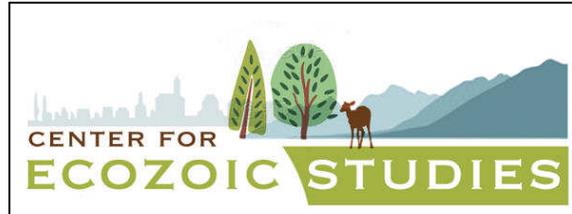


# CES Monthly Musings

May 2011

(Published May 31, 2011)



*Seeking integral community  
in an ecological age . . . .*

“Ecozoic” means “house of life.” An “Ecozoic Society” is a vibrant community of life.

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The “Ecozoic Era” is a time of mutually enhancing relationships  
among humans and the larger community of life.

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The “Great Work” of our time is to bring into being the Ecozoic Era.

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**IN THIS ISSUE:** “The Ecozoic University: A Proposal,” by George Bortnyk.

## **THE ECOZOIC UNIVERSITY: A PROPOSAL**

In this essay an outline of the framework for an Ecozoic University and the practical steps to realize it are developed and discussed with particular attention to its overarching worldview. A university designed from the ground up to address the issues raised by Thomas Berry in his life of contemplation, collaboration, teaching and writing may be a uniquely productive way to build on his legacy. Thomas’s thought is very broad in scope. The only thing that matches the breadth of his thought is the university. The Ecozoic University could possibly reframe the mission of higher education, and in doing so significantly influence the basic establishments that shape the quality and depth of fulfillment of human life and benefit the health of the larger community of life.

### **Introduction**

Thomas Berry wrote at length about the role of the university in the Ecozoic Age in two of his essays: “The American College in the Ecological Age” (*The Dream of the Earth*, 1988), and “The University” (*The Great Work*, 1999). In “The University,” Thomas identifies the university as one of the four basic establishments that pervasively affect the quality and fulfillment of human life in the modern period. The other three establishments are government, religious institutions, and commercial-industrial corporations. Thomas was disappointed in the weak response exhibited by these establishments—weak relative to the grave ongoing destruction of the natural world—especially given the huge potential of these basic establishments to exercise considerable influence. We might ask ourselves, where can individuals and small groups have the most influence in affecting change in these four major establishments to preserve and conserve the natural world through their spheres of influence?

Activism aimed at motivating governments, major religions and large corporations to place environmental conservation and preservation in the mainstream of their missions has resulted in marginal success at best. While universities have responded to environmental and energy challenges, their action in these fields has been most commonly in their scientific and engineering research functions, and much less in

their teaching role generally. Even though the university like the other institutions is deficient in its functioning, it stands out as presenting an opportunity to affect change. The primary way to affect change in the university, I would propose, is not through traditional activist efforts to motivate established universities to take up the environmental cause, though this is important. I believe the most effective way to bring about change in the university is to create a new kind of university from the ground up that operates within a new worldview.

Acting through small groups, individuals cannot create a new government and typically have no interest in creating a new religion. While a corporation (either a non-profit eco-think tank or a for-profit green tech company) can be formed easily, any of these will inherently have relatively narrow scope and limited influence. A small group, however, can create a new university that could profoundly influence the future of universities. Indeed this happened when such a small group formed the Humboldt University of Berlin in 1810 and began the modern research university as we know it today. The formation of such a new university in our time would begin with the seeds of a new worldview, what Thomas refers to as a functional cosmology. Then there would be a need for creative organizational management and the use of state-of-the-art cyber resources and tools.

If we pause to think about it, we may find this idea appealing, since the university occupies an advantaged position relative to the other three basic establishments in that a university can influence all of the basic establishments, including other universities. A university community is inherently inclusive, collaborative, and synergistic, its scope is broad with access to a wide spectrum of knowledge domains within its colleges, and its reach can be immediately global via inter-university networking and a presence in cyberspace. Moreover, once established, a university outlives its founders and continues indefinitely. The Ecozoic University may deliver more bang for the buck than many other projects that could be undertaken.

## **The worldview and mission of the Ecozoic University**

### ***Evolution of the modern university worldview***

The university as an institution, *a community of teachers and scholars*, has always lived within an overarching conceptual framework, or worldview, that provides an orientation for the pursuit and propagation of knowledge. This conceptual framework has evolved out of human experience throughout history, and its influence on the nature and operation of the university is pervasive. Reciprocally, the thought incubated in the university has had a profound influence on the surrounding cultural worldview. The interaction has been mutually formative, robustly synergistic, complex and sometimes contentious.

The university in the Western world grew out of the so-called cathedral schools and beginning in the 11<sup>th</sup> century the first universities came into being—The University of Bologna (1088), University of Paris (c. 1150), University of Palencia (1208) and University of Cambridge (1209). These early universities were influenced by Ptolemaic cosmology combined with Christian theology, and theology was taught as an integral part of university studies. These universities provided the legacy of learning within the praxis of faith.

From the fifteenth through the twentieth centuries, a new worldview evolved out of the scientific discoveries of Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, Newton and others, and later the enlightenment movement in which philosophers such as Bacon, Locke, Kant, and others sought an empirical and rational basis for understanding the physical world, for deriving human rights, and formulating just secular governance. In more recent developments, Darwin's discoveries of the evolution of species demonstrated that life forms were not static, and the geology of James Hutton and later Alfred Wegener pointed to an old Earth where land was formed in the sea and continents drifted across the planet over millions of years. These discoveries forever replaced the notion that the universe and Earth were statically created. Capitalism described by Adam Smith eventually coupled with the ever-increasing rate of scientific discovery in the industrial revolution that has spawned unprecedented technological growth at an explosive rate and continues to this day.

In response to the power demonstrated by science, reason, industry and free markets to more accurately understand and manipulate the world, the university evolved into a secular, scientific institution, largely agnostic or atheistic, with an overarching worldview that may loosely be described as philosophical materialism. Religion itself has been reduced to an object of study from historical, social and psychological perspectives, and its devout practice has been relegated to an off-campus extracurricular activity. The modern secular university has embraced belief in unfettered human progress, with no clear governing principle, that admits of no limits. On the upside, it would be hard to imagine any of the gains associated with modernity without the intellectual contribution of the university—all of the enhancements to life that few who have enjoyed them would desire to give up and those who have not, nearly universally seek.

Yet the benefits of these enhancements are accompanied by the substantial destruction of the natural world. If we give credit to the university for the upside gains of modernity, should the modern secular university also be assigned responsibility for the downside of modernity manifested in the rampant destruction of the natural world? On the one hand we might answer, “No,” and assign the blame to the overarching worldview that guides the university. On the other hand, we may answer, “In large part, yes,” since the university has substantially participated in authoring this worldview over time. Can responsibility be shared with the other basic human establishments? Partially it can, but perhaps not to the same degree. Universities are the sources of the knowledge from which the technologies of the commercial-industrial corporations and military and other sectors of government have been developed.

The modern technical-industrial society is a complex system. All complex systems are defined by their capabilities and limitations. An error of omission that has occurred in the evolution of modern technical-industrial society, from a systems perspective, is that the limits of the system were never adequately addressed. The error of omission is the failure to include the natural world as an integral part of the modern worldview as a basis for setting limits on the otherwise unfettered ambitions of modernity. This is an error of omission in which the modern secular university may be unconsciously complicit, and addressing this error brings us to consider proposing a new kind of university, one that owes its innovation to a worldview that has the integral functioning of Earth at its existential center.

### ***The Ecozoic Worldview***

A new worldview derives from a profound insight or the discovery of something important that was unseen or previously not understood. The term Ecozoic Age, conceived in the thought of Thomas Berry, may represent an insight profound enough to spawn a new, more complete worldview.

Let us define the term *Ecozoic Age* as representing a phase of evolution where the well-being of virtually all life on Earth depends on the decisions and disciplined actions of humanity to maintain the integral functioning of Earth. For those attuned to the expressions in Thomas Berry’s thought, the universe—and within it, Earth most intimately—is the primary revelation of the divine, the primary healer, the primary teacher and the primary economy. These primary functions, performed within the natural world, will continue into the future only if humanity consciously acts to enable and allow the continuation of these primary functions. *It is this state of critical dependency of the natural world on human decisions and actions that characterizes the Ecozoic Age.*

What else can be said about the Ecozoic Age? The definition of the Ecozoic Age is supported by overwhelming empirical observations and quantitative measurements. These facts describe a wide spectrum of human-caused Earth degradation that requires deliberate human decisions and actions to mitigate and remedy. The existence of the Ecozoic Age is not an abstract concept; it is rooted in factual conditions where humanity is confronted with choices whether to enable or allow the natural world to perform its primary functions, or to inhibit or degrade those functions.

The existence of this state of affairs does not imply that humanity will follow through with the necessary and sufficient decisions and actions to support the integral functioning of Earth long into the future. The Ecozoic Age may be a short-lived phase of evolution, since it is possible that human technical and industrial capacity and population levels will decline precipitously due to human enterprise encountering

natural limits. If so, nature will also have declined precipitously. While some may consider this inevitable, even part of the natural course of things, I believe that this would have to be judged a failure of human capacity, of will and of imagination.

The Ecozoic Age cries out for a response from humanity in the form of new individual and collective social behaviors that will result in mutually enhancing relations among humans and the larger community of life, human enterprise being coherent with the functioning of Earth, and the maintenance of the integral functioning of Earth.

What we have stated here is unprecedented in Earth history. At no other time in Earth history has all life on the planet depended on the actions of a single species. This awareness is the kernel of the *Ecozoic Worldview* but it also includes the awareness that while modernity has brought us to this perilous place, it has also brought us knowledge of the functioning of Earth and the essential technologies by which humans can move to benign presence. Further, a sense of the sacredness of our universe and of Earth within it and a vision of Earth community have arisen. Wisdom bearers such as Thomas Berry have shown that a new consciousness is possible. Together these constitute the Ecozoic Worldview. (For a more complete statement of this worldview as expressed by Thomas Berry see [Appendix I.](#))

When we consider the Ecozoic Age and of the Ecozoic Worldview, many ideas about human responses may come to mind. In the remainder of this paper we will consider how the university might respond. If we were to accept that we are moving into the Ecozoic Age and this requires an Ecozoic Worldview, what should the university teach?

### ***The mission of the Ecozoic University***

To answer this question within a wide scope of principle, the Ecozoic University should: (1) develop and propagate the knowledge and skills that professionals, scholars, academics and expert specialists need to enable the continued integral functioning of Earth in all its primary functions; and (2) develop and clarify the Ecozoic Worldview.

Within this broad scope of principle, the Ecozoic University would teach the range of subjects currently offered in the contemporary university, but modified and enhanced to include the ecological thread that may be neglected in these familiar courses. Furthermore, totally new courses, major study areas and degrees would surely be designed and offered. In the essay, "The American College in the Ecological Age," Thomas suggests six core courses that might be required of all students.

The initial rollout and implementation of the Ecozoic University would most likely be in cyberspace as a virtual campus (a component in the Teilhardian noosphere). In terms of structure and internal functioning, the Ecozoic University would support and integrate a complement of colleges under its aegis that offer courses within major study areas that fulfill degree requirements at the undergraduate and graduate levels, and support postgraduate studies and research as well. While not precluding innovative methods of teaching and learning, the internal governance and operation of the Ecozoic University might be largely similar to that of the contemporary university.

To make this effort worthwhile, the Ecozoic University has to offer something fundamentally new with some promise of efficacy in sustaining the natural world's capacity to perform its primary functions. What distinguishes the Ecozoic University from other universities?

The Ecozoic University distinguishes itself in two ways, first, and most apparent, by offering more ecological course content that is relevant and critical to the continuing integral functioning of Earth. Second, and more profound, the Ecozoic University carries within it a fundamentally new worldview we have named the Ecozoic Worldview that derives from the very reality and concept underlying the term Ecozoic Age. The further development and articulation of the Ecozoic Worldview is a primary distinguishing feature of the Ecozoic University.

### ***The distortion of the monochromatic prism versus a holistic approach***

The metaphor of the lens or prism is often used to characterize the viewing of an issue in a narrow scope. Marxists may view society through the prism of class struggle. Capitalism may normalize the value of all things to hard currency through its bottom-line prism. Religious fundamentalists may see the world through the prism of their convictions. Movements that aim to redress a problematic life issue almost by necessity emphasize their issue of concern above all others, through their own prism.

The Ecozoic University has within its very name the potential danger of functioning with a monochromatic prism. The central idea underlying the Ecozoic University is the need to redress an error of omission in the modern worldview and its university. Expressed in different ways, the error is: omitting the limitations of the natural world as a factor in the pursuit of progress; failing to teach a holistic worldview wherein the natural world is recognized for the primary functions it performs; and failing to teach that the well-being of the human is achieved only within the integral functioning of Earth.

While the Ecozoic University has an ecological focus, it must also be attentive to the broader spectrum of life issues. This might be accomplished in part by redressing the neglected ecological thread *within* the broader spectrum of life issues, and thereby include many life issues within its *green* scope. The Ecozoic University must implement a holistic approach, and perhaps a more interdisciplinary (or *pan-disciplinary*) approach. Just how this should be done, while still achieving the same depth and clarity of education realized through the partitioning of knowledge domains by discipline, is still very much an unanswered question.

There are more specifics to be presented, both in terms of course content and just how the Ecozoic University could be designed and open its virtual doors to students. To be sure, realizing the Ecozoic University as situated within the context of the Ecozoic Age entails accomplishing many specific nuts-and-bolts tasks, some appearing daunting and formidable.

### **Proposed approach and methods to establish the Ecozoic University**

So far we have outlined that recognizing the existence of the Ecozoic Age gives rise to the Ecozoic University that lives within an Ecozoic Worldview. We have asserted that the task of the Ecozoic University is not only to transmit knowledge critically relevant to the challenges of the Ecozoic Age, but also to more rigorously develop and articulate the content, character and implications of the Ecozoic Worldview that provides the overarching framework and orientation for the Ecozoic University itself. In addition, we have alluded to a few specific courses that should be taught at the Ecozoic University.

Now on to the next question: how do we accomplish this? How do we go about creating the Ecozoic University, which is a complex, multifaceted and a substantial undertaking to say the least? How do we go about designing and building the Ecozoic University as a respected and accredited institution of higher learning, such that, within perhaps four to five years, we have a virtual campus with students enrolled, paying tuition, earning a real and relevant education, with real opportunities to be hired into professional careers after graduation that support a constructive response to the challenges of the Ecozoic Age? How do we translate and evolve abstract ideas that were conceived in a contemplative religious mode of thought into tangible knowledge and skills, degrees and paying careers that substantively address a multitude of ecological challenges in the twenty-first century?

The following is a very rough and preliminary description of how the Ecozoic University might be constructed. The methods and tools used in business and industry would be used to define and manage a project that integrates the diverse contributions of many knowledge domain experts—the *integral functioning of Earth* and the *primary revelation of the divine* meet up with PowerPoint, Microsoft Project, streaming video and social networking media. Bear in mind this how-to section is a set of very preliminary suggestions.

### **Phase One: Design as a thought experiment**

The first phase is to design the Ecozoic University as a thought experiment where it costs little to nothing to think big. Thinking big—the Ecozoic University should integrate and support a spectrum of colleges that rival the largest established bricks-and-mortar universities on the planet. In this phase, we think big, make a big organizational chart, and figure out later how to manage the “bigness.” In the realm of the thought experiment, the laws of physics and economics are not constraints.

#### **Step 1**

In the first step of the thought experiment, we construct a model of the Ecozoic University as we would like to see it in reality. Envision an online instantiation of the Ecozoic University with say twenty-five colleges that include the colleges of: Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Engineering and Computing Sciences, Biology and Life Sciences, Sociology and Psychology, Education, Business and Corporate Management, Political Science, Law, History, Anthropology and Archeology, Philosophy and Religious Studies, Paleontology, Atmospheric and Climatology, Marine Sciences, Medicine and Medical Sciences, Literature and Humanities, Fine Arts, and surely we can list others. Construct an organizational chart in PowerPoint. It is okay to think big; all we are producing in the thought experiment phase is ink and pixels. Don't worry about it being perfect – it will change.

#### **Step 2**

Then a committee of say five to ten people, or more, go off to survey the courses, majors and degrees traditionally offered in these colleges listed in Step 1. In this step, a list of majors, minors, and degrees are constructed, along with associated courses that fulfill various degree requirements.

#### **Step 3**

In Step 3 we complete these four tasks: (1) identify which of the courses listed in Step 2 may have a neglected ecological thread; (2) identify totally new courses appropriate to the various colleges and their degree programs that may have a major ecological component; (3) very important, we identify ways and means to integrate knowledge domains such that a more complete view of the world may be better comprehended; and (4) identify any new degree programs that might add value to the overall goals of the Ecozoic University. Committee members contributing to this step, guided by a content template that asks for textbook titles, lecture briefs, student collaboration projects, research topics, essays, etc., will write up a brief outline or syllabus for each course. There may be about 200 courses to outline in this way, and this work may take a committee of ten to fifteen contributors working in parallel about six months to complete. Contributors should collaborate over this research period as often as needed. It is important to get this step pretty close to correct, since these outlines will guide the inputs we request in the call-for-contributions phase.

#### **Step 4**

The outlines produced in Step 3 are vetted and peer reviewed in Step 4. These outlines will become the straw-man<sup>1</sup> examples of courses that later go out with the call-for-contributions package to the community of academics and professionals worldwide to serve as preliminary guidance (straw-man) on the content and format of course content we are looking for. The purpose for designing a set of straw-man course

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<sup>1</sup> From *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*:

A “straw-man proposal” is a brainstormed simple proposal intended to generate discussion of its disadvantages and to provoke the generation of new and better proposals. Often, a straw-man document will be prepared by one or two people prior to kicking off a larger project. In this way, the team can jump start their discussions with a document that is likely to contain many, but not all the key aspects to be discussed. As the document is revised, it may be given other edition names such as the more solid-sounding “stone-man”, “iron-man”, and so on.

outlines is to guide the construction of the course content the Ecozoic University needs. The downside of this approach is potentially placing a damper on utterly pure creativity that might be expressed in some course content we would receive. The practical side is that we need content that will cohere within a larger curricula. Part of the general call-for-contributions, described in Step 5, should also include an opening to receive creative input that does not fit the suggested outlines, but offered with caution and caveats. Too much constraint and we get little that is new; too little constraint and we get little that is useful.

### ***Phase Two: Final design***

#### ***Step 5***

In this phase, a call-for-contributions is released to academics and professional experts worldwide. The call-for-contributions is issued in hard copy suitable for snail mail and a soft-copy is posted on a website where the entire package can be viewed online or downloaded. The call-for-contributions package is comprised of: (1) a one-page top level summary of the contribution called for; (2) a white paper describing the concept, purpose, and timeline for developing the Ecozoic University (that may be a very substantially expanded version of this essay with a schedule); (3) the peer-reviewed document produced in Step 4 that contains the straw-man course, major and degree outlines produced in Steps 1 through 4 to be referenced as guides; and (4) preliminary description of the online virtual campus that includes a description of the interface capability provided to students and professors on the virtual campus set up on the Internet.

The call-for-contributions is an invitation for experts from academia, research institutes, governmental and non-governmental organizations, and independent specialists and consultants to write final course content outlines and syllabi for courses that fulfill major and degree requirements of specific colleges within the Ecozoic University. Their content, after vetting and peer review, is uploaded to the Ecozoic University's cyber campus and made available to students and educators. By the time Step 5 is underway, the cyber mechanism that hosts the Ecozoic University needs to be up and running so that course content can be uploaded and exercised as an initial or "alpha release" with limited access.

In this phase, a review board decides on the appropriateness and quality of the course content submitted by contributors. It is conceivable that some content would be rejected, in whole or in part, or changes negotiated with the contributor.

The contributors of accepted course content will likely be the adjunct professors that interface with the students enrolled in online courses.

#### ***Step 6***

This step entails the final determination of the online teaching faculty and other staff that will manage the various departments of the colleges within the Ecozoic University. The faculty will most likely be the contributors designing the final content of the courses in Step 5 above. Recall again, the step-by-step approach outlined here is preliminary. It constitutes an initial attempt to make the design process at least somewhat comprehensible.

### ***Phase Three: Rollout and opening the Ecozoic University to an initial class***

#### ***Step 7***

We can view the cyber manifestation of the Ecozoic University as a complex system. Any time a complex system is rolled out for the first time, problems are encountered. We could describe the Ecozoic University at this point in its development as the "beta version" open to access outside the planning group. Perhaps the best way to test the system and ring out the inevitable bugs is to have an initial class of students exercise the various components and then perform a review of content and interfaces.

***In parallel with Steps 1 through 7***

In parallel with Steps 1 through 7 that focus on the design of course content, major study and degree requirements, and the ways and means of achieving a holistic approach to the acquisition of university-level knowledge, two additional tasks need to be accomplished.

Parallel task one is the design of the cyber structure that will host access to the course content and facilitate communications among students and professors. There are several examples of online universities in operation now and bricks-and-mortar universities have been using intranets to support many aspects of communication and exchange of course materials. This technology is out there now and available.

The website will support downloadable files, student-professor communications, blogs and bulletin boards, online meeting and collaboration capability, streaming video download for real-time or recorded lecture content. Cyberspace capabilities to support online education are growing rapidly, and capabilities will only increase in the future. This cyber component of the Ecozoic University can be constructed while other contributors work on course design.

The goal would be to have a cyber structure that can accept the course content when it is ready to be uploaded with all of the point-and-click and other mechanisms working. It may be feasible to obtain a code structure from an established online organization and contract a web developer to tailor it appropriately.

Parallel task two is designing the hierarchy of governance for the Ecozoic University. An initial starting point may be to reference the conventional hierarchy of governance found at contemporary universities and examine how other cyber universities govern themselves.

***Ongoing development: Open curricula design***

Open curricula design, may be very powerful, and would likely be set up after the initial course ensemble is completed. The instantiation of the Ecozoic University in cyberspace totally eliminates the constraint of co-locating professor and students. The professors and students may be distributed across the planet. Moreover, knowledge domain experts that are deeply entrenched in their research work and utterly precluded from contributing as an adjunct professor on location at a bricks-and-mortar university can author course content and make it available to the world. To convey a sense of just how powerful this can be, consider *Wikipedia*, *The Free Encyclopedia (Wikipedia)*.

Recall how *Wikipedia* works. An expert on a given topic can go online and author content into *Wikipedia* in accordance with a template and set up links to any number of other topics based on terms used in the article entered. Peer review follows to improve and/or verify quality. The *Wikipedia* content has grown into a huge content archive of facts and knowledge that is accessed virtually every second of the day worldwide.

A modified version of the *Wikipedia* model may be implemented in the cyber mechanism that hosts the Ecozoic University. Any expert who wants to set up a course relevant to the theme of the Ecozoic University, monitor it and interface with students may author the course content in accordance with a standard template. Acceptance of the content would be pending peer review for accuracy and relevance to the college for which it is intended within the Ecozoic University. The author can possibly be compensated with a portion of the tuition paid.

For example, suppose some engineers and risk-assessment experts want to setup a course on the safety risks inherent in nuclear power plants. They would author the content in accordance with a template determining format and style. Then the course content would be vetted through a peer review process and uploaded to the cyber campus. Such courses could be used to spot-train on topics to particular users that need just-in-time training, such as a Congressional staffer that is assigned to attend a hearing on licensing new nuclear power plants in the United States. In addition, such a course could be included as

an elective toward a degree in political science or engineering. The course could be adjusted for those requiring a lesser or greater degree of mathematical depth and rigor in the course.

The most knowledgeable experts in the world would have the opportunity to come forward to offer course content through Ecozoic University's open curricula design feature, and students at large would not be limited only to the course content available at their local university. Individual universities can accredit courses based on the relevance and standards of rigor found in their content.

### **How can the size and complexity of this project be managed?**

How will the volume of work and complexity be managed? How will it be funded? To answer these questions, we can refer to the list of phrases below.

- Innate desire to contribute
- Simultaneity and parallelism
- Resonance, latent concurrence and consensus
- Stone Soup dynamics
- God has lots of money

#### ***Innate desire to contribute***

Much of the work in developing the Ecozoic University work will be done by volunteer university professors and a certain type of professional working in research or other role at the forefront of solving or describing ecological problems. This type of person enjoys contributing as an "architect of ideas." He or she will be an expert in the knowledge domain of the course being designed. The successful contributor will have an innate desire to contribute to a project. These initiatives can provide more satisfaction than the routine duties at the day job. The extracurricular project may become an enhancement to one's resume. With a sufficient number of volunteer contributors working in their fields of expertise, the work of any one person should not be too burdensome.

If the importance and viability of a project can be demonstrated, then many academics and professionals will contribute. The first set of academics and professionals may very well come from the 150 or so contributors to *A Tribute to Thomas Berry*, published in *The Ecozoic*, Volume 2, and from their extended community of colleagues.

#### ***Simultaneity and parallelism***

Much of this project can be done in parallel, such as writing course outlines. The course outlines required would be split up by knowledge domain and have specified templates. This will allow many people to work independently even in the same knowledge domain. They will also be able to access each other's work and collaborate so that results may be obtained in a reasonable time frame.

#### ***Resonance, latent concurrence and consensus***

The ideas represented by Ecozoic Age, Ecozoic Worldview and Ecozoic University are ideas whose time has come and the action implicated is overdue. These ideas will resonate with many because latent concurrence and consensus already exists. The key factor missing is the project structure in which to contribute.

#### ***Stone Soup dynamics***

"Stone Soup" is an ancient parable. A Google search will find several versions of it if you're not familiar with it. In short, some hungry soldiers enter a village in search of food and the villagers hide their food fearing the soldiers will deplete their meager stores. The soldiers, however, have magic stones that will make soup when placed in a pot of boiling water. As the crowd watches the steaming pot in anticipation of seeing soup magically materialize, one villager proclaims, "I have some cabbage to thicken the broth."

Another person offers to bring some extra salt beef. One thing leads to the other, and soon the villagers have made a large tasty pot of soup. You get the drift here. A project like the one designed to produce the Ecozoic University has a *Stone Soup* quality to it. People will bring their cabbage and salt beef to the pot.

### **God has lots of money**

“God has lots of money” is a statement attributed to Mother Theresa of Calcutta. Many philanthropists will fund a good idea once it begins to show some life and commitment behind it. Mother Theresa’s work had adequate funding. Khan Academy recently received a \$3 million dollar grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Visit the online course program of the Khan Academy at <http://www.khanacademy.org/#browse> to see what it’s all about. The Ecozoic University project can attract adequate funding once it is started and shows promise.

### **Summary**

If Thomas Berry’s ideas are correct and some segment of the populace recognizes the Ecozoic Age and the Ecozoic Worldview, then the course content built on, or consistent with, Thomas’s thought will be well received in the university setting, and should produce good consequences in practical application when professionals in various fields apply the knowledge received in these courses.

The Ecozoic University can be a virtual campus to provide a university education to students and/or generate course content to disseminate to other educational institutions. Entire course sequences could be made available to bricks-and-mortar universities or linked into other cyber universities. With open curricula design, any expert or group of experts in a given topic may generate content for colleges within the Ecozoic University.

In the coming decades, society will need an increasing number of professionals who understand the ecological dimension in their fields. Society in general needs to have a better understanding of the ecological factors that affect life in sensitive bioregions and across the planet. Some examples follow:

- Municipalities will need managers and consultants who know how to reduce their carbon footprints.
- Experts in a host of ecological issues will be needed to negotiate treaties between nations.
- Many engineering innovations will be needed to solve a host of technical ecological problems.
- Journalists will need to understand ecological factors integral to the news stories they write.
- Spiritual leaders, writers and artists will need to understand ecological spirituality.
- The general population will need to understand that the natural world around them provides the basis of life, and this fundamental understanding should enable them to vote more appropriately in the democratic process.

The project proposed is large and complex and would require the contribution of many people over perhaps two to four years to complete an initial rollout. The project work entails two fundamentally different components, each critically important to realizing the Ecozoic University.

The first is the philosophical work that derives the remedy to the perceived error embodied in the current modern university—the failure of the modern university to present a unified, largely complete picture of reality that includes how the well-being of the human is supported only within the integral functioning of Earth.

The second task, while extensive and complex, really reduces to an exercise in program management and the development of an online campus. The task involves defining of a statement-of-work, course outline specifications, objectives and a schedule for carrying out the work. This task doesn’t involve much that is fundamentally new.

The hard part is synthesizing the philosophical approach and arriving at a consensus on this approach. Total consensus may be hard to achieve and the final philosophy implemented in the Ecozoic University may be a compromise that satisfies no one fully, but in general most agree is moving in the right direction.

Is this project worth doing as presented or with modifications? All comments are welcome; this proposal can benefit from much review, thought, comment and questioning.

**By George Bortny**

## **APPENDIX I**

### **THE DETERMINING FEATURES OF THE ECOZOIC ERA**

**By Thomas Berry**

1. Earth is a communion of subjects not a collection of objects.
2. 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, Earth is not a global sameness. It is a differentiated unity and must be sustained in the integrity and interrelations of its many bioregional modes of expression.
3. Earth is a one-time endowment. It is subject to irreversible damage in the major patterns of its functioning.
4. The human is derivative, Earth is primary. Earth must be the primary concern of every human institution, profession, program and activity. In economics, for instance, 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. It should be clear, in the medical profession, that we cannot have healthy people on a sick planet.
5. The entire pattern of functioning of 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, while 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.
7. The Ecozoic can come into existence only through an appreciation of the feminine dimension of 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 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 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 that will recognize the sacred dimension of 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 [present] language is radically inadequate. A new dictionary should be compiled with new definitions of existing words and an introduction of new words for the new mode of being and functioning that are emerging.
12. Psychologically all the archetypes of the collective unconscious attain a new validity and a new pattern of functioning, especially in our understanding of the symbols of the Tree of Life, the heroic journey, death and rebirth, the mandala and the Great Mother.

13. New developments can be expected in ritual, in all the arts, and in literature. In drama especially, extraordinary opportunities exist in the monumental issues that are being worked out in these times. The conflicts that until now have been situated simply within the human drama are 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.

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***The mission of CES is to offer visions and understandings, through dialogue, of ecozoic societies and contribute to their realization through research, education, art, and action.***

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**Contributions are welcome.**