

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*)

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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 Winningham 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.*

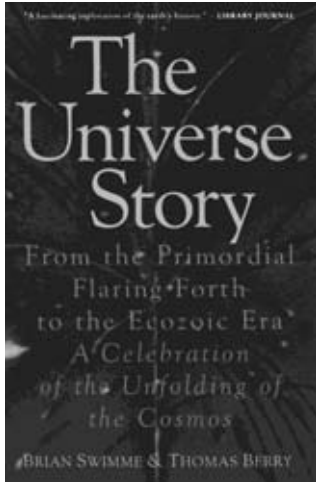
The Great Work

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.”

