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Leonardo Boff: The difficult transition from the technozoic to the ecozoic

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Eco Catholic

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Great crises demand great decisions. There are decisions that involve life or death for some societies, institutions or people. The present situation is like that of a sick person, to whom the physician says: Either you control your high cholesterol and blood pressure or you will have to face the consequences. You decide.

Humanity as a whole has a fever and is ill; humanity must decide: either continue its delusional cycle of production and consumption, always ensuring the growth of the national and world GNP, a cycle very hostile to life, or promptly confront the reaction of the Earth-system, that is already giving clear signs of global stress. There is no nuclear cataclysm, which is not impossible but improbable, and would mean the end of the human species. But we do fear, as many scientists predict, a sudden weather change, so abrupt and drastic that it would rapidly decimate many species and put our civilization at grave risk.

That is not just a sinister fantasy. The 2001 report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change already foresaw that eventuality. The 2002 report of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences affirmed that «recent scientific evidence point towards the presence of an accelerated and vast climate change; the new paradigm of an abrupt change in the climatic system is already well established by research from ten years ago. However, this knowledge is little disseminated and scarcely taken into account by social analysts.» Richard Alley, president of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences Committee on Abrupt Climate Change, proved with his group that, at the end of the last glaciation, 11 thousand years ago, the climate of the Earth rose 9 degrees in only 10 years (data from R. W. Miller, *Global Climate Disruption and Social*

Justice, N.Y 2010). If this were to happen to us, we would have to confront an environmental and social disaster of dramatic proportions.

What is at stake with the climate question? At stake are two practices in relation to the Earth and her limited resources, that are the cornerstones of two eras of our history: the technozoic and the ecozoic.

A potent instrument, developed in recent centuries, is used in the technozoic: techno-science, under which every resource is exploited in a systematic way, at ever increasing speed, especially for the benefit of the minorities of the world, leaving aside the majority of humanity. Almost all of the Earth has been occupied and exploited. She has been filled with toxins, chemical elements and greenhouse gasses, to the point that the Earth has lost her capacity to metabolize them. The clearest symptom of this incapacity is the fever that our planet is experiencing.

The ecozoic looks at the Earth within the processes of evolution. The universe has existed for more than 13.7 thousand million years, and it is expanding, pushed by the unfathomable background energy and the four interactions that sustain and nourish everything. It is a unitary, diverse and complex process that has produced the great red stars, the galaxies, our Sun, the planets and our Earth. It also generated the first living cells, multi cellular organisms, the proliferation of the fauna and flora, the human self-awareness through which we feel part of the Whole and responsible for the Planet. This process involves the Earth up to the present. Respected in its dynamics, it allows the Earth to maintain her vitality and equilibrium.

The future lies in the balance, between those committed to the technozoic, with the risks it entails, and those who, embracing the ecozoic, struggle to maintain the rhythms of the Earth, to produce and consume within her limits, and who accept as their primary interest, the perpetuation and well being of humans and the Earth community.

If we do not take this step we may not escape the abyss that awaits us.

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