THOMAS BERRY envisions the Ecozoic Era as a time when humanity is present to the Earth Community in a mutually-enhancing manner. Crucially, he presents this vision as the emerging Ecozoic Era. Roots and tendrils of a transformed human presence are evident right here and now.

Few if any of us live with this mindset consistently in the foreground. Nevertheless, we have viscerally experienced, if only fleetingly, its draw. We sense its capacity to open our hearts, to guide and empower action, to bring forth our own greatness as we step into the Great Work. We feel called to contribute in our own unique way.

The call is so new and fresh among us that there is no clear path, no time-tested set of practices that distinguish Ecozoic activism from earlier forms of environmental and social engagement. Surely, Ecozoic activism will embrace the best that has come before. It will build upon the successes of the past, while offering up emergent novelty as we shift from an exclusive focus on the human (or the divine and human connection) to the more-than-human realm.

Ecozoic activism will manifest in forms as diverse as any other expression of the life force. Yet beneath the diversity of doing will reside a shared core of being. The stronger the core, the more natural, compelling, and fruitful the response. To distinguish and nurture such core ways of being, such attitudes of the heart, is thus crucial to the emerging Ecozoic Era.

The following four attitudes of the heart are, in our estimation, the cultural coding necessary to effectively herald, embody, and usher in the Ecozoic Era. They could also be described as The Four Pillars of Ecozoic Activism.

1. ALLUREMENT
   The dream drives the action.
   —Thomas Berry

THE FOUNDATION of Ecozoic activism is, of course, The Great Story—the epic of evolution. The Great Story is everybody's story; it is the overarching story of every thing and all times. Crucially, it is a creation story still in process. The Great Story thus embraces our visions of the future as well as the scientifically familiar record of the past. Ecozoic joins Paleozoic, Mesozoic, and Cenozoic in the pantheon of eras of complex life that have a tangible and honored presence in shaping the lives we lead today.

One of the things we learn from The Great Story is that reality is made of nested wholes—atoms within molecules, within cells, within organisms, within ecosystems, within bioregions. Wholes within wholes (holons)—each integral to itself yet also part of larger wholes, with no part able to fully comprehend the goings on of the larger wholes within which it is embedded. Within this nested holarchy of being, we observe that the larger wholes influence the activities of smaller wholes they encompass by way of signals that are experienced bodily. Discomfort or pain signals something to be

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Embodying the Future, Here, Now

By Michael Dowd and Connie Barlow
avoided. We seek that which fascinates or gives pleasure. All this occurs within a context that Teilhard de Chardin characterized as "groping": feeling one's way into the future without knowing what lies ahead.

To move in the direction of fascination is allurement. In the human, we all have experienced allurement at the level of spirit as well as body. Ethical allurements color our dreams of the future. Actions that push our joy buttons, that light up our lives, signify paths of Ecozoic activism. To act within a state of allurement is thus at the heart of Ecozoic transformation. As Joseph Campbell was fond of saying, "Follow your bliss." In the midst of our actions we will be modeling the very end we are advocating.

There will always be actions to take as good citizens; there will always be problems to fix in the moment. But for the long-term, for soul sustenance and for confidence that our choices are, in fact, choices made not by our small selves but by that portion of the Great Self residing in each of us, we can trust our allurements as ultimate guides. We can trust that our share of the Great Work lies where our own great joy intersects with Earth's great need.

And then, the dream will indeed drive the action.

2. TRUST
   The Universe can be trusted.
   —Michael Dowd

Ecozoic activism can unite in our trust in a self-organizing, time-developmental Universe—whatever our particular conceptions of Ultimate Mystery may be. Such trust will become increasingly supportive as the pain of this transition, this collective rite of passage into maturity as true Homo sapiens sapiens (doubly wise humans) greets us again and again.

Trust in the Universe by no means translates into passivity. Rather, we are empowered to act in the face of the most formidable obstacles, in grave uncertainty, because we do trust.

As activists, we will judge and condemn others to the degree that we judge and condemn ourselves...we will trust the Universe to the degree that we trust that our own shortcomings serve a purpose...

3. COMPASSION
   Comprehensive compassion is unfurling in the human species.
   —Brian Swimme

Ecozoic activism is driven by allurement, not by anger or fear. Yet in the face of grave disappointments, during those inevitable times when we come to doubt our self worth or the viability of our species, what gives us the strength to carry on? For eons, the religious answer to this question has been simple: faith.

A metareligious, spiritual movement grounded in and inspired by The Great Story will, by definition, be an inclusive, evolutionary spirituality. As a community of Jews, Christians, Pagans, Hindus, Buddhists, secular humanists, atheists, pantheists, panentheists, and so on, we honor the full breadth of our traditions, which continue to feed us in many ways. Those of us called to
children who swim beneath the waves of the sea, to those who live in the soils of the Earth, to the children of the flowers in the meadows and the trees in the forest..."

Far more difficult than nurturing interspecies compassion will be nurturing compassion toward those humans here and now who seemingly stand in the way of mutually enhancing human-Earth relations. Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh, in his poem "Please Call Me By My True Names," challenges us deeply: "I am the 12-year-old girl, refugee on a small boat, who throws herself into the ocean after being raped by a sea pirate, and I am the pirate, my heart not yet capable of seeing and loving." He closes, "Please call me by my true names, so I can wake up, and so the door of my heart can be left open, the door of compassion."

Such expansive compassion is not only an ideal but also, at times, a necessity. Julia Butterfly Hill speaks movingly of how she would not have been able to persist in her perch in the redwood tree had she not broken through her rage against the loggers. How else could she survive day upon day of the roar of helicopters, the sneer of chainsaws, and the sad thunder of toppling trees?

Finally, there is the challenge of compassion for oneself. Compassion toward the pirates of the planet may be a powerful platform for Ecozoic activism, but we can count on ourselves to often feel and express the opposite: rage. We will fall short of our ideals, again and again. We will thus need to nurture compassion for ourselves ongoingly. As activists, we will judge and condemn others to the degree that we judge and condemn ourselves. As activists, we will trust the Universe to the degree that we trust that our own shortcomings serve a purpose and are gifts for our own and others' growth.

As with the Ecozoic Era, shimmering into existence in fits and starts, comprehensive compassion is unfurling in the human species, flickering in one heart, then in another and another.

4. GRATITUDE

If the only prayer you say in your whole life is, 'thank you,' that would suffice.

—Meister Eckhart

ECOZOIC ACTIVISM starts and ends with gratitude as gratitude is both an outcome and a source of the three previous attitudes of the heart. Cultivating gratitude opens us to allurement, strengthens our trust, and expands our compassion. Gratitude heightens our effectiveness as activists, for it holds anger, judgment, fear, and overwhelm at bay. As M.J. Ryan says, "gratitude is the mother of joy."

Gratitude manifests in the midst of our everyday living when we pause to take account of how much we ourselves have been given. We are present to the wonder of the simplest gifts: a glass of water, a spoonful of food, a breath of air. At such times, our hearts are full.

Thomas Berry has movingly written that, while we humans contribute to the cosmos by discerning and telling The Great Story, it is ultimately our role, our calling, to become "celebrants" of this story. Affirmations of gratitude we speak as individuals in our own reflective moments are one form of celebration. So too are our comings together in community to celebrate a solstice, a life passage, or the memory of a moment of transformation in the immense journey of life. Celebrating life is an essential part of Ecozoic activism. In fact, dancing may be one of the more important things you can do to help usher in the Ecozoic Era.

So where does this bring us? In summary, we might say that whatever else Ecozoic activism may come to entail, it will surely embody these four attitudes of the heart: allurement, trust, compassion, and gratitude.

These are the four pillars upon which the Ecozoic will be built.

Connie Barlow is one of the organizational leaders of the epic of evolution movement and a long-time wilderness advocate. Her books include The Ghosts of Evolution: Green Space, Green Time: The Way of Science; and Evolution Extended: Biological Debates on the Meaning of Life. Connie's great joy is exploring and sharing the ways in which an understanding of evolutionary and ecological sciences can enhance our communion with the natural world.

Michael Dowd, MDiv, DMN, is a community organizer, evolutionary evangelist, and well-known popularizer of The Great Story. A former United Church of Christ minister and author of EarthSpirit: A Handbook for Nurturing an Ecological Christianity, he now manages Global Action Plan's Sustainable Lifestyle Campaign in Rockland County, New York. Michael's great joy is inspiring faith and trust in the Universe and empowering people to follow the path where their great joy and the world's great need intersect.