The Great Work

*We are about the Great Work.*

*We all have our particular work—some of us are teachers, some of us are healers, some of us in various professions, some of us are farming.*

*We have a variety of occupations.*

*But beside the particular work we do and the particular lives we lead, we have a Great Work that everyone is involved in and no one is exempt from.*

*That is the work of moving on from a terminal Cenozoic to an emerging Ecozoic Era in the story of the planet Earth… which is the Great Work.*

- *Thomas Berry*

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1. Our current geo-biological era, the Cenozoic Era, began 67,000,000 years ago following the mass extinction of the dinosaurs and many other species. Now Earth is undergoing a mass extinction of plant and animal species of similar magnitude, this time caused by the impact of human activity on the community of life systems. The Cenozoic Era is ending.

2. That another geo-biological era will follow the Cenozoic Era is not in question. What is in question is whether humans and other forms of life as we know them will continue. Will we achieve a viable mode of human presence on the Earth? The “Ecozoic Era”—a time of a mutually enhancing relationship of humans and the larger community of life systems—represents the hope that we will.
A Pip’s Voice*

by Kurian Kachappilly cmi

On the eve of the May Day
I took the children out for a walk.
As we marched along the way,
I was detained a while, for a talk.

So courteous and generous seemed he,
A lemonade, he offered me.
Gulping down the drink, a Pip –
I filtered out from a sip.

Annoyed, I was to throw it out,
“Please,” cried the Pip out:
“Cast me not away in the wood,
To be eaten up by the birds,
Or to be trampled by the herds.
But sow me in the soil good,
That I may yield ‘seventy,’
And reward thee in plenty.”

How benevolent Nature is! I thought.
But, alas! Man cuts his brother’s throat,
And, yet pretends to be “his keeper.”
That prodded me to think deeper
Of the Pip. For it’s something to be taught,
To the children, whom soon I caught.

*Editor’s note: A “pip” is a seed.
Call for an Ecozoic Society

by Herman F. Greene

We need to bring into being an Ecozoic Society! The challenge is set forth in *The Universe Story* by Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry:

The future of Earth’s community rests in significant ways upon the decisions to be made by the humans who have inserted themselves so deeply even into the genetic codes of Earth’s process. The future will be worked out in the tension between those committed to the Technozoic, a future of increased exploitation of the Earth as resource, all for the benefit of humans, and those committed to the Ecozoic, a new mode of human-Earth relations, one where the well-being of the entire Earth community is the primary concern.

This is the jumping-off point, the razor’s edge, the great divide, the call to action and commitment. Will we be about the Technozoic, or will we be about the Ecozoic? Our response will reverberate through every future epoch. We have come to a moment of great decision, one that calls us to answer once and for all the question posed in that song of old, “Which side are you on? Which side are you on?”

Yet, we find ourselves in a situation where there seems to be no truly meaningful way to extricate ourselves from the technological enterprise around us. This essay was typed on a computer produced by thousands of industrial processes; the computer drew power from vast electric grids that coursed through forest and field. When we depart for work, many of us will join hands with men and women around the world in the contemporary venture we have named “Technozoic.” What then are we to do?

Three Building Blocks

While there are many answers to this question, and many associations currently engaged in bringing into being an ecologically sound society, here this author will present three
organizational foci which may shed light on current activity in this area, and around which some people may choose to organize in new associations. These areas are the New Story, Bioregionalism, and Ecological Spirituality.

The New Story

The New Story—the narrative of the creative development of the Universe from the primordial flaring forth to the emergence of the Ecozoic Era—is one of the building blocks of an Ecozoic Society. At once a scientific account and an epic myth of origins, this story relates how things came to be, and what significance and role humans have in the ongoing drama of the cosmos. The dual nature of the story, its blending of the scientific and the meaning-giving mythological, is what makes it the “New Story.” A primary source for learning about this story is Swimme and Berry’s *The Universe Story*.

The New Story needs to be told in myriad ways. It needs to be taught. It needs to be read in bedtime stories. It needs to be told at the hearth and campfire. It needs to be sung. It needs to be danced. It needs to be expressed in liturgy and art. It needs to be beaten on drums. Orchestral works, operas and oratorios need to resound in celebration of the evolutionary adventure taking place throughout the Universe.

But, you might ask, as exciting as this New Story is, why is it so important? There are three reasons. First, the New Story awakens a sense of the awe and mystery of existence and of our participation in the cosmological order of the Universe. Second, the New Story reconnects the self (and so restores the self) with that which is more primordial than family, tribe, clan or nation—the self’s relationship with the natural world from which it came and of which it is a part. Third, the New Story provides a unifying mythology for all human cultures and a basis for common action in the realization of the Ecozoic Era.¹ If we take all these

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¹ The “Ecozoic Era” is a term coined by Thomas Berry. It refers to the promise of a coming era when human beings live in a mutually enhancing relationship with the larger community of life systems. It is a process concept . . . not something to be arrived at, but something ever to be created.
together, we might think of the New Story as an important part of the “knowing” dimension of an Ecozoic Society.²

**Bioregionalism**

A second building block of an Ecozoic Society is Bioregionalism. A “bioregion” is a naturally occurring geographic division of Earth that contains an interacting community of life functioning as a relatively self-supporting system within the ever-renewing processes of nature. To think bioregionally means to think of humans as being co-existent with and dependent upon the natural order, not as being dominant over it. The role of humans in the bioregion is to appreciate and celebrate its diversity and to honor and preserve its vitality, including the human part of it.

The bioregion would seem to be the fundamental ordering principle in an Ecozoic Society, the successor to the nation-state and the “world without borders” or “globalism” now so much in vogue. Here a word needs to be said about the word “society.” In the bioregional sense, “society” means the entire community of animate and inanimate beings. The constitution of the bioregional polity would preserve, not only the rights of humans, but the rights of the entire community. In the bioregional economy, the global would

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² As a part of the knowing dimension, the New Story involves knowledge of the scientific and historical discoveries of the 19th and 20th centuries that made possible the telling of the story. These discoveries include, among others, the laws of thermodynamics; the theory of evolution; the theories of special and general relativity and of the relationship of time, space, motion, matter and energy; quantum mechanics; modern astronomy and the theory of a time-developmental universe; cellular biology, genetics and the discovery of DNA and RNA; advances in mathematics and computational science; and modern archaeological, anthropological and historical studies that have vastly expanded our understanding of human history. As Swimme and Berry have said, the New Story is the Copernican Revolution of our time. It is a narrative expression of a set of understandings primarily derived from science and history that are transforming human consciousness and reorienting the human community within the larger community of life. The narrative is important in its own right, but it is only the tip of the iceberg. The New Story, as any adequate myth of origin and purpose must, expresses an inexhaustible mystery, but the creative aspects of this mystery for humankind may best be appropriated when apprehension of the mystique of the narrative is combined with seeking to understand the new science and history on which it rests and the implications of this new science and history for understanding our place in the world.
exist to serve the local, rather than the other way around, and the local would contain most of the industries and sources of food and supplies needed to sustain the life of the community. Citizens of bioregions would know their places as much by trees, plants, animals, rocks and streams as by streets and buildings and other human features. In a world of bioregions, eating and living would observe the gentle ordering of seasonal cycles, and there would be no place for wasting . . . for all the world would be a sacred place for the community of all beings.

Bioregionalism provides the context for meaningful human endeavor, and thus it can be thought about as an important part of the “doing” dimension of an Ecozoic Society. Good works are those which sustain the diversity, communion, and self-organizing dynamics of the bioregional community. Bad works are those which destroy the diversity, communion and self-organizing dynamics of the bioregional community. Therefore, work in support of the bioregion might include planting and maintaining neighborhood gardens; learning and teaching about composting and other forms of re-use and recovery of materials; learning and teaching about local plants, animals and geology; learning and teaching about native species, permaculture, and environmental conservation, including preservation of wild lands; changing personal and family patterns of consumption; supporting local farmers and industries; working with developers, town councils and zoning boards on development of communities that preserve natural habitats and consist of human structures that reduce demands on resources; learning and teaching about bioregionalism and its implications for government and
economics, including such difficult issues as trade, employment and distributive equity among the differing bioregions; protesting development that negatively affects a bioregion; and sharing ideas on bioregional efforts that work.\(^3\)

**Ecological Spirituality**

A third building block of an Ecozoic Society is Ecological Spirituality. In many ways as humans we have lost our sense of the spirituality of the Earth and of our intimate connection with the natural world. The understanding that has dominated the sense of reality and value in the classical civilizations and religious traditions has been based on a sense of the pathos of the human condition and of the transient and tragic nature of the temporal order. As observed by Swimme and Berry in *The Universe Story*, the phenomenal world in this understanding has been viewed as oppressive to the more exalted aspects of existence. The spiritual world and the natural world have been viewed as two different orders of being.

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3 Bioregionalism does not mean a return to the regional societies of the past. While the past provides some models of what is possible, this author believes it is not possible or desirable to return to regional societies as they existed in an earlier time. Subsistence farmers in the South may of necessity be living in a bioregional economy and yet rightfully seek to improve their standard of living through participation in the global economy. In industrialized societies, where, for example, even this paper on this page involves shipments of chemicals and materials from several countries or regions and where cultural exchange is an important source of meaning, fulfillment and possibility, *strict* bioregionalism may be viewed, with some merit, as an abstraction of limited relevance. Still the concept of bioregionalism would seem to be the only theoretical basis on which to move toward an ecologically sound society, one which offers the promise of habitat and nourishment for other-than-human plant and animal species and sustainable sufficiency for the human species. It seems inevitable that, to achieve the goal of a viable human economy within the larger community of life systems, there must be a movement to localization of industry and agriculture to bring production, consumption and re-use or recycling closer together. Yet bioregionalism is not the opposite of globalism—indeed the natural world depends on global transport of air, water, chemicals, nutrients, and even species, such as in their migratory journeys. So in an Ecozoic Society there is a place for inter-regionalism (economically, politically and culturally), but what this place is must, in the future, be measured by its impacts, both positive and negative, on the interacting communities of life at the bioregional level.
The conviction that the natural world is a lower, temporal reality, as distinguished from the higher, eternal reality, has served to validate the belief that exploitation of the Earth for the sake of humans is acceptable.

The secularistic tendencies of modernity (a turning solely to temporal, this worldly concerns) has not proven to be an antidote for the problems related to this ancient dualism. With the de-souling of nature by Descartes in the 17th century began another dualism, this between human beings and the nonhuman world seen as mechanism without inherent values or purposes. Nature became something to be mastered and conquered, to be “tortured to reveal her secrets.” The millennial expectation of the ancient dualism to be realized by divine intervention gave way to the technological pursuit of a humanly made paradise (at least a penultimate one) in historical time.

Ecological Spirituality differs from both ancient dualism and modern secular humanism. Ecological Spirituality is grounded in the sense that, from the beginning, the Universe has had a psychic/spiritual dimension, and that this dimension is manifest in every element of the Universe and in the Universe as a whole. As Thomas Berry said in his paper on “The Spirituality of the Earth,” when we speak of the spirituality of the Earth we are not speaking of the Earth as having an objectively spiritual quality, as when we observe the beauty of the Earth, but of the spirituality of the Earth as subject, the interior numinous reality that gives form to the Earth and in which we participate. Thus, Ecological Spirituality doesn’t separate the divine and the natural realms, rather it sees the divine as indwelling and influencing the process of creation; nor does it separate human from other-than human life, rather it understands, in both an evolutionary and existential sense, that there is a kinship of all beings.

Ecological Spirituality might be thought of as an important part of the “being” dimension of an Ecozoic Society. Simply understood, Ecological Spirituality involves reconnection with the natural world and its numinous quality. This could involve attention to the singing of the birds, presence to wind and sea, absorption in a starry night, or nearness to earth and seed. If spirituality seems like a troublesome word, this element might be thought of as personal transformation—transformation from being separated from nature to being present in an interior way to its mystery and value.
For some people, Ecological Spirituality would involve a communal dimension and, for many of these, the practice of an established religion. In the communal context, Ecological Spirituality would involve the renewal of traditions or the birthing of new traditions that awaken sensitivities to the natural world and to the continuing creativity of the cosmos. The primary referent of these ecological spiritualities in their various forms would not be the written text of any religion, but rather the non-verbal or primal awareness of the revelation of the divine in nature. Ecological Spirituality would not replace traditional teachings of spirituality and ethics, rather it would broaden the context of these teachings and expand the awareness of the divine-human encounter.

In a more complex understanding of Ecological Spirituality, the term includes the humanistic dimension of spirituality and presence to the mystery and value of the human community within the inclusive community of life. It honors the role of humans, as stated in *The Universe Story*, of “enabling the Earth and the universe entire to reflect on and celebrate themselves, and the deep mysteries they bear within them, in a special mode of conscious self-awareness.” As so understood in its comprehensive meaning, Ecological Spirituality becomes a guiding motif for the realization of an Ecozoic Society.

So offered here are these three building blocks—the New Story (knowing), Bioregionalism (doing), and Ecological Spirituality (being)—with the hope that they will shed light on the way to an Ecozoic Society.

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The Next Things After Surrender

by Ellen LaConte

It’s nearly a quarter century now since I began visiting woods. This statement implies more forethought than I intend, for I believe now that it was not I who chose suddenly to go, but they who demanded I come. The woods willed me away from the familiar lawns and gardens, tempted me away from my small-farmer’s preoccupations with tasks and tools, weeds and productivity, as surely as ever a vision of grace wooed a sinner. The summons, my Calling, was that specific and exclusive, and it made all the difference.

It was sometime in spring, because a male snipe was repeatedly twirling his way into the sky every night and then plummeting to earth on his watery song, hoping to entrance a female to his singing field. A symphony of peepers accompanied him from the lowland along the riverbank across our narrow valley. I forget the date, but I remember the sensation. When I looked out my kitchen window then, it was not the scrupulous patterns of the herb garden I saw, or the chicken coop we’d built, or the raised beds and orderly rows from the previous year’s vegetable gardens. Rather, it was the wild beyond our pale that at first my two eyes were drawn to—and then my inner eye. Longing, a faint recollection like a whiff of incense or a snatch of liturgy from a past somehow grander and more true, stole my attention from what I meant it to be given to, nagged at me—then laid siege.

The forest was retrieving my imagination from being self-center in my narrow domestic rounds. At first I only looked into the woods, only stopped by, sniffing the air in the dusky oaken nave, harkening to snuffly leaf sounds like muttered prayer coming from inside the wall of trees. As if the ages were still dark and not only the woods, I seemed to need to make the forest familiar by transforming it into something human-made. Conveniently, I found several “doors” through the brush at the verge which opened into the woods. But still I waited. I was, I think, as anxious about what might find me as about what I might find.
I am a creature of words and compulsions. Making order, fixing, studying-up on things, taking control, and talking, talking, talking, are my mode. Straight lines of thought and text, straight rows of books and seedlings, and five-year plans are my way of seeming to defeat chaos, the ecstatic running of life at once up and down hill, willy-nilly, full-tilt and devil-take-the-hindquarters. These habits were unregenerate, unconscious, back then. They made an illusory wall between me and life’s random, sudden embrace and then equally suddenly away again before you can return or trust it. “In the beginning was the Word” meant to me back then exactly that: Before words, we weren’t fully human; after words, well . . . They are our constant companions.

It’s what Buddhists call “monkey mind,” and Catholic mystics, “sin.” My mind was always fully engaged with thoughts, with words about thoughts, with what I perceived to be first things, first.

Of course, it was not my mind the Forest beckoned. Rather it was those habits of mind that had to be broken in order for my soul’s memory of First Things also to be fully engaged.

And so, finally, when the shadbush trees had thrown their creamy vestment across the upper meadow, and—this seemed essential—when my husband had gone to work, I ceased resisting the call. I tried the portals I’d found, one by one, going into the woods a ways each time, until I perceived within the forest, other rooms and passages between them, and stairs . . . and altars.
Though the precise analogies came later, my sense even at the beginning was of having entered the first church.

For some days I perched reverently on steps of stone listening, looking. As a novice longing to be admitted to the Mystery, I cleaved to the ancient authority of the Word and was ashamed of my ignorance of the names and life-ways of the plants and animals I sat amongst. In truth, I recognized very few. I deemed it a failure on my part to do them the courtesy of offering them the one sure gift of my species, which is to honor Things (as the poet Rilke designated all that was sacred but not human) by setting them apart, by way of naming, one from the other.

And yet, even that early on in my enchantment, something in me rebelled at catechism. Attempting to name all those explosions of possibility into Life by which I was surrounded there in the Connecticut forest—and giving the attempt my whole attention—felt like . . . well, like ticking off the orders of service on the Call to Worship program rather than attending the service itself.

There I sat on a rock in a beautiful glade in the middle of May, with bronzed and coppered oak leaves and maple leaves in every shade of green opening their profusion of tiny fists overhead, and what I thought about was not that miracle but my ignorance of the names of their parts and species! And what that ignorance reminded me of was that at six or seven when I could read the program, though I continued to love to read, I stopped liking church.

I remembered palpably, and for the first time and with something like regret, how church had felt before I could read. I remembered dandruff on the collars of the dark jackets and coats in the rows in front of me, the blue hymnals lined up in the rack below; perfumes and colognes dispersed upon the air with every movement around me; rhinestone earrings, necklace pearls with rainbows on them; stained-glass light playing on people’s cheeks, marbling the white walls; and
the wonderful, terribly sad, wooden face of Christ that looked down on me from the front wall. And dust dancing in shafts of that party-colored light.

I remembered being made to sit up, when the church was full, rather than lying with my head in my mother’s lap. I remembered my feet going to sleep when I sat up because the front of the pew cut into my calves, and my mother’s white-gloved hand on my knee when I fidgeted to wake up my feet again; the lacy frills on my white socks and the chandelier light reflecting off my black patent leather shoes; and my father’s earnest upturned face, radiant in a singular way, one hand resting on the cover of the thick Concordance that was his key to “the teachings.”

And there were the sound and the feeling of the rising up and sitting down of everyone at the same time and their voices speaking in unison—repeating, repeating, putting me almost to sleep. Until—oh!—the organ! That first discordant alarum, and thunderous notes occupying the whole space, driving sleep away, vibrating thrillingly in my stomach and in the pew under me; and then the choir, and the rustling and rising up again of everyone, and that collective voice, singing gloriously now, and a sensation in my chest that was as large and open as the room—and me rising to stand on the pew tall as my mother and letting light and sound move through me and wishing the huge glorious feeling wouldn’t stop. . . . And believing that feeling was God.

Before the words on the program’s page and my childish thinking about them replaced the ineffable Word, I had released easily into the colors and movements and music, the repetitions that free the soul to find its own way, to be found.

I saw on that May day in the forest I had lost something dear and essential when I learned to think about church, when I could dissect the service into its sequence of components rather than simply slipping mindlessly, joyously into its flow. I had lost the capacity to come to church, to Christ, truly a little child.

Similarly, I saw that learning, knowing, too much about the woods might spoil the joy of immersion. Setting Things apart one from the other, by naming them, might be the bane of Them as they were way unnaturally parted from their context and each other—and from me. Calling them out, when I could—robin, jay, gray squirrel, sparrow, crow, slug, worm—made
them feel more distinct from, than kindred with, me . . . also more contained and more common.

The thought afforded itself to me that it accomplished no earthly good to name the worm or microbe apart from the loam or clay they live in; that the circumstances of the worm and microbe, loam and clay—and I—would be much improved by my having, instead of only a word, an ideogram or active percept, such as Native American word-ways or Chinese characters provide, that could contain at once the worm, the microbe, the loam and the clay—and the music and the ritual of their particular orders of service, their shared experience, of ours together.

I catch myself muttering under my breath, reminding myself even now, because the seductive power of information is real, that the names of Things are not primarily what I need to know, as naming saints cannot claim for me the experience of their passion or suffering. Naming, when it is not undergirded by both sorts of apprehension—understanding and awe—is a kind of trespass, an appropriation that may cheapen rather than honor.

It was not the names, not the scientists’ concordance, but the understandings, awe and experience of the context that I lacked when I began going into the woods. It was those, and abandon of myself—surrender—that I had been summoned to relearn. Learning the names first, while it might have signified an honorable intent, would have opened only one pathway to understanding and none at all to awe.

And so I was inclined by that heretical notion to loose, then lose, my mind. I entered the forest thereafter with as little agenda as I could muster. I tried simply to be there, to let my senses take to the woods and, with them, that portion of my mind that exists beneath and existed before reason and naming, that portion of my mind which had responded without question to hymn and organ and repeated prayer.

Enabled by a run of unseasonably balmy weather, I stretched out upon a cathedra of ledge exactly as I had on those pews when I was small, and dangled my hands and feet amongst ferns. I scrutinized flecks of gray and orange and yellow lichen on the outcrop under my chin as I once had the patterns in the grain of pants-polished wood. The rock and I and everything around us was bedecked with light. Gnats and midges and motes of dust
danced in the down-thrown beams that danced on me. Multi-colored mosses made tapestries of the trunks of trees. When I turned over, I found that burls and witches’ brooms and the undersides of birds’ nests were as Gothic modillions and vaulting bosses on a leafy ceiling.

For all that I was nearly 30, I began to feel exactly as if I were four again and diminutive in those grown-up pews, watching the adults circle each other in the aisles. As if I were learning instinctively again the stances of hosanna and supplication, the pattern of liturgy and round of sacraments, the lilt and murmur of the choir’s preparations, the uses of wine and wafer and bent leg, the tilt of head and cant of spine.

This time it was sugar maples who told their sacred secrets to the virtuous oaks and me. Birches craned their long white necks to retrieve their share of light from St. Boniface’s erect and estimable firs. And though it was blue jays and towhees, toadstools and chipmunks I took the text from, everything in the forest seemed as excellent, of-a-piece—and inevitable—as that spell-binding church world had seemed when I was young.

It was evident to me that the woods had summoned me while I was still salvageable, and, through the route of my rejuvenated imagination, had made a cloisters for me so that I would not be afraid but might lurk about, say on a Wednesday, when no one else was there, blithe again as the innocent child for whom everything was as fairly a play-thing as a work of God. Escaped into them from the Calvinist grown-up world of chores, I swung my arms broadly and scuffled my feet and hummed inside my head and let whim, or the will of the woods, direct my way. And sure enough the trees hummed too under their cowls of green, and coaxed me with down-thrown arms from clerestory to clerestory. The woods knew me.

Sometimes I felt huge, crawling into crevasses where visitors ever so much smaller than I had left nests or vomited up clumps of bones and fur. Then I made myself frightfully small, the better to eavesdrop on the breezy chatter and blustery quarrels that went on ceaselessly in the verdant dome eighty feet above me. I hoarded reliquiae—tiny knuckles and skulls, seeds and feathers and eggshells—into a shrine in a shelf of stone, and lifted punky torsos of trees to see the noses of worms retreat, and watch ants and stag beetles, sow bugs and millipedes flee Heaven’s unwarranted bright.
I climbed what trees I could and put myself in the places of doves and angels. I imagined letting go, considered flinging myself on the air’s mercy. The forest had tendered every other grace. Surely there would be wings!

My escape from the secular and mundane did not go unnoticed. Although he did not chastise me, my husband did wonder aloud at the slowness with which the spring planting was being undertaken, at my evident preoccupation. Where, he asked, was my mind gone to in the middle of sentences and dinner preparations?

“Just thinking,” I said aloud, or something like that. *Into the embrace of my wilder faith, into God’s very body,* I thought.

But at night, sweating in our humid room indoors, no doubt besotted on toadstool spore and the incense of pine, I dreamed. And my dreams were possessed. In them, swaths of inexplicable cool swirled round the feet of trees and around my feet, planted with conviction. Sometimes my dreams were pagan, yet perhaps closer to the true experience of awe than our more pristinely constructed obsequies. In those dreams, the faces I had seen in tree bark came alive and the heart of the oak and my dryad heart beat to the same sap-surging rhythm. Worship turned into something less noble then. The Green Man’s face, the sensations I felt upon waking were not always entirely innocent.

I’d waken, shamefaced, to the sound of trees’ fingers scratching at the screens. They rousted me out to the edge of the night-wood where the moon cast my shadow with theirs across the lawn. There I stood at the edge of the Creation, longing even more elementally than before—wishing for more courage, or abandon. I could feel my husband’s eyes on my back. Somehow he knew not to call me in, not to say he’d seen me tempted and had no idea by what or whom.

By mid-summer noon-days, I couldn’t resist the Call and made away from the sun-beaten garden for where shade and the Mystery awaited me. All afternoon I plunged through the out-flung threads of
borealis spiders, rubbed my cheeks on puffs of moss, and followed traces of scat as a holy trail, until, wound up as tight as the spiraling snipe, I’d spin myself down into the leaf mulch and lie eyeball to eyeball with a spotted salamander or a maple sprout whose essential fluids and urges I knew by then that I shared—whose Creator was also mine.

Wonder was the next thing after surrender and it put a speedy and necessary end to my giddy illusions of the similarity and sympathy of the forest to me and mine. It overtook me in the season of storms.

My tendency had always been to gloat from behind glass and walls at my safety from the weather’s wilder moods. Walls and roofs, like churches, keep us from the more reckless and extravagant experiences of total baptism in God’s world. The Immanent is less imminent indoors and in man-shaped landscapes. But the fearless adept I had become by then must know what happened to the feathery hemlocks when the whirlwind tore at their green wings, had to hear the howling of the Arcadian choir, suffer the flagellant rain and watch the iron-willed hornbeam bend.

Rain drenched my hair and poured down my neck, thunder cracked and lightening pulsed demonically inside the roil of charcoal cloud. Still, I breasted through the wind-lashed underbrush toward my cloisters in the lovely dark and deep.

But, hark! My comfortably appointed cell was gone! There where I’d mused in the friendly, domestic wood and meditated reverently in the demure light, was pandemonium! Every limb was wracked, every leaf turned its pale back to the beating. My familiar trees shrieked and contorted, the faces in the bark grimacing. Hordes of brambles ravaged my clothes and creepers snatched angrily at my ankles. Vicious broadcasts of rain skinned my face and pummeled my shoulders; a helter-skelter of litter obscured the familiar ground. Every one of the spires of fir was a lightening rod, its rectitude a dare. There was an explosion of light and sound in the vault overhead! I smelled char, heard wreckage . . . Paradise was lost!

I fled to the granite ledge and huddled beneath a cornice. In a matter of moments I was matured and humbled. I saw that the forest’s power was as unconditional as its embrace.
And then the tempest passed. As quickly as it had come, I heard it pass triumphantly down the valley. It departed just before the returning sun, leaving rain drops at the tip of every twice-cut leaf of woodfern to scatter a covenant of tiny rainbows in my lap. Steam rose off the rumpled mulch. My virtuous forest smelt like a Pentecostal’s tent after the evening service. Flattened grasses sprung gamely up again around me, limbs moaned, sighed and disentangled themselves. Then, after what had seemed to me a ravishment, the woods were peaceful once more save for a robin’s sultry song. I was a wreck, but my woods lay back luxuriantly and dozed.

At that moment the forest became the Forest, and everything in it brave. As it was for Rilke after his conversion, the closer I got to Things then, the more miraculous they seemed and the less I believed I might ever really understand them, or It. No matter how long I might look, how attentively I might pray my way into them, these woods—apart from the presumption of my name on a piece of paper in the courthouse—were in no way “mine.” God’s they were, in deed.

For a time, as if I had the choice, I avoided the Forest’s discipline. I sat in the evenings on the porch by my husband’s side snapping beans and devoted myself again to straight rows and jewel weed and potato beetles... or seemed to. It was a false recanting. The birch and alder at the edge of the garden watched me smugly. Their whispered condemnations traversed the slope. The tame ping, ping of beans in the bottom of the pot was a reproach. I lost my appetite. Night after night, ignoring twig-fingers on the sill, I twitched and fidgeted in bed, could scarcely get my breath. My husband despaired of my sanity.

Obsessed by both the fear and joy, I submitted. One oppressively hot afternoon—it was late August by then—I hiked in well beyond where I had ever gone before and high up a ridge to an
undomesticated part of the Forest. The woods were uncertain of me, dubious about my return. They neither spoke nor gestured in my direction. I needed to open myself again.

The first voice I heard was water. I searched for the source, careful to tread softly, offend no Thing. I found the stream where it emerged from its occult sojourn beneath me in the rock. Its free-fall over the rubble of well-head was at first as perpetual and methodical as a clepsydra telling time. I moved a stone; the brook shifted, reset itself, and told another time. In part the water was clear, and I could see straight through to the gray-green rock; and in part it frothed white, where it took on air. I followed it downhill a ways to where it sang with an acolyte’s bright falsetto over smaller stones. Then it went silent for a time in a deep pool—only its surface moved—before it poured through a narrow gap in the chalice of rock, fell clear, sloughed off its little load of granite dust and light onto a bed of matted leaves, and hid itself again in a ferny wallow. I went back up to the source and followed it down again several times to see what might be different, what I might have missed. It was not the same twice.

Nor, I partly understood, was I.

I took one palmful of the living water, raised it to the trees and drank of it.

Then, feeling that I must yet prove contrition, I part-way shinnied up a birch that had fallen and gotten hung up in the crotch of a young oak on the hill below it that rose above this little stream. I laid myself along the bone-white trunk and draped my hands self-consciously over the cross-trees on either side, and I waited. I told myself I was prepared to stay as long as I must.

It was warm, even in the mottled shade, and the air was thick with the scent of green and decay. A crow called and then another; and then a hawk, circling high up somewhere above the tree tops when it could not see me, “kireed.” Off to my right and further down, a large branch tore loose, ricocheted off other branches and fell to the ground, making a soft final “thunk,” which I felt more than heard. A mosquito buzzed nastily by my ear, but I reminded myself that the ones you hear don’t bite, and forced myself not to swat at it, not to move, finally to ignore it.
I had been primed for the ecstatic moment by weeks of sylvan exercises and wonder, and also by something more like longing. Now I yielded completely to desire, and clasped the whole rising and falling Life of the Forest passionately to me as it was given to me in the body of That One Tree.

Soon a delicious tremor claimed me, carrying me to a place so old and deep, a place of such pure erotic sensation, I could not remember its like. My skin slipped and skipped over my flesh like a cat’s. My eyes crossed and all the light-etched shapes around me burred and ran together.

The Forest was no longer only “out there,” but also within me, in my ears and nostrils, under my skin, in my imagination, on my tongue. . . . I knew the Forest then, or almost was it.

The communion ecstasy passed off quickly. But for a moment—it was the first time I recall this happening to me—I wasn’t thinking anything. I was somewhere or in some state more elemental than thought. I was not so much aware of as part of the tree beneath me. My spine repeated its spine, my skin grafted to its skin . . . and then, ever so briefly, I wasn’t any more—at least not as “distinct from.” I disappeared into tree and Forest as surely as the novice disappears in prayer into the Creator.

And then I understood that the spiritual event lay within the physical event. And I thought: Just so, smoldering within me, lies an ember of soul which Spirit might blow into flame if I were this way hungry and open.

And with that understanding, with that thought, at the very moment of that return of self-awareness, the experience of self-disappearance and within-ness passed off.

Though decades of lapses lay ahead, I was converted. I’ve said that it made all the difference. Certainly apartness, mindlessness, and ignorance have not since been quite so absolute.

I did not leave everything behind for the Forest or for the God within, but I did actively and successfully seek repetitions of that experience of context, what theologians call “contingency.” And though I knew the Forest was not a church, I did not become churched again nor try, at least not then, to assign a cause to what had happened. Yet my life and work did take another path.
from that time. I did put myself again, often, within the woods, and turn myself over to my senses and as intuitive a reading of them as I could learn.

I have relocated twice, have somewhat learned another kind of forest, a beaver bog, a field Andrew Wyeth might have painted, shingle beaches, clam flats, an island—these in Maine.

I have experienced that self-releasing, self-lessening response also on heaths and barrens and atop coastal cliffs. Such vast spaces seem wider open to God’s perusal, more self-exposing than woods. They arouse a latent memory more like temple than church, a response less intimate but perhaps bone-deeper than my forest retreats. I make time for these experiences—and also for silence. They are Sabbaths of a kind, reminding me that Christ took to the hills and deserts to pray.

I began immediately after my summons by woods to garden somewhat less militantly. I largely gave up monoculture, straight rows and, eventually, mechanical tillage, left some of the prettier, less prolific weeds alone when I realized that for the Forest there are no weeds. I made it a priority to be outside sometimes without working, without doing something. I swear places whisper to me, crook the finger when I forget to come. I believe that they live, even “know,” in some way, that they and the creatures abiding therein communicate, that Spirit moves through and among them as through me.

Arrogance in the presence of the Creation (perhaps a precondition of the self-consciousness that sets us apart from the rest of the Creation) is diminished by awe. Righteous anger, I fear, is not. Certain of our national habits and cultural behaviors are awful rather than awe-filled: the assumption of ownership; unrestricted development, even the ostensibly sustainable kind; corporate nomadism; ceaseless wetlands filling, crop harvesting, drilling and mining—aspects of the public form of greed called “resource management”; the commodification of every Thing; egregious “takings” by private individuals, corporations and governments; pollution and energy trading; the false communion of consumerism; the specious notion that we know what is “wise use”; the unrepentant beatification of the “economy.” It’s the Creation, stupid. Our collective hauteur makes the private and small-group practices of humility difficult, but they are all there is, and difficult is not the same as impossible. There are geniuses and saints among us who point and live the way, apostles whose creed does not leave out the Forest.
Indifference, stemming from forgetfulness and headlongness, is the chief opponent to my effort to remain faithful to and familiar with the ever-emergent life of the woods, fields, hills, and shores, and with the ever-emergent Creator they manifest; hence the importance of regular attendance upon them, of frequent re-tuning and bending of knee.

I allow now that after wonder, naming can be a gift, a way of riveting attention and memory, and that it is a necessary key to preservation.

It occurred to me some while after my summoning by woods, how the trick was done. How it was the Forest made its demands known: We routinely imagine that God—or however we name That Which Is—summons our souls. In our best moments we trust that the bodies we are in are capable of sensing the sacred summons, as if we were forks tuned to that particular Sound. It seemed no more difficult to imagine that, if we let it, That of God within the manifest Creation might summon That of God within us. The emergent life in Things and in us might well make the same music, speak in similar tongues: of fire, air, earth, and water; and of bone and breath, skin, feather, leaf, fur and blood.

I was given to think how much greater would be our capacity to hear and to respond if we made the effort to rejoin our small bodies with the larger body of Earth, God’s Body if you will, the elements of which Were Made and of which we are made.

Oh, if we could but amplify our separate little human resonance with that One. How holy and reverberant It All would be—we all would be—in that peaceable kingdom which could come after surrender.

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Entering the Ecozoic Era: Guidelines for the Journey
by Bill Rickard

The historical mission of our time 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.

- Thomas Berry

Thomas Berry’s definition of the Great Work before us—our “moment of grace”—can be viewed as the fundamental strategic statement of what must be accomplished for the human species to enter and participate in the Ecozoic Era, his vision for a time of mutually enhancing relationships between humans and the larger community of life systems to follow our present Cenozoic Era. In implementing this strategy, we now need concrete tactical indicators to show us where we are and how to respond to the challenges we encounter on the journey. Fortunately, some fine thinkers have developed principles that pertain to various aspects of the timing, impact, and behaviors that may be useful to the individual preparing to consciously undertake the journey.

Joanna Macy, for example, sees our current place in history as the Great Turning. There are three key tasks that we must undertake nearly simultaneously to birth the Great Turning, or as I see it, the participation of the human species in the early stages of the Ecozoic Era. Her first task requires “holding actions in defense of Earth—political, legal, and economic actions to slow the destruction of the planet now”—as very clearly exemplified in the Seattle World Trade Organization demonstrations. As a springboard for moving on, the second task consists of “analysis of structural causes and creation of structural alternatives” to the current way the human species is acting. The third task cited by Macy is “a fundamental shift in worldview and values” as a way of living our way into the Ecozoic Era. Her incisive analysis, developed over many years as an environmental activist, teacher, and engaged Buddhist, allows us to get a little clearer view of what the ordinary person can do to participate in the birthing of the Ecozoic dream.
Holding Actions

Saul Alinsky has described in graphic form where many of us in the First World find ourselves at the threshold of the Ecozoic Era: “These are days when man has his hands on the sublime while he is up to his hips in the muck of madness.” How do we change? What principles do we have available to govern our behaviors as we strive to conduct non-violent actions, the holding actions Macy suggests as the first step? Physicist, ecologist, and co-director of the Shavano Institute, Will Keepin offers the following 13 guidelines to help the individual prepare for holding actions during the Great Turning. Keepin calls these 13 points the principles of spiritual activism. They are clearly based on a reformation of the heart as the foundation for personal equanimity during the holding actions yet to come.

1. The underlying motivation must be rooted in compassion and love, not anger, fear, and despair.
2. There must be a non-attachment to outcome. If our work is to foster lasting positive change, we must commit to doing something even if we never see the results in our lifetime.
3. If our work has integrity, that in itself will protect us.
4. Integrity means cultivate integrity in the fruit of our work; we cannot achieve a noble goal using ignoble means.
5. Demonizing our adversaries leads to polarization. People respond to arrogance with their own arrogance.
6. Find and fulfill your own true calling. You are unique.
7. Move from an “us-them” consciousness to a “we” consciousness.
8. Our work is for the world rather than for us.
9. Selfless service is a myth, because in serving others, we also serve ourselves. In giving we receive. Falling into the trap of pretentious service to others’ needs encourages a false sense of selflessness.
10. Don’t insulate ourselves from the pain of the world. We must allow our hearts to be broken open.
11. What we attend to, we become. If we attend to battles, we become embattled. If we give love, we become loving. What we choose shapes and deeply defines us.
12. Rely on faith—not blind adherence to any set of beliefs but a knowing from experience the universal principles beyond our direct observation.

13. Love creates form. It is the mind that gives rise to the apparent fragmentation of the world, while the heart operates at greater depth.

The above guidelines have been condensed from Keepin’s original 13 principles, and were published in this form in the Winter and Spring 2000-2001 edition of *EarthLight* magazine. A full version can be obtained from the Shavano Institute (www.shavano.org). Some of these guidelines might be modified, but overall they will help an individual form an attitude that will enable participation in non-violent direct action in working toward the Ecozoic Era’s worldwide birthing without engendering the bitterness, hate, and self-righteousness frequently found in resistance movements.

**Structural Analysis and Alternatives**

In looking at Macy’s second task, analysis of the structural causes and creation of structural alternatives, precise compact guidance based on thoroughgoing research is available from many quarters such as George Sessions and Arne Naess and the Natural Step. In *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century*, edited by Sessions, Naess presents a platform for deep ecology that consists of eight planks or principles that can help guide individual decision-making and actions. These eight principles are:

1. The well being and flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent worth). These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes.

2. Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves.

3. Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs.

4. The flourishing of human life and the non-human world is compatible with a substantially smaller human population. The flourishing of non-human life requires a smaller human population.

5. Present human interference with the non-human world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening.
6. Policies must therefore be changed. These policies affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present.

7. The ideological change will be mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between bigness and greatness.

8. Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to try to implement the necessary changes.

These crisp statements of the philosophical underpinnings of deep ecology end with a moral imperative to participate in the solution. This solution looks toward Macy’s first task in the Great Turning, holding actions, and the third task, developing a new worldview for the Ecozoic Era.

The next set of guidelines for the path into the Ecozoic Era are the result of the work of Swedish oncologist Karl-Henrik Robert, founder of the Natural Step, who developed the four system conditions in consensus with many scientists in an iterative process over a period of two years. These four conditions are quantifiable measures for judging whether an action, particularly by a corporation, is ecologically sustainable or not. In much the same way as Naess’s work, the fourth condition contains a moral imperative.

1. Substances taken from the earth’s crust cannot systematically increase in the biosphere. This means that fossil fuels, metals, and other minerals cannot be extracted at a faster rate than their natural re-deposit rate back into the earth’s crust.

2. Substances produced by society cannot systematically increase in the biosphere. This means that substances (including toxic chemicals) must not be produced at a faster rate than they can be broken down in nature.

3. The physical basis for the productivity and diversity of nature must not be systematically deteriorated. This requires that we critically examine how we harvest renewable resources and adjust our consumption and land-use practices to fall well within the regenerative capacities of ecosystems.

4. In order to meet the previous three system conditions, there must be a fair and efficient use of resources to meet human needs.
These four system conditions were developed as concepts of sustainability for running a better business. As universal principles, they contribute to our understanding of what will aid the birthing of the Ecozoic Era in the same way as the deep ecology principles outline the need to respect the rights of other-than-human species. After adoption by over 60 major corporations in Sweden, the Natural Step has migrated to the United States and is being led in this country by Paul Hawken, prominent businessmen and author. Hawken’s latest work, *Natural Capitalism* (written in conjunction with Amory and L. Hunter Lovins), is a brilliant forecast of what we can expect technologically in the early decades of the Ecozoic Era.

Another set of principles extraordinarily useful in guiding our actions as we birth the Ecozoic Era has been developed by William McDonough, former Dean of the School of Architecture at the University of Virginia and senior partner in the much acclaimed design firm of McDonough and Associates. His design principles, originally set out for the City of Hanover, Germany as the host for the 2000 World’s Fair, were meant to ensure that “only environmentally sustainable activities could portray the best of humankind’s hopes for the future.” The original design principles are listed below:

1. Insist on rights of humanity and nature to coexist.
2. Recognize interdependence.
3. Respect relationships between spirit and matter.
4. Accept responsibility for the consequences of design.
5. Create safe objects of long-term value.
6. Eliminate the concept of waste.
7. Rely on natural energy flows. Understand the limitations of design.
8. Seek constant improvement by the sharing of knowledge.

McDonough has compacted these original Hanover principles to the following three principles suitable for all design problems as part of the legacy we leave for future generations.

1. Waste equals food. McDonough believes there are two metabolisms in which we operate and live: the organic (of which we are physically a part) and the technical (the one of human artifice not necessarily connected to the organic one). We should be designing
things that can return safely to both the organic and the technical metabolisms. ‘We should design things . . . that can become technical materials again forever but that won’t be released into the organic metabolism.’

2. Use current solar income (as opposed to the use of solar wealth in fossil fuels).

3. Respect diversity—not just biological diversity, but every diversity (national, cultural). Everything in the world is different and the difference should be preserved rather than homogenized.

From these universal design principles, McDonough offers three very handy criteria for the day-to-day decision making process of individuals:

1. Is it ecologically intelligent? 2. Is it just? and 3. Is it fun?

Worldview and Values

Many of us are living our way into a new way of thinking about the Great Work and the Great Turning as we begin the journey into the Ecozoic Era. In our search for guideposts along the way, is there a macro estimate of where our culture now stands and where it may be headed? Fortunately, Paul Ray and Sherry Ruth Anderson have been conducting research on the values held in our culture and have published an extraordinary estimate of the values held by the roughly 200 million adults in this country.11

Their insights into both the values and worldviews prevalent or emerging today and the significance of what may be occurring in the culture as we proceed into the Great Turning can be seen from the following:

To spot a change in the shape of American culture, you have to go beyond opinions and attitude, because these shift as quickly as a summer wind. You have to dive deep down into the values and worldviews that shape people’s lives – the deep structure that shifts gradually, over decades and generations. Once you catch sight of these deep changes and track them, you can discover a lot about what matters most to people and how they will act. Values are the best single predictor of real behavior.

After exhaustive analysis, Ray and Anderson have stratified the current adult population into three groups according to the values they hold:

(1) Traditionalists, (2) Moderns, and (3) Cultural Creatives. They estimate
there are 50 million Cultural Creatives at present. The Moderns make up the dominant subculture (48 percent or about 93 million people). The Traditional subculture (about 47 million people) is in a continuing decline. Readers of The Ecozoic Reader are most likely in the Cultural Creatives group. This view of this culture’s values is based on the 200 million adults in this country at present. This survey did not include roughly 80 million children—about 4 to 5 million of whom will be entering the adult population each year.*

In which group will their values fall? Clearly part of the Great Work is helping to inform and clarify the worldview of emerging adults.

How, then, can we go about changing and reinforcing individual worldviews so that we can, as Gandhi advises, “become the change we want to see in the world.” The following four suggestions have proven helpful to me in altering my worldview over the past several years. And, in my case, Thomas Berry’s assurance that “awe and wonder can be learned” was a hope-filled motivator in my journey.

**Immersion.** This step entails deliberately placing oneself in the heart of nature with the intent of deepening our awareness and appreciation of the sacredness of creation. Meditation in nature is a particularly rewarding activity. Following the example of Stephanie Kaza who has described her relationships with trees,¹² I spent three months forming a relationship with San Domenico Creek in Northern California while helping fourth graders conduct water quality tests in the creek. Listening to the creek in dry and wet times, watching boatmen skip along the surface in quiet pools, and wading in it to retrieve the occasionally dropped test equipment created a friendship, a bond, that I previously would not have thought possible. Another example of deliberately attempting to change my worldview through immersion occurred in 1997 when I spent several months in Haiti working in Mother Theresa’s institutes for the poor changing diapers, giving haircuts and massages, and applying fresh dressings to savage wounds in order to understand human suffering more deeply. Haiti also offered me the opportunity to walk in the oppressed hills where well over 90 percent of the trees have been cut for fuel and commerce.

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* The basic values survey conducted about six years ago was completed with over 1,000 adults; children were omitted because values surveys could not be applied to them.
Affiliation. It’s been estimated that there are 30,000 organizations involved in sustainability-enhancing, earth-rescuing, Great Work-oriented themes in this country alone and over 100,000 worldwide. One’s worldview can be changed by participating in a wide range of activities from telling the New Story to children to joining a community-supported agriculture project, from forming a study circle to cleaning a creek. What is critically important is that we link hands and hearts with people who embrace similar values (not necessarily all the same values) and become known to one another. The deliberate connection of the Cultural Creatives into a powerful, spiritually based, planet-saving movement can occur very quickly if we link up with persons and organizations with like values.

Reading Widely. I group the ever-burgeoning array of learning materials (audiocassettes and videos as well as books) that I find important to shaping my worldview into three categories:

1. *Those that tell the New Story, the Epic of Evolution and the scientific and cultural underpinnings of where we come from.*

2. *Those that define where we are now,* such as the marvelous State of the World series, occasional papers, and bimonthly magazine published by Worldwatch. Impact statements by the Sierra Club and the United Nations Environmental Program, and the World Resources Institute offer not only useful analytic knowledge but serve as goads to action. Globalization and the commercial forces currently at work may be the most important reading of all – understanding the destructive business and economic mechanisms that we can be mindlessly abetting. The alternative press, such as, *The UTNE Reader,* *YES,* and *Mother Jones,* frequently analyzes this last group. The research of Paul Hawken and David Korten offers detailed insights into the international financial mechanisms now at work and a cogent presentation of how business could work if values became an overriding force rather than short-term profit.

3. *Those that look to the future in terms of the next step in the evolution of the species.* The work of many transition-leading authors seeking to close the chasm between spirit and science, such as Brian Swimme, Peter Russell, David Suzuki, and Ursula Goodenough, have helped round out my own worldview. Particularly exciting are the works of such voices as Willis Harman, Georges Van Vrekhem writing on the great Indian sage
Sri Aurobindo, and Aurobindo’s current-day disciple Satprem in trying to envisage where we as a species are headed.

Integrating consciousness research with scientific explanation and spiritual wisdom may give us clues to how to cooperate in the “re-invented human” in the Ecozoic Era. As Sri Aurobindo has pointed out “man is a transitional being.”

**Staying Open.** A critical component in the process of developing and enhancing one’s worldview is the need to keep the mind and heart from rushing to judgment. Allowing ideas, concepts, and dreams to gradually inform our contribution to the Great Work is the core of being transformed personally and allowing that transformation to flow outward to others. As William McDonough might ask of each idea, “Is it ecologically intelligent? Is it just? Is it fun?”

**Conclusion**

This article has offered guidelines on what must be accomplished for the human species to enter and participate in the Ecozoic Era—guideposts to show us where we are and how to respond to the challenges we encounter on the journey. At this “Great Turning” point in our history, we are given three key tasks that we must undertake almost simultaneously. Some guidelines are given to help the individual prepare for holding actions in defense of Earth—to slow the destruction of the planet now. These are principles of spiritual activism that will govern our behaviors as we participate in non-violent direct action. Next, the paper highlights the needed analysis of structural causes for the problematic ways the human species is currently acting and the moral imperative to create structural alternatives to this behavior. The principles of deep ecology can help guide individual decision making and the Natural Step’s criteria for measuring ecological sustainability can govern institutional actions. Finally, the paper discusses a needed fundamental shift in worldview and values, an important part of which is helping to inform and clarify the worldview of emerging adults. Four suggestions that may be helpful in changing and reinforcing individual worldviews are given:

1) Deepen our awareness and appreciation of the sacredness of creation.
2) Join others with similar values to participate in activities.
3) Read and absorb knowledge from a wide variety of learning materials.

4) Keep an open mind and heart, allowing ideas and dreams to gradually inform our contributions to the Great Work.

I hope this paper may be useful to the individual preparing to consciously undertake the journey and show what the ordinary person can do to participate in the birthing of the Ecozoic dream. As you begin living your way into the Ecozoic Era, keep in mind McDonough’s three handy criteria for daily decision making. 1. Is it ecologically intelligent? 2. Is it just? and 3. Is it fun?

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Notes


3 Will Keepin, Principles of Spiritual Activism, from the Leading With Spirit Program, 2000, Shavano Institute, Boulder Colorado (www.shavano.org).


10 William McDonough, address to the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA) Conference in State College, PA, February 1999.


14 *SIERRA*, the bimonthly magazine of the Sierra Club, San Francisco, CA. Also the Sierra Club Activist Network’s *Planet*, a monthly newsletter.


16 World Resources Institute, *World Resources 2000-2001, People and Ecosystems, The Fraying Web of Life*, Washington, D.C. This report is a collaborative effort of the UN Development Programme, the UN Environmental Programme, the World Bank, and the World Resources Institute.


25 Satprem, *Sri Aurobindo or The Adventure of Consciousness*, 1993, Institute for Evolutionary Research, Mt. Vernon, WA.
Center for Ecozoic Studies

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**Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of the Center for Ecozoic Studies (CES) is to contribute through education and research to the realization of the Ecozoic Era—a time when humans live in a mutually enhancing relationship with the larger community of life systems. CES is distinguished by an emphasis on dreaming and story telling (a groping, feeling, imaginative process expressed through art and thought) as a way of enabling the creative advance needed to bring into being cultural archetypes and understandings for a new mode of human civilizational presence, and also on discerning practical steps leading toward the Ecozoic. CES is dedicated to the principle that we are embedded in a meaningful universe that is irreversibly and continuously evolving. In such a universe, the Ecozoic Era is a process concept...not something to be arrived at, but something ever to be created. Its hallmarks are inclusiveness, interdependence, and celebration; communion, differentiation, and subjectivity (self-organization); and sensitivity, adaptability and responsibility. It crucially involves more just and cooperative relationships among humans, as well as transformed relationships of humans with the larger natural world.
Contributors to This Issue

**Britta Strong**
is creator of the cover art in this issue. Britta has studied art and horticulture, and in December 2000 she received her B.A. in Integrative Arts from Penn State University. She has served as an intern at the Wetlands Institute in Stone Harbor, NJ, and her drawings have appeared in the Institute’s publication, *View from the Tower*.

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**Ellen LaConte**
Ellen LaConte is a former homesteader and Director of the Social Science Institute of Helen and Scott Nearing who writes, speaks, teaches, edits and ghosts on subjects including sustainable living, the suburban eco-revolution, future studies, the evolution of consciousness and education. For over twenty years she has lived in and with the Penobscot Bay bioregion of Maine. This summer she will transplant herself and reroot in Winston-Salem of the Piedmont Bioregion of North Carolina. She may be reached at eleni@mint.net.

**Bill Rickard**
is a retired intelligence officer from northern Virginia. He holds masters degrees in economics, counseling, and creation spirituality. Bill conducts workshops on Right Livelihood for persons recovering from addictions, leads a small mindfulness meditation group, practices voluntary simplicity, and goes camping with his grandchildren. He may be reached at billrickard12@aol.com.

**Pam Bruns** and **Jennie Baumeister**, both publications managers at organizations located in Research Triangle Park, NC, lay out and publish *The Ecozoic Reader*.

Submissions for Publication

We invite you to share with us your dream experiences of the Ecozoic Era and your stories of awakening and development. We also invite you to share your insights regarding steps that may be taken to move toward the Ecozoic.

To submit an article for publication, send a double-spaced printed copy of the article and the electronic file(s) on diskette (formatted for PC) to Center for Ecozoic Studies, 2516 Winningham Road, Chapel Hill, NC 27516, U.S.A. Alternatively, you may e-mail your submission to ecozoic@mindspring.com. In addition, please send your contact information and a brief biographical description of yourself that we may use to identify you to our readers.