Thank you Mike and the Ethics, Religion and Society Program for this opportunity.

Many of the ideas shared tonight are part of a still inchoate book manuscript about the implications of being human at a time when we, as a species, due to our population numbers, our affluence, and our technology (to use biologist Paul Ehrlich’s equation), appear omnipotent. In 2011 the Jesuit Task Force on Ecology noted in *Healing A Broken World* that “the ecological crisis threatens the livelihood of all people.” In the last few years, the term the Anthropocene has become widely used in academia. There are conferences about it, journal issues devoted to it, and scholars across all disciplines are engaged in discussing it. The Anthropocene refers to an era, probably beginning with the Industrial Revolution in the late 1700s, when we began to burn fossilized plants in the form of oil, coal and gas for energy rather than relying on water, wind, wood, human and animal power. The era that preceded it is known as the Holocene and is marked by an unusually stable climate. The Holocene lasted for 10,000 years, and during it, almost everything we associate with civilization came into being—agriculture and the domestication of animals like cows and horses; our ability to live in dense settlements, such as cities; writing; monumental structures like the Egyptian pyramids; and the flourishing of artistic expression through art, music, and dance. But we have left that era behind. The Anthropocene means that we are a geological force. This doesn’t just mean that you can see our work from space—like the Great Wall of China or the lights of our megalopolises at night. It means, we are a geological force, like plate tectonics, fire, and tsunamis. Just as these events are recorded in the geological record, so, too, will a mass sixth extinction of plants and animals that is now underway, increased deposition of carbon into the seas and atmosphere, and increasing deposition into our oceans of phosphorous and other chemicals essential to the health and vitality of our soils. We are the beneficiaries of a planet long in the making. Now we stand at the threshold of a new planet, one that ecologist and activist Bill McKibben has called *Eaarth*, E-a-a-r-t-h. This new Eaarth is responding to our geological force with global climate destabilization. In Ohio it means cooler and wetter summers and winters. In the West drier conditions all around so that California, the land where almost half of the country’s food is grown, is suffering from prolonged drought. And, in much of Africa, it means increased aridity and thus decreased ability for food self-sufficiency.

As I have sought to understand the magnitude of human destruction and what it is that one pitiful individual might do, perhaps the ultimate collective action problem in political science, I have

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also claimed a better understanding of why we, as humans, are where we are and what needs to change. Part of what needs to change is education. The first scholar to hold a chair in Human Ecology, Paul Shepard, argued eloquently and, sadly, to little effect, decades ago that solutions to the environmental crisis lay in thinking about the human species and particularly, child-rearing and education. The Anthropocene marks clearly that we have the capacity to destroy our own home. In that process, we have vigorously neglected significant aspects of human development and human needs. We are technologically savvy but spiritually bereft. Jesuit Superior General Adolfo Nicolas, S.J. noted in 2010 that when people lose the ability to engage with reality, dehumanization results. My reading of history is that the majority in the United States (and other Western societies) have inherited a particularly dissociative way of thinking and thus have created a particularly dissociative set of cultures that have allowed for and fostered technological wonders and spiritual and social impoverishment.

I suggest this evening that, in light of this crisis, we pay attention to education, to Jesuit education for sustainability. In this series on Jesuit ethics, I offer a vision for what one facet of such an ethic might look like in practice, in the hundreds of institutions that carry the Jesuit tradition. Jesuit education for sustainability can get us closer to planetary healing than most other educational philosophies I am familiar with. The Jesuit educational mission offers us a way back to our full humanity in a way that is rigorous, grounded in practice, and attentive to the whole person. This is an exploration of a way forward, one ethic among others, for this Jesuit institution, all Jesuit institutions at a most perilous time—certainly economically and environmentally but also spiritually and emotionally. I think there can be a Jesuit ethic for sustainability and that it is rooted in education. Social ecologist Stephen Kellert helps to set the agenda for this evening: “But if it is meaningful and not merely rhetorical, an ethic must also serve as a guide to what is ultimately in our collective interest, a map that shows us how we can, as a society, pursue fitness and fulfillment. The great challenge of today is to connect our understanding of nature’s contributions to the human body, mind, and spirit to the demands of a world in which nature seems to be ever more in retreat.” In a sentence this is part of my agenda this evening: “to connect our understanding of nature’s contributions to the human body, mind and spirit to the demands of a world in which nature seems to be ever more in retreat.”

Many others also see the current ecological crises as crises of spirit, of conscience. Biologist Paul Ehrlich, psychologist Robert Ornstein, theologian Thomas Berry, all have claimed for decades that the challenges human society faces are so great that they warrant a change in human

Thomas Berry has warned that we must not mistake the order of magnitude of the challenge, our challenge is to create a new sense of what it is to be human. Other cultures in our time and many other cultures in other times had a better sense of what it means to be optimally human than we now possess. They understand, in Kellert’s words, “nature’s contributions to the human body, mind, and spirit.”

And this might as well be the institution to think through and then live into what Jesuit Education for Sustainability could mean. Even before I became engaged in sustainability work and teaching, Xavier seemed like an oasis from a frenzied and driftless world. Much of this is a result of our foundational philosophy and the ways in which the people this philosophy attracts work together to make it meaningful. So, this is the second leg of my strong claim for this evening, that Jesuit education for sustainability has the capacity to re-connect us and thus to offer something that sustainability education is lacking and, at the same time, Jesuit education for sustainability has the capacity to deepen and strengthen what it is that makes Jesuit education so special and important.

I will do three things this evening. The first is to:
1. Examine long-term human relationships to the environment to tease out “nature’s contributions to the human body, mind, and spirit.” For the Anthropocene is new, the Holocene a mere blip in the record of human history, and the Pleistocene, tens of thousands of years ago, the cradle of modern humans in their anatomy and potentialities. All of these eras must be of concern to us.

As an historian with a strong anthropological background and a deep and abiding interest in biology, I find our early history, millennia ago, essential to understanding the anomaly that the last few centuries are in human time. I also find the different trajectories of other societies an untapped reservoir of creativity and effective ideas and institutions for how to “create a new sense of what it means to be human” as Berry calls for.

Second, I will
2. Briefly describe one of the common ways in which sustainability is conceived and implemented both in society generally and in education and indicate why it has not been and cannot be effective.

Third, I will
3. Suggest how Jesuit education for sustainability can radically change the sustainability agenda, making it much more likely to succeed (and, in turn, pushing Jesuit thinking about relational theology deeper into ecological thinking).

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8 Laszlo and Combs, eds., *Thomas Berry, Dreamer of the Earth*, x.
1. LONG-TERM HISTORY
The first step tonight is to dig back deep into the past to understand the changing human-nature relationship. One of the most interesting ways to find out what it means to be human, what we most fundamentally need is to look at where we have come from in the deepest sense. I start my African history survey with human evolution because I find the distant past is a necessary corrective to current short-term thinking and historical understanding. We now believe that some being a bit different than a chimpanzee developed 8 million years ago in Africa, the first step in human evolution. Modern humans developed in Africa about 200,000 years ago during the Pleistocene, the era that preceded the Holocene. Starting a mere 100,000 years ago, they began to occupy other parts of the world, coming to our continent 20,000 years ago or so. Ten thousand years later, we began to significantly disrupt water and soil cycles as we developed various forms of agriculture in different parts of the world. Several hundred years ago, we harnessed ancient sunlight, coal, then petroleum and natural gas, to provide energy for tasks that could not have been imagined up to that point, limited as we were by human, animal, wind and water power. We achieved this because we are the only species that has the capacity to think of things that are not in front of us, to communicate about ideas. And we are hard-wired to solve problems; we are a technological animal. iPads and Google Glass are just the latest in a long stream of technological developments created by a species fascinated by ideas and capable of harnessing the Earth’s systems to their own ends. Despite our technological prowess, our biology is millennia old and adapted to a world we no longer live in. Our cultural evolution has outpaced our biological evolution for a millennium or more. We can react quickly, as environmental educator David Orr reminds, to a person entering this room with a handgun but the onset of global climate change does not result in the same kind of adrenaline rush because of our biological evolution. We are biologically and genetically of the Pleistocene.

We evolved in a natural world, not in a human-created one. Thus, we are of the natural world and, as biologist E.O. Wilson and Kellert have noted, we have a broad affiliation with nature, one that we now call biophilia, “an affinity for life and lifelike processes.” An appreciation of this history, of these relationships is an essential starting point for a functional worldview of what it means to thrive as humans. “An ethic that transforms our relationship to nature must embrace all of our biophilic values,” Kellert has written.

A number of scholars have described different elements of our holistic integration with the natural world. For our purposes tonight, I collapse these biophilic attributes to three broad

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9 David Orr, Keynote Presentation at “Greening of the Campus” Conference, Ball State University, March 19, 2012.
10 Shepard, Traces of an Omnivore.
categories, largely thanks to the work of ecologist Daniel Botkin. The first biophilic value is the most obvious because it is the dominant way in which we relate to the Earth. Humans have had and still have a utilitarian relationship with the natural world; our species needs resources for survival. Our recent history has seen an overwhelming support for and experience of domination over nature at the expense of many of the other biophilic characteristics, or other essential aspects of our humanity. Thomas Berry laments we have become monotropic at the expense of holistic integration. “We have lost our capacity for communication with the natural world in its inner life, its spirit mode. We find ourselves illiterate as regards the languages of the natural world.” It is monotropism, a tunnel vision that overprioritizes particular parts at the expense of an appropriate consideration of the whole, that he decries. Young economists in France a decade ago used the same language to describe the tendency of modern economic theory toward monotropism, Their journal and society are now called Real World Economics. This narrow thinking is a characteristic of modern society.

The second biophilic characteristic is that humans have had and still have an intellectual and cultural relationship with the natural world; for both utilitarian and less practical reasons we seek to understand why animals behave the way they do, how to predict the climate, etc. There is clearly overlap between this element and the first as the more humans understand, the more efficient and successful they can be in exploiting natural resources. This perspective includes culture, particularly the meaning that is made of the natural world, including the stories humans tell about their place within it in order to regulate human action. I will give some examples of societies in which this aspect is more salient in a few minutes.

The third is that we have had and still have a spiritual relationship with the natural world. This perspective stems from a sense of vulnerability in the face of natural forces, such as hurricanes and tsunamis, as well a sense of wonder and awe. The latter is common to many through the writings of philosophers and naturalists, who spent time in the wilderness, away from human civilization, such as John Muir. But these reactions are two sides of the same coin. Within both vulnerability and awe is recognition of human frailty in the larger scheme of things.

The writer Henry Beston emphasized the spiritual facet, arguing: “Nature is a part of our humanity, and without some awareness and experience of that divine mystery man ceases to be man. When the Pleiades and the wind in the grass are no longer a part

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of the human spirit, a part of very flesh and bone, man becomes, as it were, a cosmic outlaw, having neither the completeness and integrity of the animal nor the birthright of a true humanity.”

Identifying the different ways we are part of nature is easy. Returning some kind of balance among the three, material, cultural and spiritual, is much more difficult, but it is precisely what we must do to achieve sustainability. We are handicapped by much in our cultural and philosophical inheritance. Therefore, I find great inspiration in the way Africans and others have inhabited and continue to inhabit their environments and to relate to each other. Two brief examples might stir your imagination and passion.

In a brilliant anthropological study of the Luo of Western Kenya along Lake Victoria, Parker Shipton demonstrates how the Luo strive for a life of indebtedness—even debts that they know they will never repay in their lifetimes. Shipton writes: “In Africa or elsewhere, a life in which all debts were settled would be a frozen life of atomized individuals—no life at all.”18 This is not overspending a credit card and then seeking bankruptcy through a rather anonymous legal process but, instead, the cultivation of relationships of give and take that ensure connectedness for a lifetime and beyond—so that one’s welfare is literally tied up in that of another’s—and not just blood or marital relatives. Shipton again: “Loans are the elastic in economic life, stretching labor and capital over land, stretching food over the season, stretching income over a lifetime.” He calls these entrustments. “Entrustments—loans with feelings behind them, and ones not necessarily repayable directly—are not just about wealth, or about giving and getting. They are also about defining who we are, and about connecting to something bigger than ourselves.”19

Shipton’s trilogy concludes with a book about privatization of land and the mortgaging that often accompanies it. In Western history, the land mortgage, increasingly common after the sixteenth century, implies that land is bounded and separate from the person. In most of rural Africa, for reasons of social security, “usually more than one person can claim interest in any given piece of land.”20 This is in keeping with a broad, long-standing, though flexible strategy of spreading risk, authority, and ownership widely. Shipton again: “To pledge land was to arrogate, as an individual, rights that pertained in part to other members of a family and lineage.”21 Land belongs to ancestors and future family members in both philosophical and material ways. Lineages lay claims to land for both the dead and unborn and burial sites are important spiritual resources. Furthermore, as farmers in an area with unreliable rains and uncertain markets, commoditizing land is insanely risky. He concludes that mortgaging might make sense in an industrial economy with sufficient wage employment. But Kenya has neither. Despite more than sixty years of exposure to land titling and mortgaging, most Luo are reluctant to mortgage their

19 Shipton, Nature of Entrustment, 208.
21 Shipton, Mortgaging the Ancestors, 135.
land and in Shipton’s words deem it “unnatural and unfair.” In the Luo approach to land, all three biophilic attributes are demonstrated—material, cultural and spiritual.

Anthropologist Keith Basso offers a second example from the Apache in the American southwest. Like most pre-industrial societies, Apache landscape and history are inseparable—as a man or woman walks to collect water or food, he or she literally walks through history, through a series of landscapes with names that are embedded with events, important people’s stories, and the values necessary to live successfully in that location. Basso lived with the Apache trying to make sense of the deep and vast reservoir of knowledge embedded in the now arid Apache lands. He notes that the name of a place is like a picture. “It is this combination of brevity and expressiveness, I believe, that appeals to the Apaches and makes the mere pronunciation of place-names a satisfying experience.” Names like: Water Flows Down on a Succession of Rocks; Water Flows Inward Under a Cottonwood Tree; Line of White Rocks Extends Up and Out; Gray Willow Curves Around a Bend. While grandmothers and uncles must perish, the Apache are grateful for the enduring nature of the landscape that immortalizes their wisdom and stories. The landscape looks after the Apache and “keeps the badness away,” one Apache told Basso. Place names “may be used to summon forth an enormous range of mental and emotional associations—associations of time and space, of history and events, of persons and social activities, of oneself and stages in one’s life.”

Basso recounts numerous examples of the powerful and succinct ways in which landscape stories are used to socialize and educate. In one case, a young woman had made a grave error and hid in her home for weeks, ashamed to come out in public. She eventually ventured out and was invited to a circle gathering. On this first public occasion, Basso witnessed the elders sharing a few place names. For a non-Apache they would have no context or meaning but for the young woman they conjured up first an image of the place, then the story that took place there and then the morals associated with it.

These examples illustrate that contemporary societies have taken different trajectories to the 21st century, trajectories that are expressions of human unity with nature. The Luo and Apache participate in a market economy, send their children to school and follow global news. Yet, they have maintained strong associations between each other and the Earth, associations that I believe Jesuit education for sustainability has the foundation, philosophy, and strength to revive.

2. SUSTAINABILITY—COMMON NOTIONS

Loans with feelings and landscapes embedded with history and moral lessons—these don’t seem totally foreign to us but for most of us are not part of our everyday experiences, because since the times of ancient Greece, there is a tradition in Western thought, one thread among many to be sure, that emphasizes rational thinking and questions the value of sensory and emotional perception, often derived from the natural world. Such a position can clearly be seen in the work

22 Shipton, Mortgaging the Ancestors, 231.
of Plato and Aristotle to different degrees. And, Rene Descartes in the 17th century prioritized the specifically cognitive or intellectual components of the human condition. Environmentalist Kenneth Worthy calls this a tradition of dissociation and argues that it coincided with a culture that was relatively individualistic and competitive. Unfortunately, our common notions of sustainability follow this cultural trajectory. Instead of offering a substantially different way of thinking about the future, much of what passes for sustainability is tied to the past in unproductive ways. This brings us to the second point tonight and that is that common sustainability rubrics are severely handicapped by their tethering to a narrow and dissociative way of thinking about humans and human society, ones that emphasize only one of the biophilic characteristics covered earlier.

The most common definition of sustainability comes from the Brundtland Commission in the late 1980s. But the Brundtland Report, though receiving much popular press and acclaim, was, I believe, deeply flawed. It reflects the dissociated thinking that has predominated in our culture and that is at the root of our multiple crises even as it seeks to bring together the centuries-long intellectually dissociated elements of society, economics and the environment. This dissociation has been long in the making. Economist Karl Polanyi worried about these dissociations in the mid-20th century and traced their origins to the mid-nineteenth century in England. They became even more prominent with access to cheap, seemingly endless supplies of energy in the early 20th century. By mid-century in the United States production became unmoored from natural resource limits and by the 1980s with trickle down economics, labor became unmoored from society, families and human welfare.

In the intellectual and geopolitical context of the 1980s, concern for the environment and those living in poverty became considerable; the Brundtland Commission sought to right these wrongs and to re-associate the environment, society and economics. They wrote words you are probably familiar with:

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\text{Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable—to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.}\]

This widely quoted definition sounds promising. The problem is what follows.

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\text{The concept of sustainable development does imply limits—not absolute limits but limitations imposed by the present state of technology and social organization on environmental resources and by the ability of the biosphere to absorb the effects of}\]

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human activities. But technology and social organization can both be managed and improved to make way for a new era of economic growth. The Commission believes that widespread poverty is no longer inevitable. Poverty is not only an evil in itself, but sustainable development requires meeting the basic needs of all and extending to all the opportunity to fulfill their aspirations for a better life.30

In this passage, the emphasis is on more development (through better technology and social organization) in order to eradicate poverty. A mere gesture toward the environment and limits was all they envisioned due to a faith in the market economy and a primary concern for material poverty. Here and throughout the document, the focus is on realizing economic concerns, justified in part at least by social concerns.31 For example, in the Introduction, the Commission writes, “Our report…is not a prediction of ever increasing environmental decay, poverty and hardship…. We see instead the possibility for a new era of economic growth, one that must be based on policies that sustain and expand the environmental resource base.” The message is that human technology will overcome environmental limits for the sake of development. Finally, *Our Common Future* concludes that ending material poverty is the only way to ensure societal sustainability. Others have long been concerned that societal vulnerability is due as much, if not more, to investment in endless growth without concern for limits. A proper critique of this document requires an historical examination of the narrow material definition of poverty that has been hegemonic since 1948 which I have done elsewhere.32 Such an examination reveals that, ironically, most calls for poverty eradication require emphasizing only the instrumental biophilic characteristic, reinforcing environmental degradation and social isolation.

And such is the problem with the entire document, it does not bring back cultural and spiritual biophilic characteristics, instead only emphasizes material relationships through productivity and elimination of material poverty. The document did not have the necessary long-term historical view or the philosophical perspective necessary to radically re-consider who we are and what kind of society we need to create to protect our collective humanity. It essentially calls for more of the same dissociation. We are not primarily economic beings as Luo understand. Sustainability requires human beings who have the ability to exert all their biophilic characteristics, something that is not readily achieved when special consideration is given to the economic or material facet of our relationship to nature.

What currently stands for sustainability is not a radical agenda. It does not fundamentally ask who we are and what we are doing here. Jesuit theology and education makes it clear that the agenda is association: between people, between people and God, and between people and the environment as the Society of Jesus’ General Congregation 35 highlighted in 2008. You will notice no mention of economics here. Economics is but one avenue for human activity, it is but one part of one of three major ways we are part of the environment. It does not deserve and cannot maintain a place of special significance if we seek to maintain optimal welfare for beings and ecosystems. We have not paid enough attention within mainstream sustainability to the

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32 Smythe, “An Historian’s Critique of Sustainability.”
breadth of our relationships to the environment. Think quickly about your most immediate association with sustainability. If I am not far off, it is something related to recycling, reducing waste and energy use, and printing on both sides of a page. Where is eating wild berries, growing garlic, painting a sunset, gaping at a bald eagle, or mopping up after a hurricane?

We need an agenda that gets us out of bed every morning and calls forth more energy than we think we possess, greater vulnerability than we have ever demonstrated, and a commitment to association at the risk of loss of independence, material wealth and shallow notions of convenience. As Mike Graham noted in his Sustainability Day speech in 2011, “the enormity of the task of environmental reconciliation…very likely will not happen unless our major symbolic systems are re-imagined in light of the environment.”33 Both Popes John Paul II and Benedict have clearly tied social justice and environmental issues together, much like the Brundtland Commission sought to do, but instead of assuming that development, production and consumption would continue apace, both in 1990 and then again in 2010 World Day of Peace remarks made clear that society’s current crises are spiritual ones and require a different approach, not passive faith in more of the same.34

3. JESUIT SUSTAINABILITY

To the third point, then, Jesuit education for sustainability. We have much to learn from our past and from societies with deeper relationships with their ecosystems. But we also have the wisdom of the Society of Jesus to strengthen these historical and anthropological insights. Since the early 1990s, environmental concern has grown within the Catholic Church as World Day of Peace speeches reveal. In General Congregation 35, the Jesuits recognized an intrinsic and indissoluble unity—right relation with God, right relation with each other, and right relation with the Earth—as the foundations for re-association, for reclaiming our full humanity.35 And in 2011 *Healing Our Broken World* presented recommendations so that the concern for ecology can be integrated into all Jesuit ministries. In addition to other cultures and other times, much in the Jesuit tradition calls for reconnecting what has been disconnected over the last centuries.

How might we, as educators and students at Xavier, seek to reclaim these connections in their full capacities? There are three characteristics that I will suggest are essential to a Jesuit education for sustainability. All three help to restore the spiritual and cultural biophilic characteristics that are essential to a healthy relationship for humans and the ecosystems of the planet.

WONDER

33 Michael J. Graham, S.J., “The Place of Sustainability and the Environment within Roman Catholic Thought.”
Integral to education for sustainability is restoring a sense of wonder not only in terms of the natural world but also in terms of human capacities and human society, that is, seeing God in all things. Wonder might be defined as Adam Konopka has suggested as “surprised delight in the face of the unknown” or inexplicable. Wonder requires much greater emphasis on the other two biophilic values that have been sidelined by our current economic emphasis—a sense of vulnerability in the face of the natural world and a grand curiosity. These emphases, in turn lead to greater opportunity for sensual engagement with the world. Robust pursuit of all biophilic values as essential elements in our educational systems will temper the hubris that currently marks much of our education whether it be in history, business, or biology. But I am not sure our students or we experience such wonder enough.

There are both intellectual and spiritual components to an education for wonder. The intellectual component emphasizes the long duration of our planet’s and humanity’s history as mentioned earlier. The industrialization and consumption levels that many of us take for granted have only been with us for a couple of hundred years out of the millennia that modern humans have been alive. For much of modern human history, we gathered and hunted and lived in small bands of people with few possessions. Certainly, we are not returning to that state, but it has been the dominant human experience on the planet and knowledge of that reality shifts our sense of permanence and how important our current technology and institutions might be in the long term. This long duration of human history is essential for a sense of humility and wonder.

One of Jesuit education’s chief strengths is how readily it comes by the spiritual component of education for wonder. Fr. George Traub notes that the Jesuit and Ignatian vision sees life and the whole universe as a gift calling forth wonder and gratitude. We encourage our students to get involved in the wider world, to be of service to others, to think of themselves as part of God’s mission, as part of something bigger than themselves. This same sense of transcendence can be inculcated no matter a student’s religious faith through a sense of wonder, both at the natural world but also at human society and human relationships. We are, after all, who we are in relation to the world around us and Jesuit higher education roots students in this broader context. The Superior General of the Jesuit order, Fr. Adolfo Nicholas spoke in 2010 in Mexico City to make clear that intellectual inquiry is not sufficient: “In other words, depth of thought and imagination in the Ignatian tradition involves a profound engagement with the real, a refusal to let go until one goes beneath the surface. It is a careful analysis…for the sake of integration around what is deepest: God, Christ, the Gospel. [I would add, the Earth.] The starting point, then, will always be what is real: what is materially, concretely thought to be there; the world as we encounter it; the world of the senses so vividly described in the Gospels themselves.” This is a clear call for emotional and sensual engagement in the world around us. To this end, many of us teaching sustainability classes have been incorporating field trips for several semesters. One of these has been to French Park, initially envisioned by my colleague, Nancy Bertaux. As part of my African history class, as we were talking about early settlement and the development of agriculture, my students walked the property with a naturalist from the Cincinnati Parks who was able to narrate the history of settlement and agriculture in the area. For most students, the idea that a landscape has layers of history, that Africans millennia ago faced some of the same challenges as their ancestors in Ohio did decades ago was important. Imagining a farming family
working a hillside in French Park made the history of agriculture come to life in an important way for my students.

This element of Jesuit sustainability calls me to be a different kind of teacher than I was when I first came to Xavier. I began teaching here thinking my mission was to educate about how totally screwed up things were. But students get that part, as many of you have heard me say. The part they, and often we, don’t get at all is the sense of wonder, mystery and accompanying hope. They need us to carry Thomas Berry’s passion as described by a colleague: “His was not an abstract or detached knowledge about something. It was a love affair, a passion: a vital heat rose in the room when he spoke. This was wisdom, not just knowledge. Thomas was a wisdom teacher not a knowledge teacher. Wisdom includes both knowledge and heart, mind and passion.” Jesuit sustainability requires that professors and students be whole people, that we risk ourselves, our hearts, and our passions in the classroom. I know some of you do this already and that students respond positively. I like the way poet Derek Walcott has put it, “the fate of the poet is to fall in love with the world in spite of history.” Jesuit education for sustainability calls us to be poets and to educate our students for poetry in this sense. We will minister, wax poetic, and educate at once.

What might we, as an institution, do to self-consciously promote wonder? Instead of Academic Day? Wonder Day? Consider broadening the mission of the CTE to the Center for Teaching Excellence and Wonder? The discernment value in our new core comes close to calling for a sense of wonder. Perhaps we might think anew about what this value means and how it might play in our core?

**MORAL ENGAGEMENT**

After educating for a sense of wonder, the second attribute of Jesuit education that I would like to highlight as essential for sustainability education is the unabashed embrace of moral language. We are educating in a remarkably vacuous age. Our students have less face-to-face contact with each other and their instructors (if involved in online learning) than students in the past. Fr. Nicholas has said, “All I wish to signal here is my concern that our new technologies, together with the underlying values such as moral relativism and consumerism, are shaping the interior worlds of so many, especially the young people we are educating, limiting the fullness of their flourishing as human persons and limiting the responses to a world in need of healing intellectually, morally, and spiritually.”

Our technologically sophisticated and globalized economy has rendered many of us numb to the implications of our everyday actions. Worthy has written, “We live with divisions in various types of relationships that matter: between us and the consequences of our actions; between us

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and the people and nature we affect with our actions; and between us and the processes that create the products we consume. These dissociated conditions inform, shape, and constrain our choices….and are unique to modernity.”38

Worthy notes that because of our globalized technological achievements, most of us engage in everyday destruction as a result of our daily actions. We are vaguely aware that flipping a light switch (to use an example that my colleague James Buchanan often cites) cues another mountaintop for destruction but we don’t live with the truncated mountainside, the contaminated water, or the potential flood from a toxic holding pond, the way our neighbors do in Appalachia. Similarly, our morning and evening commute tie us to an industrial-military complex and to political instability in Iraq and elsewhere but most of us did not know the Iraqis who died during Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003 and after or witness the destruction and rebuilding of Baghdad. Worthy calls this **the banality of everyday destruction**. He goes on, “Participating in a society where common decisions are known to cause major problems for people and the environment, where real choice is reduced because many of the outcomes are dissociated from us, is apt to leave us with a sense of ineffectuality rather than a sense of being active, engaged actors in our world. This sense of impotence, I argue, is one of the defining yet ironic characteristics of modern life… We surrender a large proportion of our ethical freedom, responsibility, and agency to the political, legal, scientific, and other organizations and institutions that mediate between us and our consequences and between us and the spheres where they are manifest.”39

Jesuit education must restore a greater proportion of ethical responsibility and freedom. David Orr notes that another aspect of environmental education is that knowledge carries responsibility to use it well in the world. A corollary is that we cannot say we know something until we understand the effects of this knowledge on real people and their communities. The Jesuit notion of solidarity, so clearly articulated by Fr. Peter Hans Kolvenbach in his Santa Clara address in 2000, and well integrated into Jesuit higher education in the United States through social justice work and service learning, and in Xavier’s new core values, is not only resonant with Orr’s call but suggests an added dimension that is essential to sustainability education. That dimension is to, as much as humanly possible, be mindful of the myriad ways in which our actions have deep, often unintended consequences, far from where we live and play. The Jesuit’s 2011 *Healing A Broken World* document is mindful of consequences and connections in their call for long-term partnerships with institutions so that students and faculty involved can know how university-community partnerships impact organizations and communities. This is an immensely challenging task and I don’t know how to effectively carry it out particularly internationally, but I think we have begun to be engaged in this work in a variety of ways. Julia O’Hara’s “Central America: Toward a Well-Educated Solidarity” guide completed on a Conway Fellowship provides a start for a sound theoretical basis for engagement in Latin America and elsewhere. How we internationalize our curriculum is a fundamental question. There is much to be learned about people’s lives and circumstances far from our own. But how to do so in a way that builds a more passionate, engaged citizenry everywhere? I have written in a critique of service learning that one of the challenges all of us face—no matter where we live—is the sense of impotence that Worthy highlights. One of the key questions that faces educators who want to be in service

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to healthy planet and healthy communities is: how to restore opportunity and engagement for all. If our students achieve it at the expense of the planet or people elsewhere, ours is a senseless and destructive quest. Taking solidarity to another level means that Jesuit education is not just about witnessing and accompanying, though those are important. It is also about fundamentally changing our ways of life so that we and others might have life-giving choices. This can only be done within community and grounded in a common philosophy that will act as a safety net when the going gets tough.

A final point thanks to David Orr about educating for moral engagement is that examples and actions are more important than words; students need faculty, staff and administrators with integrity and institutions capable of embodying ideals completely in their operations.40 Nancy Tuchman, Vice Provost and Professor of Biology at Loyola University Chicago, has indicated that in her experience students feel an undue burden when we tell them about all the systemic problems our societies face and then lay most of the responsibility for solving them at their feet, as in “It is up to your generation to solve these problems.” Quite appropriately, often the students’ response to such a proclamation is to wonder why their teachers are abdicating responsibility after contributing to the problems for years. So, now I realize that, both personally and institutionally, it is our collective responsibility to share our journeys with our students. Our renovated Alter Hall is projected to have very low energy use. This and many other elements of the building can be shared widely with our students, who will need to be active players in ensuring the building meets its potential. They also should know that Cincinnati is increasingly being recognized by national media as a city making important large-scale efforts for sustainability including a city-wide recycling program and purchasing of green energy credits. Our actions and choices will never be comprehensive, never enough from our perspective or someone else’s, but they are a manifestation of our concern and willingness to act on that concern as well as a reflection of our personal attributes and choices and the institutional challenges we face in acting on our values. The contradictions are as important as the seemingly more virtuous actions for we are limited by institutions, by previous choices and other impediments. In the choices we make are lessons for our students about how to carve out individual and institutional paths toward a more sustainable future.

What does this sense of solidarity and moral engagement mean for this new kind of education? It means holding ourselves to a high standard and articulating that standard for ourselves and our partners. I would very much like to see this University engage in a year-long conversation about immersion, service learning, peace and justice work at the intersection of sustainability and globalization. In other words, how might we explicitly be about reducing the banality of everyday destruction while promoting associations, amongst people and between people and other living organisms? My guess is that such a conversation would involve a turn toward political engagement and re-creating our own lives and communities because of our commitment toward those who live far away but are tethered to our decisions and choices.

VOCATION AND CALLING

So far I have highlighted educating for a sense of wonder and moral engagement particularly across cultural and national boundaries. The third characteristic of Jesuit education that is an essential corrective to current sustainability and educational practices is vocation and calling. Jesuits are attentive to formation of character as much as career. There are many voices in many fields that find education for jobs misguided within our current global environment. David Orr worries that we teach students to seek a career instead of a calling. Geneticist and The Land Institute founder Wes Jackson has expressed a similar concern, noting that we educate for upward mobility, which often means leaving home and improving on the lifestyle and choices of one’s parents and home community. Our students come to college steeped in twin ideals of upward mobility and infinite personal flexibility in terms of residence, relationship, and resources. These ideas are based on a belief in technology and a pervasive set of global ideas and norms and assumptions, not the least of which are endless progress and infinite resources. And, as educators we promote such ideals. In English professor Jason Peters’ words, we “let these students major in Getting Ahead. We have strip-mined the local talent, converted it into ‘graduates,’ and shipped it to Big Important Places.” In as much as we try to sell to prospective students and parents the kinds of jobs and salaries our graduates will get, we are educating for a career rather than a calling rooted in values and a more sustainable future. What if we thought of all potential lines of work as promoting right relation with the Earth? As reducing the banality of everyday destruction? What if we thought of our own work in that light?

What is important here is what we propose to educate for. What we think we are educating for is based on what we are most paying attention to in the broader world.

There is much concern about challenges to colleges and universities—quality, online education, mounting costs, etc. But there is much less attention to the broader realities of the world into which our students will be graduating—destabilized global climate systems, overwhelming economic inequalities between nations and within them, and the potential for radical destruction, though terrorism and other means, by those no longer willing to accept impotence as a state of being. Orr is concerned that we are educating as if there is no planetary emergency. He argues that we need to teach skills and knowledge for survival, for some level of self- and local sufficiency. Few of our U.S. colleges teach students practical skills such as car repair, gardening, or furniture making; having relegated such tasks to vocational school training. The assumption is that higher education yields a salary big enough to meet all of our needs in the marketplace; all we need to know is how to use our heads. Student debt and sluggish employment rates for graduates certainly add to the inadequacy of this assumption.

Another group of scholars and practitioners who work with disadvantaged communities with high unemployment rates see the goal of education as equipping students for opportunities rather than jobs. In this view, jobs are an artifact of the Industrial Revolution and the megalopolises that such economies created. It is a system that is falling apart—all the cheap energy is gone, our planet is super-heating, our infrastructure is crumbling, inequality is deepening, and youth unemployment is rampant. Development professor Alcinda Honwana has identified a new social

41 Orr, *Earth in Mind.*
42 Wes Jackson, *Becoming Native to this Place* (Lexington, KY: 1994).
phenomenon, waithood, a limbo state between childhood and adulthood that many are now experiencing, including our students, a condition that renders them not-yet-adults because they are unemployed or underemployed, unable to obtain housing independently, or a wage job in the formal economy. Unemployed youth helped to launch the Arab Spring, the Occupy movement, and they fill city streets worldwide with their normal, but frustrated, ambitions. From my perspective, it is hard to imagine creating more jobs than we currently have in the face of these realities unless many were to agree to manual labor for part or all of their living. Radical scholar Mexican Gustavo Esteva and Norwood Assistant Law Director, Chris Brown both emphasize the need for opportunities rather than jobs. Esteva has launched a University for the Earth in southern Mexico—it offers neither diplomas nor courses but, instead, the opportunity to learn from a mentor about how to make a living rather than find a job. The Germans have very successful vocational training that has kept their youth unemployment rates lower than ours by half.

Jesuits already encourage students to make a living, to find a calling. Situated within a more robust ethical framework, Jesuit sustainability education has the potential to offer a meaningful solution within the context of multiple crises in higher education, the environment and the economy. Rather than a piecemeal approach to work that divides what needs to be done into ever smaller, meaningless parts, what if work inculcated “the interdependence that we feel and know is behind all things in the universe?” as Episcopalian priest Matthew Fox calls for. What this might look like, I don’t know, though it will be shaped by people in the trenches, who live and work alongside the increasing numbers of people in our global economy who have been rendered meaningless because their passions, talents, and contributions no longer fit our narrow economic systems, people like Esteva and frustrated Egyptian youth. It might involve deeper integration with Evanston and its 12 percent unemployed population. What opportunities are there to create a better environment right here for everyone—those who deal in drugs because they have no other options, our suburban students who fear risk and failure, and our fragile environment that needs more bees and butterflies?

What about a sustainable community incubator? To qualify for space and resources, you would have to propose a task, an opportunity, a company that promotes optimal humanity--right relationship with the Earth and various communities, reduces the numbness that results from the banality of everyday destruction restoring the spiritual connection to nature, and involves some element of self-sufficiency to help us intellectually and culturally engage with nature. As we move forward, we will, of course, maintain our commitment to a liberal arts education but must

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heed the need to provide young adults with the skills necessary to contribute to planetary and societal well-being rather than a narrow economy wed to natural resource exploitation.

**CONCLUSION**

We are beautifully situated, as heirs to a robust, engaged educational tradition to re-create our colleges and universities as institutions that teach about sustainability in the most comprehensive way possible. Sustainability, as Jesuits have recognized over the last few decades, is an integral part of our mission. If we can successfully align our tradition with David Orr’s and others’ vision for truly environmental education we can offer our students something few others can—the intellectual and spiritual foundation for engaging in a troubled world with purpose and hope.

My overall argument is that if we, as participants in Jesuit education, think and act regarding sustainability as we have solidarity and poverty, gender and diversity, that is, as ways of being and knowing that are integral to a full human experience based on biophilic values, then our universities will be all the richer for our work and accomplishments. But, far more significantly, the integration of attention to biophilic values with the centuries-old Jesuit ideals of wonder, moral engagement and vocation and calling provide a depth and strength to sustainability that is rare in education. Such an integration allows for personal and societal transformation; it allow us to reclaim our full humanity, to be of the world spiritually, intellectually and materially. It is a wonderful opportunity for strengthening our academic vision and responding holistically to one of the gravest challenges our species has ever faced.