

Conditions for Entering the Ecozoic Era*

By Thomas Berry

The following statements are proposed as conditions for Entering the Ecozoic Era.

1. The Earth is a communion of subjects; it is not a collection of objects.
2. The Earth exists and can survive only in its integral functioning. It cannot survive in fragments any more than any individual 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 inter-relations of its many bioregional modes of expression.
3. The Earth is a one-time endowment. It is subject to irreversible damage in the major patterns of its functioning.
4. The human is derivative; the Earth is primary. The Earth must be the primary concern of every human institution, profession, program and activity. In economics, for example, the first law of economics must be the preservation of the Earth economy. A rising gross national product with a declining gross Earth product reveals the absurdity of our present economy. Likewise, it should be clear in the medical profession that we cannot have well people on a sick planet.
5. The entire pattern of functioning of the Earth is altered in the transition from the Cenozoic to the Ecozoic Era. The major developments of the Cenozoic took place entirely apart from any human intervention. In the Ecozoic, the human will have a comprehensive influence on almost everything that happens. While the human cannot make a blade of grass, there is liable not to be a blade of grass unless it is accepted, protected, and fostered by the human. Our positive power of creativity in the natural life systems is minimal; our power of negating is immense.
6. "Progress," to be valid, must include the entire Earth in all its component aspects. To designate human plundering of the planet as "progress" is an unbearable distortion.

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7. The Ecozoic can come into existence only through an appreciation of the feminine dimension of the Earth, through a liberation of women from the oppressions and the constraints that they have endured in the past, and through the shared responsibility of both women and men for establishing an integral Earth community.

8. A new role exists for both science and technology in the Ecozoic period. Science must provide a more integral understanding of the functioning of the Earth and how human activity and Earth activity can be mutually enhancing. Our biological sciences especially need to develop a “feel for the organism,” a greater sense of the ultimate subjectivities present in the various living beings of the Earth. Our human technologies must become more coherent with the technologies of the natural world.

9. New ethical principles must emerge which recognize the absolute evils of biocide and geocide as well as the other evils concerned more directly with the human.

10. New religious sensitivities are needed; sensitivities that will recognize the sacred dimension of the Earth and that will accept the natural world as the primary manifestation of the divine.

11. A new language, an Ecozoic language is needed. Our Cenozoic language is radically inadequate. A new dictionary should be compiled with new definitions of existing words and introduction of new words for the new modes of being and of functioning that are emerging.

12. Psychologically all the archetypes of the collective unconscious attain a new validity, also new patterns of functioning; especially in our understanding of the symbols of the heroic journey, the death-rebirth symbol, the Great Mother, the Tree of Life.

13. New developments can be expected in ritual, in all the arts, and in literature. In drama, especially, extraordinary opportunity exists in the monumental issues that are being worked out in these times. The conflicts that until now have been situated simply within the human are now magnified considerably through the larger contours of conflict as these emerge in this stupendous transition from the terminal Cenozoic to the emerging Ecozoic. What we are dealing with is in epic dimensions beyond anything thus far expressed under this term.

14. Mitigation of the present ruinous situation, the recycling of materials, the diminishment of consumption, the healing of damaged ecosystems; all this will be in vain if we do these things to make the present industrial systems acceptable. They must all be done, but in order to build a new order of things.