In this issue: “Comparing Thomas Berry’s “Twelve Principles of the Universe” written at the Riverdale Center (before 1994) with the “Twelve Principles of the Universe” in Evening Thoughts (2006),” by Herman Greene; “Dave Cook’s Book Events,” by Dave Cook and Joanna Haymore, and “CES in 2008” by Herman Greene.

Comparing Thomas Berry’s “Twelve Principles of the Universe” written at the Riverdale Center (before 1994) with the “Twelve Principles of the Universe” in Evening Thoughts (2006)

Thomas Berry first wrote his “Twelve Principles of the Universe and the Understanding of the Role of the Human in the Universe Process,” when he was at the Riverdale Center in New York where he lived until around 1994. Berry’s original Twelve Principles (attached) were studied very carefully in the writing of CES’ Twelve Principles (revised edition attached).

The Twelve Principles of the Universe in Evening Thoughts (2006) (attached) are different in significant ways. It is not clear to me whether this difference resulted from changes made by Thomas or changes made by the editors. (Mary Evelyn Tucker was the main editor and there was a professional editor who worked on the text with her, and an editor at Sierra Club books as well.) The first principle is new and is worded in a way that causes some concern for me, especially the phrase, the universe story is “known in the twentieth century for the first time with scientific precision through empirical observation”:

1. The universe in its full extension in space and in its sequence of transformations in time is best understood as story: a story known in the twentieth century for the first time with scientific precision through empirical observation. The greatest single need for the survival of the Earth or of the human community in the twenty-first century is for an integral telling of the great story of the universe. This story must provide in our times what the mythic stories of earlier times provided as the guiding and energizing sources of the human venture.

The reason this concerns me is because of the confusion that might come from the statement the story of the universe is known with “scientific precision.” In fact the story of the universe is still becoming known by scientists and they have a long way to go. This is why Connie Barlow and
Michael Dowd have said the universe story is “the story of the changing story.”
http://thegreatstory.org/what_is.html. Further, even the Big Bang itself is not settled. I’m attaching a paper by Timothy Eastman, a plasma physicist at NASA, in which he gives questions some scientists have about the big bang theory. Further, to stay that the scientific story is known “empirically” is an additional source of confusion. Scientific cosmology that explains the origins of the universe is based on some evidence and then a lot of math, and it might be thought of as the least empirical of the scientific disciplines. Later parts of the story, such as those dealing with the development of life on Earth, are more grounded in empirical observation than the earlier parts.

Next in this first principle, there is no transition from “scientific story” to “integral story.” Integral story would presumably include the secondary qualities of the universe, such as beauty, feeling, consciousness and so forth, and not just the primary measurable qualities that are the domain of science. Further, it is problematic to say that the universe story needs to be spread almost evangelically (as suggested by the words it is “the greatest single need” and “it must provide . . . what the mythic stories of earlier times provided”). The universe story has informed my life, but there are many who will find it a stumbling block either because they don’t accept evolution or they feel the story is too Western and scientific, or they feel it is interesting but it doesn’t have the strong motivational power it has for others. In terms of cultural meaning and heritage, the universe story cannot replace traditional myths and at best needs to be set alongside traditional myths in a dialogical mode.

I cannot go deeply into Thomas Berry’s recent cosmological thinking, but it is much less dependent on the scientific universe story. He goes to great length now to say that the factual account of the universe given in science is not what he means by a cosmology. Last Sunday when I asked Thomas “What is the most important thing in bringing about a change to the Ecozoic?” he said, “Recognize that science is not a guide to value and meaning in the universe and it needs a context in which to interpret itself.” He amplified this by saying, “There is a difference between scientific and cosmological knowing. They are both reasoned ways of understanding, but qualitatively different in what they are understanding. Science is quantitative, cosmology is qualitative. Science is not a cosmology. When science thinks it is a cosmology, it becomes a danger. When science functions within a cosmology it becomes a wisdom.”

Moving on from Principle 1 in Evening Thoughts, I particularly lament the failure Evening Thoughts 12 principles to include the principle that “from its beginning the universe is a psychic as well as a physical reality” (Principle 3 in the Riverdale version). (Note that this principle is covered on Page 163 of Evening Thoughts, even though it was not included in the Evening Thoughts 12 Principles.) Principles 7-11 in Evening Thoughts are minor essays covering the ground given simply in Principle 10 in the Riverdale version as follows: “The historical sequence of cultural periods can be identified as the tribal-shamanic period, the classical civilization period of the great religious cultures, the scientific-technological period, and the ecological period.” By breaking down Riverdale Principle 10 into 5 principles, Evening Thoughts makes the 12 principles more of an essay on human history than “principles of the universe and of the human role in the universe process.”

Principle 11 in Evening Thoughts seems to be intended to correspond somewhat to Principle 11 in the Riverdale version. Principle 11 in Evening Thoughts, however, is susceptible to confusing interpretations in the same way its Principle 1 is. In Evening Thoughts’ Principle 11, I think what was meant was that against the background of a world of new scientific technologies, such as the digital revolution and genetic engineering, there was a parallel, contrary movement toward intimacy with the Earth. But the first sentence could easily be read as saying that these new scientific advances themselves were the movement toward intimacy. Toward the end of that principle, it talks about “integrating human technologies with the technologies of natural world.” It doesn’t seem to me that in a carefully thought through statement of ecozoic principles, one would want to speak of “technologies of the natural world.”

In Thomas’ statement about “re-inventing the human” he calls us to “critical reflection.” (“The historical mission of our times is to reinvent the human—at the species level, with critical
reflection, within the community of life-systems, in a time-developmental context, by means of story and shared dream experience.” The Great Work, 159 (emphasis added).) On page 63 of The Great Work he writes: “One of the most essential roles of the ecologist is to create a language in which a true sense of reality, or value, and of progress can be communicated to society.” Thomas Berry’s work is immensely important to the future. It can serve as a guide for many. For it to do so, it must be understood critically. Recitation is not enough, interpretation is needed. Even if those who interpret Thomas do so differently, it is important that a critical dialogue be conducted about his work and its meaning. The integrity of his work is important. This is a part of the research and education of CES.

Herman Greene
hfgreene@mindspring.com

Dave Cook’s Book Events

(One purpose of CES is to support Artists and Writers for the Ecozoic. In keeping with this purpose, we include this announcement of a book by one of our writers.)

Dear All,

Reservation Nation, my novel, is in the bookstores.

I’m doing the first of two local reading/signings at Market Street Books in Southern Village (Chapel Hill, North Carolina) Tuesday, January 29 at 7pm - the Regulator in Durham (North Carolina) Wednesday, February 27 at 7pm--come if you can. We’d love to see you there.

We could use help getting the word out about the book and this event, so if you’d be willing to send this email and its flyer about the book along the web to folks you know, we’d appreciate it.

Dave’s new web page is www.reservationnation.info. If we knew how to hook you up right now so you could click it we would, but oh well. . .

Dave and Joanna
joanna-dave@mindspring.com

CES in 2008

This article covers “Why CES?”, “CES’s Future,” “2008 Goals,” “Keys to Success,” and “Revised Foundational Statements.”

Why CES?

In the last 18 months I conducted an experiment. I gave Wendy Burkland, Nancy Rickard, Joanna Haymore and Ann Loomis complete autonomy in putting together and editing the “Wisdom of Women” edition of The Ecozoic Reader (the WOW edition). Even when the proofs came to me, I didn’t change a single word or even a comma. I didn’t change a picture or alter any of the format changes they made. I did this because I had confidence in them and also to see what would happen if an issue of the Reader was produced through CES independently of me.

What I learned was the same vision that has guided me came through the work of the WOW editors and authors. The way I interpreted this is that CES is a vessel of a shared vision. All of the writers in the WOW edition accepted responsibility for transmitting the vision, and all of the editors were inspired by and carried by this vision to offer it to others. If the vision has an author, it is Thomas Berry. Yet, even he points beyond himself, by saying the vision is the “dream of the Earth.” This vision, this dream, has been
carried by countless generations and has taken on a special meaning in our time as we face the looming crises of the 21st century.

The prospect of facing these crises is not altogether bleak. We are not condemned by fate because we have found an ecozoic vision which gives us hope and we realize we have been given powers that offer us a choice about the future, if we will only act.

How and whether we act is a matter of wisdom, understanding, commitment and courage. All are sustained by a vision.

CES is a vessel of a vision of an ecozoic society. It did not originate with us, we are only transmitters.

To carry such a vision is a sacred trust.

CES’s Future

“The Ecozoic”—We of CES cannot describe it exactly, but it carries for us a meaning.

Joanna Haymore in her article “Women’s Ways of Knowing” described it this way: “[The Ecozoic Vision] is that humans, Earth, and all its life can move into a mutually enhancing relatedness capable of carrying us into a future that we could hope to leave for all Earth’s children.” And then, knowing inside what this meant for her, she wrote about why it is essential we “pay attention to this wisdom coming from the feminine perspective.”

So it is the “Ecozoic,” this vision, that has lead each of us who has contributed through education, research and art to the work of CES. We have never had exact goals for CES, and we have been insulated from economic pressures largely by staying small, all volunteer and low budget. Now that I know, as a result of the WOW edition and the responses we have received to it, how much this means to people, I believe it is time to set goals for ourselves and to expand.

I can foresee a day when our new publication, The Ecozoic: Reflections on Life in an Ecological Age, is widely distributed. I can foresee a day when courses on “The Wisdom of Women,” “The Ecozoic Society,” and other topics will be widely taught. I can foresee a day when our new website is frequently visited for its resources. I can see membership in CES for people around the world as a way of holding fast to the dream.

I don’t think of CES as being the center of a movement. I think of CES more as a silent partner of those who carry the Ecozoic vision.

For at least the next year, CES will likely remain all volunteer, though it will not always be so. Thanks to Wendy Burkland, Nancy Rickard, Joanna Haymore, and Ann Loomis and the authors and artists of the Wisdom of Women edition of The Ecozoic Reader, I now know that when I step down as the leader of CES, CES will go forward undiminished. The vision of the Ecozoic is a shared vision.

Goals for 2008

Yesterday I wrote down my goals for CES for this year. Some are quite mundane and have to do with “taking care of business” so that CES will be in a position to move forward. Others have to do with new directions.

Here is my list:

1. Launch The Ecozoic: Reflections on Life in an Ecological Age and publish it three times.
2. Revise the CES website so that it offers more resources to Ecozoans and reflects the five activity areas of CES (described in the attachment on “Logo, etc.”).
3. Bring into being a network of artists and writers who can assist each other in publishing and performing and contribute to the publications of CES.

4. Continue the work of the Wisdom of Women group and bring into being one or more additional wisdom projects (such as, the wisdom of indigenous people).

5. Establish closer contact with CES Members and develop membership identity.

6. Build the Board of Directors of CES and fill its officer positions.

7. Create a new general email list for CES Monthly Musings and other items of general interest separate from the email list(s) for local announcements and coordination of CES.

8. Revise the Foundational Statements and Essays of CES and distribute them.

9. Clean up the internal records of CES (legal, financial, database, archives) and improve responses to requests.

10. Develop a base of volunteers to carry out the work of CES and have at least two general meetings a year.

I have a wish list too, and it includes:

- Begin work on one or more courses, such as “The Wisdom of Women” and “The Ecozoic Society.”
- Write a book on “The Ecozoic Society”
- Support the people in China who are working on ecozoic subjects
- Seek grant funding and obtain part-time paid help.

What are your lists of goals and dreams for CES in 2008?

**Keys to Success**

As I write, I look at these lists of goals and dreams and I find them quite daunting. I ask myself how we could ever do these things and wonder how I can make the personal commitment needed to give these goals a chance. I have learned to live one day at a time, to put one foot in front of the other, to suit up and show up, to do my part (do the best I can), and leave the results to God. I have to remember such things to have the courage to proceed.

Having done this, I humbly offer my list of keys to success for CES in 2008:

- Personally commit to giving consistent leadership to CES
- With the help of others, get CES shipshape as an organization
- Invite others to take leadership roles in CES and give them permission to do so
- Provide ways for people to carry out limited tasks for CES as volunteers
- Build a leadership team consisting of an active Board of Directors and officers
- Pay attention to the ways we are most able to serve others now through the launch of our new publication, revising the website, and maintaining regular communication through the CES Monthly Musings.
- Begin work on CES educational programs
- Encourage the development of wisdom groups and support for artists and writers
Do what we can for those in China

What is your list?

Revised Foundational Statements

Some, but not all, of you know that CES has a set of “Foundational Statements” and “Foundational Essays.” You may find our current versions on the CES website at www.ecozoicstudies.org.

During this year we will revise these “Foundational Documents,” put them on our website and distribute a copy of the revised documents to our Members. You can help in this effort, especially by suggesting key essays to guide our work (ones we can publish without copyright problems). Some of the essays we have used in the past will be dropped and others added.

I am attaching proposed revisions of our two key Foundational Statements as follows:

- LOGO, MOTTO, MISSION, TASKS, ACTIVITIES AND ORGANIZATION
- TWELVE UNDERSTANDINGS CONCERNING THE ECOZOIC ERA

I invite your review of these, and your questions and comments.

Herman Greene
hfgreene@mindspring.com

* * * * *

The mission of CES is to offer a vision of an eozoic society and contribute to its realization through research, education and the arts.

If you like to become a member of CES, you may do so by sending a letter to CES at 2516 Winningham Road, Chapel Hill, NC 27516 with your contact information and dues. Annual dues are US$30 (individual or family); reduced price, US$20; outside U.S.A., Canada and Mexico, add US$10. Sustaining Member US$130. Contributions are welcome.