I Am Nature
The New Story

How does nature’s deep design live in us?

Journey to Oneness in Teresa of Avila’s Interior Castle

The Crystal Diamond
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Introduction

Question and Statement:

How does nature’s deep design live in us?

The Journey towards oneness in Teresa of Avila’s Interior Castle.

This question stirred in us a quest to map the tradition of oneness in Teresa, nature and in ourselves. We use the model of the mystic, related arts and science and our own experience to put forth this presentation. Nature’s deep design is pervasive … both visible and invisible. All the resonance of one to another creates a pattern, a design that is replicated in all of nature. This means in all that is … even the things we don’t know yet.

The New Story is told in five chapters:

Vita tells us about Teresa, her process, her interior Journey as explicated in the Interior Castle.

Annemarie shares Bill Plotkin’s eight stages of soul development toward wholeness.

B.J. tells us about our journey to find a home in God through synthesizing the writings of many contemporary wisdom figures.

Mary Ann gives us a biological and poetic view of her relationship with trees.

Joan tells about the soul Journey of a child with Teresa, the significant of a sequence of numbers, seashells, music, archetypes and the oneness of it all.
The Interior Castle: Teresa of Avila Models a Process of Seeing the Deep Design of Oneness in All of Life

Teresa a woman of the 16th century. She unfolded to be a mystic and to be a prophet for us. She was able to become one with all; centuries before Teilhard de Chardin coined the term “omega point.” Enfolded in Jesus, she became conscious of herself, others and the Divine within the whole world.

Teresa was prodigious writer, a founder of numerous monasteries around Spain (when travel was by donkey and cart), a community woman who was acquainted with pots and pans, sewed for the other sisters, played musical instruments and danced in the halls. She was also a woman of prayer. In her mature years, she wrote the Interior Castle, a metaphorical story that invites us on a journey to be all in all. Actually, it’s an autobiographical story in which Teresa is the castle and the castle is the dwelling place for her God and all of creation. Teresa sets up her story into seven dwelling places, also known as castles, houses, rooms, that are spacious and well-appointed. In the very first house, she tells us about the seventh to entice us on the journey.

“You mustn’t think of these dwelling places in such a way that each one would follow in the file after the other, but turn your eyes toward the center which is the room or royal chamber where the king stays, and think of how a palmetto has many leaves surrounding and covering the tasty part that can be eaten (I: 1-8).”

Even at the center of the castle, where all is calm and suffused with the light of God, and where the soul possesses at last the subject of its desire, Teresa insists on obras: works of love, service to neighbor, the virtues necessary to a life for others (vii4:8-9, 14-15).

To be truly spiritual then, is not merely to exist in a delightful and profound peace at one with God but also to suffer generously, to commit oneself unreservedly to others’ good, to cross into the territory of truth and humility, to look reality in the face and know its worth from God's point of view, serenely embracing without counting the cost whatever befalls in the day-to-day walk with the loving companion. The beginning is also the end, to be and to do, in love and suffering with the one whom we know loves us.

These dwelling places are all about relationships with the self, with others, with God, with all that is about, above, beyond, within and without.

Way before GPS and MapQuest, Teresa of Avila began her own journey as experienced and written in the story, Interior Castle. This archetypal journey is a spiral. We enter to begin and to be collectively and personally transformed. To get a sense of this journey, let us recall that we are constantly in motion as is everything else. Nothing in our world is solid or unchanging. This motion unfolds as
patterns and designs in all of life and in both microscopic and macroscopic views deep designs can be seen.

This we wish to understand and aspire to replicate. Since we already have a nascent design within, our development depends on an expanded consciousness and receptiveness to all that exists. Marx says “life determines consciousness.” The more we can experience and truly reflect on our experience sufficiently to be able to articulate it, the more we will be in tune with all that we encounter.

So in the Interior Castle, we will consider the first three dwelling places, the next three and then the seventh.

In the first dwellings our lives are superficial. We just go through life day after day without much consciousness, without any thought of our shadow, without wonderment. We magnify differences and internalize grievances in a way that is ridiculous. We are unfocused and fret our time away until we are moved by warmth, strength and determination to seek something more.

In the second dwellings we are moved to a moral conversion. We want to pray, but only sometimes, nothing consistent, but it bothers us not to pray. Seeing our own shortcomings – how we are so easily overcome by “poisonous creatures” – has the capacity to overwhelm and discourage us. Teresa describes these dwelling places as “afflicted.” There is a wish at times to return to an ignorance is bliss existence, but God’s constancy saves the day. Teresa recommends we find a spiritual director or friend who can strengthen our resolve and with whom we can continue the journey. The second dwelling places increasingly call us into a great knowledge of who we are meant to be and a greater desire to become that person.

In the third dwellings, we are invited into a relational identity-understanding ourselves to be in constant relationship with the divine. Teresa uses the biblical passage of the rich young man (Matt. 19) to highlight the invitational nature of a newly forming relationship between the human the divine. She recognizes the third dwellings are “certainly … a state to be desired (iii: 1-5) and yet there is more to the journey. As in the story of the rich young man, the ultimate destiny rests in the choice either to follow Christ and move more deeply into all that the human-divine relationship entails or to “turn away sorrowful.” Teresa calls us to revere God and recognize God’s presence in all our daily activity and to respond with awe and openness to the mystery of God revealed in everything. She suggests a thorough pruning of all the weeds that inhibit the growth of our garden (ourselves), thus allowing our relationship with God to define itself.

In these dwellings, Teresa exhorts us to move with haste, to abandon our reason and our fears into God’s hands, to not only see God in rules and commandments but with immense affection and tenderness.
We could view the first, second and third dwellings as preparation, purgation or simply getting ready. It’s like a sous chef who gets every little thing ready but the executive chef who adds the spices and cooks the meal. So, now the executive chef is beginning to take over.

In the fourth dwellings we begin to let go of controls and begin to surrender to a mutual human-divine relationship. We get glimpses of who we can be when capacitated by God. Teresa begins this stage of the mystical journey with Psalm 118:3. “When you enlarged my heart …“ Our own sense of selfhood must expand, grow into its capacity to house the fullness of the divine. It’s a stretching and a receptive process. It’s a quiet time.

For Teresa, asceticism consists fundamentally in the expansion of one’s affective capacity that is in the ability to move beyond personal self-interest and to extend oneself through compassion and charity toward others. Teresa encourages us to think of asceticism in relational terms: how do we respond to the daily challenges that living in community, marriage, family life and our interconnection with all of creation? How can we do this lovingly? How do we take on our responsibility for the proper care of the earth and all contained therein in become whole? How do we receive drink from the fountain of living water?

Throughout the fourth dwelling, our seaworthiness is honed. Teresa calls this loving God “without self-interest.” There is a depth that settles in when we love without the gifts – just for the person.

However, the gifts just keep coming – spiritual delights given by God just because; not connected to anything we do.

Teresa instructs that the inward searching takes the form of a “gentle drawing inward … like a turtle drawing into its shell … so that the soul instead of striving to engage in discourse strives to remain attentive and aware of what the Lord is working in it” (iv:3.3-4).

This is the way that our hearts are enlarged. In these dwellings, we feel the immensity and great honor to be in direct connection with God. Teresa suggests that now is not the time to dissect or diagram this experience. She says “the soul should strive to cut down the rambling of the intellect … enjoy it without any endeavors other than some loving words” (IV: 3-7).

Bernard Haring said that if you could only say one prayer in life, let it be “thank you.” Teresa rejoins: “The important thing is not to think much but to love much; and so do that which best stirs you to love” (iv:1-7).

She goes on by relating that if clarity is needed then check out how much you love your neighbor on good days and bad days, when convenient or not. In proportion to our love of neighbor is our love of God.
In the fifth dwellings, we experience what it is like to live fully, deeply within ourselves. The fourth dwelling expanded our heart so that this spaciousness becomes inviting, hospitable for unitive experience. We change. All the little worms within us become butterflies. We become a new person.

Teresa relates “the soul weaves the cocoon in which the worm is transformed into the butterfly by getting rid of self-love, self-will and attachments” (v: 2-6). These actions are transformative, not self-destructive nor final. It’s all about God’s love embracing us in our totality—every little hair and wiggle. The relational identity is becoming stronger.

An example of this dwelling would be the movie As Good as It Gets when Jack Nicholson is pressed repeatedly to give Helen Hunt a compliment. Finally, with a squirm, he says “You make me want to be a better man.” The slow courtship in this movie is akin to the fifth dwelling. Jack Nicholson thinks about Helen Hunt a lot and about himself a lot, so much so, that it is difficult to speak.

Teresa says, “O Sisters, how can I explain the riches and delights found in the fifth dwelling places? I believe it would be better not to say anything about the remaining rooms, for there is no way of learning how to speak of them; neither is the intellect capable of understanding them nor can comparisons help in explaining them; earthly things are too coarse for such a purpose” (v:1-1).

However, Teresa does go on. She reiterates the need for spiritual companions to talk with, to understand their human-divine relationship and tells us once again the absolute necessity of love and actions for our neighbors.

In the sixth dwellings, life really becomes vibrant. We prize the mystery of ourselves while feeling the pain of letting go of attachments. You can carry more on your back when crawling than you can when you fly. These dwellings embody God’s deeper invitation into the reality of an identity shaped by the union of human and divine.

Teresa’s ardent yearning for relationships is evidenced in the heightened forms of communication, namely unitive encounters of rapture, ecstasy, visions, locutions and so forth, which she explains in detail to diminish our fears and enliven our desires. A mystical transformation is occurring so that an inner-Trinitarian and intersubjective union with God transpires. In the first three dwellings Teresa entered and became the “castle” now a switch occurs and God becomes the castle in which Teresa dwells but only briefly. She yearns for a forever and ever union within the castle.

So in the sixth dwelling we need lots of courage. It’s as if the divine-human relationship is in full courtship mode. Teresa hears and feels the words of God and they become embedded in her heart. She trusts, has no doubt that she is loved and cherished even when she is stunned, bewildered or overcome by the intensity of the experience.

Teresa relates that the joy of this form of love, new to herself, is “so excessive that she wouldn’t want to enjoy it alone.” She radiates this love outward and draws people to it as
if in a communal celebration. Teresa has found herself and tells us that like the father of
the prodigal son, she wants to prepare a feast and invite all because she is in a warm and
safe place.

This time of transformative companionship awakens Teresa to everything around her and more. She
is able to take in the fullness of self-in-God and the ultimate reality of the communion of all things in
God.

The seventh dwellings are a place of connectedness. They are amazingly quiet and complete: like
immigrants seeing the Statue of Liberty after a long and arduous voyage. Teresa arrives into the
intimate being of the Trinitarian God. With undivided consciousness she knows the world and herself
not in the process of becoming but in the achievement of being. Not as separate parts but as an
organic whole. Life now flows wordlessly; revelatory knowledge of God, self and the world become
an ongoing way of seeing and knowing. This union is no longer brief or fleeting it is forever and ever.

Teresa writes:

    Each day this soul becomes more amazed, for these persons never seem to leave it anymore,
    but it clearly beholds, in the way this was mentioned, that they are within it. In the extreme
    interior, in some place very deep within itself, the nature of which it doesn’t know how to
    explain, because of a lack of learning, it perceives their divine company (vii: 1-7).

Teresa uses the metaphor of Martha and Mary to exemplify the nature of encompassing God in a
contemplative union as active in regard to all of creation. This praxis is captured by Moltman when
he says: “It is not a choice of being a mystic or a prophet – the choice is to be a mystic and a prophet.

With the certitude of experience, Teresa models a process for us, a journey that enables us to
negotiate our own journey through the self to explore the links between God and the history of
humanity.

*These woman have informed my thoughts and heart about Teresa of Avila: Gillian Ahlgren, Margaret
Brennan, Constance Fitzgerald, and Vilma Seelaus*
Who Are We Anyway?
“Religion is a human interpretation of what is sacred”

For me, the Story of the Universe is especially a spiritual revelation. It requires faith but can never oppose verified facts nor be imposed for belief.

My attempt here is to ever so briefly present Bill Plotkin’s work as an answer to “How does the design of nature life in us?” Plotkin posits that there is a developmental unfolding within all human beings that leads us from being held in loving human arms to being consciously held within One Universe who loves us intensely. Similar to the rooms of Teresa’s castle, we have an visceral intellectual/spiritual/social pull from room to room toward finding our identities and creating healthy cultures as our way of loving our One Universe in return.

Just as the Universe and Earth have irreversible developmental stages, Plotkin outlines eight progressions of growth that instinctively occur in the spiritual/intellectual and social journey of any human. No development task of each stage is ever fully completed. Every transition between stages presents a loss/crisis and new opportunities. There are no set time frames; one can more or less progress or get stuck along the way and no stage is “better” the other. These stages surprisingly circle the four directions. The full flowering of humanity is proportional to the health of local cultures.

For each stage below, I give 1) its name (and major gift is capitalized) and cryptic summary; 2) personal notes from my spiritual story to help be curious about your own; 3) quote Thomas Berry (italics), whose words gave me, with his interpretation of universe and Earth as sacred, a broader spiritual vision/context and meaning for all I hold dear.

Stage 1: The INNOCENT in the NEST (early childhood)
This is the only stage where the caregivers have to do the work. The tasks are to love/treasure this infant and keep her/him safe.

World population is under 2 billion. Hierarchy and dualisms were in our culture. Pius XII had declared the infallibility of the pope and that the Church was the body of Christ. There was a very high respect for the clergy, God's will and the desire to get to heaven. Our area of town was declared a new parish; our chapel was a remodeled army hut. With an extreme price, World War II ended, but Truman also helped start the UN. Anxiety was part of our young family but I had a happy childhood giving and receiving kindness; accepting and working out sufferings as they came. As a very young child on the beach with a happy mother nourishing her spirit, this experience stood out: I felt at deeply at home, free and full of wonder.

“To understand this primordial need that humans have for the natural world and its animal inhabitants, we might reflect on the needs of our children, the two, three, and four-year olds
especially. We can hardly communicate with them in any meaningful way except through pictures and stories of humans and animals and fields and trees, of flowers, birds and butterflies, of sea and sky. These present to the child a world of wonder and beauty and intimacy, a world sufficiently enticing to enable the child to overcome the sorrows that they necessarily experience from their earliest years.”

Stage 2: The EXPLORER in the GARDEN (middle childhood)
The child begins to claim his/her own authority (“I”). Overflowing with wonder and emotions, the young one explores and learns the givens of the world and his or her place in it. Lucky the child with honest mentors about!

Everything was new. My parents and school encouraged and expanded my circles of play with neighborhood friends and relatives. We scouted one another’s spaces and learned new ways of doing things from their parents. Music, stories and laughter were part of our gatherings. While dad was building our house, mom was part of a determined and successful committee to start our parochial school.

“In speaking about the education of the six-year-old child, she (Maria Montessori) notes in her book, To Educate the Human Potential, that only when the child is able to identify its own center with the center of the universe does education really begin. For the universe, she says, ‘is an imposing reality.’ It is ‘an answer to all questions.’ She observes how this experience of the universe create in children admiration and wonder, how this enables children to unify their thinking. In this manner children learn how all things are related and how the relationship of things to one another is so close that ‘no matter what we touch, an atom, or a cell, we cannot explain it without knowledge of the wide universe.’”

Stage 3: THE THESPPIAN AT THE OASIS (early adolescence)
A dramatic youth full of fire is fully present. Near puberty, life centered and in nature and family shifts to concerns and preoccupations that orbit around peer groups, sexuality and society

In grade four, transferring to the new parish school, I began my Catholic education with the Adrian Dominicans. Beside bomb drills, I heard lots of stories about missionary saints, reflections on Jesus, the importance of praying for peace, pagans, going to Mass and being good. Looking back, I am amazed to the grip that all things Catholic had consciousness, too much it seems now on an outside God.
“To the children, To all the children: To the children who swim beneath the waves of the sea, to those who live in the soils of the earth, to the children of the flowers in the meadows and the trees in the forest, to all those children who roam over the land and the winged ones who fly with the winds, to the human children too, that all the children may go together into the future in the full diversity of their regional communities.”

Stage 4: THE WANDERER in the COCOON (late adolescence)
Focus shifts from one’s emotional and social life to the wild world of your very own unique soul. It requires leaving behind your past role and searching for something you are very drawn to. If feels dark, mysterious and frightening.

Moving on to Loretto High School, in spite of an interest in boys and their sports, I often found myself moody and irritable – a full feeling of being pulled but unable to know to what and where. Perusing the book of various orders, I decided to be a missionary. Mom said I had to ask my father, who said absolutely not. The greatest balm arrived shortly: mom encouraged me to apply to Marygrove. The teachers were open, insightful, fun and responsible. They fed new worlds to me. Still I struggled with a “spiritual” pull until one day, IHMs, who I had never considered before, rose right up as my clear path that came to be. No sooner did our class become novices when, wow, Vatican II documents blessed all people as carrying a sacred role and a guiding conscience. Our role was to be an encouragement among people. I wanted to head in this direction.

“Presently, those of us who are heirs to the biblical tradition are trying to be religious in accordance with written scriptures and covenant relations with the divine based on a juridic model. This can be effective only as long as it functions within the awesome awakening to the divine evoked by our experience of the natural world. We become religious by fulfilling our role within the larger community of the universe itself. The natural world is both the primary source of religious understanding and the primary religious community. In the natural world, we discover the mysterious power whence all things come into being. In humans this religious community reflects on and celebrates itself and its numinous origins in a special mode of conscious self-awareness.”

Stage 5: THE SOUL APPRENTICE at the WELLSPRING (early adulthood)
Like a spring, you increasingly respect your unique natural spontaneities (identity). You search now to become skilled at cultural delivery systems that fit your natural gifts.

My early jobs teaching coincided with cultural upheaval. Racism toward blacks, the Vietnam war, resistance to liturgical changes increased conflicts among people. I felt drawn to works with adults in pastoral ministry, starting with parish ministry and was lucky to be offered some training. But once I began official parish ministry, and under the Pope John Paul II, I felt
very increasingly disturbed with official positions toward women, homosexuals, roles, divorce, who the Church was, the total control of rituals … but especially not listening to members’ needs. I needed distant myself.

“We need to reinvent the human at the species [soul] level because the issues we are concerned with seem to be beyond the competence of our present cultural traditions, either individually or collectively. What is needed is something beyond existing traditions to bring us back to the most fundamental aspect of the human: giving shape to ourselves. The human is at a cultural impasse. In our efforts to reduce the other-than-human components of the planet to subservience to our Western cultural expression, we have brought the entire set of life-systems of the planet, including the human, to an extremely dangerous situation. Radical new cultural forms are needed. These new cultural forms would place the human within the dynamics of the planet rather than place the planet within the dynamics of the human.”

Stage 6: **THE ARTISAN in the WILD ORCHARD (late adulthood)**
Task: Creating and implementing innovative delivery systems for soul
Gift to Community: Seeds of cultural renaissance

Fortunately, our community was seriously listening to one another and with the closing of schools risked everything to let the sisters claim their souls and start new works. While I found work, a main interest became listening to why others were leaving their parish, starting with family members. I also experienced the loss of community that comes with such a decision. With the nuclear arms race, the injustices in El Salvador and the huge surge in environmental concern, there were new opportunities. Out of the blue, I was encouraged to study Thomas Berry’s work for six weeks. There my soul found itself and everything meaningful fell in place.

“As humans we are born of the Earth, nourished by the Earth, healed by the Earth. The natural world tells us: I will feed you, I will clothe you, I will shelter you, I will heal you. Only do not so devour me or use me that you destroy my capacity to mediate the diving and the human. For I offer you a communion with the divine, I offer you flowers whereby you man express your reverence for the divine and your love for each other…

Stage 7: **THE MASTER in the GROVE of ELDERS (early elderhood)**
Task: Caring for the soul of the more-than-human community
Gift: Wholeness

Stage 8: **THE SAGE in the MOUNTAIN CAVE (late elderhood)**
Task: None, but what happens (without deliberation) is tending the universe
Gift: Grace
I think one take-away is that many people are also looking for a much broader world sacred view that is adequate for the our times and the future we want to create. Using only Catholic concepts may not be the most helpful to them.

I also think there are very serious questions as to why our Catholic Church is so resistant to naming the universe as living and sacred and personal. Jesus seemed to get it.

Taken from:
Bill Plotkin, Soulcraft: Crossing into the Mysteries of Nature and Psyche (2003 New World Library, Navato CA)


Thomas Berry, The Dream of the Earth (1988 Sierra Club Books, San Francisco CA)

Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, The Universe Story: From the Primordial Flaring Forth to the Ecozoic Era (1992 HarperSanFransico, CA)

Thomas Berry edited by Mary Evelyn Tucker, Evening Thoughts: Reflecting on Earth as Sacred Community (2006 Sierra Club Books, San Francisco CA)
Life’s Journey – Finding A Home In God
“You find God in yourself, and you find yourself in God.” St. Teresa of Avila

When I was 7-8 years old, I remember sitting in my Sunday school class looking out the window. I saw a tree along the sidewalk and thought, “How could anyone not believe in God when they see that beautiful tree?” As a child and, frankly, up into my 50s, I sought to know and serve a distant God, a Trinity of Father (Loving Parent), Son (Jesus) and Holy Spirit. My life experiences have formed me as a unique facet of St. Teresa of Avila’s crystal diamond. Therefore, my life’s journey to finding God has led to discovering God in the new Universe Story. How does the universe become a home in God?

What is nature’s deep design? Universal qualities present everywhere.

- **Everything in the universe is inter-connected and inter-related.** All that has been, is, and will be has its origins 13.8 billion years ago. Evolution is a cosmic birthing process. Ilia Delio, OSF, states, “Evolution is God coming to be at the heart of the cosmos.” Evolution is the name given to God’s creativity that has been realized by natural processes, life dynamics and universal forces/laws.

- **There are three dynamics in relation to each other present in our Universe – differentiation, interiority and communion.** Thomas Berry defines the three: “Differentiation is what created the marvelous diversity present in the material forms of our Universe. Deepening the diversity is the dynamic of interiority, which means that every aspect of our Universe, from atoms to humans, has a unique identity, touched, influenced and shaped by experience. The third dynamic, communion, holds all of this diversity together in an interdependent reality.” Thich Nhat Hanh writes, “We are here to awaken from the illusion of our separateness.”

- **We came from stardust!** Humans are part of nature, not separate from nature. Meister Eckhart wrote in the 14th century, “Every creature is a face of God.” Humans are part of the dynamics of the universe, not apart from them. We belong to one Earth community and all parts need to be viable and flourishing. We stand on the shoulders of our ancestors and act as a springboard/seedbed for our descendants.

- **Consciousness is an aspect of the whole universe.** Consciousness is not only a part of the human brain, but is a universal “collective unconscious” that Carl G. Jung understood permeates the whole of creation. Diarmuid O’Murchu writes in his book, *Evolutionary Faith*, “It is an amalgam of all the thoughts, feelings, aspirations, and ideas that have ever been experienced. It is a reservoir of spiritual, psychic, and mental energy, and it exists everywhere. … It is in this capacity for self-organization that growing numbers of scientists concede the existence of consciousness as a universal quality. … Consciousness is what discloses to us a world of greater complexity, openness, fluidity, and creativity.” (pp. 172-177) Rev. Richard Rohr, OFM, writes, “The theology of Francis, Duns Scotus, and Bonaventure was never about trying to placate a distant or angry God, earn forgiveness,
or find some abstract theory of justification. They were all about cosmic optimism, deep
time, and implanted hope! This invites us beyond the negative notion of history as being a
‘fall from grace’ to the long and positive view of history as a slow emergence/evolution
into ever-greater consciousness.” (Daily meditation 3/27/17)

- **Birth, life, death, and resurrection (rebirth) is a universal pattern.** The resurrection of
  Jesus was not a one-time miracle but was evidence that Jesus the Christ is omnipresent.
  Jesus’ life and teachings show us that each of our life’s journey is a path of resurrection.
  “Behold I make all things new.” –Revelation 21:5

- **Nothing remains static. The universe moves towards expansion, complexity, and
  change.**

*How does nature’s deep design live in us as revelation of God?*

- Evolution teaches us that God is not a creator from afar but a relational life power present
  in the processes of the universe itself.
- “There is one God and Creator of all, who is over all, who works through all, and is within
  all.” Ephesians 4:6
- The path of the Cosmic Christ is the evolutionary emergence of all toward a complete
  unity. The Universal Christ is an archetype for everything, the unification of all things.
  Christ (God’s design for all creation) was at the beginning of time and space. Jesus the
  Christ was the manifestation of the Divine within humanity. Rev. Rohr states, “Christ is
  much larger and older than either Jesus of Nazareth or the Christian religion. The Christ is
  whenever the material and the divine co-exist – which is always and everywhere.” This is
  supported by Colossians 3:11: “There is only Christ: he is everything and he is in
  everything.” Also, 1 Corinthians 15:28, “In the end … God will be all in all.” We are in Christ.
  Therefore, the path of the Cosmic Christ moves us forward into the newness of God.
  Mirroring and witnessing to the life and teachings of Jesus the Christ puts us on the path
to Oneness with All (the Cosmic Christ). I recognize this reality within me as God-ness, the
  Divine Spark, my True Self, my Spirit. Christ lives in me, and therefore, I live in God.
  Realizing what Jesus called, “the kingdom of God,” is the path of the Cosmic Christ. The
eternal, Cosmic Christ saves us all by **including all.** Rev. Rohr expresses the concept so
precisely, “So it’s not about being correct: it’s about being connected!”

- **Christ-consciousness is living now to bring Christ’s light into the darkness of the world.**
  Being aware of our personal connection with the Cosmic Christ allows us to move forward
  (evolve) on a path with a unique divine plan/purpose. Christ-consciousness calls me to be
  Christ-like in the world of today. God lures us from the future to contribute our lives to
  bringing forth love.

- Teilhard de Chardin, explaining his concept of the “Christic consciousness,” states, “The
  cosmos is fundamentally and primarily living. … Christ, through his incarnation, is internal
to the world … rooted in the world, even in the very heart of the tiniest atom. … Nothing seems to me more vital, from the point of view of human energy, than the appearance and eventually, the systematic cultivations of such a ‘cosmic sense.’ This reveals his view of God as the God ahead, the God who draws all things to their completion in Christ, the Risen Christ at work in the whole creation. His vision of the convergence of the universe of modern science with God in Christ, he called the Omega Point.

- Mysticism: Karl Rahner described mysticism as an “orientation to boundless mystery.” O’Murchu explains, “Mysticism is not about human abandonment into the arms of the divine, but about immersion in the divine mystery at the heart of creation.” Mystics contribute to the transformation of consciousness by their ability to see with breadth and depth. The mystic vision is toward seeing greater union, i.e., bigger connections.

- The Trinity is not theological speculation about the inner life of God, but a re-imaging of a relational pattern coded into all of creation. Cynthia Bourgeault writes, “It is the presence of the Trinity as a pattern repeated at every scale of the cosmic order that makes the universe a manifestation of God and itself sacred and holy.” New Trinitarian theology reveals that true power is circular or spiral, not necessarily hierarchical. God’s power is not domination, threat or coercion, but “shared power” based on love, trust and mutuality. The Trinity expresses servanthood, not empire-building.

- The Law of Three is a cosmic organizing principle based on the present of three forces—affirming, denying, reconciling. By giving attention to these three forces, the Law of Three shifts the focus away from eliminating opposition toward working collaboratively for an agreeable solution. Albert Einstein said, “A problem can never be solved at the level at which it is created.” As we learn to hold the tensions between opposites, new possibilities may emerge from a third force coming into focus.

- “Thin places” are transparent places or moments when one can be aware of the transcendent nature between apparent reality and deeper reality – an opening between this world and another. We are aware of a spiritual dimension beyond our own cognitive knowledge. Barbara Brown Taylor, This Place That Has Made Us Kin, gives the following examples of what could be “thin places:”
  - Hospital rooms, prison cells, soup lines
  - Places in nature
  - Unity felt in prayer
  - Kindness received
  - Holding a newborn child or creature
  - Gazing at beauty
  - Knowing the mystery while present at a dying

In my later years, a Trinitarian God (Creator, Jesus the Christ, Spirit within me) has been revealed to me by looking inwardly to myself. Meditation, Centering Prayer and silence in nature affirm my God-
ness, the Divine spark, my True Self. Christ lives in me, and therefore, I live in God. The path of the Cosmic Christ is the “kingdom of God,” taught by Jesus, the Risen Christ. A loving God began the Universe and continues to be present in the ongoing realities of the Universe. I want to live in right relationship with Earth, with all humanity and with all other species. I celebrate the vastness, diversity and creativity of the Universe by expressing awe, wonder, gratitude and appreciating beauty and unique gifts/talents of all creatures. The revelation of God is also known through scientific knowledge and discoveries, natural beauty, deep knowing and loving relationships. God is Loving Presence throughout the Universe.

To conclude, Nature’s deep design lives within us as we

1) Recognize the pattern of the Trinity God as not three distinct persons, but as a deep relational reality evident throughout the universe and we are part of it;
2) Welcome an emerging consciousness arising within us by embracing a perspective of sustainability, kinship with all and solidarity with other protectors of Earth;
3) Encourage the transformational work necessary to move from societal individuality to safeguarding the common good of all humanity, all species, the whole Earth; and
4) Affirm the pattern of birth, life, death and resurrection (new birth) as a universal occurrence.

Reflection Questions

1. How would a “Cosmic Christ” path/focus be transformative in your life?
2. Has new Trinitarian theology changed your God concepts and thoughts about heaven and salvation?
3. Do you see yourself as part of a diminishing community or an expanding, connecting, viable community?

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Roots and Reach of Trees

The Early Years
I remember the two trees I grew up with, a basswood and a black walnut tree. The basswood was close to the house in our small backyard. I would spend time looking at it, admiring its large leaves. “What’s its name?” I asked Dad. He answered, “A basswood.” I knew the tree’s name and I enjoyed its presence.

The black walnut was behind the garage. Its place was best behind the garage because it was a little messy when the walnuts fell to the ground. I had a project. I would collect the walnuts, go to the back steps and crack them open with a hammer. The walnuts that I collected then went to Mom and Dad. I am reminded of this early relationship with a walnut tree because at this time in my life there is a walnut tree in my front yard. When the walnuts are ready now, I leave it up to the squirrels. This walnut tree is truly the squirrel’s playground.

Marygrove College
I was a biology major. Classes covered many life topics: biochemistry, ecology, plants, evolution, etc.

I was reminded of the oxygen/carbon dioxide cycle one early evening when I was leaving the office. My little, then 2-year-old friend, was playing in the labrynth and he called me over to join in running in circles and stopping to hug a tree. When I taught life science, I encouraged students to hug a tree because of the important relationship between humans and trees. The tree receives the carbon dioxide that we breathe out, and releases oxygen for us to breathe. I am thankful that I was able to learn this and so much more about our living planet.

Travel and Trees
“Mysticism always occurs, concealed and namelessly, in the midst of ordinary life.”
-Karl Rahner, SJ

Walking in Woods
“Come! Come and See!
Come and See where I live!”

Mind and heart return
To an ordinary experience,
Walking in John Muir woods
And the Hartwick Pines.
Why did I feel peace in my being?
Why does walking in woods
Rest gently in my memory?

Trees live a truth
Resonating in my being:
A desire for a diverse community;
The gift of each one enriching the whole;
Acknowledging signs;
Adapting to evolve;
Right relationship.

The roots and reach of trees:
Seeking nurture and
A strong foundation,
Enriching the arms
Dancing with the beloved.

By M.A.B.

Chapter 2012
I was a member of the 2012 Assembly/Chapter Committee and the subcommittee on prayer. Prayer reflections were on the Tree of Life. The following was written by the committee members:

Our Community of IHM
Deep roots anchored courage,
Strong trunk wisdom stories,
Fruitful branches risking reach

A Tree of Life

Biomimicry and the Genius of Nature
I am so happy to have the opportunity to learn about Biomimicry. This gift will help me to grow into right relationship with nature.

Stepping Out Of A Box (What Is Your Box?)
Push down the walls around you.
Reach beyond the structures you have built.
See with new eyes.
Hear with new ears.
Soar into the beyond.
You have no limits.
With your hand caress the flower's petal,
know the gentleness of love.
Move closer to beauty and truth.
In a cosmic sense, you dance in the universe,
melting into your fellow creations, disappearing.
Freedom and humility are sisters.

By M.A.B.

One of my Favorite Mystics

THERE
by Hafiz

There
I bow my head –
At the feet of every creature.

This constant submission and homage,
Of kissing God
All over,
Someday,
Every lover will
Do.

Only
There I prostrate myself –
Against the beauty of each form –

For when I bring
My heart close to any object
I always hear the Friend
Say,

"Hafiz, I am Here."
Did You Know?

Peter Wohlleben wrote *The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate.* “… Wohlleben’s revelatory reframing of our oldest companions is an invitation to see anew what we have spent eons taking for granted and, in this act of seeing, to care more deeply about these remarkable beings that make life on this planet we call home not only infinitely more pleasurable, but possible at all.”

Tree rings reveal history.

More trees, more shade,
less flooding

Urban neighborhoods with
more trees tend to have
lower crime rates.

Trees will nurse
a sick neighbor.

Trees will warn each other
of danger, sending electrical
 signals across a fungal network.

Trees will keep ancient stumps
of long-felled companions
alive by feeding them sugar
solution through their roots.

Trees are social beings.
The Child and the Seashells
*The Child archetype lives in each of us.*

I’d like to begin my story with a childhood memory. The most beautiful place on Earth for me was being at the seashore watching the vibrant sun fade slowly into the water. Where does it go? I asked myself. Maybe it just goes to rest for a while until it reappears. As a Child, I was content with that idea. Playing in the waves and filling my pail with seashells consumed my time and were great fun. By evening, my pail was full of beautiful shells, different shapes, sizes, color each a unique treasure to bring home. I was so excited to show my mother yet another pail of seashells. Where did she ever put all of them!

But on this one particular evening while listening to the roaring waves and seeing the light fade, a special feeling, which I never forgot touched me. I was enchanted by beauty and the emotion that settled in my heart. I could not pull my eyes away from the sun nestled in rays of colorful cloud formations until it disappeared, leaving only the sound of rolling waves.

When we look and listen deeply to something, we bring it inside ourselves. The shells, waves and sunset became part of me … nature inside with nature outside as one. In this magical place, a glorious song broke through the waves soaring from beneath the bottom of the sea to the heights of the galaxies. The sunset, seashells, waves and song found a home in me. Or was it I who found a home in them … or both? I think that was my first sense of belonging.

I will always remember that special evening and hope never to lose the charms of childhood. It is an enriching way of being in this world and with God. Perhaps the allurement of sacred mystery pulls us into the beauty of God’s presence.

In this sense, the Child’s magical moment at the seashore was foretelling the experience of oneness in Teresa of Avila’s soul Journey through the Interior Castle. Teresa understood the path of human development … that we are always becoming and moving toward wholeness and that our longing for oneness is so core to our being that separation oftentimes feels unbearable.

*What light shines through the dark in Teresa of Avila’s Interior Castle?*

Crossing the threshold into the Castle with Teresa and the Child is the beginning of sacred Journey. We know it well. The pattern and design of the archetypal Journey is well traveled … we walk in the footsteps of all those who have gone before us. With Teresa, we enter into paschal mystery as shadow and light reveal and reflect insights about self that are as expansive as the universe. In the darkness of letting go, caterpillar transforms into butterfly leaving the cocoon behind, awakening us to new light. Transformation is a lifelong process that moves through dark fearful times to expanding consciousness, broader vision and deepening soul. Teresa’s soul voice resounds as light throughout the Castle and in all nature. As Great Mother, she revives the maternal principle of Earth out of which
we are all born. Her feminine voice continues to awaken, dualities become more integrated, potential for transforming past wounds and healing our Earth become real possibilities. Movement toward center in the Castle is movement toward center in our own lives where God enfolds us in an epiphany of light, color, sound, revealing what already lives within … deep longing for wholeness, oneness.

In the seventh house, Teresa speaks of union, masculine with feminine in spiritual marriage … a universal image for the union of the human and divine. Today we might call this Christ consciousness. In tantric yoga traditions, the seventh chakra, often referred to as the thousand-petal lotus chakra located at the top of the head, gives us access to higher states of consciousness and union with the divine. In Jungian terms, the sacred marriage integrating Divine Feminine with Divine Masculine is an archetypal expression of union, oneness, wholeness, love … mysterium coniunctionis.

Let’s go back to the Child at the seashore, pail of seashells in hand listening to the sound of waves sweeping the sand. Walking with her at the seashore, we step into the evening sky flooded with the immensity of new light breaking through the sunset into rising dawn revealing a cosmic sense of death-rebirth as cyclical pattern of transformation.

She is the gatherer of new insight and knowledge, the curious one, the playful one, maker of invisible connections, holder of mystery and wonder, lover of home and belonging.

It is for us to take her hand.

*What is the relationship between seashells and mathematics?*

Decades later, I discovered that each seashell grows in response to an inborn design and in accordance to its own archetypal and morphogenetic blueprint. The underlying design duplicates a universal pattern matching the Fibonacci code, a mathematical sequence of numbers. Sounds a little like the Da Vinci code? Actually Dan Brown did utilize this code in his storytelling … plus more codes within codes, symbols within symbols all adding up to a thrilling story.

Fibonacci was an Italian mathematician (c. 1175 – c. 1250) considered to be the most talented Western mathematician of the Middle Ages. The particular mathematical sequence he discovered underscores the many deep designs, patterns found in the natural world, and to my delight specifically for this story, mathematics, physics, music and Jung.

In this sequence of numbers, a new number is found by adding the two numbers before it. The sequence goes like this, starting with 0 and 1: 0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34 and so on.

The sequence of numbers is nature’s numbering system. It appears everywhere in nature from the leaf arrangement in plants, the scales of a pineapple, the pattern of the florets of a flower, the spirals
in galaxies, the Tree of Life. If we were to examine the number of arrangement of petals on a flower, we would find that the number is often one of the Fibonacci numbers. For example in the outer ring of ray florets in the daisy family, the Fibonacci sequence illustrates the pattern very well. Daisies with 13, 21, 34, 55 or 89 petals are not accidental, but predictable, according to the Fibonacci sequence, as an underlying part of nature.

So next time you gather a simple exquisite arrangement of daisies you are seeing much more than the beautiful visible flowers. You are exposing an invisible world of mathematical order, pattern and design.

What about humans? The Fibonacci sequence applies here as well. The Fibonacci sequence of numbers is related to the irrational number called the golden ratio=phi. The golden number is 1.618 and can be found throughout life. It creates a sense of balance, harmony, symmetry we find in nature's deep design, art, architecture, music, the human body. The golden ratio is the architectural principle of proportion in the human body. For example, in the anatomy of the hand, it is seen in the proportions of sections of a finger. We have eight fingers in total, five digits on each hand, three bones in each finger, two bones in one thumb, and one thumb on each hand.

So there it is – 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8. When we say we are nature, we really are!

The golden ratio also links art and music. Examples, Leonardo Da Vinci’s Mona Lisa is drawn according to the golden ratio (some debate this), Claude Debussy and Bach used it explicitly in their music and the Greeks in building the Parthenon. Examples are endless.

In what can seem to be randomness in our world we find pattern, design and mathematical order. I remember Brian Swimme saying “Pythagoras had been right all along – the world could be understood through number and pattern.” Pythagoras also made contributions to music theory and related music with mathematics.

Mathematics proves all this to be true, but at the most profound level, mystery and beauty enfold the mathematics, music, depth psychology and everything else. This does not negate the knowledge gained from new understandings, but rather opens us, in the deepest sense, to the possibility of actually experiencing it.

In this expanding consciousness an awareness of global oneness is springing up as new seeds from all around this beautiful Earth. The idea of unity of life, “that we are one,” is becoming part of the mainstream.

Holding the Child’s hand, we recall that special evening when she heard a glorious song soaring from the bottom of the sea to the heights of the galaxies. She stood in awe and wonder. I know now it was her voice soaring up from her soul giving sound to the vast beauty and mystery of where we live and belong.
How does nature’s deep design in mathematics relate to physics and music?

In music, intervals are the distance between any two notes and when played in succession create melody and simultaneously sounding notes form chords. These intervals produce a mathematical sequence, even the space between the notes reverberate all the sounds around it. As the waves on the seashore spiral up and beyond each other from the depths of the sea, so music spirals up from the artist’s fertile imagination.

One of my favorite periods in classical music is the Baroque style. For example, in Bach’s “The Art of the Fugue,” a mathematical analysis of its structure, done in the context of a graduate course in Baroque music, shows strict adherence to the Fibonacci sequence resonating with the natural order of things. Perhaps that is why music touches the human soul so deeply.

The fugue, in simple terms, is a polyphonic (many voices=vocal or instrumental) composition in which one musical theme is introduced by one voice and taken up by other voices interweaving the different voices making what is called counterpoint forming harmony, or metaphorically speaking, each sea wave touching the seashore at various intervals weaving together beautiful rhythmic patterns of sound.

All music emerges from the principles found in physics and mathematics. Centuries ago, some considered the study of music to be a kind of science. Here’s a thought that captured my imagination many years ago: “Science is the music of the intellect, and music is the science of the heart.” When we listen deeply all linear time fades away and we soar into a spiral of belonging with the divine, as did the Child standing at the seashore.

The interaction of sounds, tempos, rhythms create beautiful music in a similar way as the interaction of facts, observations and knowledge create beautiful equations in physics. Science and music use formula and theory to explore the mysteries of life. Science can explain the mathematics of music, but emotion creates the beautiful music. Our imaginations spark the ground of all creativity.

All sound is vibration and it is the frequency of vibration that makes pitch. Music puts the vibration of sounds into notation and patterns that awaken human emotions and voilà you have Bach’s beautiful “The Art of the Fugue.” Sounds so simple! Vibration of sound in music is similar to the sound of vibration in the natural world, the rhythm of sea waves, the crescendo of a rose opening, a sacred walk through Teresa’s Castle, the exquisite design of a seashell and from a simple daisy to the vibration of the universe.

Music truly is a dynamic energy that unites humans despite conflicts and separations between nations, peoples and ideologies in our world today. The dynamic energy of music is in sync with the deep energy patterns of psyche/soul in all humanity.
How do archetypes reflect nature’s deep design?

Everything in our world is in motion. Archetypes are dynamic energy forces that create and connect human energy to the universal forces in all nature and cosmos. Everything evolves and is connected to the divine. We are linked to all that surrounds us and all that is deep within us.

What is an archetype? Jung, in very simple terms, describes an archetype as a universal, archaic pattern within the human psyche. These archetypes cannot be known in themselves but may be accessed through myths, symbols, rituals, the arts, stories, dreams, poetry. They are basically inherited unconscious potentials that, when actualized, enter into consciousness. What we now call expanding consciousness. Shared consciousness, which operates as a unifying force within society is collective consciousness, common understanding. The deep source of “new consciousness” comes from the unconscious level of being.

Taken deeper and with broader universal scope, archetypes are patterns of meaning, psychic blue prints embedded in the spiritual energy of the universe – in the cosmic creation itself. Through archetypes, our entire being is intimately interconnected with creation. Archetypes are potential means through which we might evolve into spiritual cosmic planetary beings.

Teilhard de Chardin spoke of the “holiness of evolution” that proceeds toward spirit. What an exquisite deep knowing and understanding of evolution! From this knowing he questioned what the spiritual energy resources we have in the human community that would further the development of the human are. Where are we going as a species?

... Questions to ponder

Thomas Berry, in The Great Work (p. 69), speaks of the archetype and the human-Earth relationship.

“... In the obscure regions of the unconscious where the primordial archetypal symbols function as ultimate controlling factors in human thought, emotion, and practical decision-making, a profound reorientation toward this integral human-earth relationship is gradually taking place. The archetypal Journey of the universe can now be experienced as the Journey of the individual, since the entire universe has been involved in shaping our individual psychic as well as our physical being from that first awesome moment when the universe emerged.”

He continues with a brief discussion of four archetypes he considers significant for our time: Journey, the Great Mother, Tree of Life and Death-Rebirth.

I would like to add the Child archetype as a significant symbol for our time as well. The Child symbolizes the future, the mystic center. The mystic Child teaches wisdom (Jesus in the temple). The Child is soul and product of coniunctio, the union of Divine Feminine with Divine Masculine, unconsciousness with consciousness ... union of two making one.
What to make of all this?

In this paper I have attempted to respond to the question, how does nature’s deep design live in us? and connect it with Teresa’s Journey toward wholeness, oneness through the Interior Castle, the Crystal Diamond.

I pondered this question and statement within the context of our world today. How do we bring the reflective light shining from within the Crystal Diamond into a world that seems lost in shadows and oblivious to the beauty and depth of our natural world?

While writing, it began to take shape as story and I recalled a childhood memory at the seashore. I have always felt close to Teresa and her soul Journey through the Interior Castle and decided that both the Child and Teresa would walk this spiritual Journey together. As the story unfolded through the lens of the Child, Teresa, Castle, mathematics, physics, music and archetypes, I began to see the interconnections of each lens and discovered five underlying themes that could potentially guide us through the visible world into the invisible world where nature’s deep design is rooted and where soul Journey originates and is eternal.

1. The fifth house in the Castle is a time of deepening contemplative prayer. Teresa calls it the prayer of union in which “one neither sees, nor hears, nor understands.” She uses the metaphors of caterpillar that dies and is reborn as butterfly and union as an experience of dying in Christ and rising to new life. Contemplation rests in soul and is awakened by the mystery of Death-Rebirth reflecting the deep pattern of Journey in all that is.

2. Living seashells inhabit the sea, and when time is right, present as beautiful gifts on the seashore. They hold the key to deep design and pattern within all nature. If we observe closely enough we see within them a reflection of our own deep design.

3. Mathematics and physics bring a scientific understanding of deep design through number equation and pattern. The concrete meets the mystical through the wonder of symmetry, harmony, balance, beauty.

4. Music is the unifying collective song of our oneness based on number, pattern, vibration of sound touching and resonating soul.

5. Archetypes, deep spiritual psychic patterns, connect our inner world to outer world, from the inner reaches to the cosmos.

All these lenses are interrelated, interwoven as one in the Web of Life, as is all humanity interconnected to one another, to nature and the cosmos.

Mystery is our source and sustenance, whether it be a Child’s song soaring hand in hand with Teresa through Castle and beyond, the wonder of number and pattern, the revelatory experience of
oneness on a special evening at the seashore, the elegance of an inborn design within seashells, the archaic archetypal spiritual patterns within psyche that soar to the heights of galaxies, the beauty of a Bach fugue whose vibration is consistent with the universe.

As we awaken to this wondrous, beautiful mystery of all life, we realize that this depth of knowing has been living within us all along.

Stay awake.
Conclusion

So we conclude with an invitation to each to be awake and receptive to all the wonders of inclusion around us. Put fears aside of judgments and status in the community. The Journey is yours. Be attentive to what draws you deeper in love toward unit. Get outside, inside and enjoy!

As Teresa of Avila says, “This fire of love in you enkindles the souls, and with every other virtue you will always be awakening them.”

Interior Castle VII: 4:14