

Jim Dator
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UHM

This is a message of both hope and despair.

First the hope.

I spoke at first the Earth Day over 30 years ago at Maui Community College. The Dean of Students was Tom Sines. Hearing what I had to say about the urgency of our environmental problems, Tom resigned from MCC, entered ministry, and is now the leading evangelical Anglican focusing on social justice and environmental quality. He argues that evangelical Christians who are truly "pro life" should devote themselves to improving the lives of the poor, and the life of the planet, and stop ranting on about abortion and homosexual lifestyles.

You also just heard from Rep. Mina Morita, the only elected person in this state who understands the urgency of our environmental problems, AND who does something about them. DO you understand what a rare and courageous person she is in this State? We need many, many more like her. Why should she stand alone against all who continue to rape the land and waste our resources?

I hope there is out there in the audience today someone--indeed, many someones--who will from now on devote their lives to effectively and honestly overcoming human hunger and poverty, and addressing the urgent needs of our battered planet.

That would be the best reason for me to be hopeful of all.

But, truly, I am also despondent, because by all measures the Earth and much of humanity is far worse off now than it was in the first Earth Day in 1972, though the lives of the super rich and resource-squandering have never been better.

Now, if I may say so, one reason we are better off is that we continue to have things like this Earth Day that insist on treating the plight of the planet as though it could be solved by planting a tree here and cleaning up some mess there. These are good things, but the problem is much, much graver and requires quite different thoughts and actions.

To put it frankly, nature is dead and so we have got to stop pretending that we are "preserving nature" unless we are planning on embalming a dead planet.

As the old saying goes, there is no where on the face of the planet where the hand of man has not set foot. Once nature was almighty, and humans puny. Now humans have interfered more or less--and increasingly more and more--with every once-natural process.

Nature is dead and everything is now artificial and increasingly so. We need to understand that. To understand it very, very deeply, and stop being sentimental about the nature we have irrevocably killed and that is now dead and gone.

There is a passage in the Little Prince that states our duty now. The Little Prince says, "be careful what you tame because you are then responsible for it forever: you are responsible for your rose."

Over the last several thousand years, humanity has transformed a wonderfully operating wilderness into a garden, and then into a farm, and then into a factory, and now into a museum, perhaps next into a morgue.

Our responsibility now is either to assume responsibility for our rose--for the artificial world we have created--or to get out of the way and let nature take over from us again.

On the other hand, many of you know that I teach courses about living on Mars. I do this for several reasons. For one thing, I think we would treat Earth differently if we knew more directly about other planets--at least our nearest neighbors Mars and Venus. Since we only know one planet, and it not well, we are not very wise in our stewardship of it.

Another reason, is because if humans DO go to Mars and certainly Venus, we will have to do so in entirely artificial environments. What we learn about living on Mars and Venus might help us learn how to design, build and manage our artificial Earth.

So I hope to see you all on Earth Day 2030 which I propose we celebrate from our biodome on Olympus Mons, on Mars.