

—Slug:.....COMM-0861.opin.essay.adair
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—For section.....Voices/Essay
—Format.....Opinions
—Dateline.....Westminster West
—Article Number:.....43467

Notes from editor (not for publication):

Hi, Peter — I emailed a question about the last sentence. Photo from Artemis is ready to go, space permitting (so to speak). —Jeff

HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 Earth's imagination is bigger than our own

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

2 Our life-world today is as it is because our planet
3 transmutes adverse events into imaginative creations. Earth
4 demonstrates this miraculous ability time and again.

####END SUBHED####

5 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

6 WE MAY TRUTHFULLY say that imagination is the human
7 superpower. This is a wonder conferred by a mysterious universe.

8 All of our inventions and achievements in science,
9 technology, agriculture, medicine, religion, literature,
10 mathematics, design, art, music, dance, architecture — among

11 myriad others — percolate first as bubbles of imagination. In our
12 essence as human beings, we are founts of imagination.

13 And it is not at all a coincidence that this superpower is
14 born from a home planet in a continual state of transforming.

15 Unlike Mercury, Venus, and Mars — planets, once
16 active, that have settled into a stony paralysis — or the gassy
17 giants Jupiter and Saturn, or the icy twins Uranus and Neptune,
18 Earth is a cosmic seed that sprouted, and it is a marvel of
19 planetary metamorphosis.

20 No other planet has altered its outward appearance so
21 thoroughly and so often as Earth. With swirling clouds, polar
22 caps, drifting continents, mutable land- and skylscapes, surging
23 oceans, and swarming microbial, fungal, plant, and animal life,
24 Earth is itself a rich display of imagination.

25 * * *

26 THIS IMAGINATIVE capacity is one among several of Earth’s
27 native superpowers — superpowers that traditionally have been
28 intuited and referred to by our ancestors as the “primary
29 elements.” As understood now, these primary elements are earth,
30 water, life, air, and fire. As Earth formed, each superpower arose
31 from a preceding one, much as a seed germinates in stages.

32 We can chart the course of this emergence. It begins 4.4
33 billion years ago, when a small planet-like body that would
34 become our Moon struck Earth. The impact vaporized a portion
35 of Earth’s rocks, releasing the water held within them, falling as
36 rain to become the oceans.

37 The oceans then became the fecund womb for life’s
38 appearance 3.8 billion years ago.

39 And from Earth’s early life of photosynthesizing bacteria
40 in the sea, our oxygen atmosphere formed. This oxygen-rich
41 atmosphere, in combination with plant life on land as fuel,
42 allowed for the sudden and uncanny appearance, 400 million
43 years ago, of fire.

44 This is the astonishing trajectory of Earth’s unfolding.

45 * * *

46 THE ADVENT and evolution of these remarkable
47 superpowers is an expression of Earth's indigenous creative
48 imagination. We belong to a flowering miracle.

49 Once established, the elements became essential and
50 permanent features of a maturing Earth, composing the lustrous
51 jewel we now inhabit. And like a developing organism — like a
52 human life — Earth has experienced travails and traumas during
53 its growth.

54 One of those challenging circumstances occurs early in
55 Earth's formation. During the time period between 4.1 and 3.8
56 billion years ago known as the Late Heavy Bombardment — scars
57 of which can still be seen on the faces of Mercury, Mars, and the
58 Moon — our planet underwent a massive pummeling from
59 comets and asteroids.

60 The assault might have left Earth as scarred and bereft
61 and unfortunate as our planetary neighbors. However, because
62 Earth is warm-blooded, with its core heat ceaselessly stirring its
63 magma, the violent impacts were absorbed and transmuted into
64 Earth's body.

65 That ceaseless inner stirring is the activity of a dreaming
66 Earth.

67 * * *

68 WHAT DOES Earth dream amidst this cosmic upheaval?

69 In imagination and reality, an evolving Earth births its
70 first life forms — a marvel of creation arising from mayhem. Earth
71 endured the transgressions, healed its wounds, and continued to
72 shape itself. As humans, we too possess the resilience to recover
73 from trauma and remain open to new growth.

74 In a unique planetary reimagining more than 4 billion
75 years ago, Earth became a water planet, with its surface covered
76 by ocean. Water's quality of absorption, accompanied by the
77 rhythm of tides and waves, enabled the dissemination of minerals
78 and chemicals throughout the planet, providing a necessary
79 condition for life's development.

80 Water is a blessing. Nonetheless, there are instances in
81 Earth's history when water became a danger.

82 On three occasions — 720, 650, and 580 million years
83 ago — our planet's life-giving oceans froze over to become the
84 phenomenon known as Snowball Earth. Due to a sharp decrease
85 in carbon dioxide, expanses of ice formed and encroached from
86 the north and south poles, encasing the planet until only a
87 narrow strip of open water remained at the equator. Viewed from
88 space, Earth would have appeared as an ice sphere.

89 Earth recovered from this extreme circumstance when
90 our planet's inner heat — that ceaseless creative stirring —
91 welled up in volcanic eruptions that restored essential heat-
92 trapping gases to the atmosphere.

93 Earth did more than simply react to the drastic condition
94 of a frozen world. Earth's inspired response was the triggering
95 630 million years ago of the first appearance of complex life on
96 the planet.

97 This is a significant threshold event in Earth's unveiling.
98 * * *

99 WE DON'T HAVE TO imagine this. Earth did.

100 Complex life — that is, the life of plants, fungi, and
101 animals — would, in turn, face dire challenges in the form of
102 extinction events.

103 Evidence from rocks testifies there have been five major
104 extinction episodes in Earth's history: the first, 445 million years
105 ago; the last, 65 million years ago. Between these dates occurred
106 the most severe event on record: the Permian extinction 250
107 million years ago, when up to 80% of water-based species and
108 70% of land-based species perished.

109 And then an entirely amazing and unexpected kicker:
110 Following upon each of these profound setbacks, life would
111 eventually rebound with life forms more widespread, more
112 diverse, and more complex.

113 Our life-world today is as it is because our planet
114 transmutes adverse events into imaginative creations. Earth

115 demonstrates this miraculous ability time and again. In effect,
116 Earth consents to shining by not minding the rubbing. There is a
117 holiness at work here, dwelling and dreaming at the very center
118 of the Earth.

119 * * *

120 THE LAST significant extinction upheaval, as is widely
121 known, occurred 65 million years ago, when a meteor the size of
122 Mt. Everest collided with Earth near what is now the Yucatán
123 peninsula, resulting in the fiery demise of the dinosaurs. As a
124 result, mammals emerged as the principal large animal species
125 on the planet.

126 The proliferation of mammalian forms begins in a fiery
127 birth, and two million years ago human culture begins with the
128 domestication of fire.

129 Every human culture that has ever existed, beginning
130 with *Homo erectus* and continuing through *Homo sapiens*, has
131 used fire. Fire was a godsend for humankind, providing warmth
132 against the cold, safety from predators, and light beyond daylight
133 hours.

134 Early use of fire sparked the development of cooking,
135 ceramics, and metallurgy. Fire empowered humans. The degree to
136 which we would later harness fire's energy for our purpose
137 borders on the magical. Take away fire, and we are quickly
138 reduced to helplessness.

139 Most significantly, the open fire was a magnet for
140 communal gathering and sharing.

141 It is here that music making, dancing, storytelling, and
142 ceremony were inspired and cultivated. Fire — the last of Earth's
143 physical superpowers to emerge — stoked human imagination: It
144 is the hearth from which all culture and civilization sprang.

145 * * *

146 OUR HUMAN IMAGINATION, our superpower, stems directly
147 from our planet's unique creative power.

148 It is a superpower that, in addition to enabling the
149 realization of marvelous dreams, also threatens Earth's physical

150 and biological systems to such a degree that in our time we may
151 be incurring a sixth major extinction. Whatever that outcome, in
152 light of Earth's continuing transformations, we are participants in
153 an act of ongoing creative development. And of this we can be
154 sure: Earth's imagination is bigger than our own.

155 We can recognize that we possess an innate imaginative
156 capacity mirroring Earth's own vibrant activity. We embody the
157 same indwelling creative energy.

158 Whatever may be the source, Earth is the flowering of a
159 beneficent cosmic intention, and we are a part of this
160 blossoming. Amidst its creative movements, Earth has minted
161 humanity like a coin out of the precious metal of divine mystery.

162 Through Earth's unveiling, vast movements, and
163 milestone events occur on the most beautiful planet in the solar
164 system — perhaps in the cosmos. Our Earth is a wonder and a
165 gift, and we partake of a shared unfolding, in divine communion
166 with a cosmic intelligence continually creating, discovering, and
167 realizing itself.

168 This is the miracle we belong to, a miracle living us, a
169 miracle and mystery appearing all around us, deserving of our
170 service, our care, our reverence, and our celebration.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

####BEGIN BIO/COATTAIL####

171 **PETER ADAIR**, with his wife Caitlin, is the co-creator of
172 the Sanctuary Garden in Westminster West.

####END BIO/COATTAIL####

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LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

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###END LOGLINE###