

## CLIMATE CHANGE CHRONICLE 37

### On the Road to the Ecozoic Era

In their book, *The Universe Story: From the Primordial Flaring Forth to the Ecozoic Era*, Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry predict the coming of the Ecozoic Era. (“Eco” from the Greek “house or home”, and “Zoic” from the Greek, meaning “pertaining to living things” thus “the house or home of living things”.) The dominant characteristic of this new era will be *a mutually enhancing relationship between our species and Earth*.

Some folks will say, “This is ridiculous. They can’t just make up a name for a new era. Do they think they have a crystal ball or something to see into the future?”

But they don’t need a crystal ball. Earth has existed for four billion years. We can assume that it will continue to exist for another four billion years or even longer. But we can’t make the same assumption for our species. We have existed for two hundred thousand years and have come down through the process of evolution. We can assume that we will exist only as long as Earth continues to support us as it has in the past. But going from what scientists are telling us about an Earth-damaging climate change, our continued existence may be in jeopardy.

The term Ecozoic Era is, then, based upon the assumption that we will continue to exist—if we take the necessary steps to stop damaging Earth and create a mutually enhancing relationship that will sustain us.

Built into this possibility then is the assumption that we will come to our senses and change our ways to ensure the continued existence of our species. So the real issue is not so much about whether we will continue to exist but *how* we will continue to exist. The mutually enhancing relationship rests upon certain assumptions.

First is the assumption that we learn to see ourselves as earthlings, part of a living Earth and a conscious universe. That is the starting point for any successful effort to ensure our on-going survival.

Second this new awareness is more than an intellectual exercise. It must be an awareness that moves from our head to a psychological/spiritual awareness deep within us. We cannot change the outer world without changing our inner world. To use the famous expression of Barbara McClintock, “We must develop a feel for the organism.”

Third we must stay in this struggle for the long haul. We need to develop a climate change culture at all levels, particularly at the community level. This is essential if we want to help the generations that are coming after us. A significant aspect of our work is to recognize that the systems we have put in place, particularly the economic and

political systems are a major cause of the problem. We need alternative systems and suitable transitions.

Fourth, we must move quickly. Scientists are setting bench marks and warning us how serious the situation is. The longer we wait and allow the present situation to continue the harder it will be to turn things around.

Fifth we must let Earth take the lead. Here the science is absolutely critical. The scientists can show us how to help nature restore the ecosystems that we depend upon for our survival.

So, at the very least, these are some of the key steps we must take to play our role in helping develop a mutually enhancing relationship with our species and Earth.

I'll conclude in my somewhat unorthodox way with a story that seems to fit—or I will make it fit.

At the end of my work day I like to have some red wine and watch the news on TV, especially the American news. I usually hate the commercials but one day I saw an unusual commercial that I really enjoyed.

A father was feeding a baby sitting in a high chair. On a chair next to the child was the family dog. He was watching the action. The meal was a bit of a mess— oatmeal was all over the baby's face. When the child was finished the father stood up and said, "Mom is going to be home in a couple of minutes. I've got to get you cleaned up."

He took the baby's bowl over to the sink, washed it and picked up a wash cloth. He went back to the baby and, to his surprise, the baby's face was clean. Puzzled, he looked over at the innocent looking dog, smiled and said, "That'll work."

In an Ecozoic Era where we have no prior experience we must go with whatever works.

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