

The Ecozoic Reader

CRITICAL REFLECTION, 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.

Covenant

Written as I sat with the grief I experienced after having heard Thomas Berry's words, and with my need to take ownership of the ways in which I participate in the Earth's demise, both willfully and unwillingly, in the manner in which I tend my own plot of Earth.

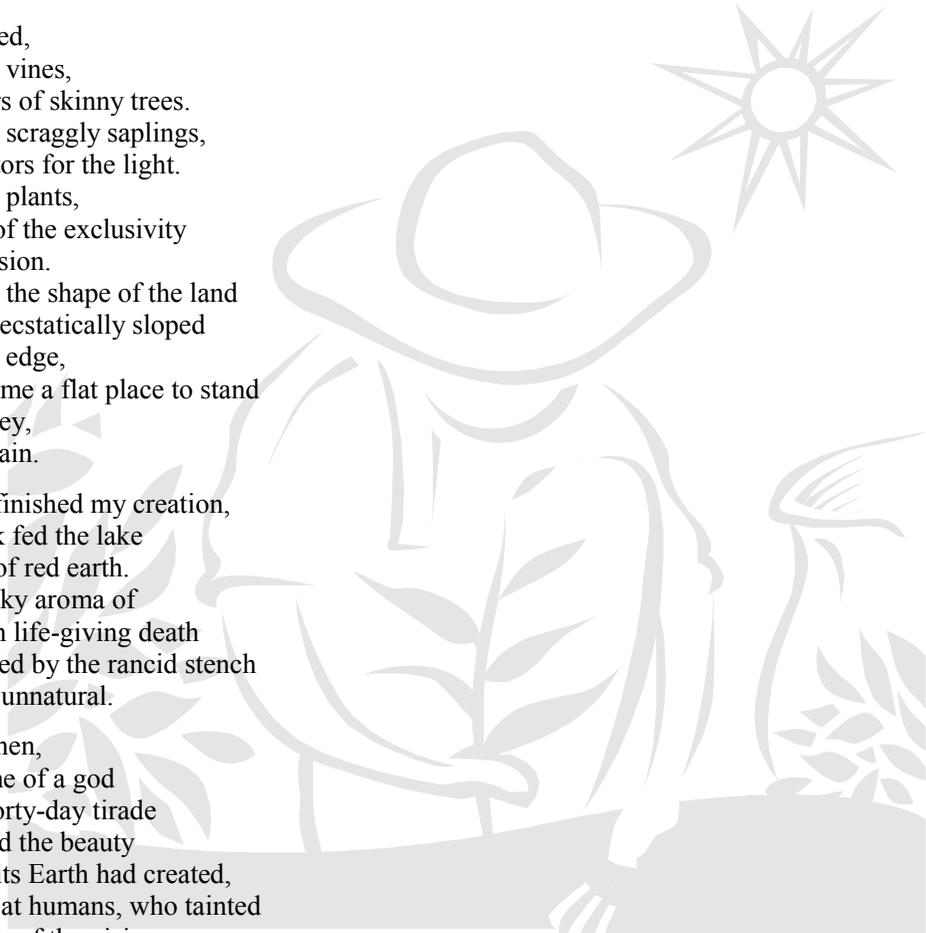
By Kathy Grabowski

My garden began with death.
Healing from its last domestic disturbance,
Interrupted, again
by another human's myopic grand design
and grace-less sense of time.

I delivered,
Death to vines,
stranglers of skinny trees.
Death to scraggly saplings,
competitors for the light.
Death to plants,
victims of the exclusivity
of my vision.
Death to the shape of the land
that had ecstatically sloped
to lake's edge,
denying me a flat place to stand
and survey,
My domain.

When I finished my creation,
the creek fed the lake
rivulets of red earth.
The musky aroma of
humus in life-giving death
supplanted by the rancid stench
of death unnatural.

I knew then,
the shame of a god
whose forty-day tirade
sacrificed the beauty
of what its Earth had created,
in anger at humans, who tainted
the purity of the vision.



This god cried
A multi-hued testimonial
To the power
of love and forgiveness for that which falls short
of egoistic expectations.

I understood
the nature of Love
in the rainbow
whose beginning and end could not be seen.
The Covenant,
a cascade of words that flowed into my heart.

I spoke to the Earth
of my need
to create the forms
that flowed from my mind.
I told the Earth my need for a place to pause,
a playground for my senses.

In reply,
the payment exacted
by my garden
to slake my need was
Exuberant Green,
that moved of its own
grand design and Grace-full time.
Our relationship now defined by
my learning
the laws of light.
Light that illuminated
the arbitrary power
once assumed as my right,
understood as, my gift.

In the Glory of this light,
I slipped my hands
into Earth's skin
rendering it
imperfectly beautiful,
birthing it again
into its death,
wholly – Holy.

The Ecozoic Era *

by Thomas Berry

It is indeed a high honor to be with you today and to discuss with you the significance of this period in history. Far beyond anything else, we must be aware of the terminal phase of the Cenozoic Era of Earth's history in which we presently find ourselves. In these fateful years we are terminating sixty-five million years in the biological history of the planet. It is most important that we appreciate the order of magnitude of what is happening in our times.

The changes presently taking place in human and earthly affairs are beyond any parallel with historical change or cultural modification as these have occurred in the past. This is not like the transition from the classical period to the medieval period or from the medieval to the modern period. These changes reach far beyond the civilizational process, beyond even the human process, into the biosystems and even the geological structures of Earth itself.

There are only two other moments in the history of this planet that offer us some sense of what is happening. These two moments are the end of the Paleozoic Era 220 million years ago, when some 90 percent of all species living at that time were extinguished, and the terminal phase of the Mesozoic Era sixty-five million years ago, when there was also very extensive extinction.

Then, in the emerging Cenozoic Era the story of life on this planet flowed over into what could be called the lyric period of Earth history. The trees had come before this, the mammals already existed in a rudimentary form, the flowers had appeared perhaps thirty million years earlier. But in the Cenozoic Era, there was wave upon wave of life development, with the

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* *Editors Note:* This speech was delivered at the Eleventh Annual E. F. Schumacher Lecture, October 1991, in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. Edited by Hildegard Hannum.
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flowers, the birds, the trees, and the mammalian species particularly all leading to that luxuriant display of life upon Earth such as we have known it.

In more recent times, during the past million years this region of New England went through its different phases of glaciation, also its various phases of life development. New England's trees especially developed a unique grandeur. Possibly no other place on Earth has such color in its fall foliage as this region. It was all worked out during these past sixty-five million years. The songbirds we hear also came about in this long period.

Then we, the human inhabitants of Earth, came into this region with all the ambivalences we bring with us. Not only here but throughout the planet we have become a profoundly disturbing presence. In this region and to the north in southern Quebec, the native maple trees are dying out in great numbers due to pollutants we have put into the atmosphere, the soil, and the water.

Their demise is largely a result of the carbon compounds we have loosed into the atmosphere through the use of fossil fuels, especially of petroleum, for our fuel and energy. Carbon is, as you know, the magical element. The whole life structure of the planet is based upon the element carbon. So long as the life process is guided by its natural patterns, the integral functioning of Earth takes place. The wonderful variety expressed in marine life and land life, the splendor of the flowers and the birds and animals—all these could expand in their gorgeous coloration, in their fantastic forms, in their dancing movements, and in their songs and calls that echo over the world.

To accomplish all this, however, nature must find a way of storing immense quantities of carbon in the petroleum and coal deposits, also in the great forests. This process was worked out over some hundreds of millions of years. A balance was achieved, and the life systems of the planet were secure in the interaction of the air and the water and the soil with the inflowing energy from the sun.

But then we discovered that petroleum could produce such wonderful effects. It can be made into fertilizer to nourish crops; it can be spun into fabrics; it can fuel our internal combustion engines for transportation over the vast highway system we have built; it can produce an unlimited variety of plastic implements; it can run gigantic generators and produce power for lighting and heating of our buildings.

It was all so simple. We had no awareness of the deadly consequences that would result from the residue from our use of petroleum for all these purposes. Nor did we know how profoundly we would affect the organisms in the soil with our insistence that the patterns of plant growth be governed by artificial human demands met by petroleum-based fertilizers rather than by the spontaneous rhythms within the living world. Nor did we understand that biological systems are not that adaptable to the mechanistic processes we imposed upon them.

I do not wish to dwell on the devastation we have brought upon Earth but only to make sure we understand the nature and the extent of what is happening. While we seem to be achieving magnificent things at the microphase level of our functioning, we are devastating the entire range of living beings at the macrophase level. The natural world is more sensitive than we have realized. Unaware of what we have done or its order of magnitude, we have thought our achievements to be of enormous benefit for the human process, but we now find that by disturbing the biosystems of the planet at the most basic level of their functioning we have endangered all that makes the planet Earth a suitable place for the integral development of human life itself.

Macrophase biology is concerned with five basic spheres: land, water, air, life—and how these interact with one another to enable the planet Earth to be what it is—and a very powerful sphere: the human mind.

Our problems are primarily problems of macrophase biology. Macrophase biology, the integral functioning of the entire complex of biosystems of the planet, is something biologists have given almost no attention. Only with James Lovelock and some other more recent scientists have we even begun to think about this larger scale of life functioning. The delay is not surprising, for we are caught in the microphase dimensions of every phase of our human endeavor. This is true in law and medicine and in the other professions as well as in biology.

Macrophase biology is concerned with five basic spheres: land, water, air, life—and how these interact with one another to enable the planet Earth to be what it is—and a very powerful sphere: the human mind. Consciousness is certainly not limited to humans. Every living being has its own mode of consciousness. We must be aware, however, that consciousness is an analogous concept. It is qualitatively different in its various modes of

expression. Consciousness can be regarded as the capacity for intimate presence of things to one another through knowledge and sensitive identity. But obviously the consciousness of a plant and the consciousness of an animal are qualitatively different, as are the consciousness of insects and the consciousness of birds or fish. Similarly, there is a difference in consciousness between fish and human – for the purposes of the fish, human modes of consciousness would be more a defect than an advantage. So too, tiger consciousness would be inappropriate for the bird.

It is also clear that the human mode of consciousness is capable of unique intrusion into the larger functioning of the planetary life systems. So powerful is this intrusion that the human has established an additional sphere that might be referred to as a technosphere, a way of controlling the functioning of the planet for the benefit of the human at the expense of the other modes of being. We might even consider that the technosphere in its subservience to industrial-commercial uses has become incompatible with the other spheres that constitute the basic functional context of the planet.

The biggest single question before us today is the extent to which this technological-industrial-commercial context of human functioning can be made compatible with the integral functioning of the other life systems of the planet.

The biggest single question before us today is the extent to which this technological-industrial-commercial context of human functioning can be made compatible with the integral functioning of the other life systems of the planet. We are reluctant to think of our activities as inherently incompatible with the integral functioning of the various components of the planetary systems. It is not simply a matter of altering our ways of acting on a minor scale by recycling (which presupposes a cycling that is devastating in

its original form), by mitigating pollution, reducing our energy consumption, limiting our use of the automobile, or by fewer development projects. Our efforts will be in vain if our purpose is to make the present industrial system acceptable. These steps must be taken, but according to my definition of the Ecozoic Era there must be more: there must also be a new era in human-Earth relations.

Our present system, based on the plundering of the Earth's resources, is certainly coming to an end. It cannot continue. The industrial world on a global scale, as it functions presently, can be considered definitively

bankrupt. There is no way out of the present recession within the context of our existing commercial-industrial processes. This recession is not only a financial recession or a human recession even. It is a recession of the planet itself. The Earth cannot sustain such an industrial system or its devastating technologies. In the future the industrial system will have its moments of apparent recovery, but these will be minor and momentary. The larger movement is toward dissolution. The impact of our present technologies is beyond what the Earth can endure. *

Nature has its own technologies. The entire hydrological cycle can even be regarded as a huge engineering project, a project vastly greater than anything humans could devise with such beneficent consequences throughout the life systems of the planet. We can differentiate between an acceptable human technology and an unacceptable human technology quite simply: an acceptable one is compatible with the integral functioning of the technologies governing the natural systems; an unacceptable one is incompatible with the technologies of the natural world.

The error has been to think that we could distort the natural processes for some immediate human benefit without incurring immense penalties, penalties that might eventually endanger the well-being of the human as well as that of most other life forms. This is what has happened in the twentieth-century petroleum economy we have developed.

The petroleum at the base of our present industrial establishment might at its present rate of use last another fifty years—probably less, possibly more. But a severe depletion will occur within the lifetime of young people living today. The major part of the petroleum will be gone. Our youngest children may see the end of it. They will likely see also the tragic climax of the population expansion. And with the number of automobiles on the planet estimated at six hundred million in the year 2000, we will be approaching another saturation level in the technological intrusion into the planetary process. **

* *Editor's Note:* This speech was given during the recession of 1991. Now, after the apparent vindication of the industrial-technological economy in the booming 1990s, the global economy is again in difficulty. For an in-depth, current development of the themes in this paragraph, see Lester R. Brown, *Eco-Economy* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001).

** *Editor's Note:* The actual number of automobiles in 2000 was 532 million, but the total number of motor vehicles, including trucks, was 700 million, a number

It is awesome to consider how quickly events of such catastrophic proportions are happening. When I was born in 1914, there were only one and a half billion people in the world. Children of the present will likely live to see ten billion. The petrochemical age had hardly begun in my early decades. Now the planet is saturated with the residue from spent oil products. There were fewer than a million automobiles in the world when I was born. In my childhood the tropical rain forests were substantially intact; now they are devastated on an immense scale. The biological diversity of life forms was not yet threatened on an extensive scale. The ozone layer was still intact.

A renewal of life in some creative context requires that a new biological period come into being, a period when humans would dwell upon the Earth in a mutually enhancing manner. This new mode of being of the planet I describe as the Ecozoic Era

In evaluating our present situation I submit that we have already terminated the Cenozoic Era of the geo-biological systems of the planet. Sixty-five million years of life development are terminated. Extinction is taking place throughout the life systems on a scale unequaled since the terminal phase of the Mesozoic Era. ***

A renewal of life in some creative context requires that a new biological period come into being, a period when humans would dwell upon the Earth in a mutually enhancing manner. This new mode of being of the planet I describe as the Ecozoic Era, the fourth in the succession of life eras thus far identified as the Paleozoic, the Mesozoic, and the Cenozoic. But when we propose that an Ecozoic Era is succeeding the Cenozoic, we must define the unique character of this emergent era.

I suggest the name “Ecozoic” as a better designation than “Ecological.” Eco-logos refers to an *understanding* of the interaction of things. Eco-zoic is a more biological term that can be used to indicate the integral *functioning* of life systems in their mutually enhancing relations.

The Ecozoic Era can be brought into being only by the integral life community itself. If other periods have been designated by such names as

expected to grow to 1.1 billion in 2020. The WorldWatch Institute, *Vital Signs 2001* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), p. 68.

*** *Editor's Note:* For an extensive analysis of this, see Richard Leaky and Roger Lewih, *The Sixth Extinction* (New York: Anchor Press, 1995).

“Reptilian” or “Mammalian,” this Ecozoic period must be identified as the Era of the Integral Life Community. For this to emerge there are special conditions required on the part of the human, for although this era cannot be an anthropocentric life period, it can come into being only under certain conditions that dominantly concern human understanding, choice, and action.

When we consider the conditions required of humans for the emergence of such an Ecozoic Era in Earth history, we might list these as follows:

The first condition is to understand that the universe is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects. Every being has its own inner form, its own spontaneity, its own voice, its ability to declare itself and to be present to other components of the universe in a subject-to-subject relationship. Whereas this is true of every being in the universe, it is especially true of each component member of the Earth community. Each component of the Earth is integral with every other component. This is also true of the living beings of the Earth in their relations with one another.

The termination of the Cenozoic Era of Earth history has been brought about by the incapacity of humans in the industrial cultures to be present to Earth and its various modes of being in some intimate fashion. Ever since the time of Descartes in the first half of the seventeenth century, Western humans, in their dominant life attitudes, have been autistic in relation to the non-human components of the planet. Whatever the abuse of the natural world by humans prior to that time, the living world was recognized until then in its proper biological functioning as having an “anima,” a soul. Every living being was by definition an ensouled being, with a voice that spoke to the depths of the human of wondrous and divine mysteries, a voice that was heard quite clearly by the poets and musicians and scientists and philosophers and mystics of the world, a voice heard also with special sensitivity by the children.

Descartes, we might say, killed the Earth and all its living beings. For him the natural world was mechanism. There was no possibility of entering into a communion relationship. Western humans became autistic in relation to the surrounding world. There could be no communion with the birds or animals or plants, because these were all mechanical contrivances. The real value of things was reduced to their economic value. A destructive anthropocentrism came into being.

This situation can be remedied only by a new mode of mutual presence between the human and the natural world, with its plants and animals of both the sea and the land. If we do not get that straight, then we cannot expect any significant remedy for the present distress experienced throughout the Earth. This capacity for intimate rapport also needs to be extended to the atmospheric phenomena and the geological structures and their functioning.

Because of this autism my generation never heard the voices of that vast multitude of inhabitants of the planet. They had no communion with the non-human world. They would go to the seashore or to the mountains for some

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recreation, a moment of aesthetic joy. But this was too superficial to establish any true reverence or intimate rapport. No sensitivity was shown to the powers inherent in the various phenomena of the natural world, no depth of awe that would have restrained their assault on the natural world in order to extract from it some human advantage—even if this meant tearing to pieces the entire fabric of the planet.

The second condition for entering the Ecozoic Era is a realization that the Earth

exists, and can survive, only in its integral functioning. It cannot survive in fragments any more than any organism can survive in fragments. Yet the earth is not a global sameness. It is a differentiated unity and must be sustained in the integrity and interrelations of its many bioregional contexts. This inner coherence of natural systems requires an immediacy of any human settlement with the life dynamics of the region. Within this region the human right to habitat must respect the right to habitat possessed by the other members of the life community. Only the full complex of life expression can sustain the vigor of any bioregion.

A third condition for entering the Ecozoic Era is recognition that the Earth is a one-time endowment. We do not know the quantum of energy contained in Earth, its possibilities or its limitations. We must reasonably suppose that Earth is subject to irreversible damage in the major patterns of its functioning and even to distortions in its possibilities of development. Although there was survival and further development after the great extinctions at the end of the Paleozoic and the Mesozoic Eras, life was not so highly developed as it is now. Nor were the very conditions of life at those

times negated by such changes as we have wrought through our toxification of the planet.

Life on Earth will surely survive the present decline of the Cenozoic, but we do not know at what level of its development. The single-cell life forms, the insects, the rodents, the plants, and a host of other forms of life found throughout the planet—these will surely survive. But the severity of the damage to the rain forests, to the fertility of the soils, to species diversity, and to the chances for survival of the more developed animals, the consequences throughout the animal world of the diminishment of the ozone shield, the extension of deserts, the pollution of the great freshwater lakes, the chemical imbalance of the atmosphere—all are signs of disturbance on a scale that might make restoration to their earlier grandeur impossible, certainly within any time frame that is conceivable to human modes of thinking or planning. Almost certainly we have witnessed in these past centuries a grand climax in the florescence of the Earth.

A fourth condition for entering the Ecozoic Era is a realization that the Earth is primary and humans are derivative. The present distorted view is that humans are primary and the Earth and its integral functioning only a secondary consideration—thus the pathology manifest in our various human institutions. The only acceptable way for humans to function effectively is by giving first consideration to the Earth community and then dealing with humans as integral members of that community. Earth must become the primary concern of every human institution, profession, program, and activity, including economics. In economics the first consideration cannot be the human economy, because the human economy does not even exist prior to the Earth economy. Only if the Earth economy is functioning in some integral manner can the human economy be in any way effective. The Earth economy can survive the loss of its human component, but there is no way for the human economy to survive or prosper apart from the Earth economy. The absurdity has been to seek a rising Gross National Product in the face of a declining Gross Earth Product.

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This primacy of the Earth community applies also to medicine and law and all the other activities of humans. It should be especially clear in medicine that we cannot have well humans on a sick planet. Medicine must

first turn its attention to protecting the health and well-being of the Earth before there can be any effective human health. So in jurisprudence, to poise the entire administration of justice on the rights of humans and their limitless freedom to exploit the natural world is to open the natural world to the worst predatory instincts of humans. The prior rights of the entire Earth community need to be assured first; then the rights and freedoms of humans can have their field of expression.

A fifth condition for the rise of the Ecozoic Era is to realize that there is a single Earth community. There is no such thing as a human community in any manner separate from the Earth community. The human community and the natural world will go into the future as a single integral community or we will both experience disaster on the way. However differentiated in its modes of expression, there is only one Earth community—one economic order, one health system, one moral order, one world of the sacred.

My effort here is to articulate the outlines of a new mythic form that would evoke a creative entrancement to succeed the destructive entrancement that has taken possession of the Western soul in recent centuries.

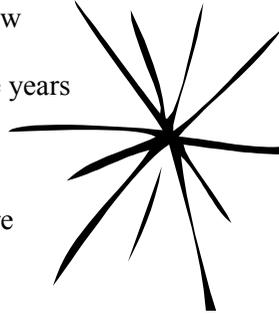
As I present this outline of an emerging Ecozoic Era, I am quite aware that such a conception of the future, when humans would be present to the Earth in a mutually enhancing manner, is mythic in its form, just as such conceptions as the Paleozoic, Mesozoic, and Cenozoic are mythic modes of understanding a continuing process, even though this continuing process is marked by an indefinite number of discontinuities amid the continuity of the process itself.

We can counter one entrancement only with another, a counter-entrancement. Only thus can we evoke the vision as well as the psychic energies needed to enable the Earth community to enter successfully upon its next

great creative phase. The grandeur of the possibilities ahead of us must in some manner be experienced in anticipation. Otherwise we will not have the psychic energy to endure the pain of the required transformation.

Once we are sufficiently clear as to where we are headed and once we experience the urgency and the adventure of what we are about, we can get on with our historic task. We can accept and even ignore the difficulties to be resolved and the pain to be endured, for we are involved in a great work. In

creating such a great work, the incidentals fall away. We can accept the pathos of our times, the sorrow that we will necessarily go through. We can, I think, assist the next generation as they take up this creative effort, mainly by indicating just where they can receive their instructions. It is the role of elders at the present time to assist them in fulfilling their role in this moment of transformation. Elders, we have a lot of older people but few elders. Tribal people, for their part, depend on elders for their instructions. I was privileged to see this process at work some years ago when I was invited to participate at a meeting of indigenous Indian peoples—mostly Ojibwa, Cree, and Six Nations—on Cape Croker along Georgian Bay in northwest Ontario. The purpose of the meeting was to consider the future and the direction their lives should take.



I hope we will be able to guide and inspire our next generation as they attempt to shape the future. Otherwise they will simply survive with all their resentments amid the destroyed infrastructures of the industrial world and amid the ruins of the natural world itself. The challenge itself is already predetermined. There is no way for the new generation to escape this confrontation. The task to which they are called and the destiny that is before them are, however, not simply theirs alone. The human is linked to every Earthly being, to the entire planet. The whole universe is involved. The successful emergence of the Ecozoic Era can presently be considered the great creative task of the universe itself.

This destiny can be understood, however, only in the context of the Great Story of the universe. All peoples derive their understanding of themselves from their account of how the universe originally came into being, how it came to be as it is, and the role of the human in the story. We in our Euro-American traditions have in recent centuries, through our observational studies, created a new story of the universe. The difficulty is that this story was presented in the context of the mechanistic way of thinking about the world and so has been devoid of meaning. Supposedly, everything has happened in a random, meaningless process.

It is little wonder, then, that we have lost our Great Story. Our earlier Genesis story long ago lost its power over our historical cultural development. Our new scientific story has never carried any depth of meaning. We have lost our reverence for the universe and the entire range of natural phenomena.

Our scientific story of the universe has no connection with the natural world as we experience it in the wind and the rain and the clouds, in the birds, the animals, and the insects we observe around us. For the first time in all of human history the sun and moon and stars, the fields and mountains and streams and woodlands fail to evoke a sense of reverence before the deep mystery of things. These wondrous components of the natural world are somehow not seen with any depth of appreciation. Perhaps that is why our presence has become so deadly.

But now all this is suddenly being altered. Shocked by the devastation we have caused, we are awakening to the wonder of a universe never before seen in quite the same manner. No one ever before could tell in such lyric language as we can now the story of the primordial flaring forth of the

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universe at the beginning, the shaping of the immense number of stars gathered into galaxies, the collapse of the first generation of stars to create the ninety-some elements, the gravitational gathering of scattered stardust into our solar system with its nine planets, the formation of Earth with its seas and atmosphere and the continents crashing and rifting as they move over the asthenosphere, and the awakening of life.

Such a marvel is this fifteen billion year process; such infinite numbers of stars in the heavens and living beings on Earth, such limitless variety of flowering species and forms of animal life, such tropical luxuriance, such magnificent scenery in the mountains, and such springtime wonders as occur each year. Now we are experiencing the pathos of witnessing the desecration of this sublimity.

We now need to tell this story, meditate on it, and listen to it as it is told by every breeze that blows, by every cloud in the sky, by every mountain and river and woodland, and by the song of every cricket. We have lost contact with our story. Yet we can come together, all the peoples of Earth and all the various members of the great Earth community, only in this Great Story, the story of the universe. For there is no human community without the human community story, no Earth community without the Earth story, and no universe community without the universe story. These three constitute the Great Story. Without it the various forces of the planet become mutually destructive rather than mutually coherent.

We need to listen to one another's way of telling the Great Story. But first we in the West, with our newly developed capacity to observe the universe through our vast telescopes and to hear its sounds as these come to us from the beginning of time and over some billions of years, need really to listen as our own special way of understanding and participating in the Great Story.

Whenever we forget our story we become confused. But the winds and the rivers and the mountains never become confused. We must go to them constantly to be reminded of it, for every being in the universe is what it is only through its participation in the story. We are resensitized whenever we listen to what they are telling us. Long ago they told us that we must be guided by a reverence and a restraint in our relations with the larger community of life, that we must respect the powers of the surrounding universe, that only through a sensitive insertion of ourselves into the great celebration of the Earth community can we expect the support of the Earth community. If we violate the integrity of this community, we will die.

The natural world is vast and its lessons fearsome. One of the most ominous expressions of the natural world has to do with nuclear energy. When we go deep into the natural world and penetrate the inner structure of the atom and in a sense violate that deepest mystery for trivial or destructive purposes, we may get power, but nature throws at us its most deadly consequences. We are still helpless with regard to what to do once we have broken into the mysterious recesses of nuclear power. Forces have been let loose far beyond anything we can manage.

Earlier I mentioned five conditions for the integral emergence of the Ecozoic Era. Here I would continue with a sixth condition: that we understand fully and respond effectively to our own human role in this new era. For while the Cenozoic Era unfolded in its full splendor entirely apart from any role fulfilled by the human, almost nothing of major significance is likely to happen in the Ecozoic Era that humans will not be involved in. The entire pattern of Earth's functioning is being altered in this transition from the Cenozoic to the Ecozoic. We did not even exist until the major

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developments of the Cenozoic were complete. In the Ecozoic, however, the human will have a pervasive influence on almost everything that happens. We are approaching a critical watershed in the entire modality of Earth's functioning. Our positive power of creativity in the natural life systems is minimal; our power of negating is immense. Whereas we cannot make a blade of grass, there is liable not to be a blade of grass unless it is accepted, fostered, and protected by the human. Protected mainly from ourselves so that the Earth can function from within its own dynamism.

There is, finally, the question of language. A new language, an Ecozoic language, is needed. Our late Cenozoic language is radically inadequate. The human mode of being is captured and destroyed by our present univalent, scientific, literal, unimaginative language. We need a multivalent language, one much richer in the symbolic meanings that language carried in its earlier forms when the human lived deep within the natural world and the entire range of Earth phenomena. As we recover this early experience in the

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emerging Ecozoic Era, all the archetypes of the collective unconscious will attain a new validity as well as new patterns of functioning, especially in our understanding of the death-rebirth symbol and the symbols of the heroic journey, the Great Mother, the tree of life.

Every reality in the natural world is multivalent. Nothing is univalent. Everything has a multitude of aspects and meanings, the way sunlight carries within itself warmth and light and energy.

Sunlight is not a single thing. It awakens the multitude of living forms in the springtime; it awakens poetry in the soul and evokes a sense of the divine. It is mercy and healing, affliction and death. Sunlight is irreducible to any scientific equation or any literal description.

But all these meanings are based on the physical experience of sunlight. If we were deprived of sunlight, the entire visible world would be lost to us and eventually immense realms of consciousness and all of life. We would be retarded in our inner development in proportion to our deprivation of the experience of natural phenomena, of mountains and rivers and forests and seacoasts and all their living inhabitants. The natural world itself is our primary language as it is our primary scripture, our primary awakening to the

mysteries of existence. We might well put all our written scriptures on the shelf for twenty years until we learn what we are being told by unmediated experience of the world about us.

So too we might put Webster on the shelf until we revise the language of all our professions, especially law, medicine, and education. In ethics we need new words such as biocide and geocide, words that have not yet been adopted into the language. In law we need to define society in terms that include the larger community of living beings of the bioregion, of the Earth, and even of the universe. Certainly human society separated from such contexts is an abstraction. Life, liberty, habitat, and the pursuit of happiness are rights that should be granted to every living creature, each in accord with its own mode of being.

I might conclude with a reference to the Exodus symbol, which has exercised such great power over our Western civilization. Many peoples came to this country believing they were leaving a land of oppression and going to a land of liberation. We have always had a sense of transition. Progress supposedly is taking us from an undesirable situation to a kind of beatitude. So we might think of the transition from the terminal Cenozoic to the emerging Ecozoic as a kind of Exodus out of a period when humans are devastating the planet to a period when humans will begin to live on the Earth in a mutually enhancing manner.

There is a vast difference, however, in the case of this present transition, which is one not simply of the human but of the entire planet—its land, its air, its water, its biosystems, its human communities. This Exodus is a journey of the Earth entire. It is my hope that we will make the transition successfully. Whatever the future holds for us, however, it will be an experience shared by humans and every other Earthly being. There is only one community, one destiny.

The Green Man

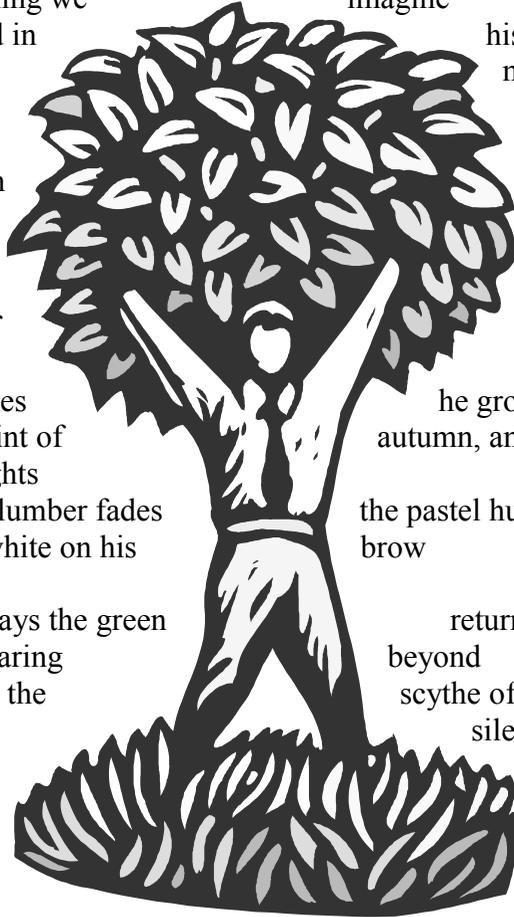
Sharon Elizabeth Wood

Everything we imagine
 Is grounded in his footing
 Leafy measures
 syncopating lives

He is the Am of the forest
 A cushion for the stars
 All creatures
 endless in his bark,
 The rustle of his breath

There are times he grows crisp
 With a hint of autumn, and winter
 nights
 When slumber fades
 Of summer white on his the pastel hues
 brow

Always the green returns
 To the clearing beyond search
 Cleaving the scythe of death in rebirth
 Out of the silence, still,
 God's own sacrifice



The Hunt for the Green Man: Dialogues written at the Chapel Hill Library during a Sunday Salon sponsored by the C.G. Jung Society - November 18, 2001

By Ann Loomis

The Green Man signifies irrepressible life. Once he has come into your awareness, you will find him speaking to you wherever you go. In his origins, he is much older than the Christian era. He is connected to the Great Goddess and cannot exist without the feminine principle. There is a link between the Great Goddess and the Green Man, and whenever she appears, he is likely to follow. If the Great Goddess has reappeared today as the concept of Gaia, then who is the Green Man in his new incarnation?

As a visual image, he has three main forms. In the first and oldest form, he is a male head formed out of a leaf mask. In the second form, he is a male head disgorging vegetation from his mouth and often from his ears and eyes. In the third form, the head is the fruit or flower of vegetation. The ferocity of the Green Man's facial expression is one of warning against neglect of natural law and the crushing of natural instincts in an unbalanced attempt to maintain control.

With the onset of the Age of Enlightenment, the Green Man went to sleep because of the effects of the rational-scientific attitude and the technology of the Industrial Revolution. His reappearance today in art and as a symbol of the environmental movement has profound significance for humanity. When an image of such great power as the Green Man returns in a new aspect after a long absence, the purpose of his return is not only to revive forgotten memories, but also to present fresh truths and emotions necessary to fulfilling the potentialities of the future.



By Ann Loomis

Me: Green Man, what forgotten memories are you here to revive?

GM: Ah, it's a great mystery, isn't it?



Me: Will you reveal your mysteries to me?

GM: Mysteries are like treasure hunts. See if you can unlock the secrets of my treasures.

Me: Can you at least give me a clue to start?

GM: Hmm, let's see. How about, LEAF.

Me: That's all? Leaf?

GM: Okay, here's another. LIFE.

Me: Leaf, life. A leaf goes through the cycle of life-birth, death, rebirth.

GM: How does a leaf do that?

Me: For one thing, a leaf has to be attached to a tree or a plant to do its thing.

GM: So you're saying that a tree gives life to the leaf. What are you getting at?

Me: Remember the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden? Adam and Eve never ate of the Tree of Life, did they?

GM: No, but maybe you can.

Me: Green Man, are you tempting me? I don't want to get into trouble here.

GM: Don't worry, I was there in the Garden of Eden. I know what went on there.

Me: Where were you in the Garden?

GM: I was up there among the leaves of the trees watching the whole thing. Our “first parents” weren’t ready to eat of The Tree of Life, but human kind is at a different point now.

Me: What will the Tree of Life tell us for our times?

GM: Ah, now that’s further into the mystery. You’ll have to hunt for it.

Me: Any clues?

GM: Look at all the leaves coming from my head. Leaf and head, head and leaf. Therein lie the clues to my mystery, both forgotten and not yet known.

By Betty Lou Chiaka

Me: Green Man, where are you in my life now?

Green Man: I’m hiding waiting for you to find me.

Me: What do I have to do to find you?



GM: You have to come outside and open your senses and your heart. You won’t find me at first. You won’t find me fast. I will elude you until your heart breaks with longing to be touched.

Me: I feel like there’s no time for such things these days and that pains me a lot.

GM: Good, your heart is starting to open. Feel that pain of no-time, no permission, no real reason to come out.

Me: Will you support me to do so?

GM: Yes, I'm just here waiting for you. I AM here.

By Jean White

Me: Green Man, I am wary of asking about what I need to do for the care of the Earth in myself and in the actual world. However, I will take the risk to listen to your response to my statement.



GM: I am aware that you have been searching and watching for evidence of my presence. That consciousness will grow and allow you to experience more evidence of how I am weaving the Earth's air, water, and warmth through the actions and deeds you do. Be mindful and it will enhance your life and that of those who are around.

By Nancy Corson Carter

Me: Green Man – so ferocious yet green, a plant, susceptible to frost, to mowing, to being eaten even by a passing deer – who are you?

GM: “The force that through the green fuse drives the flower . . .” You’ve heard of me; you’ve laughed at me as the Jolly Green Giant, for example, but generally you’ve effeminized and trivialized, even ignored me.

Me: I’m sorry, it’s just that I/we took you for granted, I guess. But no longer is that possible. Now I have a sense that you are deeply needed. What have you come to tell us?

GM: Walt Whitman knew – Leaves of Grass – all the most ordinary of Life – grass, for heaven’s sake! – is mystery and of the deepest universal as well as particular meaning.

Me: Yes, and how do you “marry” with Gaia? What does this mean?

GM: You've been in the Amazon; I saw you there. I've seen you everywhere there is green growing/flowing life on Earth, and you, mostly unbeknownst to yourself, have seen me. It's iconic really as well as direct reality – your eyes, the seeing of Earth, is part of who you are and who I am – seeing – in the deepest sense of knowing, acknowledging, being erotically and every-way-of-loving in relation.

By Rosalie Germano

Me: Green Man, where do you stand when things are falling down?

GM: I stand tall with roots deep in Gaia's soil.

Me: And if you fall?

GM: I grow on my side, receiving my nourishment from Gaia even when I am toppled.

Me: And if your tap root is severed?

GM: I go on in what comes after me in the sprouts that come forth from what was my roots.

Me: I've seen that happen. What can I learn about my life from what you are teaching me?

GM: You can learn to be nourished by Gaia while you can, for as long as ever you can, suck in life knowing that you will be healed either in yourself or in what comes after you.



By Albert Howard Carter, III

Me: Green Man, who are you?

GM: I am your forgotten self.

Me: How can I remember you, re-member me?

GM: Go outside and go inside your self.

Me: If I stretch two ways, won't I break?

GM: No, you will be healed, wholed, haloed.

Me: Were you in the Leonid shower?

GM: Yes, especially the dust from all the meteors and meteorites that helps build and renew the earth, build and renew the imaginations of all who are observant.

Me: Can you guide my creativity?



GM: Sure, I do already; you can't stop me, but you can further enhance my power.

Me: How?

GM: Go outside and go inside yourself.

Me: Isn't that what you said before?

GM: Of course, and for millennia past and to come: corso and ricorso. Hear the wind in my leaves and in your hair.

By Sharon Elizabeth Wood

GM: It isn't hollow. These leaves are the fingers of time.

Me: Is there a story?

GM: It is in the wood. The forest of life; the forest of mind. Gather.

Me: Where is the wood?

GM: Everywhere. Feel my breath. The rough tongue of drought and prosperity. Fish flow through my veins.

Me: Are you with us?

GM: I whisper. Pine.

Me: And Gaia?

GM: I am the shadow of the giant stomach. I ride the wind where Gaia abides.

Me: Will you stay with us?

GM: Look to the acorn and the wild mushroom. Seek the soul of the Earth. Pungent. Pulsing. Alive.



Spirit of the Wilderness

By David King

Spirit of the wilderness
 I wake to hear your call
 Wandering 'round these fences
 Trying not to fall
 On a moonlit night your shadow's cast
 Dance upon my bedroom wall
 I hear a voice of innocence
 Calling through the fog
 Dancer of another time
 I hate to see you fall
 Passing through the woods Sublime
 I hear your curtain call
 The crashing of exploding smoke
 Disappear before the dawn
 I wake to find you all alone
 Your blood runs through us all
 Spirit of the wilderness

Though they cut back all the land
 To put their highway's through
 Your territory is untied integrity still true
 The grid they laid upon the ground
 Marked progress at every shore
 But I like it best when I'm alone
 I see you by my door

It's a sadness of the times we live
 Where industry is king
 We're losing all our artisans to tractors and machines
 It's a modern life of acquisition
 Vapid as can be
 Our friends are burdened
 Our loved ones weather
 And nobody is free

Spirit of the wilderness

Is Science Really Compatible with Religion?

By E. Maynard Adams

Although many people over the past several centuries have felt a logical tension between religion and modern science and students of the culture have concluded that as science has progressed religions has lost ground in modern Western civilization, a number of recent cultural critics have contended that there is really no conflict after all. Some agree with Ian Barbour (*Issues in Science and Religion*, Prentice Hall, 1966) that science and religion are “complementary languages” representing alternative types of analysis from different perspectives of the same reality, not exclusive competitors. Indeed, Barbour received the “Nobel prize” in religion, the coveted Templeton award, for this as a major contribution toward the advancement of religion. Others agree with John Polkinghorne. “Reality,” he says, “is a multi-layered unity. I can perceive another person as an aggregation of atoms, an open biochemical system in interaction with its environment, a specimen of *homo sapiens*, someone whose needs deserve my respect and compassion, a brother for whom Christ died. All are true, . . . and all mysteriously cohere in that one person.” “Part of the case for theism,” he contends, “is that in God the creator, the ground of all that is, these different levels find their lodging and their guarantee.” (*One World: The Interaction of Science and Theology*, Princeton, 1986, p. 97).

Science and particular religions obviously disagree on many factual matters. The Judeo-Christian religion, for instance, has its six-day creation story, which if taken literally, is inconsistent on many points with the scientific account of the origin and development of the universe. It seems clear to me that, where science and religion give inconsistent accounts of contingent factual matters, a rational person has no choice but to accept the findings of science and to reject the conflicting account in one’s religion, for science is very careful about collection evidence and in holding its beliefs accountable to the relevant data and proceeds with a standing invitation for anyone to prove its truth-claims false; but, where the conflict is in categorical beliefs, it isn’t clear that science has the advantage. And the most serious conflicts between science and religion are over their categorical views of the world.

In our empirical, anti-metaphysical age, we don’t give much attention to categorical concepts and beliefs. Yet we deal with them all the time. For

instance, the concept of causation is not an empirical concept. It is part of the conceptual framework that makes empirical investigations possible. We could not empirically discover that there are no causes, not even that there was an event without any connections, for we would not consider something to be real that had no causal relationships. If I should “see” a cat sitting on the table before me that had no effect on my hand when extended to the area or no effect on other things in its vicinity, I would not take my visual experience of a cat on the table to be veridical. In other words, causation is part of my conception of reality. Much the same is true of the concept of a physical object. We could not empirically discover that there are no physical objects. We have to take the semantic content of a visual or tactile experience, for instance, to have independent spatial location and to have causal connections with other independent spatial objects in order for us to count the sensory experience as veridical. And of course being a spatial

The significant challenge of modern science to religion is not in the empirical findings of science, but in the presuppositions of its methodology.

object in causal relationships that is independent of our experience of it is our concept of a physical object. Our concepts of space, time, substance, person, fact, property, existence, possibility, normativity, value, meaning, consistency, truth, self, world, and on and on are categorical. They are foundational concepts.

They are not formed to help us make sense of the items, features, and structures we encounter in the world. They are involved in being a self and in having a world with items and features in it

and in having knowledge of them. And so categorical concepts are true of or have application to any world we could encounter.

Some categorical concepts may take on different forms. For instance, there is a teleological and a naturalistic form of the concept of causation. Which of these two forms we accept is not an empirical matter. The teleological concept of causation, that is, for something to happen for the realization of an end or for what ought to be, had to be abandoned when normativity or value-requiredness and the concept of inherent structures of meaning were eliminated from our ontological categories. This left the cause of an event or state of affairs to be found among the environmental, elemental, or antecedent factual conditions that necessitated it. That is what the naturalistic concept of causation amounts to. So the reduction of the teleological concept of causation to the naturalistic concept was not for

empirical reasons. It was part of the overhaul of our ontological categories made necessary by the modern revision of our view of the knowledge-yielding powers of the human mind. This revision was not based on empirical discoveries. It occurred primarily because of a shift in the purposes for which people sought knowledge; that is, because of a change in the dominant conception of the human enterprise. The modes of experience in which normative, value, and meaning concepts are grounded do not yield the kind of knowledge that is useful in our materialistic pursuits. And so they were discredited as knowledge-yielding modes of experience.

In giving a scientific descriptive/explanatory account of an event, we place it in the world not only as delineated in the concepts and laws of a scientific theory, but also in terms of the categories of the worldview presupposed by the scientific method; that is, we assign the event a place in the scientific worldview as well as in a scientific theory. We locate it both in the world as delineated in categorical structures and in a particular segment or dimension of the world as delineated in terms of a scientific theory. Only the latter account is subject to empirical confirmation or refutation. The view or the assumption about the categorical structure of the world is constant across scientific theories. It is the metaphysical view of the world presupposed by modern science.

Consider the case of a fine man who died suddenly in his fifties. He had accomplished much in his field and was admired and respected by all who knew him both professionally and as a human being. The autopsy showed that he had extensive previously undetected coronary artery disease and had had a sudden fatal coronary occlusion. After having the medical report carefully explained to his grieving widow, she said, “I just can’t understand why such a brilliant man had to die so young when he had so much to offer.” It became clear in talking with her that her “Why?” about his death was asking for an explanation in terms of reasons that would justify his death, reasons that would show that his death was a good thing. In other words, she wanted an explanation of her husband’s death that would place it in a world in which things work together for the realization of what is good – for the fulfillment of what ought to be. In her worldview, the only explanation that would satisfy her “Why?” would be one that would show that her husband’s death was a good thing.

There are those who say that the scientific theory of biological evolution is compatible with the Judeo-Christian religion, for it does not really matter to the Judeo-Christian religion whether creation took six days as in the

It is not only religion with which the worldview presupposed by modern science is incompatible; it is incompatible with morality, normative social and political thought, indeed, the whole humanistic universe of discourse.

biblical story or the millions or billions of years that science talks about for the development of the universe. But what does matter is that according to the scientific account of biological evolution and of the development of the physical universe in general is that it is a blind process, with no ends involved; it is not a becoming, not a process fulfilling or realizing an ought. The causality in the process is not teleological. The dynamics of the universe does not work toward the realization of an order of goodness. In other words, the scientific account of the origin and development of the universe is cast in terms of a worldview in which there are no ends, normative laws, or values structures in nature. Whatever happens is the consequence of elemental, environmental, or antecedent factual conditions, without the pull or constraint of an end in view or a normative requirement.

The significant challenge of modern science to religion is not in the empirical findings of science, but in the presuppositions of its methodology. Modern science restricts itself to sensory observation for data-gathering and theory confirmation. This worked a transformation in the descriptive/explanatory conceptual system of science. Science not only excluded statements that could not be confirmed or falsified by sensory data but eliminated concepts from its conceptual system that could not be grounded in or validated by sensory experience. It was on this basis that value concepts, the concept of normativity, and the concept of inherent structures of meaning, the key concepts of lived experience and the humanities, were eliminated from the descriptive/explanatory conceptual system of science. This is what gave rise to the naturalistic worldview of modern science, not the empirical findings of science.

The justification for the reformation in the methodology of modern science and thus for the transformation in its conceptual system and worldview is the claim that we have no knowledge-yielding powers in which we can ground and validate these concepts. This is a philosophical claim, not a scientific finding. Given that the concepts of value and normativity are tied somehow to our emotive or non-indifferent experience and that the concepts of meaning are grounded in our reflective awareness of our own subjectivity and perceptual understanding of the expressions and behavior of others, the justification of the elimination of these humanistic concepts from our descriptive/explanatory conceptual system and thus from our ontological categories turns on whether these modes of experience have the appropriate categorical structure to be knowledge-yielding. This is a matter we determine by a philosophical examination of the grammar of the language we use in reporting and describing such experiences and a consideration of what it makes sense to say and what it does not make sense to say about them.

Without going into a detailed analysis here,¹ it seems clear that emotive experiences, reflective awareness, and expression perception or perceptual understanding, the experiences in which value and meaning concepts are grounded, have their identity and unity in terms of their semantic content and logical form, that is, in terms of what is semantically in them as distinct from what is existentially in them and in terms of the grammatical form of the language in which they are expressible. Furthermore, it makes sense to speak of such experiences as translatable into sentences and it makes sense to say they mean what the sentences that articulate them mean and they have the logical form these sentences have. And it makes sense to speak of them as having logical relationships, as making truth-claims, and as veridical illusory,

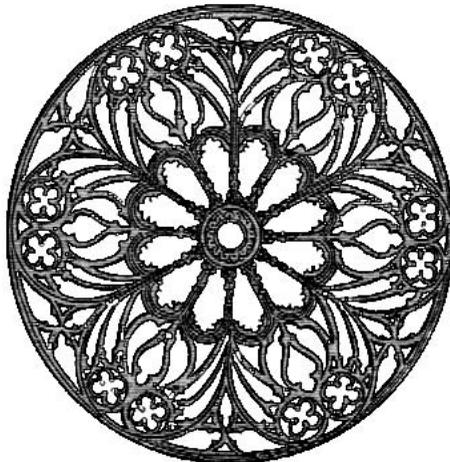
We must either reinstate the humanistic categories in our scientific descriptive/explanatory conceptual system, or accept science as a limited perspective that gives us useful practical knowledge while we live our lives and run our institutions within a humanistic view of self and the world.

¹ For a detailed analysis, see E. M. Adams, *Philosophy and the Modern Mind* (1975), pp. 77-201; and *The Metaphysics of Self and World* (1991), pp. 34-91.

or hallucinatory. All of this indicates that these experiences are knowledge-yielding, and it follows from these considerations that our value, normative, and meaning concepts that are grounded in these knowledge-yielding modes of experience have ontological significance and should be included in our descriptive/explanatory conceptual systems and thus in our metaphysical view of the world.

It is not only religion with which the worldview presupposed by modern science is incompatible; it is incompatible with morality, normative social and political thought, indeed, the whole humanistic universe of discourse. The world defined by the categorical presuppositions of modern science is a world in which human beings could not live; it is a world in which knowledge would not be possible, including science itself.

Philosophers have made heroic efforts to reduce the humanistic universe of discourse to the scientific or to explain away all apparent humanistic truth-claims that would be a logical challenge to the scientific worldview, but the logical difficulties persist. After a lifetime of struggle with these problems, I have concluded that only two courses are open to us. We must either reinstate the humanistic categories in our scientific descriptive/explanatory conceptual system, or accept science as a limited perspective that gives us useful practical knowledge while we live our lives and run our institutions within a humanistic view of self and the world.



There

By James Price
(An Eighth Grader)

Once I took a trip to see a new house that was being built on top of a mountain. It was a rather small mountain, some would call it a hill, but the view was breathtaking. At first I was excited. How cool could it be to live up here? I sat down on the deck of the new house which offered a beautiful view of the North Carolina mountains. There, I could look over the land, seeing small mountains in the foreground, and large ones behind. Then, I saw a house on one other small mountain, obstructing the view, and I saw telephone poles, strung up across the mountains. Sudden sadness washed over me and I started to think. What will happen when there is a house on every mountain top? What view will there be then? I looked around the new house. How many trees were cleared for this to be built? What will happen when we have gone too far and cleared too many trees? Before nature had been destroyed here it must have been beautiful and peaceful. What have we done? What have we done to the Earth as humans? What have we done to nature? Does anyone care anymore? Does anyone really care anymore about having beautiful mountains and beautiful views? It is sad.



On this Earth Day 2002, (which is today in case you didn't know), I ask that you stop and just think. Think about what we as humans have done, or what you have done to hurt the Earth. I ask you only to take the time in whatever way, to preserve nature, preserve the Earth, and enjoy them while we still have the time. Just think about this, **and really think** about these things that I have said.

Thank you for your time.

A College Essay for the Ecozoic

By Liz Levitt
(A College Student)

During the spring of my sixteenth year, I made a solitary ritual of venturing out into the last fleeting moments of the night to see the sun rise over the Appalachian mountains. I was attending the Outdoor Academy of the Southern Appalachians at the time and, although the natural world has always been an important presence in my life, the semester I spent in Pisgah Forest deepened my relationship to the Earth.

Returning home to suburban Greensboro, I felt bereft of the natural beauty that surrounded me in the mountains and wondered how I would nurture my newfound intimacy with the cosmos and Earth. I was comforted by a quote from Black Elk that would serve as a reference point for me as I returned home:

The first peace, which is the most important, is that which comes within the souls of people when they realize their relationship, their oneness, with the universe and all its powers, and when they realize that at the center of the universe dwells the Great Spirit, and that this center is really everywhere, it is within each of us.

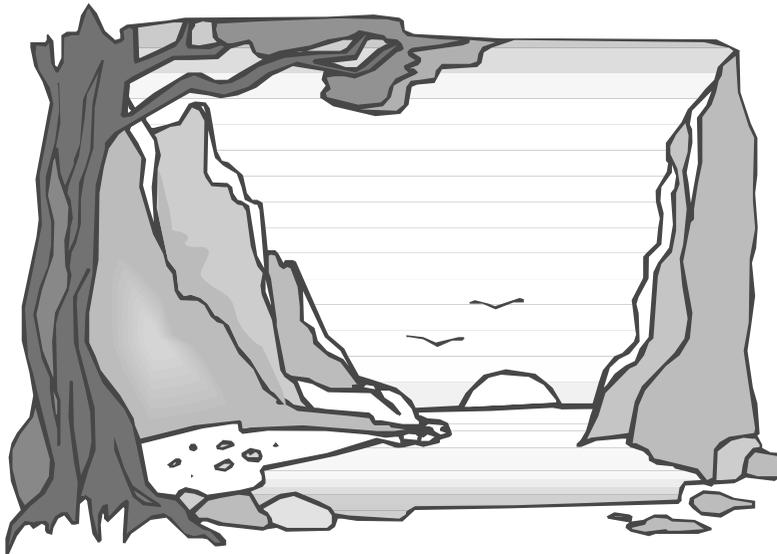


In the fall of my junior year, I received an invitation to spend two days with Thomas Berry, world-renowned ecotheologian and author of *The Dream of the Earth*, *The Universe Story* and *The Great Work*. Thomas had been asked to provide a philosophical foundation for the Earth Guides Training Program at nearby Timberlake Farm and I had been invited to be a trainee. When I arrived at Timberlake to take part in the program, I found myself in the presence of a wise elder whose thoughts, from that moment forward, would have a profound influence on the evolution of my thinking.

Thomas's words, more than those of any other thinker, have given me a vocabulary for capturing the moments of presence I experienced in the Appalachian mountains. In essence, Thomas is saying that despite the distinct interiority of each living thing, there is no separation between them. They are all connected. From Thomas' perspective, there is a distinction between the human and the natural world, but not a separation. This concept of distinction rather than separation, fascinates me; it captures my actual experience of the natural world and gives me a whole new way of thinking about the interconnectedness of all life.

It is easy to see how human beings, lacking such a vision, have lapsed into an extractive and exploitative relationship to the earth. As long as we view ourselves as separate from Earth, we will continue to view Earth as a resource for our exploitation and use.

There is no greater need of our time than to create a new vision of human life as part of an unfolding universe story; there is no better way to begin than to make our own heartfelt connection to the living universe itself. As Thoreau says, in *Life Without Principle*, "Really to see the sun rise or go down every day, so to relate ourselves to a universal fact, would preserve us sane forever."



Communion with All

By James Stovall
(A Seminary Student)

The Age of Nations is past. The task before us now, if we would not perish, is to shake off our ancient prejudices, and to build the earth.

– Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, 1936

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus is reported to have said, “Do to others as you would want them do to you.” These simple and familiar words convey a truth about how we are to act in the world. The words also convey a message about our fundamental connectedness as humans. A more contemporary way of stating a similar message would be to say, “We are one. We are all a part of an amazing journey in which our fates are linked together. We breathe the same air and drink the same water. We are all in this together.”

We are all a part of an amazing journey in which our fates are linked together.

What is needed in the world today is a new way of thinking that embodies this basic truth. Until recently, the human species had not experienced Earth as one integrated system. We had limited experience of other peoples and other cultures. Our primary loyalty has most often been limited to our family, tribe, race, religion, ideology or nation. Our identification has been restricted, and we have often seen those beyond that identification as enemies.

There is a growing awareness in the world today that we can no longer see ourselves as totally separate from one another. The visual symbol of this new awareness is the picture of Earth from space. Along with this awareness is a greater appreciation for the diversity of creation and the importance of maintaining and honoring and learning from all aspects of creation. This also means learning to profoundly respect and learn from our differences. In our time we are able to see, like never before, that all of life is interdependent, that we share a common destiny, that our individual well being depends on the well being of the whole system.

The basic message in the proceeding paragraphs represents a “word” that has been profoundly important to me at a very personal level. It is a view that I have attempted to incorporate into my life on a daily basis and one that I

have sought to be reflected in my life and work as a whole. It is also a message that I have attempted to communicate with others in a wide variety of ways. It is a message that I believe to be desperately needed in our world today. Many have suggested the survival of the planet may hinge upon our collective ability to incorporate this new way of thinking into our lives and our social systems.

By starting with the quote from the Gospel of Luke, I am, in one sense, attempting to manipulate the tradition to get it to say what I want it to say. The message about our connectedness is only one of many themes that might be found in the tradition. I am also tapping into whatever existing loyalty and commitment to the tradition may be present on the part of the reader. I am primarily interested in the tradition to the extent that it is helpful in conveying this core message. I personally have limited interest in other major themes or directions that may be present in the tradition.

I also approach the tradition somewhat skeptically as one who has seen the tradition misused, in my view, in a manner that has had tragic consequences and in a manner that contributes to the problem of not understanding ourselves as one. The Christian tradition, like other religious traditions, has been used to divide the people of Earth. I see people using words and expressions that have, for all purposes, lost their meaning and relevance to people in the 21st century. I see people afraid of facing a future in which we must essentially recreate the tradition if it is to be used for something other than a regressive force within society.

My interest in this “word” grows out of my own personal experience and my view of the world we live in. I approach the current task as a white, Anglo-Saxon, middle-class, American male who has been raised and indoctrinated in the Western, Protestant Christian tradition. I was raised in the south and was sensitized to the issue of racism. I also approach the present task as one who has spent over five years among the poorest of the poor on the planet having lived in Egypt, India and Indonesia. This experience has caused me to be sensitive to the fact that roughly 15% of those on the planet control over 85% of the earth’s resources and that 85% of those on the planet attempt to get by on less than 15% of Earth’s resources.

I am professionally involved in assisting people in resolving conflicts through the use of mediation. I am deeply concerned about the use of

violence throughout the planet—from domestic violence to war between nations. I also find myself deeply concerned about matters related to ecological destruction, homophobia, consumerism and patriarchy. Finally, I approach this task as one very much in need of love and forgiveness from others. I am in need of hope for the future as I attempt to respond to the needs described above. I have experienced being part of a caring community and I continue to search for ways of connecting with others in an honest and profound way.

In the first part of the last century, German theologian Rudolph Bultmann described the task of contemporary theology as demythologizing the traditional Christian language. At the risk of oversimplifying, he challenged modern theology to reinterpret the Christian symbols in such a way that they might be understood by people in our time. In many respects, the Christian terms developed in a time in which an entirely different worldview was predominant. This paper, in a sense, seeks to continue the work that has been taking place as Bultmann describes. The job is one not simply of extracting the Christian language from its original mythic structure in an effort to consider it in the abstract. The job includes putting it into a context that is appropriate for our time.

In our time the task of demythologizing the Christian understanding involves a dialogue between science and religion.

I will seek to interpret the Christian language in the context of our fundamental unity.

In our time the task of demythologizing the Christian understanding involves a dialogue between science and religion. In the 13th century, the works of Aristotle were made available in a manner that restored confidence in empirical knowledge and gave rise to a school of philosophers known the Averroists. The Averroists suggested that philosophy was independent of revelation. The rise in popularity of the movement essentially threatened the ability of the church to be taken seriously and engage in the dialogue of the day. If the church had chosen to ignore the work of Aristotle, chances are that the church would have become irrelevant because of the clarity and persuasiveness of Aristotle's work.

It was in this context that Thomas Aquinas managed to reconcile the position of the church with the works of Aristotle. Aquinas argued that the

truths of faith and those of sense experience are fully compatible and complementary. Aquinas organized the knowledge of his time in the context of faith. Through the work of Aquinas, the church put its imprimatur on the cultural material of the time. This paper will draw heavily from three authors (Sullie McFague, Kaufman and Thomas Berry) that have attempted to do much the same work in dealing with the scientific breakthroughs that have taken place in our time.

The dialogue between science and religion must occur at several levels and should take place in an atmosphere of mutual respect in which each sphere must come to recognize the scope and limitations of its own area of knowledge. Science has shaped the collective imagination in our time like nothing else. Science, and its brother, technology, has transformed the face of the planet and changed our lives and our thinking forever. On the one hand, science has pushed our ethics into a whole new realm. On the other hand, science seems to hold the seeds needed to recapture a profound sense of the sacred in our time as it serves to illuminate the wonder of creation.

While science offers clues to a new theology, it will not do the job alone. Theology may, in a sense, partner with science in identifying and articulating the principles and patterns that appear to be built into creation. Science seems to lack the ability to frame these patterns and principles in such a way that speaks to the fundamental questions of human existence. Science allows theology to see creation and nature in a new way. Science doesn't give us a new theology. Science does give us a new way to look at creation that produces a new theology.

Theology should respond to science as a credible and contemporary view of reality. Theology doesn't adopt the scientific view. Theology incorporates the scientific view and allows it to illuminate the wonder and mystery of creation.

In considering the source of confusion and breakdown in our time, Thomas Berry has suggested that there is a crisis in our cosmology or our

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. . . .

Science seems to lack the ability to frame these patterns and principles in such a way that speaks to the fundamental questions of human existence.

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basic story about the nature of the universe. The cosmology of a people concerns not only stories of origin but also the general way of thinking about our relationship to the world around us. The cosmology of a culture shapes the social structures within the society. Our collective story serves to shape our emotions and provides us with life purpose and energizes our actions. Our story helps us to make sense of our suffering. It gives a sense of identity and provides a context in which life can be meaningful.

Since the Enlightenment, much of Western Christianity has focused upon matters of the spirit as distinct from matters of a physical nature. To some extent this dichotomy grew out of seeing the human as “just below the angels.” The uneasy truce between science and religion centered upon science being concerned with the natural world and religion focusing upon spiritual matters. This split had at least two tragic consequences: first, religion was now reluctant to draw upon the natural world as a means of experiencing the divine; second, science was now able to relate to Earth as mere stuff lacking any sense of the divine. Western society generally sees nature as inert, lifeless stuff to be manipulated and messed with as long as it serves our purposes. The divine is too often seen as something out there or up there but not found in the real, physical world. Religion often challenged people to transcend the natural world in order to connect with the divine.

Being able to detach from the physical world in that manner allowed scientists in the West to probe, explore, and analyze the stuff of Earth in a new and unprecedented manner. This led us to the incredible explosion of science and technology of the present age. This view of Earth has now turned against us in an incredibly destructive manner. In more recent years, science has begun to recognize a fundamentally different basis for reality. Rather than seeing the universe in all of its separateness and individual parts, science has begun to see reality as fundamentally connected.

Recent discoveries offer a way of overcoming this split that has been present for several centuries. Physics demonstrates that nothing exists in isolation. All of matter, from subatomic particles to the galaxies in space, is part of an intricate web of relationships in a unified whole. Biology reveals that, in a totally interrelated system, the principle of survival of the fittest has

new meaning. The “fittest” is now seen as that species that best contributes to the well being of the whole system. Ecology provides the understanding that all parts of a living system are interconnected and that greater stability results from increased diversity. These and other “discoveries” reveal a new paradigm and point us in the direction of a new relationship with Earth and with one another.

A growing number of scientists now suggest that the universe is more like an evolving, maturing organism that has been developing for 15 billion years. The universe has become increasingly complex and diversified, beginning with hydrogen, then forming galaxies, stars and planets and evolving more complex life forms over time.

Sallie McFague says that the “common creation story” is at the heart of the contemporary scientific view of reality. She highlights five important features of the common creation story:



- (1) The evolutionary perspective serves to put humanity in its proper context as far as having just recently appeared in the past several hundred thousand years or so. McFague explains: “On the universe’s clock, human existence appears a few seconds before midnight. This suggests that the whole show could scarcely have been for our benefit.”
- (2) The story is an ongoing story with an open future. The story doesn’t claim to have it all figured out. We are always becoming and it is at least partly up to us to determine what the future will be.
- (3) There is a radical interrelatedness and interdependence of all aspects of creation. Everything that is came out of this evolutionary process. We are all cousins. Everything that is shares a common source and history.

- (4) Creation is multileveled in terms of complexity. Included in the increasing complexity is increasing subjectivity or the ability to experience and feel. The more complex the entity, the more vulnerable and dependent it is upon the other levels that support it.
- (5) The common creation story is public and can be known by all. It includes everyone and is available to everyone. The story represents a common meeting place for diverse meeting place for diverse people.

The universe, through the human, is now capable of reflecting upon its own significance and meaning. According to Thomas Berry, “The human being is that being in whom the universe reflects upon itself and its numinous origin in its own unique mode of conscious awareness.” The human is less a being on Earth or in the universe than a dimension of Earth and the universe. The Bible says that humans are created in the image of God. Science suggests that whatever creative force gave rise to the universe also gave rise to the human. In either case, we are bonded with the creative powers in the universe. We are natural creatures. Nature is at work within our bodies all of the time. Our genetic coding brings about healing when our bodies are injured. The same principles that guide nature also guide our bodies at the physical level and at the level of our creative imagination.

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There are spontaneities within us that are the same creative energies that cause the sun to rise, the rose to bloom and the cow to give birth to the calf. These creative energies can serve as a source of guidance to us. These instincts come from the same mysterious source as the entire universe. In the words of Kaufman: “This spontaneity as the guiding force of the universe, can be thought of as the mysterious impulse that gave birth to the primordial fireball.” Thomas Berry makes a similar point in saying “The human is that being in whom the grand diversity of the universe celebrates itself in conscious awareness.”

Thomas Berry makes a distinction between our genetic coding (hard-wiring) and cultural coding. The extent of the cultural coding as a species is part of what distinguishes us from other species. Use of language is part of

our genetic coding. Which language we speak would depend upon the language of our parents, where we were born and other such specific factors. Part of our genetic coding seems to be a response of awe when we encounter mystery. Organized religion is part of our cultural coding; that is part of what we have created as cultural and social beings. Worshipping some form of the divine seems to be as essential part of being human. Historical evidence would seem to indicate that some religious response to life is built into the human constitution.

Humans, like the rest of creation, are incredibly diverse. In *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas comments on the multitude of things that come from God:

because God’s goodness could not be adequately represented by one creature alone, God produced many and diverse creatures, so that what was wanting in one, in the representation of the divine goodness, might be supplied by another. For goodness in creatures is manifold and divided; and hence the whole universe together participates in the divine goodness more perfectly, and represents it better than any single creature.

Thomas Berry argues that this need to appreciate diversity can be applied to all areas of human activity including religion. Given the great diversity within nature one could expect that any single revelation of the divine would, in some respect, be incomplete. The divine isn’t revealed all at once. In his study of world religions, Berry has observed that each religious tradition is full and complete, in some respect, by itself although “each is a vital expanding process with an ever renewing series of transformations throughout the centuries.” Each of the major religions have evolved and remained open to change and interpretation as they have interacted with new breakthroughs within the culture or in interaction with other traditions.

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Berry argues that each of these revelatory experiences is needed in order to more fully grasp the Whole. It is also the case that each tradition carries the whole within itself in much the same way that the entire DNA structure of a human being is carried within each and every molecule. Berry urges

caution among Christians speaking about the fullness of the Christian revelatory experience. He suggests that the church has participated in various forms of bigotry and arrogance in asserting that the Christian tradition represents an exclusive claim to the truth.

Another important aspect of our humanity as an extension of the whole of creation relates to our new power stemming from technology. With the splitting of the atom and various other technological breakthroughs that occurred in the 20th century, Einstein has suggested that “everything has changed except our way of thinking.” Today, we exercise power over forces that are on an order of magnitude many times greater than was available in previous periods in history.

According to Berry, “The earth that directed itself instinctively in its former phase now seems to be entering a phase of conscious decision through its human expression.” Earth seems to have entrusted its destiny to human decision in a brand new manner. God seems to have now given the human community the power to destroy its basic life systems that have enabled the evolutionary process to unfold up to this moment.

Understanding ourselves as co-creators in the evolutionary process invites us to consider the whole of creation.

Science suggests that humans are now involved in giving shape to the evolutionary process. We have the capacity to destroy creation or give positive shape to it. In either case we are responsible for shaping the future. We have decisions to make in much the same way as the people of Israel (Deut. 30:19) were challenged to choose the life-affirming path.

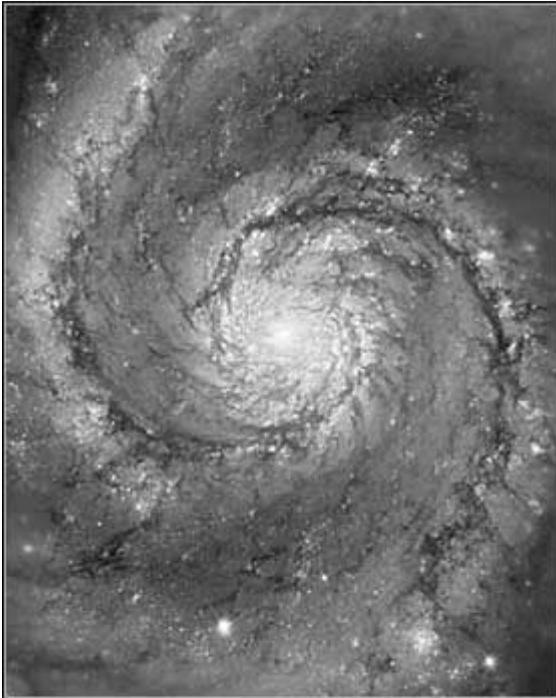
Understanding ourselves as co-creators in the evolutionary process invites us to consider the whole of creation. We are challenged to think more comprehensively than ever before. In understanding our unique role, we are compelled to act out of a concern that takes us beyond a concern for oneself, one’s group, tribe or country. This is similar to a call to love others as our neighbor.

Christianity has maintained that God acts in and through history. Given what we know today about the 15 billion-year evolutionary process, we might come to understand God as the guiding, creative force that underlies

the process. God is revealed to us as we recognize and celebrate the goodness of creation present throughout the universe. God is also seen in the patterns and principles that emerge in and through creation.

If we understand ourselves to be part of a process that has emerged as a result of trial and error, we may be more inclined toward a greater willingness to forgive others and ourselves. We may actively seek out ways to exercise compassion and cooperation in regard to other humans and the rest of creation.

We may even be compelled to take risks and sacrifice on behalf of future generations. As participants in the creative, evolutionary journey, we come to understand our actions as sacred, while fully aware of our limited knowledge and understanding of the entire process. Rather than acting out of hubris or arrogance, we act out of humility and in a tentative manner as we feel our way in the dark.



Change of Heart

By Polly Gates

I flushed a moth down the john today.
Absentmindedly, I did not think
of his convenience, just of mine.
It seemed the simplest thing to do, but
he was alive when I had hoped him dead.



The toilet waters roiled
As the current swept him
down a vortex without escape.
I watched in horror as he panicked,
fluttered desperately,
bobbing lightly on the swirling waters,
trying to fly up, but
inexorably sucked down instead.
The toilet belched as if content,
and he was gone,
carried down to drown in sewers
far beneath the city.



A moth is meant for light and air
not such a fate.

Later when I went to feed the dog a little
caterpillar waited in his dish.

“Oh no, not again!” I thought

Gently I took the bowl,

Added water and walked to the back yard.

Kneeling down I slowly poured it out.

Soft grass and damp earth received
my caterpillar. He was back again on
firm ground and safe terrain.



So too, my goodness.

We all are on firm ground when we are kind
to helpless things.

Songs from the Order Ecumenical

Life is Good

Tune: Walk Right In.

Life is good and we can shout
With the sun and the moon and the stars...
(repeat)

Everybody's talking 'bout the universe
Let's all dance to life.



Life is good and we can shout
With the sun and moon and the stars yeah man
With the sun and moon and the stars. Yeah!

Free to Decide

Tune: Hi, Ho, Nobody Home.

Free, free, free to decide
What this world is going to be;
This imperative is ours
To be free, free....
(repeat)

*Editors Note: These are the first songs to be printed in *The Ecozoic Reader*. We welcome your submissions of songs, music and other artistic expressions.

The Center for Ecozoic Studies

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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 community of life.

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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 on 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.

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