



Chapter XIII

WHO SPEAKS FOR EARTH?

To what purpose should I trouble myself in searching out the secrets of the stars, having death or slavery continually before my eyes?

—A question put to Pythagoras by Anaximenes (c. 600 B.C.), according to Montaigne

How vast those Orbs must be, and how inconsiderable this Earth, the Theatre upon which all our mighty Designs, all our Navigations, and all our Wars are transacted, is when compared to them. A very fit consideration, and matter of Reflection, for those Kings and Princes who sacrifice the Lives of so many People, only to flatter their Ambition in being Masters of some pitiful corner of this small Spot.

—Christiaan Huygens, *New Conjectures Concerning the Planetary Worlds, Their Inhabitants and Productions*, c. 1690

“To the entire world,” added our Father the Sun, “I give my light and my radiance; I give men warmth when they are cold; I cause their fields to fructify and their cattle to multiply; each day that passes I go around the world to secure a better knowledge of men’s needs and to satisfy those needs. *Follow my example.*”

—An Inca myth recorded in “The Royal Commentaries” of Garcilaso de la Vega, 1556

We look back through countless millions of years and see the great will to live struggling out of the intertidal slime, struggling from shape to shape and from power to power, crawling and then walking confidently upon the land, struggling generation after generation to master the air, creeping down into the darkness of the deep; we see it turn upon itself in rage and hunger and reshape itself anew, we watch it draw nearer and more akin to us, expanding, elaborating itself, pursuing its relentless inconceivable purpose, until at