

## THE DETERMINING FEATURES OF THE ECOZOIC ERA

By Thomas Berry

1. Earth is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects.
2. Earth exists and can survive only in its integral functioning. It cannot survive in fragments any more than any organism can survive in fragments. Yet, Earth is not a global sameness. It is a differentiated unity and must be sustained in the integrity and interrelations of its many bioregional modes of expression.
3. Earth is a one-time endowment. It is subject to irreversible damage in the major patterns of its functioning.
4. The human is derivative, Earth is primary. Earth must be the primary concern of every human institution, profession, program and activity. In economics, for instance, the first law of economics must be the preservation of the Earth economy. A rising Gross National Product with a declining Gross Earth Product reveals the absurdity of our present economy. It should be clear, in the medical profession, that we cannot have healthy people on a sick planet.
5. The entire pattern of functioning of Earth is altered in the transition from the Cenozoic to the Ecozoic Era. The major developments of the Cenozoic took place entirely apart from any human intervention. In the Ecozoic, the human will have a comprehensive influence on almost everything that happens. While the human cannot make a blade of grass, there is liable not to be a blade of grass unless it is accepted, protected and fostered by the human. Our positive power of creativity in the natural life systems is minimal, while our power of negating is immense.
6. Progress, to be valid, must include the entire Earth in all its component aspects. To designate human plundering of the planet as progress is an unbearable distortion.
7. The Ecozoic can come into existence only through an appreciation of the feminine dimension of Earth, through a liberation of women from the oppressions and the constraints that they have endured in the past, and through the shared responsibility of both women and men for establishing an integral Earth community.
8. A new role exists for both science and technology in the Ecozoic period. Science must provide a more integral understanding of the functioning of Earth and how human activity and Earth activity can be mutually enhancing. Our biological sciences especially need to develop a “feel for the organism,” a greater sense of the ultimate subjectivities present in the various living beings of Earth. Our human technologies must become more coherent with the technologies of the natural world.
9. New ethical principles must emerge which recognize the absolute evils of biocide and geocide as well as the other evils concerned more directly with the human.
10. New religious sensitivities are needed that will recognize the sacred dimension of Earth and that will accept the natural world as the primary manifestation of the divine.
11. A new language, an Ecozoic language, is needed. Our language is radically inadequate. A new dictionary should be compiled with new definitions of existing words and an introduction of new words for the new modes of being and functioning that are emerging.
12. Psychologically all the archetypes of the collective unconscious attain a new validity and a new pattern of functioning, especially in our understanding of the symbols of the Tree of Life, the heroic journey, death and rebirth, the mandala and the Great Mother.
13. New developments can be expected in ritual, in all the arts, and in literature. In drama especially, extraordinary opportunities exist in the monumental issues that are being worked out in these times. The conflicts that until now have been situated simply within the human drama are magnified considerably through the larger contours of conflict as these emerge in this stupendous transition from the terminal Cenozoic to the emerging Ecozoic. What we are dealing with is in epic dimensions beyond anything thus far expressed under this term.
14. Mitigation of the present ruinous situation, the recycling of materials, the diminishment of consumption, the healing of damaged ecosystems—all this will be in vain if we do these things to make the present industrial systems acceptable. They must all be done, but in order to build a new order of things.

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\*Handout from the library of Santa Sabina Conference Center, San Rafael, California, 2004, except that Item 7 is from a similar list presented by Thomas Berry at an annual conference of the Center for Reflection on the Second Law held in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

## TWELVE PRINCIPLES FOR UNDERSTANDING THE UNIVERSE AND THE ROLE OF THE HUMAN IN THE UNIVERSE PROCESS\*

By Thomas Berry

1. The universe, the solar system, and the planet Earth in themselves and in their evolutionary emergence constitute for the human community the primary revelation of that ultimate mystery whence all things emerge into being.
2. The universe is a unity, an interacting and genetically-related community of beings bound together in an inseparable relationship in space and time. The unity of Earth is especially clear; each being of the planet is profoundly implicated in the existence and functioning of every other being of the planet.
3. From its beginning, the universe is a psychic as well as a physical reality.
4. The three basic laws of the universe at all levels of reality are differentiation, subjectivity, and communion. These laws identify the reality, the values, and the directions in which the universe is proceeding.
5. The universe has a violent as well as a harmonious aspect, but it is consistently creative in the larger arc of its development.
6. The human is that being in whom the universe activates, reflects upon, and celebrates itself in conscious self-awareness.
7. Earth, within the solar system, is a self-emergent, self-propagating, self-nourishing, self-educating, self-governing, self-healing, self-fulfilling community. All particular life systems in their being, their sexuality, their nourishment, their education, their governing, their healing, their fulfillment, must integrate their functioning within this larger complex of mutually dependent Earth systems.
8. The genetic coding process is the process through which the world of the living articulates itself in its being and its activities. The great wonder is the creative interaction of the multiple codings among themselves.
9. At the human level, genetic coding mandates a further trans-genetic cultural coding by which specifically human qualities find expression. Cultural coding is carried on by educational processes.
10. The emergent process of the universe is irreversible and non-repeatable in the existing world order. The movement from non-life to life on the planet Earth is a one-time event. So too, the movement from life to the human form of consciousness. So also the transition from the earlier to the later forms of human culture.
11. The historical sequence of cultural periods can be identified as the tribal-shamanic period, the Neolithic village period, the classical civilizational period, the scientific-technological period, and the emerging ecological period.
12. The main human task of the immediate future is to assist in activating the inter-communion of all the living and non-living components of the Earth community in what can be considered the emerging ecological period of Earth development.

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\**Thomas Berry and the New Cosmology*, eds. Anne Lonergan and Caroline Richards (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1987), 107-108.

## THE HISTORIC MISSION OF OUR TIME

By Thomas Berry

The historic 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.

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\*Thomas Berry, *The Great Work* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999), 159