopher Mare

Summer 2008

Happy Valley



Imagine: our Sun burst into being some 5 billion years ago! That is a very long time; yet it took only a relatively short while for a family of planets to coalesce from out of the lingering stardust, each one assuming a regular orbit around the dazzling new star at the center. Along with various moons, comets, planetoids, etc., this magnificent solar system soon settled into a dynamic, rhythmic gyration – the neogenesis of living potential.

While truly spectacular, miraculous, awe-inspiring on its own, from a universal perspective this self-organizing emergence was not really all that remarkable, for new stars are being born all the time. In fact, our beloved Sun came into being several billion years into the universal outbreath commonly called the Big Bang. Anyway, the third planet from the Sun was situated in that comfortable thermal zone where water can endure in its liquid state. The nascent Earth was a hostile scene: volcanic activity spewing particulates from the interior combined with outgassing water vapor to produce rain – and the rain fell for millions of years! Soon enough, oceans were formed. This enabled the effervescence of a thin, protective membrane called an atmosphere, which consequently allowed autocatalytic chemical activity to occur within pools at the surface. During highly energized conditions far from equilibrium – as during a lightning strike – chains of carbon compounds were able to self-organize themselves for periods long enough to begin exchanging materials with their environment. This was the celebrated origin of Life on Earth!

While also truly spectacular, miraculous, and awe-inspiring on its own, was this self-organizing emergence of Life really all that remarkable from a universal perspective? After all, out of the billions of stars that have made their appearance in the billions of years into the ongoing outbreath, how many others have achieved planets with standing water? Organic, biological Life on Earth commenced 3.9 billion years ago – just some one billion years after the Earth solidified. This relatively swift appearance suggests a vitalistic teleology of some kind. The trajectory of events since that time has been so profound, so thoroughly mind-challenging, that Evolutionary Biology must surely be considered a Spiritual discipline. The prototypal living systems of the early Earth were carbon-based single cells living in a water medium – these were the Prokaryotes, or bacteria. Nature worked and reworked this same basic configuration for 2 billion years,

until the bacteria filled every available niche. It's important to realize that bacteria still form the foundation of Life on Earth; they are literally everywhere. A typical handful of fertile soil contains many millions of these tiny unicellular creatures.

It's certainly a "fallacy of misplaced anthropocentrism" to worry whether humans have the ability to extinguish Life on Earth, for the Prokaryotes will surely adapt and endure under any conditions. Indeed, the Prokaryotes have already done so in the past. By 1.5 billion years ago, the Prokaryotes were severely threatened by the rising Oxygen concentration in the atmosphere, which was highly toxic to them. The stage was set for a profound leap in the level of complexity: which occurred with the creative emergence of the Eukaryotes – unicellulars with a nucleus and various specialized organelles. This evolved structure of prototypal living system had distinct advantages over the Prokaryotes, for this form could combine itself into colonies of cells, each cell performing a specialized function for the whole. Thus the prototype of the lung was created by Eukaryotes in ingenious symbiotic communion, who could now 'breathe' all that Oxygen that was formerly so toxic. What had been 'pollution' became transformed into nourishment for the next evolutionary stage of Life.

All advanced forms of Life on Earth are just this: colonies of eukaryotic cells acting in cooperative, integrative union. A human being, for example, is composed of some 3 trillion of these cells – each one a self-organizing entity of its own. With the introduction of multi-cellular structures, the profusion of Life on Earth proceeded to complexify and diversify at a dizzying rate: first came seaweeds and sponges; then the fishes; then the emergence onto land with the amphibians, birds, insects, plants, and fungi; soon enough the mammals and marsupials appeared. Each of these more advanced lifeforms was essentially a cooperative, self-organizing colony of eukaryotes with a specialized niche to fill. What's more, each was cognitive, in the sense of purposefully exchanging information and materials with the environment, thereby altering the environment in ways to suit its purpose.

Finally, some 20 thousand years ago – a relative blip on the evolutionary biology screen – a species called *Homo sapiens* appeared. With a highly evolved nervous system, including a cerebral frontal lobe that could conceptualize and anticipate future situations, this species proceeded to alter the environment in phenomenal ways. By 5000 years ago, the species produced a survival system called 'civilization' – the culture of cities – a highly abstracted mode of living through which the species began to perceive itself as distinct from, even superior to, the Nature that had been its ancestry. At an even dizzy rate, the power-centralizing mandate of civilization enabled in rapid succession: economics, industrialization, the splitting of the atom, computerization, etc.

And now we've reached Peak Oil and Global Warming, with the very real prospect of setting back the evolutionary biology clock. Was *Homo sapiens* a mistake? Is this species an evolutionary dead-end, whose legacy will be the mindless destruction of millions of years of planetary evolution?

Perhaps; but let's just imagine for a moment that out of the billions of stars that have emerged in the billions of years into the ongoing outbreath, many, even just several, of these stars has come with planets that could contain standing water. Well then, the emergence of biological, organic, carbon-based life was virtually assured. And imagine further: once the Prokaryotes had filled their niches, enabling the succession to the Eukaryotes, then the rapid progression of multi-cellulars would ensue, culminating in a neurologically advanced species like *Homo sapiens*. From this perspective, *Homo sapiens* is not likely a unique species existing on a single isolated planet but rather an 'archetype' in any living planet's evolution toward self-consciousness. Perhaps this is *Homo sapiens* mission: to introduce civilization on a planet so that the material element of that planet can be subdued and converted into so much random order. Civilization produces concentrated, ever expanding energy sinks, so *Homo sapiens* proceeds to mine all the latent carbon stores on the planet, thus rapidly releasing this element back into the Biosphere. With ever increasing reliance on technology, the species eventually produces a spacecraft, through whose lens the planet comes to witness itself from afar, as a whole. This is the emergence of Gaia: a self-aware, self-conscious planet ready to leap to a new level of complexity, order, and potential – a level, we could suspect, ready to interface and participate with the galactic system. Yet, even though *Homo sapiens* has a purpose, once the planet achieves self-consciousness, then the methods of *Homo sapiens* become outworn and antiquated. Continuing to subdue the material element of the planet through the power-centralizing mandate of civilization becomes dangerous, even lethal.

The billions of years' long trajectory of Evolutionary Biology inevitably produces a new species – one capable of comprehending the essence and meaning of the whole, one capable of acting as the interface, we could suspect, between Gaia and the Cosmos. This is "The Evolution of an Ecovillage Potential" – for the new species requires a home, a specialized socio-ecological niche from which to carry out its purpose. This nature-encoded 'human habitation system' is the ecovillage – that vibrantly fertile womb through which can be birthed the next species of humanity. From this larger perspective, then, the ecovillage is not a "movement;" nor is it simply the experimentation with innovative models of "sustainability" – no, it's so much more than

that: The emergence of the ecovillage is confirmation that our beloved Gaia has achieved self-consciousness, and is ready to initiate her next stage of evolution.

Let us not fret, then, over the pitiful drama played out in the so-called “news” – for this is just the inevitable culmination of the power-centralizing mandate of the 5000 year march of civilization. *Homo sapiens*’ time is finished; they’re completing their cycle in due fashion; a new world order is indeed emerging. And let us not worry that we aren’t doing enough to ‘save the planet’ – for Gaia is quite capable of saving herself, thank you. It is misplaced responsibility, if not anthropocentric inflation, to assume that as well-meaning individuals, we can effect planetary change when that change is already happening – as a consequence of the 3.9 billion year trajectory of the evolution of Life! What if it turns out, for example, that in some inexplicable way Gaia needs all that additional carbon in the atmosphere to reach her next evolutionary stage – just as in a previous era the rapid introduction of oxygen into the atmosphere upset the existing order, yet allowed for a more advanced level of development?

Let us instead rejoice – for a grand new Epoch is dawning. Let us celebrate our good fortune for being alive in these days as the harbingers of a new species, as progenitors of a new and improved way of Life on Earth. Fill your heart with love, compassion, and grace, and continually instill respect, dignity, and honor into your families and communities. This may be enough in these days: living your life as the enlightened human being you always knew was possible, whose potential had always existed yet could not come into full global luminescence until Now. The evolution of Life on Earth has been a deliberate, continual ascension to reach upwards to the Divine. Now, with the achievement of planetary self-consciousness, the Divine is able to descend into the material element of the planet – knowingly and palpably through people who are paying attention.

The ‘ecovillage’ is the alluring heart-space in which this ascension and descension can meet – and so co-mingle, co-fertilize, and ultimately intercourse in dynamic, orgasmic, cosmic co-creation. Therefore, do all you can to learn about this ecovillage potential; and then initiate the steps necessary to seed ecovillages into your own communities. The benefits will be not only for yourselves but also for the evolutionary trajectory of Life on Earth.