

The Ecozoic Reader

STORY AND SHARED DREAM EXPERIENCE OF AN ECOLOGICAL AGE



“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

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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 Cenozoic¹
to an emerging Ecozoic Era² in the story of the planet Earth...
which is the Great Work.*

- Thomas Berry

¹ Our current geo-biological era, the Cenozoic Era, began 65,000,000 years ago following the mass extinction of 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.

African Sorrow

By Sister Sheila Flynn, OP

A tiny poem for the women who suffer in our land:

Sorrow . . . heap Earth
 Under it
 And heave forth fruit
 From it
 Wrought from the tears
 Of our pain.

Editors Note: In this time, we also remember American sorrow, Afghan sorrow, and the sorrow of so many in the world from struggles old and new.

The art in this edition is by Sister Sheila Flynn, OP, and the women of Mpophomeni, South Africa, with whom she lives and works.





An Historical Moment

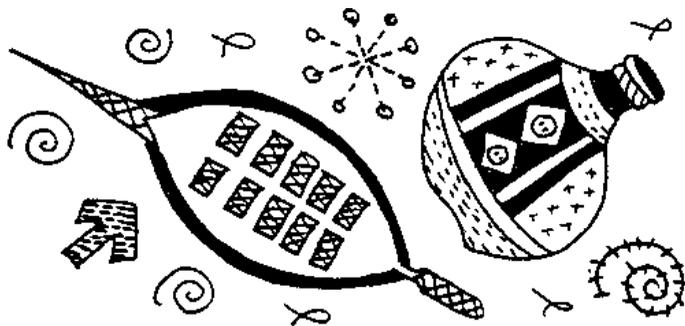
By Thomas Berry

With the destruction of the Trade Towers in New York in the opening year of the 21st century, the American people enter a new Age of Anxiety. We might have hoped for a more serene century after all the anxious period of the 20th century. The century just ending seems to have been an unending sequence of anxious moments: World War I lasted from 1914 till 1918; the Economic Depression from 1929 throughout the 1930s; World War II in the 1940s; the Korean War of the 1950s; the existentialist angst of mind in the 1950s and 1960s; the Vietnam War in the late 1960s and early 1970s; the Cold War with the Soviet Empire from the 1950s until 1991. These were mostly periods of military conflict. Yet they were also periods of economic, political and intellectual tension.

In the opening year of the 21st century we entered a new all-pervasive anxiety originating in the terrorist destruction of the twin Towers of the World Trade Center—a building that, at least symbolically, might be considered as the central expression of western economic dominance over the nations, the peoples, and the natural resources of the Earth. It might even symbolize American arrogance as its supermarkets spread throughout the nations of the world. To some, these towers might even symbolize the oppression of the impoverished nations by the most affluent nations of the world.

While here in America we have taken an attitude of violated innocence with a flaming assertion of vengeance against the perpetrators of the assault on the Towers, we might reflect somewhat on the larger context of what is happening. We might be under extensive illusions as regards our efforts to “help” the less developed nations. While we are indeed a “good-hearted” people we must begin to recognize that “doing good” is not the simplistic thing we sometimes think it to be. We seem not to realize that of the industrialized nations of the world, we give the least percentage of our national income to assist these nations in need. We have consistently refused to join with the other nations of the world in bringing about a greater harmony of peoples and more equitable distribution of wealth.

Then there is the question of industrial “development” of the more land-based peoples. To disturb the village life of a people living in harmony with the ever-renewing sequence of the seasons by teaching them a non-renewing, commercial-industrial way of life, is to impoverish rather than to enrich them. When we loan money to the politically competent commercial-entrepreneurial members of a society entering its modern phase by developing their natural resources, we open the way not only to an oppressive class in the local society, but also to the accumulation of the enormous debt owed to the industrialized nation by the so-called “third world.”



We might reflect on the damage that we can do to ourselves by our present wrath against those already known as terrorists or suspected of being terrorists. However justified the punishments that might be imposed on those who brought about this sudden slaughter of innocent people, these punishments may have long lasting consequences, for example, in a growing suspicion of each other within and among nations. The ease with which we have traveled and communicated with each other may change significantly.

I would simply note that the event with which we are dealing could very well precipitate ourselves and the larger community of peoples into a prolonged and all-pervasive state of anxiety. The questions of “whom can we trust” takes over our consciousness. Now more than ever we need, not simply to create peace, but to create the *basis* on which an enduring confidence can exist within nations and between nations.

As the human population of the world and consumption increase the natural resources of the Earth are proportionately diminished. They will surely become ever more precious. The strife over who will possess, who will control these resources, will most certainly increase. Meanwhile the spiritual resources needed for a true bonding within nations and between nations have been diminishing as emphasis on political power and money values has increased.

We had thought and hoped that a great peace might pervade the world when we looked out over the 50 million persons who died during World War II. At our first meeting in San Francisco at the end of the war, we set up the United Nations. Among its great achievements was the transition from colonial status to independence for almost a hundred different peoples. Yet peace within nations and between nations remained beyond immediate attainment.

We also had utopian expectations from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund; then later from the World Trade Organization. Yet these programs only increased the control of a few nations, the Group of Seven, now the Group of Eight, over the economic future of the world. At the meeting of the World Trade Organization in Seattle and at other consequent meetings, a rising protest has been shown against the globalization of the economic affairs of the nations. The pathos of the situation is that along with the exploitation taking place there is a sincere dedicated effort to alleviate the deprivation of needy peoples.

The difficulty is that the advanced nations simply do not know how to achieve what is at times a noble effort. We have hardly begun to appreciate that the human project throughout the world requires something more than money can buy. The planet Earth is something more than “natural resource” to be *used* by humans.

Here we might propose that a viable future for the human community rests largely upon a new relationship between the human communities and the planet on which we dwell. We need to appreciate that both our physical and our spiritual survival depend on the visible world about us. We would have no inner life of mind, imagination or emotion without the wonder, the beauty and the intimacy offered us by the dawn and sunset, the singing birds and the cry of the wolf, by the meadows and all their flowers, by the grandeur of the mountains and the vastness of the sea.

A viable future for the human community rests largely upon a new relationship between the human communities and the planet on which we dwell.

To preserve all this in its integrity is the common task before us. For this is a world that cannot be bought with money, cannot be manufactured with technology, cannot be listed on the stock market, cannot be made in any chemical laboratory, cannot be reproduced with all our genetic engineering, cannot be sent by email.

Here we find not only the wonders we see with our eyes, but also that more mysterious world beyond, the world that is not diminished by sharing but is rather increased the more it is shared by others, as the music of a Beethoven symphony is more meaningful when heard not alone but with others. So too with the peace of the city. We need to be with others. So now we need to experience together the stars in the heavens as well as the wonders of Earth.

In this context we need to live together not in a world of aggression and counter-aggression, not in a world of mutual exploitation, but in a universe that is the deeper self of each of us. As we recover from the sorrows inflicted upon us by the recent destruction of the Trade Towers, as we ease the antagonisms that surround us, we need to go further into that deeper identity that we have with each other in the Great Self. Somewhere, somehow, mercy and justice must kiss in the all-embracing numinous presence wherein peace descends upon us all in the dawn of a new day.

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Children of the Forest

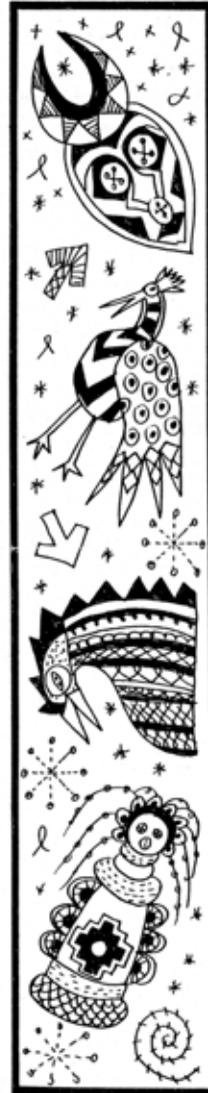
By Thomas Berry

We are all children
Of the forest. Here
We are sheltered from
The sun as we watch
The squirrels climb through
The trees, the deer browse
The small budding bushes.

Here in the forest
We listen to the wind
As it rustles the leaves
Of the great oak trees.
We listen and we learn
To make music on our
Flutes and our drums.

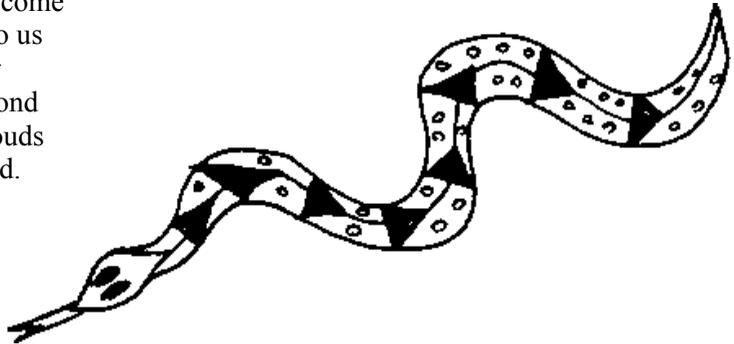
We are all children
Of the forest. Here
The rain drips down
Gathers into streams
Then into rivers
That flow far away
The deep blue sea.

The squirrels and the deer,
The winds and the rain
We dance and sing
And we all play together
The trees, the flowers
The butterflies, the birds
The chipmunks, the bear
And the deer.



All of us, children of
The forest. We whirl
And we tease and we chase
One another until the western
Sky glows in the golden
Light of evening. Then
We lie down to sleep
Beside each other in
The warmth of the night
That covers us with
Its blanket of darkness.

Then the stars come
Out and sing to us
As we drift far
Far away, beyond
The distant clouds
Into Dreamland.



© Thomas Berry, 1995

Inspired by
The Drawing of
A woodland scene
By a student of
Public School 240
Brooklyn, New York

Our Children: Their Future

By Thomas Berry

Our children will live, not in our world but in their world, a future world that is rapidly taking on its distinctive contours. Our exploitive industrial world, despite all our scientific discoveries, technological skills, commercial abundance and stock market advance, is in a state of decline. The long-term survival of our children will depend on a new relationship between the human and the natural worlds. A change is taking place from exploitive relationships to one of mutual enhancement between the natural and the human worlds. The type of prosperity known through the industrial processes of the 20th century will never again be available.

A new creative period, however, will be available. Our children must activate these new forms of delight in existence in the great variety of human activities. Indeed we ourselves have begun this process. Already we are aware of the following conditions the children need if they are to attain the fulfillment for which they are destined.

The long-term survival of our children will depend on a new relationship between the human and the natural world.

Health and Environment

Our children need a healthy Earth on which to live. A sickened planet is not conducive to healthy children physically, or to emotional or psychic security. They need pure air and water and sunlight and fruitful soil and all those living forms that provide context in which human existence can be properly nurtured. Only if we can provide this context will we fulfill our obligations to our children.

The Great Community

Our children need to become members not only of a local or even of the human community. They need to become conscious members of that wonderful community of all the living and non-living beings of the world about them. Human community as such is an abstraction. The only real community is the integral community of the entire continent, the entire planet

or even the entire universe. We are awkward at this manner of thinking because our religious as well as our humanist traditions carry a certain antagonism toward the natural world. But now the refusal of human beings to become intimate members of the community of Earth is leading to the devastation of the entire planet. The next generation can survive only as functional members of this larger community. Our children are instinctively aware of this. We need only to foster this awareness.

Literacy

Our children need to learn not only how to read books composed by human genius, but also how to read the Great Book of the Earth. Reading this Great Book is natural to children. Alienation from this primary educational experience has been, in our generation, the source of unmeasured disaster to every aspect of human existence. The new prosperity requires a new language, a language of nature that presently begins to be understood by those involved in solar energy, by the new architects, the new educators, the environmentalists. This new language is primarily the language of the Earth, a language of living relationships that extend throughout the universe.

We have here on the North American continent a superb natural setting in which our children can become literate, capable of understanding what their world is telling them. Above all this natural world is telling them about a new prosperity, a new richness of life, new energies that are available, new experiences to enjoy.

Energy

Our children must understand how to function with the energy of the sun and the wind and the water, rather than with the energies of fossil fuels or of nuclear processes. Our inability to use these other energies properly has led to a situation in which the planet Earth is covered with grime that is not only harmful to all forms of life, but which is eating away with its acids the very stones and structures of all the great cities of the world. The understanding of more benign energy forms and the skills to interact with them effectively, these are absolute necessities for the survival of our children in a sustainable life context.



Food

Our children need to learn gardening. The reasons for this reach deep into their mental and emotional as well as into their physical survival. Gardening is an active participation in the deepest mysteries of the universe. By gardening, our children learn that they constitute with all growing things, a single community of life. They learn to nurture and be nurtured in a universe that is always precarious, but ultimately benign. They learn profound reasons for the seasonal rituals of the great religious traditions.

More immediately, however, is the questions of physical survival. With the ever-increasing loss of soil on which food-growing depends, stress of the economic situation, and with the crowded situation in our urban centers, the capacity of local communities to grow a significant amount of their own food on very limited areas of Earth in an organic context will become an increasing urgency. Community-supported agricultural projects are already being developed throughout the North American continent.

Elementary education especially might very well begin and be developed in a gardening context. How much the children could learn! A language related to life! Emotional responses to blossoming and fruitful plants, social cooperation, death as a source of life. They could learn geology and biology and astronomy. They could learn the sources of poetry and literature and the arts. They might even be saved from the sterile and ephemeral world of electronic games.

The Managerial Role

Our children need to be prepared for their role in the fruitful functioning of the Great Earth itself, the first and greatest of all corporations. They need to learn that the managerial role in all human corporative enterprises is to enhance the functioning and meaning and value of this primary corporation of the planet on which we live. If the Earth becomes bankrupt, there is no future for anything that lives. The remarkable achievement of the Earth in its natural state is its ability to renew itself and all its living forms. There is a minimum of entropy in the Earth system. Energies are cycled and recycled indefinitely. The infrastructure renews itself. No human process can do this. Neither automobiles, nor roadways, nor subway systems, nor fossil fuels, nor railways, nor power plants, nor nuclear stations renew themselves. They last

a few years and then rust away and the resources of the planet are no longer sufficient to renew them.

A completely new managerial role begins to identify itself. It will function in a different fashion and with different ideals from the manner in which management functions at present. This new mode of management begins to manifest itself in development of new courses and programs in ecological economics.

Revelatory Experience

Our children need to understand the meaning and grandeur and sacredness of the Earth as revelatory of the deep mysteries and meaning of the world. Rather than teaching them to disdain the natural world as unworthy of their concern, it would be most helpful if our religious traditions would move toward a stronger emphasis on the glorious phenomena of the universe about us as modes of divine communication.



In a special manner our children need to observe and esteem the spontaneities of nature in the various bioregions of North America. These spontaneities give expression to genetic diversity, which is the most precious endowment of the living world. Without the marvelous variety of living forms that swim in the sea and live and move upon the Earth and fly through the air, our own human understanding, our emotional life, our imaginative powers, our sense of the divine, our capacity for verbal expression . . . these would all be terribly diminished. If we lived on the moon our sense of the divine would reflect the lunar landscape; our emotions, sensitivities and imagination would all in a similar manner be limited to a lunar mode of expression. So with our children, they are what they are and have such remarkable expansion of life because

they share in the natural world here on the North American continent. The radiance of our surroundings is even now reflected in the radiance of our children's countenances.

A Sense of History

Our children need a sense of their unique historical role in creating this new ecological age. This future world is something that has never existed before. We are involved in an irreversible sequence of planetary developments. For the first time an integral form of the planet Earth with all its geological contours, its living forms, and its human presence has become possible as a vital, functioning reality expressing itself in its unbroken sequence of splendors in movement and song and an infinite variety of color in the sky and throughout five continents.

There is a certain truth in the expression: “The Dream drives the Action.” Among the greatest contributions we can make to our children is to assist them in their dreams of a world of pure air and water and sunlight and soil, where the company of living beings would flourish, as this has not happened in recent centuries.

America

As this country has often been the leader in the great industrial-technological experiment that has been taking place in these past two centuries, and as this country has suffered severely from the devastation consequent on the petrochemical period through which we are passing, so now we might well become the leaders in guiding the children of the world toward this more splendid future that is presently in the making.

If we see the aurora, we live in hope they will see the dawn.

An Ecozoic Monastery: Shaping a Transforming Vision for the Future

By Sister Gail Worcelo, CP

In 1994 I read a paper by Thomas Berry entitled, “Women Religious: Their Future Role.” It stated that in past centuries no religious community had been founded that was oriented toward protection of the Earth from the devastation that was beginning to be inflicted on the natural world through human agency. Such a community would have been unthinkable at that time. Now, however, there is hardly any religious or human activity that has prior claim to our concern. If a women’s religious congregation committed to the saving of the natural world was unthinkable in former centuries, it is now unthinkable that it does not exist!

The Passion of the
Gospels and the Passion
of the human began to
be extended to the
Passion of the Earth.

The invitation to begin such a community in the Church came as call and imperative to me. I had been studying with Thomas Berry since my novitiate in 1984 within the monastic community of the Passionist Nuns. By the time I arrived, the Passionist Congregation, founded by St. Paul of the Cross in the 1700’s, had undergone three major changes in the evolution of its own self-understanding.

It had moved from devotion to and remembrance of the Passion of Jesus to a recognition, beginning around the time of Vatican II, of the suffering Christ in the ‘Crucified of Today,’ those countless millions of unnamed ones undergoing the ravages of war, torture, violence, poverty and displacement.

Through the genius and deep intellectual probing of Thomas Berry, himself a Passionist, a further evolution in the understanding of the historical reality of the Passion began to take place in the early 1980s. The Passion of the Gospels and the Passion of the human began to be extended to the Passion of the Earth.

It is within this context that my formation took place. The pathos of our times had manifested itself in severe degradation of the planet, from simple physical assault, to disturbance of the chemical balance of the planet through petrochemical industries, to questionable manipulation of the genetic constitution of living beings, to the radioactive wasting of the planet through nuclear industries. It became clear to me that this was the place where Christ was suffering his present Passion.

To this end, Bernadette Bostwick and I have set about creating a new monastic religious community in the Church. Our “Ecozoic Monastery” is currently being founded in Vermont under the guidance and direction of Thomas Berry, CP, as a further extension of our originating charism. Presently, we have acquired a 190-acre plot of land and are preparing to move out of our house in the town of Weston to live on this land.

Why an “Ecozoic Monastery?” The word “Ecozoic” refers to the emerging period in the evolutionary process of Earth functioning. In this period, the human recognizes itself as a formidable presence on the planet and seeks ways of going into the future in a mutually enhancing manner with the rest of the community of life. Our Ecozoic Monastery will embrace those ancient monastic values of prayer, work, and community, which are at the service of the search for the Divine.

Its orientation will be towards the healing and protection of the Earth from further devastation by modeling ways which support a new pattern of human presence on the planet.

In these early beginnings, we imagine ourselves as missionaries to the bioregion and its life systems of water, air, and soil that must remain healthy if we are to survive. We imagine our monastery as a place of sanctuary for seeds, the new refugees of our time who need to be safeguarded from the fate of genetic manipulation. We imagine activating deep inner capacities still latent in our contemplative depths. We cherish the ability to open ourselves to a comprehensive compassion that is concerned for species thousands of years into the future in order to feel their vulnerability based on our actions now.

We begin this new monastery with the belief that when the full story of our origins and unfolding is comprehended in all its beauty by the human community, the energy released will set into motion the creativity of the human venture from a depth not hitherto suspected. When we humans realize that our ancestry included all forms of life, all the stars, the galaxies, even the fireball at the heart of time, then a spring of power will renew the face of the Earth.

© Sister Gail Worcelo, CP, 2000



A Curve That All Lines Must Follow

By John E. Surette, S.J.

The title of this article is taken from the words of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin in his work *The Human Phenomenon*. I find that my life—my line—is presently following a compassionate curve of which I have become increasingly aware. Let me explain . . .

During earlier adult decades I looked forward to the time when I would have arrived at a kind of security. It was not financial or job or professional security that I had in mind. It was, rather, the security of having achieved some degree of synthesis in my life. It was the security of having gleaned some insight into the really important questions about the meaning and purpose of human existence. I looked forward to the time when, for example, as an uncle and as a priest, I could share my insights, my wisdom, with my nieces and nephews and all peoples.

Well, as the years passed I did arrive at a synthesis. I was gifted with some wisdom to share. It was a wisdom born from years of study and contemplation, trial and error, success and failure. I was beginning to share it with others. Then, about ten years ago, something began to change. My wisdom seemed to be somehow inadequate. It was still true and beautiful and precious on one level, but lacking on another.

My life is following a
compassionate curve
of which I am
increasingly aware.

I was surprised to discover myself gradually living out of a new perception of things. Like the biblical Noah, I found myself deposited on a new shore. At times I was scared and confused, and at other times excited and challenged. I was undergoing what is popularly known as a paradigm shift, living with a new view of reality and a new way of seeing the world.

The largest possible context for our lives, the foundation of all meaning, is the story that attempts to answer the ultimate questions: From where do we come? Where are we now? What are we to do? What is our destiny? The answers to these questions serve as the matrix for all that we construct in the areas of governance, law, medicine, education, economics, science, and religion. In our human history we have had many stories of origin and meaning. For the past two millennia we have lived on a deep level out of the origins story found in the first book of the Bible. In recent decades we have a story revealed through the sciences. It is the epic of evolution.

During this century, an evolutionary view of life and of the universe has arisen to replace the established static view of a fixed and fully furnished universe. We now live in a cosmogenesis rather than a cosmos. We are now invited into a metaphysics of becoming, rather than one of being. Our human lives are part of the evolutionary unfolding of the universe, of Earth, and of life. This unfolding is the “curve that all lines must follow.”

Our human lives
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In the traditional view that has guided religion and culture, the cosmos is substantially the same today as it was at the beginning, a beginning measured in thousands of years. This story values order and stability. It sees the natural world as a backdrop for our human adventure.

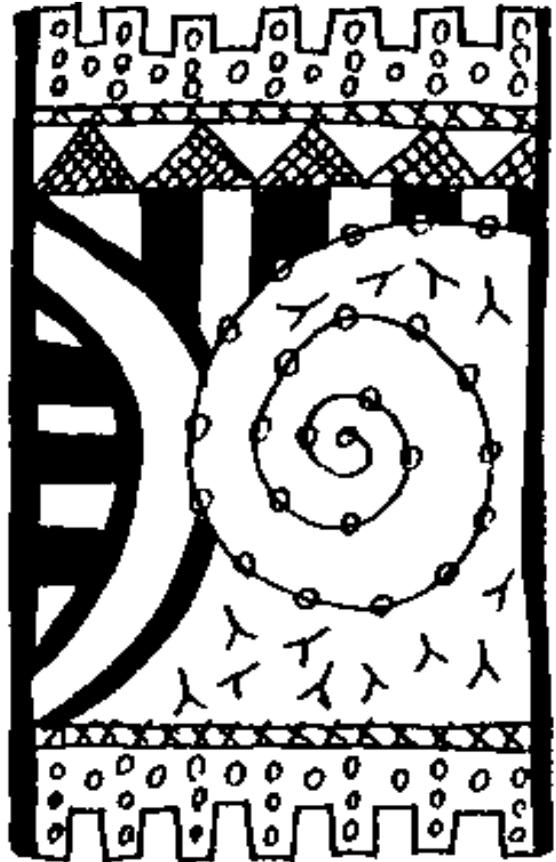
In the evolutionary view, the universe is approximately 15 billion years old and continues to unfold itself in space-time. This process has involved a movement into ever greater diversity, complexity, and inter-relatedness. And it continues today. This story values dynamism and creativity. It sees the human species as an aspect of the universe’s emergence and as a conscious participant and celebrator of its beauty, terror, and mystery.

This more recent story gifts me with a sense of the Numinous, a sense of everything in the process of unfolding and opening out into

Mystery . . . that realm which carries the dream and the energy of the future. What is being revealed as a universe that from its beginning has a psychic/spiritual as well as a physical/material dimension. Borrowing the words of geologist Thomas Berry: “Once we appreciate this trans-material dimension of the universe we can understand that the human story is inseparable from the universe story; then we can see that this story of the universe is in a special manner our sacred story” As such, the evolutionary curve becomes a compassionate curve for me. It is benevolent in my regard. It carries my story and my meaning. I know that I am loved. I am not afraid. I expect on-going care and enrichment.

I am led into a spirituality that has a serious concern for the Earth-human relationship. It is a spirituality that is of Earth, not about it. Life springs from the heart of matter. Matter matters. My thoughts and prayers are as much of Earth as are the rocks and the flowers. Earth is the nurturing context of all that constitutes my humanity. All of my experiences of Spirit have been and are experiences of Spirit in and through matter, in and through Earth. There is no other way.

I have come to experience myself as an integral member of the natural order of things. Through my life on Earth I participate in and activate a universal dynamic and pattern. In my death, I will do the same. Apart from Earth, I am an abstraction, an illusion. Within that illusion, no wonder I experience so many



difficulties. Within that illusion, no wonder the human society to which I belong is faced with the diminishment of its institutions. So much of what Western culture has built and destroyed is based upon the illusion of human separateness. My fulfillment, however, is not to be found in some inter-human solitude, but in my relationship with all members of the communion of subjects, which is the universe.

For me, shifting paradigms and changing stories continues to be a time of startling revelations. Through the evolutionary narrative I have been blessed with new understandings and experiences of the universe and my/our role within it. These revelations both affirm and challenge some of my most basic perceptions and assumptions of my self-identify, my work, my faith, and the Divine.

What is blessed is changed. It can never be the same again. So it is with me!

© John E. Surrette, S.J., 2000

Earth Pledge for the Ecozoic Era*

By Richard J. Lambert

May this be our pledge for the Ecozoic Era.

- We will not bring about the desolation of this our Earth by acts of exploitation or self-serving gain.
- We will pursue the ideal of human and Earth as one sacred community, both individually and in solidarity with others.
- We will cherish and learn from the Earth, our Mother, and we will press for a similar response in those vested with power.
- We will seek to activate human energy and zest for life in peoples of all ages and nations.
- Thus, in all these observances, we will pass to the next generation this Earth, not sullied in splendor, but flashing forth greater grandeur than was our inheritance!



* *Editor's Note:* This article is taken from *Celebrate Life* by Richard Lambert.

Spirituality for Our Time: The Vision of The Whidbey Institute

*By Design Team, The Whidbey Institute**

Times of unprecedented change call for wisdom, innovation, and courageous commitment to a new vision of the future. Today is such a time. The challenges facing men and women at the turn of the century are on a scale that exceeds what people of earlier generations have had to address. Of greatest consequence is the environmental crisis. The widespread degradation of the natural world profoundly threatens the health and generativity of the planet's ecology and the human community. The environmental crisis has become the decisive challenge of our time and *the* organizing principle for creating a viable and healthy future.

The state of the environment cannot be addressed, nor a new and positive future imagined, without the recognition that at the heart of this challenge is a *spiritual* crisis of the deepest importance. We are now witnessing the practical consequences of philosophical, scientific, and religious assumptions that have prevailed, especially in the Western world, during the last few centuries. These assumptions must be made visible, and they must be transformed, for to continue in these patterns is to persist in our destructive alienation from the natural world. The spiritual resources for renewal are not lacking, but we must learn a new way, a path of reverence for the Earth itself, for ourselves, and for all the creatures of the Earth. We must recover a spiritual wisdom offering the imagination and hope to meet the challenge of the threatened global environment.

The Challenge of the Environmental Crisis

The enormity and pervasiveness of the environmental crisis can no longer be minimized. The increasing destruction of planetary life systems is all too evident, including the cutting of vast forests, the thinning of the ozone shield, the emission of gasses threatening to bring global warming, the rapid extinction of species, the fouling of air, water, and land, the loss of top soil,

* *Editor's Note:* This article is excerpted from the Prospectus, the foundational document of The Whidbey Institute, January 1994

and the expansion of deserts. Linked to these realities are issues of over-consumption, poverty, threats to indigenous cultures, equity and justice, sustainable development, and a soaring world population. However familiar these issues may be, the threat to the health of the planet's ecology is growing rapidly and now affects all parts of life. The natural world is under unprecedented stress and in the next years this fact will press itself upon the global community with relentless urgency.

We believe that the environmental crisis serves as a comprehensive frame in which to view the full spectrum of interrelated issues now before us. We are beginning to recognize the connections between the environmental crisis and unjust or unenlightened economic, political, and social policies. The destruction of the natural world produces a climate of despair in cultures around the world, affluent and impoverished alike. In a devastated landscape a hopeful future becomes increasingly unimaginable. This is despair and disenfranchisement at the most radical level, and it contributes to the erosion of fundamental ethics and decency in human communities, and the suffering of massive numbers of people around the world.

The environmental crisis is preeminently a crisis of the human spirit.

The need, therefore, is not to respond only to the conditions of the trees, the oceans, and the endangered species of the Earth, but simultaneously to recognize the toxins and violated social ecologies that are injuring or killing the human species. These include the market driven media, the present economic structures that govern national and international development, the relationship of environmental degradation and poverty, and the increasingly toxic patterns of work and family life. An intimate relationship exists between all these issues and the health of the natural world, upon which all human life is fundamentally dependent.

The Needed Dimension

Until recently, the spiritual dimension of the environmental crisis has been largely ignored. Today this is changing. Many people, including numerous environmental, political, and religious leaders, now believe that the root causes of the accelerating destruction of the environment run far deeper than we have heretofore understood. Many of these root causes are to be found in the cultural values and religious and scientific beliefs that have

dominated the Western world during the last three centuries. These values and beliefs perceive nature as merely physical and mechanical in a manner that obscures the numinous or powerful sacred character of the natural world. The result has been the devaluing and degrading of the environment.

Therefore, the only adequate response to the environmental crisis is a *radical* response. The situation we face today will not yield to solutions that are only technological or political. Fundamental questions must also be asked about the place of human beings in the natural order. The assumptions upon which our culture is based must be re-examined and challenged. The environmental crisis is preeminently a crisis of the human spirit. It calls for the transformation of our hearts and minds, a profound repatterning of how we think and live, and a new understanding of what is sacred.



When we speak of a spiritual response to the environmental crisis, we mean that our view of the world and its future, our regard for human life, and our actions toward environmental healing must begin with, and be sustained by, a vision of the sacred. That is, we must learn again to recognize that all things, all creatures of the Earth, all life, have inherent value and place. What we now know of the origins of the universe and the processes by which life has unfolded, conveys a dynamic quality of mystery. We must relearn the ways this mystery has been evolved and taught in the spiritual traditions of the world. We must overcome the terrible loss that characterizes our historic age—the loss of sacred presence in the natural world, and the alienation and despair that we carry in our hearts as the inevitable result. We harm the Earth, other creatures, and ourselves because we have been taught to forget that

we are members of the living community of the Earth, an interdependent web of astonishing beauty and diversity.

Spiritual wisdom calls us out of our self-deception into compassionate awareness. It awakens in us the desire to change. It provides the critical perspectives needed if we are to recognize those cultural patterns most in need of revision. To discern a viable future, and to be grasped by the power and hope with which to attempt its realization, we must turn to those spiritual depths, which have been too long neglected, in our common life.

We believe that a spirituality is now needed that honors the Earth and engenders a sacred vision of life. We believe it is essential that this new spirituality:

- recognize the interdependence, holistic, and dynamic character of the universe;
- engenders a deep communion between the human community and the living Earth through learning a first-hand knowledge and respect for all aspects of the environment;
- draws from spiritual traditions without being bound to past beliefs and practices;
- demonstrates a vital, non-dogmatic, and inclusive spirit, and promotes hopeful and life-celebrating activity;
- fosters the development of personal meaning and a conviction of the unique contribution of each individual life;
- encourages the development of personal and corporate values and behaviors reflecting wise and equitable use of resources;
- encourages the development of spiritual practices which link a strong, resourceful inner life to the capacity for compassionate service and the work of healing and justice-making.

Spiritual wisdom calls us out of our self-deception into compassionate awareness.

Such a spirituality must be informed by wise discernment and critique. Particularly in times of cultural anxiety people may turn to religion as an escape or panacea. They may find themselves influenced by movements that are superficial, or manipulative, or do not call people to commitment and responsibility. It is our conviction that any spirituality that is easy or glamorous, or that is rigidly fundamentalist or controlling, ultimately becomes life-denying rather than life-enhancing.

We believe that there is a deeper hunger now emerging in our culture for authentic spiritual experience as men and women seek guidance and perspective in meeting the environmental crisis. We believe there is a new readiness to act from the deepest levels of our being in charting a new course for our common life and building a future that is viable for ourselves and for coming generations. We see evidence that many are now ready to examine issues of consumption and materialism and to develop new patterns of moderation and simplicity. We sense a new capacity to enter into communion with the natural world, to find in it a source of wisdom, imagination, and hope, and to work on behalf of its healing and renewal. We believe that this awakening of spiritual awareness, of moral conscience, and of committed action offers true hope for the restoration of the natural world, and for the renewal of the human spirit.

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The Movement

By John P. Cock

The Great Work before us . . . is not a role that we have chosen. It is a role given to us, beyond any consultation with ourselves We were chosen by some power beyond ourselves for this historical task The nobility of our lives . . . depends upon the manner in which we come to understand and fulfill our assigned role.

—Thomas Berry (*The Great Work*, p. 7)*

The good life is not “grasping after greater wealth to sustain a ‘better life’ that we perceive as ‘progress.’” This mode of consumerism is our “pathology” and “addiction” according to Thomas (p. 116). Likewise, the good life is not measured by GHP: “A rising *gross human product* with a declining gross Earth product is surely a contradiction” (p. 74). And the good life is not glorification of the human: “Both our religious and our humanist traditions are primarily committed to an anthropocentric exaltation of the human” (p. 104), at the expense of greater values. “Our human ethics are derivative from the ecological imperative. The basic ethical norm is the well-being of the comprehensive community and the attainment of human well-being within that community” (p. 105).

What are some new strategies for the good life? “Community-supported agriculture, solar-hydrogen energy systems, redesign of our cities, elimination of the automobile in its present form, restoration of local village economies, education for a post-petroleum way of life, and a jurisprudence that recognizes the rights of natural modes of being” (p. 110). Our present pace of the old *good life* is simply not sustainable according to Thomas. “What is needed is a sustainable way of life”

History is governed by those overarching movements that give shape and meaning to life by relating the human venture to the larger destinies of the universe.

* *Editor’s note:* All page numbers cited refer to the hardcover first edition of Thomas Berry’s *The Great Work: Our Way Into the Future* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999).

(p. 114) and a “sustainable future” (p. 133). “Any recovery of the natural world in its full splendor will require not only a new economic system but a conversion experience deep in the psychic structure of the human” (p. 60). A conversion from the old *good life*—that doesn't work—to the *new good life* of *intercommunion* with the universe is the objective of the *Great Work*.

These manifesto-style words by Thomas indicate *Our Way Into the Future* (his subtitle for *The Great Work*). He reminds us it took about 15 billion years for the Earth to emerge to this point, and only ten thousand years for us humans to gain significant control over the Earth (p. 50). How long will it take for us to come into a compassionate and responsible management of that which is entrusted to our care, to become *good* stewards of the universe?

The thesis of the *good life* we are putting forth is that of the *profound human journey*. Within primal communion we are awakened to, formed for, engaged in, and sustained for the *Great Work*, which is the good life of universe stewardship. This *Great Work* is our calling that can set us free.

Moses was awakened, formed, and sustained for the *Great Work* of setting *God's* chosen people free. Today we are being awakened, formed, and sustained for the *Great Work* of setting *God's* universe free, which was the assignment from the beginning, but we humans got carried away with serving human desires rather than the needs of the universe. Now we have been called again to the real task of caring for the universe. If we answer this call, liberation of all *God's* humans will also be done, and immeasurably better than before.

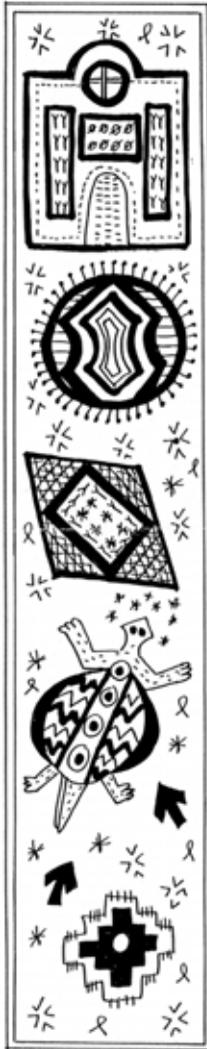
The movement
we are talking
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intercommunion
of creation . . . in
some more or less
self-conscious
network of care.

The main way we humans are liberated is caring for the universe-wide neighbor that Thomas has convincingly described. How will that liberation come to be? By our creating and joining *the* movement. I again quote Thomas' opening to *The Great Work*: “History is governed by those overarching movements that give shape and meaning to life by relating the human venture to the larger destinies of the universe. Creating such a *movement* might be called the Great Work of a people.” (p. 1)

Therefore, our mandate is to help create the movement of those who care for the universe. We know there are hundreds of movements abroad that are comprehensive. One could even call the United Nations a movement and applaud its recent fifteen-year plan for the Earth and all its constituents, including water, various species, and the atmosphere, as well as us six billion humans. But this is not the movement Thomas is talking about.

The movement we are talking about is the *intercommunion* of creation, as we know it, bound together in some more or less self-conscious network of care. The primary hope for this moment in evolution is our deeper consciousness of the Spirit present in creation. Throughout our meditations we have emphasized motivation for the *Great Work*, and we have said that the heart of that motivation is Spirit. If the movement of those who care for the universe is not grounded in the Spirit, it will fail. If it is grounded in Spirit, there will be no force great enough to stop it.

- Who can stop a movement on which every being's life depends?
- Who can stop a movement that is history long, universe wide, and Spirit deep?
- Who can stop a movement with a membership of all species, all peoples, all cultures, all religions, and all sectors?
- Who can stop a movement that's out to protect every being's home, every being's rights, and every being's best interests?
- Who can stop a movement that is the big tent for all caring movements?
- Be careful in trying to stop this movement. Be enhanced by advancing it.
- It's a movement whose time has come.
- It's a movement worth body and soul.
- This is a movement of *intercommunion*.



- To be in this movement, this *Great Work*, is to be living the *good life*.
- The Spirit, the call, the story, the mandate—all these—and *we* are creating this movement.
- May we be so motivated, and re-motivated, and re-motivated.

This article is excerpted from the Epilogue of John P. Cock's book, *Motivation for the Great Work: Forty Meaty Meditations for the Secular-Religious*, with a foreword by Thomas Berry.

Taking the ‘Burbs

By Ellen LeConte

An Ecozoic Age in America could well begin with a concerted effort to retrieve a sense of community, eco-logic and the sacred in the suburbs. Unintentionally, unconsciously, the suburban lifestyle has become the American Dream in its deficient phase: progress run amok, evolution biting off its own tail, conservation rendered as conservatism, success perverted into desecration. People of good will have become unaware of their circumstances and impact. Culturally and socially, the suburban lifestyle spreads vacuity, loneliness, homogenization, isolation and genuine ignorance of interconnectedness and carrying capacity. Suburban building and transportation congestion, energy use patterns, and resource consumption have a dramatic impact on land, water, the biotic community, natural systems, health, human collectivity, climate, and our sense/experience of the sacredness of Creation and our immersion, participation and blessing in it.

The aim here would be to re-invent suburban living along cooperative, Creation-centered terms.

The aim here would be to re-invent suburban living along cooperative, Creation-centered terms. There are a variety of ways in which Ecozoans wishing to Take Back the ‘Burbs or Bring the ‘Burbs along into an Ecozoic Age might help their own suburb become a community by engaging neighborhood Re-Creation Spirituality. For example:

- Work with lawn care/landscape companies to turn them organic, native, energy efficient, and natural. Canvass others in the neighborhood; get a natural care company to do a workshop for the community.
- Where there’s good sun aspect, even in northern climate, educate in the use of rooftop solar panels for water heating.
- Reduce lawn size with native, regional pollinator and bird-friendly landscaping, and backyard Victory herb and vegetable gardens; the Victory in this case over environmental desecration.

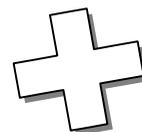
- Collect rainwater in barrels from down spouts for garden use.
- Create neighborhood van or car pools.
- Create lights-out periods, and lights off routines.
- Agree on times of silence when no lawnmowers or power tools are run.
- Give neighborhood awards for reduced energy and water consumption, provable by monthly billings.
- Hang your clothes on clotheslines.
- Plant trees, including islands of trees in parking lots.
- Create a community newspaper of innovations in which the best ideas for increased community, decreased consumption/pollution are published.
- Encourage the local school system to teach hands-on courses in community, neighborhood responsibility, environment, local geography/history/environment at each grade level.
- Get your church to develop a curriculum and outreach activities in neighborhood environmentalism and community building.
- Get to know your neighbors.
- Turn parts of big yards into community gardens or build natural recreation areas for children.
- Support local farmers.
- Hold meetings to talk about responsible shopping, consuming.
- Create walking paths/hiking trails through the backyards of neighborhoods with clearly limited, demarcated easements; sponsor competitions for best natural/native/neighborhood friendly landscaping along such trails.
- Turn vacant spaces in shopping areas or vacant lots into community spaces, gardens, meeting and training spaces for Good Neighbors.

Subtraction

By Tom Stock

It's as if a whole population has been genetically deprived of the ability to subtract.

— Wendell Berry, (*Life is a Miracle*, p.21)



One only has to look into closets, attics, basements, or garages to see how much difficulty we have with subtracting. We know how to add; we know how to multiply; we know how to divide. We need more practice with subtraction.

Global warming is helping us to think about this second simplest of the four simple mathematical functions . . . so is extinction, the ozone hole, and nuclear radiation. All have global implications. Our “economy” drives consumers to add, rather than subtract. According to Wendell Berry, the economy is a sort of legalized vandalism. Its vandalism of Earth resources that at once create a double blow to Earth—Earth is ours to consume *and* to waste. Wendell Berry blames science . . .

“Most applications of science to our problems result in large payments to large corporations and in damages to ecosystems and communities. These eventually will have to be subtracted (but not, if they can help it, by the inventors or manufacturers) from whatever has been gained.” *Life is a Miracle*, p.21.

One reason why subtraction is so difficult is that we own too much space. How many homeowners ever think about removing closet space? Not many. Usually, the reverse is true—more closet space to put more “things.” Accumulating things *in addition*, not subtraction.

If we ponder the lifestyle of our early ancestors, native Americans especially, we see that survival in the end might have come down to a small, portable fire-making kit. The small animal skin pouch that carried this equipment became the closet, garage, attic, and basement. Our native American forbearers were not driven by media and advertising. They had no clue about subtraction.



Our mission for the future should focus on how to subtract . . . in other words, to learn to sort out our need from our wants. What we want is not what we need. What we want has been created on Madison Avenue. They have cleverly confused the public into thinking that we need things we actually don't need. Look at the ads for body enhancement. Do we need to look young? Do we need to sculpt ourselves into what we think we ought to look like? Liposuction and breast enlargement are the subtraction and addition of our times. K-Mart, Wal-Mart, Home Depot, Office Max and other mega stores are the final kick, the last gasp to clutch at the old order, cling to its vocabulary and language, its standards, and its concept of growth by addition.

In the world of art, artists use subtraction in their design process. They look at negative space between the images. This process helps them compose and balance the final result. Stone sculptors work by taking away stone to reveal the form beneath.

We have divided and conquered, multiplied and subdued, added to our larders. It is now time to relearn how to subtract. Subtraction is like the forty-day Lenten season all year round. "What am I going to give up?" is the question Catholics ask on Fat Tuesday. It is simplification that we need to do to have us live more mindful clutter-free lives. Herein lies the deep meaning of quality living.

Get your math books, turn to page 21 and do those subtraction problems for your *homework!*

Moving to the Ecozoic Era

By T. Jack Heckelman

As we humans seek our proper role on this planet, we are drawn to the epic of evolution and the challenge of moving to the Ecozoic Era. When we tell the new story of the Epic, we must remember that it has three distinct parts, all interconnected—*how we came to be here, where we are, and where we're going*. Each part of the story must be told with physical, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions . . . in human terms of body, mind, and spirit which all can understand.

How We Came to Be Here

The first part, *how we came to be here*, is the exciting chronology of the 15 billion years of evolution, just becoming known to our generation for the first time in human history. It is the story of the first flaring forth of energy, the formation of stars and galaxies, of Earth, life, and of humans. It is the story of science, of how we have come to know the physical story, and are continuing to learn it's dimensions. It is also the psychic story of spirit, of consciousness, of God, of the ultimate unknowable mystery which surrounds the beginning of our universe, the continuous creativity which shapes it, and the mystery which lives today.

As we humans seek our proper role on this planet, we are drawn to the epic of evolution and the challenge of moving into the Ecozoic Era.

We can tell the story in myriad ways, with few or many details, but cannot but stand in awe and wonder at the marvel of its intentionality, diversity, and beauty. Out of it must come, for each of us, a knowing and understanding in our hearts and minds of our integral relationship with the Earth from which we have come, and to which we return; of our intimate interdependence with the Earth in all its being, in all its processes; of our oneness with the Earth, and with the universe. This awareness is the basis for us to understand the second part of the story.

Where We Are

The second part, *where we are*, acknowledges our devastation of the Earth, our huge and still growing human population, our highly developed technology, our massive use of Earth's resources, the incredible amount of waste and pollution we have created, and the resulting environmental degradation. It also must acknowledge the thought processes and attitudes that have brought us to this point—the belief that the Earth exists for our use, that all other life is inferior, and should be subservient to our needs or wishes, and that technology can solve every problem we encounter.

Again we must understand, deep within our psyche, the magnitude and impact of the power over the rest of nature we have developed. We have changed the chemical balance of the Earth, the water, the atmosphere, to the point where we are causing the end of our present geological era, the Cenozoic. The future of life now depends on the decisions we make. We must recognize the urgency and immediacy of the crisis we have created. And this leads us to the third, and for us the most significant, part of the story.

Where We Are Going

The third part, *where we are going*, has as many answers as there are people on the planet, over six billion of us at this moment. It depends on the choices we humans make. It is not predestined or preordained. Everything each of us does or says or thinks changes the Earth, and changes the universe. In the composite of all these decisions hangs the fate of the Earth.

While there is an infinity of possibilities for our common fate, they can be generally coalesced into two main groupings, keeping on as we are, or changing directions—what Thomas Berry calls the Technozoic or the Ecozoic paths.

The *Technozoic* path, business as usual, is directed by “more” and “better” in strictly human terms. More people, more technology, more “stuff,” more consumption, more waste. Yet many are already seeing the end of that path. The realities of human-induced climate change, ozone depletion, massive species extinction, and ecosystem degradation are becoming more evident. The natural world is in the worst condition it has been in for 65 million years, or for at least the last 20,000 years of direct human influence.

Some basic resources, like food, clean air, and clean water are becoming scarcer. In our societies, a few are becoming richer, more are becoming poorer. Ancient enmities and antagonisms are growing, tearing people and nations apart. Crime and terrorism are growing as more of the disenfranchised seek these routes to achieve their aims.

Continuing to follow the Technozoic path can only lead to more massive environmental degradation, social upheaval, and eventual collapse of human civilization.

The *Ecozoic* path, a mutually enhancing Earth-human relationship, and living in harmony with Earth processes, is absolutely essential if evolution is to proceed forward rather than backwards. This path is possible and achievable within human intellectual capacity, but will require almost unimaginable changes in our thinking, direction, and behavior. As Einstein stated so clearly, “You cannot solve problems with the same thinking that created the problems in the first place.”

The path must start with solid grounding in the first two parts of the story—awareness of our total integral interdependence with all living and nonliving Earth components, and acknowledgement of the magnitude of the problems we have created on the planet, and the need to change directions.

How We Shall Proceed

How shall we proceed? May I postulate twelve guiding principles to help us achieve the essential shifts in our thinking and behavior? Some relate to us as individuals, some to human society.

1. *Take a Long-Term View.* We have just turned over the calendar to a new millennium, at least the Western calendar, which is most widely known and used. I propose we think not in terms of the next quarter (as corporations think), the next year, the next decade, or even the next century, but the next thousand years. Let us envision, with our most brilliant minds, the life processes that will enable not only survival but life enhancement of all beings on this unique planet in this corner of the universe until the turn of the fourth millennium. This will totally change every aspect of our thinking and behavior, and turn us in the direction of a sustainable future.

2. *Think and Live Sustainability.* As a direct result of our grounding and long-term view, we are constrained, and motivated, to think sustainability in our every decision. Will this enhance or detract from better Earth-human relationship, a more sustainable path? Is there an alternative I could follow that would be more sustainable? How can I reduce, reuse, recycle, repair, and restore, rather than replace? Live not only by “thinking sustainability,” but by “living sustainability,” wherever possible.

3. *Take Individual Responsibility.* We must get beyond the mentality of “It doesn’t matter what I do,” or “I can’t do anything about it.” Each of us has a responsibility, a role to play. Each of us makes a difference, either positively or negatively, for the planet’s evolution. If we take individual responsibility for educating ourselves, acting out of our values and beliefs, and working for a better world, we *can* make a difference.

4. *Stabilize Human Population.* An urgent task is to stabilize, and eventually reduce, human population. We are already in a condition of overshoot—more people than the planet can sustain with even minimum levels of consumption commensurate with a “human” existence. There is no question that human population growth will eventually cease at some point—every species expands until it reaches the carrying capacity of its environment, then it overshoots and collapses. Unless we soon figure this out in an intelligent and compassionate way, we’ll face population collapse by other means—war, famine, disease. We still do have a choice now, but our time to act is very limited. Let’s act now!

5. *Redefine the American Dream.* Ever since the pioneer days, Americans have dreamed of their own home on their own land. Then they’ve added automobiles, televisions, and “white picket fences” to our dreams. It constantly wants “more” in the sectors where the economy and affluence are growing, but more and more are being left behind, both humans and non-humans. Thus we create a society of greater and greater disparity between the “haves” and the “have nots.” We need a more enlightened way of ensuring at least a minimum standard of living for every person to build a more equitable and sustainable society. We also need a radical redefinition of our materialistic standard of living, and a replacement of our reverence for material wealth with a simpler, but higher quality of life for ourselves and for future generations of all life. We’ll all end up happier in the long run.

On a related issue, we urgently need a new understanding of “property rights,” rights that have become entrenched in our American society and in our constitution as inalienable human rights. We need to consider them first as “Earth rights,” since they are part of Earth, and ensure that they continue to serve Earth needs. We need to develop ways by which both Earth needs and human needs can be met, but give priority to Earth, on which all life, including our own, depends.

6. *Preserve Bio-Diversity.* Here is where the greatest paradigm shift is required. We need to recognize the inherent rights of every living being to have food, to have habitat, and to be able to fulfill its role in the great Earth community. While we have made progress in preserving some endangered species, we are far from achieving any viable relationship between the human community and other communities of life. Instead of the governmental structures we now have, designed primarily for the betterment of humans, we need a “Council of All Beings” to adequately represent the needs and rights of other-than-human life. In the process we also need to recognize the rights of non-living beings—rivers, mountains, rocks—to exist and fulfill their roles too.

7. *Revise the Economic System.* Our present economic system, which has become the driving force of all human activity, is fatally flawed, in that it is totally based on money, a human invention. It ignores environmental and social costs. We need a new ecological economics, one in which preserving the health of the Earth is the primary concern.

8. *Recover from our Addiction to Growth.* Ever since the beginning of our present industrial society we have seen “growth” as the key desirable goal. Growth is deeply ingrained in our society and culture. Growth of population, wealth, and consumption are considered virtuous. We have never faced the reality that there cannot be continued growth in a finite world. We have failed to recognize that we are dangerously close to exceeding, and may have already exceeded, the carrying capacity of the Earth.

So we need a significant cultural change to find happiness and satisfaction in a stable, sustainable society, where we substitute “better” for “more,” where we use “quality of life” rather than “standard of living” as our criteria for measuring success. Again, quantification is more difficult, but we can develop the tools if we have the will to do so.

9. *Recover from our Addiction to Fossil Fuels.* During the past two centuries we have become addicted to fossil fuels, starting with coal and then petroleum. Use of these fuels underlies every aspect of our industrialized society. We depend on them for energy, transportation, plastics, medicines, and in a thousand different ways. We have acted as though we could continue this way indefinitely, assuming we could continue to discover other sources. Just recently, however, we are beginning to be conscious of the effects on air quality and climate change, as well as the impact that the automobile and other aspects of the petroleum economy has had on our culture, living patterns, and life styles.

Recovering from this addiction will be a very formidable task, but again it is possible if we have the will to do it. We can start by being conscious of the issue. Then we can begin reducing our energy consumption, supporting public transportation, and promoting alternate energy sources.

10. *Redirect our Institutions.* Nearly all of our societal institutions, particularly our governments, corporations and educational systems, are devoted to perpetuating the industrial growth society that we have created. Only a limited number of non-governmental institutions are devoted to building a more sustainable future. These must be supported; more need to be started. Organizations, like The Natural Step, which counsel corporations to adopt more sustainable practices, need to be supported and encouraged.

11. *Draw on our Best Sources of Wisdom.* There is the capacity within human intelligence to redirect our society in more sustainable directions. We, however, tend to be driven by capitalist thinking of creating more jobs, profits and human “progress” at the expense of the Earth and other beings. We still practice patriarchy in most societies. This male dominance perpetuates our thinking about the need and virtue of unrestrained competition, enhancing national security through militarization, and autocratic governance.

We do, however, have within our societies, sources of wisdom that are not yet listened to or valued sufficiently. These include women, with their intuition; scientists, with their understanding; indigenous people, with their ancient truths; and classical humanistic and religious traditions, with their understandings of value and meaning in human life. Listening to their voices

and views will definitely make a real difference in our decisions and directions.

12. *Recapture our Spiritual Roots.* Through the epic of evolution we are finding a new story, a synthesis of modern science, spirituality, and ancient wisdoms. We are also becoming aware of what a miraculously unique planet we inhabit. While there may well be other life in the universe, even other intelligent life, we must appreciate how the self-organizing Earth has collected just the right elements, in just the right amounts, at the right distance from the sun, with the appropriate length of time and stability to have evolved us, homo sapiens sapiens, with the self-aware consciousness of the universe in our beings. Let us be joyous, constantly filled with awe and wonder at this paradise we have, and celebrate with the universe that we are here.

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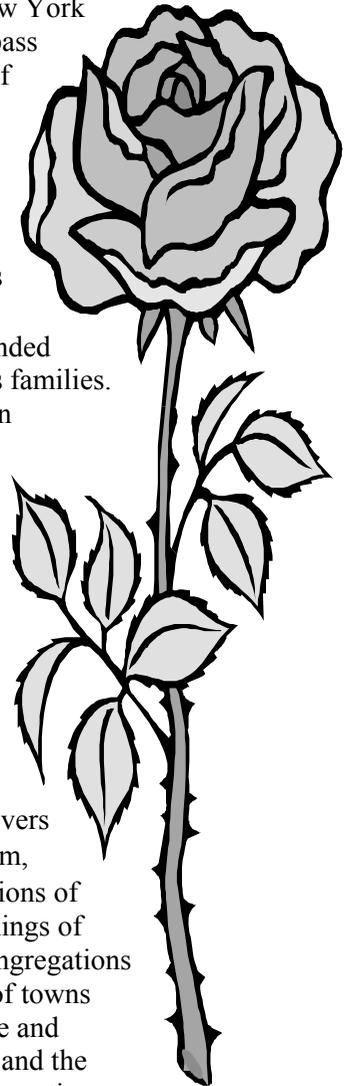
To Remember

By Nelson Stover

As the tragedy and horror of the events in New York and Washington on September 11th, 2001, pass through anger and shock and change to grief and resolve, people are seeking ways to give significance and meaning to what seemed incredible and terrifying. Some will wear an American flag and some will wear ribbons of many colors; I will wear a rose.

The terrorist activities of 9/11 were more than attacks on individuals in two big cities—though far too many of these innocent people have died, too many more are wounded and too much deep pain has been inflicted upon countless families. The four airplanes that were turned into bombs that fell on American cities damaged more than the resources of a single mighty nation—though all of the physical damage occurred in two of one nation’s great cities and the costs of rebuilding lives and infrastructures will be directly borne primarily by one government and its people. More than these targets, terrorists have taken direct and visible aim at tolerance, freedom and beauty on an international scale.

Citizens of nations on every continent shared the shock and horror of Americans at the wanton violence and destruction that erupted in the morning of 9/11. Believers of all faiths—Buddhist, Christian, Hebrew, Hindu, Muslim, and diverse other creeds and perspectives—found the actions of a few intolerable to their own understandings of the teachings of their personal beliefs. Governments around the world, congregations of all faiths, corporations in diverse nations and citizens of towns and villages in all areas of the globe are pausing in silence and erecting memorials to the individuals who lost their lives and the losses their families have suffered. At the same time, these actions



reaffirm their personal and collective commitment to affirming the diversity within our global community, to promoting the rights of individuals and organizations to grow and create, and to enhance the natural beauty of the planet on which we all live.

The dead will be remembered. The families who lost loved ones will begin the task of rebuilding lives around the emotional holes in their hearts. The damaged cities will be rebuilt. The individuals who did the actual destruction took their own lives in the process . . . their accomplices can be detained. Terrorism can and must be stopped in all of its manifestations. Beyond this, all life forms on the planet wait to see if the human community can recover a sense of peace and harmony within itself so that all of the other species and resources of the planet are not destroyed by the fires that erupt from the retribution of some societies on their suspected enemies.

Nations must decide how to deploy their armed forces and conduct their political affairs. Corporations must determine how to operate their businesses for the benefit of their customers, stockholders and the environment. Individuals of every faith, persuasion and class, must shape their own actions. For me, I will:

- seek to build bridges to individuals different than myself in an effort to understand their perspectives;
- speak openly of my hope for peace and encourage others around me to do likewise;
- pray for peace;
- embody patience, steadfastness, and understanding; and
- *wear a rose on behalf of all the people, animals and plants of the planet who hope beyond hope that tolerance, freedom and beauty will prevail in these chaotic times.*

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Statement of Purpose

The Center for Ecozoic Studies contributes through education and research to the realization of the Ecozoic Era. CES emphasizes dreaming and story telling as ways of enabling the creative advance needed to bring into being understandings for a new mode of human civilizational presence. CES believes we live in a meaningful, continuously evolving universe. 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 interiority; 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.

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Submissions for Publication

We invite you to share with us your thoughts, poetry, art, music, dance, ritual, meditation, story or dream experience of the Ecozoic Era and your insights into how to realize it.

To submit an item for publication, send a double-spaced printed copy of the item 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. Or e-mail your submission to ecozoic@mindspring.com. Please send your contact information and a brief biography. Publication guidelines are available at www.ecozoicstudies.org.

The Ecozoic Reader

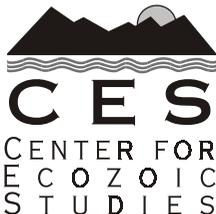
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