

# **Big History, Political Identity, and Cosmopolitan Citizenship**

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***Lowell Gustafson  
Villanova University***

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**B**ig History and a new geopolitics are supporting the development of global and even cosmopolitan citizenship.<sup>1</sup> Changing experiences of the relationship among land, water, climate, history, and politics have led to changes in key components of citizenship, such as political identity and security. A citizen feels part of a homeland, often has been born and raised there, seeks to protect it, and is committed to its future. Now homeland is no longer restricted to a nation, but encompasses the entire globe within the cosmos. The “land of my birth” is no longer only a nation, but also the Earth. Threats to the homeland are no longer restricted to foreign armies or terrorist groups, but include exhaust pipes and smokestacks that endanger both the atmosphere and the security of humanity.

Geopolitics has traditionally analyzed the relationship between geography and human political conflict among nations and other political actors in their struggle for access to land, strategic position, and resources. World political maps outline the fixed borders that need to be defended by the citizens of each nation. Between 1648 and 1989, according to Kalevi Holsti (1991), the single most important issue over which wars were fought was territory. A security dilemma often emerged when a nation felt insecure due to the capabilities of neighbours who may have been planning a surprise attack. This insecurity often led to aggression in the alleged service of pre-emptive defence. The motivation to defend one’s own territory has led to attacking that of others.

A new geopolitics analyzes geography and its relationship to politics in a broader context

that includes factors for the cooperation among global citizens necessary to protect the Earth, from which all life, including human life, originated and is sustained. A narrative drawn from the results of scientific research of Earth’s past places Earth in the context of the cosmos. The history of the Earth includes the emergence and sustenance of life—and eventually of humanity. Defending territory at this point in the history of the Earth entails a global geopolitics in which humans protect the Earth from the ill effects of the anthropocene. The term anthropocene was introduced by Crutzen and Stoermer, 2000. Geological periods are given various names, such as the Quaternary (Pleistocene/Holocene) 2.588 million years ago (mya) - 0; the Neogene (Miocene/Pliocene) 23.03 - 2.588 mya; the Paleogene (Paleocene/Eocene/Oligocene) 66.0 - 23.03 mya; the Cretaceous 145.5 - 66.0 mya; and famously, the Jurassic 201.3 - 145.0 mya. The anthropocene is sometimes used to name the current geological age, viewed as the period during which human activity has been the dominant influence on climate and the environment. (Hamilton and Gemenne, 2015; Schwägerl, Christian and Lucy Renner Jones, 2015; and Vince, 2014) Global citizenship requires a sense of global identity. In this chapter, I will look at the anthropological and sociobiological aspects of territorial defence, discuss traditional national and imperial geopolitics, and conclude with a discussion of how global geopolitics contributes to global citizenship.

### **Land of my birth**

*The anthropology of land*

Political anthropology often observes

that cultures understand themselves to have originated from their land. The land gives birth to them, sustains and nurtures them, and demands obligations of care and reverence in return. In a Yoruban myth, the divine being Orisha Nla created humans from earth. Olorun, the supreme being, gave them life. In the *Popol Vuh*, the Maya account of creation, the hero-twins' father was resurrected from the underworld, sprouted through the land, and became the Corn God. Ixmucane, the semi-divine Grandmother, fashioned the kernels of corn that were produced into the meal from which the Maya were created. Every time the Maya ate a meal of corn meal, beans, and squash, they were eating the God who was given birth from their land and from whose fruit they were created and nurtured. Books Four and Five of the *Popol Vuh* are concerned with the origins of a particular group of Maya, not all humans. The Genesis account at Chapter 1:24 states that, "And God said, 'Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.'" The account later states that the first human being was named Adam, perhaps arising from the Hebrew word *adama*, meaning earth, soil, light brown or red. A literally translated name for Adam into English might be Earthling or Humus-being (human). The Tanakh is concerned with the origin and development of the Hebrew people as well as their special relationship with a defined, holy portion of land (sometimes called Canaan, Palestine, Eretz HaQodesh, or Israel).

Much more recently, Eric Donaldson

recorded "[This is the Land of My Birth](#)," celebrating his homeland of Jamaica.

In other words, a great number of cultural and sacred myths emphasize how life and a people originate from the land. The land itself gives birth to a nation or a people. It is sacred land. The soil itself is the stuff of which we are made. Humus is the clay from which humanity is moulded. My people are human, others are foreigners or something else altogether. My territory is nurturing and sustaining. The land is fertile; it has soil from which sustenance-giving plants emerge. The Earth itself may be seen as a living female. Earth goddesses are common, such as Coatlicue in Aztec mythology, Pachamama for the Inca, Ki in Sumerian, Mahimata or Great Mother in the Rig Veda (1.164.33), Mut in ancient Egypt, and Gaia for the ancient Greeks. For all of these reasons, the land of one's birth deserves filial loyalty and protection. Land, ancestry, and kinship go together.

#### *Social Science and Defending the Nest*

Edward O. Wilson has long argued that human nature is deeply rooted in and connected to the natural world. In his 1975 book on *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis*, he first investigated how society is rooted in biology. Almost four decades later, he continues to develop his argument. Wilson contends in *The Social Conquest of the Earth* that humanity's social nature has contributed to our ability to conquer the Earth. Our ability to organize ourselves is our most powerful skill. We may lack fangs, claws, shells, wings, or cheetah-like speed, but we can work together.

We are not the only social beings and not the only ones who have done well in surviving and thriving through social organization. Ant colonies and bee hives are highly organized, with specialists in various functions. And they defend their nests to the death, as Wilson argues (Wilson, 2012). The survival of the group depends on the defence of where the young are born and raised, and where food is found or kept. Birds sometimes sing to warn others of their kind to stay away from territory with limited supplies of preferred foods. The desire of members of a group to survive and reproduce often leads to in-group cooperation and conflict with others of the same or other species who might compete for resources. If citizenship includes a sense of belonging, membership in a group that works together to protect the nest, it has an origin deep in the past. Social creatures—including humans—cannot survive without maintaining access to the land that gives them birth and sustains them.

Because land or the nest appears to be permanent to its human residents, it necessitates a kind of special protection. Building one's nation on permanent land is as wise as building one's house upon solid rock. If it can be secured, the land will stay under our possession for generations to come, and my group's ties to this land will be as permanent as the land itself. In short, protection of the land is not just for the present, but also for our children and our children's children. Each of us experiences our own aging, but the mountains seem to remain.

### **Motherland / Fatherland**

Land is a powerful source of political identity, especially when it is linked to family. Political identity as formed by a group's relationship to a defined geographic location has often been an important factor in politics. We are loyal to where we were born and raised, we root for the home team of our city or state or country, we fight for the motherland or fatherland, and we see land as our origin. Nationalists have often referred to their motherland or fatherland. It is closely linked to kinship; it is where we make our nests and raise our families. (Bouguereau, 1883)

Kinship was likely one of our species' oldest sources of identity. The need to care for young



*Bouguereau, William-Adolphe.  
1883. "The Motherland."*

*Homo sapiens* for an extended period of time is one of the driving forces of human culture. Our ability to work together in societies is made possible by our complex and relatively large brains. It may well be that the growth in hominins' brain size and complexity over the past seven million years was in a positive feedback loop with our sociability. Each of our approximately hundred billion neurons with a trillion synapses makes our brains the most complexly structured matter of which we know. Our ancestors' brains and sociability turned out to be more powerful than those fangs and claws on the African savannahs where our ancestors and their competitors evolved.

But large brains came at a cost. They made childbirth for bipedal hominins dangerous and lengthened the period of childhood dependence while the brain developed after birth. It took a number of adults a long time to bring children to sexual maturity. Prolonged relationships among child caretakers, who had to figure out how to work together for many years, led to intensely strong relationships within a kinship group. Memories of one's own former caretakers and a sense of on-going obligation to them led to hominin burial rituals that are more elaborate than how other species, such as elephants, mourn their dead. Ancestor worship may be one of the origins of religion. The nurturance and sustenance of caretakers within kinship groups, not only mothers but also fathers and other relatives, often become linked to "the land of my birth." The hills behind the mother in William-Adolphe Bouguereau's painting are part of

the message, not just a backdrop. The land is my parent and I am fiercely loyal to it, in this association.

There are seemingly endless cultural expressions about the motherland and fatherland. One might point to classics like Rig Veda, part of Hindu sacred writings, which says that "One should respect his motherland, his culture and his mother tongue because they are givers of happiness. . . . A person who is respectful towards his land, civilization and language, attains greatness and he acquires all the happiness of life. His deeds should be such that makes the motherland, the culture and language proud" (First Mandal, 13/9, Rigveda ). One might also point, in a very different cultural setting, to the evocative painting by Jacek Malczewski entitled "Motherland." (Malczewski, 1903)

A fully developed discussion about the different gendered views of the motherland and fatherland would be important, but



Jacek Malczewski, "Motherland," 1903

beyond our purpose here. Still, it is virtually obligatory to include a quote from Adolf Hitler, who said: “There is a road to freedom. Its milestones are Obedience, Endeavor, Honesty, Order, Cleanliness, Sobriety, Truthfulness, Sacrifice, and love of the Fatherland.” (Life 1939) But suffice it to say that not all art devoted to the fatherland is aggressive. There is *Má vlast*, a set of six symphonic poems composed in the nineteenth century by the Czech composer Bedřich Smetana. The second poem is *Vltava, Mein Vaterland* (My fatherland). There is the moving *Finlandia* by Jean Sibelius. These are expressions of the great significance attached to land as an ancestor from which we have been born and that deserves our protection or veneration.

Many famous expressions of American attachment to the land easily come to mind. Irving Berlin’s “God Bless America,” Woodie Guthrie’s “This land is your land,” and “America the Beautiful” by Katharine Lee Bates are iconic American songs that celebrate the land.

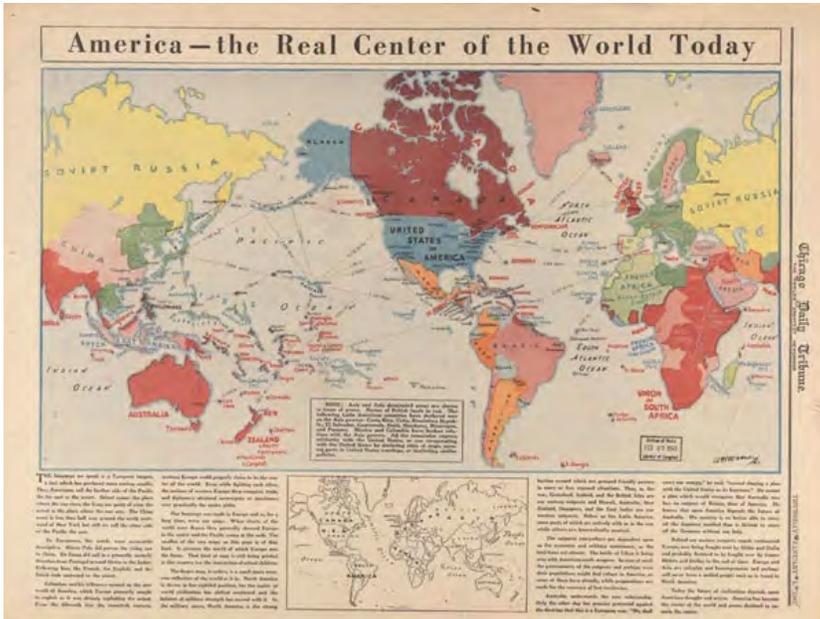
Not to be outdone, the Brazilian national anthem praises the “beloved, idolized homeland.” The “Lied der Deutschen,” written by Hoffmann von Fallersleben, from which the German national anthem was taken, praises the “German fatherland.” A famous English poem by William Blake, whose words are still sung at some English sporting events, celebrates “England’s mountains green.” (BBC Sport, 2005) One might also recall Elton John’s tribute to princess Diana at her funeral, which closely follows Blake’s line with

“England’s greenest hills.” These are but a few of the many expressions of reverence for the motherland or fatherland, the land which is an ancestor, the hills where the ancestors still walk. Nations have a powerful relationship with defined portions of land. Nationalists often seek to protect their nest, mourn the loss of their nation and the losses it has suffered. Sometimes they call for pre-emptive aggression against imminent or possibly future attacks.

### **National Geopolitics, History, and Identity**

Ownership and access to land is one way that nations have traditionally affirmed their power. The relationship between political identity and defined pieces of the Earth’s territory has been of great importance in the national era since 1648. Political maps of national boundaries are routinely used in many settings. In the United States, the America centric world map in Mercator projection is commonly shown. America is placed top and centre, with South America below and the rest of the world split in half and placed on either side of America. The message is clear. The United States is at the top of the world and at the pivotal centre of world affairs. American identity as the greatest nation in the world is confirmed by the Mercator projection. (Chicago Daily Tribune, 1942)

National geopolitics is often linked to national histories and identity. The teaching of history often relies on a national origin story in order to facilitate the larger political objective of identity formation. When my daughter came home from her first day of public school kindergarten, she had a colour-in-the-lines



Chicago Daily Tribune, 1942



Monument of national hero, Hermann in Teutoburg Forest, Germany

picture of George Washington. The process of state-sponsored identity formation began right off the bat. Her first day away from her immediate family at school began with a story about the father of her country. The issue was not to teach how to make personal decisions about which type of leader she admired; she did not come home with group of pictures of the Father of Our Country, a British king, a German dictator, a Chinese emperor, a Germanic hero (e.g. Bandel, 1840), and many other leaders.

American political identity is bound up with a full awareness of the history of the American experience. The academic field of history has often been associated with promoting national identities. When the American Historical Association (AHA) was founded in 1884, “history had only recently emerged as a distinct academic discipline. The first few professors in the field of history

had only been appointed at major universities in the 1870s.” (AHA, N.d.) The country had survived its Civil War and the last spike of the transcontinental railroad had been driven in 1869. The nation had achieved its Manifest Destiny of integrating territory from sea to shining sea. (See Gast, 1872) It was ready to tell its story. And the state was ready to sponsor it in public schooling as a way of fostering nationalism and civic pride. To become a citizen of the United States requires passing a test in part about American history, with questions about the wars in which the nation has fought (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, N.d.) . Apparently, it is important for citizenship to know what is required to defend the nation.

A key part of American identity was to be part of—and know about—the great stories



*"American Progress,"* by John Gast, 1872.

of migration from the Pilgrims' landing at Plymouth Rock to Manifest Destiny and the Oregon Trail. American identity incorporates a rock on a seashore and ruts from covered wagons in the Great Plains.

The study of political science, like history, was associated with being American and even participating in American public life. Shortly after the AHA was founded, the American Political Science Association was established in 1903. After American history, the other most

prominent questions on the naturalization test are about American politics. College courses on American political science are often about the three branches of government. Knowing about and understanding the events leading to—and the text of—the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, Gettysburg Address, the Letter from a Birmingham Jail, and much else became part of being a good American citizen. All of this just barely begins the topic of how nationalism is instilled through the teaching of history and politics.

(See Anderson, 1991; Díaz-Andreu, 2007; Ferro, 2003; Geary, 2002; Gellner, 1983; Hobsbawm, 1992; Kohl, 1996; Smith, 1988.) National citizens identified with the nation.

### *New Identities from Older Histories*

Ironically, new histories push the narrative of the past further back in time. Human histories foster human identity, perhaps a prerequisite for human citizenship. The human past did not begin with the American Declaration of Independence in 1776, the European International System in 1648, the Golden Age of Athens in 500 BCE, or with writing in Sumer in 2,700 BCE. It began with the beginning of *Homo sapiens* about 200,000 years ago in Africa. The Father of Humanity was not George Washington, Julius Caesar, or Gilgamesh.

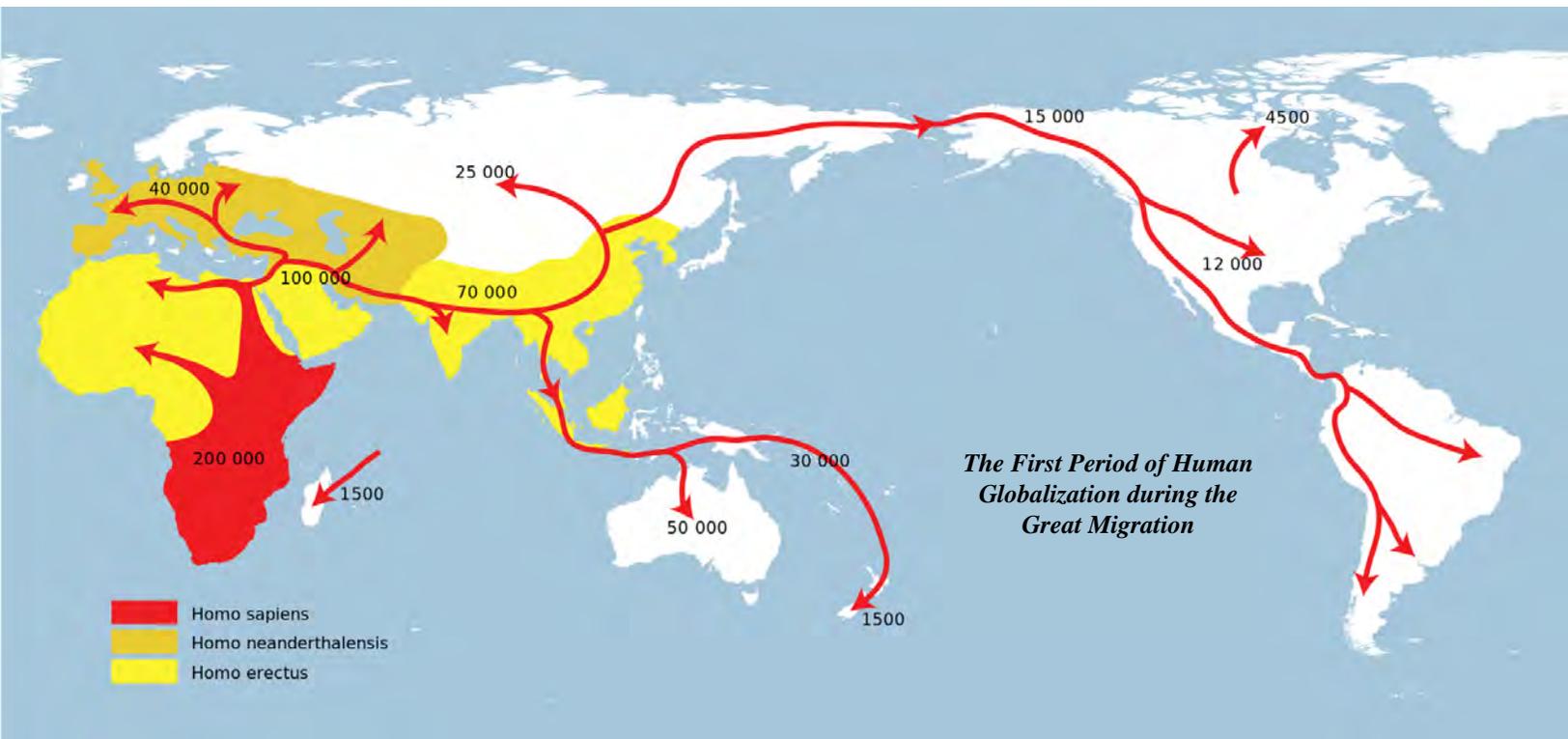
A fuller story of humans begins with the evolution of hominins not long after our common ancestors with chimpanzees lived about seven million years ago. The political lesson drawn from this story was made on his state visit to Ethiopia by President Barack Obama in 2015. The US President viewed and touched the 3.2 million year old fossilized bones of “Lucy” and “Ardi,” whose bones are even a million years older. Obama referred to Lucy in his toast at the state dinner and again the next day in a speech at the African Union. “I had the privilege to view Lucy,” he told the audience at the African Union. “You may know Lucy; she’s our ancestor, more than 3 million years old. In this tree of humanity, with all our branches and diversity, we all go back to the same root. We’re all one family; we’re all one



*Mother and Father of Humanity?*

tribe. And yet,” he added, “so much of the suffering in our world stems from our failure to remember that – to not recognize ourselves in each other” (quoted in Baker, 2015).

The common ancestors of all living humans today did not live in Mesopotamia about 6,000 years ago, but in East Africa many millennia before (Baker 2015). The story of migration did not begin a few centuries ago at Plymouth Rock, but some 70,000 years ago from East Africa as *Homo sapiens* first left their homeland where they had evolved. They reached Australia by about 50,000 years ago after having travelled along the coasts of South Asia. Eventually, they learned how to survive the trip across Siberia and made it across Beringia, the land bridge connecting Russia and Alaska during the last ice age. Some may have sailed across the Pacific to South America. By about 20,000 years ago, they had settled the Americas. This is a human migration story that is a heroic one. Without maps or previous knowledge of the routes they would take, our ancestors made their way across the globe.



Human history did not begin with writing five millennia ago. It began with humans 200 millennia ago, with roots in earlier ancestors that push our common narrative back much further than that.

### Envisioning a New Geopolitics

Along with a new migration story, we have been seeing new ideas about the relationship between land and politics. In the emerging geopolitics, there is a key role for the Earth's story—rather than only nations' stories—and that of the origins and sustenance of life on Earth in the context of the cosmos. As a result of this shifting perspective, there is a growing desire to defend the nest at the global level. The Earth as a whole is seen as the nest that produces and sustains the lives of humans throughout the globe, so it becomes increasingly important for humans to act in ways that defend our common global nest.

There are changing public attitudes about the relationship between people and the Earth's geography. With the growing environmental movement, there is an increasing perception of the interconnectedness of the Earth's conditions and human well-being. Changing understandings of the relationship of humans and Earth in space may be reshaping political identity and producing a global geopolitics. (See Anders, 1968)

That change is indicated by the unintended consequence of the US space program. That was begun early on as a response to threats from the development of Nazi jet propulsion and rockets. Later, it was stimulated by fears of the 1957 launch of Sputnik by the Soviet Union and (unfounded) American fears expressed by John Kennedy during the 1960 presidential campaign of a Soviet missile lead. In his inaugural address, he called for America



*Blue Marble - Image of the Earth from Apollo 17*

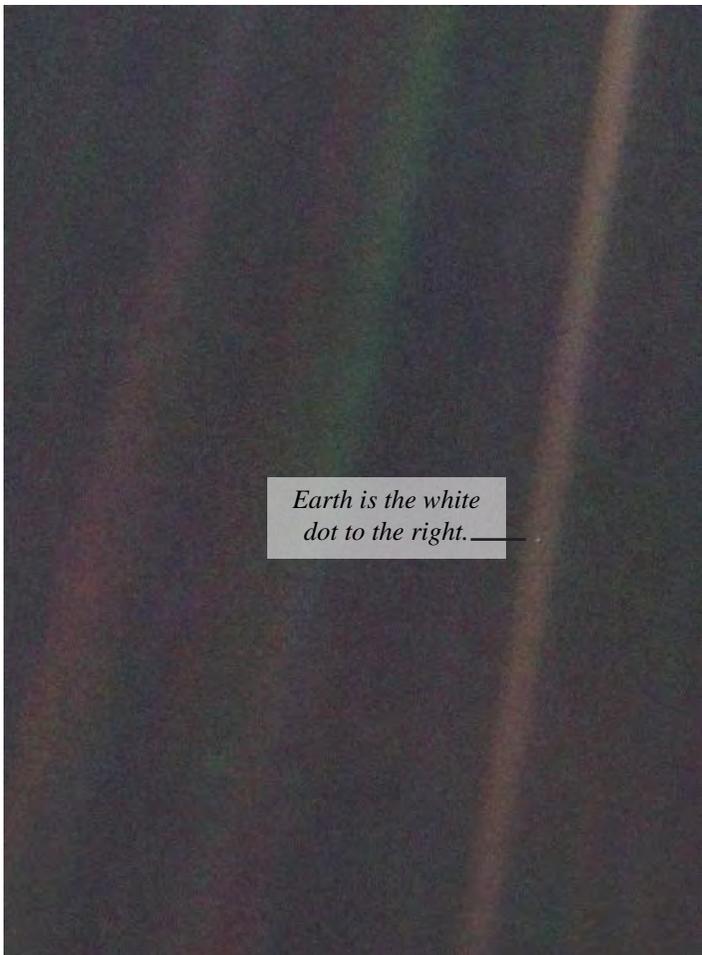
to send a man to the moon by the end of the decade as a way to show we were ahead in rocket technology and the ability to deliver nuclear warheads with ICBMs.

Whatever the benefits to national security, the American space program also produced one of the most reproduced and evocative pictures of the past half-century: the Earthrise from the moon, taken by astronaut William Anders during the Apollo 8 mission in 1968. The Blue Marble was another famous photograph of the Earth, taken in 1972, by the crew of the Apollo 17 spacecraft. The picture showed the entire, white cloud covered blue

earth in an empty, very black space. In 1990, the Voyager 1 spacecraft took a picture of the Earth from 3.7 billion miles away, showing our home planet as a small speck in an enormously large and forbidding space. (NASA e, 1990; also see Sagan 2014)

The changes in the identity of the US space program was indicated by what NASA emphasizes about the current Juno mission. [As NASA says](#), “Although the main spacecraft was built by Lockheed Martin, its instruments and components come from all over the world.” [China’s North Industries Group Corporation](#) (NORINCO Group) has produced 15,000 20-inch photomultiplier tubes (PMTs) for JUNO.

At its current impressive speed of about 37,000 miles per hour, it would take Voyager about 50,000 years to get to Alpha Centauri, the nearest star outside our solar system. For all practical purposes, we are alone. And there is nowhere else to go, until and if we ever have the technology to get to other habitable planets. We either make it together on our one habitable planet or we slide toward oblivion. There have been five great extinction events in Earth history, with a sixth self-inflicted one now in progress. Over 99% of all species that have ever existed are now extinct. There is no assurance about our species escaping the same fate others have experienced. Postponing that inevitable occurrence will take concerted action. Earth security and human security are perhaps our most pressing public policy concerns. Defending the nest now means defending the Earth, not exclusively or even



primarily the nation. Global geopolitics is a crucial component of global citizens ensuring basic well-being and even survival.

Earth is humanity's homeland. It is a one-of-a-kind planet in our solar system. Our ability to get to another inhabitable planet is, at least now, not within our reach. It is our Earth with all of its Goldilocks conditions that keeps us alive. Earth is just the right distance from the sun, keeping water in the liquid form that is necessary for life as we know it. It has just the right oxygen content in the atmosphere. It has a magnetic shield that protects us from solar winds. And we are made from the same stuff of which it is made.

#### *Globalization and Cosmopolitan Identity*

As we have discussed, national identity has often seen land as ancestor. The land and kinship have often been tied together. The land as father and mother has been a commonly held idea throughout much of history. Current histories of the origins of life support the emergence of global identities. Global identity is formed not only through increased international trade or transnational corporations and investments, but also through scientific accounts of the emergence of life on earth.

The story of globalization of humans begins much further back than the migration of our kind from Africa. It begins with the elements and molecules that make us up right now. It is generally thought now that a complex process of chemical evolution combined metabolism, membranes from lipids, and reproduction

in response to the environment in the first life forms almost four billion years ago. The knowledge of the exact process remains elusive, but LUCA, or the Last Universal Common Ancestor from about that time, seems likely to be the ancestor of all life on Earth, including one of its most recent forms: us (Deamer 2011; Hazen 2005; Pross 2012.). The common cultural motif of the Earth mother remains evocative.

The new attitudes toward the Earth and human relations are being reinforced by innovative curricula, in which history is not taught within national frameworks, but as the history of the entire past from the Big Bang to the present. The Earth and its inhabitants are placed within a cosmic framework that has spanned billions of years. The Big History Project is a new curriculum supported by Bill Gates which was piloted in 2011 and 2012, and now being adopted by schools in Australia, the Netherlands, the United States, and elsewhere. Gates initiated the project after listening to a video course offered by David Christian, who is the author of *Maps of Time: An Introduction to Big History*. In the book and the course, Christian discusses what he sees as the major periods of time since the Big Bang, each distinguished by one of a number of major thresholds. In Christian's account, history is not framed by national histories, but by the 13.82 billion year long history of the cosmos, Earth, life, and humanity (Brown 2007; Chaisson 2006; Christian 2004; Christian et al. 2014; Spier 2015.).

As we saw, the test for US citizenship

requires a knowledge of basic events in American history and the constitutional structure of government. Global citizenship is formed by a knowledge of basic events in cosmic, Earth, and life history, as well as in the basic laws that govern their development. The beginning of big history is not in 1776 or 1787 with the Declaration of Independence or the US Constitution. It begins with a singularity, a point of infinite heat and density without space or mass, from which energy, matter, space, and time emerged into a rapidly expanding universe. Immediately after the “Big Bang,” up and down quarks formed relationships through the strong force within protons and neutrons. Three hundred thousand years later, the universe had expanded and cooled enough to permit the electro-magnetic force to form relationships between protons and electrons within hydrogen and helium atoms. Gravity drew some of these asymmetrically spread out atoms tightly together enough to start fusion, and stars within galaxies were born. The result was heavier atoms, all the way up to iron in some stars. The largest stars then exploded in a supernova that produced all elements heavier than iron. These mixed with still pre-existing clouds of hydrogen and helium to form second-generation stars, like our own sun. Since we are made of the elements fused in long dead stars, Carl Sagan made the famous observation that we are made of star dust. If we left it there, we could talk about a story making us universal or galactic citizens. However, for our purposes here, we need to continue the progression of events.

While over 99% of our solar system’s matter

was drawn into the sun, there was just enough cosmic dust to form the terrestrial planets like Earth 4.5672 billion years ago. The elements that had been fused in stars and the molecules like water that had formed in space were drawn together by gravity to form what was then a molten planet with no oxygen in the atmosphere. Chemical evolution increased the complexity of the relationship of matter and eventually produced life. As Walter Alvarez (2014) says to develop Sagan’s famous phrase, “We are star dust ... concentrated by Earth!” It took almost two billion years before prokaryote cells became eukaryote cells, and then a half billion years to get from the explosion of complex life in the Cambrian period to hominins and then finally humans. The Big History curriculum teaches how embedded the natural past of the cosmos and the Earth is in each of us. The Earth is made of star dust, and we are made of Earth mud.

The Big History curriculum is part of a growing consciousness of the Earth as the changing, rather fragile home for all of humanity. The Earth is a nest that has given birth to all life on Earth. It has sustained life for a long time, but by no means every species. The requirements for sustained human life are complex and by no means assured. There was virtually no oxygen in Earth’s atmosphere when it was first formed through accretion of particles left-over from an earlier supernova. Over two billion years, cyanobacteria and other prokaryote cells which developed photosynthesis excrete oxygen, which gradually built up in the atmosphere. One effect of this was that the Ozone layer of O<sub>3</sub>

absorbed much of the sun's harmful radiation. With manmade chemicals breaking down that ozone layer, human security is being endangered.

Human use of fossil fuels emits carbon dioxide, which traps heat and is causing global warming. Levels of carbon dioxide have steadily risen since the beginning of the industrial revolution, but especially over the past fifty years, from just under 320 parts per million in 1960 to over 400 now (Tans and Keeling, N.d.). For a half century now, these levels are higher than they have been for 400,000 years. NASA concludes that, as a result, "scientific evidence for warming of the climate system is unequivocal" (NASA {b}). The effects on weather patterns, global warming, rising sea levels, and the melting glaciers and polar caps are accepted by virtually all scientists who study the issue.

A story of the cosmos and Earth's place in it has been developed over the past couple centuries, transforming our understanding of geopolitics. In recent years, world opinion leaders have also developed a vision of global geopolitics and enjoyed some success in raising it on the world's political agenda. At the 2015 meeting of world political, economic, and cultural leaders in Davos, Al Gore introduced the headlining presenter, David Christian, who presented the history of the universe, earth, life, and humanity in one lecture (Christian 2015). Since leaving office, the former vice-president made the environmental film, *An Inconvenient Truth*, and wrote *The Future: Six Drivers of Global Change* (Gore 2015). At the

Davos meeting, he wanted world leaders to be aware of cosmic, earth, life, and all of human history as they together worked to fashion a more global age.

Even if one is sceptical about the intent of elites at Davos, there are many more common, citizen-led global movements. One of these is the cogent statement of the new vision in the Earth Charter:

The Earth Charter is a product of a decade-long, worldwide, cross-cultural dialogue on common goals and shared values. The Earth Charter project began as a United Nations initiative, but it was carried forward and completed by a global civil society initiative. The Earth Charter was finalized and then launched as a people's charter on 29 June, 2000 by the Earth Charter Commission, an independent international entity, in a ceremony at the Peace Palace, in The Hague. (Earth Charter International, N.d. )

The Charter notes that we are at a critical moment in Earth's history and humanity's place in a vast evolving universe. Earth, it affirms, is our common home and is alive with a community of life. "The forces of nature make existence a demanding and uncertain adventure, but Earth has provided the conditions essential to life's evolution. . . . The protection of Earth's vitality, diversity, and beauty is a sacred trust." (Earth Charter International, N.d. ) Pando Populus is another platform for people who care about the Earth and creating an ecological civilization (Pando Populus, N.d.). There are by now hundreds of

other such efforts (350.org, N.d.).

### Concluding Questions

Many segments of humanity are still protecting their own territorial nests, even if this is at the expense of the sustenance of life on earth, including but not limited to humans. Many national governments remain motivated by national geopolitics to gain advantage in a zero sum game in which the relative power of nations is a hierarchy that matters even more than human well-being and survival. Non-state actors battle states for control of territory. The use of fossil fuels is melting glaciers and polar ice caps, resulting in rising sea levels that are threatening many coastal communities.

Can state policy follow the lead of Big Historians, the educators, and others who produce such work as the Earth Charter and realize the limits set at major environmental conferences? Can transnational corporations be motivated by profits in protecting the Earth that protects us or do they need to be regulated to do so? Can we expect to see a transition to global geopolitics after centuries of national geopolitics that is sufficiently robust to change behaviour before we follow the lead of other extinct species? Can global citizens with a global identity, concerned for global security, and aware of human kinship emerge in sufficient numbers to affect public policy? The need is clear. The outcome is not.

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# Big History and Political Identity:

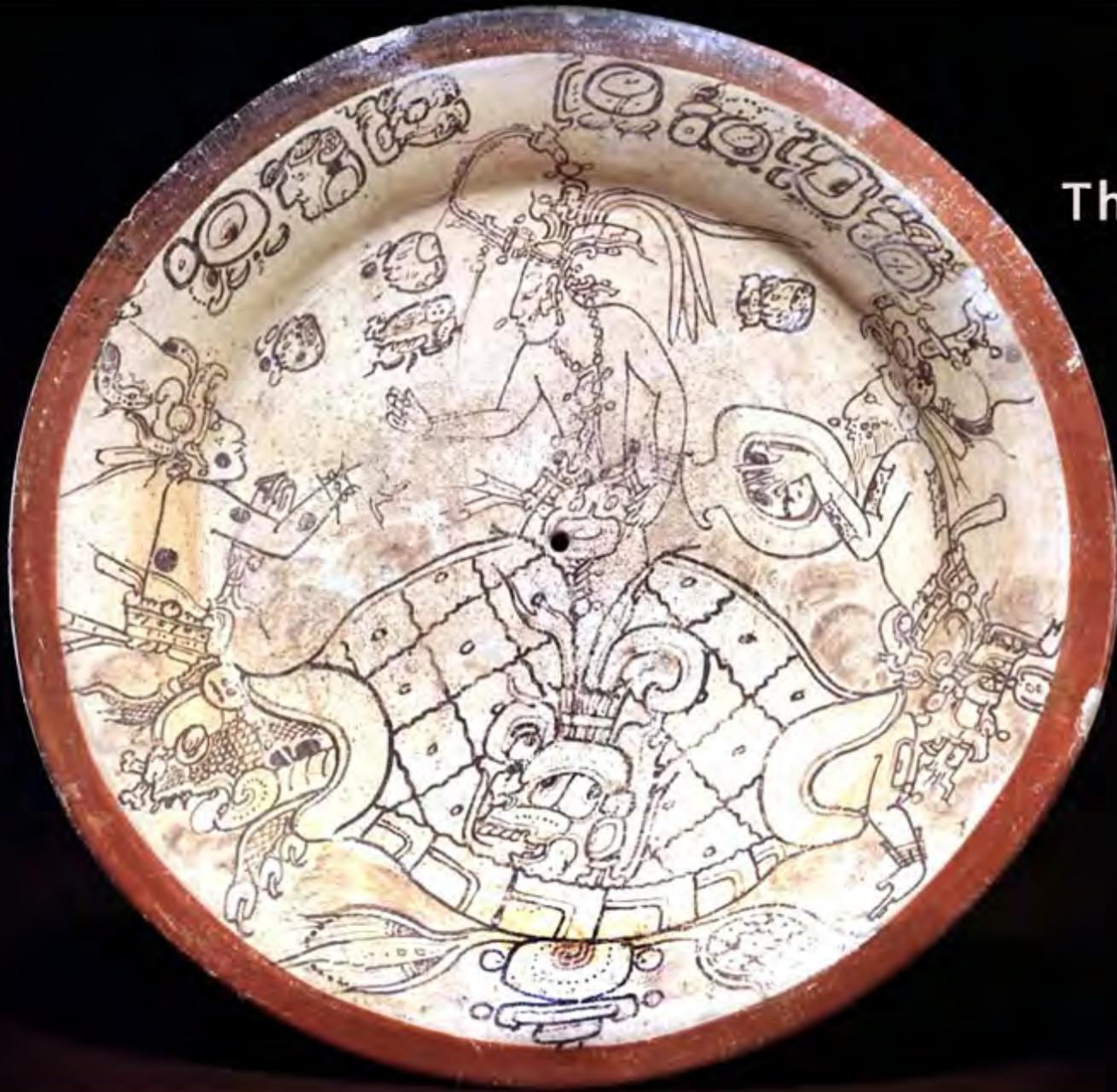
A Cosmopolitan Political  
Geography

Third  
International Big  
History  
Association  
Conference,  
Amsterdam,  
July 14 - 17, 2016



International  
Big History  
Association

Lowell  
Gustafson  
Villanova  
University



The land  
of my  
birth.



In Nigerian Yoruban myth, the divine being Orisha Nla created al life, including humans, from the earth.



Pachamama, Incan



Coatlicue, Aztec

T H E

B O O K O F G E N E S I S\*.

C H A P. I.

*God createth heaven and earth, and all things therein, in six days.*

**I**N the beginning, God created heaven and earth.  
2. And the earth was void and empty; and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God moved over the waters.

3. And God said: "Be light made." And light was made.

4. And God saw the light, that it was good: and he divided the light from the darkness.

5. And he called the light, day---and the darkness, night; and there was evening and morning, one day.

6. And God said: "Let there be a firmament † made amidst the waters: and let it divide the waters from the waters."

7. And God made a firmament, and divided the waters that were under the firmament, from those that were above the firmament. And it was so.

8. And God called the firmament, heaven: and the evening and the morning were the second day.

9. God also said: "Let the waters that are under heaven, be gathered together into one place: and the dry land appear." And it was so done.

10. And God called the dry land, earth: and the coming together of the waters, he called sea. And he saw that it was good.

15. "To shine in the firmament of heaven, and to give light upon the earth." And it was so done.

16. And God made two great lights †---a greater light, to rule the day---and a lesser light, to rule the night: and stars.

17. And he set them in the firmament of heaven, to shine upon the earth:

18. And to rule the day and the night, and to divide the light and the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

19. And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.

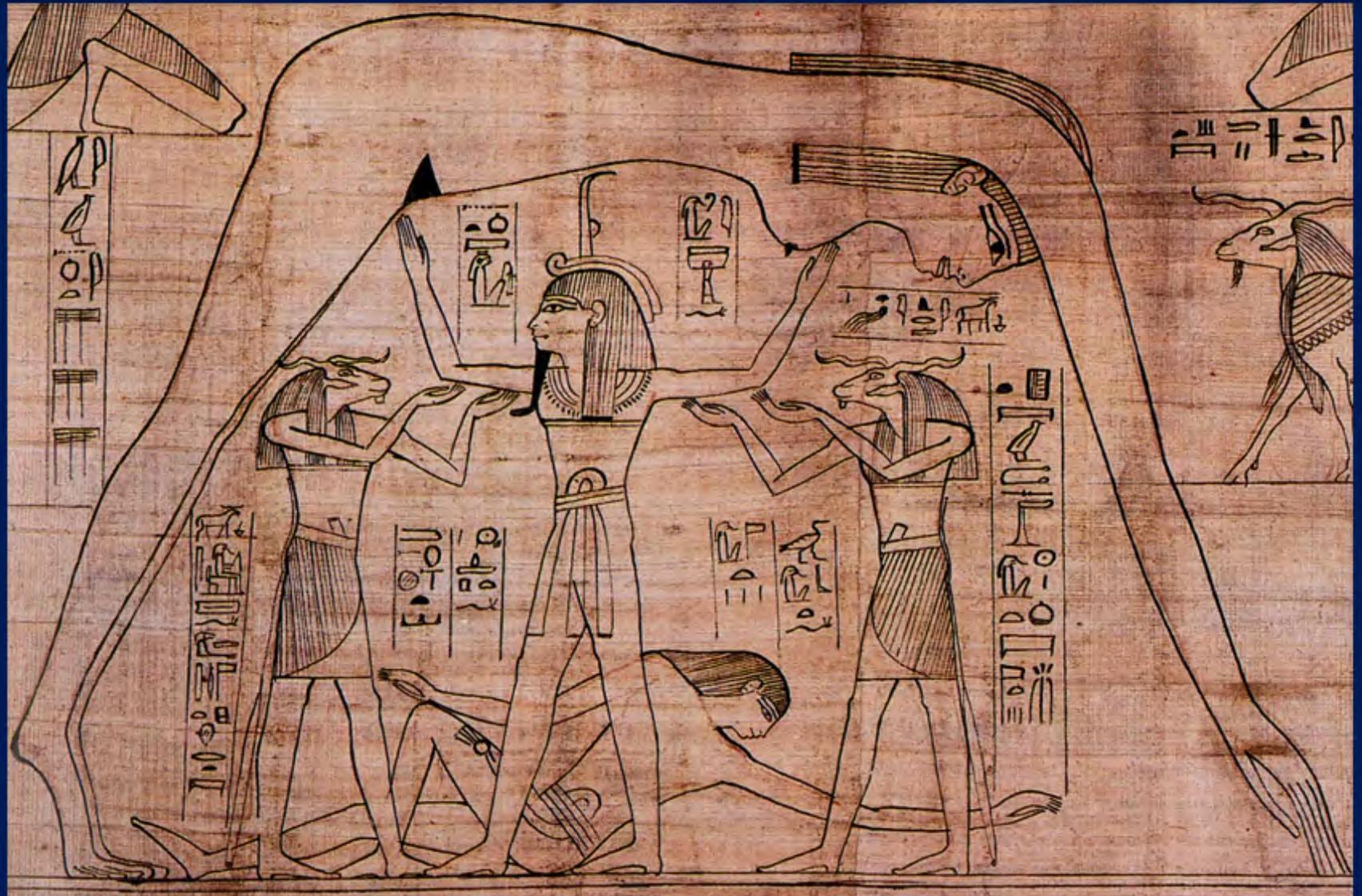
20. God also said: "Let the waters bring forth the creeping creature having life, and the fowl that may fly over the earth, under the firmament of heaven."

21. And God created the great whales, and every living and moving creature, which the waters brought forth, according to their kinds, and every winged fowl, according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

22. And he blessed them, saying: "Increase and multiply, and fill the waters of the sea: and let the birds be multiplied upon the earth."

23. And the evening and morning were the fifth day.

24. And God said: "Let the earth bring forth the living creature in its kind: cattle, and creeping things,



**Nut (Sky Goddess) over Geb (earth God)**



Nesting

# Defending the nest





William-Adolphe  
Bouguereau  
(1825–1905)

Alma Parens  
L'âme parentale /

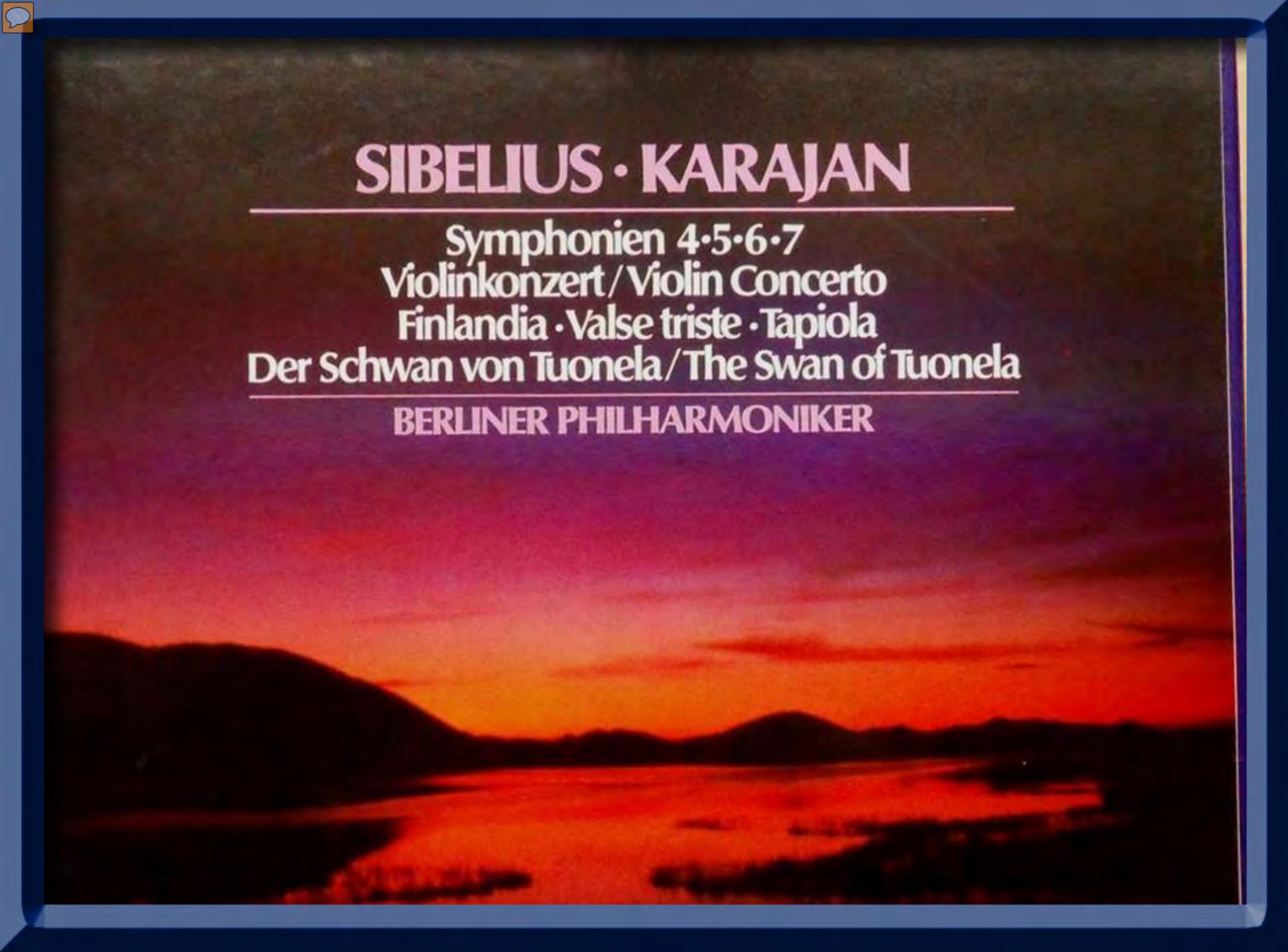
## The Motherland

1883

oil on canvas



*Jacek Malczewski, Motherland, 1903, Polish*



**SIBELIUS · KARAJAN**

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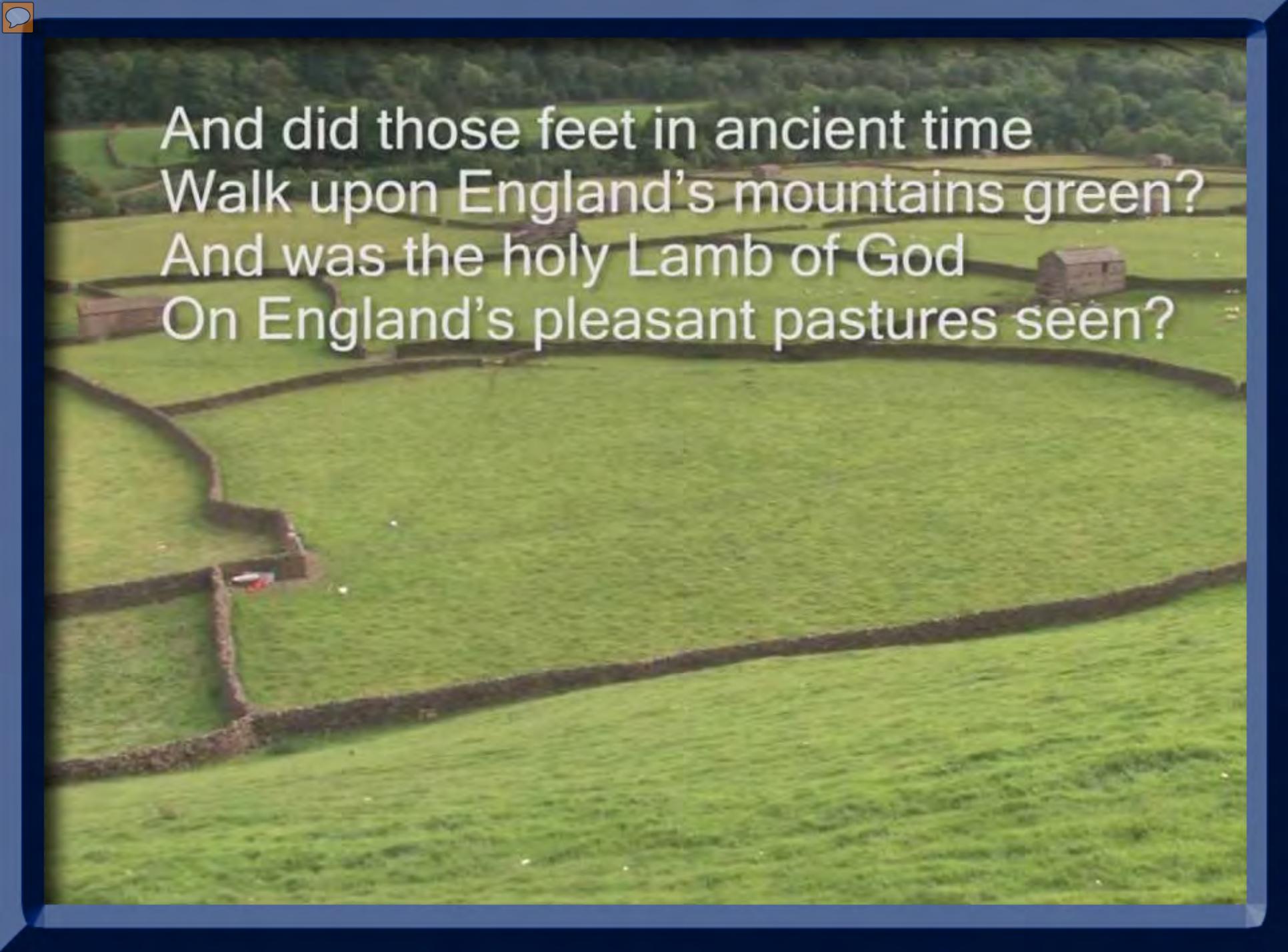
**Symphonien 4·5·6·7  
Violinkonzert / Violin Concerto  
Finlandia · Valse triste · Tapiola  
Der Schwan von Tuonela / The Swan of Tuonela**

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**BERLINER PHILHARMONIKER**



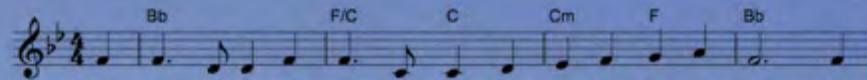
Blüh' im Glanze dieses Glückes,  
Bloom in the glow of happiness,

An aerial photograph of a lush green English landscape. The scene is dominated by rolling hills and fields, separated by traditional dry-stone walls. In the middle ground, a small, rustic wooden building is visible. The background shows a dense line of trees under a clear sky. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and idyllic.

And did those feet in ancient time  
Walk upon England's mountains green?  
And was the holy Lamb of God  
On England's pleasant pastures seen?

# America the Beautiful

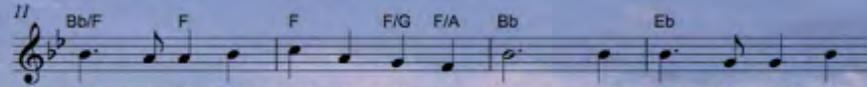
Samuel A. Ward



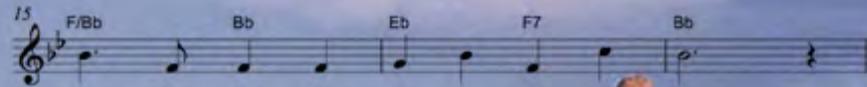
Oh beau - ti - ful for spa - cious skies, for am - ber waves of grain, for  
Oh beau - ti - ful for pa - triot dream That sees be - yond the years, Thine



pur - ple moun - tain ma - jes - ties, a - bove the fruit - ed plain. A - mer - i - ca, A -  
al - a - bas - ter cit - ies gleam, Un - dimmed by hu - man tears!



mer - i - ca, God shed His grace on Thee, and crown thy good with



bro - ther - hood, from sea to shi - ning sea.





*This land is your land, this land is my land  
From California to the New York Island  
From the Redwood Forest to the Gulf Stream waters  
This land was made for you and me.*



*Hermann in  
Teutoburg  
Forest,  
Germany*



George  
Washington



# THE OREGON TRAIL

LEGEND OF TRAILS

OLD OREGON TRAIL	1843	
WHEATMAN TRAIL	1836	
APPROXIMATE TRAIL	1846	
LEWIS & CLARK	1804-1806	
SANTA FE TRAIL	1822-1840	

NEW MEXICO

SANTA FE

CONTINENTAL DIVIDE

TEXAS

**SCALE**

0 100 200 300 MILES



**One small portion of  
Spirit of Nebraska's Wilderness and Pioneer Courage Park  
Omaha, NE, USA**



*from the Edge*

# The Oregon Trail



Introduction

Options

Quit

Travel the Trail

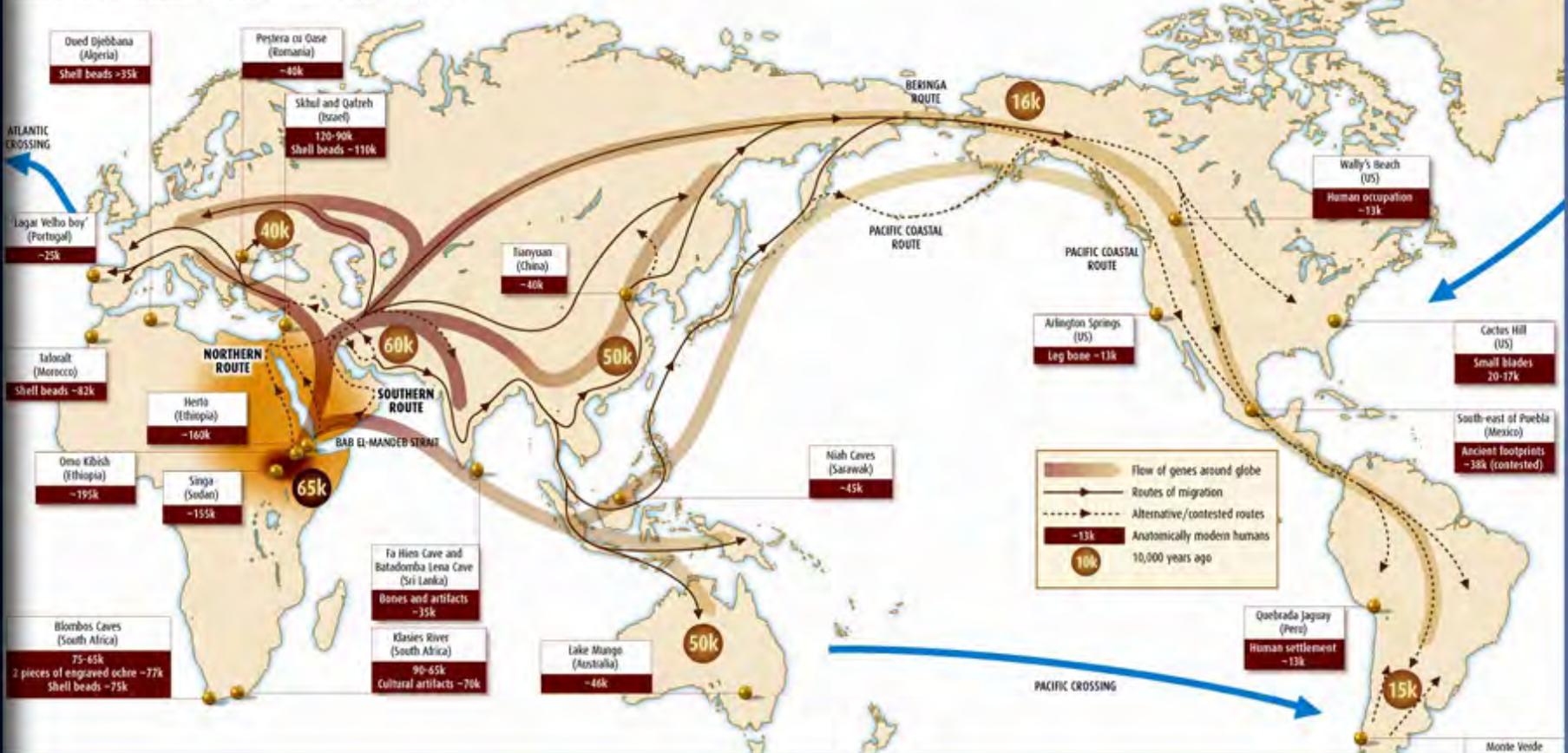




**Humanity's Common Ancestors**

# THE MIGRATION OF ANATOMICALLY MODERN HUMANS

Evidence from fossils, ancient artefacts and genetic analyses combine to tell a compelling story



## Human Migration: The Global Trail

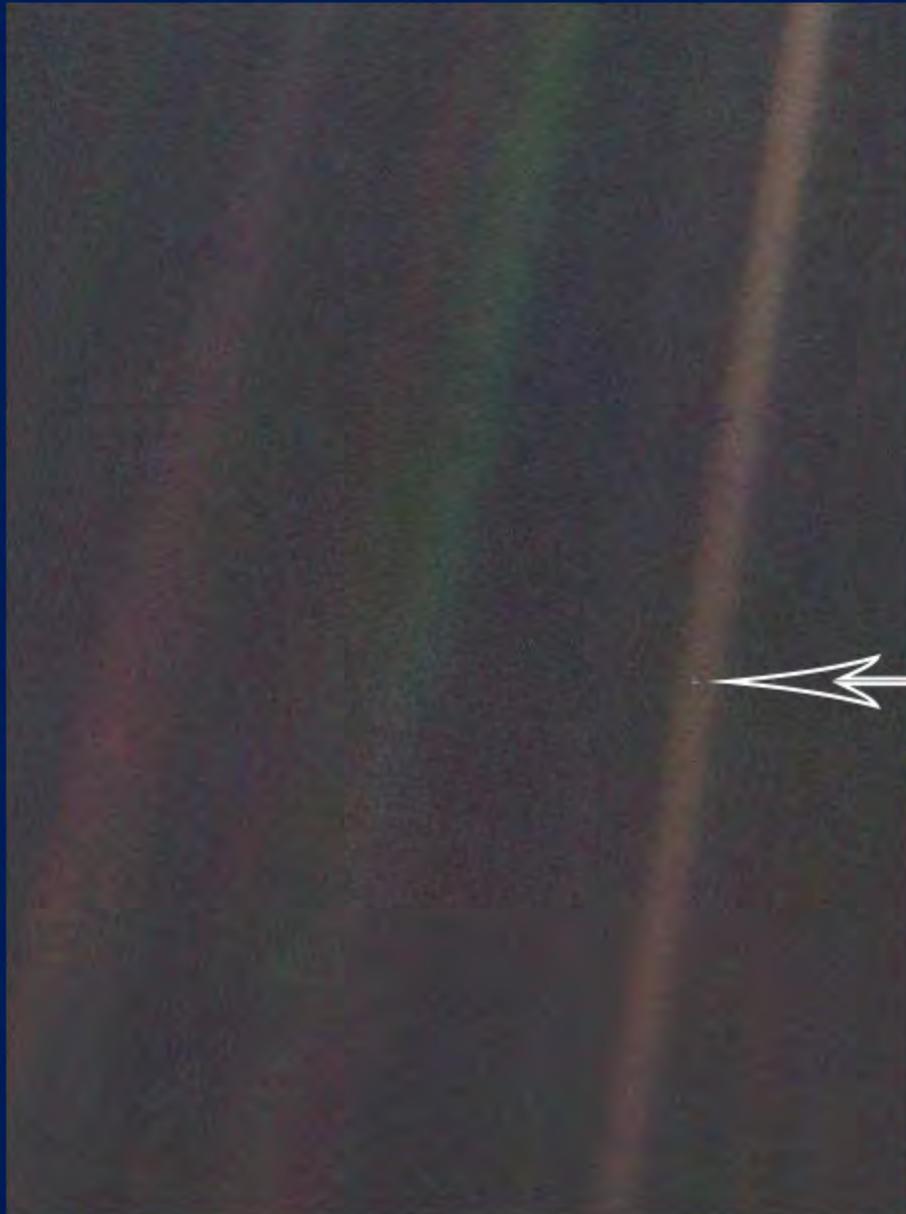


Apollo 8, the first manned mission to the moon, entered lunar orbit on Christmas Eve, Dec. 24, 1968. That evening, the astronauts-Commander Frank Borman, Command Module Pilot Jim Lovell, and Lunar Module Pilot William Anders-held a live broadcast from lunar orbit, in which they showed pictures of the Earth and moon as seen from their spacecraft. Said Lovell, "The vast loneliness is awe-inspiring and it makes you realize just what you have back there on Earth." They ended the broadcast with the crew taking turns reading from the book of Genesis.



## Blue Marble - Apollo 17, 1972

View of the Earth as seen by the Apollo 17 crew traveling toward the Moon. This translunar coast photograph extends from the Mediterranean Sea area to the Antarctica South polar ice cap. This is the first time the Apollo trajectory made it possible to photograph the South polar ice cap. Note the heavy cloud cover in the Southern Hemisphere. Almost the entire coastline of Africa is clearly visible. The Arabian Peninsula can be seen at the Northeastern edge of Africa. The large island off the coast of Africa is the Malagasy Republic. The Asian mainland is on the horizon toward the Northeast.



The Pale Blue Dot photo was taken on February 14, 1990, by the Voyager 1 space probe from a distance of about 6 billion kilometers (3.7 billion miles, 40.5 AU).

In 1969 at a UNESCO Conference in San Francisco, peace activist John McConnell proposed a day to **honor the Earth** and the concept of peace, to first be celebrated on March 21, 1970, the first day of spring in the northern hemisphere.

Earth Day begun in US in 1970.

July 1970, President Nixon signed Reorganization Plan No. 3 calling for the **establishment of EPA**.

President Nixon signed the **Clean Air Act in 1970** which set the USA as one of the world leaders in environmental conservation.

In the European Union, the very first **Environmental Action Programme** was adopted by national government representatives in July 1973 during the first meeting of the Council of Environmental Ministers.



Earth Charter was approved at a meeting of the Earth Charter Commission at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris in March 2000.

## Principles

The four pillars and sixteen principles of the Earth Charter are:

### **I. Respect and Care for the Community of Life**

1. Respect Earth and life in all its diversity.
2. Care for the community of life with understanding, compassion and love.
3. Build democratic societies that are just, participatory, sustainable and peaceful.
4. Secure Earth's bounty and beauty for present and future generations.

## **II. Ecological Integrity**

5. Protect and restore the integrity of Earth's ecological systems, with special concern for biological diversity and the natural processes that sustain life.
6. Prevent harm as the best method of environmental protection and, when knowledge is limited, apply a precautionary approach.
7. Adopt patterns of production, consumption and reproduction that safeguard Earth's regenerative capacities, human rights and community well-being.
8. Advance the study of ecological sustainability and promote the open exchange and wide application of the knowledge acquired.

## **III. Social and Economic Justice**

9. Eradicate poverty as an ethical, social and environmental imperative.
10. Ensure that economic activities and institutions at all levels promote human development in an equitable and sustainable manner.
11. Affirm gender equality and equity as prerequisites to sustainable development and ensure universal access to education, health care and economic opportunity.
12. Uphold the right of all, without discrimination, to a natural and social environment supportive of human dignity, bodily health and spiritual well-being, with special attention to the rights of indigenous peoples and minorities.

#### **IV. Democracy, Nonviolence, and Peace**

13. Strengthen democratic institutions at all levels, and provide transparency and accountability in governance, inclusive participation in decision-making, and access to justice.
14. Integrate into formal education and lifelong learning the knowledge, values and skills needed for a sustainable way of life.
15. Treat all living beings with respect and consideration.
16. Promote a culture of tolerance, nonviolence and peace.



# Earth Charter Initiative



A  
Cosmopolitan  
Political  
Identity

Earth as nest  
to be  
protected.

Humanity's  
common  
origin;  
migration  
story.

Earth security.