

THOUGHTS ABOUT CHANGES

On my retirement from academia, Spring 2015

Last week, after goodbyes to my last lovely class, spent the afternoon in the gardens. Remembered Robert Frost on “teaching can be a wonderful thing when it comes into your life just right” and his poems about apple-picking and choice of paths through snowy woods.

Thought back to my first classes at Colby (Kansas) high school. Then came a kaleidoscope of a thousand and one persons places times. And for all that reciprocal “teaching”, gratitudes.

For present and onward, thought about challenges for the **Center for Integrative Psychology** to address (gratitudes also for the continuity of CIP’s community and mission).

Someone in the last class had asked my observation about how the about world has changed. Well, for one thing, the earth and its lifeforms now change fast enough for us to recognize in one lifetime. When I first settled at FrogFarm for place, Hatfield Creek ran year-round. Forty years ago fish swam, and a pair of ducks came every year to its pools. Now it’s six years since frogsong or living water.

A unique time in human history. But if you count dinosaurs, maybe not the first time in history that sentient beings experienced the earth and its forms change so fast that it affected their lifetime. Not the first time that a civilization denuded the last stand of fruit trees for warmth . . . or a tribe the last mastodon.

However, we’re uniquely equipped to get the news from everywhere, just in case personal experience might be a fluke. We should be smarter with knowledge at hand, while we participate in a path of ecological self-destruction (even if reluctant), unless systems change.

Which parallels a system change that has crept up on us: the commodification of everything. From patented corn seeds, to for-profit prison systems and health care. And education. From Colby High on, I believed education first serves an ideal of the educated person. Now at all levels, increasingly education = efficient training to compete economically.

Found myself quoting “Things are in the saddle and ride mankind”, Emerson’s warning at the beginning of the industrial revolution. I wonder, in this information age, how advertising for consumers can be worth gillions and has become the electronic driver of our culture. I wonder how systems denuded of hands-on goods can sustain. And what difference we as individuals and- - describing ourselves as “a community networking for agents of change”-- can contribute.