

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 another mass extinction of plant and animal species, 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 to flourish. 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.

Earth's Desire

By Thomas Berry

To be seen
in her loveliness

to be tasted
in her delicious
fruits

to be listened to
in her teaching

to be endured
in the severity
of her discipline

to be experienced
as the maternal
source
whence we come

the destiny
to which we
return.



Illustration by Mary Southard

Whither Goeth CES? “. . . into All the World”

By Herman Greene

January 2003 marks the beginning of the fourth year of the life of the Center for Ecozoic Studies (CES). We have never tried to articulate in this journal what CES is about and where it is going. At the recent CES Board retreat, we took note of this omission and decided it was time to do this. We now declare ourselves to the world . . . not for our own sake, but for the sake of the Great Work of bringing into being the Ecozoic Era, a work we share with other people and many other centers of the Ecozoic vision.

Our work involves
many people.

Our work involves many people. It is not the work only of the small group of people located primarily in North Carolina who have brought CES into being. No, we are becoming an organization with worldwide reach.

Our subscribers are those who join with us in the Great Work. Thus, we see this journal and all that we do as a service to those who (i) share with us the tasks of education, research and artistic expression for the realization of the Ecozoic Era, and (ii) find in CES and its members meaningful links in carrying out these tasks.

Now I will tell, in brief, our story. I will describe the core elements of our work and explain our Foundational Documents and where they may be obtained. Then I will discuss our decision to become a membership organization and explain how we understand what it means to be a member of CES. Finally, I will discuss the special projects and international activities in which CES is engaged.

Our Story

CES grew out of the Center for Reflection on the Second Law, a nonprofit organization based in Raleigh, North Carolina (CFRSL), and headed by Jim Berry, Thomas Berry’s brother. In January 1995 I wrote a letter to Jim Berry and Thomas Berry in which I suggested the formation of a “Berry Society” along the lines of the Jung Society. Whether out of modesty or a sense of what was needed and what was not, both of them rapidly rejected a society bearing the name “Berry.” Nonetheless, I presented the idea again at a February 1995 meeting of the Board of CFRSL, and a committee was formed composed of Albert Hardy, Sue Tiedeman, Evelyn

Mattern and me to look further into a way to bring local groups into being that could carry on the work of CFRSL (the work we now call the Great Work). This committee came up with three key ideas: (i) rather than the name Berry Society, we chose the name “Ecozoic Society,” (ii) we identified “three key building blocks” of an Ecozoic Society, which were the New Story, bioregionalism, and ecological spirituality, and (iii) we decided to form support groups that would have a dynamic of reporting, learning, envisioning, and then going into the world to act.

In April of 1996, I spoke with Thomas Berry about our idea of having an organization called the “Ecozoic Society.” At first he liked the idea, and then later he said, “The Ecozoic Society isn’t some little group in Chapel Hill, it’s the whole world.” Ultimately we came up with the name “Support Groups for an Ecozoic Society.” Our work began when we put together a handbook for forming a support group and presented this for the first time in July 1996 at a conference in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, led by Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme. Also at this time I wrote “Call for an Ecozoic Society,” which described the three building blocks and was published in the July 1996 CFRSL newsletter. This article was later republished in *Earthlight Magazine* (Winter 1997-98), along with an announcement concerning the availability of the handbook. As a result of this effort, we fulfilled over 100 requests for the handbook, and we heard that several “support groups” came into being. Each of these groups opened with a discussion of their experiences with nature (to aid in reintegrating humans with the natural world), studied the New Story, bioregionalism or ecological spirituality (to learn about the Great Work), and concluded with an open discussion session (to talk about participants’ own plans, insights and questions).

In September 1998, Jim Berry died, and shortly thereafter his beloved wife Mary also died. These losses had a major impact on CFRSL and the work we were doing with the support groups. For a period, all was still.

Jim had always said that after he died, the Piedmont Bioregional Institute of Chapel Hill (PBI) should take on the work of CFRSL, and gradually this change took place. Consequently, in January 1999, the Support Groups for an Ecozoic Society program shifted over to PBI.

In the next six months, the foundations for CES were laid. In conversations between Albert Hardy and me, the name “Center for Ecozoic

Studies” was chosen. In August 1999 I wrote the essay “Foundational Ideas for the Formation of the Center for Ecozoic Studies” and drafted the first “Concept Paper” describing its proposed structure. In December 1999 the first CES “Service Group” meeting was held, and on January 1, 2000, CES officially came into being.

In September 2000, the first edition of *The Ecozoic Reader* was published and it has been issued quarterly since that time.

In September 2001, the outline of a course to be taught by CES was put forward by Elaine and Nelson Stover, John and Lynda Cock, Julie and Ted Purcell, and Valerie Vickers, with the help of others, called “Our Great Work: Toward a New Earth Resolve.” The course was first offered to the public in August 2002.

In January 2002, CES separated from PBI to become a nonprofit organization in its own right.

The Core Elements of CES’ Present Work

Here are the four core elements of CES’ present work: (i) *The Ecozoic Reader*, (ii) the course, “Our Great Work: Toward a New Earth Resolve,” (iii) Ecozoic Study Circles, and (iv) a website. In addition, CES is involved in various special projects, and participates in conferences, provides speakers and leads educational programs. The work of CES is supported by an administrative function.

The Ecozoic Reader

The Ecozoic Reader is at the heart of the work of CES. Through the Reader, we seek to heighten sensitivity to the integral relation of humans and nature, tell and celebrate the story of the universe, and provide insight into the transition to an Ecozoic society. Thus far, we have not attempted to expand the readership of the *Reader* or expand its format. We feel it is time to do so now. The feedback we have received indicates to us that the *Reader* provides a vessel for communication that would not otherwise exist. Therefore, we are ready to commit to the long-term publication of the *Reader* with all that entails.

The *Reader* depends on articles from its readers. We invite you to share your thoughts, stories, dreams and art regarding the Ecozoic and the Great Work by sending them to us for publication. We also invite you to share the

Reader itself with your friends and colleagues, so they may also share in its benefits.

“Our Great Work: Toward a New Earth Resolve” – Our Educational Programs

CES’ course team feels that the presentation of “Our Great Work: Toward a New Earth Resolve” last September, at the conference EarthSpirit Rising IV outside Asheville, North Carolina, was successful. The team has a goal of teaching the course six times in 2003. Please contact us if you would like to sponsor a course or would like to assist in its further development. An outline and description of the course is on our website. The goal is to develop a course that can be taught many times and in many places by people who receive training. A complete teaching guide for the course, and materials for use in presenting the course, will be developed.

In addition to this course, which focuses on the understanding necessary for the Great Work, CES is developing an experiential course on “Awakening to the Universe” under the leadership of Julie and Ted Purcell.

Ecozoic Study Circles

Someone said, “If you want your movement to grow, go deeper.” Sometimes we hesitate to “preach to the choir,” but historically it is precisely when those who are already committed to a movement of ideas develop the ideas further—in other words, go deeper—that the ideas spread. For several years CES has made available a handbook for forming a group around Ecozoic ideas, but we have not actively promoted formation of such groups. We now feel that it is time for this to occur.

We believe Ecozoic Study Circles are needed because features of the Ecozoic understanding are centrally important and serve as crucial guides and inspiration for action. The Ecozoic emphasis differs somewhat from other environmental efforts. The Ecozoic emphasis is on how humans may live in an integral relation with nature. The human needs to be “reinvented” and move on to create a new mode of civilizational presence. There is an emerging body of understanding about what this reinvention/evolution means. The work of Thomas Berry provides core concepts that are of critical importance in this effort, yet his work must be supplemented by many others. By being a part of an Ecozoic Study Circle people may gain understanding, make decisions about the direction of their lives, and receive support and feedback.

We do not feel everyone should be in an Ecozoic Study Circle or that any individual should feel any pressure to do so. We do hope, however, that these circles can help in strengthening the Ecozoic movement.

The “Ecozoic Study Circle Handbook” is on our website. Copies are also available from our office.

Ecozoicstudies.org – Our Website

The potential services of our website have scarcely begun to be realized. We are revising the website and we intend to make it available to people around the world for learning about CES, the Ecozoic and the Great Work. We welcome your contributions to the website, and your suggestions on how it can be improved.

The Foundational Documents of CES

The Board of Directors of CES has adopted certain documents as being foundational to the work of CES. The primary documents are the three key books that Thomas Berry has authored or co-authored: *The Dream of the Earth*, *The Universe Story* (co-authored with Brian Swimme), and *The Great Work*. The work of CES is based on ideas contained in these books. These ideas hold our work together and center us, but we regard them as springboards, not ends in themselves.

Similarly additional essays and statements by Thomas Berry and others help to ground and center our work. These essays and statements are also springboards, not ends in themselves.

Our Foundational Documents are described on Page 9 of this *Reader*. In addition, you will find on this page citations telling where documents have been published in past *Readers* or in the current issue. Copies of the Foundational Documents, with the exception of the books by Berry and Swimme, are on our website.

Membership in CES

CES has decided to become a membership organization. Concurrently with the publication of this issue of the *Reader*, we are issuing an invitation to our subscribers and others to become members. The essence of membership is a commitment to share with us in education, research and artistic expression leading to the Ecozoic Era. Education could mean teaching in a classroom or teaching your grandchildren about gardening.

Research includes both theoretical and applied research. Theoretical research on the Ecozoic involves all disciplines, from the sciences, to the professions, to the humanities. Applied research might mean changing one's lifestyle as a way of moving toward the Ecozoic, or developing an environmentally restorative product. Artistic expression could mean saying a prayer, doing a dance, writing a poem or singing a song. The Great Work can mean many things, as many things as there are people.

At this point, we don't think the focus of membership should be on CES's organizational concerns, but rather on how people symbolize and act out their own commitment to the Great Work. Certainly, however, we will appreciate the support that members give CES as an institution.

Special Projects and International Activities

In addition to its ongoing programs, CES takes on special projects both in the United States and in other countries. Some of the projects on which we are now working include the translation into Chinese and publication in China of Thomas Berry's book, *The Great Work*; co-convening a seminar on "Ecology and Social Change" at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; and introducing ideas of the Ecozoic and the Great Work into the field of process philosophy. We are also working on developing a study center at a major university, which would examine the components of an ecologically sound society.

On the international front, we have been approached by a person in China about having a CES in China. We believe the Foundational Documents and the Ecozoic Study Circle Handbook will be helpful to those who wish to engage in other countries in the kind of work we are about. We cannot envision the exact form international work through CES will take, but we feel it is important to convey to people in other lands the ideas with which all of us are working.

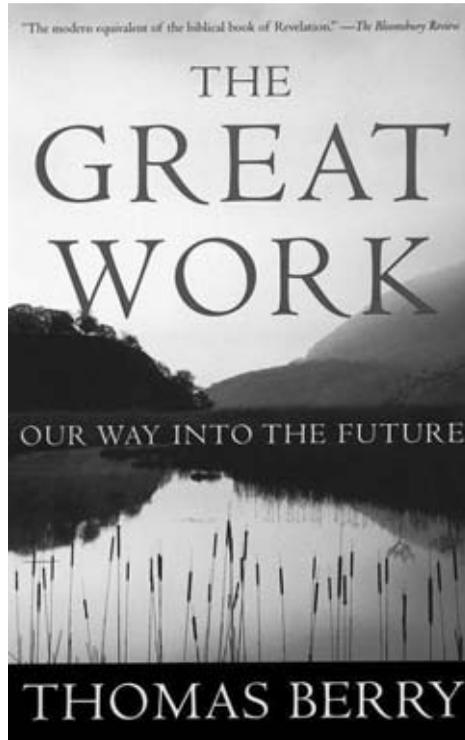
Join Us

We are only a small group of volunteers, but we have big ideas. One of our Foundational Statements ends this way:

The Great Work. The epic task, or "Great Work," of our time is to bring into being the Ecozoic Era. It is a task in which everyone is involved and from which no one is exempt, and it will require

change in every aspect of human society. On it the fate of the Earth depends, and in it lies the hope of the future.

Join us! We have a Great Work to do.



Foundational Documents—Center for Ecozoic Studies

Foundational Statements

Logo, Purpose, Motto, Tasks, Activities and Organization (see p. 10 , this *Reader*)

Meaning of “Ecozoic” (see p. 13, this *Reader*)

Meaning of the Great Work (see inside of front cover, this *Reader*)

Twelve Understandings of the Ecozoic Era (see p. 14, this *Reader*)

Importance of Thomas Berry (see p. 16, this *Reader*)

Importance of Earth Charter (see p. 17, this *Reader*)

Foundational Essays

“The Ecozoic Era” by Thomas Berry (see *The Ecozoic Reader*, Summer/Fall 2002)

“Reinventing the Human” by Thomas Berry (see p. 19, this *Reader*)

“Call for an Ecozoic Society” by Herman Greene (see *The Ecozoic Reader*, Spring 2001)

“Thomas Berry’s Great Work” by Herman Greene (see *The Ecozoic Reader*, Fall 2000)

“Elaboration of the Initial Ideas for the Founding of the Center for Ecozoic Studies” by Herman Greene (see *The Ecozoic Reader*, Winter 2001)

“Ecozoic Ideas for 2002” by Herman Greene (see *The Ecozoic Reader*, Fall 2000)

Foundational Books

The Great Work, by Thomas Berry

The Universe Story, by Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry

The Dream of the Earth, by Thomas Berry

Logo, Motto, Purpose, Tasks, Activities and Organization

Logo



Motto

“Seeking Integral Community in an Ecological Age”

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the Center for Ecozoic Studies (CES) is to contribute through education, research and the arts to the realization of the Ecozoic Era. CES emphasizes critical reflection, story and shared dream experience as ways of enabling the creative advance needed to bring into being a new mode of human civilizational presence, and also discerning the practical steps leading toward the Ecozoic. CES is dedicated to the principle that 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 rather something ever to be created. Its hallmarks are inclusiveness, interdependence, and appreciation; communion, differentiation, and subjectivity; and sensitivity, adaptability, and responsibility. It crucially involves more just and cooperative relationships among humans, as well as transformed relationships of humans with the larger natural world.

Tasks

- To provide education concerning the “Ecozoic Era” and how it may be realized through the “Great Work”;
- To assist in the sharing of stories, dream experiences, and artistic visions concerning the Ecozoic;

Logo, Motto, Purpose, Tasks, Activities and Organizations— CES

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- To encourage and support thought, artistic expression, and research (both theoretical and applied) concerning the Ecozoic Era and the Great Work; and
- To provide resources for individuals and groups to support their journeys toward the Ecozoic.

The term “*Ecozoic Era*” refers to the promise of a coming era when humans live in a mutually enhancing relationship with the larger community of life systems. The Ecozoic Era could also be called the “ecological age.” Its promise is not Utopian, but rather one of a viable mode of human presence on Earth. Bringing into being the Ecozoic Era could be called the epic task, or the “*Great Work*” of our time. Both the terms “Ecozoic Era” and the “Great Work” were first introduced by Thomas Berry, an ecologist and cultural historian.

Activities

- Publishing *The Ecozoic Reader: Critical Reflection, Story, and Shared Dream Experience of an Ecological Age*, containing literary, poetic, artistic, narrative and intellectual works on the Ecozoic Era and how it might be realized;
- Teaching the course “Our Great Work: Toward a New Earth Resolve,” covering the story of the universe, the emergence of life on Earth, the journey of humans from intimacy with nature to the modern technological period, and the promise of the Ecozoic Era;
- Maintaining a website with on-line editions of *The Ecozoic Reader* and learning materials on the Ecozoic Era and the Great Work.
- Publishing a “Handbook for Ecozoic Study Circles” and providing other resources to individuals and groups; and
- Leading conferences and seminars and fulfilling speaking engagements.

Organization

Legal Status – CES is a North Carolina nonprofit corporation and has applied for recognition as a tax-exempt, publicly supported organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code.

Board of Directors – CES operates under the direction and management of its Board of Directors.

Officers – The officers of CES are: President – Herman Greene, Vice President and Secretary – Susannah Lach, Treasurer – Nelson Stover, and Co-Webmasters – Albert Hardy and Mary Dalton.

Service Group – Volunteers working as a Service Group carry out the activities of CES.

Members – Members share in the Great Work and support CES.

Advisory Board –An Advisory Board assists CES in formulating and achieving its objectives.

Finances – CES is supported by donations, membership dues, and fees for its publications and activities.

Additional Information

For additional information, contact Center for Ecozoic Studies, 2516 Winingham Road, Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27516, U.S.A.; Phone and Fax 919-942-4358; Email ecozoic@mindspring.com; or visit CES' website at www.ecozoicstudies.org.

Meaning of “Ecozoic”

Ecozoic is based on two Greek words—*oikos* meaning house, and *zoikos* meaning of animals (*zoikos* is based on the Greek word *zōion* meaning living being).

More simply said, ecozoic is based on *eco* meaning house and *zoic* meaning life. Put together it means “House of Life.”

Ecozoic shares the same root word as economics and ecology. Based on their root words economics means the norms or rules of the house, ecology means the logic of the house, and ecozoic means the life of the house.

Ecozoic has additional meaning when used to refer to the Ecozoic Era. Thomas Berry and many others believe that we are currently in a period of mass extinction and other ecosystem disturbance that is bringing to an end the Cenozoic Era of Earth’s history (which began 65,000,000 years ago after the extinction of the dinosaurs and many other species). What will follow is not clear. If we are to survive, and if nature as we know it is to survive, then major changes will be needed in the way we live. As Thomas Berry has said, “While humans cannot make a blade of grass, there is liable not to be a blade of grass unless its is accepted, protected, and fostered by humans.” We will be involved in the future of our planet as never before. What will we make of it?

If we approach our role based on the “use” relationship that pervades our present culture, we will not succeed. We must open ourselves to intimate presence to, and an integral understanding of, nature. The “Ecozoic Era” represents the promise that Earth’s future will be a “time of a mutually enhancing relationship of humans and the larger community of life systems.”

Twelve Understandings Concerning the Ecozoic

The Nature of the Universe

1. *The Unity of the Universe.* The universe as a whole is an interacting community of beings inseparably related in space and time. From its beginning the universe has had a psychic-spiritual dimension. The universe is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects.
2. *Modes of Expression.* The universe expresses itself at all levels through communion (intimacy, interrelatedness), differentiation (diversity), and subjectivity (interiority, self-organization).
3. *Cosmogenesis.* The universe is a creative, emergent, evolutionary reality that has developed from the time of the primordial flaring forth, and is still developing, through a sequence of irreversible transformations.

Earth and Its Current Dilemma

4. *Earth.* Earth is a one-time endowment in the unfolding story of the universe.
5. *The Current Dilemma.* The effects of human activity on the Earth have become so pervasive and invasive that the survival and health of the Earth community now rest on decisions being made, and actions being taken, by humans.
6. *Transition to the Ecozoic Era.* There is a need to move from the current technozoic period where Earth is seen as resource for the benefit of humans, to an Ecozoic Era where the well-being of the entire Earth community is the primary concern.

Three Key Building Blocks

7. *The New Story*. The New Story, the narrative of the evolutionary development of the universe from the primordial flaring forth to the emergence of the Ecozoic Era, provides a unifying myth for all human cultures and a basis for common action in the realization of the Ecozoic Era.

8. *Bioregionalism*. Bioregionalism, care for Earth in its relatively self-sustaining geo-biological divisions, reorients human activity in developing sustainable modes of living, building inclusive human community, caring for the rights of other species, and preserving the health of the Earth on which all life depends.

9. *Ecological Spirituality*. Ecological spirituality, presence to the primal mystery and value of nature and to Earth as a single sacred community, provides a basis for revitalizing religious experience and healing the human psyche.

Special Contributors to the Ecozoic Era

10. *Women, Indigenous People, Science, and Humanistic and Religious Traditions*. The wisdom of women, indigenous people, science, and classical humanistic and religious traditions will have an important role to play in redefining concepts of value, meaning and fulfillment, and in setting norms of conduct for the Ecozoic Era.

11. *The Earth Charter*. The Earth Charter provides a comprehensive set of values and principles for the realization of the Ecozoic Era.*

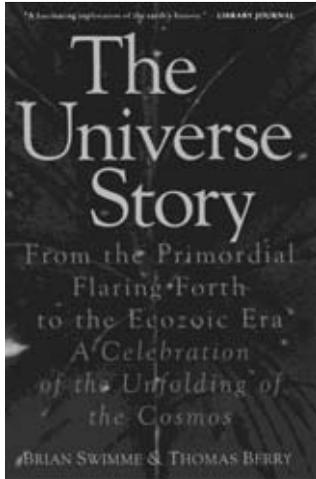
The Great Work

12. *The Great Work*. The epic task, or “Great Work,” of our time is to bring into being the Ecozoic Era. It is a task in which everyone is involved and from which no one is exempt, and it will require change in every aspect of human society. On it the fate of the Earth depends, and in it lies the hope of the future.

* The Earth Charter may be viewed at www.earthcharter.org.

Importance of Thomas Berry

Thomas Berry is the father of the Ecozoic Era, a global prophet and an Earth saint. His work forms the intellectual and spiritual basis for the work of CES.



Key Writings

He has written three books of special importance: *The Great Work* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999), *The Universe Story* (co-authored with Brian Swimme) (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), and *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988). Those who work with CES are strongly encouraged to read and study these books.

Historical Analysis

In *The Great Work*, Thomas Berry has given two observations about history that guide the work of CES. These are (1) the “central flaw” in human development is our “mode of consciousness that has established a radical discontinuity between the human and other modes of being and [has bestowed] all rights on the humans”; and (2) “[t]he historical mission of our times is to reinvent the human—at the species level, with critical reflection, within the community of life systems, in a time-developmental context, by means of story and shared dream experience.”

Importance of the Earth Charter

The Center for Ecozoic Studies has endorsed the Earth Charter and has made the teaching the Earth Charter a part of the mission of CES.

What is the Earth Charter?

The Earth Charter is a declaration of fundamental principles for building a just, sustainable, and peaceful global society in the 21st Century. These are its basic principles:

1. Respect Earth and life in all its diversity;
2. Care for the community of life with understanding compassion, and love;
3. Build democratic societies that are just, participatory, sustainable, and peaceful; and
4. Secure Earth's bounty and beauty for present and future generations.

The entire Earth Charter may be viewed on the Internet at www.earthcharter.org.

History of the Earth Charter

In 1987 the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development called for creation of a charter for sustainable development. Such a charter was begun but not completed in the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. In 1994 Maurice Strong, the Secretary General of the Earth Summit and Chairman of the Earth Council, and Mikhail Gorbachev, President of Green Cross International, launched a new Earth Charter initiative. In the summer of 2000, after a decade long series of conversations, meetings and workshops that were cross-cultural, cross-sectoral, and global in scope, agreement was reached on a set of common goals and values that became the Earth Charter. Thousands of people from over a hundred nations participated in creating the Earth Charter. Steven C. Rockefeller played an especially important role as Secretary of the Earth Charter process. The final text has rightly been called the "people's treaty" for the Earth.

Human Justice and the Ecological Crisis

CES recognizes that in addition to the ecological crisis, other problems, such as militarization and terrorism, cultural and religious conflicts, and social and economic inequity, are also of critical importance. CES believes human and ecological problems must be approached comprehensively. As emphasized in its Statement of Purpose: “[The Ecozoic Era] crucially involves more just and cooperative relationships among humans, as well as transformed relationships of humans with the larger natural world.” Yet CES also believes there can be no resolution of other human problems without addressing human-Earth relations. Moreover, given the short period of time humans have in which to act to avoid the destruction of Earth’s life systems, addressing the ecological situation must have moral and political primacy.

CES accepts the Earth Charter as the best available blueprint for the Ecozoic Era. As stated in its preamble, it provides an “ethical foundation for an emerging world community” by setting forth “interdependent principles for a sustainable way of life as a common standard by which the conduct of all individuals, organizations, businesses, governments, and transnational institutions is to be guided and assessed.”



Reinventing the Human

By Thomas Berry

*Talk delivered in Chapel Hill, NC, June 1997**

The task of our time might be expressed as a single sentence with seven phrases:

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.

I say “reinvent the human” because the issues we are concerned with seem to be beyond the competence of our present cultural traditions. As humans, more than any other mode of being we give shape and form to ourselves in our cultural configurations. We are genetically coded toward a further transgenetic cultural coding whereby we articulate the human mode of our being. We are genetically coded to think. We do not have a choice to think or not to think. We do have a choice of what we think and how we shape our patterns of living, our moral codes, our social institutions, and our artistic and literary traditions. What is needed is something beyond our existing traditions to bring us back to the most fundamental aspect of the human. The issue has never been as critical as it is now. The human is at an impasse. We have been using our freedom of determination to set ourselves at odds with the entire non-human community of earthly existence. We need to give a cultural form to ourselves that is coherent with the larger community of life.

Second, we must work “at the species level” because our problems are beyond any existing cultural solution. We must return to our genetic coding. Our problems are at the species and inter-species level. This is clear in every aspect of the human. As regards economics, we need not simply a national or a global economy, but a species and inter-species economy. Presently our schools of business teach the skills whereby the greatest possible amount of natural resources is

Our problems are at the species and inter-species level.

* *Editor's note:* This article was first published as Circular #180 of The Center for Reflection on the Second Law, July 15, 1997.

processed as quickly as possible, put through the consumer economy, and then passed on to the junk heap where it is useless at best, and at worst toxic to every living being. There is need for the human species to develop reciprocal economic relationships with other life forms providing a sustaining pattern of mutual support, as is the case with other life systems.

As regards law, we need a species legal tradition that would provide for the legal rights of geological and biological as well as human components of the Earth community. A legal system exclusively for humans is not realistic. Habitat for example, must be given legal status as sacred and inviolable for every mode of being.

Third, I say “with critical reflection” because this reinventing of the human needs to be done with critical competence. We need all our scientific knowledge. We cannot abandon our technologies. We must, however, see that our technologies are coherent with the technologies of the natural world. Our knowledge needs to be a creative response to the natural world, rather than a domination of the natural world.

Fourth, we need to reinvent the human “within the community of life systems.” Because the Earth, at present, is not adequately understood either by our spiritual or by our scientific traditions, the human has become an addendum or an intrusion. We have found this situation to our liking since it enables us to avoid the problem of integral presence to the Earth. This attitude prevents us from considering the Earth as a single society with ethical relations determined primarily by the well-being of the total Earth community.

But while Earth is a single integral community, it is not a global sameness. It is highly differentiated in bioregional communities—in Arctic as well as tropical regions, in mountains, valleys, plains, and coastal regions. These bioregions can be described as identifiable geographical areas of interacting life systems that are relatively self-sustaining in the ever-renewing processes of nature. As the functional units of the planet, these bioregions can be described as self-propagating, self-nourishing, self-educating, self-governing, self-healing and self-fulfilling communities.

Fifth, reinventing the human must take place in a “time developmental context.” We now understand the universe and the planet Earth, not simply

as an ever-renewing sequence of seasonal transformations, but as an emergent process going through an irreversible sequence of transformation episodes, moving in general from lesser to greater complexity in structure, from lesser to greater modes of consciousness, and from lesser to greater freedoms. This movement constitutes what might be called the cosmological dimensions of the program we are outlining here. Our sense of who we are and what our role is begins where the universe begins. Not only our physical shaping, but also our spiritual and cultural shaping begin with the formation of the universe.

Sixth, from this we can appreciate the directing and energizing role played by “the story of the universe.” This story that we know through empirical observation is our most valuable resource in establishing a viable mode of being for the human species as well as for all those stupendous life systems whereby Earth achieves its grandeur, its fertility and its capacity for continuing self-renewal. This story as told in its galactic expansion, its Earth formation, its life emergence, and its consciousness manifestation in the human fulfills in our times the role of the mythic accounts of the universe that existed in earlier times when human awareness was dominated by a spatial mode of consciousness. We have moved from cosmos to cosmogenesis, from the mandala journey, from the center of an abiding world to the great irreversible journey of the universe itself as the primary sacred journey. This journey of the universe is the journey of each individual being in the universe. So this story of the great journey is an exciting revelatory story that gives us our macrophase identity—the larger dimensions of meaning that we need. To be able to identify the microphase of our human being with the macrophase mode of our universe being is the quintessence of what needs to be achieved.

The present imperative of the human is that this journey continue on into the future in the integrity of the unfolding life systems of Earth, systems that presently are threatened in their survival. Our great failure is the termination of the journey for so many of the most brilliant species of the life community. The horrendous fact is we are, as Norman Myers has indicated, in an extinction spasm that is likely to produce “the greatest single setback in life’s abundance and diversity since the first flickerings of life almost four billion years ago.” The labor and care expended over some billions of years and untold billions of experiments to bring forth such a gorgeous Earth, all

this is being negated within little more than a century with what we mistakenly consider progress toward a better life in a better world.

Seventh, the final aspect of our statement concerning the ethical importance of our times is the shared dream experience. The creative process, whether in the human or the cosmological order, is too mysterious for easy explanation. Yet, we all have experience of creative activity. Since human processes involve much trial and error with only occasional success at any high level of distinction, we may well believe that the cosmological process has also passed through a vast period of experimentation in order to achieve the ordered processes of our present universe.

In both instances something is perceived in a dim and uncertain manner, something radiant with meaning that draws us on to further clarification of our understanding and our activity. Suddenly out of the formless condition, a formed reality appears. This process can be described in many ways, as a groping or as a feeling or imaginative process. The most appropriate way of describing this process seems to be that of dream realization. The universe seems to be the fulfillment of something so highly imaginative and so overwhelming that it must have been dreamed into existence.

But if the dream is creative, we must also recognize that few things are so destructive as a dream or entrancement that has lost the integrity of its meaning and entered into exaggerated and destructive manifestation. This has happened often enough with political ideologies and religious visions, but there is no dream or entrancement in the history of the Earth that has wrought the destruction that is taking place in the entrancement with industrial civilization. Such entrancement must be considered as a profound cultural pathology. It can be dealt with only by a creative vision capable of giving birth to a new more integral expression of the entire planetary process.

Such is our present situation. We are involved not simply with an ethical issue, but with a disturbance sanctioned by the very structures of the culture itself in its present phase. The present destructive dream that came to fullness in the twentieth century appears and continues now as a kind of ultimate manifestation of that deep inner rage of Western society against its earthly condition as a vital member of the life community. As with the goose that laid the golden egg, so the Earth is assaulted in a vain effort to possess not

simply the magnificent fruits of Earth but the power itself whereby these splendors have emerged

At such a moment a new revelatory experience is needed, an experience wherein human consciousness awakens to the grandeur and sacred quality of the Earth process. This awakening is our human participation in the dream of the Earth, the dream that is carried in its integrity, not in any one of Earth's cultural expressions, but in the depths of our genetic coding. Therein Earth functions at a depth beyond our capacity for conscious awareness. We can only be sensitized to what is being revealed to us. Such participation in the dream of the Earth we probably have not had since our earlier shamanic times, but therein lies our hope for the future, for ourselves, and for the entire Earth community.

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Songaia: An Unfolding Dream

By Fred Lanphear

Songaia, an intentional cohousing community with a commitment to live in harmony with Earth, was inspired in part by Thomas Berry's classic book, *The Dream of the Earth*. This book transformed my life and led me to introduce Berry's profound thinking to those of us who were re-envisioning the direction of our community.



For me, the book signaled a paradigm shift, turning my world-view inside out. I had spent 25 years of my life as a chemical-based agriculturist and 20 years involved in human development. I was a product of 21 years of formal education, shaped by the Christian church and the dominant story of the 20th Century. At the age of 55, I was faced with a radical decision—to move beyond my training, embody organic agriculture, and acknowledge that my human-centered context was too small. I was challenged to see all life forms as interdependent and to accept an emerging new creation story. It was the beginning of a journey and adventure into an unfolding future.

The year was 1990 and the place was the Residential Learning Center in Bothell, Washington—a program center and intentional community of the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA). The ICA, an international organization concerned with the human factor in world development, was in a prolonged process of reorganization. It was, as well, a time of re-visioning the direction of our own community. Something new was being called for. I led the community in the study of Berry's book and we agreed that learning to live in harmony with Earth and all its creatures would be a central value. We also wanted to share a rich spirit life, be open to diversity, commit to life-long learning, honor individual, family and

community, share responsibility for community welfare, and reach outward

toward others. Twelve years later we are 13 families working together to give form to that dream.

Songaia (the name is derived from Song of Gaia, or Song of the Living Earth) is located on 10.7 acres in a rapidly developing suburb designated as an urban-growth area. The cluster of 13 units in the form of 6 duplexes and a single dwelling attached to a common house is located on 3 acres in the center of the property. The common house is where families gather for meals, meetings, sharing-circles and celebrations. Four acres of the property is lush, second growth Douglas Fir and the rest open meadow, gardens, and fruit trees. Learning how to care for this sacred land and all its creatures is one of the challenges and adventures of our dream.

What distinguishes Songaia from other neighborhoods is not our physical layout, but our intent to live together cooperatively and in harmony with Earth. We are a diverse group with different expectations and needs for being in community. All of us do not have the same commitment and passion to participate in a new Earth-centered ethic, but there is an openness to explore what that would mean. So far, it has taken a variety of forms, from a community food model to shared amenities. The food model consists of corporate meals five times per week using staple items from a community pantry—all for only \$80 per adult per month. Bulk purchasing reduces our costs and avoids resource-wasting packaging and advertising.

Living in community often brings individual and community needs into conflict with each other—a situation further complicated when environmental needs unto the seventh generation are considered. Making community decisions is hard work. It requires developing communication skills and using group processes. It also requires developing trust among its members. Trust is developed by creating a strong culture that is shaped by consensus building, singing, heart-filled rituals, sharing-times, celebrations, traditions, a mentoring program and childcare, and a flexible and intentional budget. With this trust comes the opportunity to wrestle with issues that shape each of us, the community, and in some ways the larger society.

Making
community
decisions is hard
work

The challenge we face at Songaia is not unlike the challenge given by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, when he said, “The task before us now, if we

would not perish, is to shake off our ancient prejudices, and to rebuild the earth.” Each of us carries the prejudices, cultivated over thousands of year (since post-aboriginal civilization), that the human species is at the center of the universe, and that Earth and all its creatures are there for our use. It will take the creation of a new biocentric story, and generations of its appropriation, to correct that misunderstanding. All of us from our own generations and cultures play critical roles in this evolutionary process. All I participated in during my lifetime was necessary to bring me to this time of realization. I sincerely believe we are participants in an emerging new consciousness that will pave the way for the New Story, and for the language, rituals, and life patterns that will inculcate it.

Making such a change will require community. The church has been one of the primary communities to foster and perpetuate the dominant story, but the church, with its investment in the dominant story, is unlikely to create and champion a view that contradicts it. More likely, the New Story will emerge from communities in the workplace, in centers of education, in intentional residential communities, and among environmentally-oriented social action groups, who will embrace it and live it and lead others to follow.



Illustration by Mary Southard

Whale Watch

An Ecozoic Song for All Ages

By Sarah Pirtle

Words by Sarah Pirtle, set to the tune of "The Cruise of the Bigler," a 19th Century Irish-American ballad of the Great Lakes. John and Alan Lomax collected the song, which Sarah heard Pete Seeger sing at a People's Music Network workshop.

1. When I was the age of ten, I went to watch the whales.
They know 'em by their flukes. They know 'em by their tails.
All the flukes are different. The patterns aren't the same.
If you see a humpback tail, Then you can learn its name.

Our boat goes into Stellwagen where the whales swim free.
I've been there so many times, that the crew knows me.
I've seen the whale called *Cat's Paw*. You know, she has no fleas.
And I've met the *Cyclone* who's as gentle as a breeze.



Chorus:

Whale Watch! We're rolling! To starboard look about. Did you say that rise of spray could be a whale spout? With cameras at the ready, the scientists proclaim, We can track each humpback from the tail that tells their name.

2. Watch out for the *Drip*, a *Drip* that's sixty-five feet long.
And you may see *Salsa* dancing to the ocean's song.
There's *Lance* and there's *Torpedo*. But they won't make us halt.
And *Crystal* is the baby whose mother's name is *Salt*.

Well, some names are so corny that you gotta cringe.
One baby is named *Thread*, The mother's name is *Fringe*.
The first were *Salt* and *Pepper*. Now there's *Pinstripe* and there's *Moss*,
With all the gunk in their baleen, I'd like to call one *Floss*.

3. Our captain shouts out, "Six o'clock!" That means "Rush to the back!"
And there's a sight of lacy flukes completely shiny black.

that means that this is *Falco*, and when we see her calf,
They know her name is *Epaulet*, Her leaping makes me laugh.

Well, *Falco* she is feeding. Her giant mouth I see,
Scooping up the sand eels with great frivolity.
She weaves a net of bubbles. Her baby watches proud
As she rises up with open mouth and lunges through that cloud.

4. We're looking out for more whales and I can feel the splash
Of giant waves a-rolling as the rainy winds they blast.
I'm leaning from the railing and screaming as I see
Two great heads a-rising up and looking straight at me.

One is just a baby, and it's flopping on its back.
They say this is a new calf who gives those waves a crack.
And I would like to name that calf a name we won't forget.
With all those white dots on its flukes, I'll call it *Bubble Net*.

And so when it turned autumn, the crew did congregate
For the naming of that new whale. Raise glasses, fill your plate.
I went there and I told them what I thought the name should be.
They laughed, and then they shouted, "*Bubble Net* it's gonna be!"

Chorus:

Whale Watch! Watch out! To starboard look about.
Did you say that rise of spray could be a whale spout?
And if you see a black tail with dotted alphabet.
If it has white polka dots, it's probably *Bubble Net*.

Sarah writes: Since 1979 I've gone on over fifteen whale watch cruises into Stellwagen Bank off Cape Cod and Gloucester, Massachusetts, an area rich in tiny fish and sand eels that whales love to eat, and every time I whoop with excitement to see the whales. In the 1980s I learned that the Center for Coastal Studies in Cape Cod hosted a gathering each year where people help name the humpbacks newly sighted. I began writing this song during a whale watch when I met a boy who was equally fascinated with the varied names given to humpbacks. We collected a long list of names from the scrapbook on board. I liked imagining a child who actually gets to name one of the

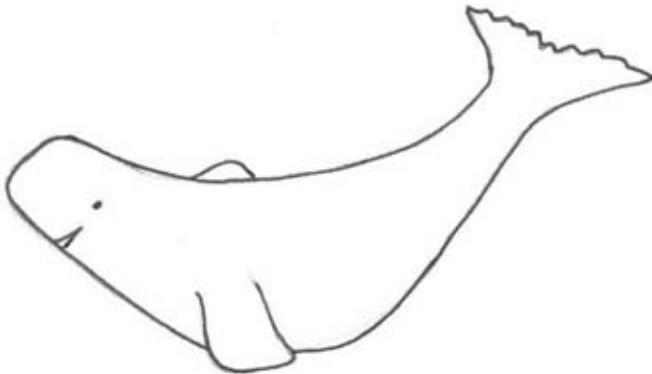
humpbacks. There are fifteen humpback whales in the song, not including the invented name, “Bubble Net.”

Whale naming has a history going back to 1976, when one was named Salt. Here’s the story—

A fisherman, Al Avellar from Provincetown, started the idea of whale watching. In the mid-1970s he noticed that when he had a boatload of people fishing, they’d stop and watch the whales. Al began taking out school groups and charters. He wanted it to be scientific, so he invited Stormy Mayo, one of the three founders of the Center for Coastal Studies, to be on board as a scientist.

The Dolphin Fleet still runs trips from Provincetown. It was Al’s son Aaron who named Salt, from her white encrusted dorsal fin. In fact, Aaron figured out that by noting dorsal patterns, he could re-recognize the same whale and distinguish it from other whales. Aaron gave the whale who traveled with Salt the name of Pepper.

As portrayed in the song, researchers come together yearly to create names based upon the natural markings on the body. These gatherings used to be held in the autumn, and that’s what I put in the song. As whale watching has expanded, researchers throughout New England have met in the spring after the data analyzed about the new whales is ready.



The Hills Are Alive: *Spell of the Sensuous* Makes Nature's Song More Audible

By Alice Loyd

As we entered the new millennium, we could assess the previous century's environmental movement as only a beginning. The secular arguments for environmental responsibility had not changed people's behavior, and religion, for the most part, reflected rather than challenged the prevailing culture as regards our relationship with the natural world. I've wished that environmentalists would see spiritual roots in their devotion to Earth, and the religious community would find nature at the heart of its worship. I have prayed for a marriage of matter and spirit in both camps, and in small ways I see it happening. There are signs of early courtship, at least, with a few shy smiles each direction.

The Spell of the Sensuous, a book by David Abram published in 1996, struck me on sight as a facilitator for the match. Writing about sensate experience, Abram uses magic as the introduction to his analysis. He says human relations with the non-human world depend upon whether we

Abram financed his education by working as a sleight-of-hand magician.

perceive the landscape with spiritual content—a position familiar to readers of Thomas Berry. An American with a Ph.D. in phenomenology, Abram financed his education by working as a sleight-of-hand magician. During performances he observed that his audience saw what they expected to see. When they believed he was about to draw a coin from mid-air, they saw it done, although the actual event proceeded in a different way.

The spiritual and material aspects of experience came together for him while he lived in Indonesia and Nepal as an itinerant magician. Support for the travel came from a grant to study the relationship between magic and medicine among traditional sorcerers and shamans. As he came to villages in remote areas, his magic tricks showed local sorcerers that he had at least “rudimentary skill in altering the common field of perception.” As a result, he was “invited in homes, asked to share secrets with them, and eventually encouraged, even urged, to participate in various rituals and ceremonies”

(p.5)* While living several years in that milieu, he managed to shed the westerner's experiential distance from nature.

Immersion in the Living Landscape

His research gradually shifted toward a “deeper pondering of the relationship between traditional magic and the animate natural world.” He came to see the primacy of non-human nature for the indigenous magician. “Countless anthropologists have managed,” he says, “to overlook the ecological dimension of the shaman’s craft, while writing at great length of the shaman’s rapport with ‘supernatural entities.’” He attributes this oversight to the western view that whatever lies beyond laboratory-type analysis must be “of some other, nonphysical realm above nature, ‘supernatural,’” and that nature is a “a rather prosaic and predictable realm, unsuited to such mysteries.”

His research gradually shifted toward a “deeper pondering of the relationship between traditional magic and the animate natural world.”

He saw, however, that the shaman’s connections—by dwelling site, activity and attention—were more with wilderness than with the village served. In the forest the shaman worked to acquire nature’s frame of reference, and the magic, or healing, was accomplished by strengthening that perception in the people. Abram observed how daily custom and local language supported such an awareness. The landscape was an element of every event.

During the years of the project he came to live in the buoyancy of that perspective—and lost the ability as he re-entered his U.S. lifestyle. The loss prompted him to seek out the causes and a cure for western blindness to full reality. Because I’ve had that same objective for several years, I came to this reading with high interest. I was asking as I began the book, “How can I help others see the aliveness in nature?” Midway through, my question became, “What can I do to enhance my own seeing?”

* *Editor’s note:* All page numbers cited refer to David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous* (New York: First Vintage Book Edition, 1997). When a page is identified for one quote and the following quotes are from the same page, the page reference is not repeated.

Written Language Seen as the Agent of Alienation

While Abram acknowledges more than one factor in the decline of respect for other species, his subject is the effect of written language. Against the background of the enchanted forest, he shows how the alphabet and written speech allowed humans to feel superior, forgetting their dependency on nature. While spoken language mimicked animal cues, and pictographs demonstrated nature's powers, writing seemed to invent a realm exclusively human. With it, thought obtained the ability to leave the body, conceiving of itself as a separate entity—as a thing that could replace things and even transcend them.

From the Hebrew “aleph-beth” marks through the Greek scribes’ insertion of vowels, he shows the progression of scholarship and custom toward pure abstraction. A non-physical realm became the ideal world, not just for religion but for science, too. Where physically-based knowledge persisted among the common people, it was denounced as heresy and punished nearly to extinction.



For me, his appraisal of the role of the Hebrews was a highlight. In this treatment of the topic, it isn't the Genesis creation account that is faulted as Hebrew influence is reviewed. In fact, Abram has a good understanding of that tradition's fluid, non-literal posture toward scripture's meaning. He shows how the absence of vowels calls for continual reinterpretation by the reader, with the chance to bring forth meaning that has never before been encountered. Each master's investment is preserved as sacred text, with the result that a parallel scripture grows, generation by generation.

While Abram praises the Hebrews in this respect, he finds less to admire in our legacy from the Greeks. They are the ones, he says, who set out to be free of Earth's restraints, moving Christendom along with formal learning into ethereality. The Hebrews looked for paradise on Earth, but Christians, under Greek influence, removed it to a groundless “heaven.” He sees Socrates as the leader in the dual feat involved in the transition. Socrates belittled nature as insensate and unsacred, and prodded his disciples into detachment. “I am a lover of learning,” Abrams quotes Socrates as saying, “and trees and open country won't teach me anything” (p. 102).

He is aware of the powerful oral tradition in Greece that would seem to preclude such a posture. He writes, “It is difficult to reconcile Socrates’ assertion—that trees and the untamed country have nothing to teach—with the Greece that we have come to know through Homer’s epic ballads. In the Homeric songs the natural landscape itself bears the omens and signs that instruct human beings.” He believes the written speech that the Greeks developed out of the Hebrew alphabet removed the link to this instruction. It did so by inserting vowels, which nailed onto the page rigid definitions, standing in merely for themselves rather than for natural phenomena. Human-created phonetic sounds took on meaning apart from the setting, and literalism succeeded representationalism as language’s function.

Self-objectification is a corollary to objectification of the universe, as Socrates knew and implemented in his teaching method. Employing exercises that overcame his students’ resistance to the process, he instituted “mental patterns or thought styles that today we of literate culture take for granted.” Abram attributes to Eric Havelock the suggestion that the “Socratic dialectic” was primarily a method for disrupting the mimetic thought patterns of oral culture. In it students were forced, in Abrams’ words, “to separate themselves . . . from the phrases and formulas that had become habitual through the . . . constant repetition of traditional teaching stories . . . By continually asking his interlocutors to repeat and explain what they had said in other words, by getting them thus to listen to and ponder their own speaking, Socrates stunned his listeners out of the mnemonic trance demanded by orality, and hence out of the sensuous, storied realm to which they were accustomed” (p. 109).

Of course for people with an aptitude for mental activity, the realm of the mind offers its own consolation. Most readers of this journal may have survived by having that place of retreat. The head is the safer region when things physical are under threat, and for a child, it can be the refuge that preserves a sense of dignity. To read Abram’s book, in fact, a person would have to enjoy scholarly analysis. I kept thinking as I turned the pages, “How ironic. The habit of mind that

How ironic. The habit of mind that enables me to understand his argument is the one that I must change to recover sensate experience.

enables me to understand his argument is the one that I must change to recover sensate experience.”

A Philosophical Posture That Restores Unity

We cannot cure present-day detachment by abandoning the alphabet, however, or by ceasing to think in abstractions—and Abram doesn’t take that route. On the contrary, he makes the case that thinkers, and phenomenologists in particular, have offered us the logic to make the transition. He draws from three whose work provides philosophical basis for seeing nature’s sentience: Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, and Heidegger.

Edmund Husserl launched phenomenology in the early 1900’s as a corrective to psychology, which by then had decided to do quantifiable science, with the mind as its object. He set out, in Abram’s words, “not to explain the world, but to describe as closely as possible the way the world makes itself evident to awareness, the way things first arise in our direct, sensorial experience” (p.35). In his efforts to say how the self experiences other selves who are experiencing, he came to the body—“as a singularly important structure within the phenomenal field” (p.37).

He began to discern the affinity between experiencing bodies, and to distinguish between experiences confined to the inside of one of the subjects and experiences they share. These classes of experience he came to call, respectively, subjective and intersubjective phenomena. Abram describes the first as “phenomena that unfold entirely for me—images that arise, as it were, on this side of my body,” referring to fantasies, fears and dreamings (p.38). The second class includes everything else, not excepting what Abram calls the “so-called objective world of science.” Objectivity has been reframed here as a category of subjectivity. Abram writes, “The striving for objectivity is thus understood, phenomenologically, as a striving to achieve greater consensus, greater agreement or consonance among a plurality of subjects, rather than as an attempt to avoid subjectivity altogether.” Eventually he called the web of interconnected perceptions “the life-world,” which Abram describes as “the world of our immediately lived experience, *as we live it*, prior to all our thoughts about it” (p.40).

Abram writes, “Oblivious to the quality-laden life-world upon which they themselves depend for their own meaning and existence, the Western sciences, and the technologies that accompany them, were beginning to

blindly overrun the experiential world—even, in their errancy, threatening to obliterate the world-of-life entirely” (p.41). At the end of his life Husserl wrote in notes, “*Overthrow of the Copernican Theory . . . The original ark, earth, does not move*” (p.42). He was not saying that the scheme of planets was mistaken, but rather that the scheme throws the mind into a quandary to which no wing of science was attending. Abram explains the conflict in these words: “The theory did not agree with our spontaneous sensory *perception*, which remained the experience of a radiant orb traversing the sky of a stable earth. A profound schism was thus brought about between our intellectual convictions and the most basic conviction of our sense, between our mental *concepts* and our bodily *percepts*.”

“The earth is thus, for Husserl,” Abram says, “the secret depth of the life-world. It is the most unfathomable region of experience, an enigma that exceeds the structurations of any particular culture or language. In his words, the Earth is the encompassing ‘ark of the world,’ the common ‘root basis’ of all relative life-worlds” (p.43). Finally, in Abram’s words, “Husserl’s writings seem to suggest the life-world has various layers, that underneath the layer of the diverse cultural life-worlds there reposes a deeper, more unitary life-world, always already there beneath all our cultural acquisitions, a vast and continually overlooked dimension of experience that nevertheless supports and sustains all our diverse and discontinuous worldviews” (p.41).

The earth is the encompassing ‘ark of the world’, the common ‘root basis’ of all relative life worlds.

In the 1960’s Maurice Merleau-Ponty set out to clarify inconsistencies left by Husserl’s progression and to create clear language for the discipline. He rejected entirely the notion of a transcendental ego, instead identifying the experiencing self with the bodily organism. Abram expresses the position in three separate statements: (i) “if without this body, in other words, there would be no possibility of experience—then the body itself is the true subject of experience” (p.45). (ii) “To acknowledge that ‘I am this body’ is not to reduce the mystery of my yearning and fluid thoughts to a set of mechanisms, or my ‘self’ to a determinate robot. Rather it is to affirm the uncanniness of this physical form” (p.46). (iii) “Ultimately, to acknowledge the life of the body, and to affirm our solidarity with this physical form, is to acknowledge our existence as one of the earth’s animals, and so to remember and rejuvenate the organic basis of our thoughts and our intelligence” (p.47).

Merleau-Ponty chose the words *sentient* and *sensible* to name the sensor and the sensed. He does not view the sensed, or sensible, as passive, however, but as lending itself to be sensed. He sees sensation as a communication as well as a connection between bodies of various kinds. An experience is a “reciprocal encounter,” in which “blue” comes forward to me and I go out toward it as we meet. “*Only by affirming the animate-ness of perceived things do we allow our words to emerge directly from the depths of our ongoing reciprocity with the world*” (p.56).

Merleau-Ponty died in 1961 in the middle of a work he named *The Visible and the Invisible*. In it he conceived of an “elemental power that has had no name in the entire history of Western philosophy.” He called it “The Flesh,” saying that it includes both our flesh and “the flesh of the world.” Abram says it is “the mysterious tissue or matrix that underlies and gives rise to both the perceiver and the perceived as interdependent aspects of its own spontaneous activity.” Due to this theory, Abram says, “I find myself forced to acknowledge that any visible, tangible form that meets my gaze may also be an experiencing subject, sensitive and responsive to the beings around it, and to me” (p.66).

The Landscape of Indigenous Cultures

In surveying phenomenological thought, Abram is providing logical justification for the concepts of preliterate cultures, which are his true interest from the first chapter forward. Through published studies, he helps us to see the landscape as these groups have seen it, describing the Aztecs (p.133), the Amahuaca Indians in Peru (p.141), the Koyukon Indians of Alaska (p.145), the Western Apache (p.154), the Aboriginal peoples of Australia (p.163), the Navajo (p.190), and the Hopi (p.192). From both hemispheres, in separate ages, and regarding languages descended from different linguistic ancestry, he offers modes of seeing that stand in remarkable agreement with each other, and in radical contrast to our own.

To advocate for
the Earth may
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it for guidance.

Partly through presenting in detail the animated Earth of their experience, he brings these alternative views into believability. He is an artist when depicting the environment, as they have known it, painting a world far richer than mine has yet become. Through extensive scenes, statements and narratives, he makes this new perspective more accessible. When I could shift

into a belief system in which nature's extension of itself toward me was ever present, the reassurance I felt was indeed magical. This support may be what the environmental movement has needed. To advocate for the Earth may require relying on it for guidance.

The landscape that he paints is luminous, but it is grounded in physical sensation. The means of access to nature's consciousness is the body, as Abrams says, our eyes, our ears, and our feet. It is no filmy, sentimental version of reality, and the reason it might seem so is due to cultural perspective. As Abram said about the credulous posture that magicians are able to encourage in their audiences, we see what we expect. Accordingly I can assume that expectations might prevent my seeing any fact. To employ my senses to their potential, I may need a belief system that supports their full functioning—one that sees the physical plane as sentient.

Abram views this correction as our salvation. To emerge from the current environmental dilemma, he says, we must discard the habits of mind that got us there. These viewpoints, he maintains, were at least partly obtained through abandoning oral culture in favor of writing. He recognizes the tremendous asset that written speech has been, while at the same time lamenting its cost. He says, "By focusing on the written word, I have wished to demonstrate less a particular thesis than a particular stance, a particular way of pondering and of questioning *any* factor that one might choose" (p.264).

Going Forward by Reclaiming a Lost Capacity

The remedy that he proposes is that we begin to sense, once again, everything we encounter every moment of our lives. An exercise especially helpful to me involved learning to feel the previously unfelt air in which we move. Discerning its presence, I realized in a new way that what I don't see is not nothing. I call this encounter a remedy because it puts me in contact with nature's agency. Doing it, I find that nature knows me as its own, producing healing at a level beyond cognition. I observe and sense rather than comprehend such a balm—an experience of the kind he says is essential. In other words, the only way to perceive my unity with the landscape may be to let my body experience it. My mind may then follow a bit, giving me glimpses of the benefit.

Abram avoids the word “spirit” altogether, as far as I can recall, but he describes a quality in matter that exceeds what we usually think of as physicality. Conversely, for him the human mind is as physical as the rest of the body. Nature is what we have in our moment of life, because it is what we are. Our thoughts are out of “nature” as much as our conduct or emotions. For earthlings, Earth is all we can know, perceptually speaking—and perception is the only way we have of knowing anything.

Words like these have stimulated volumes in argument, and no Westerner can easily grasp their meaning. Most of the human race has understood as fact the perceptions of which Abrams writes, however, and only when they became unintelligible did humans begin to plot their own extinction. Now our perceptual incapability leads to global warming and species loss, threatening survival in every region. Thomas Berry says *The Spell of the Sensuous* “should be one of the most widely read and discussed books of our time,” and it seems that only words as strange as Abrams’ might offer sufficient redress.

His words challenge our assumptions, yes, but they are also strangely familiar. At some level have we not spoken like this ourselves? The help Abram offers is where we have always found it—in every breath, every tree, each clod of dirt and each drop of water. Before I read the book I had seen the universe as sensate and communicative, and David Abram tells me how my suspicion rings true. He adds detail to the New Story of the Ecozoic movement, extending into our era the ancient tales of every region. Illuminating a landscape we love already, he reveals this illumination as an agent of its own renewal. His accomplishment here is not just to describe, though, but also to instruct. He tells the story, he gives us ways to understand it, and he offers a logic for its promulgation.

Wet Prayers

By Ted Purcell

Washing dishes to a Taize chant
my open grief returns without notice,
and tears lose their option of
falling off on the inside, unseen.

Alone, or so I feel, I wonder
what else cries in my community,
hidden from sight by distance, or else
too close to see.

Backyard grapevine, pruned severely
with good intention, releases tears of
clear sap into gravity's pull, like Gethsemane's
eternal, redeeming wetness.

Weeping clouds with water of life
soak the ground and leave some
teardrops standing at attention on leaf and flower,
spent, invested, awaiting Earth's
grateful green returns.

I see out over the sink a muddy puddle
cried into the driveway's dip, becoming
drink for the thirsty robin.

Last night low thunder bellowed its bass line
as heaven wept for me, cleared its throat, then
fading the rumble, regained its composure
and took its path into distant silence.

Whispering wind brushed the tall pines



in loving solidarity of lament
with we who mourn, then lullaby
to soothe my sleep.

My grievous error to think I cry alone,
immersed in the gracious grief of nature
where nothing is wasted, each drop savored
and digested in thanksgiving.

Even the dishwater becomes a
bubbly offering plate for the gifts
my eyes must yield into a universe
that mourns itself through God
in whom all tears are one.



Meeting Bear

By Peggy Logue

I was celebrating the year of my 60th birthday and wanted to do something challenging and memorable—something that would push my boundaries. I chose to go to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness with my 20-year-old son as guide. He had been there twice, once as a leader, and would be leading another group later this summer. Why couldn't he lead us?

It took a year for the idea to become a reality. I had to carry it in my heart, voicing it to no one until I confronted my fears and concerns. I worked through some of them but knew others would be faced in the field, in person. I had to be willing to take that risk.

One of my fears was about being in the wilderness in a soft-sided tent where there were bears. I knew there would also be wolves but I did not fear them as much. I have been in bear and wolf country before; I love and respect both animals. Earlier this summer while observing wolves in the Lamar Valley in Yellowstone, we watched a grizzly saunter along the meadow and then disappear into the woods. Unaware that we were there, she was clearly visible to us through a spotting scope. In grizzly country you are not permitted to camp with a soft-sided camper.

In the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, we would be in bear country in tents—my sons in one tent and Jerry and I in another. We could be attacked at night, my imagination told me, by a bear roaming around looking for food. Fear filled my heart as I imagined what could happen. Would I want to put my family in that kind of danger?

The confusing thing is that I was going to a wilderness area to see wildlife in their natural habitat. I wanted to experience the “wild”-ness, solitude, and connection. I feared the very thing I wanted to experience.

I feared the very thing I wanted to experience.

The first night we camped at the outfitters' base at Moose Lake, a beautiful campsite with a camp store and adjacent restroom and shower. It

was dark when I decided I needed to use the bathroom, the last facility we would see for six days. When I heard a rustling noise as I started walking toward the store, I clapped my hands together to scare away the raccoon or possum. As I neared the building I saw a huge shadow on the ice chest and with one more clap of my hands a very large black bear ran off like a puppy into the woods. We had been told that there had been only two bear sightings all summer, and those were far removed from where we were and where we were going to be. Seeing this black bear stunned me. I decided that I didn't have to go after all, and quickly headed back to the safety of my tent!

I couldn't believe what I had just seen. We had been snug in our tents, unaware, while right outside was a black bear foraging for food. I told Jerry what I had seen. He was almost asleep.

"Oh, yeah," he said, not at all interested.

"I did! I saw a bear on my way to the restroom." I yelled to John and Mike that I had just seen a bear.

"A bear?" Mike responded.
"Yes! Over by the store!"

No more sounds. They didn't believe me.

I began to doubt myself about what I had seen. It had happened so quickly. But I knew I did see a bear and that we had not taken precautions. We not only didn't hang a bear bag, we left food out as well as other scented items like toothpaste. I was sure the bear would be back. Ours was the closet campsite to the store, which was about 70 yards away.

Jerry mumbled something to me and I said, "Either you didn't hear me or for some reason you have no concern that there is a bear out there."

"Yeah! Just write about it in your journal!"

I was feeling dismissed. "Why are you having trouble with this?" I asked. "I saw a bear and we left food out."

“Okay, I thought you were just making up a story!” He rolled over and went to sleep.

The problem was mine to deal with. I was the only one on guard. I could not sleep. I had known we might have these encounters here, and an encounter had occurred. I was afraid to put in my earplugs, which I brought as a defense against snoring. I listened and listened for sounds of the bear. Instead I heard the alluring chanting of the loon. That beautiful haunting sound reassured me and I began to drift off.

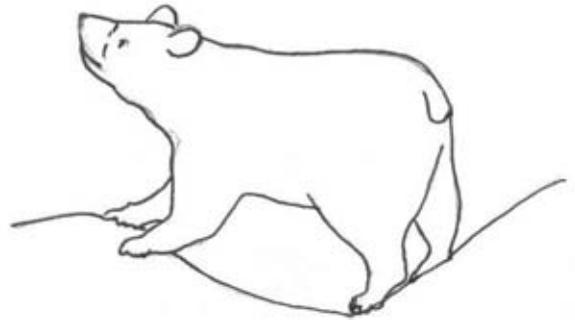
The next morning the young man who was to lead us to our wilderness entry point brought our food and canoes. I asked, “Was there a bear here during the night?”

“Yes,” another young Minnesotan answered. “I just finished cleaning up her mess. She has come here several times this summer.”

They didn’t seem concerned about personal safety, but they knew if the bear got dependent on humans it would be bad for her as well as humans. She would have to be “put down.”

“Once more, and she’s dinner!” said the young blond-haired man with our supplies. When camping in the wilderness, it is for the bears’ protection as well as for humans’ to put food in bear bags and then hang them in trees. But the truth was now known. There *was* a bear in the camp and I had seen her!

The following night I had dream. In the wilderness I have found dreams and reality are separated by a thin line. Was I that much closer to living in the now and really being present? In my dream, I was camping in a tent around dawn. Others were up doing things, but I wasn’t feeling good and lingered in my bed. The others told me a bear was coming toward me and that she was okay. I was not to worry. They were watching from a distance. In the dream I could see things from all perspectives. I could see the bear walking all around my bed. I could see me in my bed, lying on my back with my eyes following the bear. The bed, raised high off the ground, was surrounded by a



screen like you might see on a safari in the African desert. She sniffed all around, then cantered off like a big puppy dog. She ran in the direction of other campers, with children who were playing. I felt concern at first then relief as I realized no one seemed afraid. They knew she just wanted to play and be with us. It was fun to see her playful spirit.

We spent our last day in Ely, Minnesota, walking the streets and visiting the shops. We saw a store called “THE BEAR CENTER.” Inside it, a friendly, handsome gentleman told us about a photo exhibit by Lynn Rogers, with a video we could see on his work with bears. We were so taken by the work of Lynn Rogers that we watched the whole video. It gave a different perspective on the tales of how dangerous bears are. We saw Lynn hand-feed bears, visit their dens, put radio collars on them without tranquilizing, sit and talk with them, and even apologize to them when he overstepped the boundaries. He has respect for bears and while cautious, he has overcome the customary fears.

We have been home for a few days. I had no idea the trip would be so bear-centered for me. When I sat down for lunch today, staring directly at me was the National Wildlife Federation’s August calendar picture of a grizzly sitting in a field of wildflowers. It was then I got the inspiration to write this story. She wanted me to write it.

Why is my experience important? It is an example of community. We are part of the Earth community, just like the bear and all other life. I came to the Boundary Waters Canoe Wilderness Area to experience the “wilderness.” I

This land belongs to them. It belongs to the wild ones. It is their home. I am sadly estranged from it, yet my soul craves it.

felt how separated I am from the wild. One night I was sitting out with my son looking at the sky. It was so full of stars and there was so much darkness. I felt a little uncomfortable and kept listening for sounds. I felt vulnerable. I felt fear of the wild. I was not relaxed as I am at home in my own yard at dark. The next day I thought about my fear and wanted to understand it. I came to recognize that I am a six-day visitor here. This land belongs to them. It belongs to the wild ones. It is their home. I am sadly estranged from it, yet my soul craves it. The bear in my dream was the bear I saw in reality. She came back to tell me she had no desire for my demise. She was there to play and share her home. She wanted to be with us in community. She wants

to be accepted and respected and she accepts and respects me. She showed me these things as she sniffed me compassionately in my dream.

Usually I pay attention to the animals that show up in my life, either in reality or in dreams. I believe they have something to tell me or teach me, but because of my fear, I forgot about that with the bear. Now as I reflect, though, I know she came with a special message. Bear medicine is powerful. It called me to introspection. I have made changes in my life and I am in need of the quiet place. That is why I went to the wilderness. The bear was telling me to go to my den. The wild is not only without, it is within. I need to go within to discover the wild in me. And I can do that anywhere. There I will connect with the other beings. I will feel no fear. At this level I am in communion with all.

I went to be challenged by wilderness, to expand my personal boundaries and to re-member. In meeting bear, I did.



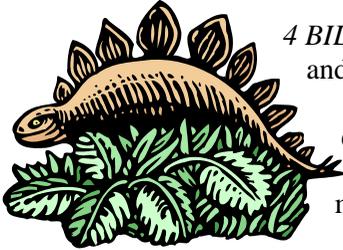
The Universe Story Is Our World-Wide Communion

By *Finley Schaefer*

14 BILLION YEARS AGO a Flaring Forth of stupendous energy occurred.

11 BILLION YEARS AGO primal stars appeared and elements, the elements that now make up our own bodies, were forged in the stars. We are literally “The People of the Stars.”

5 BILLION YEARS AGO our sun was born and soon the planets appeared. Earth brought forth an atmosphere, oceans, and continents.



4 BILLION YEARS AGO the first living cells appeared, multiplied and filled the seas.

60 MILLION YEARS AGO the CENOZOIC ERA commenced with a global cataclysm that extinguished the dinosaurs and much other life. Humans were born in the Cenozoic Era.

2 MILLION YEARS AGO human emergence began—the slow march from *homo habilis*, who used stone tools, to *homo sapiens*.

A mere *40 THOUSAND YEARS AGO* humans invented languages and crafted musical instruments.

15 THOUSAND YEARS LATER spears and bows and arrows—weapons for killing—were invented. Music preceded war!

10 THOUSAND YEARS AGO the beginning of civilization, Neolithic agricultural villages.

3,500 BCE (Before the Common Era) marked the beginning of the classical civilizations (Sumer and Egypt). The wheel was invented and language was written down.

AROUND THE TIME OF THE COMMON ERA the AXIAL AGE—the Upanishads, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zoroaster, Gautama, Confucius, Socrates, Lao Tzu, Plato, Aristotle, Jesus, Muhammad.

1500 CE the MODERN AGE begins, Copernicus, Galileo, Descartes, Newton and Bacon.

BY 1965, in our lifetimes, evidence was found of the origin of the universe and the universe's continual expansion.

This is our CREATION STORY. The Universe is not a fixed, stable background to our existence. It is growing! It is the context of our existence. It is our Mother. Let us give it a name as we have named Earth "Gaia." Let us call it "Yah!"

YAH calls back to us, "CREATE A NEW ERA—THE ECOZOIC ERA."

The Center for Ecozoic Studies

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the Center for Ecozoic Studies (CES) is to contribute through education, research and the arts to the realization of the Ecozoic Era. CES emphasizes critical reflection, story and shared dream experience as ways of enabling the creative advance needed to bring into being a new mode of human civilizational presence, and also discerning the practical steps leading toward the Ecozoic. CES is dedicated to the principle that 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 rather something ever to be created. Its hallmarks are inclusiveness, interdependence, and appreciation; communion, differentiation, and subjectivity; and sensitivity, adaptability, and responsibility. It crucially involves more just and cooperative relationships among humans, as well as transformed relationships of humans with the larger natural world.

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Membership in CES is \$20.00 per year for individual s and \$35.00 for couples. Members receive a subscription to *The Ecozoic Reader* and a copy and updates of the Foundational Documents. Members share in the Great Work and support CES and are invited to participate in CES events and listserv.

Subscription to *The Ecozoic Reader* for four editions is \$15.00 (outside the United States, Canada, and Mexico add \$10.00).

Subscription and Membership forms may be found at www.ecozoicstudies.org or contact CES as indicated on the back cover.

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Jennie Baumeister

designed and published this issue of *The Ecozoic Reader*. She is a graphics and print manager.

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 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, USA. Or e-mail your submission to ecozoic@mindspring.com. Please send your contact information and a brief biography. Publication and copyright guidelines are available at www.ecozoicstudies.org.

The Ecozoic Reader

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