A research text dump on Christopher Manes' philosophy

2 February 1986

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Introduction

Source: Redwood Uprising

A column penned in the Beltane (May 1) 1987 edition of the *Earth First! Journal*, written by "Miss Ann Thropy", implied that, following the logic of Malthus, AIDS and other fatal diseases were nature's way of regulating the human population, and concluded "if the AIDS epidemic didn't exist, radical ecologists would have to invent one." Miss Ann Thropy was an obvious nomme de plume, and many assumed it was Dave Foreman, though it was later revealed to be, by his own admission, fellow Earth First!er Chris Manes. Manes claimed that the column was "dark humor", but he was deadly serious about the thinking behind it, declaring,

> "Some Earth First!ers have suggested in Malthusian fashion that the appearance of famine in Africa and of plague in the form of AIDS is the inevitable outcome of humanity's inability to conform its numbers to ecological limits. This contention hit a nerve with the humanist critics of radical environmentalism, who contend that social problems are the cause behind world hunger and that suggesting plague is a solution to overpopulation is 'misanthropic.' They have also produced a large body of literature attempting to show that Thomas Malthus was incorrect about the relationship between population and food reduction. Malthus may have been incorrect, famine may be based on social inequalities, plagues may be an undesirable way to control population—but the point remains that unless something is done to slow and reverse human population growth these contentions will soon become moot."[1]

In Defense of Western Civilization (1985)

Author: Christopher Manes
Date: 2 February 1985
Source: Earth First! 5, no. 3 (2 February 1985): 19. <brontaylor.com/courses/pdf/Manes–civilization5%283%2919%28feb85%29.pdf>

The American Indian lost the war of rifles but won by default the war of symbols. To the generations distracted by modernity, Native American culture has come to

[1] Green Rage; Radical Environmentalism and the Unmaking of Civilization by Christopher Manes

represent the simple, profound life this land proffered before technology botched everything. So many aspiring poets, graduate students of anthropology, and even a few sensible people have been making pilgrimages to medicine men that Indians now talk about a new tribe: The Wannabees. I imagine a good many environmentalists are also in the ranks, and that's fine. When the ideals of passionate people begin to come of age, aspects of history get reinterpreted, re-emphasized, romanticized. And that's fine too: romanticizing nature indicates a metaphysical disorientation, but romanticizing people is probably inevitable and suggests a healthy outlook on life (didn't somebody call *Earth First!* a romance novel?). My experience is that only very stingy people dislike heroes.

But it seems we can only take so much romanticism at one time. Somebody has to get the boot, and if the Indians were right about nature, then the rest of us with our Western values must be the original despoilers of paradise. And a righteous boot it is, stomping away at a civilization that gave the world dioxin, Mutually Assured Destruction, and the US Forest Service.

This kind of thinking is probably behind the curious turn radical environmentalism has taken: namely, it's "rejection" of Western civilization. I say "curious" because even a little reflection will show the contradiction here. Environmentalism as a more or less coherent set of beliefs rises out of Western history; it is an episode in the Western dream of reintegration with nature which has its origins in pre-Socratic philosophy and the pagan ethos. And although as a practical matter non-Western societies have wreaked less havoc on the environment (a situation which is of course changing), this was sometimes due more to a lack of means than any spiritual inclination. Great God! even the likes of Black Elk—for many a John the Baptist of deep ecology—even he has made statements that might just as well have come out of the Medieval *contemptus mundi* tradition.

I suppose this rejection is really a kind of shorthand for a deprecation of modern industrial society—which indeed needs deprecating. Still, it results in an historical displacement which assigns the unnatural values of the present to all of Western history. This distorts the issue. If the task at hand it defending Earth, then we have to be very precise about what we're defending it from. And that is not some generalization like Western civilization.

Europe was, after all, at one time as tribal as pre-Columbian America. You could evn argue that these were the glory-days of the West, when homer sang his epics, druids communed in sacred groves, and the tragic myths of the North were incubating. Nor is it a coincidence that the finest spiritual values of the West—fascination with the world, self-sacrifice in a just cause, acceptance of fate—developed here, *not* after the urban cultures of the Mediterranean had taken root and spread. If we can believe the Roman historian Tacitus (and we can, although he was doing his own romanticizing at times), the Germans of central Europe were a lackadaisical bunch, hunting and farming undiligently, never staying in one place long enough to cause much damage: "They do

not plant orchards, fence off meadows, or irrigate gardens." In general, they preferred feasting and feuding to land development.

But this isn't intended as an apologia of Western civilization, which to my pre-Freudian mind doesn't require any. I merely want to emphasize that the problem lies in a particular relationship between man and the world, not in the vague evils of our fathers.

An example. The Celtic tribes of pre-historic Britain lived in harmony with nature. Light hunting and farming supported their flourishing Le Tene culture without diminishing the vast forests of the island. There was an iron mine or two, some extra cattle and grain to export, but the economy wasn't organized enough to cause any trouble. No cities, no central authority, no industry, because the Celts felt no *need* to control the world, but rather merely lived in it.

The Roman invasion changed all that. A heavy plough and slave labor brought virgin land under cultivation. A timber industry arose to heat the public baths of the new urban centers and to fire the forges of a developing ceramics industry. The Roman genius for exploitation developed lead, copper and tin mining on a large scale. In other words, all the familiar detritus of contemporary society. By the time the Empire collapsed and the Anglo-Saxons swarmed in, lowland Britain was on its way to deforestation. The Germanic tribes brought a short-lived sanity by destroying the cities and returning the economy to subsistence hunting and farming. Their conversation to Christianity in the seventh century, however, renewed Britain's contact with Rome and began the process of urbanization and centralization all over again. Viking invasions of the ninth and eleventh centuries returned a little health to the land, but England was already on its way to Order, Empire, and Cow Pastures.

My point is that Western civilization didn't deforest England (all the cultures involved were Western); a debased relationship with life did, one that challenges everything in nature to be organized into a network of human utility. Such is the goal of technology. It's important to think of technology not as an accumulation of machinery, but as a relationship, a one-dimensional relationship which subordinates the complex interplay between man and nature to the imperative of production and consumption. Unlike the *crafts* of our ancestors, which merely tapped into the natural qualities of particular things and brought them forward, technology seizes upon everything, everywhere, in such a way that things are permitted to exist only as a kind of standing reserve for us in a larger network. It is because of this relationship that we can have such strange concepts as "natural resource" or "human resource."

Technology, in this sense, whether ascendant in modern America or Russia, or first century Rome, impels societies to urbanize, centralize, and industrialize in an attempt to confront nature with the demands of utility. This isn't a cultural distinction, but a spiritual one, as applicable in Brazil and Ethiopia as in Illinois. World Technology nullifies all culture.

Rather than hoping for absolution at the hands of others for rejecting Western civilization, I say we can't have enough of the primal Wester values—the profundity of

the Celtic druid, the resolve of the Saxon warrior, the boldness of the Achaian seafarer. The legions of technology were defeated by the likes of these; perhaps we can defeat them again.

Technology and Mountain Thinking (1986)

Author: Christoph Manes
Source: Earth First! Journal, Brigid, vol. 6, no. 3 (2 February 1986), page 21. <environmentandsociety.org/node/6867>

The question of technology lies at the heart of the environmental crisis. I say "question" because, far from being a self-evident issue, what technology is and how we should deal with it, is exactly what needs to be addressed if we want to start "thinking like a mountain"—to use Aldo Leopold's phrase for a clarity of vision and insight that took him beyond the anthropocentric delusions of our vainglorious culture. My point in considering the meaning of technology is not to float off into the philosophic ether; philosophy that corrupts action isn't worth an oyster, and probably isn't philosophy. We all know what needs to be done to an unattended bulldozer stumbled upon in an old growth forest. But larger, more complex environmental concerns are better approached with a view to the wider implications of the technological threat, which go beyond its ugly hardware.

You hear the following argument from all kinds of people, environmentalists included: Technology is a tool—admittedly it has gotten out of hand, but the problem is not with the tool, but how we use it. We have to learn to use "appropriate" technology. Sometimes environmentalists add the more insightful corollary that the problem lies mainly in who controls technology. The solution, then, is to decentralize, which would allow us to determine for ourselves how to use technology appropriately.

On the common-sense level all this is obviously true. Most decentralization is good, and who wouldn't prefer appropriate technology to the destructive technology now befouling our air, land, and water? Yet, it is the obvious things that should give us pause, because they sometimes conceal enigmas no longer questioned. We may be deluding ourselves in thinking we can have fluoride toothpaste without having nuclear warheads. It may be that we don't use technology at all, but that it uses us. Which is to say that its physical manifestations—the chainsaws and smokestacks we all deplore—result from a relationship between humanity and Earth which transcends our immediate power to control.

In *The Question Concerning Technology* Martin Heidegger comes to these perplexing conclusions. This is a work environmentalists should read, even if they disagree with Heidegger's views, because it upsets the usual assumptions about technology underlying modern ideologies of every type. In this it shows a kinship with some currents

of deep ecology. Heidegger's argument implies that nuclear missiles (and deforestation and factories and bureaucratic minds) do, in a sense, come out of your tube of toothpaste. In other words, the institutions required to produce the technological advances we desire are the same that produce clearcuts and chemical wastes: an education system to develop and propagate techniques, centers of production, means of acquiring raw materials, transportation systems, distribution centers, currency, and other institutions all combining to make the modem industrial state. More importantly, the impulse toward an optimum humanistic existence insulated from the environment, even through the benign magic of "appropriate" technology, leads us back down the grievous path to environmental domination, whose ultimate form is total destruction.

I conclude from this that there is no "appropriate" technology. There are merely crafts, on the one hand, which tap into the abundant creativity of Earth; and on the other, technology, which always seeks to dominate it. Heidegger goes even beyond this conclusion. He argues that technology is not a tool at all, either for good or bad. Tools, like arts and rituals, play a part in the meaningfulness of the world. They engage us in the things of the world and insist on their independent existence by bringing forward their be-ing. Tools, rituals, arts let earthly things be meaningful things and manifest themselves as this particular stone to be cut or this plot of land to be hoed. At the same time, they confront us with the sheer intractable existence of things beyond any meaning we attribute to them. The two relationships belong together: both *what* something is and *that* it is.

Technology, on the other hand, effaces the things of the world, subordinating them to what Heidegger calls "the network" (Bezug) of production and consumption. Earth recedes into an amorphous "standing reserve" (Bestand), ready for use in some aspect of the network. A river becomes a hydro-electric plant; a forest becomes board feet. To use Heidegger's example, the airplane on the runway no longer even has the status of an independent, if highly artificial, thing. It is merely an arbitrary and replaceable unit of the tourist industry, which construes other lands and cultures as standing reserve to be consumed every summer, with the result that the tourists can be more efficient producers when they return to their own industries. Planes have become macroeconomic ciphers. And when terms are used like "recreation area" or "scenic wonder" or even "wilderness experience"—pleasant though these may be—isn't this also a technological representation of Earth as standing reserve?

This is a central point: technology is not an accumulation of machinery, but a relationship between humanity and Earth that challenges the existence of everything by forcing it into the production/consumption network. Everything. Including humanity. Indeed, Heidegger predicted in *The End of Philosophy* that technology must relegate humanity into standing reserve. This, he implies, is the impetus behind industrialization, whether capitalist or communist. And his prediction is coming true. The phrases "human resource" and "total mobilization of the nation" have become common, and we can only shudder at the fierce intrusion on human ecology that genetic engineering

and in vitro fertilization represent. Deep ecology is not saving Earth from man; it is saving both Earth and humanity from complete effacement by technology.

This train of thought raises all kinds of questions. Good. Deep ecology is strong insofar as it refuses to accept any dogma. As Heidegger says at the end of *The Question Concerning Technology,* "Questioning is the piety of thought." But two questions about Heidegger's thought need to be addressed. First, whether Heidegger perhaps lets humanity off too easily concerning its responsibility for the environmental crisis; and second—just the opposite—whether perhaps he gives humanity special status as "meaning-giver" to Earth (a notion New-Agers are particularly fond of). The best way to answer these is to consider Heidegger's philosophy in relation to a central tenet of deep ecology: the "inherent value" of wilderness.

Reading Heidegger, especially his early works like *Being and Time,* it's easy to get the impression that he discounted any innate or inherent values or meanings outside humanity. Sartre came away from one of Heidegger's seminars with just such an opinion, and the illegitimate French children of Heidegger's thought brought forth existentialism and other self-absorbed, anthropocentric systems incompatible with deep ecology and a healthy planet. But this is a false impression, the result of over-sophisticated and insensitive minds. He does insist that value and meaning are human concepts, but he does not do this to thrust humanity into the center of existence—on the contrary, Heidegger wants to show how tenuous and derivational these concepts are. We evaluate; Earth doesn't require this. Earth simply is, and persists, beyond the dubious evaluations of humans. For Heidegger, to talk about the inherent value of Earth would be to anthropomorphize, and hence diminish Earth.

But this is merely a terminological disagreement, a question of emphasis. Some deep ecologists have quite rightly seen in Heidegger's thought a philosophic parallel to the sense behind the term "inherent value." Throughout his career, Heidegger was always concerned with the *Seinsfrage,* the question of what it means to exist. This type of inquiry usually becomes a swamp of abstractions, but Heidegger cultivates it in terms of our relationship with earthly things, of our dwelling here on Earth. He makes the startling claim that this relationship precedes the things related, that human existence and a meaningful world are dependent on the manifestation of things themselves, of the Be-ing of beings. In one fell swoop he topples the subjective and objective citadels of modern philosophy by pointing out that the world is never a barren accumulation of individual, unrelated objects to which an abstract subject assigns meaning. We are always *in* the world, inseparable from it.

This is a simple idea, and like many simple things, difficult to explain and grasp. Even if only humans articulate meaning through language, in the larger context, Being itself (or, if you prefer, the inexplicable manifestation of Earth through earthly things) must determine our relationship with things, because we are subordinate to that relationship, with no more status than cabbages. We didn't "invent" meaning and value, nor is it in our control. In this sense, Earth and its Be-ing have a profound, unspoken, unspeakable meaning.

I'm condensing the ocean into a tea cup. Heidegger's point is to let a rose be as much as possible a rose, and not a representation of some idea. Or if we must make the rose a representation, at least we should concede that it is something other than our representation, whole and actual in itself.

In his later works, like *Building Dwelling Thinking* (Heidegger intentionally omitted the commas between the words in the title to suggest their unity), Heidegger leaps into the realm of poetry to get at this idea. Authentic human existence (as opposed to technological abstraction), he says, proceeds like a craftsman in his workshop. In making a chair or wood carving, the existence of the artisan and of his tools merge to create the meaning of the place where he dwells. His existence comes forward, as does the wood he smooths, as does the tree he felled, as does the horse that dragged it over a mountain path. This man doesn't diminish Earth; he takes part in its inevitable manifestation. "A shepherd of Being," as Heidegger says.

And thinking, too—real thinking—has this quality. Unlike the challenging-effacing of technological calculation, it attends to the clues sent from Be-ing through beings, a mode of thinking that is anything but passive. Heidegger doesn't absolve humans from the technological crisis to wallow in mystic impotence: authentic existence demands that we take responsibility for the past in order to strive to think like mountains again, knowing, however, that relationship is not a product of our will, but a blessing of Earth.

To think like a mountain—the phrase expresses a desire to go beyond the technological representation that afflicts Earth and darkens our dwelling here. I'm reminded of a few lines by the German mystic Johannes Schaffter which Heidegger liked to quote:

The rose is without a why,
it is because it is.

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Technology and Mortality (1986)

Author: Christopher Manes (under pseudo. Miss Ann Thropy)

Source: *Earth First! Journal* vol. 7, no. 1 (1 November 1986), page 18. <brontaylor.com/courses/pdf/MissAnnThropy–technology7(1)18(nov86).pdf>

Notes: Criticizes technological innovations that prolong life and suggests that they, and the western religious ideas that accompany such efforts, must go. Foreman comments in support telling bleeding heart Christians, humanists or Marxists, need not bother to send rejoinders.

"Education," whether general or specifically related to family planning, is the nostrum most often mentioned as a solution to the world population crisis, usually based on statistics from developed countries correlating a rise in education levels with decreased, birth rates. The fact is, like all technological solutions to technological problems, education programs have been an ecological failure, even where they do decrease birth rates. The statistics fail to bear out the social context of such programs, which tend to be associated with urban, industrial, consumer-oriented economies. Post-War Japan provides a striking example. It miraculously halved a 3.45% birth rate during the '50s — the same decade that saw its transformation into an industrial giant — threatening ecosystems around the globe. Similar scenarios are happening in Korea, Singapore and elsewhere. This is mainly due to contraception, abortion and birth control information, but again the distinction between general education and family planning is nominal since the latter relies on the former at some stage.

Education programs, then, may indeed cut birth rates from four to two children, but if this decrease is based on overall movement toward industrialization, those two may consume ten times as much as before and actually accelerate environmental degradation.

I'm not aware of any biocentric discussion of overpopulation which acknowledges this relationship. (Anti-Malthusians, like Boserup in her Technology and Population, see the causal relation and praise education as a means to their panacea of technological growth.) Family planning ajai^ucationare linked to the technocrattaa^Urol responsible for the ecological cHsisin the first place, and deep ecologists should research ways to dissociate them from it.

Part of the problem is our insufficient definition of the term 'overpopulation.' Demographic definitions are hopelessly anthropocentric, usually suggesting a disfunction in the ability of humans to use resources for higher living standards. We need a biocentric definition. I'll venture one now by saying any human population is overpopulated when it disrupts the cycles of nature so as to threaten to permanently reduce global diversity. By this definition the US and all industrial nations are vastly overpopulated, no matter how wealthy they are or how efficient their use of resources is. Industrialization means overpopulation.

Technological solutions to technological problems do not work. We must ask how population stability occurs naturally, not through sociological tinkering. The last time this happened was in the Mesolithic period, when humans were huntergatherers. Population was held in check not by low birth rates, but by high infant Mortality rates (although studies of extant tribes like the Djuka and Motu suggest they also practiced techniques to limit offspring). When we hear that medical science has increased longevity from about 35 to about 70 years, this means it has reduced infant mortality. People in the Pleistocene didn't drop dead at 35 — if they lived past infancy they probably lived to 70 as people always have (three score and ten, says the Bible). But since approximately half the population died in childhood, the average was 35.

The central cause of overpopulation is not high fertility (although we should strive to reduce that too) but lower infant mortality due to technological intervention. This happened in Europe and, through colonial expansion, spread to the Third World, where Western medicine, green revolutions and higher education are ensuring a bleak future for us all.

If we really are serious about overpopulation, we have to confront this fact and try to reintroduce a situation where technology does not interfere with infant mortality (or any mortality, although deaths at other ages have remained quite constant through history — except during wars and plagues). Social justice is an interesting topic which seems to have taken over the overpopulation debate, but the only just way to control population is to let natural processes do it.

If we can save children, we will. I'd use any method, technological or otherwise, to protect my child. But remove the technology to do it, and it is no longer an issue. It may be sad that children (or anybody) have to die to keep populations stable; but it's high tragedy to create a technology that insures children will reach reproductive age and then limits birth rates, all by rationalizing Earth into an industrial society. The good effects of technology are inseparable from the bad,

Reestablishing natural mortality rates essentially means dismantling the technological network that supports medical science. Is this utopian? Not really. The technological complex is more fragile than its discourse lets on. We have seen in the area of wilderness preservation how monkeywrenching succeeds in undermining the plans of corporations. At least the idea of technology dismantlement isn't distopian, as is, for instance, talk about forced sterilization — another technological solution which requires the propagation of the very technological complex which is the problem. Technological interference with mortality rates is the root of the crisis and must be confronted. Nothing else will do.

Here are some suggestions, inadequate at best. I'd like „to hear more. Finding practical ways to dismantle industrial technology is, to my mind, the most important task of deep ecology.

1) Preserve areas where mortality rates are still natural. This means preventing the export of technology to undeveloped nations. The US is the worst culprit here and its tool is the World Bank. Put pressure on the World Bank to stop its destructive loans to Third World countries. The industrialization of indigenous populations is a conscious policy — it can be changed.

2) Take back areas controlled by technology. We might follow the example of the nuclear-free zone movement and establish technology-free zones through plebiscite! Local communities could decide for themselves what technologies to limit.

3) Fight technological advances. Don't let the high-tech mytnos delude you. Universities, research institutes and corporations should become targets of paper monkeywrenching and protests. Recent legal action and the successful Earth First! protest in California against genetic engineering shows this is possible. .

4) Extend monkeywrenching to urban areas, corporate offices, research institutions. This is a controversial idea, wfucSTmay not be wise, but should be discussed.

5) Spiritually reject technology. Become a pagan and ask the old gods, and ancestors to defeat technology. It's probably not a coincidence that the world started going downhill when we rejected our ancestral gods.

No doubt, many readers mil agree that , this piece fairly glows in the dark! Others may consider it blasphemous. Responses may be sent to Earth First! (but we will consider, printing only those which emanate from a deep ecological perspective; bleeding-heart liberals (Christian or secular humanist) and Marxists need not write).

The Cult of Tree-Cutters (1986)

Author: Christoph Manes

Source: *Earth First! Journal*, vol. 6, no. 7 (1 August 1986), page 23.

Notes: Call's Christianity a "cult of tree cutters" while urging a return to Asatru, "the indigenous religion of Northern Europe."

St. Boniface included the felling of trees sacred to pagan gods among his higher accomplishments. So did St. Jerome, Bishop Otto and Willebrord. In the year 1000 AD, after the heathen Vikings had been expelled from Dublin, King Brian Boru spent a month destroying the Forest of Thor on the north bank of the Liffey. If this fanatical hatred of trees sounds familiar in our unsuper- stitious, industrial society, there's a good reason. Beyond religious zealotry, the motivation that gripped these men (and their modern heirs) was no doubt deeply connected with the transcendent significance trees have always had for humans.

In the indigenous religion of Northern Europe, Asatru, the cosmos was held together by a great ash tree. Asatru is a shamanistic religion (still practiced in Iceland) and the world tree is a shamanistic symbol. It was called Yggdrasill, or Odin's horse, because, as the god rode his eight-legged horse Sleipnir (symbolizing the funeral bier) to the land of the dead in his quest for wisdom, he was actually descending to the roots of Yggdrasill. Here bubbled three springs: Hvergelmir, Wyrd and Mimir's Well. These are probably hypostases of the same idea—the hidden source of fate, Being, the flux that takes back the dead and the force that binds us to life. At the cost of great suffering (impalement on the tree) the shaman god Odin acquires knowledge of these secrets and bestows them on the inhabitants of Middle Earth in the form of runes. Thus the world tree establishes order and makes it comprehensible to humanity.

These motifs are familiar to Fino- Ugric, Amerind and other peoples who practice shamanism. And they aren't fanciful. Trees do partake of the sky, Middle Earth and the underground; they do hold together the network of life as we know it.

Perhaps this helps explain why Northern European, North Asian and American tribes avoided the deforestation their southern kin caused. At any rate, the absolutist states of the Mediterranean had little regard for trees. There were sacred groves in Greece and Rome, but these were mostly left-overs of fertility cults that had ceased to represent a way of life by historical times. Among the Sumerians and Babylonians, competition for lumber reduced forests to the status of war-spoil; and in *Gilgamesh,* they were appropriately populated by fierce demons like Humbaba. The Judeo- Christian tradition makes a tree the source, or at least the material cause, of evil in the world. To wag some of the useless knowledge of Medieval history I've acquired over the years let me note that in patristic writings the cross was often called a tree, which purportedly

stood at the center of the world at Calvary, in exactly the same location where the tree of good and evil grew in prelapsarian times. An anti-Yggdrasill, so to speak.

It's no coincidence that these ideas were part of slave states, empires, theocracies. Absolutist cultures require their participants to become one-dimensional, committed to the status-quo as the only reality. While standing right in their midst, a tree is a living symbol of the multi-dimensionality of existence, of historicity, change.

This is the point of contact with the modern cult of tree-cutters. To use Roland Barthe's phrase, "the universe of discourse," the realm of critical ideas which deny or doubt the acceptable facts, must be closed down or narrowed by industrial society for that society to sustain and reproduce itself. The utopian nature of Deep Ecology's world view stems not from any lack of realism on its part, but from the degree to which the universe of discourse has been narrowed.

The current global attack on trees is by nature totalitarian. It replaces the wilderness that freely yields the means of existence with a central authority which dispenses food, water, power, etc., in exchange for labor — the labor that keeps the prerequisites of this authority intact. And beyond that, it is cosmically totalitarian — an attack on the world tree, our connectedness with Earth, our sense of *place* — in order to

limit the universe of discourse to the propagation of technological control. Lousiana Pacific and the Forest Service are not just cutting down trees; they're cutting us off from a meaningful world.

There's a passage in the *Elder Edda* which says that after the Twilight of the Gods, after the frost giants have stoimed Asgard, after the worlds perish in flame and flood, a man and a woman who have been sheltered by the world tree will emerge from their leafy bower and inherit a new, green earth cleansed of the monsters who wielded chaos.

Let's not wait that long.

Christoph Manes is an expert on Old English, Middle English and Norse Literature; and an ecologist who contributes regularly to our journal.

A Ritual to Sol (1987)

Author: Christoph Manes
Source: *Earth First! Journal*, vol. 7, no. 8 (23 September 1987), page 32.
Notes: Manes notes affinities between paganism in general, and specifically Asatru, to deep ecology.

As the thinking of Deep Ecology has grown and matured, its relationship with pagan tradition has become more evident. The affinity between the two invites us to give serious thought to the pagan world view, especially since Western culture has gone for so long cut off from the native religions associated with its biocentric origins in the Stone, Bronze and Iron Ages. But if paganism — authentic paganism — is to play a part in reestablishing the natural life cycles disrupted by industrial man, then it must not only meet with our intellectual approval, it must be *practiced*. The rituals of nature-based religions were not quaint examples of superstition and magic. They were an effective way in which people found their places in the cycles of the sun and moon, tide and seasons, life and death. In short, they helped our ancestors *dwell* on Earth, something we have almost completely forgotten how to do in a technological society which quantifies all time and space in terms of economic power.

The following is a ritual to the sun which I've compiled from practicing Othinist groups here and in Iceland (Othinism or Asatru being the indigenous religion of Northern Europe). The purpose of the ritual is to begin each day with a contemplation of one's dwelling on Earth, of the physical and temporal context provided by the sun's motion, which makes life coherent to us. Usually it is addressed to the sun with the arms raised in a V formation, palms facing out toward the sun's warmth.

> *Hail to you, Sun, gem of Othin, newly-risen*
> *Hail to the one who has shined on my ancestors*
> *Who shines on me now, and will shine on those who come after me*
> *Share with me today some of your light and power*
> *That I may walk the Earth in joy and fulfill my fate.*

At this point, the practitioner may contemplate how the sun has shone on all life on this planet, and consider the continuity and stability it gives to life. But these details aren't important, nor the specific words or gestures you use: one virtue of paganism is that there is no heathen Pope to prescribe one way of doing things. Pagans can use whatever words and actions they feel comfortable with. The main thing is to show an attitude of respect for the sun, which takes us beyond the narrow subjectivism of everyday existence into which we habitually fall.

Overpopulation and Industrialism (1987)

Author: Christopher Manes (under pseudo. Miss Ann Thropy)
Source: *Earth First! Journal*, vol. 7, no. 4 (20 March 1987), page 29. <brontaylor.com/courses/pdf/MissAnnThropy–industrialism7(4)29(mar87).pdf>

In a recent meeting of the Common Market (European Economic Community), demographic experts, especially from France, expressed alarm at the decline in birth rates among some member nations. Part of this concern is cultural and ethnic: because the politics of the post-war era have made it difficult for European nations to-prevent immigration, a fall in birth rates may lead not to a fall in population, but an influx of immigrants, mostly from the Third World, where population is increasing due to the dispersion of medical and industrial technology that the Common Market encourages.

The main issue, however, was not na-£ tional continuity but the continuation s' of industrial economy. Demographers pointed out that decreased birth rates j will produce a population graph in the shape of an inverted bell, top-heavy ‘ with elderly, "unproductive" citizens on s a diminishing base of young, productive workers. The results would be disastrous to the social economy. The welfare . and social security systems would lose their tax support. The accumulation of capital would shrink as total consump-i tion fell. Agricultural prices would plunge. Soccer stadiums would be half ‘ empty. Almost every aspect of industrial society would be affected.

They are, of course, right. For that reason in itself, real population decline is desirable. But it indicates how deeply ; economic forces and the social power vested in them are involved in the population problem. For environmentalists, I it's not simply a matter of convincing I people of the soundness of population control — to do. so confronts the very | existence of industrial power (as indeed K every deep-ecological argument does). E We can take heart in the fact that industrial planners are not just being B paranoid. Population decline can indeed undermine the way social power is organized and how it exploits nature. (The axiom that Igrge masses of people are easier to control than small ones is correct) The demise of feudalism, for example, is directly attributable to the 1 Black Plague, to which one-third of Europe succumbed. It became impossible for a landlord to keep his serfs on his fiefdom, despite passage of stringent laws, when serfs could sell their valuable labor in town or to property owners willing to pay for their services. As it turned out, the social economy that followed was probably worse than feudalism from an environmental point of view, but only after power reorganized itself into institutions that could exploit nature and only because a critique of feudalism had not been articulated in terms of its power relations.

What is happening now in Europe suggests that, government policies notwithstanding, populations naturally decline when they reach an unhealthy level. No doubt, there are biological constraints at work here, as scientific studi^of'&himaFpopulations indicate. The sheer stress Of living in an unnatural, overcrowded, urban society must

play a part in the declining birth rates of the West, though I'm not aware of any research concentrating on the physiological and psychological effects of overpopulation on human reproduction.

But this only underscores the necessity of seeing the population issue in the context of social power and its hierarchies. The problems of population, immigration and industrialism are interrelated to the extent that the power relations in our society cannot let this natural decline occur if they are to be maintained. Likely, the tenants-in-chiefs of feudal Europe would have used immigration to shore up their position, had the technology to move vast numbers of people been available. There . is no doubt that the modern Western ‘ technocracies do use immigration to propagate industrialism. Industrialism requires overpopulation^ the concentration of power in government and corporate control implies a diffuse body of cheap labor from which that power can be organized. Whether technological societies get this through "incentives" for higher birth rates or through immigration makes little difference from an environmental perspective, although the subsequent rift between cultural and economic values may be a point of access for a further critique of technological economy, assuming we understand "culture" in its proper, tribal, decentralized origins, and not as a product of the modern culture industry.

(It is interesting to note the problem of population maintenance in communist technocracies. These states haven't needed immigration and forbid it, since the concentration of power depends on a perennial, institutionalized source of cheap labor and this constitutes virtually the entire population of communist technocracies. At least this was true of communism in an undeveloped state like Bolshevik Russia. But the populations of some industrialized communist societies are now declining, probably due to the same biological causes as in the West, but also due to the availability of birth control techniques and the general suppression of sexuality as subversive. The recent move toward capitalism in communist Europe — such as the new Soviet law permitting family businesses — perhaps relates to government attempts to maintain overpopulation, though it wouldn't surprise me if the Soviet bloc countries eventually adopted a policy of large-scale immigration to sustain their languishing industrial economies.)

There is no way to dissociate the population issue from industrialism. To disregard their interconnections vdooms any attempt to reduce population in the developed countries to an ecologically sane level, and insures the sustained overpopulation of the Third World.

Emigration from the Third World is a result of industrialization and an impetus for it, Thg importation of teehnol-ogy is at the rootofpopulation increases Tfi undeveloped countries, since it is Offen based on "humanitarian" aims involving medical technology. The indusx trialization of the Third World cannot d^n sustain the expanding population in the shnrt-nimjhe Western technocracies will not be able to do so in the long-run. The emigration reSuiting from the failure of industrialism to sustain the population that it promotes, encourages the global concentration of power in technocratic control

by concealing the failure of industrialism; whereas traditional economies meet human needs within the bounds of natural cycles.

It should be clear from this that discussions of "social justice" taking˜nm irrigFatiun or eroiiomie inequality as-their themes serve only to˜cloud the population debate, due to the simple fact that, in a technological context, there is no such thing as "justice," it being supplanted by a network of power relations that spread inevitably over every aspect of human and natural existence. Justice and freedom and all higher value's are at home only in a de-centolircd anarchistic setting? which presupposes Earthas wilderness. Ethical discourse in technological culture is merely the rattling of our ancestors' bones —- unless it is directed against that culture in its totality. Otherwise a commitment to justice becomes just another way for technology to propagate its power relations (as I believe is the case on the overpopulation issue.)

Whatever practical efforts we use to decrease population, they need to be hased on undermining industrialism. Inevitably, this will involve controversial stands, since modern ethical discourse is bound up with industrial values. The loud criticism against Garret Hardin and his call to end immigration brings this point home. But biocentric environmentalists must have the courage to take the population debate beyond economic and political calculations. Who else is there to do it?

Population and AIDS (1987)

Author: Christopher Manes (under pseudo. Miss Ann Thropy)

Source: *Earth First! Journal* vol. 7, no. 5 (1 May 1987), Page 32. <brontaylor.com/courses/pdf/MissAnnThropy–aids7(5)32(may87).pdf>

Notes: Beginning "If radial environmentalists were to invent a disease to bring human population back to ecological sanity, it would probably be something like AIDS", Manes offered "an ecological perspective on the disease" premised on the axiom "that the only real hope ... is an enormous decline in human population." This is one of the most controversial articles ever published in *Earth First!*, and while qualifications in it were widely ignored, it arguably suggested genocidal solutions to the population-fueled environmental crisis. Such articles were used against the movement by social ecologists and social justice advocates alike and, combined with Foreman's and others anti-immigration statements, were taken by many to represent the movement's mainstreams.

If radical environmentalists were to invent a disease to bring human population back to ecological sanity, it would probably be something like AIDS. So as hysteria sweeps over the governments of the world, let me offer an ecological perspective on the disease (with the understanding that the association between AIDS and homosexuality

is purely accidental and irrelevant — in Africa it is a heterosexual disease, and is destined to be so everywhere).

I take it as axiomatic that the only real hope for the continuation of diverse ecosystems on this planet is an enormous decline in human population. Conservation, social justice, appropriate technology, etc., are great to discuss and even laudable, but they simply don't address the problem. Furthermore, the whole economy of industrial affluence (and poverty) must give way to a hunter-gatherer way of life, which is the only economy compatible with a healthy land.

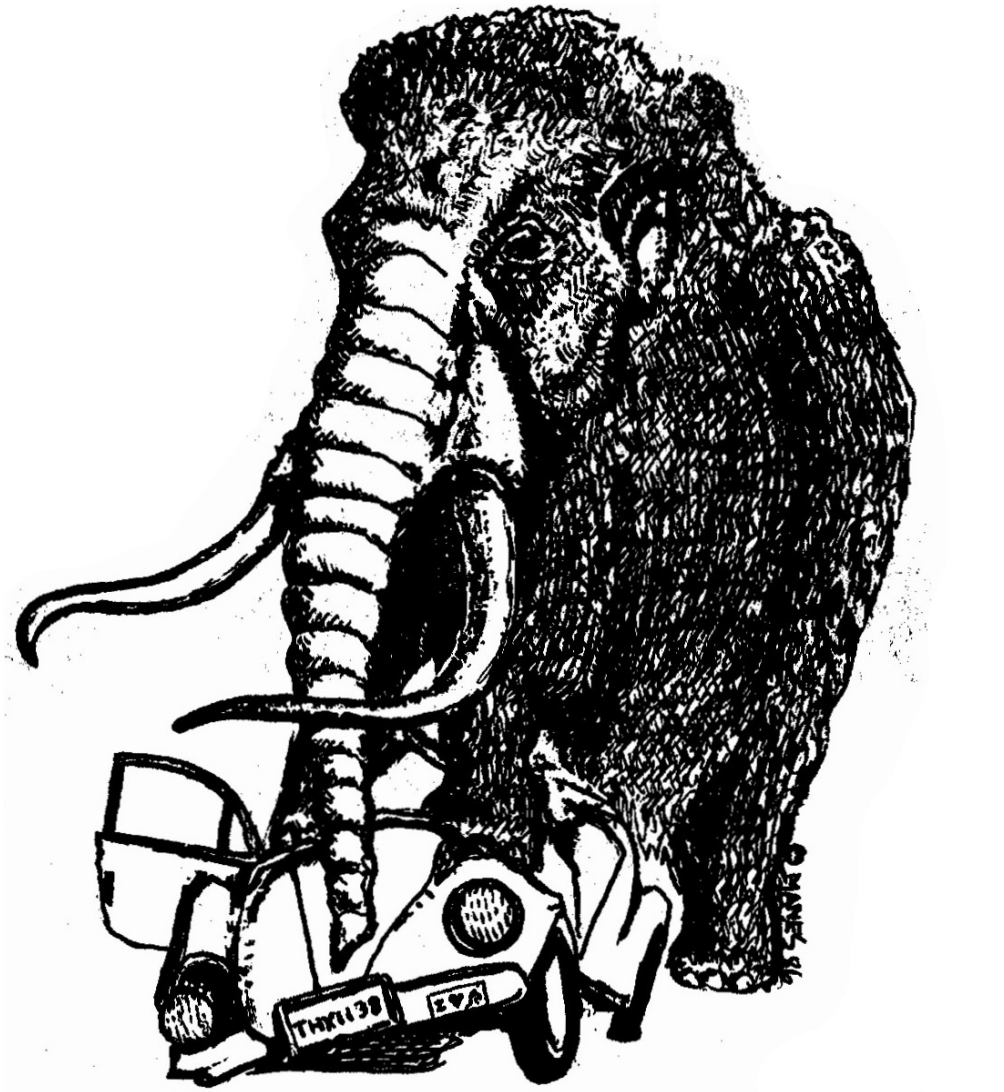
Of course, such a decline is inevitable. Through nuclear war or mass starvation due to desertification or some other environmental cataclysm, human overpopulation will succumb to ecological limits. But in such cases, we would inherit a barren, ravaged world, devoid of otters and redwoods, Blue Whales and butterflies, tigers and orchids.

AIDS, however, has the following environmentally significant characteristics: 1) it only affects humans; 2) it has a long incubation period; 3) it is spread sexually. The first of these is the most important: AIDS has the potential to significantly reduce human population without harming other life forms. The next two characteristics make it relevant to the worldwide population problem. Diseases which are excessively virulent tend to be evolutionary failures: because they quickly kill off the hosts on which they depend, they usually lose out to less deadly forms. The Black Death is a good example. It effectively decimated Europe — so effectively that it used up the susceptible host population before it could spread far beyond its Eastern geographic limits. (The present variety of bubonic plague is thought to be a less virulent form of the disease.) AIDS, however, has a long incubation period which allows infection of others, and hence survival of the virus, before death. And because sexual activity is the most difficult human behavior to control (recent frenzied attempts by Western governments notwithstanding), the AIDS epidemic will probably spread worldwide, especially to cities where people are concentrated.

Barring a cure, the possible benefits of this to the environment are staggering. If, like the Black Death in Europe, AIDS affected one-third of the world's population, it would cause an immediate respite for endangered wildlife on every continent. More significantly, just as the Plague contributed to the demise of feudalism, AIDS has the potential to end industrialism, which is the main force behind the environmental crisis.

Industrial society is based on the accumulation of capital from a mass of workers. That capital represents power to organize people and material in such a way as to disrupt natural cycles — by building dams, producing toxic wastes, "developing" the Third World ... This system requires a critical number of producer/consumers. If the population goes beneath that number, industrialism cannot function. Capital dries up, governments lose authority, power fragments and devolves onto local communities which can't affect natural cycles on a large scale.

Exactly what that critical number is, I don't know, and it probably depends on many factors (deep ecologists should research this). Based on historical evidence, I guess that the population of the US would have to decline to 50 million to really



BRING BACK
THE ICE AGE!

undermine its industrial economy, and down to five million to make hunting/gathering/small farming feasible. This suggests that AIDS would have to kill 80% of the world's human population to end industrialism, though even a much smaller decline would fragment economic power.

Whether AIDS will effect that many people is doubtful. Long before that, governments and institutions will enforce draconian measures to stop the disease, as they have already proposed in Europe. However, the social disruptions involved in this may cause a breakdown in technology and its export, which could also decrease human population.

None of this is intended to disregard or discount the suffering of AIDS victims. But one way or another there will be victims of overpopulation —through war, famine, humiliating poverty. As radical environmentalists, we can see AIDS not as a problem, but a necessary solution (one you probably don't want to try for yourself). To paraphrase Voltaire: if the AIDS epidemic didn't exist, radical environmentalists would have to invent one.

Paganism as Resistance (1988)

Author: Christoph Manes
Source: *Earth First! Journal* vol. 8, no. 5 (1 May 1988), pages 21–2. <brontaylor.com/courses/pdf/Manes–paganism8(5)21–22(may88).pdf>

I do not know much about gods; but I think that the river

Is a strong brown god

T.S. Eliot

Only a god can save us

Martin Heidegger

It probably is no coincidence that Iceland was both the last outpost of paganism in Europe, and the last bastion of resistance to the rise of European feudalism. The relationship between Iceland's religion and its independence evidently wasn't lost on the Norwegian King, St. Olaf, who schemed to Christianize the Icelanders as vigorously as he did to subjugate them. History proved his strategy effective, though it took a little longer than he had hoped — 265 years after he met a watery death at the hands of pagan Vikings unsympathetic to his church-going megalomania. Similar patterns linking primal religions to non-hierarchical, Earth-harmonious ways of life, are woven into the fabric of history, from the Ainu of the Japanese archipelago, to the Indians of

the Amazon basin. In its unrelenting march across the globe, civilization consistently represents paganism as an obstacle, somehow intimately associated with independence from central power.

What did St. Olaf and the thousands of other proselytizers for civilization know that we don't? If the general goal of radical environmentalism is to resist the ever-widening control of Technological Culture over nature and human nature, we should examine civilization's perception of paganism to see if it holds any knowledge we can use strategically. In an unthematized way, we can already see a connection. The rise of radical environmentalism and neopaganism occurred almost simultaneously, no doubt in response to the same concerns over the desacralization of Earth that mod, ern industrial culture represents. Coincidentally, the official "rebirth" of paganism in Iceland, under the auspices of Sveinbjorn Beinteinsson, took place in 1972, the same year the Norwegian thinker, Arne Naess, wrote his historic article laying out the concept of Deep Ecology. (St. Olaf would turn in his grave, if he had one.) The large number of neopagans in the radical environmental movement confirms the fact that people involved in the struggle against accumulated power sense an affinity between,; Deep Ecology and "The Old Ways," as; Gary Snyder calls primal religions. The purpose of this article is to thematize that affinity. In particular, I want to consider what paganism offers in resisting the way power works in today's hierarchical society, not only in terms of philosophy, but in actual social practice.

'Paganism' itself is too broad a term, including as it does not only the animism of hunter-gatherer tribes, but the rather stuffy polytheism of agricultural states like Egypt, Greece and Rome — which proved all too compatible with centralized power. For the former, then, I reserve the term 'primalism', meaning the entire religious complex of preagricultural peoples, including animism, animatism, shamanism, and ancestry worship. For what Professor Drengson calls "third wave" religions (see his accompanying article), i.e., Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, I'll use the term 'ethical religions'. This is meant to emphasize the fact that all these religions concentrate on humanity's ethical nature. They all concern themselves with generating "moral" or "right" behavior, and create institutions to encourage or enforce that end: monasteries, churches, schools, courts. I realize this is a reduction. Certainly some ethical religions, such as Buddhism, have proved less serviceable to the accumulation of power than others. Moreover, there are different forms of each of these religions: Meister Eckhart's Christianity is quite unlike Jerry Falwell's. Nonetheless, taken as a whole, over a long historical process, the ethical religions have been and remain the *vectors* of civilization and its power.

To see how civilization makes use of religion, therefore, we begin with the ethical religions. The most obvious way in which they are implicated in the power relations of organized societies is through the support their cosmologies give to civilization's values. Even a brief look at these cosmologies indicates that they all represent the universe as a hierarchy — if not in actual physical terms as in the Bible, then in ethical terms as in Buddhism. The universe has an order, proclaim the ethical religions, and humans

can discover it through revelation or self-examination. By their content, then, ethical religions lend metaphysical credence to the "orderliness" of civilization and its power relations, providing it with a universal analogue to its various historical forms.

But beyond the specific details of cosmology, the very attempt to represent the world totally in terms of some principle of order fixes the world in a valuational framework. The values may vary with the particular religion — so that Christianity, Judaism, and Islam see the world as the expression of God's goodness, tainted by its contrary, sin; while Hinduism distinguishes *Atman,* the divine within man, from the illusory reality around him; and Buddhism emphasizes the all-encompassing effects of desire, and their relinquishment through *nirvana.* In the very process of valorization, however, regardless of the form it takes, a problematical relationship between humanity and nature is created, which is intimately associated with civilization. As Heidegger says in his *Letter on Humanism: [P]recisely through the characterization of something as "a value," what is so valued is robbed of its worth. That is to say, by the assessment of something as a value what is valued is admitted only as an object for man's estimation. But what a thing is in its Being is not exhausted by its being an object.*

By converting the world into values, the ethical religions play an indispensable role in the way power relations work in hierarchical societies. In the discourse of civilization, the projects of hierarchical of states are validated in terms of value, so that the real action of these projects — the accumulation and spread of power — disappears from view in the shimmer of ethics. To give an example, sexual behavior became a locus of values in the early stages of organized society. A biological act was transformed into a social means of regulating human bodies (what Michel Foucault calls "bio-power"), through the promotion of such values as increasing population, the economic productivity of the nuclear family, or in more recent times the industry of pleasure — as supported by increased consumption. The particular values aren't of fundamental importance and critical thinking need not — indeed, should not — take them seriously. What is important is the fact that civilization relies on a "totalization" of value; that is, values represented as universally applicable — to everyone, eveiywhere, at all times. Through totalized values, organized societies have at their command a medium in which to propagate the kind of human behavior upon which they depend. Whether that means plowing a field, working in a factory, or dropping an atomic bomb, the discourse of civilization can find an alibi in values — such as God's commandments, "progress," or humanism in its traditional or more arabesque forms (e.g., Murray Bookchin's "social ecology" and its apologetics for civilization's power structure in such giddy definitions of man as "natural evolution knowing itself').

We tend to think of power only in terms of its ability to repress behavior. The king's army puts down an insurrection, the police arrest a criminal, a principal expels a student — this is tangible power. But, as Foucault has so convincingly argued (in *Discipline and Punishment* particularly), the power of organized societies is also *generative.* It causes people to act in certain ways, not only by the limited means of coercion, but by creating a field in which such actions are "just," "moral," "good,"

"civilized." Values envelop the members of organized societies, and act as alibis for the accumulation of power, which defines civilization.

I'm suggesting that the ethical religions are more than just a convenient repository of metaphysical concepts and images that civilization draws on; they are, in their axiological structures, creations of civilization to be used as alibis for the accumulation of power. Some of these alibis are painfully obvious today. The agrarian states, for instance, adapted late pagan theogeny into the concept of the divine origin of kings. When Christianity made supernatural copulation disreputable, feudalism used Christian doctrine to construct the divine right of kings. The historical alibis are endless, but once their mythological source falls into desuetude, we can discern a singular process occurring all along: organized societies using values to accumulate and augment power.

The situation becomes confusing when new, more efficient forms of social domination develop new, more efficient alibis, such as nationalism or the Eni lightenment concept of "the natural rights of Man." The result is that the ethical religions momentarily take on the role of opposing the further enveloping of nature and human nature in civilization's power. A complexity also arises in the fact that some, if not most, of the myths that displaced the ethical religions still act as alibis for power today. Therefore, the many thinkers who have analyzed the role of religion since the 17$^{\text{th}}$ century find themselves reconstructing history according to a universe of discourse surrounding these prevailing myths. The gradual eclipse of religion in the waxing power of science is represented as "progress" in actuality (by traditional humanists), or *in posse* (by Marxist historians). Even Max Scheier, whose description of science as *Herrschaftswissen* — "knowledge for the sake of domination" — influenced Heidegger and initiated the questioning of scientific neutrality, still saw the rise of modernity as a radical shift away from the relatively benign religious values of the Middle Ages. This stance has introduced itself into the environmental debate in the form of arguments for Christian stewardship, whose advocates (followers of Teilhard de Chardin, Wendell Berry) claim it to be the answer to the scientific reductionism destroying the environment. (And perhaps it is — what it isn't, however, is an answer to the general power relations of civilization, which have other ways of destroying the environment besides science: the sublime Christian metaphysics of medieval feudalism, for example.) To "explain" the declining fortunes of ethical religions in the last three centuries, there is no need to delve into the teleologies of "progress," the dialectics of history, or the rising tide of nihilism — one merely has to look at the surface of events to see the operation of power finding more complete methods of domination. We might reverse Scheier and characterize civilization as *wissenproduzierende Herrschaft* — domination that produces knowledge — whether scientific or religious is hardly decisive.

Ethical religions may be able to resist some forms of power accumulation threatening the environment, especially those associated with the modern myths that displaced the central role of religion. But ethical religions can never offer resistance to civilization

as a whole, because they count among its many children — more beautiful, perhaps, than the dreary scientific offspring that disinherited them, but kindred nonetheless.

(This doesn't in any way suggest that people who practice ethical religions don't fit into the radical environmental movement. A Deep Ecology perspective can arise from many sources, as Devall and Sessions explain in their book, *Deep Ecology.* Ultimately, resistance is a personal commitment related to action, not ideology.)

Civilization uses religion. But what is the reason for its antagonism toward primalism? Simply put, organized societies have never succeeded in using (primal religions to accumulate power. In fact, as Professor Drengson notes, the elements of primalism that live on, in polytheistic paganism and ethical religions act as loci of resistance within those religions, emerging from time to time, for example, in the writings of Meister Eckhart and St. Francis.

We can distinguish a number of general characteristics of primalism that retard its assimilation into hierarchical societies. Again, within the broad range of primal religions, there are probably exceptions to these characteristics; but on the whole they apply.

1. *The world is alive.* Primalism generally conceives of a world spirit, under numerous names, which is the origin of all things and to which all things return. This not only includes humans and animals, but stones, waterfalls, mountains, and so forth. The world, therefore, is a community; the same force that animates people brings forth the cherry tree, the scorpion, and the cliff. This corresponds with our *factual* knowledge of biology, geology, and cosmology, — a knowledge which unfortunately has been assimilated into the valuational framework of civilization's myths. In the observation of nature, there is not one scrap of evidence that humankind is any more unique or important or "creative" than lichen (unless of course one defines these concepts tendentiously). This view of the world is unserviceable to civilization's need to totalized values.

2. *Time is cyclical.* In particular, the world doesn't have a *telos,* a universal goal governing everything that happens (or at least such a *telos* is not intelligible to us). Even if, as is often the case, primal myths include a catastrophic end to the world, this is usually represented as a prelude to a reconstituted Earth, beginning the cycle again. (This kind of myth bears a striking similarity to the Big Bang/ Closed Universe theory, which has received so much scientific attention recently.) Primalism, then, doesn't supply a universal principle that organized society can use as an alibi for its projects.

3. *This life is more important than tke next. The* field of comparative religion traditionally views primalism as "undeveloped" because its mythic narratives give only the vaguest portrayals of the afterlife. This misses the point: primal peoples usually aren't very interested in life after death. This life is sufficiently full to hold their attention. Elaborate concepts of the afterlife seem to be the product of

> societies under the influence of groups whose concentrated power and abstracted, specialized way of life generate speculation about their souls' ultimate fate, as part of their obsessive desire to transcend nature. The Egyptian aristocracy is a case in point, with its ludicrous monuments to death.

These aspects of primalism render it indigestible to organized power. But more importantly, primalism avoids the kind of totalization of the world which civilization requires. Value in primal religions (e.g., as presented in the *Havamal,* an Old Norse shamanistic text) doesn't pretend to be universal truth that should envelop every individual at all times. Killing causes strife, but sometimes is necessary. Stealing is bad, but some people deserve to be plundered. Adultery usually causes problems, but it won't consign anyone to hell. In other words, the values of primal peoples usually present themselves only as observations of what often happens to men and women trying to get along in this contingent world, not as metaphysical injunctions. This is, no doubt, one of the reasons primal peoples never felt the urge to proselytize as those of ethical religions do.

Finally, the structure of primalism is non-hierarchical, non-authoritarian. Religious institutions either do not exist or are limited in authority. They are rarely involved in regulating behavior. Shamans, witch doctors, priestesses, sibyls are invested with a certain amount of power, but generally it is negative and discontinuous, repressing rather than producing certain activities. These religious figures aren't leaders in the sense of possessing and enforcing a continuous regime of power over the community. Even in their roles as "wise-men," these figures hold only a discontinuous power, for their knowledge comes into play only in certain unusual circumstances, such as famine or plague. In contrast, the wise-man or guru or master of the ethical religions totally envelops those who seek his knowledge. It is another example -of organized power, as the incredible behavior it generates (asceticism, self-mutilation, abstinence) should suggest.

Primalism has demonstrated its historical incompatibility with the forms of power that have plundered Earth. Does it offer, however, a viable opposition to civilization's present form: Technological Culture. Obviously, a primalism reconstructed from scholarly knowledge is not the same as the primalism that inhabited the natural world. But perhaps *a. future primalism* can assist in the reinhabitation of that world.

First, on the large scale, the experience of space, time, and value in primalism is as valid today as it was for our ancestors. If Deep Ecology is to articulate a new vision of the world — one that is not another totalization easily converted into an alibi for power — then the fact that civilization rejected primalism suggests that its world view, its localized ethics is a good place to look for a model. Ideas like the Gaia hypothesis and bioregionalism seem to be steps in that direction.

Second, primalism also seems to resist Technological Culture on the personal level. The practice of primal rituals is *subversive.* This is suggested negatively by the hostile response it elicits from privileged speakers of hierarchical power, such as ministers and

scientists. And positively, primal rituals screen out the "techniques of the self' (to use Foucault's phrase) with which Technological Culture envelops us — psychotherapy, improvement of productivity, consumerism. Rituals have no "purpose," if we mean this in a technological, economic sense. But in their attentiveness to natural cycles, to biological space, to localized values (the rising of the sun over *this* place, the birth of *this* child, the coming of *this* spring), they nullify the regime of totalized experience.

One must be careful, of course, in offering answers to the environmental crisis rather than action, insofar as such answers can help fuel the totalization of the world that civilization uses to keep intact the "circuitry" of power — among institutions, fields of knowledge, and techniques of the self — responsible for 10,000 years of environmental abuse: manifested as agricultural states, feudalism, capitalism, socialism; as medical science, humanism, "social ecology." If by resisting civilization's power 'relations, intellectually and physically, we can short out that circuitry, we will need no answers. As an open form, useful in exposing civilization's alibis and undermining the techniques of the self which Technological Culture encourages, primalism has the potential to assist radical environmentalism in forging this ethics of resistance.

Christoph Manes, a regular contributor to EF!, *has an article appearing in the next issue of* Environmental Ethics.

Nature and Silence (1992)

Author: Christopher Manes
Date: 1992
Source: Environmental Ethics, Volume 14, Issue 4, Winter 1992, pages 339–350. <doi.org/10.5840/enviroethics19921445> & <academia.edu/47717018/Nature_and_Silence>

A viable environmental ethics must confront "the silence of nature"—the fact that in our culture only humans have status as speaking subjects. Deep ecology has attempted to do so by challenging the idiom of humanism that has silenced the natural world. This approach has been criticized by those who wish to rescue the discourse of reason in environmental ethics. I give a genealogy of nature's silence to show how various motifs of medieval and Renaissance origins have worked together historically to create the fiction of "Man," a character portrayed as sole subject, speaker, and *telos* of the world. I conclude that the discourse of reason, as a guide to social practice, is implicated in this fiction and, therefore, cannot break the silence of nature. Instead, environmental ethics must learn a language that leaps away from the motifs of humanism, perhaps by drawing on the discourse of

ontological humility found in primal cultures, postmodern philosophy, and medieval contemplative tradition.

A Tuscarora Indian once remarked that, unlike his people's experience of the world, for Westerners, "the uncounted voices of nature ... are dumb."[2] The distinction, which is borne out by anthropological studies of animistic cultures, throws into stark relief an aspect of our society's relationship with the nonhuman world that has only recently become an express theme in the environmental debate. Nature *is* silent in our culture (and in literate societies generally) in the sense that the status of being a speaking subject is jealously guarded as an exclusively human prerogative.

The language we speak today, the idiom of Renaissance and Enlightenment humanism, veils the processes of nature with its own cultural obsessions, directionalities, and motifs that have no analogues in the natural world. As Max Oelschlaeger puts it, "... we are people who presumably must think of the world in terms of the learned categorical scheme of Modernism."[3] It is as if we had compressed the entire buzzing, howling, gurgling biosphere into the narrow vocabulary of epistemology, to the point that someone like Georg Lukács could say, "nature is a societal category"—and actually be understood.[4]

In contrast, for animistic cultures, those that see the natural world as inspirited, not just people, but also animals, plants, and even "inert" entities such as stones and rivers are perceived as being articulate and at times intelligible subjects, able to communicate and interact with humans for good or ill. In addition to human language, there is also the language of birds, the wind, earthworms, wolves, and waterfalls—a world of autonomous speakers whose intents (especially for huntergatherer peoples) one ignores at one's peril.

To regard nature as alive and articulate has consequences in the realm of social practices. It conditions what passes for knowledge about nature and how institutions put that knowledge to use.[5] Michel Foucault has amply demonstrated that social power operates through a regime of privileged speakers, having historical embodiments as priests and kings, authors, intellectuals, and celebrities.[6] The words of these speakers

[2] Quoted in Hans Peter Duerr, *Dreamtime: Concerning the Boundary Between Wilderness and Civilization*, trans. Felicitas Goodman (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), p. 90.

[3] Max Oelschlaeger, "Wilderness, Civilization, and Language," ed. Max Oelschlaeger, *The Wilderness Condition: Essays on Environment and Civilization* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1992), p. 273.

[4] George Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1968), p. 234.

[5] Surely one reason laws against the inhumane treatment of pets have entered our rigorously anthropocentric jurisprudence must be the sense that domesticated animals communicate with us (presumably in ways wild animals do not) and therefore acquire a vague status as quasi-subjects.

[6] See especially, Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Vintage, 1973), pp. i-x; "What Is an Author?" *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault,* ed. Donald F. Bouchard, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 113–38.

are taken seriously (as opposed to the discourse of "meaningless" and often silenced speakers such as women, minorities, children, prisoners, and the insane). For human societies of all kinds, moral consideration seems to fall only within a circle of speakers in communication with one another. We can, thus, safely agree with Hans Peter Duerr when he says that "people do not exploit a nature that speaks to them."[7] Regrettably, our culture has gone a long way to demonstrate that the converse of this statement is also true.

As a consequence, we require a viable environmental ethics to confront the silence of nature in our contemporary regime of thought, for it is within this vast, eerie silence that surrounds our garrulous human subjectivity that an ethics of exploitation regarding nature has taken shape and flourished, producing the ecological crisis that now requires the search for an environmental counter-ethics.

Recognizing this need, some strains of deep ecology have stressed the link between listening to the nonhuman world (i.e., treating it as a silenced subject) and reversing the environmentally destructive practices modern society pursues.[8]While also underscoring the need to establish communication between human subjects and the natural world, John Dryzek has recently taken exception with this "anti-rationalist" approach of deep ecology, which he suspects is tainted by latent totalitarianism.[9] As an alternative, he proposes to expand Habermas' notion of a discursively rational community to include aspects of the nonhuman, to break the silence of nature, but to retain the language of humanism that suffuses the texts, institutions, and values we commonly celebrate as the flowers of the Enlightenment. Others, such as Murray Bookchin, have in like fashion also attempted to rescue reason from its own successes at quieting the messy "irrationality" of nature, to have their *ratio* and ecology too.[10]

It is a dubious task. By neglecting the origin of this silence in the breakdown of animism, the humanist critics of deep ecology reiterate a discourse that by its very logocentrism marginalizes nature, mutes it, pushes it into a hazy backdrop against which the rational human subject struts upon the epistemological stage. It has become almost a platitude in modern philosophy since Kant that reason (as an institutional motif, not a cognitive faculty) is intimately related to the excesses of political power and self-interest. As Foucault puts it, "we should not need to wait for bureaucracy or concentration camps to recognize the existence of such relations."[11] The easy alliance of power and reason that sustains those institutions involved in environmental destruction

[7] Duerr, *Dreamtime,* p. 92.

[8] See, especially, John Seed, Joanna Macy, Pat Fleming, Arne Naess, *Thinking like a Mountain: Toward a Council of All Beings* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1988). For an original and enlightening discussion of the interrelationship between language and wilderness, see Oelschlaeger, "Wilderness, Civilization, and Language," pp. 271–308.

[9] John S. Dryzek, "Green Reason: Communicative Ethics for the Biosphere," *Environmental Ethics* 12 (1990): 200.

[10] Murray Bookchin, *The Ecology of Freedom* (Palo Alto, Calif.: Cheshire Books, 1982).

[11] Michel Foucault, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977–1984*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Routledge, 1988), p. 59.

also sustains their discourses. Thus, at the very least, we should look askance at the emancipatory claims humanists like Dryzek and Bookchin are still making for reason in the field of environmental philosophy.

In this paper, I want to avoid the jaded polemic between rationality and the irrational, and enter the issue "perpendicularly," so to speak, by taking the silence of nature itself (not the desire to rescue reason, the human subject, or some other privileged motif) as a cue for recovering a language appropriate to an environmental ethics. In particular, this approach requires that I consider how nature has grown silent in our discourse, shifting from an animistic to a symbolic presence, from a voluble subject to a mute object. My aim is neither a critique of reason nor a history of Western representations of nature, both of which have been made happily redundant by a century of scholarship. Rather, I offer a brief genealogy of a discourse, including reason, that has submerged nature into the depths of silence and instrumentality.

Heidegger is surely correct when he argues that all language both reveals and conceals.[12] However, our particular idiom, a pastiche of medieval hermeneutics and Renaissance humanism, with its faith in reason, intellect and progress, has created an immense realm of silences, a world of "not saids" called nature, obscured in global claims of eternal truths about human difference, rationality, and transcendence.[13] If the domination of nature with all its social anxieties rests upon this void, then we must contemplate not only learning a new ethics, but a new language free from the directionalities of humanism, a language that incorporates a decentered, postmodern, post-humanist perspective. In short, we require the language of ecological humility that deep ecology, however gropingly, is attempting to express.

In his comprehensive study of shamanism, Mircea Eliade writes: "All over the world learning the language of animals, especially of birds, is equivalent to knowing the secrets of nature..."[14] We tend to relegate such ideas to the realm of superstition and irrationality, where they can easily be dismissed. However, Eliade is describing the perspective of animism, a sophisticated and long-lived phenomenology of nature. Among its characteristics is the belief (1) that all the phenomenal world is alive in the sense of being inspirited—including humans, cultural artifacts, and natural entities, both biological and "inert," and (2) that not only is the nonhuman world alive, but it is filled with articulate subjects, able to communicate with humans.[15]

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[12] Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Mannheim (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1959), pp. 93–206.

[13] I use the term "Renaissance humanism" broadly to include a pastiche of the cultural obsessions mentioned, which have continued through the Enlightenment. The "meaning" of these motifs may change as different institutions use them strategically for different purposes. Nevertheless, they have been consistently deployed in the domination of nature, the issue at hand here.

[14] Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstacy* (Princeton: Prince University Press, 1972), p. 98.

[15] See Robert H. Lowie, *Primitive Religion* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1924), pp. 99–135. Like humanism, animism may have many "meanings" depending on how institutions use it, but the institutions in animistic societies tend to wield power in a manner too discontinuous and inefficient to

Animism undergirds many contemporary tribal societies, just as it did our own during pre-Christian times. Indeed, the overwhelming evidence suggests the universality of animism in human history.[16] Even in modern technological society, animistic reflexes linger on in attenuated form. Cars and sports teams are named after animals (as if to capture sympathetically their power). Children talk to dolls and animals without being considered mentally ill, and are, in fact, read fairy tales, most of which involve talking animals. Respectable people shout at machines that do not operate properly. While modern scholarship tends to focus on "explaining" this kind of thinking in psychological or sociological terms, my interest in it lies in the sense in which it gives us what might be called the "animistic subject," a shifting, autonomous, articulate identity that cuts across the human/nonhuman distinction. Here, human speech is not understood as some unique faculty, but as a subset of the speaking of the world.

Significantly, animistic societies have almost without exception avoided the kind of environmental destruction that makes environmental ethics an explicit social theme with us.[17] Many primal groups have no word for wilderness and do not make a clear distinction between wild and domesticated life, since the tension between nature and culture never becomes acute enough to raise the problem.[18]This fact should strike a cautionary note for those, such as Bookchin and Robert Gardiner, who illegitimately use modern technological societies to stand for all humanity throughout history in global claims about culture compelling humans to "consciously *change* [nature] by means of a highly institutionalized form of community we call 'society.'"[19] Our distracted and probably transitory culture may have this giddy compulsion; culture per se does not.

In the medieval period, animism as a coherent system broke down in our culture, for a variety of reasons.[20] Not the least of these was the introduction of two powerful institutional technologies: literacy and Christian exegesis.

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dominate discourse the way ours do. See Stanley Diamond, *In Search of the Primitive: A Critique of Civilization* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1974).

[16] See Edward B. Tyler, *Primitive Culture* (New York: Holt and Co., 1889), p. 425; Louise Ba'ckman and A˜ke Hultkranz, *Shamanism in Lapp Society* (Stockholm: Alquist and Wiksell, 1978), p. 27. Although Ba'ckman and Hultkranz only discuss shamanism, it is well-attested that shamanistic practices depend on an animistic world view.

[17] The Easter Islanders, whose culture was apparently animistic, are the only exception I know of, and their problems probably tell us more about the fragility of island ecosystems than social structures.

[18] See Darrell Addison Posey, "The Science of the Mebêngôkre," *Orion,* Summer 1990, pp. 1623; Jon Christopher Crocker, *Vital Souls: Bororo Cosmology, Natural Symbolism, and Shamanism* (Tucson, Ariz.: University of Arizona Press, 1988).

[19] Murray Bookchin, "Social Ecology versus 'Deep Ecology': A Challenge for the Ecology Movement," *Green Perspectives, Newsletter of the Green Program Project* 4–5 (Summer 1987): 27; Robert W. Gardiner, "Between Two Worlds: Humans in Nature and Culture," *Environmental Ethics* 12 (1990): 339–52.

[20] Animism had already collapsed in classical Mediterranean cultures with the earlier introduction of literacy and humanism. See Morris Berman, *The Reenchantment of the World* (New York: Bantam, 1984), p. 57.

Jack Goody argues that alphabetic writing "changes the nature of the representations of the world," because it allows humans to lay out discourse and "examine it in a more abstract, generalised and 'rational' way."[21] This scrutiny encouraged the epistemological inference, apparently impossible in oral cultures where language exists only as evanescent utterances, that meaning somehow resides in human speech (more particularly in those aspects of it susceptible to rational analysis), not in the phenomenal world. Down this road lies the counterintuitive conclusion that only humans can act as speaking subjects.

Taking Goody's analysis a step farther, David Abram maintains that our relationship with texts is "wholly animistic," since the articulate subjectivity that was once experienced in nature shifted to the written word.[22] At one time nature spoke; now texts do ("it says ..." is how we describe writing). As cultural artifacts, texts embody human (or ostensibly divine) subjects, but stand conspicuously outside nature, whose status as subject therefore becomes problematical in ways unknown to nonliterate, animistic societies.

The animistic view of nature was further eroded by medieval Christianity's particular mode for interpreting texts, exegesis. Christian theology was clear, if uneasy, on this point: all things—including classical literature, the devil, Viking invasions, sex, and nature—existed by virtue of God's indulgence and for his own, usually inscrutable, purposes.[23] With this point in mind, exegesis, the branch of religious studies dedicated to interpreting the Bible, concluded that behind the *littera,* the literal (often mundane) meaning of a biblical passage, lay some *moralis,* a moral truth established by God. And beyond that lurked some divine purpose, the *anagogue,* almost certainly beyond the ken of human intellect, unless divine revelation obligingly made it evident.

The cognitive practice of exegesis overflowed the pages of the Bible onto other texts and ultimately onto the phenomenal world itself. By the twelfth century, the German philosopher Hugh of St. Victor could talk about "the Book of nature"— a formulation that would have puzzled a Greek or Roman intellectual of the classic period, not to mention Hugh's own tribal ancestors just a few centuries earlier.[24]Like the leaven or mustard seeds in Christ's parables, the things in nature could thus be seen as mere *littera*—signs that served as an the occasion for discovering deeper realms of meaning

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[21] Jack Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 37.

[22] David Abram, "On the Ecological Consequences of Alphabet Literacy: Reflections in the Shadow of Plato's *Phaedrus,*" unpublished essay, 1989.

[23] See Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), pp. 67–98. For a contrast between the exegetical and non-exegetical traditions in the Middle Ages, see Cecil Wood, "The Viking Universe," *Studies for Einar Haugen* (The Hague, Paris: Mouton, 1972), pp. 568–73.

[24] Hugh of St. Victor, *The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor: A Medieval Guide to the Arts,* trans. Jerome Taylor (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), p. 64. The metaphor of the world as a book appeared as early as Augustine's *Confessions*, but it did not begin to mold discourse about nature until the later Middle Ages.

underlying the forms of the physical world. According to medieval commentators, eagles soared higher than any other bird and could gaze upon the sun, undazzled, because they were put on Earth to be a symbol of St. John and his apocalyptic vision, not the other way round. From this hermeneutical perspective, it was inconceivable that eagles should be autonomous, selfwilled subjects, flying high for their own purposes without reference to some celestial intention, which generally had to do with man's redemption. Exegesis swept all things into the net of divine meaning.

Such, at least, was the theory (and although it appears alien to modern thought, we should consider that our relationship with nature, despite its outward empiricism, is not that different; we have replaced the search for divine meanings with other "transcendental" concerns such as discerning the evolutionary *telos* of humanity[25]). Exegesis established God as a transcendental subject speaking through natural entities, which, like words on a page, had a symbolic meaning, but no autonomous voice. It distilled the veneration of word and reason into a discourse that we still speak today.

It is, of course, a simplification to suggest that a period as intellectually and institutionally diverse as the Middle Ages experienced nature in one way only.[26]Nevertheless, in broadest terms, for the institutions that dominated discourse during the Middle Ages (i.e, the Church and aristocracy), nature was a symbol for the glory and orderliness of God. This idea found its cosmological model in the so-called *scala naturae* or "Great Chain of Being," a depiction of the world as a vast filigree of lower and higher forms, from zoophytes to Godhead, with humankind's place higher than beasts and a little less than angels, as the Psalm puts it. Curiously, for the medieval exegete, the Great Chain of Being at times acted as a theological restraint against abusing the natural world, at least within the hushed, abstracted cells of the cloister. Thomas Aquinas invoked the *scala naturae* in an argument that—*mutatis mutandis*—could have been made by a conservation biologist condemning monoculture:

> [T]he goodness of the species transcends the goodness of the individual, as form transcends matter; therefore the multiplication of species is a greater addition to the good of the universe than the multiplication of individuals of a single species. The perfection of the universe therefore requires not only a multitude of individuals, but also diverse kinds, and therefore diverse grades of things.[27]

When the Renaissance inherited the *scala naturae,* however, a new configuration of thought that would eventually be called humanism converted it from a symbol of

[25] For a discussion of the "return of exegesis," see Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Press, 1973), pp. 297–99.

[26] As early as the thirteenth century, Albertus Magnus, mentor of Thomas Aquinas, was already writing "natural histories" that were extra-, if not anti-exegetical. Albertus Magnus, *Man and Beast,* trans. James J. Scanlan (Binghamton, N.Y.: Medieval and Renaissance Text and Studies, 1987).

[27] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles,* bk. 3, chap. 71. Quoted in Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being,* p. 77. Aquinas, of course, meant species in the philosophical, not the biological sense, but the principle is strikingly similar.

human restraint in the face of a perfect order to an emblem of human superiority over the natural world. Originally a curriculum emphasizing classical learning, humanism came to emphasize a faith in reason, progress, and intellect that would become the cornerstone of modern technological culture.[28] Drawing on humanity's position in the Great Chain between "dumb beasts" and articulate angels, humanism insisted there was an ontological difference between *Homo sapiens* and the rest of the biosphere, infusing a new and portentous meaning to the ancient observation that humans had rational discourse while animals did not. "Man" became, to quote Hamlet, "the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!" (though Shakespeare, as if aware of the absurdity of the claim, follows this statement with an obscene joke at Hamlet's expense).[29] The tragic soliloquist might have added: the sole subject of the phenomenal world. About the same time *Hamlet* was written, Francis Bacon expressed this teleological craze more bluntly: "Man, if we look to final causes, may be regarded as the centre of the world; inasmuch that if man were taken away from the world, the rest would seem to be all astray, without aim or purpose..."[30]

Strained by the scientific revolution, the celestial links to this chain may have grudgingly come undone in our time (conveniently leaving our species at the apex of the order), but its cultural residue still haunts the human and physical sciences. It is the source of the modern notion that *Homo sapiens* stands highest in a natural order of "lower life forms"—a directionality that comes straight out of the *scala naturae,* which seems to hover translucently before our eyes, distorting our representations of the natural world into hierarchical modes, while itself remaining all but invisible.[31]

The Great Chain of Being, exegesis, literacy, and a complex skein of institutional and intellectual developments have, in effect, created a fictionalized, or more accurately put, fraudulent version of the species *Homo sapiens:* the character "Man," what Muir calls "Lord Man." And this "Man" has become the sole subject, speaker, and rational sovereign of the natural order in the story told by humanism since the Renaissance.[32]

Our representations of nature may have undergone a variety of important permutations since the Middle Ages, molding and conditioning our discourse about respecting or abusing the natural world. But the character of "Man" as the only creature with anything to say cuts across these developments and persists, even in the realm of environmental ethics. It is the fiction reiterated by Bookchin in his teleological description of evolution as "a cumulative thrust toward evergreater complexity, ever-greater subjectivity, and finally, ever-greater mind with a capacity for conceptual thought, symbolic

[28] See David Ehrenfeld, *The Arrogance of Humanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).

[29] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet,* act 2, sc. 2, lines 306–10.

[30] *The Philosophical Works of Francis Bacon,* ed. Robert Leslie Ellis and James Spedding (1905; reprint ed., Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1970), 6:747.

[31] For a discussion of this "translucent" quality of representations, see Roland Barthes, *Mythologies,* trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), pp. 109–59.

[32] The concept of "Man" as a fiction is taken from Foucault, *The Order of Things,* though I have shifted his usage to accommodate the theme of nature's silence.

communication of the most sophisticated kind, and self-consciousness in which natural evolution knows itself purposively and willfully."[33] Through humanism, the boisterous, meandering parade of organic forms is transfigured into a forced march led by the human subject.

It is hardly surprising that this subject should demand such an overbearing role in environmental philosophy. Post-Enlightenment emancipatory thought, from idealism to Marxism to Freud, has made the human subject the expectant ground of all possible knowledge. Empiricism may have initiated an "interrogation" of nature unknown to medieval symbolic thought, but in this questioning no one really expects nature to answer. Rather, the inquiry only offers an occasion to find meanings and purposes that must by default reside in us. As the self-proclaimed soliloquist of the world, "Man" is obliged to use *his* language as the point of intersection between the human subject and what is to be known about nature, and therefore the messy involvement of observer with the observed becomes an obsessive theme of modern philosophy.[34] In the form of the Heisenberg Principle, it has even entered the serene positivism of scientific thought.

Postmodern philosophy has rudely challenged this transcendental narcissism, viewing the subject as fragmented and decentered in the social realm, a product of institutional technologies of control rather than the unmoved mover of all possible knowledge.[35] This challenge has set the stage for the reevaluation of the silence of nature imposed by the human subject. In environmental ethics, however, resistance to the tendentious rhetoric of "Man" has come almost exclusively from the camp of deep ecology.

From one perspective, the biocentric stance of deep ecology may be understood as focusing evolutionary theory and the science of ecology onto the idiom of humanism to expose and overcome the unwarranted claim that humans are unique subjects and speakers. Although regrettably silent on the issue, biologists qua biologists recognize that humans are not the "goal" of evolution any more than tyrannosaurs were during their sojourn on Earth. As far as scientific inquiry can tell, evolution has no goal, or if it does we cannot discern it, and at the very least it does not seem to be us. The most that can be said is that during the last 350 million years natural selection has shown an inordinate fondness for beetles—and before that trilobites.

This observation directly contradicts the *scala naturae* and its use in humanist discourse. From the perspective of biological adaptation, elephants are no "higher" than earwigs; salamanders are no less "advanced" than sparrows; cabbages have as much evolutionary status as kings. Darwin invited our culture to face the fact that in the observation of nature there exists not one scrap of evidence that humans are superior to or even more interesting than, say, lichen.

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[33] Bookchin, "Social Ecology," p. 20.

[34] For a comprehensive discussion of the problematic use of the human subject as the ground of knowledge since the Enlightenment, see Foucault, *The Order of Things,* pp. 303–43.

[35] See, for instance, Foucault, "Critical Theory/Intellectual History," *Politics, Philosophy, Culture,* pp. 17–46.

Predictably, we declined the invitation. Not everyone likes being compared to lichen, and traditional humanists in the environmental debate, explicitly or implicitly, continue to affirm the special subject status of "Man." Bookchin, for instance, insists that humans have a "second nature" (culture) which gives them not only the right but the duty to alter, shape and control "first nature" (the nonhuman world).[36] Henryk Skolimowski sounds a similar trumpet of ecological manifest destiny, proclaiming: "We are here ... to maintain, to creatively transform, and to carry on the torch of evolution."[37] While refreshingly more restrained, Dryzek seems to accept Habermas' position that the essence of communication is reason—which is not coincidently the kind of discourse favored by human subjects, or more precisely by that small portion of them who are heirs of the Enlightenment. Almost all of us, including biologists, refer to "lower" and "higher" animals, with the tacit understanding that *Homo sapiens* stands as the uppermost point of reference in this chimerical taxonomy. (Contrast this system of arrangement with the decentered and hence more accurate taxonomy of many American Indian tribes who use locutions such as "four-legged," "two-legged," and "feathered.")

It is no exaggeration to say that as a cultural phenomenon, as opposed to a scientific discourse, evolutionary theory has been absorbed by the *scala naturae* and strategically used to justify humanity's domination of nature. Evolution is often represented graphically as a procession of life forms moving left to right, starting with single-celled organisms, then invertebrates, fish, amphibians, and so on up to "Man," the apparent zenith of evolution by virtue of his brain size, selfconsciousness, or some other privileged quality. Strictly speaking this tableau, which we have all seen in high school textbooks, only describes *human* evolution, not evolution in general. Nevertheless, for a technological culture transfixed by the presumed supremacy of intellect over nature, human evolution *is* evolution for all intents and purposes. The emergence of *Homo sapiens* stands for the entire saga of biological adaptation on the planet, so that everything that came before takes its meaning, in Baconian fashion, from this one form.[38]

None of this directionality has any corroboration in the natural world. Rather, it belongs to the rhetoric of Renaissance humanism, even though it has also found its way into environmental ethics. Bookchin, for example, has proudly proclaimed that his philosophy is "avowedly humanistic in the high Renaissance meaning of the term,"

[36] Bookchin, "Social Ecology," p. 21. In a recent article, Bookchin truculently denies that he endorses the domination of nature, but then goes on to suggest with a straight face that perhaps humans should someday terraform the Canadian barrens (presumably after removing the polar bears) into something more to our liking (or to the liking of whatever institution is powerful enough to carry out such a bizarre scheme). "Recovering Evolution: A Reply to Eckersley and Fox," *Environmental Ethics* 12 (1990): 253–74.

[37] Henryk Skolimowski, *Eco-Philosophy* (Boston: Marion Boyers, 1981), p. 68.

[38] Although scientists, of course, are well aware of the difference, and do represent evolution in a more genealogically correct manner, the scientific representation lacks the cultural resonance of the humanized tableau.

which he associates with "a shift in vision ... from superstition to reason."[39] It cannot be emphasized enough, however, that, the velleities of humanist philosophers notwithstanding, in nature there simply is no higher or lower, first or second, better or worse. There is only the unfolding of life form after life form, more or less genealogically related, each with a mix of characteristics. To privilege intellect or self-consciousness, as opposed to photosynthesis, poisoned fangs, or sporogenesis, may soothe ancient insecurities about humanity's place in the cosmos, but it has nothing to do with evolutionary theory and does not correspond to observable nature.

In similar fashion, biocentrism brings to bear the science of ecology upon the exclusionary claims about the human subject. From the language of humanism one could easily get the impression that *Homo sapiens* is the only species on the planet worthy of being a topic of discourse. Ecology paints quite a different, humbling, picture. If fungus, one of the "lowliest" of forms on a humanistic scale of values, were to go extinct tomorrow, the effect on the rest of the biosphere would be catastrophic, since the health of forests depends on *Mycorrhyzal* fungus, and the disappearance of forests would upset the hydrology, atmosphere, and temperature of the entire globe. In contrast, if *Homo sapiens* disappeared, the event would go virtually unnoticed by the vast majority of Earth's life forms. As hominids, we dwell at the outermost fringes of important ecological processes such as photosynthesis and the conversion of biomass into usable nutrients. No lofty language about being the paragon of animals or the torchbearer of evolution can change this ecological fact—which is reason enough to reiterate it as often as possible.

Mercifully, perhaps, there exist other touchstones for appraising human worth besides ecology and evolutionary theory—philosophy, literature, art, ethics, the legacy of the Renaissance and Enlightenment, for the most part, that Dryzek, Bookchin, and other humanist environmentalists clamor to preserve. When, however, the issue is the silencing of nature by the rhetoric of "Man," we need to find new ways to talk about human freedom, worth, and purpose, without eclipsing, depreciating, and objectifying the nonhuman world. Infused with the language of humanism, these traditional fields of knowledge are ill-equipped to do so, wedded as they are to the monologue of the human subject.

Bill Devall, coauthor of *Deep Ecology,* once suggested that deep ecology involves learning a new language.[40] Indeed, environmental ethics must aspire to be more than just an explicit schema of values proclaimed as "true," for ethics are implicated in the way we talk about the world, the way we perceive it. In an attempt to reanimate nature, we must have the courage to learn that new language, even if it puts at risk the privileged discourse of reason—and without a doubt, it does.

A language free from an obsession with human preeminence and reflecting the ontological humility implicit in evolutionary theory, ecological science, and postmodern

[39] Bookchin, "Social Ecology," p. 20.

[40] Bill Devall, personal correspondence, 17 October 1988.

thought, must leap away from the rhetoric of humanism we speak today. Perhaps it will draw on the ontological egalitarianism of native American or other primal cultures, with their attentiveness to place and local processes. Attending to ecological knowledge means metaphorically relearning "the language of birds"—the passions, pains, and cryptic intents of the other biological communities that surround us and silently interpenetrate our existence. Oelschlaeger has convincingly argued that such relearning is precisely what "wilderness thinkers" such as Thoreau and Snyder are attempting to do.[41]

Dryzek suggests that rational discourse can make an agenda of this listening to place, its requirements and ways. But, as he himself points out, the discourse of reason is not a private attribute, but a communal endeavor. As such, it is enmeshed in the institutions that have silenced nature through the production of various kinds of knowledge—psychological, ethical, political—about "Man."

I am not advocating here a global attack on reason, as if the irrational were the key to the essence of the human being the way humanists claim reason is. I am suggesting the need to dismantle a particular historical use of reason, a use that has produced a certain kind of human subject that only speaks soliloquies in a world of irrational silences. Unmasking the universalist claims of "Man" must be the starting point in our attempt to reestablish communication with nature, not out of some nostalgia for an animistic past, but because the human subject that pervades institutional knowledge since the Renaissance already embodies a relationship with nature that precludes a speaking world. As scholars, bureaucrats, citizens, and writers, we participate in a grid of institutional knowledge that constitutes "Man" and his speaking into the void left by the retreat of animism. Therefore, we have to ask not only how to communicate with nature, as Dryzek does, but *who* should be doing the communicating. "Man," the prime fiction of the Renaissance, will not do.

Perhaps the new language we require can draw upon an earlier practice from our own culture: the medieval contemplative tradition with its sparseness, sobriety, and modesty of speech. Alan Drengson, editor of the deep ecology journal, *The Trumpeter,* has established the Ecostery Project, which hopes to revive a medieval social form: monasteries whose purpose is to promote an understanding of, reverence for, and dialogue with nature. Medieval discourse, for all its absurdities, at times revealed a refined sense of human limitation and respect for otherness, virtues much needed today. The contemplative tradition, too, was a communicating without the agenda of reason.

For half a millennia, "Man" has been the center of conversation in the West. This fictional character has occluded the natural world, leaving it voiceless and subjectless. Nevertheless, "Man" is not an inevitability. He came into being at a specific time due to a complex series of intellectual and institutional mutations, among them the sudden centrality of reason. He could just as inexplicably vanish. To that end, a viable environmental ethics must challenge the humanistic backdrop that makes "Man" possible,

[41] Oelschlaeger, "Wilderness, Civilization, and Language."

restoring us to the humbler status of *Homo sapiens:* one species among millions of other beautiful, terrible, fascinating—and signifying—forms.

As we contemplate the *fin de siècle* environmental ruins that stretch out before us, we can at least be clear about one thing: the time has come for our culture to politely change the subject.

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Man, the Paragon of Animals? (2010)

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OUR TREATMENT OF ANIMALS is not simply cruel and inhumane: it reflects a deeply destructive culture in which animals are bred—and genetically engineered—into units of economic and social convenience. In the process, we destroy our own animal spirit, producing a creatureless mechanical society. To create meaningful change we must see animals and nature as our equals, rather than as ingredients for industrial "progress."

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We are all familiar with the evolutionary tableau. It hovers there, visible to our thinking, an idea given graphic form in our minds, as much a part of our sense of self as childhood photographs. On the far left (the side from which we read and write texts), in some primordial sea floats a colony of single-celled creatures, protozoa huddled together as if conspiring about what is to follow. To their immediate right, more complicated but still rudimentary forms appear: a worm, an anemone, a jellyfish, a mollusk. Then, to fill this ocean of progress to the brim, a primitive fish swims into existence. Continuing to the right, poised between sea and land, an ungainly creature with a gaping mouth rears up on elongated fins to breathe its first gulp of air. It is succeeded by a salamander-like amphibian, with all four feet moving tentatively forward on dry ground. After

that creeps a reptile, large and arrogant, seemingly aware that for a season it has dominion over the Earth. Farther to the right, however, a craftier animal, covered with fur and ambling on bearlike paws, takes its place: a protomammal. No bird appears at this point, or if it does, it is an insignificant pair of wings flying high above the mammal—an apparent digression from the orderly procession below.

Now the really interesting creatures make their appearance; the ones we have all been waiting for. First, a monkey and an ape, still on all fours but apparently straining to stand upright. That virtue, however, is reserved for the next in line, a primitive hominid, perhaps an australopithecine, still hirsute and a bit stooped. His successor, a *Homo erectus*, stands straighter and more confident as he lumbers into humanness: only his heavy-browed face gives his backwardness away. After that, a Neanderthal walks, often shown holding a club, perhaps to suggest he hasn't quite made it yet to the noble estate of civilized existence. And finally, on the far right, front and center, leading this zoomorphic parade of emerging forms is the being toward which this compressed history of life has been converging: taller than the rest and high browed, a fully erect *Homo sapiens* marches. With his back to the remainder of nature, he faces the blankness at the margin of the graphic, striding off into the invisible unknown with the self-assured gait of one who walks in the evolutionary limelight.

This graphic representation of evolution, which we have all seen in high school textbooks, is of course a crude simplification. It is a heuristic, meant to bring home a basic principle of a scientific theory rather than to capture the complex, subtle lineage of living forms on this planet. Nevertheless, the particular way our culture chooses to present evolutionary theory suggests an ethical and philosophical stance, if not in the makeup of the graphic itself, then at least in how it is used and understood by our culture at large.

Would it not be possible to make a graphic true to evolution theory in which, say, a greyhound occupies the coveted far right position? Dogs emerged more recently than humans. If the graphic is ordered chronologically, as it appears to be, then wouldn't this be a more perfect representation?

The incongruity of having a greyhound succeed a human in our alternate evolution highlights an important ambiguity in the tableau. Strictly speaking, the graphic represents only *human* evolution, not evolution in general, as any biologist would have already vehemently pointed out. But this unimpeachable, scientifically accurate objection neglects the way in which the graphic is actually used in our society. For a technological culture transfixed by the presumed supremacy of intellect over nature, human evolution *is* evolution for all intents and purposes. The emergence of *Homo sapiens* stands as a symbol for the entire saga of biological adaptation on this planet. Ask people to "draw" evolution and they will probably come up with something akin to our graphic, with a human being at the lead. Hasn't evolution always been "tending" toward humanity, our culture seems to insist, with a steady development in intellect, creativity, consciousness, or some other ambiguous quality that the struggle for sur-

vival has apparently lavished on human beings above all else? Even trained biologists use the term *lower life forms*.

In this way, a double meaning emerges: the representation has not only a scientific significance but a cultural life in which it embodies and reinforces the idea that the human species is the "goal" of evolution. No reputable biologist would condone such a notion, and yet it is undeniably part of our technological culture.

A truly accurate representation of evolution would have humans, greyhounds, slimeworts, and all other modern organic forms on the right, representing the present, each equally sharing in the unpredictable unfolding of evolution, with their ancestral forms off somewhere in the past, on the left, intermingling promiscuously in a wanton dance of life. But universal kinship is not what comes to mind when the word *evolution* is used in our culture.

We should ask: Why privilege brain size or bipedalism or any of the other traits of humanity in representing evolution? Couldn't we give the privileged position according to some other quality we see, rightly or wrongly, as central to understanding the evolutionary process? Thus, if we assumed the ordering principle of evolution is the development of fleetness of foot rather than intellect, a cheetah should be the first in line—running well ahead of the pack. If, instead, longevity is that special quality, then bristlecone pine trees would capture the privileged spot now held by a hominid. The list could be extended indefinitely depending on the characteristic being promoted, in essence giving each species its privileged moment as the capstone of evolution, and thus requiring as many representations as there are species on the planet. It would be Andy Warhol's fifteen minutes of fame played out on an evolutionary canvas.

The theory of evolution maintains that all living things, under the pressure of natural selection and domestication, have developed from past forms and are more or less related genealogically depending on the proximity of a common ancestor. This is to say that there is really no basis for putting any life form at the forefront of evolution: elephants are no more developed than toadstools, salmon are no less advanced than seagulls, cabbages have as much status in the scheme of life as kings. To be sure, we are more closely related genealogically to chimpanzees than to lichen, but that doesn't mean lichen lag behind either humans or chimpanzees in the history of life. Chimps and humans can make tools, but lichen photosynthesize and we can't; chimps and humans have high IQs, but lichen dissolve stones. The useless comparisons could continue indefinitely. Although it may bruise our species' ego to be likened to lichen, from an evolutionary perspective, we cannot produce any biologically aristocratic escutcheon to the contrary.

The Monologue of Man

The popular representation of evolution has become a cultural icon for a purpose altogether at variance with the scientific theory. What it presents is a story, a narrative,

with a fictionalized version of humanity: the character of "Man," or as John Muir called him, "Lord Man." We have turned evolution into the monologue of "Man."

The theme of this monologue is that "Man" is a distinct entity among all the other species of this planet. There is "Man" and then there is nature, the realm of "lower" forms, from which "Man" has emerged and separated himself. But this unique creature is not only superior to other life forms; he is their consummation, the goal toward which they have been striving during the past 3.5 billion years of organic history. "Man," so the story goes, is the aim of evolution, its telos. And therefore, this paragon of animals, this demigod of creation, has a sort of cosmic sanction bestowed upon his activities. "Man" is the principle behind the order of things, as Bacon argued, and his intellect with its devices can rightfully supplant the natural world and its unrefined denizens.

While evolutionary theory stands in exact contradiction to the superiority of humanity (and was vigorously denounced by religious authorities as a result), its representation has very much been captured by this idea. Thus a theory that demoted humanity from semi-divine status into the swelter of biological forms has strangely come to serve the purpose of promoting the biological and moral superiority of humanity. A biological category has become a moral imperative.

Each religion has its own way of dealing with evolutionary theory: rejecting it, accepting it, modifying it, retelling it. My point is to highlight the misuse of the fictionalized version of the theory as a metaphor for human existence, a metaphor many religions themselves embrace in placing humanity above the rest of animal creation. Moreover, the fictional character of "Man" no longer merely dwells in the story of evolution, but rather he has installed himself in all the institutions of our culture, including our religious institutions. "Man," as the morally superior center of the world, has banished the saintly view of animals, has marginalized the rest of creation, has monopolized the conversation about spirituality in a way early Christianity, Judaism, and Islam would not have understood—or at best deemed an expression of the ultimate sin of pride.

The Marginalization of Animals

This narrative placing "Man" above and separate from the rest of the biotic community has had devastating impacts on the natural world and is reflected, most tellingly, in our treatment of animals. The most egregious abuse is that of the domesticated animals. As the pinnacle of evolution, we do not hesitate to artificially change the "evolution" of these animals, including the billions of cattle, pigs, and chickens used by humanity each year for food, by breeding them to accentuate the traits that suit our needs, or by genetic engineering. In this way, domesticated animals have become tragic symbols of the worst aspects of civilization. "The pathos of the over-fat pig, white rat stripped of nuance, and dog breeds with their congenital debilitations," suggests Paul Shepard, "signals to us an aspect of the human condition." We have projected these

animals as inferior to ourselves and then turned them into physical representations of our own worse instincts.

Wild animals have also succumbed to the influence of humanity's "sovereignty." Wild animals have become spectacles in our culture. Millions of people visit zoos every year to see wild creatures, but the institution is a monument to the impossibility of such an encounter. Framed by the walls and other artificial props, isolated from interactions with other species, alienated from their habitat, zoo animals are mere simulacra of wild beasts, neither domesticated nor feral, but shadow puppets. Doug Peacock, an expert on grizzly bears, defines true wilderness as the place where something bigger than you can eat you. This is not the space of the zoo. We never meet the true gaze of a wild beast, either as predator or prey or mere neighbor, since all their actions have been rendered void. The relationship is one-dimensional: the visitor gawks, and the animals submit to being objects of observation.

Nature films, whose popularity has exploded in recent years just as the animals they depict disappear, produce a more subtle form of marginalization. Natural history documentaries of wild animals purport to show creatures interacting with their environment in a natural manner. We supposedly meet predator, prey, and biological curiosities in all their beauty and freedom. How can the camera lie after all? But the camera always lies when it comes to encountering the wild. As with zoo visitors, film viewers become pure observers of the wilderness spectacle, with nothing at stake except the observation of images moving across the screen. Aspects of an animal's life that have no interest to us, but which may dominate their existence, get edited out by people who understand that for such films to sell, they must cater to the desires of modern viewers with all their cultural biases. As a result, in the editing process, only images of the more spectacular events—chases, mating displays, mothers defending their young—make it to the screen. The verisimilitude of the representations tempts us to disregard that nature films are merely a patronizing version of the "Monologue of Man," works that show only certain views of the animals that "Man" finds of interest. As a way to encounter the wild, nature films inevitably fail through the very form they take, and we must not fool ourselves into accepting a human-edited image of a jaguar as a substitute for Jaguar. The former is a cultural artifact, no matter how meticulously accurate; the latter is a wild being filled with potential meaning and a fundamental challenge to the narrative of "Man."

Rediscovering the Animal

In *The Order of Things*, Michel Foucault argued that our modern view of humanity as the sovereign of all possible knowledge, ethics, and values is a recent invention, a result of the Enlightenment and the distinct way it arranged and categorized knowledge. What if, he wonders, the way we have come to understand the world were to change, perhaps in the wake of some monumental event, perhaps through the reevaluation of our values? Foucault concludes the book with this premonition:

> If those arrangements were to disappear as they appeared, if some event of which we can at the moment do no more than sense the possibility . . . were to cause them to crumble . . . then one can certainly wager that man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea.

Could it be that "Man" as we have understood him to be, as the zenith of evolution, as the biological and ethical centerpiece of nature and God, is an extravagant temporary fiction we can no longer afford, not only because he has wreaked havoc on the animal kingdom, but also because he has impoverished our soul? To change the Foucauldian stick figure "Man" has become, we require a new spiritual vision of animals. "In a wonderful and inexpressible way," wrote medieval philosopher John Scotus Erigena, "God is created in his creatures." The question we face, in a geography increasingly creatureless and artificial, an environment more and more derivative and mechanical, is, How can we again embody our spirituality in the living organic world of animals? For the power to refresh our spiritual insights as well as our misguided understanding of our biological evolution resides in our bestiaries, both the animals of nature and the animals of the mind. Our own religious history teems with the clamor of significant beasts that tradition, sheer neglect, and the narrative of "Man" have eclipsed from view. Since the rise of science, Western culture has undertaken the discovery and cataloging of the Earth's remarkable zoological diversity. Perhaps the time has come for us to embark upon a different though related journey of discovery, the rediscovery of the meaningful fauna that leads from the visible to the invisible, from knowledge to virtue—from the narrative of "Man" to our true humanity. Each of us needs to understand that each creature followed its own course oblivious to "me." And yet together they seem to make up an intelligible whole that concerns me in ways I have not even begun to fathom.

Debate in the Earth First! Journal about 'The Parable of the Tribes'

Authors: Andrew Bard Schmookler, Australopithecus, John Davis & Christoph Manes

Dates: 1985—1987

Notes: A friendly debate is started when Earth First! editor John Davis (writing under his favorite pseudonym) reviewed an important book which contradicts the anarchistic tendencies of both the libertarian "rednecks for wilderness" and the more communitarian green anarchists. This sets off the first (and last) extended debate on social philosophy in the pages of Earth First! Formanistas from Davis, Manes, Abbey, and others, defend anarchism, while Schmookler more than holds his own.

Sources: 1. Review of *The Parable of the Tribes* by Australopithecus, *Earth First!* Journal, vol. 5, no. 8 (22 September 1985): page 24.
2. Schmookler Replies to Australopithecus by Andrew Bard Schmookler, *Earth First!* Journal, vol. 6, no. 2 (21 December 1985): page 25.
3. Schmookler on Anarchy by Andrew Bard Schmookler, *Earth First!* Journal, vol. 6, no. 5 (1 May 1986): page 22.
4. Ascent to Anarchy by Christoph Manes, *Earth First!* Journal, vol. 6, no. 6, 1 August 1986, page 21.
5. Schmookler Replies to the Anarchists by Andrew Bard Schmookler, *Earth First!* Journal, vol. 7, no. 2 (21 December 1986): pages 24–5.
6. An Anarchist Replies to Schmookler's Reply to the Anarchists by Christoph Manes, *Earth First!* Journal, vol. 7, no. 8 (23 September 1987): page 23.
7. Schmookler Replies to Anarchist's Replies to Schmookler's Reply to the Anarchists by Andrew Bard Schmookler, *Earth First!* Journal, vol. 7, no. 8 (23 September 1987): pages 26–7.

1. Review of The Parable of the Tribes by Australopithecus

Review of *The Parable of the Tribes: The Problem of Power in Social Evolution* by Andrew Bard Schmookler. University of California Press. 400pp., $19.95

Andrew Bard Schmookler's recent book, *The Parable of the Tribes,* is one of the more impressive and important books of this decade. In it, Schmookler looks back through history and pre-history to learn how we humans got ourselves and all life into such a dismal mess.

Schmookler's basic thesis is that after civilization began, violence between different peoples — and stemming from that, violence against Earth — became an inevitable part of the evolution of humanity. The "parable of the tribes" explains this inevitability roughly as follows: As long as neighboring tribes all act peacefully, peace reigns; but as soon as any one tribe becomes aggressive, all tribes must adopt the ways of violence. Consider a tribe's alternatives when faced by a hostile neighbor: The peaceful tribe can surrender, flee, or fight; any of which amounts to a victory for the ways of violence. Even as natural evolution selects for the strongest organisms and/or communities of organisms, social evolution selects for the most powerful societies. (Schmookler uses the word 'power' in the sense of power over; it would be worthwhile to see a critique of Schmookler's theories by someone, e.g. Joanna Macy, within the growing movement of persons who think that power in the sense of power over could be replaced by power in the sense of power with.) Societies attain power partly by developing technologies which exploit nature, hence nature too becomes a victim of the power struggles of social evolution.

Schmookler's parable offers a simple yet compelling theory on the downfall of humanity. For this and many other reasons, Schmookler's work is brilliant. One of the most pleasing aspects of the book for those of us with a primeval bent is his discussion of the harmonious ways of life of primal peoples. Primal peoples generally seem to have lived lives unfettered by the many restrictions that make modern life unpleasant; restrictions such as tedious labor, or contrived notions of good and evil (morality is a human construct arising after humanity's fall from the state of nature, Schmookler's work suggests).

Despite all its good points, Schmookler's book will often disappoint many readers. Political leftists will be aghast to read his discussion of the merits of US capitalism vs. Soviet communism, in which Schmookler says that the US system is basically decent whereas the Soviet system is basically bad. The latter claim is reasonable; the former is not. Feminists may resent the lack of attention Schmookler pays to the ways in which violence against Earth and humans has been historically tied to the male dominance of societies for the past 8000 years or so. Ernest Becker, the late highly acclaimed author of *The Denial of Death* would think that Schmookler overlooks the immense importance of fear of death in shaping human cultures. Biologists might question his strong stress on competition as the driving force in evolution, insofar as he underrates the importance of cooperation (symbiosis) in shaping evolution. We radical ecologists wish Schmookler had discussed in more detail how his parable ties in with violence against Earth. Furthermore, we may question whether Schmookler's is a biocentric perspective on life. Some of us grow apprehensive when we read "there is something

special about the human animal." We are apt to agree more with his suggestion that human consciousness may prove to be merely an unsucessful evolutionary experiment.

Lastly, anyone wishing for an answer to the world's desperate plight will not find it. Schmookler explains how we entered our plight, but not how we can escape it. He hints that his theoretical solution is forthcoming. This does not inspire confidence; if he is as thorough in this next project, it may not appear until after most of Earth is a wasteland.

2. Schmookler Replies to Australopithecus by Andrew Bard Schmookler

I was delighted that a review of my book, *The Parable of the Tribes: The Problem of Power in Social Evolution,* appeared in *Earth First!.* For much of the passion that inspired the writing of my book is the same as the passion that is blazoned in your pages.

I was pleased also that your reviewer, Australopithecus, evidently from a species akin to my own, the mis-named *Homo sapiens,* thought as highly as he did of *The Parable of the Tribes.* However, there are a few statements in the review that would give your readers an inaccurate understanding of the views I present in my book. I'd like here to correct such misunderstandings.

The review says that I find capitalism basically decent. In fact, while I do find many of the usual left-wing criticisms of the market economy misguided, my purpose in the part of Chapter 7 entitled "The Market as a Power System" was to spell out the strongest legitimate critique possible of the workings of the capitalist economy. My conclusion with respect to the market exemplifies my thesis throughout the book: that the market, like other systems ruled by power, cannot be trusted to rule our destiny wisely or humanely. The market attends well only to certain values, while ignoring others — including most emphatically the panoply of values connected with the natural world. The most that can be said for the market is that, properly limited by political choices reflecting other values, it can be a useful tool.

Nor was I praising our species when I wrote that "there is something special about the human animal." By special I meant unique — as one might also say that the genocide committed by the Nazis was unique. Indeed, I introduce the book with the idea that this book is intended to help remove our remaining prideful illusions about ourselves as a species.

The reviewer suggests that biologists would take issue with my emphasis on competition as the driving force in evolution. He would be right if that were how I characterize biological evolution. But it is not. The whole purpose of Chapter 6, "Systems of Nature and of Civilization," is to delineate the various ways that the evolution of civilization represents a destructive departure from the evolutionary processes that characterized

the previous, biological evolution of living systems. I stress that the competition evident in biological nature forms part of a fundamentally synergistic and harmonious order that protects the viability of all the components of the system. Whereas the struggle for power among civilized societies takes place outside the regulation of any life-serving order.

When creatures begin to invent their own way of life, it might appear that their societies would be free to develop in any way the creatures want. But what is freedom for a single society is anarchy in an interacting system of those societies. Anarchy, which Hobbes regarded as the state of nature, is indeed a state of unnature — for it had never before existed in the history of life. This is the circumstance from which arise the struggle for power and the inevitable spread of the ways of power that my book describes.

Finally, I'd like to respond to the reviewer's disappointment that I do not have more to say about how to escape our plight. Of the various critiques I have encountered since the book was published a year and a half ago, this has been the most frequent and the most distressing to me.

The Parable of the Tribes shows that the essence of our problem lies in the overarching anarchy within which human action' takes place. So long as that anarchy persists, the destructive rule of power will persist. The general nature of the solution is clear: we must create a life-serving order that both allows and requires us to act consistently with the needs of human beings and of other living things. If we are to survive for much longer, our present anarchy — a recent development of only some 10,000 years — must be made but a brief interval between two systems that embody wholeness: the pure order of nature from which we emerged, but to which we cannot return; and another framework of human devising to guide and limit human activity.

It is true that these general notions, even if accepted, do not offer detailed guidance on how to get there. Still less do they promise a quick solution to the destruction that plagues us. But that, unfortunately, is the human condition. We will not reach the promised land any time soon; and we are required to grope our way toward it without a map. This is frightening, demanding of us resources of courage and faith. What distresses me is the thought that those who fault a book that diagnoses 10,000 years of destructiveness for not offering a "solution," are shrinking from facing the true nature of our predicament and of what escaping from it demands of us.

I, for one, believe we can .make it. I believe that if the readers of *Earth. First!* were to see Earth 1000 years from now, they would weep with joy and relief at what they found.

Andrew Bard Schmookler is the author of ***Parable of the Tribes*** *and a commentator for* ***All Things Considered*** *on National Public Radio.*

REVIEWERS REPLY: Most of my doubts about Schmookler's book have now been dispelled. This is such an excellent response to my misguided review that I'm almost glad I did his book a disservice. However, some of us will be bothered by his negative use of the term "anarchy." Anarchism as advocated by such thinkers as Murray Bookchin

seems a very positive and ecological goal toward which society should, perhaps, move. What do you think of Bookchin's advocacy of anarchism, Mr. Schmookler?

3. Schmookler on Anarchy by Andrew Bard Schmookler

Dear Australopithecus:

You are uneasy with my arguing, in *The Parable of the Tribes,* that at the core of the problems of civilization is anarchy, while some people that you respect argue, rather, that something akin to anarchy is the solution. I appreciate your inviting me to respond to the position of an anarchist like Murray Bookchin. You have also articulated the position to which you wish me to respond. Here, in a nutshell, is my understanding of it: Organic societies — including the original human societies and various other communities appearing in nature — tend to be "spontaneously formed, non-coercive and egalitarian." The world took a bad turn with the creation in human societies of hierarchies, including the state and male dominated institutions. The hierarchical state brought about the various evils of civilization. We would be better off, therefore, if we could return to "ecological, stateless, communal-based societies." [Ed. note: Australopithecus thinks we would benefit by returning to such primal societies; Bookchin appears to favor combining the positive qualities of primal societies with the latent positive qualities of modern society.]

I share that primitivist appreciation of the more synergistic structure of natural societies. Where I differ from the above summarized position is in how the origin of evil is to be understood (e.g. the evils of war, tyranny, ecological destructiveness), and therefore in how these evils are best remedied.

The anarchist position suffers from a basic logical flaw: in trying to explain evil, it can't escape the problem of the Prime Mover. On the one hand, the State is the source of evil. On the other *hand, the State is itself evil. So* what is the source of the evil of the State? Anarchists, who live in societies where evils are accomplished through political systems, mistake the symptom — the state — for the cause, which is the failure to control power.

Anarchists want us to break up political powers, back to a multitude of small and self-governing communities. But the human species tried that experiment — up until 10,000 years ago. And the rest, as saying goes, is history. We had the situation the anarchists desire at the beginning, yet history unfolded into a nightmare nonetheless. What will have changed this time to prevent the groovy many from being brought under the dominion of the ruthless few?

Only if we understand what happened the first time — how the egalitarian anarchy of primitive hunting and gathering societies evolved/degenerated into the tyrannical and belligerent power structures that have bloodied our history — will we have a

chance to truly overcome the problem of power. That is what *The Parable of the Tribes* attempts to do. [Ed. note: This excellent book is now available in paperback from Houghton Mifflin for $9.95.]

The first point that needs to be made is that anarchy is not what existed before the rise of civilization. True, there was no hierarchical power structure, but there was governing order. The patient process of natural selection molds an order that is governed closely and well. There is no ruler in this lawful order, for the law of nature is part of each separate creature. Each follows only its own law — pursuing its own ends — but this law and these ends are part of a harmonious natural order.

Anarchy, in the sense of action ungoverned by any lawful order, becomes possible only when a creature has the creativity to bring its cultural development across the threshold where it can begin to invent its own way of life. The sovereign actors of civilization are ungoverned in a way that nothing in the previous history of life has been. If we look at one single actor, it looks like freedom; but if we look at the system as a whole, what we find is anarchy. This unnatural condition of anarchy, far from being our salvation, has been at the root of the torment of civilization. Let us look at anarchy.

The special evil of anarchy is that it brings evil to the fore. Why do we send out the National Guard when a disaster disrupts society's order? It is not because we are all looters waiting for a chance to pounce. But it only takes an uncontrolled few to terrorize the many. We see this problem manifested in Lebanon — the Lebanese have lacked an effective force to hold the violent ones among them in check. When historical circumstance undermined the foundations of Lebanese political order, the ruthless few were loosed from the abyss of the ensuing anarchy to rise to the top. Warlords selected from a struggle for power could then come to rule the destiny of thousands.

Anarchists paint nice pictures of how everyone will behave when the evil state is abolished. But why believe these pictures? Many believed Marx's nice pictures that once capitalism was overthrown, the state would wither away; but the Gulag shows what happens when you mistake the symptom for the disease.

I am not saying that people are evil, but that it is vain to hope that all will be good. What the parable of the tribes says is that if you have anarchy, unless everyone is good the special evils of power and domination will spread through the system like a contaminant. Unless one is "so far gone in Utopian speculation" (in Madison's fine phrase) as to believe that every community will be immune to unnice ambitions, before embracing anarchism one should ask: in the absence of any overarching governmental structure, what happens if an outlaw community arises?

"Imagine a group of tribes living within reach of each other. If all choose the way of peace, then all may live in peace. But what if all but one choose peace, and that one is ambitious for expansion and conquest? What can happen to the others when confronted with an ambitious and potent neighbor?" This is the question I ask in my book, and then I answer: there are four alternatives, none of them good. They are: destruction of the weaker society; its transformation and absorption; its withdrawal

from the area; and its successful self-defense, which regrettably requires imitating the aggressor to get a comparable level of competitive power.

The state is but a symptom of the fundamental problem, which is anarchy. Power is necessary for social survival, and hierarchy has enhanced power — from the emergence of the chiefdom, through the rise of the kingship, to the far-reaching tentacles of the nation state. (Male domination is also a symptom of the inescapability of the struggle for power: When groups are beset by external threats, greater power and status inevitably go to the protectors. The evils of patriarchy are to be seen not as the evils of men, but as the evils of having to maximize social power.)

The straggle for power, and the selection for the ways of power, have condemned civilization also to that other evil: environmental destraction. A society cannot survive the long ran unless it survives the short ran. To survive the short ran, it must have *power enough* to resist potential aggressors. Much of power comes from harnessing nature, and the maximal immediate power seems to be yielded by practices that are destructive in the long term. A society, therefore, whose own exploitation of nature cannot be sustained over the long term, can render unviable *other* societies whose practices are *ecologically* sound (though less productive of competitive power). (What is happening today in the Amazon — the displacement of ecologically sound cultures by the powerful but ecologically unsound — is typical of the social evolutionary process of the past 10,000 years.) Civilization has thus been like a mad dog — sick to the death, but able to infect the healthy with its disease.

All this leads to the very unanarchistic conclusion that if we want to eliminate these evils from human practice, we had better create sufficient government to control the free play of power. This means that if we do decentralize civilization into smaller communities — which I think would be a good move in many ways — there should be at the same time a world order sufficient at least to keep would-be conquerors from entering that time-dishonored profession. And since the biosphere is a globally interdependent web, that world order should be able to constrain any of the actors from fouling the earth. This requires laws and means of enforcement.

At the minimum, a world order needs to protect communities from the unjust intrusion of others in the form of war and environmental degradation. Whether this order should go further — as in some kind of global bill of rights to protect individuals from injustice within their communities — is a question of a different sort. I believe in cultural diversity, but I am not sure I'm willing, in the name of that value, to make disasters like Jonestown a purely "domestic" matter.

The solution to our problems requires structures to govern the play of power. Admittedly, government is often simply an embodiment of the corrupt rule of power; government is often only warfare in static form, with the strong standing with a foot on the neck of the weak. But tyranny does not support a case against government. On the contrary, tyranny is the form of government to which the anarchic struggle for power gives rise. Only when the operation of power is strictly governed can justice result. Only government can restrain power in the interests of other values.

Government is a paradox, but there is no escaping it. This is because power is a paradox: our emergence out of the natural order makes power an inevitable problem for human affairs, and only power can control power. [Ed. note: True; our fall was our "emergence out of the natural order."] It is fortunate for us that the framers of the US Constitution understood this paradoxical problem: that is why we in this society, for all its glaring imperfections, can freely discuss the evils that the play of power produces around us, and freely search for solutions.

If you want to know how terribly difficult it is to solve the problem of power through setting up good governmental structures, ask us Americans. But if you want to know how profoundly nightmarish the problem of *power* can be in the absence of a governing order, ask the Lebanese.

Sincerely,
Andrew Bard Schmookler

Andrew Bard Schmookler is one of the best ecological thinkers in the US, and we strongly recommend his book.

Ed. note: We encourage a discussion in our pages on anarchism, the state and its relation to environmental destruction, and visions of future ecological societies. We would especially appreciate receiving letters or essays from some of the deeply ecological writers, such as Dolores LaChapelle, Schmookler, Bookchin, Starhawk, Karen Warren, Ed Abbey, Bill Devall, Joanna Macy, Michael Cohen, Gary Snyder and George Sessions.

4. Ascent to Anarchy by Christoph Manes

People who believe as I do, that only something akin to anarchy harmonizes with a healthy planet and human freedom can righteously pound the table and cough up bread at the flaws in Schmookler's critique of anarchy in his *Parable of the Tribes.* What we cannot do is ignore the problem he articulates if this belief is to have any spiritual integrity. Schmookler seems to be right: when one community begins to centralize power, all others must do so or perish or flee. How, then, can anarchy be sustained (never mind attained) if the first step the power-hungry take toward empire stamps it out?

I know Schmookler would disagree with the way I've restated his terms. But his definition of anarchy is idiosyncratic and confusing, and it produces a contradictory conclusion. If anarchy is "uncontrolled power" which leads to violence between two parties (however centralized they may be), then their subordination to a higher administration, a "world order," would theoretically lead to world pacification, according to Schmookler. But there is not only a quantitive but a qualitative difference between violence in a decentralized community and a centralized state, between revenge killing in Iron Age Sweden and the nuclear arms race. The violence of societies where power has not congealed into a state cannot disrupt the cycles of nature or transform the

land into war material. State violence (even when it is "benevolent," even when it is used, as Schmookler wishes, to prevent violence) is predicated on just such a disruption, on mobilizing people and resources into a network of use. The existence of government—however kindly or ecologically aware — requires the concentration and projection of power. Which means to a greater or lesser extent the transmutation of Earth into exploitable material, the creation of means of production, roads, armaments, and the ideologies which support these. And the fact is, such ideologies are never kind or ecological.

Centralization is structurally, globally, violent. And it creates a universe of discourse which blames all its inadequacies on lack of control, on anarchy. When Schmookler uses Lebanon as an argument against anarchy, he fails to break out of this universe of discourse (that is, his thinking is no longer *critical).* The violence in Lebanon is only possible within the context of arms manufacturing and the worldwide network — of mining, smelting, chemical techniques, transportation, currency, education, etc. — which this requires; of the concentration of diverse cultures within artificial political boundaries; of the hierarchical ideologies of Islam and Christianity. Lebanon is the ugly anatomy of the modern state stripped of its short-term prosperity. It is its destiny.

Now, humanists might deplore pre-Columbian tribes going on the warpath, or Vikings sacking Lindisfarne. From an ecological perspective, however, these conflicts are neutral. I think there will always be physical violence among people, which they will have to deal with as it affects them. Other anarchists disagree. But one thing is clear: violence that doesn't stem from an organized government which mobilizes resources is no threat to Earth, and therefore has the same status as the "wars" between bees and wasps.

Of course, there is a historical relation between disorganized and organized violence. But is it invariably genetic, as Schmookler argues, or is this view merely part of the universe of discourse industrial societies use to propagate themselves? It's true that up to now history has seen greater and greater centralization. It's also true, however, that this centralization is so disruptive of natural cycles that it is as impermanent as the exotic elements brewed in cyclotrons. Anarchy is ineluctable. And so the question again is, how do we sustain it?

Imagine a community based on kinship ties, perhaps tribal-communal, perhaps made up of small landholders. They have laws, but no executive power. Those whose rights are violated must deal with the situation as they see fit. It isn't paradise, but then paradise is for dead people, not men and women, and they believe the stories of what life was like before — the remains of their ancestors' ugly world are still evident. They have what government can never give and only wilderness can: freedom.

Now imagine a neighboring community begins to centralize its power, to take the first skulking steps that will bring the world back to that ugliness. Wouldn't the first community, *knowing what it knows,* do everything possible to stop them? And wouldn't similar communities feel obliged to help? And wouldn't they all do so without imitating their enemy — whatever the risk — because they know to do so amounts to suicide?

Isn't it possible they could succeed in cutting out the cancer (and let's face it, that means bloodshed)?

People in the past have won temporary victories over centralized power. The Vikings of Iceland, without a king or general or standing army, held off feudal Europe for five centuries. The American Indians did the same against capitalist Europe. The Vikings lost because their metaphysics went bad — they accepted Christianity and eventually gave up the struggle. The Indians never gave up, but faced an enemy too militarily developed to be stopped. Our anarchistic tribe would face neither of these problems. It would only be at a slight disadvantage organizationally, and metaphysically it would have full knowledge of the alternative to its way of life. Schmookler has universalized a historical pattern, but once that pattern is articulated, isn't it possible to make it part of our present reality as something we act upon and *overcome?*

I suppose what I'm talking about here is wisdom/which one can never guarantee. We are passing through the nightmare of urban civilization $_{\mathrm{r}}$ and we can bequeath to our children the knowledge that this path led to physical and spiritual impoverishment. We can tell them stories of the Old Earth, its crystalline beauty, and how we shattered it until only brilliant splinters remained to be pieced back together. We can tell them only a commitment to the Land can keep them free. No guarantees. Just hope.

> "... and the rest
> is prayer, observation, discipline,
> thought and action."
> (TS. Eliot, *Four Quartets)*

Christoph Manes has returned to Iceland as a Fulbright scholar after a brief stay with us at the Rendezvous.

5. Schmookler Replies to the Anarchists by Andrew Bard Schmookler

Dear Australopithecus

Thank you for sending me the thoughtful responses to my letter. I thank the writers of these letters.

I do not expect that we will achieve, through this correspondence, a complete meeting of minds. But my correspondents and I do share some fundamental values, and a deep outrage at the destructiveness of our civilization. So, it does seem worthwhile to continue the dialogue to see if greater mutual understanding can be gained.

The basic question at issue is: what is the source of violence and oppression which have plagued humankind, and what is required for eliminating (or greatly reducing) the role of those evils in human affairs? How one diagnoses the ills is, of course, closely related to how one prescribes for their cure.

My correspondents, most of whom describe themselves as anarchists, are understandably offended at my attributing our problems to anarchy. Likewise, since they evidently regard centralized, governing powers as the chief agents of evil, and since they interpret my call for a "world order" as implying a global centralized power, they are outraged by my proposed cure, regarding it as simply the ultimate apotheosis of the disease. But, as several of them indicate, some of the disagreement can be alleviated by clarifying our definitions.

Anarchy and Violence: Definitions and Substance

Let us take, first, the concept of "anarchy." One theme in several of the letters is that it is unfair of me to use anarchy as a synonym for chaos. Mr. Abbey bids us remember that anarchy means not "no rule" but "no rulers." Another correspondent says that "anarchy means lack of hierarchy." The picture of the anarchic society that emerges from these letters is one that is somewhat loosely and informally organized (dare I say governed?) through direct democratic cooperative mechanisms. (Local communities might set up "organs" that could "coordinate" but not "govern," as one correspondent puts it.)

How does this portrait relate to my definition of anarchy? According to my definition, a system is anarchic *to the extent that the system as a whole lacks the means substantially to control or prevent reasonably anticipatable unjust violence or other forms of coercive domination by one part of the system against another.* (I recognize that by this definition anarchy characterizes not only an ungoverned situation like that in Lebanon but also a tyrannical government like that of Nazi Germany or Pol Pot's Cambodia. The "anarchists" and I thus share a common concern: for eliminating the condition where *the use of power is not adequately goverened.* This condition probably applies — to some degree — to all civilized societies.)

One of the correspondents claims that anarchy is not the Hobbesian war of all against all. But the question remains whether, if society were set up as he would like, that Hobbesian condition would develop.

A system must be able to deal with "reasonably anticipatable" attempts of some to abuse others. One divergence in our analyses seems to be about the nature of the threat with which the system must be prepared to deal. When my correspondents face this threat at all, it is generally in terms of the aberrant criminal *individual.* Manes says that those whose rights are violated must deal with the situation as best they can; while Abbey speaks of "vigilante justice," which he'd prefer to call "democratic justice."

But the anarchic community must be able to deal with more than just the neighborhood bully. Organized gangs will arise — not because human nature is evil, but simply because what can happen generally does. (One correspondent suggests that the world he envisions — having "abolished material deprivation" — will be immune to the evils of power-seeking. This reflects a simplistic view of why our history has been so plagued

by the rule of power-maximizing individuals and systems.) This is where *The Parable of the Tribes* becomes relevant, because it shows how a system that cannot defend itself against the worst will develop in directions dictated by the worst. My correspondent underestimate the dangers from uncontrolled power against which a civilized system must guard. This contributes to their overly sanguine view of a world of loosely knit autonomous communities.

An Evolutionary Perspective

Understanding the way our systems evolve is essential to grasping the problem of power. This is what is lacking in Manes' analysis. In several places, Manes draws a chasm of a distinction between violence among centralized states and that among less centralized entities, such as "pre-Columbian tribes going on the warpath, or Vikings sacking Lindisfarne." But even if the difference were as great as he suggests — which I question — the important point is that violence (or, -the operation of power) at one level leads toward the escalation of violence to a new evolutionary level.

This pattern of escalation has been repeated through history and across the world. (Among the works I cite on this subject in *The Parable of the Tribes,* that of the anthropologist Robert Carneiro is most pertinent.) Two correspondents fault me for condemning anarchy on the basis of history's course: just because a fragmented (or, as they would prefer, decentralized) system evolved in destructive ways *once,* they argue, there's no reason to assume an *inherent tendency* for it to do so. But it did not happen only once. Civilization developed more or less independently a half dozen times. The uncontrolled interactions among tribes led to their consolidations into chiefdoms, and the struggle among chiefdoms led to the first imperial systems, and so the initially fragmented communities were ultimately unified under the domination of oppressive centralized states. This basic pattern was repeated in Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, India, Mesoamerica and coastal Peru.

An evolutionary understanding of the struggle for power tells us whatever way we design our civilization, it must be able to contain the contaminant of power.

Controlling Power

My correspondents are justifiably apprehensive about a single global power, a Hobbesian kind of solution. "A world government equipped with supreme power," writes Abbey, "suggests a planetary tyranny." ("What," writes another, "will protect us against a global state headed by some closet Nazi like , former UN head Kurt Waldheim?") Several correspondents seem to assume that my call for a "world order" entailed establishing such a supreme power. But I, too, would prefer a less centralized solution. (As my correspondents disliked my equating anarchy with the war of all against all, so I disliked their equating "world order". with global tyranny.)

Manes proposes what, in the study of international affairs, is called "collective security." If one community "begins to centralize its power" — which in Maneff demonography stands for the whole panoply of social evils—wouldn't a threatened community "do everything possible to stop them? And wouldn't similar communities feel obliged to help?

Collective security is an appealing solution, allowing each "ally" to remain autonomous. But this approach to security has the fault of its virtues, namely that action that is voluntary may prove unreliable. Machiavelli described this problem, writing in a fragmented Italy which, to his distress, was being picked apart by external powers. The ancient Romans, he wrote, demonstrated that while the "potent prince" is making war upon one, the "other powers that are more distant and have no immediate intercourse with him will look upon this as a matter too remote for them to be concerned about, and will continue in this error until the conflagration' spreads to their door, when they will have no means for extinguishing it except their own forces, which will no longer suffice when the fire has once gained the upper hand." In our century, when Mussolini — the leader of an Italy at last unified — invaded Abyssinia, other nations did nothing, in disregard of their obligations under the collective security agreement of the League of Nations.

Nonetheless, at the global level — given the dangers of creating a single inescapable tyranny — I think that a collective security system, in conjunction with a small international peacekeeping force, might be the best solution. This could only work if the most potent conceivable actors had very limited military power in comparison with the power of the collective response that would check aggression, unlike the situation today where there are powers with virtual veto power over the survival of the globe.

To keep the peace among the smaller communities my correspondents envision, however, I think collective security would be a poor choice. In a network of such small and scattered entities, less formal and more voluntary security systems would be much less effective. Furthermore, the dangers of tyranny at the sub-global level would be less catastrophic. Here I think constituting (or retaining) some kind of limited central power would be necessary.

The Demonization of Central Government

Just as I find my correspondents insufficiently concerned about the dangers of fragmentation (decentralization) of power in civilization, so do they seem to me too sweeping in their condemnation of centralized power.

But there is much in their view of centralized power and its corruption with which I agree. One says, "The state is both a source of and a product of social injustice." This statement — if the "is" were changed to "has usually been" — I would accept as as good a one sentence summary as I could find of a section in *The Parable of the Tribes,* entitled "Men Are Not Ants: The Problem of Power in the Body Politic." That section

reinforces the theme in these letters that it is often the worst among us who have risen to, positions of power in civilized systems."

I also agree that the best protection against having power abused is to distribute it equally. In general I also favor participatory, direct democracy wherever it is feasible. Power to the people!

Equating Centralization With Tyranny

However, I think two different meanings of "centralization" need to be recognized: 1) centralization meaning gross inequalities of power between members of a given polity, and 2) centralization meaning the constitution by the people, who retain ultimate power, of a central agency to perform functions on behalf of the whole. My correspondents treat the second as if it were simply and automatically a version of the first, It is not.

Any division of labor, any hierarchical organization, any differentiation of a governing apparatus from the body politic carries real and serious dangers. But . however difficult may be the task of creating a specialized apparatus system of governance without destroying the essentially democratic distribution of power, the task is not futile.

Moreover it is necessary. Not only for solving the problem of "anarchy" as I define it,, but for other purposes as well. I cannot see, for example, how we will protect Earth from those who would despoil it for their own gain without a global system of law, monitoring and enforcement. And that requires a formal apparatus.

Also there are the general problems of making a society work well. My correspondents seem sanguine about the ability of loosely organized, directly participatory systems of governance to create the fair world they envision. A couple mention small-scale or short-lived examples. But what it takes to govern a little collective is as different from what it takes to govern a large, complex social system as are the differences between ventilating a little cottage and ventilating a large building. The cottage ventilates naturally through the cracks; try that in a large building and the air will be dead. Some might like to throw out everything in our society that makes it complex, but I'm not sure that is a realistic or desirable course. And when we do have complexity, the people need to delegate some of their collective governing tasks.

I spend several hours a day on keeping informed, but there's too much I don't know about. Even fulfilling one's responsibility in a representative democracy, let alone a direct one, is very difficult. Our elected national representatives — who generally work harder and are ethically no worse than most people — are overwhelmed with the many issues on which they must decide. They too lean on colleagues, not to mention their innumerable legislative and committee staff people, for expertise in various areas. Making a civilized society work — even for one who makes it a full time job and has the noblest of intentions — is a job of staggering complexity.

A jury, spending weeks weighing testimony, can generally deliver a reasonably just verdict. But the members of the jury focus on a single decision. We can't all serve on all the juries at once to make all the decisions that need to be made.

If the achievement of important social goals *does* require the existence of some formal governmental apparatus, then the question arises whether the costs of having such institutions are worth paying. My correspondents, writing about our representative democracy as if it were essentially equivalent to an oligarchical tyranny, regard the costs as catastrophic. This seems to me a view, like in a carnival fun-mirror, that takes the actual elements but so changes their proportions as to produce a fundamentally distorted picture.

"Representative democracy," I recognize, is rife with dangers of corruption. The "representatives" can become powers in their own right, and the democracy eroded. They can, moreover, be servants of other powerful interests. But though the state is always at least partially "a source and product of social injustice," it is not always equally so. My correspondents condemn "the American Experiment" as a failure, citing the undeniable injustices of power in the US. I concur in many of their critiques. I know that, as one correspondent points out, the framers of the Constitution I praised were seeking a framework to serve their interests, and that subsequently power in the US has been used to help the most powerful few maintain and extend their domination over the many. But those who created the Constitution were not *only* serving themselves, they were also genuinely interested in constructing a just democracy. Consequently, power in the system they created is not *only* in the hands of the few, nor is it *only* used unjustly.

Abbey writes that "government serves the caprice of any person — philosopher or madman — who succeeds in seizing the level's of control." But government can have safety features built into it to prevent such seizure. Indeed, constitutional government in the US has for 200 years protected us — pretty well — from being subject to the caprice of madmen and criminals.

The workings of the American system are deeply flawed, but the differences between this system and the systems that are unadulterated manifestations of social injustice are as important as the differences between what we have and the ideal we can envision.

The Dangers of Revolutionary Utopianism

This leads to a fundamental difference: how we are to use our visions of an ideal world. On this crucial issue, both the right and the left make typical mistakes.

The error of the right is to regard the world as is as the best of all possible worlds. The right is so wedded to its "realism" that it entertains no image of an ideal world.

To the extent that conservative thought is truly based on principle, and not just dedicated to protecting those interests that are best served by the status quo, it understands but exaggerates the evils that must be contained by order. Exaggerating

those evils, the right-wing ideologue is often unconcerned with the evils of the existing system.

Several of my correspondents see me as one of these. A few of them describe my thinking as being itself a manifestation of the evil power-systems. (Manes, for example, says I fail to break out of the universe of discourse created by "centralization.") I agree that our power systems do make us think of human life in ways that interfere with our ability to change the world. But lumping me with the apologists of power is a bum rap.

The Parable, of the Tribes is a truly radical critique of civilization. And my work continues to be devoted to providing a deep critique of what makes us destructive and to seeking a path to a more humane civilization. My coming, during the formulation of *The Parable of the Tribes,* to see our dilemma in terms more tragic than those of the utopian revolutionary was not a cop out; it was working toward a balanced understanding.

If to my correspondents I seem to commit the error of the right, to me they seem to commit the error of the left. The error of the left has two related parts. The first is to condemn utterly whatever falls short of the ideal: whatever is tainted with evil is regarded as wholly evil. The second is to believe that if they can sweep away the world as it is, it will be replaced by the world as they see it in their ideal. The left often underestimates the multiplicity of factors that keep the world from realizing their ideal.

This error, as the history of revolutionary politics shows, is dangerous. A vision that damns indiscriminately all that is imperfect helps create hell on Earth. A policy that collapses the good but deeply flawed into the same file with the fundamentally evil helps create the conditions where evil thrives. If we recklessly sweep aside our flawed political structures, what fills: the vacuum will not be the utopia for which we yearn bitt a still more tyrannical structure.

Wisdom requires a synthesis of the valid understandings of both left and right. We need the left's acute sensitivity to the injustices of the status quo, and the left's ceaseless struggle to set things right. But we also need the right's sense of caution. We need the understanding that some evils are necessary, and that rectifying even those evils that are unnecessary must be done carefully, lest we plunge from bad to worse.

Andrew Bard Schmookler is nearing completion of his sequel to **The Parable of the Tribes**. This second book, which will undoubtedly be important and controversial, will discuss the origins of war.

6. An Anarchist Replies to Schmookler's Reply to the Anarchists by Christoph Manes

Schmookler's response to the various arguments put forward by anarchists against his critique of anarchy is both reasonable and eloquent. It also misses the point. Basically, Schmookler is arguing that anarchy cannot insure "social justice." For the moment let's concede the point (which isn't hard to do since no human condition can insure anything) and assume that his system of representative democracy is a better way to keep outlaws and outlaw communities from abusing others. The problem with this line of thinking is that anarchy, at least as I conceive it, is not so much concerned with social justice as it is with preventing the despoliation of Earth which inevitably follows the establishment of any centralized power, representative or otherwise. The difference in perspectives here is enormous. Schmookler assumes that by creating a system that protects people's rights, the environment will be protected as a *consequence.* I would argue, conversely, that by protecting the environment (and this can only mean returning to a state of pervasive wilderness free from centralized power) humans will have the maximum amount of freedom and "rights" possible in this contingent world of ours. Moreover. I think it can be shown that any system dedicated to social justice through political power not only does not guarantee the protection of the environment; it absolutely depends on its degradation (how else can Schmookler explain the fact that the US, his paradigm for responsible polity, is also the worst threat to natural diversity in the history of nation-states?).

The essential flaw in Schmookler's position is his inadequate critique of power, Schmookler concerns himself mainly with the power relations among people and communities. Yet there is a more basic dimension to power: the power relation between humans and nature. The power to control the lives of others, even for "beneficial" ends as Schmookler desires, derives ultimately from the exploitation of nature. To sustain the kind of society Schmookler envisions would require the continuation of some form of technological domination, which brought on the environmental crisis.

This is an important point: Schmookler's vision relies entirely on the optics of mass, technological society. That's why I can claim — without giving him a "bum rap" as he says — that his thinking remains within the universe of discourse technological culture uses to propagate itself. He argues that since citizens can't be informed about everything, we need specialists to run things. He's right — we do need specialists to keep our nuclear arsenal intact, to keep our factories producing. But Schmookler fails to ask the more fundamental question which anarchists posit: do we really want to keep things running? The question is not, as he claims, how to "control" polluters and despoilers of nature, but rather how to disintegrate the power relations which make this exploitation possible — namely, a centralized state. Despite Schmookler's claim that I am being ahistorical, pre-Columbian Indians and Germanic tribesmen didn't have to regulate chemical dumping and auto emissions. They may have been anxious

about revenge-killing, marauding enemies, many human problems, but not about their world being poisoned. Why? They had no central power to make possible the wholesale destruction of the environment.

To return to my original criticism of his position: what are the concrete implications of having a "world order" or any central form of government? It means communication technologies, roads, weapons, factories to produce these "necessities" of government, institutions to train and regulate people, a hierarchy of responsibility and power. In short, it means something like an industrial society.

Schmookler cannot escape this conclusion, yet he did not address this aspect of my article (which was its main point). If his position is to have intellectual integrity he must confront this problem *specifically.* From his writings, one gets the impression that he would be satisfied with a "rational" exploitation of resources, a "rational" abatement of pollution, a "rational" system of production. I hope this is a false impression, because it is exactly the insane rationality of technology, based on humanity's desire for power, which has despoiled our world and enslaved mankind to a way of thinking which is alien to our animal nature.

Of course, Schmookler is right when he says anarchy can't guarantee freedom and justice. Nothing can. But *any* government guarantees we will *not* have freedom and justice, because it is based on the destruction of the wilderness which is our home. Schmookler's, insistence on the essential benevolence of US polity is naive. What does "freedom" mean within the context of a society where inconceivable amounts of power (in the form of capital) are concentrated in a few institutions and corporations. It means, to borrow Samuel Johnson's phrase, we are "free" to work for these institutions in one form or another or starve, to have our lives determined by their projects, which generally involve the devastation of ecosystems. In a technological culture, the terms "freedom" and "justice" have been corrupted to propagate a particular set of power relations. It is surprising Schmookler is so taken in by the pretense of liberty industrial society promotes.

One could write a book about the way technological culture uses "freedom" to enslave its members (Marcuse already has). It is not useful to vindicate our form of power relations, as Schmookler does, on the grounds that life is better in the US than in the USSR or some other totalitarian state. This is like condoning slavery by showing that slavery in Iron Age Scandinavia was better than slavery in Biblical Egypt. The choice is odious and must be rejected. Anarchy offers the *possibility* of freedom, nothing more. We have the responsibility to seize that possibility because it is the only course consistent with nature and human nature.

Schmookler is also right when he calls our solution utopian. But what does utopian mean within, the context of a technological society? It means that anarchists' thinking is truly critical that it opposes technological culture m its totality, not just its particulars. It means that we have broken out of the universe of discourse it has established to propagate itself and its mad assault upon Earth.

Can Schmookler truly say this of his

own thinking? And if he cannot, in what way does his cure differ from the disease?

Christoph, scholar of deep ecology and Norse literature, plans to compile occasional philosophical deep ecology supplements, entitled Nerthus, *for future issues of* EF!.

7. Schmookler Replies to Anarchist's Replies to Schmookler's Reply to the Anarchists by Andrew Bard Schmookler

As fun as this is, we just can't keep meeting like this. But Christoph Manes has taken our discussion into new terrain, and I can't resist trekking there with him briefly.

Manes leaves behind the war and peace issue and heads for the wilderness. The war and peace issue was at the heart of my essentially Hobbsean critique of anarchy — anarchy seen as inevitably degenerating into Hobbes' "war of all against all"—but Manes now says he is willing to concede me that point momentarily, to focus on what is evidently his chief concern: preservation of wilderness.

Manes now addresses the question: how should human affairs be organized in order to protect the environment? He proceeds to argue that centralization of power is at the heart of the environmental problem, and that anarchy is the only solution.

I share Manes' passion to find a way to change the human system so that the destruction of nature will stop. Many years ago, I had fantasies of what would happen on this planet if all humans suddenly disappeared. If our species was wiped out in some manner that left all else intact, Earth would immediately begin to heal itself. Rivers would grow clear. Overgrazed grasslands would recover their lushness. The primeval forest would break up the concrete. Once again, Earth would be whole. And, without *Homo* so-called *sapiens,* Earth would be safe — at least until, millions of years hence, other creatures (maybe descendents of today's Raccoons) became cultural animals and crossed the fateful threshold into some kind of civilization.

So, I share Manes' concerns about the disease; but we differ on the subject of possible cures. Manes wants power to devolve: we must dismantle the power structures of our civilization and return to wilderness. I want our structures to evolve further: only by creating a better order, more imitative of the intricate order of nature, can we create a benign and viable civilization.

Let me underscore again the point that the further evolution of civilization I advocate is NOT the "all-powerful" world government Robert Goodrich and others have attributed to me in this exchange. My solution to the Hobbsean war of all against all is not the one proposed by Hobbes: that we surrender all our liberties to enthrone an absolute ruler to protect us from one another. Rather, I am more of Lockean: let's give up only those liberties we must in order to prevent the reign of destruction, and let's create all possible safeguards to protect ourselves from our "protectors."

Whether or not it is possible to *move forward* into a new kind of civilization, we should consider whether it is possible to *return* to the Garden of Eden — to a stateless and environmentally harmonious way of life — as Manes proposes. The problem with Manes' vision of a viable future is that it is based on a past that never was. Like Ronald Reagan's nostalgia for the good old days when everyone was white, self-reliant, and kind to their neighbors (like an ad for Country-time Lemonade), Manes' politics seem premised on illusions about how destructive power has been wielded in the past. Though I admit the comparison is not nice, it is not altogether invidious: both Manes and Reagan want to get government off our backs, as if government were just a disease and not also a cure to other ills that run rampant in its absence.

Manes says that it is the "power relations" of a "centralized state" that make possible the despoiling of nature. Pre-Columbian Indians and Germanic tribesmen, he says, "may have been anxious about revenge killing, marauding enemies, and any number of human problems, but not about their world being poisoned." Why? Because, he answers, there was "no central power to make possible the wholesale destruction of the environment."

I have spent my adult life studying the course of social evolution, and the record does not support Manes' portrait of a pre-state Eden. In our previous exchange, I questioned the historical validity of another of Manes' dichotomies. There, Manes declared a chasm of difference between the violence committed by centralized entities and that by less centralized groups like the Vikings. Manes' eagerness to find the source of all evil in the centralization of power now leads him into a similar distortion with respect to the evil of human despoliation of nature.

It is, of course, true that the Germanic tribes "didn't have to regulate dumping and auto emissions." But it is not true that the human destruction of the environment has historically been — or is now — dependent upon or the consequence of centralized polities.

Arguably the worse ecological damage our species has done to this planet has been through overgrazing. In areas like the Middle East, this process has been ongoing for millennia: herds of domesticated animals, laying bare the topsoil by their over-concentrated and over-protected consumption of plants, have spread desert across mountains and valleys that once were verdant. (The process was slow enough in terms of a human lifetime that no one saw reason to "worry" while contributing to this environmental catastrophe.) Far from being the effect of centralized states, this form of environmental degradation has been the specialty of pastoral peoples who — because of the same qualities of terrain that make herding animals the most suitable means of livelihood — have been the most autonomous from the domination by large power systems.

Another major form of degradation of the biosphere has been deforestation. Those pre-state Germanic tribes of whom Manes seems so appreciative were great practitioners of this art. The stripping of Europe's virgin forests to make room for the simpler systems of human agriculture went on for millennia under the aegis of various Aryan

and other peoples before, with the rise of Rome, a Julius Caesar ever ventured forth to subdue the Gauls or Visigoths.

The evidence that refutes Manes' linkage between environmental destruction and powerful central authorities remains visible today. I had the mixed fortune of living for years in beautiful Prescott, Arizona, an area where human carelessness with nature is all too evident. My article on Prescott's Dells that appeared in these pages a few months ago spoke of the libertarian belief of the people in the region in the absolute rights of private property: it was as individuals that the miners and ranchers began the process of despoliation a century ago, and it is because of resistance to the notion that political power should be used to regulate the pursuit of private ends that the process proceeds relatively unchecked. It is not state power, but the ingrained individualist resistance to state power that facilitates the degradation of Prescott's natural beauty.

Only through the exercise of state power can environmental destruction reliably be stopped. When US Steel fights the EPA over government regulations compelling the company to reduce emissions, is it state power that is the environmental villain?

I'm sure that Manes would be uncomfortable with the people I'm lumping into his side of the argument. His anarchist vision is certainly not intended to make the world safer for the US Steels of the world. But our argument is not directly about technology but about political structures or the lack of them. The problem the anarchist must confront is: *How will you stop those who would use technology to serve their own ends at the costs of destroying nature?*

This is analogous to our previous exchange about violence and injustice. There the issue was not the greedy man who destroys land to mine gold, but the warlord who tramples others to increase his power. The anarchists are not trying to leave the world prey to either US Steel or Ghenghis Kahn. But without state power arrayed against them, what will stop the unfettered expansion of their power at the expense of the well-being of both humans and the biosphere?

Some anarchist analysis may suggest that the lusts for power and wealth that drive the despoilers of the world arise because of our "fallen" condition in a world of centralized politics. It might be presumed that in a world ordered by anarchist principles, these lusts would disappear and there would therefore be no need to erect barriers to contain their free expression. But, with respect to the gangster or the industrial robber baron, such analysis would be unconvincing.

Again, the heart of the present disputation is not, as one might infer from Manes' latest letter, about technology per se but about the question of anarchy against an empowered central government. Manes has brought in technology on the premise that its destructiveness is a function of the emergence of centralized Powers. He says we must go back to decentralization to save nature; I say we must go forward, to develop more fully the political order that is required to protect humanity and nature from destructive human action.

Look at the Third World for another demonstration that it is not devolution but further evolution that we need.

Many environmentalists now say that it is in the nations of the Third World, more than in the more developed industrial nations, that the biosphere is in greatest jeopardy. Why is this? Certainly, poverty and the population explosion are part of it: desperate people, like those denuding the last vestiges of vegetation in the Sahel to provide their meager fuel supplies, do what they must or they perish. But another crucial element is the undeveloped nature of their political systems. The state is often still rudimentary, and such politcal power as there is remains corrupt and unaccountable — as power tends, to be in newly emergent systems — and often is simply an extension of private interests. Thus, greedy entrepreneurs face no obstacles to stripping tropical forests to make luxury furniture. And Corporations that have been compelled to reduce certain practices in the more developed polities of the North (e.g. the use of hazardous chemicals in the work? place) can use them with impunity in the Third World.

We cannot go back. Our species has discovered the means to exercise power — over each other and over nature — and this power can be controlled only by checks against it, that is, by other power. The problem is not that all humans are devils, it is that not all humans'? are saints — whatever the nature of 'their political order or disorder. Some will pursue power-and–possessing it, will abuse it. The way power operates in a fragmented system, unless it is checked enables those with the advantage of power to dictate the course of the evolution of human systems.

Manes challenges me, saying that my position can have "intellectual integrity" only if I confront the problem of technology. Unlike my position, he says, that of the anarchists is truly *critical* because it "opposes technological culture in its totality." In turn, I challenge the anarchists, saying that their prescription for our ills can be truly therapeutic only if they meet the challenge of containing the contaminant of power. The anarchists' arguments still have not dealt with *The Parable of the Tribes.*

The "condition of our freedom," Manes says, is "being in a state of nature." If he's right, we're in trouble. We've already been in the state of nature, and the rest, to make literal use of a figure of speech, is history. If we could go back, we'd just recapitulate the ugly course we've already taken.

Manes' option is a fond illusion. There is no way to put the djinni of our power back into the bottle. But there is the possibility that we can learn to tame that djinni. This way entails moving forward toward a more whole order, a Lockean land of order that keeps as much power dispersed in the parts as is consistent with preventing injustice and that hedges whatever power must be invested in the center with checks and balances.

Clearly, Manes will have nothing of this "taming" of the djinni. To him, this djinni is the Evil One, and those who try to learn to live with the devil seal a damned fate for themselves. Manes decries efforts to use the weight of law to bend the use of technology into a viable form. "One could easily get the impression," he writes, that I "would be satisfied with a 'rational' exploitation of resources, a 'rational' abatement, of pollution ..."

Indeed I would. *What* is rational for *our species is* to conduct *ourselves in a way that can perpetuate the viability of the Earth's living system, on which our survival also depends.* Since the beginnings of civilization, and acceleratedly as human powers have grown, our species has wielded its technology in a way that undermines the foundations of the biosphere? But no creator, as Gregory Bateson says, can win against its environment for long. The pursuit of "victories" of this sort is not rational.

Ten thousand years of civilization acting like a cancer in the biosphere does not mean that no other kind of civilization is possible. To understand how we might tame our hitherto destructive powers, we have to see this human experiment in a larger evolutionary perspective.

To us as mortal creatures, 10,000 years seems like a long time, but in the perspective of the history of life, it is but an instant. The evolutionary process that knit such harmony in the biosphere is laboring also through us to bring this sudden, new offshoot called civilization into harmony with the whole. And one of the channels through which it is working is that same rational faculty by which we came to possess these dangerous powers: the capacity to understand how the world works, and to adjust our actions in it accordingly in order to protect our survival. Increasingly, reasonable people are becoming aware that a truly rational strategy for species surviving must take into account far more than our own immediate needs.

Epochal changes are occurring: slow from the perspective of our day-to-day experience, but rapid in historical terms. The very fact that, unlike the Germanic deforesters, we do worry about the future of our planet is itself one of the hopeful new signs. Even in the course of my own lifetime, the forces of wholeness have made progress in restraining our abuse of nature. In the most developed countries, the means of restraint (virtually nil not long ago) have grown more rapidly than — and thus have gained upon — the momentum of destruction. This is not to say that the destructive process has yet been arrested, let alone reversed. But I would wager that within the lifetime of a baby born today the degradation of the environment in North America (above the Rio Grande) and perhaps in Europe will be brought to a halt.

"Technological culture" — and that's what "civilization" is does not have to be the strip-mining, smoke-belching sort. Already, the movement of technology — with silicon Chips and electromagnetic communications — suggests that technological development need not be synonymous with ever-increasing intrusion upon nature. I do not presume to know what the technology of a viable civilization would look like, but we need not assume that only in a "state of nature" can human beings live in harmony with nature. Manes denigrates my call tor some sort bf global order as requiring technology (roads, communication, etc.) and thus mandating the continuation of civilization's destructiveness. But the global coordination and regulation that is required to contain the problem of power does not condemn us to perpetuating the blight upon the Earth that our civilization has historically been.

Bringing this viable civilization into being is not impossible, but its birth pangs may be severe. We are in an , evolutionary crisis. Negotiating it successfully will take all the courage and intelligence and caring we can muster.

My anarchist interlocutors and I share fundamental values pertinent to this crisis. Goodrich is right that we are essentially allies. (I've not dealt with Goodrich's critique of me because I'd simply have repeated what I wrote here in the previous exchange.)

Our differences can be important too. The reshaping of our power systems is the only means to save Earth. We meet in the pages of *Earth First!* because we are committed to protecting those sacred "interests" that our systems so shamefully neglect. It would be a shame if people who share those values, led astray by the anarchists' wholesale rejection of our systems, contented themselves with outrage at the abuse of powers and scorned to enter the arena of power where our destiny will be decided.

We cannot afford for some of the most passionate lovers of Earth to sit out what is, for humankind, the only game in town.

Debate in the Earth First! Journal about Misanthropy

Why I Am a Misanthrope (1990)

Author: Christopher Manes
Date: 21 December 1990
Source: Davis, John, et al., eds., Earth First! Journal 11, no. 2 (21 December 1990), page 29. <environmentandsociety.org/node/6949>

If there has been one, wearisome leitmotif among the peevish critics of Earth First! over the past decade, it is the reproach that radical environmentalism is a misanthropic, antihuman, insensitive enterprise. Industry apologists lugubriously deplore how EF! wilderness proposals will cost people jobs and impede the glorious march of economic progress. A perplexed Murray Bookchin, philosoph and unintelligible grouch, frets over the fact that eco-radicals worry about "lower life forms" when the obvious apex of evolution, Murray Bookchin, has the right and duty to renovate nature according to his liking. In a recent article in *Outside,* Alston Chase, nothing if not consistent, demonstrated once again his well-honed ignorance of the environmental movement by claiming Earth Firsti's biocentrism has alienated activists. And now, alas, even some among the ranks of Earth First! are unhappy with radical environmentalism's misanthropic image and want to revamp it.

I for one am proud to be a misanthrope. Asked by friends why, I generally retort, in Thoreauvian fashion, "why aren't you one?" Given humanity's 10,000 year record of massacres, wars, ecocide, extinctions, holocausts, lethal dogmas, race hatred, casual slaughters, venality, corruption and coercion, it seems to me the burden of proof is on those who see something redeeming about this newfangled hominid. Nevertheless, in these latter days of ecological crisis, misanthropy has become an intellectual issue worthy of discussion. Therefore, I want to give my reasons for being a misanthrope.

First, I assume that the millennia-old environmental crisis is driven by the dubious ethics and ideologies of societies like ours, that phantasmagoria of misbegotten beliefs euphemistically called civilization, which justifies and promotes the destruction of nature. In the industrial age, foremost among these creeds is humanism. It is the poison chalice at our society's lips. The institutions that have seized control of our ecology

tell us that their policies against wild nature are makingabetter world forhumans. This is a lie, of course; but easily flattered and eagerly self-interested, most people around the world accept the deceit as the highest endorsement.

Warwick Fox has stated that Deep Ecology has the "negative tack" of exposing the unfounded, anthropocentric claims that rationalize humanity's abuse of the natural world. This is an important, indeed central task of any attempt to liberate nature from human dominance. For me, misanthropy serves that purpose. By attacking human arrogance, by mocking the giddy declarations of humanists about the "wondrous mind of Man," by pointing out the scientific fact that *Homo sapiens* is less Important to the biosphere than mycorrhyzal fungus, misanthropy undertakes, Coyotelike, to bring back some balance and ecological humility to our self-infatuated species. Humility often requires a little flagellation, the times require humility, and such is the effect of misanthropy.

I'm aware, of course, that our society doesn't represent all humanity. But the fact is most of the world now mimics our dissolute ways. Only truly primal cultures like the Mbuti and Penan have any claim to ecological wisdom, and these are usually frowned upon by humanists as backward, brutish and bereft of the light of social progress. By necessity I speak to my woeful fellow citizens, and in that context, misanthropy is common sense.

Second, misanthropy strikes a chord. People are tired of hearing about humankind's marvelous achievements and of what Thoreau calls "man-worship." I've talked to hundreds of people over the last year and audiences light up when I point out that there isn't one scrap of evidence that *Homo sapiens* is superior or special or even more interesting than, say, lichen. Some people, mired in ancient Insecurities, don't like being likened to lichen, but most, espe- ' daily the young, find the idea invigorating. It has the added advantage of being true.

Third, seeking real solutions to the environmental crisis necessitates challenging dogmas near and dear to the hearts of humanists, namely economic and population growth. A radical environmental movement that doesn't confront these issues belies its name. Someone has to declare the obvious need to *decrease* human population, demedicalize society, remove cultural artifacts such as dams, expand wilderness, protect and reintroduce species even at the cost of jobs.

Predictably, it hasn't been humanists.

Although none of us has the solution to the biological meltdown our planet is undergoing, Earth Firsti's role has always been to expand the universe of thinkable thoughts, to introduce an environmental discourse beyond Innocuous clichés about recycling, energy conservation, and appropriate technology. To do so one runs the risk of saying something stupid, of offending people, even nice people who probably have enough problems as it is. It opens one up to charges of hypocrisy by ideologues, as if the universe were really in terested in my moral status. But that's a risk that misanthropes must take if our culture is ever to be transfigured into some less lethal form. History

suggests It probably won't, but thank humanists for that, not misanthropes, not us happy, happy few.

Finally, I see misanthropy in the grand tradition of Heraclitus, Diogenes, Swift, Thoreau, and Abbey — thinkers whose disdain for human narcissism intimated a richer, nobler, humbler wayofllfe. Paradoxically, when human concerns are put first, humans suffer In the end through ecological decline. In contrast, by putting the Earth first, by emphasizing the nonhuman, we have the prospect of creating a society with the optimum amount of real freedom and dignity possible for *Homo sapiens* In this contingent world of ours, this world of limitations.

Misanthropy is a recognition that there are limits to human existence — that humans bumble and cheat, are self-deluded mammals, power hungry and erring by inclination, and therefore should not presume to disturb the fearful beauty of this planet. There are more remarkable things in heaven and Earth than are dreamt of in humanist philosophy.

I imagine the first real philosopher lived in Sumeria, that foolhardy empire that began the doomed parade of civilization. Looking out of his stuffy, urban flat, he saw serfs working in the fields, slaves building extravagant monuments to some boorish king, bronze-helmeted warriors selling plunder In the crowded streets to greedy merchants, shrewd priests in white robes eyeing the wives of the faithful while proclaiming the splendors of Ur. What utter nonsense, he must have said, shaking his head. He went out and told people to go back to their nomadic way of life. He was probably laughed at or hanged, and Sumeria slowly slipped into the desert sands.

That man, I assure you, was misanthrope.

Christopher Manes has been writing provocative essays for the Journal almost since its beginning but he is best known now for his highly acclaimed book Green Rage.

Why I Am Not A Misanthrope (1991)

Author: Judi Bari
Date: January 9, 1991
Source: <https://archive.org/details/timberwars00bari>

In the last EF! *Journal,* Chris Manes responds to the question "Why are you a misanthrope?" by saying, "Why aren't you one?" After all, humans have a 10,000-year history of massacres, wars, ecocide, holocaust, etc., so the burden of proof is on us non-misanthropes.

I would like to respond to Manes' challenge, and my answer has nothing to do with humanism, anthropocentrism, or the belief that humans are a "higher" life form. Unlike Murray Bookchin, I reject that claim from the git-go. I believe in biocentrism,

and think that all life forms are equal. I agree that human population is totally out of control. And I am as appalled as any misanthrope at the havoc that humans have wreaked on the natural world.

But I disagree with Manes' conclusion that the problem is "humankind." You cannot blame the destruction of the Earth on, for example, the Quiche tribes of Guatemala or the Penan of Borneo. These people have lived in harmony with the Earth for 10,000 years. The only way you could identify the Earth's destroyers as "humankind." would be to exempt such people from the category of "human." Otherwise you would have to admit that it is not humans-as-a-species, but the way certain humans live, that is destroying the Earth.

Manes briefly acknowledges that these ecologically sound human cultures exist, but he dismisses them as trivial because "the fact is most of the world now mimics our dissolute ways." This statement completely ignores the manner in which "most of the world" was forced to abandon their indigenous cultures or be destroyed. You cannot equate the slave and the slave-master. Only after massacres, torture, ecocide and other unspeakable brutality did the peoples of the world acquiesce to the conquering hordes with the culture of greed and destruction.

Technocratic man, with his linear view of the world, tends to see tribal societies as earlier, less evolved forms of his own society, rather than as alternative, simultaneously existing methods of living on the Earth. The presumption is that, given time, these cultures would somehow be corrupted like ours. But there is no evidence whatsoever that these ancient civilizations would have changed without our violent intervention. So it is not humans, but industrial-technocratic societies, that are destroying the Earth.

In the same manner that misanthropy blames, all humans for crimes of the industrial/technocratic society, so does it blame all humans for the crimes of men. The list of atrocities for which Manes condemns the human race—massacres, wars, ecocide, holocaust—are not the works of women. Of course a few women can be found and paraded out who participate in the male power structure. But by and large, throughout history, wars and atrocities have been the territory of men, in the interest of men, and against the interests of women. By categorizing as "human" traits that are actually male, misanthropes are being androcentric (male-centered) instead of biocentric (life-centered) as they claim to be.

So misanthropy is not a form of humility, as Chris Manes says. It is a form of arrogance. By blaming the entire human species for the crimes of technocratic men, Manes conveniently avoids any real analysis of who is responsible for the death of the planet. Not surprisingly, Manes himself is a member of the group that most benefits from our consumptive society—privileged white urban men.

If the purpose of philosophy is just to play mind games, then misanthropy can be seen as provocative or enticing. But if the purpose of philosophy is to help us analyze the crisis we are in so that we can try to find solutions, misanthropy fails. It preserves the status quo by refusing to distinguish between oppressor and oppressed. It goes against one of the basic instincts of all life forms, preservation of the species. And,

without contributing anything of value to an analysis of the problem, it alienates us from the people we need to work with to bring about change—people whose ideas are grounded in reality and experience, not in college textbooks.

Tales Of A Recovering Misanthrope (1999)

Author: Anne Petermann
Date: June-July 1999
Source: Earth First! Journal Litha, June-July 1999, Pages 3 & 32. Appendix from Earth First! Journal Lughnasadh, August-September 1999, Page 21. <archive.org/details/earth_first_1999>

Lately, charges of racism have been leveled at the environmental movement. Rather than building bridges between our movement and the movements of people of color, walls such as cultural insensitivity and white supremacy are being constructed. Meanwhile, the destruction of the Earth accelerates, and worldwide, people of color continue to be exploited and killed outright in what Zapatista Subcommandante Marcos has termed the "Fourth World War." This war is the result of globalizing capitalism which frees corporations from governmental restrictions such as environmental and human rights laws. It is a worldwide environmental, cultural and racial holocaust being promoted by the US government for the benefit of the corporate elite.

Corporations, in order to compete in a global capitalist world, conduct environmentally destructive activities on the lands of the poorest and most politically marginalized groups. This means that the brunt of pollution and environmental degradation occurs in towns or neighborhoods comprised of the poor or on the homelands of traditional peoples. For this reason, alliances between the environmental movement and movements of the poor and dispossessed should be simple and natural.

To a large degree, I believe, cultural insensitivity stems from privilege. The environmental movement is predominately made up of privileged people. This is what allows them the luxury of being involved in the protection of ecological systems and not worried about daily survival. It can be threatening to acknowledge one's privilege if one is an environmentalist because if that privilege is part of the system destroying the planet, it must be given up. It is more comfortable to point the finger elsewhere and adopt a misanthropic worldview— blaming all mankind. If all mankind is to blame, then we need not address issues of privilege, class or race.

When I was a teenager, I was deeply misanthropic. I loved nature and spent as much time as possible out of doors. But at night, I would look out the window at the Burger King across the street, at the gas stations on all sides, at the noisy, stinking stream of traffic, and I would loathe humanity, dreaming of its demise. When I found Earth First!, the campfire Chants of "Billions are living that should be dead" or "fuck

the human race" appealed to me. Yes, I thought, humans are a cancer on the Earth. But I was wrong.

Misanthropy is a manifestation of the nature/ human split. This view has brought our society to the brink of extinction by assuming that we can run roughshod upon the Earth without impacting ourselves because we are somehow separate. Misanthropic Earth-centered activism is a total contradiction. One cannot be earth-centered and yet hate one's own species. This dualism dooms the environmental movement to failure. We must break through the brainwashing to see the world as it truly is—deeply complex and beautiful, interwoven and interdependent—and to see our place in it.

Judi Bari, in her article, "Why I am not a Misanthrope," from *Timber Wars,* explains, "Technocratic man, with his linear view of the world, tends to see tribal societies as earlier, less evolved forms of his own society, rather than as alternative, simultaneously existing methods of living bn the Earth. The presumption is that, given time, these cultures would somehow be corrupted like ours. But there is no evidence whatever that these ancient civilizations would have changed without our violent intervention."

Humanity is not the problem. The privileged patriarchal ruling elite with their unsustainable systems of accumulation and domination perpetuated through insidious psychological manipulations and outright blunt force, are the problem. The rest of us are resources for them to exploit in the same way that they exploit the forests and the oceans. Certainly, some blame lies with the hoards practicing active apathy, but we cannot possibly blame traditional native peoples, nor the starving dispossessed, for the destruction of the Earth.

So I am enraged when I hear the intolerant assertions that come from the middle or upper middle class white activists who demand that we restrict the borders to refugees from the South. They seem unconcerned about developing an analysis of why or what the people are fleeing and uninterested in addressing issues of economic imperialism or US overconsumption. (US citizens consume 70 times the resources of the average "Third World" citizen, with most of these resources having been stolen from the "Third World ..") In addition, these activists are apparently oblivious to the fact that, as descendants of immigrants, closing an artificial border to a predominately native population to our South is hypocritical.

And there are those, such as Paul Watson, who defend their right to align themselves with "political maverick" racists, with no regard for the fact that such an alliance against Native Americans would

likely lead to a backlash, endangering not only that issue but the movement as a whole. It is simpler to blame native people for participating in a corporate venture without looking into the history of colonialist oppression and cultural destruction that left them with few economic alternatives.

Of course, not all members of indigenous society are exempt from the destructive behaviors white culture has injected. When a culture is engulfed in colonialist oppression for generations, some of the traits of the oppressor are bound to be assimilated in that culture. The misanthropy and privilege (skin color and class) of our movement

blocks people of color from trusting us. Can traditional peoples whose cultural identity has been a holistic perspective of oneness with the Earth become involved with a movement which views humans as a cancer? Can people whose history has been one of racial oppression reach out to one which is so glaringly privileged and white?

Making these alliances requires we reach out first to build trust. It means working for cultural understanding and true solidarity. In Vermont, we started by supporting the struggles of the Abenaki in order to make an alliance. We worked hard to support their fight against the state for their ancestral right to fish. The result: We have Abenaki representation on our working group, Abenaki presence at most of our protests, and we have been adopted by the tribe, which in turn has facilitated alliances with other native nations.

As ecologists we know that everything in the natural world is connected. We also know that the more diverse an ecosystem is, the better it is able to withstand adverse conditions. Why is it so difficult to understand. that these lessons also apply to our movement? If we dig deeply to find the true roots of various oppressions, we find that they all lead to the same source: the corporate, capitalist, patriarchal elite who rule our society. For this reason, our movements must unite. When we are able to stop the perpetual inane bickering and honor our strength as a diversely unified whole, we will become a force to be reckoned with.

Martin Luther King was assassinated when he moved outside of the traditional civil rights movement to organize the working class and beyond that to speaking out against the Vietnam War. Judi Bari was bombed when she successfully unified mill workers and Earth First!ers. The Palmer Raids and FBI were used to destroy the massive movement of anarchists, wobblies and workers in the US that joined forces in the early 1900s. These links terrify the ruling elite.

Our efforts in Vermont to link ecological and social issues paid off when Champion and Monsanto teamed up to spray toxic herbicides on Vermont's forests. Our social justice allies stood with us to demand a ban on these toxic applications. The fury was so deep that the legislature had to side with the people. The spraying was stopped.

Our solidarity with activists from the South fighting globalization to save their homelands, coupled with a deeper economic analysis of what "First World" countries are doing to "Third World" countries through globalized capitalism and economic pressure, such as World Bank Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), has clearly illustrated the link between destruction of the Earth and genocide against native peoples. To protect the Earth, we must support the struggles of the Earth's indigenous and peoples of color. We must fight here in the "Belly of the Beast" to end the Fourth World War.

As the corporations of the world increasingly operate without borders and across issues, the movement must respond in kind. The compartmentalization of our organizations facilitates the rampant planetary destruction by keeping us marginalized and ineffective. The Vietnam War was ended when people from all walks used every tool available to stop the war machine. From soldiers fragging officers to militants fighting

in the streets to student sit-ins to strategic anti-war bombings, the machine had to stop when it could neither predict the next move of the populace nor keep it divided.

So when Paul Watson makes alliances with Jack Metcalfe, known throughout Native American circles as a hard-core Indian-hater, on an issue involving Native American sovereignty; when Dave Foreman announces that AIDS and famines will help reduce overpopulation among people of color in the "Third World"; when Farley Mowat and Brock Evans (and Dave Foreman and Paul Watson) endorse an initiative that would restrict immigration by the Fourth World War refugees to our South, they enable the further destruction of our planet by reinforcing the walls between the privileged white environmental movement and the world's oppressed peoples.

The movements of the "Third World" are extremely powerful. People in the South clearly understand the interconnection of issues. When a Mayday march is called for in Mexico City, hundreds of thousands participate. The Zapatista's struggle for land, justice and food as well as for protection of the Lacandon rainforest. Instead of alienating people of color, the privileged white US environmental movement needs to learn from other movements.

Activists wishing to organize internationally based on these revolutionary ecological principles are invited to contact Anne Petermann POB 57, Burlington, VT 05402; nfnena@sover.net.

In Defense of Misanthropy (1999)

Author: Ohm Speckled Moonbeam and Phil Werrei

"Tales of a Recovering Misanthrope" by Anne Petermann in the June/July *EF! Journal* serves as a very illustrative example of how guilt-ridden, upper class enviros patronize and romanticize dispossessed peoples in general, and the indigenous of the world and working class in particular, to the detriment of all parties concerned.

The upper class bastions of our movement love nothing more than glorifying the "brown" peoples of the world, who, as every graduate of prestigious east coast universities knows, all live(d) in absolute harmony with nature, talking to animals and dancing around in egalitarian anarchic bliss. Likewise, they love nothing more than tossing around their antiquated Marxist notions of a revolutionary working class that hasn't existed on this continent for more than 60 years. At the same time, our fearless leaders take the silver spoon out of their mouths and with unprecedented historical audacity, try and point the blame for the global situation on all of Northern society, including the ever so shit upon working class they claim to care for so dearly.

Well guess what? Not all indigenous cultures feature(d) "a holistic perspective of oneness with the Earth" or each other. (The poster children of the woo-brained, the Maya,

practiced human sacrifice, slavery and genocide up through Spanish colonization and levied incredible destruction on the land around them. In my bioregion, the Klamaths had a knack for slaughtering surrounding tribes, enslaving their women and burning their land.) Furthermore, to suggest that the culpability for global economic pillage rests equally on the shoulders of all Northern society is a tremendous crime against truth and is remarkably indicative of the lack of class analysis in our movement.

A blatant example of how far removed upper class tree buggers are from the realities of the working class in this nation, much less any other, is seen when Petermann states, "So I am enraged when I hear the intolerant assertions that come from the middle or upper middle class activists who demand that we restrict the borders to refugees from the south." Too bad none of the guys down at the mill share her sentiments. Nor the guys on the forestry crews I've worked on. Nor the carpenters, janitors, landscapers, factory workers or any other working class people who have watched their wages drop by more than 50 percent and see a bleaker future on the horizon thanks to additional players in the already tight competition for a finite numbers of jobs. And it sure ain't the bosses of big business who are cussing "them wetback spies" and calling for the borders to be locked down. In fact, the corporations can't wait for hundreds of thousands of desperate (read: easily exploitable) workers to come into northern workplaces on the NAFTA wave. They will work for a third the money in half the conditions and help destroy the already atrophied remains of organized labor in the North. Of course, it is terribly intolerant of the working class not to be benevolent, wanting to give what little economic security we and our families have to *nuestro amigos del Sur.* The upper class people in our midst can feel righteous indignation in their tolerance about uninterrupted immigration as they sacrifice nothing in the deal. Yeah, I know, we are all hypocrites. Our relatives immigrated here (more in chains than the yuppies would like to admit) and we are unwilling to voluntarily switch positions with the thousands of refugees coming up from the economic imperialism of the South. But what the hell else can we do?

I've lived in Mexico, Chiapas, Nicaragua and El Salvador. I understand the plight of the Third World first hand. I lived, worked and slept with the very peoples the upper class heroes claim to represent, and I can honestly say that the working class in the United States is just as fucked by the bowel movements of transnational capital as any *campesinos* in the south. Rather than blaming intangible "privileged patriarchal ruling elites" while implicitly distributing the guilt for third world oppression universally over northern society and granting a monopoly of suffering to romanticized cultures far away, perhaps we had better examine the effects of the neoliberal model on our own country, our own people and our own communities.

The cogs of global capital are tearing us apart. From the forests of southern Oregon to the jungles of Chiapas, from Flint and Youngstown, to the *Maquilas* of Sonora and Chihuahua, the forces are the same. And the victims are the same. The poor. Unlike the guilt mongering upper crust would like us to believe, the talons of neoliberalism are not actively racist. They do not deliberately seek out brown, red or yellow people

to destroy out of some eugenic hatred for divergent gene pools. The forces of global capital most painfully hit the areas that are the poorest and most easily exploitable, be it *Indios* in Chiapas, hillbillies in Appalachia or Southern Oregon, factory workers in Taiwan or peasants in sub-Saharan Africa.

These victims are not so much the victims of what race they were born into, but what class. Not all Mexicans are oppressed Indians trying desperately to flee to the North. Not all Indonesians, Nigerians or Tibetans are wretched victims of genocide. It is high time for our exceedingly well educated movement to stop trying to melt complex issues of gray into tidy black and white answers that appease our own guilty white psyches. Yes, in a number of ways, race and culture are class, but to strictly focus on matters of race while ignoring the overwhelming dominance of class issues in deciding the fate of the world is to levy a discredit to us, to our suffering "comrades" and to the truth.

Rather than romanticizing the "dispossessed of the world" to the point of absurdity while simultaneously scapegoating the oppressed in one's own country, we need to see and act upon the connections we share and not allow the feel-good rhetoric of guilt ridden conciliation to drive more substantial wedges between us.

"Tales of a Recovering Misanthrope" is right about the demographics of Earth First!, but has the reasons wrong. Earth First! is indeed a movement primarily composed of upper middle class and higher white folks who are so removed from the trenches in the war for survival that they can care for trees and fuzzy bunnies. However, neither this fact, nor the fact that the movement as a whole has not reached out to minority groups, justifies the implicit accusation that the movement is racist. Rather, Earth First! has traditionally been concerned with defending the last remaining wild places of our nation, which as a matter of fact, not of choice, tend to be located in extremely rural areas. So why not extend ourselves into more environmental justice issues in cities to help colorize our movement? Because we logistically can't. We can scarcely win the issues we already work on. Not to mention, for many of us concerned with keeping ecosystems and wild areas intact, trying to preserve already annihilated urban ecosystems is fighting something of a lost cause. If this were a perfect world, it would be wonderful if Earth First! had the numbers and resources to launch successful campaigns in both rural and urban areas and could ethically raise the rainbow flag of diversity over its movement. But it can't. We are up against the fucking wall desperately trying to preserve what little of our original planet is left. Every year we watch as our tactics grow increasingly less effective and our favorite ecosystems are hauled off by truck and ship. Are we supposed to back off and allow our beloved lands to be slashed and burned because we feel guilty for being too privileged and too white? Fuck that. I am damn glad that there are a few hundred upper class white kids that can go sit in redwoods for a year and lock down to trucks and cop cars and blockade logging roads.

We should look to other movements for knowledge and experience. We should do our best to align ourselves in solidarity with movements with similar enemies. We should not allow our habits and attitudes to alienate ourselves from other cultures

and movements. But neither should we allow ourselves to get caught up in the racist pleasure of exaggerating the merits of other cultures while simultaneously beating ourselves to death in a fit of masochistic slander and guilt-ridden accusations.

And leave my misanthropy out of it. I am a misanthrope not because I hate AIDS ridden Africans or the Salvadoran *campesino,* but because I see my species, myself and my family included, as one that has been permitted to expand far beyond its means for sustainable survival within an intact ecosystem. My misanthropy comes not from an enhanced version of the "man/nature" split as Anne and Judi Bari assume, but from the fact that I see the interconnectedness between my race and nature and unfortunately, the horrors that excessive humanity has unleashed on it. My misanthropy comes from a negation of the psychotic humanism that has so flooded our movement (since its transition from cowboy hats to dreadlocks) with woo bullshit elevating human beings to something more than animal, something more than part of the natural world.

I am a misanthrope because I believe that wolves and tree voles and *Darlingtonia* have as much right to life and liberty as any gun toting redneck, crystal-worshipping dervisher or angry Indian with a ski mask. I am a misanthrope because I hate the fact that my species invented strip mines, clearcuts, fellerbunchers, sitcoms and oil spills. I am a misanthrope because in varying degrees, all of humanity is to blame for the current state of the planet. I am a misanthrope because I hate what the upper class gods of economics have done to my Earth, because I watched three children starve to death in Nicaragua after their parents were duped into having more children than they could support by the infallible Pope. I am a misanthrope not because I hate humans individually, but because I hate the culmination of humanity's imperialism on the natural world. I hate seeing the depravity of underprivileged humans in cities the world over. I hate war. I hate genocide and ethnic cleansing. I hate toxic water and barren hillsides. I am a misanthrope because I love humans as much as coyotes, kitty cats and Pileated woodpeckers and see that the only way for all of the aforementioned to live sustainably is to allow for a drastic decline in the population of the species *Homo sapiens.* I am a misanthrope because I love the Earth and all its inhabitants. I am a misanthrope because I love.

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Debate in Fifth Estate about Deep Ecology

How Deep is Deep Ecology? (1987)

Subtitle: A Challenge to Radical Environmentalism
Author: George Bradford (David Watson)
Date: 1987
Source: Fifth Estate #327, Fall, 1987. <fifthestate.org/archive/327-fall-1987/how-deep-is-deep-ecology>

Introduction

For a number of years, the *Fifth Estate* has been writing about the crisis of Western civilization and its industrial/technological plague. At the same time we have been profoundly interested in primitivism and the cultures of earth-based peoples, realizing that their demise came with the subjugation of nature by the advances of the civilized world. The view that our planet faces a grave, man-made ecological threat is certainly not unique to us, and the last few years have seen the emergence of an international green or ecology phenomenon which demands an end to environmental abuse and seeks a reconciliation between humanity and nature.

The development of this movement was inevitable considering the severity of the crisis we face. It is only surprising that the movement is not stronger and more widespread, for it would seem that the threat to the earth would be the immediate concern of us all. While the green and ecology movements have no single definition, their most prominent and visible sector is the Green parties of Western Europe and their pale reflections in North America which have already become compromised within the electoral system. Here in North America, mainstream environmental groups often fight valiant but pitifully inadequate reform battles while others immerse themselves in the latest techno-fads of "computer networking" or "alternative technology."

However, there is a more radical and hopefully growing sector of the ecology perspective, one which the *Fifth Estate* adheres to and attempts to encourage. It is anti-industrial, placing culpability for the devastation and exploitation of the earth directly

at the door of capitalism's industrial system. It is also anti-state and anti-authoritarian, linking the questions of political power, organized state control and the denial of individual freedom to the self-destructive exploitation of the earth and its resources. It seeks social models or examples in primitive peoples in a desperate search for a reconciliation with nature and a renewal of authentic human community. There is also a strong feminist element involved, stemming from the realization that just as man and the patriarchy dominates and exploits the earth (our mother), so they treat women and others.

The following essay by George Bradford does not pretend to be a critique or analysis of the broad-based ecology or green movement though it does have implications for the movement as a whole. Instead, it focuses on specific elements within the current which defines itself as the deep ecology or radical environmental perspective. Deep ecology announces itself as anti-industrial and often as anti-civilization, challenging the moderate environmental and political groups which take the character of this society as a given. However, the inability of deep ecology to come to grips with the question of the capitalist political economy leaves it filled with problems, as well as uncertainties about its future direction.

Our decision to put forth these criticisms speaks both to our realization of the centrality of the ecological crisis for this era and to the fact that the question of the ultimate viability of the industrial capitalist system and its social relationships is being moved onto the agenda for public debate. Deep ecology's generalized inability or refusal to place the environmental crisis within its social, economic and political context not only threatens to produce dangerous currents within it as a philosophy or ideology, but also threatens any potential it may have to fully understand and combat the problems we all face.

After critically examining the philosophical and social foundations of deep ecology as expressed by its exponents, the essay then moves on to deeply disturbing problems with the Earth First! organization which publishes what it describes as "the radical environmental journal." We are focusing on Earth First! not only because of its prominence in carrying out numerous admirable direct action defenses of the wilderness (particularly in the West and Southwest), but also because it is the main organization which acts out the social and environmental critiques contained within deep ecology thought. It is Earth First! which in many ways confirms for us the inadequacies Bradford perceives in its philosophical foundations.

Earth First! also looms large in our schema since it poses itself as a model for others beginning to take action in defense of the environment and has attracted many people within the anti-authoritarian movement with its commitment to militant confrontation and its ambiguous utilization of anarchist concepts. We had initially written favorably about Earth First! in this newspaper (see *Fifth Estate*, Summer 1986) and looked forward to collaborating with them; however, with time we became dismayed by comments appearing in their publication concerning the questions of over-population, AIDS, immigration, and patriotism. Further, a purposely fostered macho and "redneck"

image has created an organizational style that runs counter to the implied values of harmony with the earth.

The short excerpt from the newsletter *Alien-Nation* following the main essay suggests from what is reported that Earth First! has begun to function in classic political gang style with defensive and aggressive reactions to any perceived threat to its leadership core on organizational orthodoxy. In the latest issue of Earth First! newspaper, it has been announced that in their next edition they will answer their "leftist" critics. It is disheartening that they would characterize those who would challenge their perspectives as constituting a moribund and irrelevant left rather than people anguishing over the same problems as they.

The radical, anti-industrial wing of the ecology movement is in its infancy, and we feel it is a necessity that no body of thought, nor certainly any organization, be immune to searching criticism and rigorous critique. We expect and have received no less from our critics over the years, and for those who have said they fear we will be "throwing the baby out with the bathwater," let them be assured that our intent is to strengthen and extend the anti-industrial critique, not to weaken or diminish it. Finally, Earth First! should be aware that if anything typifies the tiny leftist political gangs that it slurs its critics as being, it is that very process of ideological orthodoxy and ossification, authoritarianism, cult-of-leaders, and insulation that appears to be occurring within Earth First! itself. By copywriting and colonizing the generalized turn away from industrialism and the desire for a reconciliation with nature as their own property, they are racketizing what we are all striving for and thus undermining our possibilities for attaining it.

Rather than circling the wagons and pulling their cowboy hats down tightly over their foreheads, we would prefer that those who espouse deep ecology and those within the Earth First! group consider this essay as a harsh but comradely criticism. We view industrialism and capitalism as our enemy, not deep ecology, and we hope its proponents can respond in a similar spirit. We have been heartened and have learned much from the examples of their resolute determination to stop the development of the wilderness. In return, we don't think it unreasonable that they might learn something from what we have to say as well.

We welcome unsolicited letter-length replies to our views. However, if you wish to reply at length, please check with us first.

—The *Fifth Estate* Staff

> Note: In the text of the essay, Earth First!, the organization, is referred to in regular type; when the publication *Earth First!* is mentioned, it is italicized.

Books and publications reviewed in this essay

Overshoot: The Ecological Basis of Revolutionary Change by William R. Catton, Jr., University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1980.

Deep Ecology: Living As If Nature Mattered by Bill Devall and George Sessions, Gibbs M. Smith, Inc./Peregrine Smith Books, Salt Lake City, 1985.

Deep Ecology, edited by Michael Tobias, Avant Books, San Diego, 1985.

Food First: Beyond the Myth of Scarcity, Revised and updated, by Frances Moore Lappe and Joseph Collins, Ballantine Books, New York, 1978; Institute for Food and Development Policy, 145 Ninth Street, San Francisco, CA 94103.

Inside the Third World by Paul Harrison, Penguin Books, New York, 1982

Earth First!, published eight times a year by the Earth First! movement, from P.O. Box 5871, Tucson, AZ 85703.

> "In every perception of nature there is actually present the whole of society."
>
> —Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*

> "The human race could go extinct, and I, for one, would not shed any tears."
>
> —Dave Foreman, leader of Earth First!, a "deep ecology" environmental organization

Ecology and the Necessity for Social Critique

The present ruination of the earth in the wake of widening industrial plagues is a situation which appears to have no meaningful or comparable precedent. Mass extinctions of species, industrial contamination, runaway development, war, starvation and megatechnic catastrophes have led to a sense of deep disquiet and mounting terror about the fate of the planet and all life. There is also a growing recognition that the environmental crisis is the crisis of a civilization destructive in its essence to nature and humanity.

"All thinking worthy of the name," writes Lewis Mumford in *The Myth of the Machine*, "must become ecological." Indeed, ecology, the word that sees nature as a household, has become a household word. Envisioning the world as an interlocking, organic whole, ecology attempts to transcend mechanistic, fragmentary and instrumental perspectives. But ecology as a scientific discipline is itself fragmentary; the notion of nature as a system can be as mechanistic and instrumental as previous scientific modes employed by industrial civilization, to which the contemporary convergence cybernetics, systems theory and biotechnology attests.

Ecology as science speculates, often with profound insight, about nature's movement and the impact of human activity on it. But it is ambiguous, or silent, about the social context that generates those activities and how it might change. In and of itself, ecology offers no social critique, so where critique flows directly from ecological discourse,

subsuming the complexities of the social into a picture of undifferentiated humanity as a species, it goes astray and is frequently vapid. Often it is employed only to justify different political ideologies, masking social conflicts in pseudoscientific generalizations. Social Darwinism and its Malthusian legitimation of capital accumulation and human immiseration during the nineteenth century is a trenchant example of the ideological utilization of scientific discourse—an example which unfortunately remains, like all fragmentary ideologies in the modern world, to plague us today.

Whether or not an entirely coherent nature philosophy is even possible, the nagging question of humanity's relation to the natural world and its parallel significance to our relations among ourselves, has become a major issue (and the most important one) in the last few years. A deepening revulsion against the industrial-work culture and the shock at the obliteration of ecosystems, species, cultures and peoples have inspired an emerging anti-industrial counterculture and a rediscovery of the lifeways of our primal roots. This has led to some degree to a convergence of environmental and anti-war movements; with it has come a significant radicalization and developing strategy of mass direct action and sabotage against megatechnic projects and the war machine. Anarchism too, and anti-authoritarian ideas in general, have had no small influence on this movement. Deepening critiques of industrial capitalist civilization (in its private Western form, and in its bureaucratic Eastern form, both of them statist), technology, and science, and the mystique of progress have contributed to a new, if diverse, philosophical orientation.

Among ecological thinkers there has been an attempt to move beyond the limitations of ecological science towards a nature philosophy and earth-based culture. Some have proposed a new perspective, deep ecology, as an emerging social model or "new paradigm" for humanity's relationship with nature. Deep ecology is a rather eclectic mixture of writings and influences, drawing on the one hand from romantic and transcendentalist writings, nature poetry, eastern mysticism and the land wisdom of primal peoples, and on the other hand from general ecological science, including modern Malthusianism. This far from coherent mixture is not entirely separate from ecology in general. At the same time, an organized deep ecology action movement has appeared, with a newspaper and many local chapters and contacts, as well as its own mythos, history, intellectual luminaries, and militant chieftains.

This group, Earth First!, was founded in the early 1980s as a radical environmental alternative to the mainstream organizations, "a true Earth-radical group" that saw wilderness preservation as its keystone; "in any decision, consideration for the health of the Earth must come first," wrote a founder, Dave Foreman, in the October, 1981 *Progressive* magazine. Wilderness preservation means not only to protect remaining wilderness but to "withdraw huge areas as inviolate natural sanctuaries from the depredations of modern industry and technology." Earth First! claims to be non-hierarchic, non-bureaucratic and decentralized; many of its adherents consider themselves anarchists. It practices and encourages an explicit luddite form of direct action against the machinery of developers, and favors tree spiking and other tactics to stop defor-

estation by lumber corporations, all described as "monkeywrenching," after Edward Abbey's novel about ecosaboteurs, *The Monkeywrench Gang.* They have done much to oppose development projects and protect national parks, using demonstrations, guerrilla theatre and civil disobedience at development sites and in national parks. Their newspaper is also an excellent source for information on rainforest destruction, battles over wilderness and old growth forests, defense of habitat for bears and other species—in short, for environmental confrontations all over the world. They have definitely played a positive and creative role in encouraging and publicizing a more intransigent environmentalism that sees intrinsic worth in wilderness and in willing to go from letter-writing and lobbying to blockades in order to fight for it. In *Earth First!* there is little information on struggles against toxic wastes or megatechnic development in the cities, or of anti-militarist struggles. Starting from what they call deep ecological principles, they see their efforts at wilderness preservation as central. Does deep ecology represent an emergent paradigm for an earth-based culture? Is it the coherent culmination of the anti-industrial tradition?

"Biocentrism" Versus "Anthropocentrism"

Deep ecology as a perspective was originated by Norwegian writer Arne Naess in the 1970s and remains an eclectic and ambiguous current. Only two books dealing explicitly with the subject have yet appeared—both, revealingly, anthologies containing a mixture of sometimes complementary, sometimes contradictory writings. *Deep Ecology* (Avant Books, 1984), edited by Michael Tobias, is a collection of poetry and essays from writers like William Catton, George Sessions, Murray Bookchin and Garrett Hardin. The essayists are widely divergent, the poetry a mix of general nature and ecological themes. Another collection, *Deep Ecology: Living As If Nature Mattered* (Peregrine Smith Books, 1985), is written and edited by George Sessions and Bill Devall and is probably the more complete book, made up of essays by the editors and quotes from a myriad of sources. The Tobias edition, nevertheless, has several useful essays for understanding the perspective (including a long philosophical essay by Bookchin anticipating some of the problems in it).

It was Arne Naess who in 1973 described deep ecology as an attempt "to ask deeper questions." This "ecosophy," as he called it, consciously shifted "from science to wisdom" by addressing humanity's relationship with nature, since "ecology as a science does not ask what kind of society would be best for maintaining a particular ecosystem." Sessions sees it as a "new philosophy of nature," and one text from a green network, quoted in his anthology, describes such ecological consciousness as "a proper understanding of the purposes and workings of nature" that does not "impose an ideology on it." Deep ecology seeks to transform society based on this understanding.

The philosophy has as its basic premises the interrelatedness of all life, a biotic equality for all organisms (including those for which human beings have no "use" or which might even be harmful to us), and a rejection of "anthropocentrism" (the belief

that human beings are separate from, superior to, and more important than the rest of nature).

Anthropocentrism, they feel, underlies human arrogance towards and exploitation of the natural world. They call for a new "land ethic," after environmentalist writer Aldo Leopold, not only to restore a harmonious balance in nature, but to answer a fundamental human need to experience untrammeled wilderness and to live in harmony with the planet. Many of these concerns are not unique to deep ecology; the *Fifth Estate*, for example, has made such a reconciliation with the natural world a central focus for the last decade.

The appeal of a biocentric orientation and its subsequent critique of the conquest of nature that has characterized all state civilizations (particularly western civilization and capitalism) is undeniable. Seeing human beings as members of a biotic community may at least suggest the question of "what kind of society would be the best" for living in harmony with the earth. This, of course, is the vision of primal peoples; the animist mutualism and rootedness that is in everyone's past. As Seathe, of the Suguamish people, said, "The earth does not belong to man. Man belongs to the earth. This we know. All things are connected as the blood that unites a family." The rejection of "human chauvinism," as deep ecologist John Seed puts it, is a rediscovery of this view. "'I am protecting the rainforest,'" Seed writes, "develops to 'I am part of the rainforest protecting myself. I am that part of the rainforest recently emerged into thinking.'"

The wisdom of this vision is clear; the present apocalypse that we are experiencing is the culmination of the hubris which wants to bring all of nature under human control, both through rapacious devastation or "benign" meddling. When one considers how people live in this high energy consumption society, with its hatred and contempt for life and nature, with its demonic development projects that gouge the earth and destroy myriad life forms to create the empty, alienated civilization of computerized nihilism, even the response of misanthropy is understandable—such as 'naturalist John Muir's comment that "if a war of races should occur between the wild beasts and Lord Man, I would be tempted to sympathize with the bears..." Deep ecology claims that that time has come.

As poetic commentary, Muir's misanthropy is commendable. But it must be remembered that human beings are animals too, and the same forces that are destroying the bears have destroyed many human beings and cultures, and are undermining all human life as well. While its rejection of biotic hierarchy, and "man" as the pinnacle and lord of creation (the model for all hierarchies), is crucial to a reconciliation with the natural world, the deep ecological notion of anthropocentrism is itself mired in ideology.

Positing itself as a critique of "humanism" (defined rather simplistically as the ideology of human superiority and the legitimacy to exploit nature for human purposes), deep ecology claims to be a perspective taken from outside human discourse and politics, from the point of view of nature as a whole. Of course, it is a problematic claim, to say the least, since deep ecologists have developed a viewpoint based on human, socially-generated and historically-evolved insights into nature, in order to design an

orientation toward human society. At any rate, any vision of nature and humanity's place in it that is the product of human discourse is by definition going to be to some degree "anthropocentric," imposing as it does a human, symbolic discourse on the nonhuman.

The deep ecologists, for example, reject other forms of environmentalism such as technocratic resource conservation, as anthropocentric because they are framed in terms of utility to human beings. And criticizing animal liberation, Sessions and Devall argue that it simply extends moral and political categories of legal rights from the human world to nature, thus furthering the human conquest of nature.

But the deep ecological "intuition...that all things in this biosphere have an equal right to live and blossom" is the same projection of human social-political categories onto nature—a legalistic and bourgeois-humanist anthropocentrism itself. Ecology confirms the animist vision of interrelatedness, but when expressed in the ideological terms of this society, it denatures and colonizes animism, reducing it to a kind of economics or juridical, legal formalism. Neither animals nor primal peoples recognized or conferred abstract legal rights, but lived in harmony and mutualism, including a mutualism of predation of other species to fulfill their needs and desires. Human subsistence was bound up with natural cycles and not in opposition to them; people did not envision an alienated "human versus nature dualism (which, whether one takes "nature's" side or "humanity's," is an ideology of this civilization), but rather "humanized" nature by interacting mythically and symbolically with it.[1]

When ecological "anti-humanism" (justly) rejects technocratic resource management, it does so for the wrong reasons. The dualism of its formulation takes the technocratic reduction of nature to resources for an undifferentiated species activity based on supposed biological need. While human beings and institutions that actively engage in the destruction of nature must be stopped by any means necessary and as soon as possible, it should not be automatically assumed that they are acting out the biological destiny of the species; that would be to take at face value the corporate and state rationalizations for exploitation ("we do it' all for you"). This aberrant destructiveness (which

[1] As I was in the process of writing this article, a recent essay by Murray Bookchin treating the same issues came to my attention. While we had come independently to many similar conclusions, I did find his essay, "Thinking Ecologically: A Dialectical Approach," helpful in formulating some of the arguments in my final draft. (See the Spring/Summer issue of *Our Generation*, $7.95 Canadian, from Journals Department, University of Toronto Press, 5201 Dufferin Street, Downsview, Ontario, M3H 5T8 Canada). Nevertheless, I think it important to note that 'while Bookchin responds powerfully to the entire discussion on the question of humanism and the dangerous mixture in deep ecology of sentimental mysticism and a harshly instrumental scientistic methodology, his notion that "human intervention into natural processes can be as creative as that of natural evolution itself' suggests the very technological hubris that deep ecology confuses with humanism. Given Bookchin's view of creative human intervention (and his naive position on technology in Post-scarcity Anarchism), what is his attitude toward biotechnology, which uses the same essential argument in legitimating its destructive meddling into the fundamental structures of nature? Bookchin's perspective needs a thorough critique which hopefully will be undertaken soon.

has only occurred in the context of civilization) must be viewed as occurring within and answerable to a human social context that is not readily explained by ecological analysis.

Deep ecology' collapses into ideology when it sees the pathological operationalism of industrial civilization as a species-generated problem (as the discussion of its Malthusian tenets will show), rather than as generated by social phenomena that must be studied in their own right. Concealing socially generated conflicts behind an ideology of "natural law," deep ecology contradictorily insists on and denies a unique position for human beings while neglecting the centrality of the social in environmental devastation. Consequently, it has no really "deep" critique of the state, empire, technology or capital, reducing the complex web of human relations to a simplistic, abstract, scientistic caricature. Taking pains to defend every form of life from whales down to even the extinct or near-extinct (unless the military labs have it) smallpox virus, only human beings are banished from creation for their depredations. Deep ecologists tend to forget that particularly in the long run preservation of wilderness and defense of natural integrity and diversity is essential to human survival also, that there is no isolated "intrinsic worth" but an interrelated dependency that includes us all.

The Problem of Human Intervention

Another confusion in the critique of anthropocentrism is the rejection of human stewardship of nature.

The notion of intervention is anthropocentric in their eyes; they associate it with genetic manipulation, scientific forestry management, and resource development (actually extraction) for "human needs." But they only offer an alternative form of management. As Sessions and Devall write, "Our first principal is to encourage agencies, legislators, property owners and managers to consider flowing with rather than forcing natural resources." They call for "interim management" and technological intervention. This ambiguity (and ingenuousness about agencies legislators and the rest) informs this entire discussion. Their description of policy decisions "based on sound ecological principles" sounds like a picture of *present* agencies and their self-justifications. The detailed wilderness proposals in *Earth First!* are also an example of a notion of human stewardship.

And despite their lack of sympathy for mass technics, they have no critique of technology as a system or of its relation to capitalist institutions. So while humans "have no right to reduce richness and diversity except to satisfy *vital* needs" (a rather ambiguous qualification), snowmobiles are deemed "necessary today to satisfy vital needs" of northern peoples such as Eskimos. So, in with the snowmobiles must slip the industrial apparatus and petroleum-based energy economy that are necessary to produce and use them. In fact, they argue, culture itself "requires advanced technology," so we end up with a somehow "greened" version of the present world, with industrialism and

a technicized culture intact—presumably with those quaint native dances on television to preserve "diversity."

Capitalist institutions are barely looked at as the major perpetrators of environmental devastation they are, even though the authors do recognize "the possible destruction of up to twenty-five percent of all species on Earth due to business-as-usual economic growth and development during the next forty to sixty years." Speaking of the unintended consequences of technology, they refer to the agricultural crisis in California's Central Valley, where agribusiness, "which claims as its goal, 'feeding the hungry of the world,' is now creating an unhealthy, almost unfit environment for many human inhabitants of the Valley." Here again we see them taking corporate propaganda at face value, so technological shortsightedness and the "humanist" goal of "feeding the world" become the cause of the problem, rather than capitalist looting, which degrades the natural integrity of the valley not to feed people but to line the investors' pockets.

Deep ecology claims to ask deeper questions, but it does not recognize that this might require deeper analysis of human society. So the "non-ideological" perspective ends up taking politics in a capitalist democracy for granted, recommending a rather confused kind of "direct action in politics or lobbying" (Sessions and Devall). For these deep ecology theorists, direct action is reduced to lobbying, and presumably to electoral politics (and when the environmentalists cozied up to then California governor Jerry Brown—how many trees got chopped with him in power?). Nowhere is this "working-within-the-system-ocentrism" questioned; it is simply assumed. We also get a fetish of nonviolence from Session and Devall, and a reformism that centers on seeking wilderness proposals and that wishes to "secure" nature "against degradation caused by warfare and other hostile acts." Their naivete about securing nature against war is equaled by their simplistic view of international politics and the global economy, particularly the relations between industrial nations and the Third World.

The deep ecology perspective insists that everything is interrelated and sees this recognition as "subversive to an exploitive attitude and culture" (Sessions, in the Tobias anthology). But ecological reductionism fails to see the interrelatedness of the global corporate capitalist system and empire on the one hand, and environmental catastrophe on the other. This is far from subversive—despite the courageous and imaginative acts of many deep ecology militants who act against the tentacles of the planetary machine. In fact, the absence of a critique of capital is a real impediment to the generalization of authentic resistance to the exploitive-extractive empire which is presently devouring the earth because it mystifies the power relations of this society and squanders the possibility for linking the human victims of the machine in different sectors. Humans are the only beings, by the way, anthropocentrism or not, in a position to wage effective war against the empires and articulate an earth-based culture and a renewal of the land.[2]

[2] The mechanistic application of so-called natural laws to society impoverishes social critique. Deep ecology articles are frequently rife with glib comparisons between humanity and "grey fuzz," lemmings, algae, and other species, followed by simplistic, almost Aesopian comments on complex issues specific to

"Malthus Was Right"

While deep ecologists may consider their perspective a "new paradigm," its Malthusian component is a commonplace of current ideology. In fact, "too many people" is one of the automatic responses made to any criticism of industrialism and the state: present numbers, we are always assured by ecologist, corporate developer, marxist and capitalist alike, could never be supported in a nonindustrial, sustainable society. Deep ecologists accept Malthus' proposition—that human population exponentially outstrips food production—as an essential support for their orientation (though it is certainly arguable that deep ecological thinking need not be Malthusian). It is taken for granted by most, and the slogan "Malthus Was Right" is even peddled as a bumper-sticker by Earth First!. William J. Catton, Jr., who is quoted and published in both anthologies, is a leading modernizer of Malthus, and his book *Overshoot: The Ecological Basis for Revolutionary Change* (University of Illinois Press, 1980), has become a bible of sorts to the deep ecologists (even those, one would surmise, who haven't read it).

Population growth is certainly a cause for concern, perhaps even alarm. More than 900 million people are presently malnourished or starving, and hunger spreads with the rising numbers. But Malthusian empiricism sees many hungry mouths and con-

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human society. A recent example is an article, "On Horns and Nukes" (*Earth First!*, September 1986), by George Wuerthner. In it, the author blithely compares the current nuclear arms races to the rivalry and "dominance hierarchy" of bighorn rams based on horn size. I'll leave aside his zoological interpretations, but given ecological science, there is much room for differences even there. The article's real absurdity is the idea that "nuclear weapons may not function primarily as offensive weapons, but like the horns of the Bighorn ram, may represent a nation's rank within the international community." Nothing here about the complex social relations that underlie nuclearism and the arms race, such as the original (offensive) use of nukes and their continuing use as a threat to make geopolitical policy. (See Daniel Ellsberg's enlightening introduction to Thompson and Smith's *Protest and Survive* for a brief history of the uses of the bomb.) Nothing about the massified technological bureaucracy, the permanent war economy and the technological drift so brilliantly described by C.W. Mills, in *The Causes of World War Three*, back in the 1950s. Nothing about the Cold War and the militarization of culture, despite the wealth of information and the high level sophistication of much of the anti-war and anti-nuclear movements in this country. No, because nuclear weapons systems (and their civilization) are just the horns of sheep (and nation-states the members of a Bighorn "community"), Wuerthner wishes to avoid any "simplistic solution" to the problem, arguing: "Like the bull Elk who has lost his antlers, a direct reduction of nuclear stockpiles could destabilize the world's tenuously recognized hierarchy of military power. Such a reduction may inadvertently bring us closer to nuclear war, rather than further away." This is Reagan talking to the disarmament movement, or James Watt, with pseudoscience to back him up. What does our philosopher recommend? If horn display is part of the problem, he says, "research by the U.S. government in human perceptions of status, rank, and power might reveal a partial solution to the arms race." Perhaps the government will farm that study out to the Rand Corporation or one of the other think tanks and let us know how it turns out. Meanwhile, such willful ignorance on this naturalist's part not only reflects the limitations of ecological ideology, but almost brings tears to one's eyes over the contradiction between the environmentalist concern for nature and its legitimation of the nuclear empire—this kind of silliness from a journal claiming to be at "the cutting edge" of this "new ecological paradigm."

cludes that there are too many people and not enough resources to keep them alive. Scarcity and famine are thus explained as natural phenomena, inevitable, irrevocable, even benign. The pseudo-objectivity of scientific ideology is probably nowhere more profoundly expressed than in this Malthusian model. If, astonishingly, it is still necessary to argue against Malthus a century and a half later, it is because people know so little history.

Malthusian ideology emerged from the crucible of early industrialism and the immiseration and class conflict that came in its wake. As people were driven from their lands and craft workers were dispossessed by industry, masses of displaced people were shoveled into mills and mines, ground up to accumulate profit, and replaced by the hungry unemployed who followed them. As the commons (where rural people might grow their own food) were seized by wealthy landowners and sheep farmers, even the food and help to which they had traditionally been entitled during hard times in feudal society came under attack.

Malthus was only the most celebrated of the many pseudophilosophers who sanctioned class brutality by applying the economics of Adam Smith and its notion of a "natural" and self-regulating political economy to "natural law." The previously-held notion of a "just wage" had disappeared with classical economy; now the obligation to help the poor went with it. The surplus of workers that was so good for business and kept wages down came to be seen as a surplus in population. From his pulpit and in his essays, the good parson Thomas Malthus argued that people's animal power of multiplication would eventually run up against the constricting walls of scarcity, and concluded that feeding people who might otherwise starve would only lead them to procreate and increase generalized misery.

Against the rising revolutionary tide in France and the writings of utopian disciples of Rousseau, who attributed vice and misery to the corruption of human institutions and civilization, he posed "deeper seated causes of impurity," namely his "principle of population." In answer to the anarchist utopian William Godwin, who argued after Rousseau that in a society where people lived "in the midst of plenty and where all shared alike the bounties of nature," misery, oppression, servility and other vices would disappear, Malthus solemnly declared: "Man cannot live in the midst of plenty. All cannot share alike the bounties of nature." Contrary to the vision of humanity's natural state as one of "ease, happiness and comparative leisure," he argued, in the dour vein of Thomas Hobbes' vision of a state of war of all against all, that population was always and everywhere pressing against available food supply. So if subsistence should improve, population would rise with it, and pressure on the food supply would begin anew. For the sake of civilization and human progress, there was no alternative. "Man as he really is," he pronounced, "is inert, sluggish, and averse from labor, unless compelled by necessity." Therefore, instead of aiding the poor, "we should... court the return of the plague."

Malthus' numerical formula, which he worked out assiduously in his book, elaborately contrasting the abstract differential between geometric and arithmetical growth,

was the most compelling part of his proposition. But his argument was essentially circular and reflected in Newtonian fashion only a tendency or capacity for geometric population growth in a hypothetical situation in which no checks on population were present. Too many imponderable factors were involved in his calculations, and as Gertrude Himmelfarb wryly observed in her introduction to the 1960 edition of *On Population*, "The difficulties, as Malthus might have said, increased geometrically."[3]

[3] As Dennis Wrong argues in *Population and Society* (1966), the capacity for population to surpass subsistence is undeniable, "but it leaves entirely open the question of the degree to which at a given time the capacity is actually being realized...for whenever a case is found in which the means of subsistence are abundant and population growth falls short of Malthus' maximum rate, by definition, the checks are at work preventing a more rapid increase."

Among many naturalists, the Malthusian proposition is not considered applicable to either human or animal populations. As D.H. Stott writes (in "Cultural and Natural Checks on Population Growth," in Andrew P. Vayda, *Environment and Cultural Behavior*, 1969), "That the amount of food available sets the ultimate limit to the growth of all animal and human populations cannot be disputed. But this apparently self-evident proposition only holds good in a very rough way over a long period. The popular Malthusian notion that the number surviving from year to year is determined by the current supply of food, with the excess dying from starvation, is no longer supported by any student of natural population." Utilizing many animal population studies, including those of the lemmings perennially used by Malthusians, Stott demonstrates that other built-in population limiting factors occur that refute the Malthusian hypothesis, such as decreased violability of the young and infertility, even when food is available. There is evidence that human populations function similarly, according to Stott, hence the Malthusian catastrophe is "unlikely to occur," and will be avoided by complex limiting factors if not by conscious human intervention. In any case, the toxic contamination of human beings appears to be laying the basis for a population decline in the ugliest of terms.

The Malthusian might argue that while increased infertility and inviolability of offspring is occurring among humans, medical technology is keeping people alive that would have died under natural conditions. They are certainly correct on this score, but they have missed the point. We must resist the medicalization of our lives because it is undermining our humanity with its insane premise to overcome all death and disease. We are going to have to relearn how to live with death, which means letting people die that technology keeps alive, if we are to avoid being drawn into a deepening technological control of life. Medicalization and its promise of overcoming death leads directly to bioengineering and the undermining and restructuring of human beings, which will bring us either to medico-technological catastrophe which wipes everything out, or an engineered Brave New World. Furthermore, the medical industry is itself a tremendous polluter, as the recent controversy over the low level radiation land fill to be constructed in Michigan attests. An enormous landfill must be built to store radioactive wastes—many of them medically-generated—for several hundred years. So we see the irony of medical nuclear technology, used to cure diseases like cancer (when, in fact, little progress has been made on any of these fronts anyway) causing cancer, birth defects and so on as it becomes a mountain of toxic residue. This must stop; with it, of course, will end certain short-term medical benefits (and a lot of medical exploitation of sick people and medically-induced disease, as well). The few short-term benefits that medical high technology bring are outweighed by its long-term deleterious effects on nature and human health. The death rate may rise, including among infants, as this shift occurs, which would work with other factors to bring down population, but this is still not at all a confirmation of the Malthusian response that there are too many people now on earth because of this or other causes. This discussion demands more attention than a footnote: I am only raising the issue, not proposing to identify the exact point to which medicalization must be dismantled.

If, as Jeremy Rifkin argues in his recent important, though flawed, book *Algeny*, "there is no neutral naturalism," it is clear that the acceptance of Malthus' proposition had little to do with its actual merits. Within its own terms and framework it was irrefutable, but Malthus' schema was as anthropocentric as it was ideological. Outside its social context it would have remained merely speculation. As it was, it legitimated brutal oppression and dispossession of entire classes of people. As Himmelfarb remarks, its logic "was the logic of Adam Smith, and there was nothing in the principle of population that was not implied in the now 'classical' principles of political economy...Malthus only made more dramatic what Smith had earlier insisted upon: that men were as much subject to the laws of supply and demand as were commodities..."

A Struggle for Survival

Darwin's theoretical formulations came from the same social context. And if Malthus' proposition appealed to Darwin for its suggestion of natural selection through a "struggle for life" (a term that Malthus himself had used), it appealed to the English ruling classes for the same reason. Darwin's theory, despite a wealth of keen observation, was in Rifkin's words, "a reflection of the industrial state of mind" that anthropocentricized nature by imposing economic categories on it. As Mumford writes, "Darwin was in fact imputing to nature the ugly characteristics of Victorian capitalism and colonialism. So far from offsetting the effects of the mechanical world picture, this doctrine only unhappily offered a further touch of cold-blooded brutality..."

The struggle for survival (a parallel of the human struggle) was the motor force of progress and evolution. "All organic beings," Darwin argued in *The Origin of Species,* were "striving to seize upon each place in the economy of nature." Yield, output and the motive of efficiency inform all his work. "Hard cash paid down over and over again" was the "test of inherited superiority." In an argument derivative of Adam Smith's notion of economic progress, even the evolution of simple to more complex organisms represented a kind of physiological division of labor. And European colonialism was legitimated too, as it justified, in Darwin's words, the "extermination of 'less intellectual lower races' by the more intelligent higher races." There was "one general law," he argued, "leading to the advancement of all organic beings, namely, multiply, vary, let the strongest live and the weakest die."

As an element of a rightward shift among some university circles, Malthusianism could be dusted off and re-legitimated by scientists, but presently one can at least see that the population question, even among animal populations, is not clear-cut, and that there are still many differences of interpretation. Wrong notes that the decline in the rate of growth in the developed world severely undermines Malthusianism, and adds, The natural sciences contribute significantly to the study of population. But the main causes of population trends, and the consequences of them that arouse great interest, are social." While an unlimited growth in population is indisputably 1 cause of human suffering, Wrong argues, "Malthus' view of human nature was that of a biological determinist."

It would be careless and inaccurate to argue that Darwin's insights were entirely the product of bourgeois mystification and scientism. There was even the implicit insight in Malthus that infinite technological progress and population growth would ultimately crash against natural finite limits—a point overlooked by the utopians and their bourgeois, Marxist and syndicalist descendants. But if in Darwin, particularly, there was an ambiguity between the organic understanding he developed and the mechanistic, economistic terms in which it was often expressed, there was no such ambiguity in the Darwinism, and its offspring, the Social Darwinism, that followed. Social Darwinism and Malthusianism became enshrined in modern ideology, in the viewpoint of the powerful classes and the powerful nations. As Darwin's contemporary Herbert Spencer put it, humanity's very well-being depended on this struggle for survival: "The poverty of the incapable, the distresses that come upon the imprudent, the starvation of the idle, and those shoulderings aside of the weak by the strong, which leave so many 'in shallows and in miseries,' are the decrees of a large, far-seeing benevolence." By way of this "conjurer's trick," as Engels called their formulations (though he too suffered from its determinist, productivist methodology), bourgeois economic doctrine was transferred to nature, and then back again to human society and history to prove its validity as eternal natural law.[4]

[4] Bill McCormick argues in the August 1986 *Earth First!*, in an article, "Towards an Integrated Approach to Population and Justice," that "a dual approach" to population must be taken, reversing population trends while fighting economic injustice. Yet his argument rests on an attack on Frances Moore Lappe and Joseph Collins' *Food First*, which demonstrates that only a struggle for economic justice will be effective in stabilizing populations. McCormick's approach starts from the assumption that "any modern social problem" must be considered by also "considering population density as a serious factor, not an insignificant one..."

Nowhere does he refute their argument that population density is not a factor in present starvation (many starving countries have relatively low population densities, while countries with greater densities are self-sufficient or potentially self-sufficient) or that present hunger is not caused by overpopulation. While he agrees that a struggle for justice is key, his solution is a homily that "we" start having fewer children. In "Earth First versus Food First," in the Summer 1987 *Kick It Over* (P.O. Box 5811, Station A, Toronto, Ontario M5W 1P2 Canada), he repeats his argument, noting that the current U.S. position since Reaganism follows the "resourceful earth" hypothesis of Julian Simon and Herman Kahn that is hostile to birth control policies because, it argues, "continuous growth is good for the planet." Actually, while "Reagan Era" reactionaries do oppose birth control and abortion rights in the Third World with absurd economistic, technocratic and moralistic arguments, they are actually a variant of modern Malthusianism themselves (Malthus also opposed birth control as immoral), since their arguments are linked to the opposition to social welfare programs as well, based on arguments about the resolution of population and development crises by "free market" capitalist economics. For a critique of neoconservative Malthusians that still suffers from a liberal technofix perspective on the problem of hunger, see "Malthus Then and Now," by John L. Hess, in the April 18, 1987 issue of *The Nation*. Jonathan Kieberson's article, "Too Many People?" (in the June 26, 1986 *New York Review of Books*), also treats some recent neoconservative population arguments. He notes as well that in many poor countries, "policies to alter reproductive behavior do not work well." While many factors may be involved, a central factor appears to be that "people do not wish to change their decisions to have many children." Clearly, social factors, many of them discussed in great detail by Lappe and Collins, underlie

Modernizing Malthusianism

So the deep ecology position on overpopulation, contrary to being part of a "new paradigm," is part of an old one, the economistic Malthusian theory. It has also been pretty standard fare in ecological writings since Darwin.[5] Nevertheless, the overpopulation thesis is still compelling, especially when one looks at a graph of human population growth since pre-history, with the right-hand side shooting up precipitously in the last two or three centuries. The population question, as Neo-Malthusian ecologist Paul Ehrlich (author of *The Population Bomb*) remarks, is "a numbers game," but imagine a country like Bangladesh, with its large population and all the problems of private land tenure, peonage and institutional scarcity that it faces, doubling in size in the span of a generation. As human numbers climb to six, seven, eight billion in the next few decades, it is fair to ask what possibility there will be for liberatory societies living in harmony with the natural world. And technofix responses—from fusion power to super-bioengineered agriculture to space colonies—are either absurd fantasies or "solutions" that are worse than the problem itself.

At some point in population growth, neither natural integrity nor human freedom is possible. But despite Malthusian numerology, that point is not self-evident. Consequently, overpopulation may be one source of the present world hunger crisis, but it takes a leap of faith to automatically conclude that famine is purely the result of "natural laws" when it occurs in a class society with a market economy and private ownership of land. Ecology reduced to ideology tends to simplify what is complex when it ignores the interrelations within human society in its analysis. But the interpretation of hunger is deadly serious because on it depends how ecologists, and all of us, respond to a whole complex of associated problems. Ideas have material consequences, so it is the responsibility of deep ecologists to examine their premises carefully. These premises find their most thorough expression in William Catton's book, *Overshoot.*

Based on the ecological concept of "carrying capacity" (the capacity of an ecosystem to support a given population of a species in a sustainable and renewable manner), Catton's thesis is that "human population has long ago moved into a dangerous phase

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such decisions, so arguments like McCormick's are little better than sermons—sermons that tend to affirm the Malthusian legitimation of starvation even as they argue for social justice.

[5] For example, William Vogt's 1948 *Road to Survival*, which called for strict population controls since there would be no time, as some argued, for populations to stabilize on their own. Why "ship food to keep alive ten million Indians and Chinese this year, so that fifty million may die five years hence," he mused. "China quite literally cannot feed more people...There can be no way out. These men and women, boys and girls, must starve as tragic sacrifices on the twin altars of uncontrolled human reproduction and uncontrolled abuse of the land's resources."

This same kind of argument was advanced by another ecological writer, John Stewart Collis, in *The Triumph of the Tree* (1954). This eminently civilized biocentric thinker writes of the "dread subject, this of population," that "In 1770 the vastly overpopulated continent of India was the victim of a famine in which ten million people died. That was excellent—as seen from the viewpoint of the animals...But our approach is so extraordinary. We really do seem to think that human beings should be exempt from natural laws."

of the 'boom-bust' cycle of population growth and decline." He explains in the Tobias anthology, "Carrying capacity, though variable and not easily or always measurable, must be taken into account to understand the human predicament."

Of course Catton does far more than take this ecological concern into account. He creates a theory of history around it, attributing the rise of state civilizations, technological development, war and imperial rivalry, economic crisis and unemployment, political ideology and cultural mores, revolt and revolution all to population pressures. It is an ambitious theory, but it follows the same economistic logic and mathematical mystification as that of Malthus. Catton's book reveals how scientism, the lack of a social critique, and captivity to a paradigm or model can lead to misinterpretation.

Catton's view starts from a Darwinian perspective of a competitive struggle for survival between species. Human beings have historically followed a process of "takeover" of carrying capacity ("diverting" resources from other species to themselves), "essentially at the expense of its other inhabitants." But human expansion inevitably had to come up against the limits of scarcity, of the land's carrying capacity. Only the discovery of new territories and new forms of extraction would forestall population crash. The first leap was the "horticultural revolution," which made it possible for "a minuscule but increasing fraction of any human tribe to devote its time to activities other than obtaining sustenance." With this increased human "management" of the biosphere, carrying capacity was increased, and with it, human population.

The next significant stage in development occurs at the end of the European Middle Ages (and this book has a very Euroamerican focus), when the known world was "saturated with population," making life intolerable and threatening population crash. The discovery of the Americas, however, changed everything. "This sudden and impressive surplus of carrying capacity" shattered the medieval vision of changelessness, and laid the foundations for an "Age of Exuberance," with its "cornucopian paradigm." "In a habitat that now seemed limitless, life would be lived abundantly." New beliefs and new human relationships were born from the increased carrying capacity, including a revolution in invention and technology (though elsewhere he argues that the development of technology is a result of population pressure rather than this "exuberance"), a democratic world view and an "emotional exuberance" characteristic of the new American society, leading the modern world "to suppose that mankind was largely exempt from nature's limits."

But as population quickly expanded, the next stage of expansion of carrying capacity was the development of "phantom carrying capacity," extracting only temporarily available, nonrenewable resources to support burgeoning numbers, a "drawdown" form of takeover which relies on petroleum, minerals, etc. This dependence led to "overshoot" and the present "post-exuberant age," in which human numbers have long exceeded the long-term, renewable carrying capacity of the environment, bringing about inevitable "crash" or "die-off' of the population. "There are already more human beings alive than the world's renewable resources can perpetually support," he argues. Carrying capac-

ity is also being diminished by toxic industrialism, "unavoidably created by our life processes."

While there are many responses to this crisis including revolutionary upheaval or faith in technology, he asserts that only an ecological paradigm, which recognizes carrying capacity limits and the need to reduce human numbers, will work. "The cumulative potential of the human species," he writes, repeating Malthus, "exceeds the carrying capacity of its habitat." With this incorporeal truism regarding a potentiality, he concludes, "No interpretation of recent history can be valid unless it takes these two factors and this relation between them into account."

Catton's book is not without its insights and thoughtful observations, and his arguments are often persuasive, relying as they do on the obvious—the destruction of nature by civilization, the increase of human numbers, the finite limits of the earth. Unfortunately, his thesis is only a rehash of Malthus: scientifically reductionist, simplistic, and highly ideological. Attempting to turn "ecological principles into sociological principles," he turns sociological distortions into natural law.

Scientific Reductionism

There is a kind of inverted anthropocentrism suggested in Catton's idea of takeover and inter-species competition for "resources" that, one suspects, secretly wishes to eliminate humans altogether from nature in order to impose some hypothetical balance (a view held without irony by some deep ecologists). This is the struggle for survival and law of the jungle left over from Social Darwinism. But it is also possible to postulate a mutualist equilibrium between humans and the rest of nature throughout the vast majority of our sojourn on this planet, in which human subsistence has even nurtured and encouraged the life of other species.[6] Catton's paleontology is also skewed, with its implicit Hobbesean picture of primitive life as a miserable struggle for subsistence, and its facile description of the origins of agriculture and the emergence of hierarchies. His historical theory of stages is patterned after the standard textbook model of progress.

The real shortcomings of Catton's thesis are most apparent in his historiography and analysis of the modern epoch. His scientific reductionism misinterprets the rise of capitalism and present capitalist society. His simplification of the whole convergence of cultural-historic developments—rising mercantilism and industrialism, the spread

[6] Naturalist Gary Paul Nabhan relates some examples in an interview in the July/August 1986 issue of the Colorado literary magazine *The Bloomsbury Review*, describing the gathering of "sandfood" (a dune plant endemic to the delta of the Colorado River) by the Sand Papago Indians. This human "takeover" reflects a natural interaction which played a crucial role in the germination 'of the plant; in fact as gathering has declined, so have the plant's numbers. Another example is the parsnip of the Northwest: 'The way it was gathered actually increased its vegetative propagation." This perspective is similar to Kropotkin's critique in *Mutual Aid* of nineteenth century ideology and to many of the writings of renowned American naturalist Carl O. Sauer, who posed "ecologic equilibrium" as an alternative to the Malthusian proposition which, he argued, has never been proven. (See his *Selected Essays: 1963–1975*, from the Turtle Island Foundation, 1981.)

of invention, statification and national consolidation, exploration and conquest, the slave trade, and more—to a species "exuberance" (like algae in a petri dish) due to increased carrying capacity, is biological determinism at its crudest. He paints a rosy picture of Europe as it was depopulated in the mass flight to the Americas, overlooking that despite "increased carrying capacity" there, conditions worsened for most people during the conquest.

That the riches in America and the cheap labor of her indigenous and imported slaves provided raw material and "increased carrying capacity" for emergent capitalism goes without saying. But there is little or nothing in Catton's history about this "original accumulation" that paid for industrialization, which is why he fails as well to understand the character of U.S. civilization. The "abundance and liberty," he writes, had "ecological prerequisites"—though he doesn't explain what were the prerequisites, then, of the slaveocratic, exterminist, repressive side of the civilization. (Nor does his model illuminate the contrast between North America and Latin America, which had the same "ecological prerequisites," yet an exceedingly different social character, leading to that oppressive and uneven relationship between them with which we should all be thoroughly familiar.)

Catton's portrayal of U.S. development is an oddly formulated apology for empire. Extolling the frontier, he attributes American democracy to a simple surplus carrying capacity (in an argument, coincidentally, which implies that current scarcity must inevitably lead to authoritarian rule). "A carrying capacity surplus facilitates development and maintenance of democratic institutions," he declares, while "a carrying capacity deficit weakens and undermines them." Thus, political differences between the U.S. and Europe were ecological: "Europe was full of people; America was full of potential." Such sloppiness not only effaces English and French (revolutionary) democracy and other libertarian forms from the picture, it overlooks a country like Russia, also relatively empty of people and "full of potential which suffered under despotism and autocracy.

This pseudohistory is mixed with sociological-ecological cliches, and ends in patriotic fervor. Low population density; he tells us, renders "human equality...feasible, even probable." (Saudi Arabia?) U.S. history, therefore, "has thus exemplified the dependence of political liberty upon ecological foundations." He makes no reference here to slavery, the conquest of northern Mexico, the extermination of the Indians, the interventions into Central America, the bitter class conflicts in mines and mills. And he leaves us with a high school textbook picture of the country: "Settlers in the New World did create a new and inspired form of government in a land of opportunity...Americans did win the west...A great nation was built in the wilderness..."

Our Yankee Doodle Dandy concludes in an outburst of political cant we've heard from Daniel Boone to Ronald Reagan: America "tried honestly and generously to share the fruits of its frontier experience with people in other societies overseas..." (like Vietnam and Nicaragua!). But as the empire extended its domination overseas, this sharing (usually in the form of a massacre of an Indian village) came to nothing, since

"American imperialism was essentially fruitless..." One cannot resist thinking here of the "fruitless" U.S. imperialism in Latin America banana republics. He pays homage, commendably, to nineteenth century anti-imperialists who warned against American conquest in the Caribbean and the Philippines and counsels that ecological limits have brought the U.S. empire into decline, sadly acknowledging, "We did not recognize precedents in time to avoid the frustration of ill-founded aspirations."

But there are those among us who celebrate and would like to more fully participate in the collapse of this and every empire, in order to find our way back to a harmonious relation With nature so longed for by deep ecologists. That this book has elicited such an enthusiastic response from them is disappointing, reflecting their serious political ignorance and conservative reaction to imperial decline. If anything, they should have noticed the connection between empire and habitat devastation—from ancient times to the carpet-bombing and defoliation of Indochina. Why is deep ecology so superficial when it comes to an analysis of contemporary empire, its origins and history?

An Economistic Analysis

In the economistic manner of Social Darwinism, Catton turns the natural world into a savings bank, yet he ignores global capitalism itself. So, for example, the collapse of the German economy after World War I, the Great Depression, and even the oil shortages of the 1970s were the result of natural scarcity and "carrying capacity deficit," rather than economic fluctuations (though ultimately real shortages of nonrenewable materials are inevitable). Manipulating a host of statistics, he explains that if current agriculture were to revert to pre-industrial forms, "four earths would be needed" to support the present population. The rising use of copper, steel and aluminum are also examples of "draw down" to extract needed phantom carrying capacity to support the population. In another tortured mathematical argument, we are told that in 1970 U.S. energy use amounted to 58 barrels of oil per capita annually. By strenuous calculation, he demonstrates that were we to try to get this energy from renewable, agricultural sources, rather than "phantom carrying capacity" of fossil fuels, we would only get 1.27% of total U.S. energy consumption. After this long numerical exegesis, he concludes, "It should be clear, therefore, that the actual population of the United States had already overshot its carrying capacity measured by the energy-producing capability of visible American acreage."

But of course it is not so clear at all. If carrying capacity has been exceeded and there isn't enough to go around, why are crops systematically dumped and destroyed? Only a critique of the system that turns food into a commodity can make sense in such a context. And his numerical mystification fails to note that "per capita" energy consumption includes the urban megalopolises, the glut of industry, transport, the military, and the frenetic form of life specific to industrial capitalism. To identify biological carrying capacity with such figures is patently absurd.

There is no doubt that the present form of existence is destructive, and increasingly destructive as population grows. But to argue, "Even our most normal and non-reprehensible ways of using resources to support human life and pursue human happiness" are destroying the environment is to forget that the form of culture in industrialism and the manner in which pursuing "life and happiness" is organized, are destroying life, not necessarily sheer population numbers. The toxic wastes produced by industrialism are not "unavoidably created by our life processes," they are the result of capitalist looting and a pathological culture. People do not need either vast energy consumption or toxic waste production to be kept alive; in fact, we are being steadily poisoned by it.

The notion of carrying capacity is trivialized by reduction to absurd statistics. No one really knows what the earth's actual carrying capacity is, or how much land we need to live in a renewable manner. What have megatechnic projects, freeways, asbestos, nuclear power, armaments production, or the automobile to do with biological carrying capacity? What have they to do with anything except the inertia of investment, technological drift, and capital accumulation? Catton's ecological paradigm reduces everything to numbers and mechanistically applies its analysis to society, rendering it blind to the actual forces leading to extinction. When this methodology compares, for example, statist wars and imperial rivalry to the territorialism of animals, it imposes the (current) scientific description of one highly complex order onto another, unrelated one. This is pseudozoology at its worst.

Technology and Alienation

Catton's discussion also misapprehends the critical role of technology in the present crisis for all the same reasons (though it is not entirely devoid of insight or thoughtful observation). Catton follows the standard line of reasoning (so brilliantly discredited by Lewis Mumford in the early chapters of *The Myth of the Machine*) that sees human species-essence as that of a tool-using or "prosthetic" animal. In general, he confuses tools and tool use with the technological system. So, for example, seeing clothing (like all tools) as a prosthesis, he decides that central heating and air conditioning in modern buildings are simply extensions of clothing. His conclusion is thus predictable, and conforms to the standard ideology of technology: "If the digging stick was a prosthetic device, so was the modern power shovel."

This myopia discerns no difference between living in a hut or pueblo and a mega-high rise, or between a spear and a missile, confusing the similarities between such phenomena and their far more important distinctions. It is beyond the scope of this essay to discuss this fallacy in detail (and I have written about it already in "Technology: A System of Domination," in the Winter 1984 FE), but the metaphor of all technics as prostheses misses the qualitative transformation that occurs as technology becomes a system that envelops human beings and society, modifying their nature to conform to its operational demands.

When, for example, he employs the prosthesis metaphor to describe a pilot strapping a jet airplane to his waist, Catton forgets that the pilot becomes totally enclosed in an artificial environment and utterly dependent upon a technological system—all of it the crystallization of coerced labor, hierarchic domination and stratification, of remote control and alienation. For the same reason Catton misunderstands work, describing the technological and economic division of labor (in an uncanny inversion of Darwin's industrialized model of complex organisms) as "functionally equivalent to the interactions of diverse species." But these "biotic niches" are only positions in a social hierarchy, a work pyramid—the perfect definition of civilization.

Because its devastation is self-evident, Catton understands progress as "a disease." But he only seems to think so because it contaminates the habitat, forgetting that it contaminates the human spirit as well. "The more colossal man's tool kit became," he writes, "the larger man became, and the more destructive of his own future." There is no recognition in this formulation of alienation and the fundamental desire to cease being a thing among things, and to become an integrated, living being once more in an animate world. The more colossal technology has become, the smaller the individuals imprisoned within it, and the more suffocated and crushed by the artificial world built by their forced labor. This anguished condition is the authentic source of revolutionary change that will put an end to industrialism, rather than a scientific paradigm of energy exchanges between organisms and environment (which in any case has now been recognized by biotechnological capital as the basis for its further conquest of nature).

Scientific Ideology As Material Force

It follows that Catton's view of radical revolt is very negative. He has little sympathy for anti-colonial movements, and even though it was during the 1960s (that "crescendo of ugly, mindless and malicious behavior") that an environmental and anti-industrial awareness was renewed, he can only compare the radicalism of the period to "queue jumping," a panic response, even to nazism. His monolithic interpretation attributes all of these responses, of course, to population pressure. Rejection of the corporate state and a reorientation towards nature are criticized as superficial unless they are founded on an understanding of "geochemical processes" and resource limits. Radicals seek a "magic recipe for avoiding crash," he argues, and slogans like, "Stop the bombing now!," "Freedom now!" and "End apartheid now" (his list), as well as the "theft and publication of secret documents" (presumably the Pentagon Papers) and "the burning of flags and embassies" are only destructive panic responses and "queue-jumping." Even peace movements are to blame for missing "the environmental sources of antagonism."

His alternative is one of "enlightened self-restraint" and further inquiry (presumably in orderly lines behind politicians, scientists and academics). He rejects "rampant competitiveness" while forgetting that the image of such competitiveness pervades his whole portrayal of nature. His proposals are few and tame: "ecological modesty," phas-

ing out fossil fuels, a reform of the mass media, and a defense of existing environmental laws. Society must act "as if... we had already overshot," he writes, in a subtle softening of his thesis, and the crash must be ameliorated to save as many human lives as possible by a conscious renunciation of destructive industrialism and its culture.

His conclusions avoid advocating the die-off that his thesis suggests is inevitable. "Bankruptcy proceedings" must be held "against industrial civilization, and *perhaps* (my emphasis) against the standing crop of human flesh," he argues; and in another modification, he says, "There *might be* already too many of us" to return to a simpler, renewable life. He even warns that his method will not point to "obvious solutions to the predicament." Perhaps he perceives, if dimly, that scientific ideology becomes a material force with consequences. Social Darwinism, combined with eugenics (the genetic "control" and "improvement" of breeds), was employed to justify colonial conquest and to legitimate reactionary immigration policies around the turn of the century, and even led ultimately to eugenics-based extermination of psychiatric inmates, Jews, Gypsies and other "subhuman breeds" by nazi technocrats in their death camps. Today, overpopulation "theories" are used by development bank bureaucrats to justify industrial development of sensitive wilderness areas (as in northern Brazil), and economic planners are currently utilizing "triage" analysis (a battlefield medical operation in which certain of the wounded are left to die in order to concentrate on those with a better chance of surviving) to consign masses of Third World peoples to starvation for the purposes of restructuring capital and paying off the national debt of countries like Mexico and Chile.

The Grasshopper and the Ant

Catton at least has the decency to distance himself a bit in his conclusions, seeking to avoid the "cruel genocide" that they imply by searching for an ecological reorientation and attempting to spare human life. There are others in the ecology movement who share the Malthusian promises of his flimsy "overshoot" thesis who *embrace* such genocide—for others, that is. One prominent example is right-wing biologist Garrett Hardin (published in the Tobias anthology, though he is not in agreement with radical environmentalism). Hardin's zero-sum view of nature identifies bourgeois property rights with natural law: only private property rights will protect the environment since treating nature as a shared "commons" will lead some to act irresponsibly and others to suffer for it. He argues, in true Malthusian neoconservative form, that "excessive altruism" (identified with liberalism and Marxism, of course) will plunge all, rich, and poor, powerful and weak, "into the Malthusian depths."

Proposing instead a "lifeboat ethics," Hardin's theory is merely a repeat of the fable of the grasshopper and the ant, with a tinge of imperial hubris. While profligate and "over-fertile" Third World grasshoppers have "ruinously exploited" their environment, hard-working Euroamerican ants have built their fortune and future. Now the hapless grasshoppers are swimming around the lifeboats of the wealthy nations, begging for

admittance or a handout. But helping them will only eventually swamp the boats. "Complete justice, complete catastrophe." An elegant parable. Hardin prefers instead "population control the crude way," and "reluctantly" suggests borders be closed, since "American women" would be rapidly surpassed in reproduction by immigrants.[7] In the Tobias anthology he argues the impossibility of internationalism, proposing national patriotism as an alternative, stating, "there must be the patriotic will to protect what has been achieved against demands for a world-wide, promiscuous sharing." The nation "must defend the integrity of its borders or succumb into chaos."

Of course, Hardin's "theory" only distills the diminished, crackpot outlook of free market ideology and imperial arrogance, since the wealthy nations made themselves so by the systematic looting not only of the heritage of their own peoples but particularly of the riches of the Third World. His "solutions" are the virus itself. But they are acceptable to many ecologists, who, according to Devall and Sessions, "argue that it is sometimes tactically wise to use the themes of nationalism or energy security to win political campaigns." It is a view held as well by the KKK, which (less reluctantly) has taken to armed patrols of the U.S.-Mexico border to prevent Latin Americans from entering "illegally."

This patriotic nationalist fervor and aversion to Hispanics is also shared by novelist Edward Abbey (*eminence grise* and guru of the Earth First! group), who (from the formerly Mexican territory of southern Arizona), wrote in a letter to *The Bloomsbury Review* of April-May 1986: "In fact, the immigration issue really is a matter of 'we' versus 'they' or 'us' versus 'them.' What else can it be? There are many good reasons, any one sufficient, to call a halt to further immigration (whether legal or illegal) into the U.S. One seldom mentioned, however, is cultural: the United States that we live in today, with its traditions and ideals, however imperfectly realized, is a product of northern European civilization. If we allow our country—our country—to become Latinized, in whole or in part, we shall see it tend toward a culture more like that of Mexico. In other words, we will be forced to accept a more rigid class system, a patron style of politics, less democracy and more oligarchy, a fear and hatred of the natural world, a densely overpopulated land base, a less efficient and far more corrupt economy, and a greater reliance on crime and violence as normal instruments of social change." The contrast drawn between the U.S. and Mexico by this self-proclaimed "anarchist" is astonishing on several counts, any one sufficient to reveal his utter racism and historical stupidity. One might mention in passing the relationship between the corruption in the Mexican economy and U.S. economic domination (why, for one small

[7] In response to the suggestion that his recommendations might be racist, he counters with an example of Japanese-Americans trying to stop immigration to the Hawaiian islands because of the severe limitations on land. This argument repulsed me personally, for I have spent much time in the islands, and have seen with my own eyes what the private property so hallowed in Hardin's view has done. As if it were abstractly a population question there, and not the runaway tourism development and the agro-industrial contamination, that are Hawaii's problems. Hardin's article is "Lifeboat Ethics: The Case Against Helping the Poor," in *Psychology Today*, September 1974.

example, U.S. companies and their subsidiaries can pollute and ravage the land and people with impunity there). Or perhaps we should consider the great love of nature he attributes to the North Americans, the absence here of oligarchic control, the "efficient economy." And, of course, "we" don't rely on crime and violence to effect political policy (as in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala). Abbey should be ashamed, but he isn't; he has a following.

A Deep Ecologist Who Advocates Genocide

Among his following are many of the eco-activists and deep ecologists of Earth First!, including their apparent leader for life, Dave Foreman, who in an interview with Bill Devall in the Australian magazine *Simply Living* said, regarding starvation in Ethiopia, that "the best thing would be to just let nature seek its own balance, to let the people there just starve..." Giving aid would of course only spur the Malthusian cycle, thus "what's going to happen in ten years time is that twice as many people will suffer and die." Notice how Malthusian brutality is couched in the terms of humanitarian concern.

"Likewise," he said, "letting the USA be an overflow valve for problems in Latin America is not solving a thing.

It's just putting more pressure on the resources we have in the USA...and it isn't helping the problems in Latin America." Notice here how rapidly the "anti-anthropocentrist" reverts to a nationalist resource manager. But his entire formulation, like those of Abbey and Hardin, reverses social reality and conceals the real sources of hunger, resource pressures, and refugees.

Central America is being devastated by U.S. corporate exploitation and a genocidal war to make sure the plunder continues. One horrible example is the U.S.-caused war in El Salvador, defending a death squad government that would likely collapse in weeks without U.S. backing. The war has forced one quarter of the Salvadoran population to become refugees, and a half a million of them have fled to the U.S. Comments like Foreman's might not be quite so obscene if there were consistent coverage in his newspaper of U.S. exploitation in Central America (apart from the occasional material on rainforests, usually in a Rainforest Network supplement) and denunciations of the U.S. annihilation of the Salvadoran people, cultures and lands, but there is no anti-war component in the paper and little about these interrelated problems in Central America. Foreman, too, ought to be utterly ashamed, but Foreman, too, has a following.

When Devall asked Foreman why the mainstream environmental movement had not addressed the population issue, the reply was, "you can't get any reaction." Foreman appeared to be implying that no serious dialogue could be generated on it, but if so, he was being less than candid. Last summer I sent a friendly but critical letter to *Earth First!* which criticized contemporary Malthusianism and warned them to "not make the mistake of *advocating* the genocide that the industrial system is already carrying out." It was never printed, nor did it receive any response, though in subsequent issues Foreman

stressed the need for an exchange of ideas and diverse points of view, describing the paper as "a forum" of the deep ecology/Earth First! movement.[8]

I sent another letter questioning why mine was never printed, pointing out the problems with Foreman's comments on immigration and Ethiopia, and warning them to avoid becoming "vanguardist" by suppressing the diverse views they claim to want and which undoubtedly exist inside the deep ecology current. I finally received a note from Foreman himself, groaning, "Gawd, I'm bored with left wing humanist rhetoric." In answer to my question about open discussion on the population issue, he replied, "My honest feeling is that the vast majority of those who consider themselves Earth First!ers agree with my position...I am all for cooperation with other groups where it fits, but we have a particular point of view which we are trying to articulate. Call it fascist if you like, but I am more interested in bears, rainforests, and whales than in people."

[8] Actually, a tiny slice of my friendly cover letter was printed, where I took issue with Foreman's offhand comment in a previous issue that Bookchin "would do well to get out of his stuffy libraries and encounter the wilderness," calling it an irrelevant and unjust personal attack. Foreman printed this one remark, responding that his comment was "a fundamental critique of Bookchin and anyone else who relies excessively on scholarship instead of direct wilderness experience for wisdom."

He added that "in virtually every area where I disagree with him, his lack of direct wilderness experience is the key. I do not believe that anyone, no matter how learned or thoughtful, can fully understand human society or the relationship of humans to the natural world without regularly encountering the wilderness and finding instruction there." This, of course, is nothing but fascist mystical demagogy. Foreman didn't get his ideas on Ethiopia, Latin America, deep ecology or anything else directly from the wilderness, but from reading books and articles like everyone else—particularly, for one example, from Paul Shephard's strange and technocratic book, *The Tender Carnivore* and the Sacred Game, and for another, from David Ehrenfeld's *The Arrogance of Humanism*, which are both beyond the scope of this essay to review. It is demagogy as well because Foreman doesn't know about Bookchin's experience and because it implies that it is his (presumably correct) "wilderness instruction" that tells him exactly where Bookchin's ideas go wrong. Foreman is claiming a special relationship with nature and using it to pontificate on political questions (like letting others starve). Whether any wilderness experience, even that of primal people, can be called "direct" is questionable. But the wilderness experience of anyone grown up in industrial civilization is always mediated by ideology and culture. "Direct wilderness experience" is also a middle class fad, with an enormous industry in nylon and aluminum and plastic products to make it all possible. Foreman, after all, is no primal person coming from a culture embedded in the natural world, he is A frontiersman, a settler, who forgets that being in nature physically does not in and of itself promise any insight.

As Hegel said of nomads, they bring their world with them. (*Simply Living*, in which the Foreman-Devall interview appeared, is a green-oriented magazine available from P.O. Box 704, Manly 2095, N.S.W., Australia).

Well, it's certainly Foreman's business to print, or not print, whatever he likes.[9] And since I have access to publications myself, I gave up attempting an open and egalitarian

[9] And it appears to be turning into his business. Foreman promises Devall in the *Simply Living* interview that "there is a need for a number of people to be watching Earth First! and to be very alert of growing bureaucratisation or compromise or consolidation of power, and if I see that kind of stuff happening I will try to point it out." Actually Earth First! is less of a bureaucracy than an autocracy, which is why Foreman has final say on everything printed in the paper, and why letters from the ranks that oppose his general position get suppressed (which happened in a debate that occurred on the question of anarchy during 1986 and early 1987). The paper poses as only one independent newspaper in the broad Earth First! movement, but since it is the only central organ, it is de facto the mouthpiece and official paper. In the June 1987 issue Foreman complains that people are getting involved who don't share the "strong general consensus" of the group, and lays out a thirteen-point program for the party faithful (including Malthusianism), each followed, in Animal Farm style, by a slogan to back it up. ("Four legs good, two legs bad," is not among them.) The points are often vague enough to cause controversies in interpretation themselves, but Foreman concludes: "Although I am only one voice" within Earth First! (he is also the owner, editor and publisher of its main newspaper and holds the entire mailing list which is closed to local groups), "my feeling is that if someone or some local group cannot accept these kinds of parameters, then they are probably in the wrong bunch and ought to join some other outfit or start their own." When he says in the same column, let Earth First! be itself he really means, let Foreman be Earth First! There should be no doubt as to who the real "foreman" of this outfit is.

The debate on anarchy is another revealing example of the actual conservative discourse underlying the radical posturing in *Earth First!* It began with an attack on anarchy in the May 1986 issue by writer Andrew Schmookler, author of *The Parable of the Tribes*, and described by editor Foreman as "one of the best ecological thinkers in the U.S." Schmookler's essay, sprinkled with parenthetical praise and advertisements for his book by the editor, argues against a more anarchist-oriented writer, Australopithecus, that the "unnatural condition of anarchy, far from being our salvation, has been at the root of the torment of civilization." The emergence of the state, in Schrnookler's tired logic, is reason enough for anarchy to be rejected. "Anarchists want us to break up political powers, back to a multitude of small and self-governing communities," he writes. "But the human species tried that experiment—up until 10,000 years ago. And the rest is...history." The rest is history, of course, as it is commonly defined, but Schmookler fails to notice that the "experiment" lasted for 99% of human existence.

Given Schmookler's definition of anarchy, his conclusions are foreordained. What existed before civilization's liquidation of the "experiment" of small, self-governed communities was not anarchy, he says. "True, there was no hierarchical power structure, but there was governing order...There is no ruler in this lawful order...Each follows only its own law—pursuing its own ends—but this law and these ends are part of a harmonious natural order." Schmookler is an ignoramus who hasn't even read a basic anthology of anarchist philosophy since he has more or less described anarchy as its classical proponents defined it. No hierarch, no leader (or archon), no archy or state: anarchy. He does not have the slightest idea what he is talking About.: For him, anarchy is how the state and its ideologues, how hanging judges and newspaper headlines define 'it: "action ungoverned by any lawful order," or chaos.

Hence his conclusion that "the state is but a symptom of the fundamental problem," which is 'power. Therefore, contradictorily, "power is necessary, for social survival...we had better create sufficient government to control the free play of power...there should be a world order sufficient" to carry out this task. The state, a symptom of the problem of power, becomes the solution. In answer to the obvious response, who will guard the guardian, he solemnizes, "Government is a paradox, but there is no escaping' it." This ecclesiastical line evokes an image of Winston Smith fleeing from the gaze of Big Brother, or Guy Debord's remark that this civilization "no longer promises anything. It no longer says, 'What appears is good, what is good appears.' It simply says: 'It is so."'

Smugly extolling slave-owning colonial conquerors such as Madison and the framers of the U.S. Constitution, Schmookler asks, "Why do we send out the National Guard when a disaster disrupts soci-

discussion with him and decided to further research deep ecology and the hunger question. It was later that his comments on Ethiopia and related issues came to my attention, but they heightened my sense of unease with the direct action environmental group that had previously earned my respect and praise in the *Fifth Estate*.

While Foreman's presumptuousness about speaking for the "vast majority" of Earth First! (and by extension, deep ecologists and even *other species*) is only manipulation, his acceptance of the label of fascist is telling. There is a definite connection between fascism and his perception of world corporate genocide as nature taking its course. It is also fascistic to call for an end to immigration and the closing of borders, especially to exclude those who are fleeing a war waged by one's own country. (Perhaps Earth First!

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ety's Order?" Society's "order" includes the business-as-usual of work slavery and ecological devastation that Earth First! and many others spend their time fighting, but no matter. And he posits the horrible situation in Lebanon as an example of what happens in the absence of a strong centralized state. There were many responses to Schmookler from the Earth First! ranks and elsewhere; most were suppressed by the editors, though Schmookler had a chance to quote from some of them in order to answer his invisible critics. Three different people told us that they had responded, two of them Earth First!ers, but their letters never saw the light of day. One, Jack Straw (c/o The Daily Battle, 2000 Center Street #1200, Berkeley, CA 94704), replied to Schmookler that "Governors and presidents (not the abstract 'we' you refer to) send out the National Guard not to protect the many against the terrorist few, but to guard private property..." All of this was lost on Schmookler, but the ranks of the opposition never got a chance to make up their own minds by hearing different points of view.

The points of view they heard were those of luminaries, approved by the editor—particularly Edward Abbey, who blamed the slaughter in Lebanon on overpopulation and whose defense of anarchy sounded more like a portrait of vigilantism. Even regular contributor Christopher Manes, whose writing is frequently of the most thoughtful and careful quality, and who accurately blamed the crisis in Lebanon not on statelessness but on the state, failed to point out the patterns of inter-imperial rivalry and the present role of the U.S. empire and its client state Israel in the unraveling and slaughter occurring throughout the Middle East. Again, the lack of an understanding (or at least an articulation) of the social-political context, even from the anarchist-oriented wing of Earth First!, is startling.

As for Schmookler, he is only a U.S. nationalist and a shill for authoritarian power. On Central America, for example, Schmookler wrote in the February 11, 1985 issue of *New Options* (in a piece entitled "Remember U.S. Interests") that "nations...do not have the luxury of being completely unselfish...And it is not desirable for people of goodwill to debate U.S. foreign policy without regard to American interests." He admits that he does not know "what vital American interests are at stake in Central America," but he hypocritically asserts that the U.S. "plays an overall positive role" not only in the world, but "in the evolution of our species." Here, again, is the imperialist Darwin, and Spencer! "The world would be a worse place," we are lectured, "if the United States disappeared overnight." He might ask the opinion of the 100,000 Guatemalans murdered by U.S.-backed dictatorships since the CIA overthrow of their government in 1954, or the 50,000 Salvadorans butchered by another U.S. client, with U.S. support, since 1980, and on and on. But of course they can't reply. Schmookler decides that since the U.S. shouldn't disappear, we must understand that sometimes "our vital interests and the rights of others" may conflict, making necessary "agonizing moral choices." This is an apology for systematic genocide.

Foreman's touting of this "ecological thinker" seems to indicate not only a conservative, imperialist element among contemporary environmentalists, but a desire to head off the healthy, anti-authoritarian currents in the group that recognize the link between U.S. corporate empire, international imperialist conflict, the state, and the ecological crisis. But the "big guns" he employs are rather pitiful.

will volunteer to help round up those courageous people in the Sanctuary movement who, in the best tradition of the anti-slavery underground railroad, are aiding the refugees. Or they can help the KKK apprehend Guatemalan Indians, an animist, land-based people, fleeing a holocaust perpetrated with the active involvement of the U.S.) And, finally, smearing all anti-capitalism or critiques of global corporate empire as "an ossified leftist worldview that blames everything on the corporations" (as Foreman does in the 3/21/87 *Earth First!*) is reminiscent of the anti-communist pseudo-radicalism of the nazis themselves. Certainly, "capitalists are not the only problem" (Foreman, in the 6/21/87 *Earth First!*). But Foreman should realize that the problem won't be resolved as long as capital exists. To deny the connection between chopping down trees and chopping down peasants is to show willful ignorance and to act in silent complicity with murderers.

The Tattered Food Web

The entire question of food is integral to deep ecology because food is essential to life. As Gary Snyder writes in the Sessions/Devall anthology, "The shimmering food-chain, food-web, is the scary, beautiful condition of the biosphere...Eating is truly a sacrament." Anti-Malthusian and Malthusian will agree that the food-web is now in tatters. Agriculture is now a destructive industry and people are going hungry in enormous numbers. Everyone agrees that fundamental imbalances underlie this situation. But what are they?

Foreman argues (in his interview) that "domesticating plants and animals is violence of the worst kind because it twists their natural evolutionary potential." Only a return to hunter-gathering and the die off of the vast majority of people will bring things back into balance. Even gardening is a "violent activity." This viewpoint is not much of an option for the majority of us, and it's hardly going to be pursued. (In any case it is the old alienated dualism operating, that denies humans any place in nature, denies what we have evolved into; it's like decrying the mammals for eating dinosaur eggs. I am reminded of Kirkpatrick Sale's droll comment in *Human Scale* that "one must not, after all, confuse the ecological ideal of living *within* nature with the somewhat more Eastern notion, recently popular here among the hair shirt wing of the back-to-nature people, of living under it."

The deep ecologist argument, based on Catton's carrying capacity theory, is that there is no longer enough to go around in anything resembling a renewable, sustainable manner. Any suspicion that starvation might presently be the result of distribution and other social conflicts alone, rather than natural limits, is considered a "humanist," "anthropocentric" (and probably Marxist) fantasy. (Perhaps there are deep ecologists who do not agree, but we haven't heard of them.)

The population question is a numbers game, with many variables and many possible interpretations, as a perusal of the literature will confirm. Population has skyrocketed in the last few centuries. In the last century world population has more than doubled

and has just hit the five billion mark. The growth in the birth rate peaked during 19601965 and has been slowly falling. In 1980 it was about 2.17 percent and is expected to decline to about 1.84 percent by the year 2000. Growth in developed countries has been slowly grinding to a halt, which means that by the end of the century, when we reach six billion, five billion will be in the Third World.

The world population growth rate has been declining even more than was previously expected, but nevertheless, population is still rising in overall numbers, from about 76 million a year at the present time to an expected 93 million at the century's end. One demographic forecast is that if the world could reach replacement-level fertility by the year 2000, the world's population would stabilize at around eight and a half billion towards the year 2100." As Paul Harrison observes in his book *Inside the Third World* (Penguin, 1982), this means "that timing, in the battle to beat population growth, is of the essence," since the longer population stabilization takes, the higher the population will be down the line.

He describes the population growth as a result of the "demographic transition," as a result of a decline in the death rate rather than a boom in the birth rate, which is falling though much more slowly. As the birth rate slows, it should eventually catch up with the death rate decline, but it could take a good century or more in the Third World. There is some hope in the fact that the birth rate is slowing down even while the population in the Third World is actually much younger than before, but the overall picture is not optimistic at all.

"All the threats to the land, with the possible exception of salinization, are caused by poverty and overpopulation," writes Harrison, "and, in turn, they accentuate poverty." His book is a bleak picture of the state of the Third World and its implications for all of us. "Man and the land in poor countries are locked in a destructive and seemingly inescapable relationship, in which they are spiraling down, in self-fueling motion, towards mutual destruction." The loss of land appears to be the main cause for the undermining of overall well-being—"the dispossession of small holders, increasing landlessness, mechanization, increasing population" all go together. What is happening in the Third World today seems to parallel the industrialization of Europe, which went through dispossession, landlessness, and population growth. But this time the consequences are further down the spiral for the whole world.

And yet Harrison still maintains that the entire crisis could at least have been lessened, "first and foremost by radical land reform and the establishment of cooperatives, giving everyone who lives on the land access to the land and its produce." Harrison is no Zapatista or agrarian revolutionary, but he recognizes the need to promote subsistence, equity in resources and basic health. In most countries, though, "government policies have been the direct opposite, we find land reform has been either corrupted or a cover for the actual undermining of subsistence.

"There is really no such thing as world hunger," Harrison observes, "but only hunger of particular areas and particular social groups. The total food resources available in the world would be perfectly adequate to feed everyone properly if; they were fairly

distributed among nations and social groups." This is Kirkpatrick Sale's argument in human Scale, that there is more than enough to go around, and that "there is not a single country to which the U.S. exports grains that could not grow those grains itself." This view is also held by Frances Moore Lappe and Joseph Collins, whose 1978 book *Food First: Beyond the Myth of Scarcity* (dismissed as "absurd" in a one-liner by Foreman) is perhaps the most sophisticated anti-Malthusian argument available.

Despite some shortcomings in their view (a marked social-democratic, pro-development stance and a lack of criticality concerning industrialism as a system and socialist countries like China, in particular), their arguments are very persuasive and bring together a critique of industrial agriculture and the global market that would help deep ecologists to ask deeper questions about hunger.[10] The notion that present scarcity is generated by overpopulation cannot be substantiated, they argue; not that there are no natural limits, but that "the earth's natural limits are not to blame." The world is presently producing enough grain to supply everyone's caloric and protein needs. (A third of it goes to livestock.) And these figures do not include the many other nutritious foods available, such as beans, nuts, fruits, vegetables, root crops, and grass-fed meat. The Malthusian argument "is worse than a distortion," they argue, since it shifts the blame to "natural limits" and to the hungry in a world where "surplus" food stocks are dumped like any other commodity to increase their profitability. Boring left wing humanism notwithstanding, the refusal to understand that food has become a commodity is to mystify the modern shredding of the sacred food web.

The Global Supermarket

What are the causes of hunger? Historically, we should remember that colonialism wrecked subsistence in most countries, bringing with it an emerging capitalist economy,

[10] One of the book's greatest shortcomings is probably its failure to address the problem of the rising aspirations in the Third World for a highly industrialized society, based on the same positivist-scientistic religion that has led the western world to the technological impasse it presently faces. Perhaps it was beyond the scope of a book which focused on discrediting the myths of world hunger, but industrialization and the industrialization of culture, from a social as well as an ecological point of view are as serious as any other faced in the Third World must not follow the European or U.S. or, socialist bloc models for industrialization. As Rudolf Bahro writes in *Socialism and Survival*, "On a world scale industrialization cannot be achieved any longer," since the earth's natural limits will not allow the growing world population to live like the current North American middle class. "And at the national level industrialization can no longer solve any problems of general interest. As has been shown in the last decade—the so-called decade of development-industrialization will only increase the sum of absolute impoverishment. The conclusion is to disengage, not for a better industrialization, but for a different type of civilization..." What should "the wretched of the earth...direct themselves towards?" Bahro asks. "Shouldn't the inhabitants of the ranchos organize for something very similar to the Old Testament exodus from Egypt: an outbreak back to the countryside?" The monster we face, therefore, is not simply plunder and inequitable distribution. "The monster is our industrial system, our industrial way of life itself." (*Socialism and Survival*, Heretic Books, 1982)

wage system, cash crops and monoculture, destruction of traditional economies, forms of sustainable agriculture, as well as the destruction of people's basic land skills with their reduction to plantation workers. With the traumatic destruction of indigenous cultures came a desperate acceptance of and desire for the industrialized goods of western commodity society. Contrived by colonialism, this recipe for disaster accounts for the world crisis we are now witnessing.

Today powerlessness over their lives and land is leading the people of the Third World to hunger and despair. Large landholders control the vast majority of the land in poor countries (and rich ones as well). They are also the least productive farmers. In 83 countries some three percent of landholders control 79 percent of all farmland. Their yields are lower, consistently so, than those of small landowners. Much of their land is left unplanted and is held to keep others from using it to compete on the market. A Colombian study in 1960 showed that the largest landholders, in control of 70 percent of the land, planted only six percent of their land.

Peasants, driven from the land by large landholders, as in Central America and particularly El Salvador, are driven up the mountainsides into infertile lands where to eke out a living, they cause erosion and generalized destruction of the land. When they try to regain their lands, they are shot down either by paid mercenaries or the official army and police. Or they flee to the cities and thus aggravate the problem of urbanization.

In Kenya in 1970, "3,175 large farms owned by Europeans, individual Africans, corporations and some cooperatives, occupied 2.69 million hectares of the best land, while the country's 777,000 smallholders were crowded into only 2.65 million hectares," Harrison reports. "Even among the latter there were great disparities: the 52 percent with farms below two hectares occupied only 15 percent of the land, while the top 7 percent took up more than a third of the total." Kenya exports cotton, tea, tobacco, coffee, and (Del Monte) pineapple, while its people go hungry. Privatizing land holdings and destroying older traditions of community mutualism has undermined subsistence throughout Africa and Asia. As a U.N. report on the conditions of the Sahel (Mauritania, Mali; Niger and Chad) states, "All it now takes is a year or two of short rain and what is left lands in the hands of a few individuals." Drought in Africa was part of a millennia-long cycle. But it was cash crop exploitation, a market economy and taxation that led to starvation there rather than drought. "Ships in the Dakar port bringing in 'relief food (during the hunger crisis in the 1970s) departed with stores of peanuts, cotton, vegetables and meats," write Lappe and Collins. "Of the hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of agricultural goods the Sahel exported during the drought, over 60 percent went to consumers in Europe and North America and the rest to the elites in other African countries." In Chad an *increase* in cotton production went hand in hand with mass hunger. The increase in cotton production throughout the Sahel led a French nutritionist to remark, "If people were starving, it was not for lack of cotton."

Harrison's study confirms Lappe and Collins' argument. "Much of the best land that should be used for domestic food production in the developing countries is growing

cash crops for the West," he writes, and "five of the most common, sugar, tobacco, coffee, cocoa, tea, are not doing the West much good either." Cattle production for consumption by the imperial metropolis also undermines local subsistence Harrison observes. "'Sheep eat men,' the peasants displaced by enclosures of common land in England used to complain. Cash crops eat men in much of the developing world."

Even during the 1973–1974 hunger crisis there was no shortage of food, according to Sale. In Bangladesh, frequently referred to as the model for the Maithusian overpopulation argument (and where 90 percent of the land is worked by sharecroppers and laborers), many people starved after the 1974 floods while hoarders stacked up four million tons of rice because the majority was too poor to buy it. The cash crops themselves bring currency or goods into the agro-exporting countries, but this money goes to buy industrial-consumer goods like refrigerators, air conditioners, cars, and refined foods for the elites, as well as to pay for a booming arms race (mostly to repress their own populations). Multinationals, meanwhile, are now taking at least seven billion dollars a year more from the Third World in official payments than they are putting back in, "and probably a good deal more via transfer payments," notes Harrison.[11]

Cash crops go to feed the global supermarket, particularly in the metropolis, and reap huge profits for industrialization of the planet by international capital.[12] Mexican soil and labor are already supplying one-half to two-thirds of the U.S. market for many winter and early spring vegetables. The shift from local consumption to production for export to the U.S. is astonishing. In operations mostly financed and contracted by U.S. corporations, from 1960 to 1976 onion imports to the U.S. increased over five times to 95 million pounds; cucumber imports went from under nine-million pounds to 196 million pounds. From 1960 to 1972 eggplant imports multiplied ten times, squash 43 times. Frozen strawberries and cantaloupe from Mexico represent a third of U.S. annual consumption, and about half of the winter tomatoes sold here are Mexican. Meanwhile, agriculture for local consumption is being squeezed out, raising prices of basic staples.

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[11] Harrison comments that if one were to consider the idea of reparations to the Third World for exploitation and damage done, the total "would probably be astronomical." To give an idea, he mentions Chile. There, under the government of Salvador Allende, economists, deciding on compensation costs that would be paid to multinational corporations for nationalizing copper holdings, "estimated that the companies had made excess profits of $774 million and that far from having a right to any compensation, the companies actually owed Chile $378 million." Of course, the United States quickly put an end to this kind of economic speculation.

[12] Actually, multinational corporations are attempting to shift the global supermarket into the Third World as well. India, for example, has a sizable middle class and modern economy, perhaps with as many as 50 million people "who can consume on the level with most Americans and Western Europeans," according to one corporate advisor quoted by Lappe and Collins. Many multinationals are rapidly buying out and wrecking local food producing concerns and pushing their high energy-consuming, less nutritious products on the Third World. The distribution of food within Third World countries is as uneven as the discrepancy between them and the industrialized nations, and it is getting worse, as the figures in Harrison's book show.

One half to one third of total meat production in Central America and the Dominican Republic is exported, principally to the U.S. In Costa Rica meat consumption declined as exports to the U.S. grew, much of it going to fast food hamburgers.[13] Guatemala, Ecuador, and to some extent Mexico are being turned into major flower exporters for the global supermarket. Brazil has increased production of soybeans to be fed to American and Japanese livestock by more than twentyfold in the last decade, Sale reports, "while its production of food crops has already declined." In northeast Brazil, according to Harrison, "dense stands of thick green sugar cane wave their silvery tassels in the breeze, while the laborers who plant and cut it are squeezed onto the roadsides in their little huts and have no room for even a few vegetables."[14]

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[13] In Costa Rica, beef production nearly quadrupled between 1960 and 1980, but local consumption declined by almost 40 percent. "Guatemala and Honduras followed the same pattern," writes Albert L. Huebner. "So did Nicaragua until 1979, when the Somoza dictatorship was overthrown. Under that plundering regime, beef production increased threefold after 1960, but beef exports increased nearly six-fold. The Somoza family owned one-fourth of the country's farmland, as well as six beef-importing companies in Miami." (See "World Hunger Myths: Taking Food From the Poor's Mouths," Albert L. Huebner, *The Nation*, June 22, 1985.) In light of such looting, it should become clearer, even to the dimmest deep ecologist one would hope, why nationalist regimes that cease to serve as simple conduits for massive U.S. corporate exploitation come under such powerful attack—Guatemala in 1954, Chile in 1973, and now Nicaragua, to name just a few. Ironically, in contrast to Dave Foreman's paranoid desire to protect "the resources we have" in the U.S. from famished Latin Americans, the State Department philosophy since the 1950's has been to rely on various police states and to hold back "nationalistic regimes" that might be more responsive to "increasing popular demand for immediate improvement in the low living standards of the masses," in order to "protect our resources"—in their countries! Hence the current genocidal war against Central America. (See "The Scandals of 1986," by Noam Chomsky, in the Spring/Summer 1987 *Our Generation*. Also his *Turning the Tide: U.S. Intervention in Central America and the Struggle for Peace*, South End Press, 1985 which should be read by every deep ecologist.)

Despite many informative articles, and much activity in behalf of rainforests, the connection between human suffering and habitat destruction is rarely made in *Earth First!* For information on rainforests write the Rainforest Action Network, 300 Broadway, Suite 28, San Francisco, CA 94133. The World Rainforest Report appears regularly as a supplement in *Earth First!*, but has a somewhat different perspective, as far as I can tell, on the population question. A recent supplement contains an article on deforestation in the Philippines which stresses that while population pressure "has been the common scapegoat for many ills in developing countries," and while such pressure "will have a direct impact on forest destruction in the Philippines," it is poverty that underlies the problem. The way to promote smaller families, the author argues, is "to provide livelihoods allowing for a life of dignity." Despite serious population increase, "existing sources would have sufficed" in many situations "had there been equitable distribution." He gives as an example the island of Palawan, where the upland forests are being destroyed by poor farmers while the lowlands, held by absentee landlords, sit idle.

[14] This is not the image of world hunger held by most North Americans. Rather, the U.S. is seen as the "breadbasket of the world," feeding the poor nations and keeping them from even more severe misery than they are currently undergoing. "The truth," writes Huebner in the article cited above, "is quite different." In 1978, for example, "a representative year between periods of famine, most U.S. agricultural exports went to well-fed nations, not to those where malnutrition is pervasive. And for all the importance placed on breadbaskets, only one fifth of the grain in international trade goes to less-developed countries." If We look at protein deficiency, which, according to world hunger analyst George Borgstrom, "must be regarded as the chief nutritional deficiency of the world," protein is flowing

In this scenario not even increased food production serves to help the hungry. As Lappe and Collins demonstrate, "the increase in poverty has been associated not with a fall but with a rise in cereal production per head, the main component of the diet of the poor." So the image of Green Revolution technology (drawn for example by Catton) as causing a population increase and subsequent destruction of carrying capacity is a fiction. The Green Revolution is utilized by large landholders to produce for the global supermarket, not to feed people locally. It increases hunger by bringing the industrial revolution to agriculture, by destroying subsistence, agricultural and genetic diversity, and by creating dependence on chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and machinery—and on the corporations that produce them.

Nor is toxic-chemical agriculture a result of population pressure. The U.S. uses one billion pounds of toxic pesticides, herbicides and fungicides annually—some thirty percent of world consumption. One third goes to golf courses, parks, and lawns. Only five percent of crop and pastureland is treated with pesticides, fifteen percent with herbicides and .05 percent with fungicides. One half of pesticides go on non-food crops. Cotton alone receives 47 percent of all insecticides used. Despite a tenfold increase in use of such agents, crop loss to pests has remained about the same since the 1940s. And even with no use of such agents, crop loss figures would only rise slightly, if at all. A third of all pesticides produced, some of them illegal in the U.S., go to the Third World, but they come back to haunt us with our morning coffee and cantaloupe.

So toxic agriculture is not a function of subsistence but of corporate profits. To link the two in a Malthusian argument is to indirectly line up with the Wall Street Journal, which argued that the disaster at Bhopal was unfortunate but a necessary risk in order

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from the poor to the rich nations. "Rather than the rich feeding the poor," writes Huebner, "the poor feed the rich."

The U.S., for example, imports more meat than it exports; in 1977, it exported about $600 billion, but imported twice that amount. U.S. imports of fish have risen as well, doubling since the 1950s. During 1971, when a previous famine wracked Africa, 56 million pounds of fish were exported from the hardest hit regions. In Malaysia, despite "a substantial increase in the total catch" between 1967 and 1975, "per capita fish consumption dropped by 30 percent. In Thailand and the Philippines, seafood exports have also increased rapidly while local consumption has declined." "Because the poor are feeding the rich," Huebner concludes, "famine in many parts of the world will increase." And increasing exports, which is the statist strategy, will only exacerbate the problem. Africa offers "a striking illustration," according to Hubner. "Media accounts portray the continent's food problem as a blend of drought, disease, overpopulation, political instability and inefficient peasant farming. The prevailing belief is that Africa is a basket case which will survive only through massive, open-ended aid. In fact, it is a rich and steady source of crops consumed daily in the advanced nations—meat, vegetables, tea, coffee, cocoa, sugar—and even of fresh flowers for the dinner table. Increased exports will profit international agribusiness, which dominates Third World agricultural production, and will maintain the large landholders there, but it won't feed hungry Africans."

The strategy of self-sufficiency, while a "more promising" one, he explains, is also flawed: "self-sufficiency in less-developed countries can't happen until it is practiced by the: developed nations and they relinquish their control of the world food system...The question What can poor countries do to become self-sufficient? requires a small, but critical change to What can rich countries do to become self-sufficient?"

to feed people. Bhopal wasn't only a horrifying example of a technological civilization completely out of control, it was a corporate crime. It is those sorcerer's apprentices the capitalist corporations, we might remind these careless deep ecologists, who turn scarcity and starvation in one place into luxuries somewhere else. And where people resist the operations of this "economic freedom," the armed might of the state, complete with covert and overt operators, steps in to ensure that things remain just as they are and that business goes on as usual.

Under increasing attack, squeezed from all sides, the world's poor are having large families in a desperate attempt to get support in their old age, to obtain cheap labor power on their plots or in the labor market, and to overcome high infant mortality rates. In much of the world, another child is an economic benefit and will bring more income to the family than will be expended in the child's upkeep.[15] Yet there are also many indications that large families have an adverse effect on their members, who tend to be less nourished and in worse; health than smaller families. Furthermore, as Harrison observes, this short-term survival strategy has long-term social costs for the community and the country in land fragmentation, erosion, poverty and urbanization. The poor of the Third World are courting "long-term ruin to avoid immediate disaster."

The World Going to Hell

Whatever the basis of analysis, the prospects are indeed grim. One cannot help but agree with Catton's statement, "The time may be near when it will take an optimist to believe the future is uncertain." The world is going to hell.

And the optimism that might be found among certain investment strategists and technocrats is anything but reassuring. Industrialization continues unabated in its frenzied obliteration of life. Harrison sees overpopulation as one of several interlocking factors causing the present growing world crisis, and remarks that Malthus may yet have his say. "If a non-oil agricultural practice is not developed fast," he writes, "available food per capita will start to decline... If man does not conquer the population problem, nature will step in and do it for him." The *Food First* thesis supports the goal of a stabilized population but sees the population pressure more as a "symptom and aggravating factor" in the crisis. While these interpretations vary, their recommendations are similar.

[15] In some countries the lack of land, unemployment and plummeting wages have reversed this tendency, and population growth may be starting to bottom out. According to Harrison, Bali, Thailand, Indonesia and Egypt have seen significant drops in their growth rate due to a combination of landlessness, unemployment and vigorous family planning programs. Lappe and Collins argue, "In countries where the decline in birth rate has been significant, the causal factors do not appear to be direct birth control programs so much as a shift in resources toward the poorest groups." In countries such as Sri Lanka, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Egypt, Argentina, Uruguay, Costa Rica and Cuba, "most have, or once had, some national policies favoring the low-income groups, whereas in countries such as Brazil, Venezuela, the Philippines and Mexico, the well-being of low-income groups is diminishing and birth rates are not declining significantly."

Both views see a renewal of local subsistence and self-reliance as key, and both call for radical, sweeping land reform. This does not mean a simple redistribution, however, but the creation of cooperative, participatory and egalitarian societies aimed at helping the people at the very bottom. Lappe and Collins write that their perspective "is not a simple call to put food into hungry mouths." In fact, they oppose food aid because it does not reach the hungry, undermines revolt, and destroys local food production. They insist, rather, that "if enabling people to feed themselves is to be the priority, then all social relationships must be reconstructed." This amounts to a call for agrarian revolution.

First and foremost, such a revolution must liberate women. They are "the poorest of the poor," as Harrison says. They constitute "the largest group of landless laborers in the world," since even in cooperatives and land redistributions, they are frequently shut out. Industrialization and urbanization also hurt them the most, destroying their handicrafts and worsening the unjust division of labor to "the notorious double day" of wage work and household work. If they have fewer children, they suffer for lack of labor power; if they have more, they are overburdened and their health undermined.

The population question can never be addressed until having fewer children can become a reasonable option. That means freedom for women from male domination, and an agrarian social transformation that reunites agriculture and nutrition, renews self-reliance and subsistence, and creates equality. If deep ecologists can recognize that these social questions must be resolved in order to reconcile humanity with the natural world, that a whole earth vision must be grounded in the social, they will make the leap that they desire in their understanding and practice. Human liberation is integrally bound up with the liberation of nature, and therefore is truly "deep ecological."

It is a tenet of deep ecology that nature is "more complex than we can possibly know" (Sessions and Devall). In that case, deep ecologists should refrain from blanket statements about human populations, since no interpretation can presently be substantiated in any absolute terms. (So glib remarks about someone else's "die-off' only come from a *preference*, not a recognition of natural necessity. In such a case "theory" is nothing but mean-spirited ideology, with fascist implications—and helps, by the way, neither bears, whales nor rainforests). Catton says there are already too many people; Sale, on the other hand, argues that the entire world's population could fit into the U.S. with a density less than England's, and in the fertile agricultural regions with a density like that of Malta. The statistics to back up arguments grow exponentially.

Meanwhile, practical steps must be taken to stop the process by which the world and everything in it are being reduced to money, and finally, to toxic waste. "Letting nature take its course" by consigning people to starvation is not a solution even within its own terms, since the deteriorating situation described so vividly by Harrison (and others) won't go away when a few million—or many millions—die. The earth will continue; to be gouged, the forests leveled, and society's capacity to bring about change will be diminished.

Such Malthusianism is not even deep ecological since it neglects the totality of the habitat destroyed for all species in the wake of the famine and doesn't recognize that environmental desolation in one place affects natural integrity everywhere. (As if borders will make a difference after Abbey builds his Chinese Wall to keep the barbarians out, when the forests are down and the land and sea poisoned in Central America. And as hunger grows here in the imperial heartland, will these cowboys patrol the interstates to keep the hungry at bay? And will they soon start insisting that people be expelled from "their" country as "undesirables"?)

Despite the shortcomings of the book, in *The Conquest of Bread*, Kropotkin raised the issue that remains central today for social and ecological transformation. Bread, he said, "must be found for the people of the Revolution, and the question of bread must take precedence of all other questions. If it is settled in the interests of the people, the Revolution will be on the right road; for in solving the question of Bread we must accept the principle of equality, which will force itself upon us to the exclusion of every other solution." In answer to Kropotkin's profound observation, some among the deep ecologists would prefer to respond with a simple program: let them starve.

And perhaps they have a point. Perhaps there are too many people to live in a renewable manner. Perhaps the starvation of some is unavoidable. But as long as poor and tribal peoples around the globe starve while overfed, high energy consuming bankers sit in air conditioned high-rises in New York, in Paris, or Dakar, something is wrong. Before the poor of the world die of hunger—those little communities which are also small and unique parts of the whole picture, as Aldo Leopold might have said—let's deal with the neckties in the high-rises. It's nature's way too, after all, for people to pool their imagination and their desires to cooperate in making revolutionary change.

Sessions and Devall write that "Certain outlooks on politics and public policy flow naturally" from ecological consciousness. This is manifestly untrue. Ecology, as I have shown, is an ambiguous outlook, and can lead in many directions. Deep ecology is layered, as is all scientific thinking about the social, with all the ideological compost and decay of a crumbling civilization about to collapse or devolve into something even more horrible. Deep ecology, starting from an intuition about the unity of life, an intuition of primal traditions present in the undercurrents of this civilizations—claims to be a new paradigm, a philosophical and social system. This outlook enjoys increasing legitimacy in radical environmentalist circles as a coherent political perspective. Yet while deep ecology may draw from many profound sources in the long oral and written traditions of natural observation, there are many deep problems with it as well.

Deep ecology loves all that is wild and free, so I share an affinity with deep ecologists that has made this essay difficult to write. I have written this detailed critique because I find it troubling and depressing that a movement so courageously and persistently involved with direct action to defend the earth can simultaneously exhibit reactionary, inhuman politics and survivalist posturing. Deep ecologists, particularly Earth First!, have come to recognize the centrality of technology in the destruction of the earth. But

if they remain blind to the interrelatedness of capital and the state with the planetary megatechnic work pyramid that is devouring nature, they will become mired in an elitist warrior survivalism that will lead nowhere.

As long as deep ecology discerns the present apocalyptic period as the result of a species-wide "biotic exuberance" in the imagery of a fungus, it will remain in a mystical domain of original sin, misanthropy and Malthusian indifference to human suffering. This fatal error will not only serve to conceal the real structural sources of the present devastation—the system by which we all, dispossessed peasants and deep ecologists alike, court disaster by simply surviving in an increasingly constricted, deadened world—but will also undermine the chances for the human solidarity that might overcome it.

I believe that little by little (and perhaps already too late), people around the world are beginning to see these connections, to recognize that capital, technology and the state are an interlocking, armored juggernaut that must be dismantled and overthrown if we are to renew a life in harmony with nature and human dignity. They are also increasingly aware that we cannot go on "living" like this, that we are sawing the branch out from underneath ourselves. The mystique of technological progress must be fought in city and country, defending habitat and halting the toxic production process.

We cannot isolate one bioregion or watershed from another—they are all part of a living organism. And we cannot separate fundamental human needs from those of the planet because they are consonant with one another, not opposed. So the changes that we all desire must occur deep down, at the level of human society, or nothing will prevent capital from destroying nature entirely. If an intransigently radical, visionary, earth-centered culture that fights for the earth is to flourish; radical environmentalism must confront its own ideological contradictions before they crystallize into a religion, complete with high priests and leaders, and squander what may be our Last dwindling opportunities to stop this global megamachine and renew life.

—George Bradford

Quotations inserted as sidebars in original text

> "I take it as axiomatic that the only real hope for the continuation of diverse ecosystems on this planet is an enormous decline in human population...if the AIDS epidemic didn't exist, radical environmentalists would have to invent one."
>
> —Miss Ann Thropy, a regular columnist in *Earth First!* (very likely Dave Foreman, *EF!* editor himself), in the May 1, 1987 issue.

> "I am pleased to find the population problem discussed more and more in *Earth First!*. Aside from biological warfare, however, I haven't read of any solutions."
>
> —Suslositna Eddy, in an article in the March 20, 1987 *Earth First!*.

While I was proofing this text, a review of a feminist book on population, *Reproduction Rights and Wrongs* (Betsy Hartman, Harper & Row, 1987), came to my attention. According to reviewer Eleanor J. Bader, this "feminist critique of population control...attacks the banks, governments, and world agencies which perpetuate the myth that only by reducing our numbers will we tackle poverty, hunger, and disease." Hartman, like so many others, shows that this notion of population control puts the cart before the horse. The question of population can only be addressed, she argues, by improving maternal and child primary health care, along with sweeping improvements in people's lives through economic transformation and genuine land reform, and social improvements in the position of women. She uses several examples to demonstrate that the birth rate will decline "even when the gross national product per capita is low," when such policies, even in a limited form, are followed. The widespread, coercive measures of population control pursued by the U.S. and other international agencies and private foundations with Third World governments, on the other hand, undermine the health of women and children and ultimately exacerbate the problem. Even liberal reforms that "fail to deal with the unequal power relationships at the root of the problem" are destructive to the people affected by them and ultimately bound to fail. (See "A Feminist Analysis of Population Control," *The Guardian*, September 16; 1987.)

Related

- Statement from Alien-Nation in this issue [FE #327, Fall, 1987].
- *Live Wild Or Die*: The Other EF!, FE #330, Winter, 1988–89

Deep Ecology as Strategic Knowledge (1989)

Subtitle: A Letter to the Fifth Estate
Author: Miss Ann Thropy
Date: 1989
Source: Fifth Estate #331, Spring 1989. <fifthestate.org/archive/331-spring-1989/deep-ecology-as-strategic-knowledge>

Dear Fifth Estate:

As the author of "Population and AIDS"—the article that seems to have galvanized so much "anarchist" opposition to Earth First!—I can't help but attempt a brief response to George Bradford's wide-ranging critique of deep ecology in FE. Although it would be easy enough to get polemical about the rancor in Bradford's article, polemics are always a side show to the question at hand, which for deep ecology, at least, is the environmental crisis. What I'd like to do, then, is discuss the philosophic project

of deep ecology, particularly as it pertains to population. For by misconstruing the former, Bradford misrepresents the latter.

From Bradford's perspective, the problem with deep ecology is its unacknowledged entanglement with the embedded ideologies of advanced capitalist society; an entanglement mystified by the presumptuous claim to a privileged, non-ideological ground for understanding nature. He makes the somewhat threadbare argument (after Skolimowski, et al) that "any vision of nature and humanity's place in it that is the product of human discourse is by definition going to be to some degree 'anthropocentric.'" Yes, whatever deep ecology says is perforce "anthropocentric" in a weak, self-evident sense, but it doesn't follow that such discourse places humanity at the center of its ethics—that is, "anthropocentrism" in its strong, substantive sense. As Warwick Fox points out in a recent edition of The Trumpeter, this kind of tautological accusation "confuses the inescapable fact of our human identity...with the entirely avoidable possibility of human chauvinism." And if we are truly concerned with change, not epistemological conundrums, only the substantive sense is relevant to the environmental debate. This crisis is, after all, not based on the trivial fact that anything a man believes is by definition a belief held by a man, but on the specific ideologies of civilization, which can be analyzed and resisted.

This is a telling misunderstanding on Bradford's part. It suggests a presupposition that deep ecology should be a "totalized" philosophy, along traditional metaphysical lines. Philosophy seeks to make transparent the ground of its own possibility (and, of course, the instability of these bases drives the history of philosophy forward). But deep ecology isn't a philosophy in this totalized sense. It isn't creating an ontology, epistemology, axiology, etc. to totally explain and envelop Being. Professor Devall, in particular, has emphasized how a deep ecology position can issue from a variety of religious and ethical sources. I don't presume to speak for all deep ecologists, but it seems to me that deep ecology seeks "strategic knowledge" (to use Foucault's phrase), knowledge based on our existence here and now in this society directed at resisting the structuring of nature and human nature that civilization enforces. It doesn't offer ultimate truth, but an ethics of resistance, a "negative ethics," which flows out of the threat of the environmental crisis.

Given the nature of this threat, deep ecology sees the necessity of "decentering" mankind, of showing that the groundless axiologies of civilization are alibis for the accumulation of power by particular groups. Bradford skillfully exposes the capitalist alibi. Unfortunately, he completely neglects, or rather participates in, a more fundamental one, no doubt because of its superficial differences with capitalism. He argues that there are enough "resources" for all five billion large mammals of the species homo sapiens, but these necessities of life are being misappropriated by capital. And he may be right—but only if we ignore the whole question of wilderness and the right of other species to exist. By representing Earth as a resource for human exploitation, he perpetuates the basic alibi civilization has used to accumulate power since its origin. He naturalizes this anthropocentrism by using the rich imagery of evolutionary science:

just as it was natural for proto-mammals to hasten the extinction of dinosaurs, so too is it natural for humans to exterminate other species, destroy habitat, and exploit the Earth—as long as it's done by poor agricultural "anarchists" and not capitalists! This kind of mythic discourse masks the disjunction between natural selection, which always produces diversity and stability, and the accumulation of power that groups of humans deploy against the biosphere, and hence against our species' benefit, for their own benefit (even in the "benign" form of agricultural power).

In short, Bradford totalizes nature by following a representation of the world that civilization has always used as an alibi to accumulate power: the primacy of human welfare.

One can easily disprove the factual basis of this alibi (and FE has done its part over the years along these lines). But I only want to contrast Bradford's totalizing representation with deep ecology's negative ethics as applied to population. By defining the population problem only in terms of "human welfare" (how many people the Earth can feed), Bradford valorizes human life over its ecological context: wilderness. Any way you look at it, feeding today's population (generated as it was by medical and industrial technology), requires intensive agriculture, which precludes the existence of large wilderness and the process of natural selection therein. Bradford, then, identifies human welfare With a separation from wilderness; that is, the founding myth civilization uses to accumulate power. In contrast, in its role of resistance, deep ecology recognizes that putting wilderness ahead of human welfare is, paradoxically, the only effective way to promote human welfare—if we mean by the term the right to be free from the totalizing ideologies of civilization and the power-hungry groups they serve. Wilderness resists civilization's alibis; "human welfare" as a totalized value, as a telos, already belongs to them.

With this in mind, I'll go so far as to say that humanity became overpopulated the first time it picked up a plow and began its long, destructive trek to industrialism. It was the moment when representation was transformed into power formation. It is the lingering subtext to Bradford's outrage.

I welcome Bradford's critique of capitalism and technology as a step toward resistance and freedom. Unfortunately, he shrinks back at the idea that a critique of civilization's power relations must also include the relatively poor majority of humans, even though they elicit our compassion. Taking power from the gang of thugs who run this planet and giving it to the powerless (though it's something I for one would like to see, being powerless myself) won't solve the larger problem of power formations and their alibis. Only wilderness will do that, and therefore radical environmentalists follow strategies to preserve and expand wilderness, even if, as on the immigration issue, it coincidentally associates us with nationalism or other obnoxious ideologies.

Unless Bradford and other anarchists of the FE variety can accept this and recognize the role of wilderness in resisting civilization's power relations, any discussion between us will inevitably degenerate into fruitless attempts at conversion. An example of which, unfortunately, was Bradford's article.

Yours,
Miss Ann Thropy

Well, I wasn't brief after all. I hope you can use this anyway. By the way, in Bradford's article you incorrectly identified me as Dave—really, I sing much better than Foreman! A hint: I was the only EF!er Bradford had anything good to say about. I must be slipping. You can contact me through EF! Tucson (P.O. Box 5871, Tucson, AZ 85703) if you feel the urge.

Return of the Son of Deep Ecology (1989)

Subtitle: The Ethics of Permanent Crisis and the Permanent Crisis in Ethics
Author: George Bradford (David Watson)
Date: 1989
Source: Fifth Estate #331, Spring 1989. <fifthestate.org/archive/331-spring-1989/return-of-the-son-of-deep-ecology>

Introduction

The letter above ["Deep Ecology as Strategic Knowledge," FE #331, Spring, 1989] was sent to the *Fifth Estate* last year in response to the essay I wrote, "How Deep Is Deep Ecology? A Challenge to Radical Environmentalism" (FE #327, Fall 1987). I had a brief correspondence with the author (who, interestingly, admitted to being an EF! man), and had planned to print his letter with several others from EF!ers (we eventually printed a selection of them in the Summer 1988 FE). The more I looked at "Miss Ann's" (rather, Mr. Ann's) letter, with its claims to an anti-technological, primitivist, even anarchist perspective, the more I realized its appropriateness as a starting point for my essay. However unkind one may judge me for using a relatively short letter as the focus for a long critical essay, I think the letter so representative of the entire range of problems with the deep ecology movement that I think the temptation is one worth following. If the form is strange, I can only hope that the ideas in the essay are important enough to overcome this problem. The form is in part a result of the shorthand manner in which deep ecologists tend to evade a genuinely critical dialogue. Deep ecology (DE) ideology appears to deflect criticism the way religious dogma does, by raising its voice over all others in defense of its intuitions and simply repeating its assertions (hallelujah and amen), as well as by conveniently misrepresenting the views of its critics.

With this in mind, it is significant that Mr. Ann assiduously avoids or simply dismisses the substantive political questions raised by my essay to focus on more oblique philosophical points, taking a couple of minor parenthetical asides far enough out of

their context to paint me as a calculating "resourcist" willing to steam shovel what is left of wilderness for a world of wall-to-wall wheat. Let me assure him, deep ecologists in general, and the readers that I am not concealing a bulldozer in my backyard. Readers familiar with the direction of the Fifth Estate over the last decade will need no reassurances.

A common technique of debater trickery is to wrap oneself in the american flag (or the red flag). I think that Mr. A. and other deep ecologists have done this with the idea of wilderness. Can anyone who has read my essay really believe, for example, that I reduce this entire discussion to the allocation of resources, simply representing "earth as resource for human exploitation," thus perpetuating the ideologies that legitimate Power? Or that I "totalize nature" by valorizing "human life over its ecological context" and by identifying "human welfare with the separation from wilderness?" Isn't it clear in my critique of dualism that for me the notion of a human life or well-being outside of its ecological context is a meaningless construct? Isn't it obvious that the defense of wilderness and biodiversity are not in opposition to human well-being, but are, on the contrary, fundamental human values?

For the last decade I have participated in several projects that explicitly call for the deconstruction of technological civilization and for a reconciliation with the natural world. Accordingly, I have opposed all development of wilderness and even of undeveloped pastoral lands (even empty lots in the city for that matter!). I favor withdrawal of construction from the fringes of wild areas along with their proper restoration to original integrity. I need neither simplistically anthropocentric nor biocentric motives; nearly all the motives for preservation make sense: moral and aesthetic reasoning, the desire for self-preservation, a reverence for life. If I do not agree with the idea that rainforests should be protected in order to maintain a genetic "bank" for future bioengineering, that has more to do with a critique of and opposition to mass technology and instrumental civilization, a fear of what it means for human beings as much as for everything else, than it does with species "egalitarianism." The desire to protect forests, deserts and even remote places that I will probably never see flows from deep human values and a desire to defend the personhood of the planet and the planethood in me. In this sense, I see no separation with nature.

Likewise, I was surprised and disappointed to find my essay described as rancorous. If there was anger, I will have to admit that it was in reaction to seeing a radical defense of the natural world used to rationalize starvation and death squads (even if indirectly)for the victims of imperial plunder. I despise moral cant and smug, unfeeling privilege. But I actually went to great lengths in my essay to point out the many positive aspects of EF! and deep ecology and my affinities with them. I wrote it not so much to convert people but to make connections with them and thus begin a dialogue that had been shut out of the *EF! Journal* by an editor who claimed to represent the views of the whole group. Many of those connections have been very rewarding. If I was in error on any organizational aspects of the group, I could only start based on what I could surmise as an outsider; but after hearing from numerous EF! supporters,

critics and members how their letters and articles were suppressed and even changed to remove political views to which the editors objected, I don't think my assessment of organizational manipulation was that far off the mark.

Finally, my critic coyly dismisses polemics as "sideshows"; I disagree. The controversies going on aren't scholastic debating exercises, though they may appear academic to the uninitiated. They are crucial discussions that could have serious consequences for what seems to be a growing, and inevitable, environmental radicalism—indeed, for the growth of the whole radical movement in the next period. The kind of response that we at the FE have gotten from the several issues treating these questions is evidence enough that the people who are sitting in, creating community groups, canvassing, doing sabotage, publishing flyers, tree-sitting, and many other activities are reading and discussing the ideas, and developing ideas and voices of their own. It is to those people that I dedicate this essay.

A Deep Social Ecology?

The implications of a deep ecological vision as a broad, intuitive sensibility—a refusal of instrumental, commoditized relations with the Earth; the notion of kinship with the land and a land ethic; the understanding that the full realization of the personhood of the human subject and of the planet do not compete with one another but correspond; an affirmation of the primal, animist wisdom that places humanity within the web of life and not at the top of some hierarchy—the rediscovery of this constellation of insights is in my view a fundamental precondition for breaking out of the prison-house of urban-industrial civilization and creating a family of free cultures in harmony with one another and with the Earth.

The same goes for the idea of a social ecology, which implies an investigation into the social roots of our permanent crisis in culture and character, an articulation of the manifold forms of freedom and revolt expressed in and against history, and a radical refusal to be reduced to commodities, resources and machines ourselves. The adjectives accompanying the term ecology say enough to be suggestive of a new synthesis of primitive and modern, but they do not say enough to be exact. Turning them into platforms undermines their energies and broad promise.

Now every adherent claims a different spin on deep ecology, but as a philosophy and as a movement (which is how it presents itself) DE invites critiques by its very stance as the basis for a new metaphysics and "paradigm" for culture, as when Bill Devall and George Sessions state in their book, *Deep Ecology*, that it "goes beyond a limited piecemeal shallow approach to environmental problems and attempts to articulate a comprehensive religious and philosophical world view." DE's critics have not questioned its failure to be a "totalized" philosophy but rather its claim, through its unsubstantiated assertion of access to "deeper" truths by asking "deeper" questions, to be such a philosophy. DE's claims are quite ambitious. George Sessions characterizes it as one of "the two main post-modern philosophies of the future" (along with, of all

things, New Age!); and in his letter to the FE castigating us for not printing his 23-page diatribe against social ecologist Murray Bookchin, Bill Devall posits DE as the culmination of a history of progress, writing, "Fundamentally, deep ecology is about ontological questions. It is heir to the three great intellectual, perceptual revolutions in the West—Copernicus, Darwin, and ecological (Thoreau, Leopold)."[16]

Devall's formulation places him well within the Western ideology of scientific-technological progress and reveals how little DE offers as critique of ecological science to the degree that it participates in this ideology. One is reminded of the almost schoolbook discussion in Aldo Leopold's essay on the evolution of ethics, "The Land Ethic," in which he discusses what he sees as an expansion of ethics from classical times, defining modern politics and economics as "advanced symbioses in which the original free-for-all competition has been replaced, in part, by co-operative mechanisms with an ethical content."

As far as the history of history (and specifically of capital) goes, Leopold seems to have the chronology back ward.

Later, he writes that our attitudes towards the land "are still governed wholly by economic self-interest, just as social ethics were a century ago." While Leopold's criticism of economic motives is admirable, his description of progress is ingenuous. For what governs social ethics in modern America?

Leopold defines the environmental ethic as the result of progress in science, specifically in ecology: "We now know what was unknown to all the preceding caravans of generations," he writes, "that men [sic] are only fellow voyagers with other creatures in the odyssey of evolution. This new knowledge should have given us, by this time, a sense of kinship with fellow-creatures; a wish to live and let live; a sense of wonder over the magnitude and duration of the biotic enterprise." But of course this is not "new knowledge" at all; it is precisely what many former generations, among primal peoples, knew quite well. Progress is a lie; the idea of a mythic return (or revenge) corresponds more closely to the emerging animism and environmental ethic than the notion of scientific revolution. Scientific "progress" has played a central role in corroding the very connections that DE claims to affirm, which was a point of my original essay and which will be further explored here. So it is interesting to see a leading DE proponent resort to it.[17]

Deep ecologists claim to ask "why" more insistently and consistently than others, taking nothing for granted, as Arne Naess, the founder of this perspective, argues. It claims a neutral, privileged ground for itself beyond human concerns, analyzing humanity's relationship with nature and problems of society through ecological discourse. As one prominent Canadian deep ecologist, Alan R. Drengson, writes, it "applies ecological paradigms not only to plants and animals but also to human culture and its internal

[16] Bill Devall and George Sessions, *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered* (Peregrine Smith Books, 1985), page 65; George Sessions, "Deep Ecology and the New Age," *EF! Journal*, Mabon edition 1987; Bill Devall, personal correspondence to FE, 12/7/87, unpublished.

[17] Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (Ballantine Books, 1966), pages 238, 117.

and external relationships." This discipline thinks primarily "in biotic rather than social terms," as Kirkpatrick Sale characterized the distinction between deep ecology and its critics.[18]

But in any human discourse regarding our relationship to nature, all terms are social, and the scientific paradigms to which Drengson refers are themselves layered with the ideologies of the civilization that generated them. While deep ecologists claim to take nothing for granted, the terms by which they define their process of inquiry go themselves unquestioned. Assuming rather than critically examining the premise that human activities can be explained according to the tenets of ecological science, deep ecologists apply ecological models to everything, from the yearly migrations of birds to the forced migrations of war refugees. Any reference to social causes is met by accusations of "shallowness," since at some level at least ecological relations do underlie human society. But the real question isn't whether ecological relations in some way underlie "human culture and its internal and external relationships," the real question is whether ecological analysis is sufficient to explain human culture's history and conflicts. And in answering this question at least, deep ecologists have proven to be far shallower than their critics. (This is why in most ecological discussions of El Salvador, for example, the social struggle there is simply and simplistically described as the function of population pressure and what might be more fundamental causes such as land tenure and class conflict are missed.)

Ecological reductionism is not the only problem with the DE paradigm; the tendency to graft unexamined and gratuitous political positions onto it is another. Yet once DE spokesmen utter them, they become part of the program. One can count as examples statements by Naess that cultural diversity "requires advanced technology" and that it is "inevitable to maintain some fairly strong political institutions."[19]

I treated several such positions in my original essay, but rather than repeat what I wrote in the essay, I'll provide another example of such "deep" thinking which is steeped in innumerable political assumptions. Fritjof-Capra, a prominent writer on such matters, writes in an article entitled "Deep Ecology: A New Paradigm," that the "new thinking" has as its goal "to further economic development." Capra portrays the economy (another word, as someone aptly put it recently, for capitalism) in completely benign terms, describing it as "a living system composed of human beings and social organizations..." As for the relationship of technology to society, he argues that "certain tasks should never be left to computers," like those requiring "wisdom, compassion,

[18] "Interview with Arne Naess" (George Sessions), in Devall and Sessions, *Deep Ecology,* pages 74–77; Alan R. Drengson, "Developing Concepts of Environmental Relationships," in *Philosophical Inquiry,* Vol. VIII, No. 1–2 (Winter-Spring 1986), page 54; Kirkpatrick Sale, "Deep Ecology and Its Critics" *The Nation,* May 14, 1988.

[19] See Naess and Sessions, "Basic Principles of Deep Ecology," in Devall and Sessions, *Deep Ecology,* page 73; Naess, "Notes on the Politics of the Deep Ecology Movement," 1985, quoted by Richard Sylvan, "A Critique of Deep Ecology," *Discussion Papers in Environmental Philosophy,* Philosophy Department, Australian National University.

respect," etc. Hence, "Decisions and communications that require human qualities such as those of a judge or a general—will dehumanize our lives if they are made by computers. In particular, the use of computers in military technology should not be increased, but, on the contrary, should be radically reduced."

Quite a few assumptions here, I'd say, not the least of which is Capra's apparent faith that a new society guided by new thinking would include not only computers but even military technology, judges and generals! "It is tragic," Capra intones, "that our [sic] government and the business community [sic] have removed themselves very far from such considerations."[20] What is truly tragic is that so few biocentrists have any critique of or apparently even any visceral anger toward the very forces of domination and alienation that are reducing the planet to a petrochemical gulag. What is tragic is their failure to see that the "biotic terms" of ecology are patently inadequate even as those terms are indispensable. When Kirkpatrick Sale says in the article cited above, for example, that deep ecologists "regard the fundamental issue to be the destruction of nature and the suffering of the rapidly dying species and ecosystems as distinct from those who regard the basic issue as the absence of justice and the suffering of the human populations," he is imposing a contrived and gratuitous dualism on what is in reality a cluster of interlocking crises.

A Neutral Ground

Dualism runs rampant throughout DE, starting from its ambiguous contrast of nature and humanity. In this scenario humanity is seen as simply "one" with nature so that any discussion of humanity's specific problems is seen as "anthropocentric" and an affront to a biospheric egalitarianism that itself does not distinguish between history or differing levels of complexity. And yet at the same time, humanity is seen at least implicitly as a uniquely negative force and as in a polarity with nature. Starting from a legitimate revulsion against the destructiveness of civilization, DE takes for granted an economistic, "zero-sum" picture of the world and natural history, in which humanity can only thrive by making nature lose. This is essentially the world view of bourgeois civilization: "man" struggles against nature, carving progress out of rough, unyielding stone. In the DE view (at least at its extreme, among self-described misanthropes), the values of the poles are simply reversed, to the point that any modification of nature to serve human well-being is condemned. This attitude underlies the rejection of "humanism" (defined by them as the belief that human beings can do whatever they like with the natural world to aggrandize themselves).[21]

[20] Fritjof Capra, "Deep Ecology: A New Paradigm," *Earth Island Journal,* Fall 1987.

[21] Of course this does not keep even the misanthropists from arguing, as does Mr. A in his letter, that protection of the natural world actually serves genuine human values. A core element of DE is its claim to be a philosophy of ethical and spiritual "self-realization" for human beings (an anthropocentric goal if there ever was one). In fact DE originator Arne Naess has written that "with a more lofty image of maturity of humans, the appeal to serve deep, specifically human interests is in full harmony with the

The same dualism is played out in several overlapping polarities: from this ambiguous contrast of biocentrism and anthropocentrism come the polarities of intrinsic or inherent value in nature vs. utilitarian or instrumental value (value for human beings), biospheric egalitarianism and noninterference ("let nature be") vs. "resourcism" or "stewardship" (which as they paint it, implies a totally administered nature cultivated for the good of some undifferentiated human species' "need"), and "humanism" vs. wilderness and its values.

Starting from the notion of a philosophically neutral ground that can stand far enough outside of nature and society to judge them both as separate categories, Mr. Ann accuses me of trivializing DE's rejection of anthropocentrism with my comment that any human discourse on these matters is by definition going to be to some degree anthropocentric, "imposing as it does," I wrote in the passage truncated by my critic, "a human, symbolic discourse on the nonhuman." This observation is dismissed as an "epistemological conundrum." Such a "tautology" is not relevant, he argues; only a "substantive" ethical formulation is.

Forgive me if I happen to disagree. DE's claim to establish a biocentric ethic as opposed to an anthropocentric one "decenters" humanity ethically by assuming precisely a "totalized" picture of the universe which can serve as a vantage point for judgment. But if the problem of finding a neutral or privileged ground that can establish "non-anthropocentric" or intrinsic worth in nature and decenter humanity is an epistemological conundrum, it is one that plagues all of contemporary environmental philosophy. If we are to take seriously the statement by Devall and Sessions that "Nature is more complex than we now know and more complex than we possibly can know," we cannot take for granted or as neutral the discourse through which we apprehend nature.[22]

In his environmental history, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England,* William Cronon reveals the problems with the kind of dualism characteristic of DE. In social and ecological discourse, he points out, the question is not one of an untouched, "virgin" landscape contrasted with a human one, but between distinct "ways of belonging to an ecosystem." Such a perspective, he argues, would therefore "describe pre-colonial New England not as a virgin landscape of natural harmony but as a landscape whose essential characteristics were kept in equilibrium by

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norms of deep ecology" (from "Eco-philosophy VI", quoted by Sylvan). DE's followers may have done it more harm than its critics, but Naess and others did little to distance their politics from the statements of Foreman and others.

[22] Devall and Sessions, *Deep Ecology,* page 145. This is in line with Leopold's comment in "The Land Ethic" that "the biotic mechanism is so complex that its workings may never be fully understood" (page 241). In Space, Time and Gravitation, Arthur Eddington also raises the epistemological problem: "It is one thing for the human mind to extract from the phenomena of nature the laws which it has itself put into them; it may be a far harder thing to extract laws over which it has no control. It is even possible that laws which have not their origin in the mind may be irrational, and we can never succeed in formulating them."

the cultural practices of its human community."[23] Cronon quotes Thoreau, who writes in Walden that he would like to know "an entire heaven and an entire earth," "the entire poem" of nature. But this is not possible, Cronon argues. "Human and natural worlds are too entangled for us, and our historical landscape does not allow us to guess what the 'entire poem' of which he spoke might look like. To search for that poem would in fact be a mistake. Our project must be to locate a nature which is within rather than without history, for only by so doing can we find human communities which are inside rather than outside nature." Cronon is speaking to environmental historians, but his advice makes sense for those who would begin to discuss our relationship with the natural world and the present crisis in it.[24]

We must therefore show restraint and some humility in judgments about nature and society, especially where the prospect of mass death—someone else's, that is—comes in. Simply stated, it is one thing to argue that "nature knows best." It is quite another to assume that one philosophical current knows what is best for nature—right down to taking political positions calling for the closing of borders or letting people

[23] This is not to say that the landscape "needed" human intervention to maintain some kind of equilibrium. Nature, being what it is, becomes what it will become. In a much larger sense, there is no equilibrium, but only relative periods of equilibrium punctuated by change.

[24] William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (Hill and Wang, 1983) pages 12–15. In an article which just recently came to my attention and which has not been published as of this writing, Jim Cheney discusses precisely the error of trying to find "the entire poem" of nature. Comparing DE holism with the late classical stoic veneration of the cosmos, Cheney shows how both claim loyalties to an abstract totality by ultimately suppressing solidarity and community with particulars. But such positions mystify the important differences in human society and maintain these philosophical positions within the alienated realm from which they seek release. For the ancient stoics, only the "grammar of the cosmos" was real; by embedding themselves in this cosmic abstraction they escaped direct relations with the society around them, "the world of difference." One can see a parallel attitude in the common DE refrain that wilderness is the only "real world." Such ontological absolutism, in Cheney's words, "has left the realm of discourse altogether. The kind of understanding that is claimed (union of the mind with the whole of Nature or God) is quite ahistorical and quite Stoic in temperament. The understanding claimed is positioned with respect to neither the personal nor the social nor the historical contingencies within which that understanding arises." DE tends to surpass even ecological science, thus "bootstrapping" itself "into eternity."

Interestingly, for Cheney, this reveals a lack of radicalism in DE, and is ultimately, in his view, a "position of retreat." The stoics yearned for a home "in the breakup of the polis" while refusing to give up the privileges of that polis. "Read 'modernism' for the polis," he writes, and the problem of DE can be seen. Actually, the breakup of the polis can also be paralleled to the decline of the U.S. global power, and along with it the relative social peace and the facade of environmental protection that it afforded the imperial metropole. DE is in this sense a post-imperial current, which is why it exhibits both radical revolutionary and reactionary manifestations. In contrast to DE holism, Cheney argues, what is needed "is an environmental version of a 'politics of difference,'" which "would begin with an acknowledgment of otherness, of difference" rather than submerging it in a totalizing vision that puts the entire Earth first before any of the particularities are sorted out. Thus DE falls short of its intent to achieve authentic connectedness.

I do not do justice to Cheney's insights. When his article, "The Neo-Stoicism of Radical Environmentalism," is published, we will notify FE readers as to how they can obtain it.

starve. Such reasoning constitutes a kind of teleology based on assumed omniscience. The resonant remark by Aldo Leopold, "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community," then, provides no answers; it only poses a series of questions.[25]

Such a view, as Peter A. Fritzell writes in a very sensitive essay on the subject, "explains human actions as functions in and of evolving ecosystems only when those actions are consonant with the needs of other elements in such systems where consonant means conducive to the continued, healthy existence of all present species—as defined and determined by humans and human science." (my emphasis in the latter phrase) Commenting on Leopold's celebrated passage cited above, Fritzell observes, "Is man to determine when the biotic community is stable and beautiful? Or must man take counsel from other citizens of the community—not only pines, deer, and wolves but cheat grass, gypsy moths and rats? [Not to mention women!) Can man take anything other than human counsel with the other members of the land community? Can such counsel ever express more than the ecological interests of humans and the species they most closely identify with?"

Further on he remarks, "The paradoxes of wilderness preservation are less logical problems than they are communal concerns." And, I would add, concerns which are rooted in a matrix of social conflict and domination. Fritzell quotes Leopold, who sensed the same problem: "Does the pine stimulate my imagination and my hopes more deeply than the birch does? If so, is the difference in the trees, or in me?"[26]

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[25] Leopold, "The Land Ethic," in *A Sand County Almanac,* page 262.

[26] Peter A. Fritzell, "The Conflicts of Ecological Conscience," in *Companion to A Sand County Almanac,* J. Baird Callicott, editor (University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), pages 141–151. Arne Naess answers Leopold's question, "The beauty of a tree is as much in the tree as it is inside us." ("The Basics of Deep Ecology," in *Resurgence* No. 126, January-February 1988.) Sorry, but trees, and all of nature, have no need of beauty. They are what they are. They are beautiful to us because we are, and are not, what we are.

For having made an observation along the lines of Fritzell, Mr. Ann accuses me of making "threadbare" and tautological arguments "after Skolimowski, et al." I had never even heard of Henryk Skolimowski at the time, but upon reading that line, I immediately liked him. Eventually I ran across his name in late 1988 and sent him my essay. Skolimowski, the author of *Eco-Philosophy: Designing New Tactics for Living* (1981) and several other essays and monographs on environmental philosophy, quickly wrote back, sending me his book and other writings and a friendly letter, calling my critique of DE essentially "correct" and "on the right track." I have not had time to review the materials he sent except for an article he particularly recommended, "The Dogma of Anti-Anthropocentrism and Eco-philosophy" (*Environmental Ethics,* Vol. 6, 1984, pages 283–288). The essay is a commentary on a review of his book by George Sessions; interestingly, Skolimowski objects to what he considers a selective and self-serving distortion of his views as "heedlessly anthropocentric" to the point of "giving a carte blanche for the exploitation of other beings for the benefit of man." It is worth quoting from Skolimowski's response: "I am told that Western thinking is hopelessly anthropocentric and because of that we are shortchanging other species and other forms of life," he writes. "Agreed. I am told that we must think like a mountain, which Aldo Leopold has recommended. I am quite in sympathy with what he wanted to say, but not with what he actually did say. Unfortunately, we cannot think like a mountain; nor can we even assume that the mountain would like to think, like a mountain or otherwise...

The Problem of Intrinsic Value

The problem raised by Leopold concerning our relationship to the rest of nature underscores the problem of the intrinsic value of nature (a DE pillar) and the subsequent discussions of an environmental ethic now taking place among philosophers. Evolutionary and ecological science have revealed what primal peoples knew all along, that humanity is kin to the rest of creation, only a strand in the complex web of life, and dependent on the biotic stability and integrity of the whole. "The moral implications of this idea for human behavior were, to say the least, problematic," writes environmental historian Roderick Nash, "and philosophers after Leopold would devote hundreds of pages to the subject."[27]

Nash's estimate is conservative. The discussion of an environmental ethic and the problem of intrinsic value in nature has in fact become a veritable industry. It may be ironic, but it is certainly no accident, that much of the discussion around establishing a grounding for intrinsic value in nature and a non-anthropocentric ethics is to be found in books and journals outlining the catastrophic mass extinction of species and ecosys-

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"A more important point is this: all those claims which we make on behalf of others—the trees, the brooks, the mountains, the fields, the foxes, the whales, and the last, but not least, the dying cultures being decimated in the Amazonian forests—by whom are they made? With what kind of mandate, and from whom? If a mountain were to speak on behalf of all others, she might just as well shrug her shoulders and say: let it be as is; all things come and go; emerge and perish; all is natural; let natural forces prevail. It is also likely that the mountain would not want to talk on behalf of others. It is our peculiar propensity to do so. It is our peculiar moral burden to have to do so. We care for others because we feel we must...let me state it very clearly: all claims made on behalf of the biotic community are made by human beings; they are filtered by human sensitivities and by human compassion; they are based on our human sense of justice, on our human recognition of how things are and how they ought to be; they are pervaded with human values—all these claims are therefore deeply and profoundly embedded in our anthropocentrism, whether we can recognize this or not."

I tend to disagree with Skolimowski on Leopold's phrase; the idea of "thinking like a mountain" is a powerful image that can at least lay the basis for the series of questions that an ethic of environmental concern addresses. And if I am to think like a mountain, let it be like Mount St. Helens! (But my heart belongs to Pele at Kilauea.) Skolimowski's criticism of DE is nevertheless compelling. He says, "While it is right and noble to fight against the limitations and dangers of anthropocentric myopias, it may not be so right and noble to elevate the dogma of anti-anthropocentrism to the level of a new deity. I am reluctant to say it, but it has to be said clearly: there is a great deal of self-righteous and concealed arrogance among deep ecology proponents who want to tell everybody that they know better and that they are the only possessors of Truth." And he warns, "When one speaks on behalf of all creation (on behalf of all evolution in my parlance)—thus touching the subject which is so intricate, subtle and difficult—one must speak with caution." Of course it is precisely this caution which DE proponents seem to lack the most.

I detect significant differences between my ideas and focus and those of Skolimowski, judging from a quick glance at his book, but I will save comment for later. For his part, Skolimowski wrote that he felt that while my essay was "powerful," it was "not radical enough," partly because it did not articulate its own philosophy "in positive terms. Post-industrialism and anarchy are tired concepts. We need new concepts, visions and ideas that are fresh and charge us with new energies." When I review Henryk Skolimowski's work in the future, I will try to make this concern the focus of my discussion.

[27] Roderick Nash, "Aldo Leopold's Intellectual Heritage," in Callicott, *Companion*, page 82.

tems being carried out by the day-to-day operations of the industrial megamachine. Athena's owl flies, it appears, only at dusk.

Thus, the legal debate around giving "rights" to wilderness and other species signals their disappearance. Similarly, the elaboration of highly articulated ethical systems has only accompanied a widening swath of violence and destruction and the armoring of the human personality—such systems are mere pieties as far as capital accumulation is concerned. One would think, reading the literature of deep ecology, animal liberation and environmental ethics, that the rights of human beings have been firmly established, and must now be widened to accommodate a deeper land ethic—this in the age of mass exterminations of people in gas chambers, carpet bombings of whole populations, chemical-biological warfare and the threat of nuclear incineration in increasingly volatile gambles to defend the markets and resources of rival empires.

This actually was a major element of my original critique of DE: not its poetic identification with the natural world, but its naivete about Power, a naivete it inherited from the liberal environmental and conservation movements from which it emerged. One can only shake one's head upon reading how encouraged Arne Naess was after writing numerous "experts" about his DE platform, including "top people in ministries of oil and energy," when "many answered positively in relation to most or all points."[28] According to Naess, we are to be encouraged that "there is a philosophy of the man/nature relationship widely accepted among established experts responsible for environmental decisions " which will bring about "substantial change of present politics" to protect the Earth from "shortsighted human interests." This simplistic contrast of nature and human interest, shortsighted or otherwise, leaves Naess blind to the actual organization of Power, and to the subsequent operationalism of what we have called in the FE, after E.P. Thompson's formulation of the nuclear arms race, an exterminist civilization.

This is in no way to say that there is nothing to be affirmed in an environmental ethic. It is only to point out the limitations of ecological thinking and the anthropocentrism/biocentrism contrast as a tool of radical critique or as an alternative, new paradigm for thinking. The scientific naturalism upon which it rests is extremely contradictory and problematic; it is a knife with no handle. The permanent revolution of the methodological categories and language of science is a reflection of the constant transformations in technological apparatus and the commodity system by which capital itself expands. Science's description of the world is a description of its world; as Goethe knew, "everything factual is already theory."

Regarding this statement by Goethe, Theodore Roszak quotes twentieth century physicist Werner Heisenberg's comment, "In natural science the object of investigation is not nature as such, but nature exposed to man's mode of enquiry." The violence that the empirical method implies cannot be discerned by Heisenberg's bland statement;

[28] Arne Naess, "The Deep Ecology Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects," in *Philosophical Inquiry,* Vol. VIII No. 1–2 (Winter-Spring 1986), page 29.

one must look to its origins in the scientific revolution and the experimental method, as expressed by Francis Bacon, that "nature exhibits herself more clearly under the trials and vexations of art than when left to herself"—which was to say, when confined and tortured by mechanical devices. For Bacon it was necessary to "hound nature in her wanderings," without scruple "of entering and penetrating into these holes and corners, when the inquisition of truth is man's whole object."

As Carolyn Merchant, quoting from Bacon, explains, nature had to "be bound into 'service' and made a 'slave,' put 'in constraint' and 'molded' by the mechanical arts...The interrogation of witches as symbol for the interrogation of nature, the courtroom as model for its inquisition, and torture through mechanical devices as a tool for the subjugation of disorder were fundamental to the scientific method as power." Of course, the actual torture and murder of women as witches were contemporaneous with the rise of the scientific method, and both were in fact carried out by the same social class of men—indeed, by many of the very same men.

For these men, who not only "vexed nature" but slaughtered midwives and healers with their mechanical arts, "sexual politics helped to structure the nature of the empirical method that would produce a new form of knowledge and a new ideology of objectivity seemingly devoid of cultural and political assumptions," Merchant writes. Behind this new ideology of science lay the horrors of gynocide—a holocaust against hundreds of thousands, probably millions of women, from the 14th to the 18th century. The emerging mechanical and industrial technology developed by the rising scientific and economic elites to carry out their "vexations" of nature's body and the bodies of women helped to rapidly extend and consolidate this ideology's power. As Mary Daly has written in her powerful description of the witch burnings, "The escalation of technology and of persecution goose-stepped together in the 'march of progress.'"[29] To return to Goethe's remark, the facts which generate this torturous theory were themselves derived from a theory of torturers.

The Problem of Scientific Naturalism

The emergence of a new recognition of kinship with nature also has its source in part in that scientific naturalism—in fact one of the traditions of humanism itself—which tore human beings from their traditional metaphysical milieu and redefined them as natural objects.[30] But this 'objective" decentering of humanity doesn't stop there; it tends to erode the essentially spiritual intuition of inherent value as soon as it starts

[29] Goethe and Heisenberg quoted and discussed in Theodore Roszak, *Where the Wasteland Ends: Politics and Transcendence in Postindustrial Society* (Anchor Books, 1973), pages 303–304; Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (Harper and Row, 1980), pages 168–172; Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Meta-ethics of Radical Feminism* (Beacon Press, 1978), page 190.

[30] See Nicola Abbagnano's essay on humanism in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* Vol. 4, Paul Edwards, editor-in-chief (MacMillian Publishing Company and The Free Press, 1967).

to suggest it. Scientific naturalism provides no easy answers to the question raised by Leopold and plagues the contrast between what is anthropocentric and what is biocentric with the same epistemological problem that DE would like to forget: how to establish an ethical ground. Given the corrosiveness of scientific naturalism and the limitations of knowledge, on what ground could DE base its ethical (which is to say political) decisions?

This was at least in part what I was trying to say in my essay when I discussed *EF! Journal* editor Dave Foreman's remark that plant and animal domestication—even gardening—are "violence of the worst kind" because such activity "twists [species'] evolutionary potential." (In *Desert Solitaire*, a book that demonstrates poignantly, as the author might say, that there is a way of being right that is necessarily wrong, Foreman's mentor Edward Abbey even condemns potted plants for similar reasons.) By way of what he calls a "catastrophist" deep ecology (a euphemism for good old american survivalism), Foreman (like his epigone Mr. A.) argues that only a mass dieoff of human beings, and literal return to hunter-gatherer life by the small percentage that remains, will bring the world back into proper balance.

Disregarding for the moment that domestication, from the point of view of scientific naturalism, is as much an evolutionary potentiality as any other, I responded that such a scenario was not an option that even its adherents could seriously undertake. At any rate, such a mass die-off could prove to be even more catastrophic for the rest of nature, since no one rolls over and neatly expires in such numbers. As I have shown in my essay's discussion of the hunger question and a subsequent article on women's reproductive rights and the population question, such a Malthusian Final Solution only aggravates the problem of ecological collapse and social chaos—an argument being confirmed by what is currently happening in Africa.[31]

[31] See my original essay, "How Deep is Deep Ecology" (Fall 1987 FE), also my review of Betsy Hartmann's book *Reproductive Rights and Wrongs* (Harper and Row, 1987), "Women's Freedom: Key to the Population Question," [FE #328, Spring, 1988] and my exchange with William Catton, Jr., author of the *Neo-Malthusian Overshoot,* and Bill McCormick, in the Spring 1988 FE. None of the substantive discussions of the population question that have been raised in these articles have ever received even a mention in the *EF! Journal*. Apparently, DE proponents prefer to tar their critics as supporters of unlimited population expansion, as if one might not even agree that population stabilization and reduction is a long-term, positive goal, while looking for radical forms of social transformation to bring it about. Rather, the deep ecologist takes for granted the "zero-sum" model: human beings acting to defend their freedom, health and long-term well-being can only do so by devouring and destroying nature. The mainstream deep ecologist accepts the phallo-technocratic position of population control with little recognition of the complex of social issues that underlie runaway population growth. Such a position led George Sessions sanctimoniously to ask an audience of feminists at a conference on ecology and feminism just exactly what "they" were planning to do about overpopulation, as if feminism and women's freedom weren't exactly the answer to the question he was posing in the most bureaucratic, scientistic and phallocratic terms.

The catastrophist position, aiming at a totalized, ostensibly more "radical" critique, makes the same kind of error. Thus we see none other than Mr. A, writing under his cute female pseudonym in an article entitled "Technology and Mortality" (*EF! Journal*, Samhain 1986), showing the same environ-

In my essay, I commented that Foreman's view reflected an "alienated dualism...that denies humans any place in nature, denies what we have evolved into; it's like decrying the mammals for eating dinosaur eggs" (since, presumably, the egg-stealers were at least contributing to undermining the biotic diversity of the late Cretaceous period when dinosaurs were threatened and going extinct). Such an argument posits deep ecologists as the neutral arbiters of nature's balance and imposes a contrived egalitarianism that demands that humans do nothing to modify the environment or other species.[32]

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mentalist blindness to the question of women's freedom. Discussing the failure of technocratic, statist population control programs, he writes, "Family planning and education are linked to the technocratic control responsible for the ecological crisis in the first place, and deep ecologists should research ways to dissociate them from it." Here he shows his willful ignorance and sexism when he recommends that deep ecologists study what has already been thoroughly explored by numerous radical feminist critics. But his hypocrisy is also stunning; while admitting that he'd "use any method, technological or otherwise, to protect my child," he still goes on to advocate higher infant mortality and disease as a solution, since "the only just way to control population is to let natural processes do it." His ideological image of "natural processes" presupposes a nature which is utterly inert and static, in which human decision-making has no effect—a view which does not correspond to any sophisticated understanding of nature today. It is, rather, a thoroughly religious vision. Not surprisingly, linked to this view of nature as object is what is presupposed about woman's nature. Women play no role; either they are the passive matter of the (male-dominated) technocratic "family planning" (read: population control) institutions, or the passive and inert matter of nature's "natural course" (male-generated compulsory pregnancy) with its attendant disease, high birth and infant mortality rates, etc.). Here the "radical" wing of DE reverts to the actual politics of the very Parson Malthus himself, who opposed birth control because it would interfere with the "natural processes" at work in the famines and plagues sweeping away the underclasses. This elitist position posits the disease itself as a cure, thus assuring the continuation and deepening of the crisis it purports to address. In such a view, woman is never the subject of her own inquiry or her own practice. This from a "DE philosopher" referred to by *EF! Journal* publisher Foreman as one of the "avant-garde" (read: vanguard) of the avant garde of radical environmentalism (see "The Question of Growth in Earth First!," *EF! Journal*, Litha 1988). Two very valuable responses to such mystifications are to be found in Sandra Harding's *The Science Question in Feminism* (Cornell University Press, 1986) and Susan Griffin's *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her* (Harper and Row, 1978). When women make a revolution to take back stolen land and the health of their families from international capital, the "population problem" will find a low tech, ecologically sound, social resolution.

Foreman's comment is in an interview, "The Foreman of Radical Environmentalism," in the December 1987 *The Animals' Agenda.* For Abbey's remark, see *Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness* (Ballantine, 1968), page 27.

[32] Interestingly, the idea that dinosaurs were extinguished by voracious egg-stealing mammals has been completely rejected. See Michael J. Benton, "Dinosaur's Lucky Break," in *The Natural History Reader in Evolution*, Niles Eldredge, editor (Columbia University Press, 1987). And weirdly, the only actual response to my original essay in the pages of the *EF! Journal* was an obscure aside about this hypothetical "egg-stealing" line of mine in an article, "A Critical Mythology of Civilization," by yet another "philosopher in the vanguard of deep ecology thought" according to Foreman's introductory notes, Christoph Manes. In this article, the hapless philosopher Manes identifies critics of DE as "apologists for civilization" and uses my line—which is a reference to DE's implicit claim to an omniscient, neutral perspective vis-a-vis nature and evolution in its absolutist condemnation of even horticultural civilization—as evidence of my defense of progress! I allegedly argued that if the egg-stealing by mammals is natural, then "so too it is natural for humans to destroy habitat as part of their evolution to agricultural societies..." I can only surmise that these "vanguard" thinkers have absolutely no response

But from the point of view of the scientific naturalism on which ecology rests, there is no egalitarianism. As a well-known environmental philosopher, Holmes Rolston, writes, "Neither plants nor animals are moral agents." Not only that, "Bacteria and men do not recognize mutual obligations, nor do they have common interests." Organisms—be they viruses decimating seal populations in the North Sea, crown-of-thorns starfish scouring the Great Barrier Reef, the swallows that chase the bluebirds away from the house we erected for them, or mammals stealing dinosaurs eggs—do not recognize ethics, equality, or intrinsic worth. As Hegel put it, animals "do not stand stock still before things of sense as if these were things per se, with being in themselves: they despair of this reality altogether, and in complete assurance of the nothingness of things they fall-to without more ado and eat them up."

Exploring the problem of intrinsic value and scientific naturalism (or what he calls "holistic rationalism"), another environmental philosopher, J. Baird Callicott, argues that "if one defends one's intuition that biological impoverishment is objectively wrong by positing organic richness as objectively good, one might well be accused of temporal parochialism and a very subtle form of human arrogance."

He continues, "Considering our time as but an infinitesimal moment in the three and one-half billion year tenure of life on planet earth (let alone the possibility that earth may be but one of many planets to possess a biota), man's tendency to destroy other species might be viewed quite disinterestedly as a transitional stage in the earth's evolutionary odyssey. The Age of Reptiles came to a close in due course (for whatever reason) to be followed by the Age of Mammals. A holistic rationalist could not regret the massive die-off of the late Cretaceous because it made possible our yet richer mammal-populated world. The Age of Mammals may likewise end. But the 'laws' of organic evolution and of ecology (if any there be) will remain operative. Nonhuman life would go on even after nuclear holocaust. In time speciation would occur and species would radiate anew. Future 'intelligent' forms of life may even feel grateful, if not to us then to their God (or the Good), for making their world possible. The new Age (of Insects, perhaps) would eventually be just as diverse, orderly, harmonious, and stable and thus no less good than our current ecosystem with its present complement of species." Callicott's response to this troubling view is revealing: he has none. "With

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to my political and social critique and are reduced to distorting my arguments in order to evade my refutation of their Malthusianism. The "mythic discourse" in which I supposedly engage "flies in the face of the fact that there is nothing necessary about agricultural society," Manes writes, as if in evolutionary terms anything could be judged "necessary." Agriculture, he argues, "is the original system used to accumulate power" and is in no way related to human evolution, "which involves the selection and survival of genes, not habits." Here Manes only participates in a mechanistic mystification of inventing causalities out of coexistent phenomena (like the familiar historian's fallacy, post hoc ergo propter hoc, or "after this, therefore because of this") in regards to cultivation—an error he shares, interestingly, with John Zerzan, whose agricultural thesis I discuss elsewhere in this issue. But he also reverts to a reductionist biologism that disregards the intricate relationships between natural and cultural evolution and thus, in the manner of DE ideology that I have all along critiqued, concocts the very kind of mythology and its naturalization of history that he claims to demythologize.

friends like the holistic rationalists," he concludes, "species preservation needs no enemies."[33] But at a minimum his observations suggest the tenuousness and inadequacy of ecological science as the sole basis for a social critique or ethical (that is, political) action, thus leaving open the question of those other sources from which such action might come. As Elliot Sober has argued (in an essay in part replying to Callicott), "to the degree that 'natural' means anything biologically, it means very little ethically. And conversely, to the degree that 'natural' is understood as a normative concept, it has very little to do with biology."

For example, not only is the definition of a species now in question, but the entire notion of a "natural state" for an organism or environment has been discarded by biologists, and the hypothesis that diversity causes stability "is now considered controversial (to say the least)." Sober observes that "environmentalists should not assume that they can rely on some previously articulated scientific conception of 'natural,'" since from the point of view of science, what is "natural" is ambiguous. Our intuition, he writes, tells us that there is a fundamental difference between a mountain and a highway system, "but once we realize that organisms construct their environments in nature, this contrast begins to cloud. Organisms do not passively reside in an environment whose properties are independently determined. Organisms transform their environments by physically interacting with them. An anthill is an artifact just as a highway is."[34]

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[33] Holmes Rolston III, "Duties to Ecosystems," in *A Companion,* pages 247248; G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind* (Harper Torchbooks, 1967), page 159; J. Baird Callicott, "On the Intrinsic Value of Nonhuman Species," in *The Preservation of Species: The Value of Biological Diversity,* Bryan G. Norton, editor (Princeton University Press, 1986), page 151.

[34] Elliot Sober, "Philosophical Problems for Environmentalism," in *The Preservation of Species,* pages 180–188. One example illustrating the problems in conservation biology mentioned by Sober is discussed in Lily-Marlene Russow's essay, "Why Do Species Matter?" (reprinted from the Summer 1981 *Environmental Ethics*) in *People, Penguins, and Plastic Trees: Basic Issues in Environmental Ethics,* Donald VanDeVeer and Christine Pierce, editors (Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1986). The Baltimore oriole and the Bullock's oriole were once recognized as separate species, she notes, but due to interbreeding where their ranges overlap, "both ex-species are now northern orioles." The very definition of a species is now in question; as Russow observes, "what counts as a species is a matter of current fashions in taxonomy" (page 121). In his essay on the current extinction spasm, "Why the Ark Is Sinking" (in *The Last Extinction,* Les Kaufman and Kenneth Mallory, editors, MIT Press, 1986), Les Kaufman demonstrates how different communities of rock hopper penguins, ostensibly members of the same species, cause great problems for taxonomists. There are anywhere from eleven to eighteen different species depending on which taxonomist is judging; hence, "our notion of what a species is, or isn't, is largely an artifact of human bias" (page 9). One can only imagine how such problems are magnified when biology, as current scientific discourse may posit it, invades political discourse, which is why one feminist critic of science, Sandra Harding, suggests that rather than imposing biology on politics, "much of biology should already be conceptualized as social science."

In fact, she observes, "paradigmatic theories in particular areas of inquiry eventually wear out as fruitful guides to research," as Kuhn's theory of scientific revolutions suggests. "Shouldn't this also be true for science as a whole?" (*The Science Question in Feminism,* pages 43–44.) It is an ironic revenge that Linnaeus, the originator of modern taxonomy, went insane at the end of his life.

By such an implacable logic, Sober infers the ultimate indifference to which scientific naturalism can lead. His essay also suggests the problems with an ostensibly omniscient biological egalitarianism that simultaneously sees humanity as "one with nature," "one more species among many," and yet also as a unique source of evil in the biosphere. Any species, after all—from humpback whales to the ecoli bacteria in human feces—is only "one among many," whatever that means. In the case mentioned, do we assign them equal value, meaning, grandeur? If so, why then do deep ecologists complain? As Callicott has suggested, nothing civilization does, not even nuclear war, will destroy life itself, only complex life; what remains would probably follow the tendency to diversify and evolve, as the biota did after other mass extinctions, such as the Permian, when over 90 percent of species disappeared—long before dinosaurs or mammals.

If we are entirely one with nature then we are no different from red tide or viruses or a destructive meteor from space, and nature is doing this strange dance with itself; or is chaos. Even the Earth is "one mere planet among many," a speck in the cosmos. Indeed, why not cosmocentrism, why stop with the biota, the Earth?[35] In the big pic-

[35] According to a Reuters report (August 16, 1987) Soviet scientists have reported that an asteroid discovered some five years ago and known as "1983 TV" will collide with the Earth in the year 2115. "If studies confirm the reality that the two celestial bodies will collide, then our successors will have two choices in order to save themselves—either to make the asteroid alter its course, or to blow it up in space," writes Alexander Voytsekhovsky in the newspaper Socialisticheskaya Industriya. Conveniently for his discipline, Voytsekhovsky reports that "vast sums of money would be needed to find and destroy the asteroid."

A cosmocentric view might defend the "right" of the asteroid to its orbit, to let nature take its course. The Earth is, after all, a troublesome planet, its organisms colonizing space with their junk and their microbes. Just as from the point of view of a virus, all humans are an undifferentiated mass, from the cosmocentric perspective, perhaps everything on Earth is as undifferentiated, perhaps, and has no more claim to its orbit or survival than an asteroid.

If such a catastrophe is going to occur (and in fact much of the theory of extinction suggests it as a possibility), all of our ethical discussions (and even our arguments about technology) will prove inadequate to confront the event in a way meaningful to us as a species. Mass extinction and mass technics both undermine the possibility for coherent ethical discourse, it seems. The catastrophe is one of meaning as well. E.M. Cioran, one of the most mordant and fascinating misanthropes writing today, states, "What place do we occupy in the 'universe?' A point, if that! Why reproach ourselves when we are evidently so insignificant? Once we make this observation, we grow calm at once: henceforth, no more bother, no more frenzy, metaphysical or otherwise. And then that point dilates, swells, substitutes itself for space and everything begins all over again." (*The New Gods,* Quadrangle, 1974, page 113.) Somehow, I suspect that I may see another brief "response" to this entire essay that quotes only a fragment of this footnote to "prove" that I support a space program and thus the whole megamachine itself, to save humans from asteroids. For an interesting discussion of cosmic events and mass extinction of species, see Stephen Jay Gould's "Continuity" and "The Cosmic Dance of Siva," in *The Flamingo's Smile* (Norton, 1985); in the former essay, Gould's remarks are very pertinent to the DE-inspired misanthropy that one is wont to read in the *EF! Journal*. From the larger (or perhaps "holistic rationalist") view, that is, "from a geological perspective measured in millions of years," Gould writes, "extinction is inevitable, even necessary for maintaining a vigorous tree of life. We may also argue, both in the abstract and for life's actual history, that an occasional catastrophic episode of mass extinction opens new evolutionary possibilities by freeing ecological space in a crowded world."

ture, extinction is inevitable, since the Earth eventually will be destroyed as the sun expands to a supernova (again, according to the best available scientific theory). In 65 million years (long before that remote end), will we be much more than a layer in the sediment? It is impossible to tell, but I am as fascinated with and as repelled by scientific naturalism as anyone else. It does compel me to withhold final judgment on such matters and to begin, as Mr. A. seems to advise, where I am: a human being in a world layered with natural, historical, and social interrelationships, conflicts, affinities and obligations. I don't reject my humanity by identifying with the planet; I am responding to it.

Beyond Intrinsic Value

One is forced by this discussion to agree, finally, with Callicott, who writes that "there can be no value apart from an evaluator...The value that is attributed to the ecosystem, therefore, is humanly dependent."[36] And that value, obviously, must be carefully examined within its own social and historical context. Environmental philosophers have been unable to reach a conclusive view of the problem of intrinsic worth. Some have argued that human-centered values should not be discarded and can provide a powerful set of motivations for preserving wilderness and protecting the natural world. Even if one avoids the more instrumental character of some arguments of this type (that rain forests contain a wealth of future medicines or food crops, for example), the defense of wilderness as an expression of our own innate biophilia or love of and identification with life, is extremely strong, as when naturalist Edward O. Wilson argues, "We are in the fullest sense a biological species and will find little ultimate meaning apart from the remainder of life." Again, to follow Theodore Roszak's insightful obser-

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Yet to those misanthropes and holists, deep ecological or otherwise, who might welcome the demise of this troublesome and tricksterish species that is humanity, and who do not see any reason to favor such a complicated mammal over any other species, be it a cabbage or the smallpox virus, Gould answers: "The potentially beneficial effect of a mass extinction on life's unpredictable rebound 10 million years down the road cannot speak to the significance of our own twig on life's tree...If we extirpate this twig directly by nuclear winter, or lose so many other twigs that our own eventually withers away, then we have canceled forever the most peculiar and different, unplanned experiment ever generated among the millions of branches—the origin, via consciousness, of a twig that could discover its own history and appreciate its continuity." The misanthrope may not take such consciousness very seriously, but that would be to forget the deep ecological concern with diversity and the uniqueness of a species. Consciousness, writes Gould, "is a quirky evolutionary accident, a product of one peculiar lineage that developed most components of intelligence for other evolutionary purposes...If we lost its twig by human extinction, consciousness may not evolve again in any other lineage during the 5 billion years or so left to our earth before the sun explodes" (pages 430–431).

[36] J. Baird Callicott, "Animal Liberation: A Triangular Affair," (reprinted from the Winter 1980 *Environmental Ethics*) in *People, Penguins, and Plastic Trees...*, page 191.

vation, the personhood of the human being is interrelated with and contingent upon the personhood of the planet.[37]

Sober argues that the value of nature and wilderness is ultimately aesthetic, which is not to say frivolous, and he compares the preservation of a majestic cliff to that of the ancient temple which stands on it, seeing them both as important. (For those who may not care for this example, let us substitute that of; say, a magnificent grotto and the paleolithic painting left on its walls.) Indeed, the comparison of natural objects to aesthetic masterpieces is a common motif in all environmental literature, from John Muir's comment during the campaign to save Hetch Hetchy from developers that "everybody needs beauty as well as bread," to Edward Abbey's comparison of the damming of Glen Canyon to the destruction of the Taj Mahal or the cathedral at Chartres, with the distinction that the natural object is alive "and can never be recovered."

Another writer argues that "our duties toward species arise not out of the interests of the species, but are rooted in the general obligation to preserve things of value." And even David Ehrenfeld, who attempts in his provocative if flawed book, The Arrogance of Humanism, to explode all the "humanist" shibboleths and along with them this anthropocentric aesthetic criterion, falls into the same reasoning. Ehrenfeld criticizes the humanism in even the land ethic and in related aesthetic criteria as a form of "condescension" that is "not in harmony with the humility-inspiring discoveries of ecology." Instead, he argues for a "Noah principle," stating that natural objects and species "should be conserved because they exist" (a very problematic and ambiguous formulation—everything exists), and because this existence "is itself but the present expression of a continuing historical process of immense antiquity and majesty." Yet concern for antiquity and majesty represents an obviously aesthetic, even classical humanist motivation.[38]

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[37] Edward O. Wilson, Biophilia (Harvard University Press, 1984),page 81; Theodore Roszak, Person/Planet: The Creative Disintegration of Industrial Society (Anchor Books, 1975). Roszak writes of his certainty that "within the next generation, there will emerge a well-developed body of ecological theory that illuminates this subtle relationship [of] the planetary dimension to the spreading personalist sensibility which links the search for an authentic identity to the well-being of the global environment." DE would like to consider itself the "heir" or legatee of this growing awareness and its theory, but it falls short. Nevertheless, these discussions and the growing awareness itself are confirmations of Roszak's prediction.

[38] See Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (Yale University Press, 1982), page 165; Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire,* page 174; Lily-Marlene Russow, "Why Do Species Matter?" in *People, Penguins, and Plastic Trees...,* page 120; David Ehrenfeld, *The Arrogance of Humanism* (Oxford University Press, 1981), pages 207–208. In this same passage Ehrenfeld attacks the humanism in even those attempts to find aesthetic, non-utilitarian motives for preservation. These are "purely selfish reasons," he argues, that reflect "condescension and superiority," an "attitude...not in harmony with the humility-inspiring discoveries of ecology..." Yet not only do we survive at least partially for "purely selfish reasons" (an observation he himself makes a few pages later), the sense of awe before the immense beauty of nature is precisely what inspires preservationist thinking and an ecological ethic, precisely the result of sensitive identification with nature that refuses, out of a partially "humanist" sensibility, to

Holmes Rolston despairs of finding a distinct intrinsic value, noting that "apart from any human presence, organisms value other organisms and earth resources instrumentally," but they "value these resources instrumentally because they value something intrinsically: their selves, their form of life...thus both instrumental and intrinsic values are objectively present in ecosystems. The system is a web where loci of intrinsic value are meshed in a network of instrumental value."

But because neither term is satisfactory "at the level of the holistic ecosystem," he continues, "...we need a third term: systemic value." In this way ethics will not be complete "until extended to the land." Interestingly, before I had read any of this literature of environmental ethics, I wrote in my original essay that "there is no isolated 'intrinsic worth' but an interrelated dependency that includes us all." I hoped in such a way to move beyond dualism towards an animist mode of kinship, at the level of the gift which stands in utter opposition to an economic civilization that reduces the world—including human beings—to resources, to dead things.

Callicott attempts to resolve the question by arguing that while there may be no intrinsic value in natural objects, they "may nonetheless be valued for themselves" as well as for their use to human beings. He calls for the discovery of "metaphysical foundations for the intrinsic value of other species," asking, "What are the ethical systems, and more generally, the world views in which claims of the intrinsic value of non-human species are embedded?"[39]

Such agonized philosophical questioning of humanity's relation to nature—while the very fabric of life appears to be coming apart—seems another bitter irony. But it, too, suggests that the emerging ecological ethic may signal more a mythic return, the coming around of a cycle, than a model of advancing progress as one might find in environmental ethics, in notions of "paradigm change" culled from the concept of scientific revolution, or in the social ecology dialectic.

The original inhabitants of this land knew what Hans Peter Duerr reports in his remarkable book Dreamtime: Concerning the Boundary Between Wilderness and Civilization: "To get to the point of origin, to be able, for instance, to 'speak' with plants, a person needs what the Indians call 'reverence.' Humans must become unimportant before the other beings of nature: 'When I was still a child, my parents and the old people taught me to treat everything with reverence, even the rocks, the stones and the small crawling insects, for they are all manitus,'" Duerr quotes a Native American, and he adds: "To 'become a part' of the manitu of all things means to 'speak the common language of all things.'"[40]

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be reduced to a utilitarian science of energy bits and caloric counts. A review of Ehrenfeld's book will appear in a future issue of the FE.

[39] Holmes Rolston III, "Duties...," pages 268–70; Callicott, "Animal Liberation...," page 191, and "Intrinsic Value...," page 145.

[40] Hans Peter Duerr, *Dreamtime: Concerning the Boundary Between Wilderness and Civilization* (Basil Blackwell, 1985), pages 110–111.

A sense of reverence—is this not fundamental to a reawakening of our proper relationship to the planet and to ourselves? And is it not clear that this implies neither a mechanistic imitation of primal society nor the grafting of its insights onto an instrumental science or dualistic model based on competing interests? Where does this reverence come from and how can it be expressed?

Indeed, the current discourse in which DE participates constrains meaning in a language that is already instrumentalized. It not only mechanistically isolates and fragments so-called inherent from instrumental value, but bases itself on a model of necessity and need that reflects the alienated discourse of bourgeois materialism and the capitalist market themselves. When Arne Naess writes that the "vital needs" of human beings must be met, he tries to evade the problems such a formulation suggests by leaving this notion "deliberately vague." But he thus resolves nothing and leaves the entire notion itself unexamined. The dualism of human "need" struggling against natural law—isn't this distorted construct, assuming as it does a polarity between an undifferentiated nature and an equally undifferentiated, simplified "human" need, only an image of this society? Ironically, deep ecologists drink from the same polluted source as the marxists and liberal humanists they vilify: starting from the ideology of natural and historical necessity, they all assume the inevitability of scarcity and its consequent generation of needs. For liberal and marxist alike, increasing needs are a factor of progress; for the deep ecologist, they are the result of increasing numbers—the progress of factors. In these complementary ways, views that are ostensibly opposed diametrically actually share in the mystique produced by the bourgeois civilization that spawned Malthusian scientism, a mechanico-materialist marxism and technocratic liberalism: the ideology of instrumentalism.

But is it possible in nature, as in primal societies, that there is no instrumental value at all, no need, just as there is no economy, no production? Writing about the fundamental differences between objects in western and indigenous contexts, Jamake Highwater observes, "The objects of Indians are expressive and not decorative because they are alive, living in our experience of them. When the Indian potter collects clay, she asks the consent of the river-bed and sings its praises for having made something as beautiful as clay. When she fires her pottery, to this day, she still offers songs to the fire so it will not discolor or burst her wares. And, finally, when she paints her pottery, she imprints it with the images that give it life and power—because for an Indian, pottery is something significant, not just a utility but a 'being' for which there is as much of a natural order as there is for persons or foxes or trees. So reverent is the Indian conception of the 'power' within things, and especially the objects created by traditional craftspeople, that among many Indians, the pottery interred with the dead has a small perforation, a 'kill-hole,' made in the center in order to release the orenda—'the spiritual power'—before it is buried."[41]

[41] Jamake Highwater, *The Primal Mind: Vision and Reality in Indian America* (Meridian, 1981), pages 77–78.

Again the idea of reverence is raised, and we can see that it is not even a question of refusing to allow what we consider alive by scientific standards to be turned into "dead things," but rather two opposed visions: an ecstatic vision in which everything is alive, and that of capital, within which everything becomes lifeless, dead matter. Intrinsic value has its place on the altar in such a scheme, but instrumental value is the iron hand that rules the world, the iron hand of necessity.

As Jean Baudrillard writes in *The Mirror of Production*, his devastating attack not only on marxism but on all of productivist civilization, necessity is "a Law that takes effect only with the objectification of Nature. The Law takes its definitive form in capitalist political economy; moreover, it is only the philosophical expression of Scarcity." But what is scarcity, this centerpiece of Malthusian ideology? "Scarcity, which itself arises in the market economy, is not a given dimension of the economy. Rather, it is what produces and reproduces economic exchange." Scarcity, produced by the emergence of economic exchange, becomes the alibi, if you will, for justifying the forces that generated it, and ends in a pre-capitalist mystique of the "tragedy of the commons" and a "life-boat ethic," "the survival of the fittest," "us against them."

Yet neither nature nor primal societies are determined by need, which arises out of this phantasm of scarcity that both fuels and results from capital accumulation; none of this exists, Baudrillard argues, "at the level of reciprocity and symbolic exchange [as in primal society], where the break with nature that leads to...the entire becoming of history (the operational violence of man against nature)...has not occurred." Hence need and social interest are the products of such an economic order, not natural phenomena—and with them, the cleft between intrinsic and instrumental value, between human well-being and the integrity of nature. "The idea of 'natural Necessity,'" writes Baudrillard, "is only a moral idea dictated by political economy."[42]

Anthropologist Dorothy Lee puts it another way. She does not claim "that there are no needs; rather, that if there are needs, they are derivative not basic. If, for example, physical survival was held as the ultimate goal in some society, it would probably be found to give rise to those needs which have been stated to be basic to human survival; but I know of no culture where human physical survival has been shown, rather than unquestioningly assumed by social scientists, to be the ultimate goal." To follow the model of deep ecologists, for example, one would assume that "humans" are devouring nature by following a basic species' "need" to maximize food. This ideological image teaches us nothing about the natural history of human beings and even less about the kind of society that maximizes the production of crops even by mining and destroying the very soil on which they depend.

"To the Hopi," on the other hand, writes Lee, "corn is not nutrition; it is a totality, a way of life. Something of this sort is exemplified in the story which Talayesva tells of the Mexican trader who offered to sell salt to the Hopi group who were starting out on a highly ceremonial Salt Expedition. Within its context this offer to relieve

[42] Jean Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production* (Telos Press, 1975), pages 58–61.

the group of the hardships and dangers of the religious journey sounds ridiculous. The Hopi were not just getting salt to season their dishes. To them, the journey was part of the process of growing corn and of maintaining harmonious interrelations with nature and what we call the divine. It was the Hopi Way, containing Hopi value. Yet even an ethnographer, dealing with Hopi culture in terms of basic needs, views the Salt Expedition as the trader did and classifies it under Secondary Economic Activities."[43] The Hopi Way and the mode of life of many primal cultures indicate very clearly to us what are the foundations for the kind of reverence that will bring us back into contact with the planet, but only if we have eyes to see, and enough vision to break through the categories that have been imposed by capital and its thorough instrumentalization and commodification of the world.

"All My Relations"

The sciences have confirmed the animist intuition that we are physically and psychologically continuous with the rest of nature. Geology, astronomy, biology, evolutionary science and genetics all demonstrate that our very bodies are made up of the same elements that existed during the formative period of the Earth and have made their way down to us through time and all the evolutionary changes that have occurred during the last several billion years. The salt of the oceans whence we emerged flows

[43] Dorothy Lee, *Freedom and Culture* (Spectrum, 1959), page 73. I recognize that it may be impossible to get entirely beyond this tension between need and necessity and the universe described by Baudrillard and suggested by Lee, Marshall Sahlins (Stone Age Economics), and others. On some level, "need" may be said to exist if people go hungry, and people went hungry during certain periods of the seasonal cycle in primal society. For the way in which such periods were integrated into the mythic and gift cycles by one group of native peoples, see the beautiful tales collected and translated by Howard Norman, Where the Chill Came. From: Cree Windigo Tales and Journeys (North Point Press, 1982). Windigos, usually shown in the form of "a wandering giant with a heart of ice," are the cause of chaos and starvation during lean times. The Windigo is often thought of as the spirit of all those who have ever starved to death. Yet it is also a reflection of a disruption of the gift cycle in the community rather than a simple biological fact. Scarcity a "law" imposed by bourgeois economic modes of thinking does not determine the activities of the Cree, though it may certainly be argued that scarcity, and hence need, determine human action where the economic reigns. Thus it may be impossible to entirely escape the notion of defending our "interests" or acting to satisfy "need" even as we recognize the problematic, imposed character of these categories.

Cronon's book *Changes in the Land* contains an extremely interesting discussion of scarcity that may be helpful here. Reporting that the northern New England natives "accepted as a matter of course that the months of February and March, when the animals they hunted were lean and relatively scarce, would be times of little food," he writes that the europeans "had trouble comprehending this Indian willingness to go hungry in the late winter months" and their "apparent refusal to store more than a small amount of the summer's plenty for winter use." The colonists could not understand such an attitude when it would have been patently easy for the natives to gather and store more. The natives were nonplused, replying, "It is all the same to us, we shall stand it well enough; we spend seven and eight days, even ten sometimes, without eating anything, yet we do not die." What was more ironic, Cronon observes, was that native people "died from starvation much less frequently than did early colonists..." Here we see the refusal of surplus, which is another way of saying the refusal of scarcity. (pages 40–41)

in our veins, and the slow development of our backbones and brains have laid the foundations for our very consciousness. Our first dances and songs moved with the rhythms of the Earth. We are also biological kin to other organisms. As E.O. Wilson has noted, "About 99 percent of our genes are identical to the corresponding set in chimpanzees, so that the remaining 1 percent accounts for all the differences between us."[44]

Wilson's comment reflects once again the ambiguous character of the ecological and biological sciences, why none of this scientific reasoning embedded in the ecological paradigm sufficiently guarantees that we will develop ethical concern or proper relation to the biosphere any more than the knowledge that other human beings are our biological kin will prevent us from annihilating them in a war. Wilson reveals the dangerous reductionism of his sociobiology when he says that the one percent of genetic variation accounts for all our differences with chimpanzees. Such a mystification suppresses the complex relationship between natural and cultural evolution that points to the problematic uniqueness of our troublesome species.

Wilson is a strange mixture of visionary and Frankenstein, and thus representative of many preservationist scientists. To him, "Organisms are physicochemical mechanisms rather than the vessels of a mystic life force." Thus protecting nature leads undeniably to the necessity for genetic engineering—guided, of course, by the "conservation ethic." One is reminded of geneticist Francis Crick's remark, "Once one has become adjusted to the idea that we are here because we have evolved from simple chemical compounds by a process of natural selection, it is remarkable how many of the problems of the modern world take on a completely new light." Theodore Roszak comments, "Indeed they do. It is the funereal gleam by which we travel the wasteland, the light of dying stars."[45]

This is the dark side of biological science's shift from earlier, more mechanistic models of nature to a "total field" picture of the natural world as a "cybernetic system," a shift that flows directly into a more developed, more totalitarian system of domination and intervention in nature. Just as Einstein's theory had multiple implications, not the least of which turned out to be the nuclear technology that now may already be extinguishing all complex forms of life, so modern ecological theory and its systemic paradigm may usher in a bioengineering age that will culminate in the final conquest of nature as we know it (soon to be followed, obviously, by our extinction). Much of this could flow directly out of an ecological impulse to save the planet from an otherwise inevitable degradation of its biodiversity through the adoption of genetic banks and bioengineering. I am reminded of Marcuse's parallel comment on nuclearism. "Does not

[44] E.O. Wilson, *Biophilia*, page 130. For an interesting discussion of modern, ecological intuitions of connectedness, see J. Baird Callicott, "The Search for an Environmental Ethic," in *Matters of Life and Death: New Introductory Essays in Moral Philosophy,* editor Tom Regan, Second edition (Random House, 1986).

[45] Wilson, *Biophilia*, pages 48, 135–50; Crick quoted and commented on in Roszak, *Where the Wasteland Ends,* page 173.

the threat of an atomic catastrophe which could wipe out the human race also serve to protect the very forces which perpetuate this danger?" he asked. "The efforts to prevent such a catastrophe overshadow the search for potential causes in contemporary industrial society."[46]

Yet to point to the ambiguities in the ecological vision is not to deny its aspects capable of affirming kinship with and respect and reverence for the land—those elements in evolutionary science capable of confirming the world view of animist native peoples that now stands in such stark contrast to and in condemnation of this instrumental civilization. An ethical element can be derived, in part at least, from evolutionary science. Callicott proposes a "bioempathy" similar to Wilson's notion of biophilia (or perhaps a social aspect of bioempathy standing on the shoulders of biological kinship), rooted in our mammalian evolutionary development. If nature is an "objective, axiologically neutral domain," he asks, "How is it possible to account for the existence of something like morality or ethics among human beings and their prehuman ancestors in a manner consistent with evolutionary theory?"

Drawing on Darwin, he points out that the prolonged parental nurturing of offspring, and the strong emotional bond that accompanies it, would explain such a phenomenon, even suggesting why such groups in which this trait was more pronounced would have had increased chances of survivability. Of course the thread that led Kropotkin to write Mutual Aid is recognizable here—a work that despite all its illusions about progress

[46] Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man* (Beacon Press, 1966), page ix. Also see Tomas McSheoin's "In the Image of Capital: The Rise of Biotechnology" (FE #320, Spring 1985), in which he says: "Each new step technology takes brings us a step closer to the end of life on earth. Biotech represents a deepening of capital's project of world domination, a move to a qualitatively new level, a restructuring of the living world, in capital's image, for capital's profit...Through building a whole new production cycle on this technology, capital hopes to avoid the crash that will result from its continued outrageous pillage of the world's natural resources...Biotech presents not only a whole new wave of products, but also a basic new production process, thus giving capital another possible escape route from its present global crisis: a new source of energy and raw materials is what the genetic alchemists promise capital..." Also see Jeremy Rifkin's impassioned, if somewhat flawed, plea against genetic engineering in *Algeny* (Penguin, 1984).

In his excellent critique of modern scientism, *The Reenchantment of the World* (Bantam, 1984), Morris Berman acknowledges the ambiguity in the systems theory associated with much of the new physics and new environmental philosophy today. The cybernetic model, he writes, "can easily be used to validate the alternative model of industrial totalitarianism...The cybernetic model could well describe a mass society managed by social engineers through a series of 'holistic,' bureaucratic parameters, and indeed, precisely this scenario is envisioned by Robert Lilienfeld in his book *The Rise of Systems Theory.* Far from leading to a planetary culture, says Lilienfeld, the emphasis on communication suggests a world knit closely together by a system of computerized mass media and information exchange." Even ecology—be it "deep" or "social"—uncritical as it has been of holistic "eco-technology" and computerization could end up rationalizing a further level of domination and a further conquest of nature. Berman quotes Ludwig von Bertalanffy, a founder of system science, who writes of his field that centered as it is "in computer technology, cybernetics, automation and systems engineering," it "appears to make the systems idea another—and indeed the ultimate—technique to shape man [sic] and society even more into the megamachine." (pages 288–289)

and technology and its romantic whimsy (this latter is actually part of its appeal), drew a portrait of evolution stressing cooperation that is now being vindicated by evolutionary theory's deepening understanding of symbiosis and mutualism in nature.

It's possible that there may be a bit too much sociobiology in this description as well, but it does suggest persuasively that an environmental ethic can be rooted in an explicitly human social context and need not (and probably cannot) be based on a perspective of neutrality or one-dimensional identification with the otherness of nature. When we anthropomorphize by calling the Earth our Mother, we are reiterating our biological link to the planet and also to our real mothers (and by extension, to our families and communities), just as when Native Americans refer to other species as "all my relations" they are not denying kinship with their human relatives but integrating kinship on both levels.

Such forms of kinship and community are interlocked but not entirely identical. As Rolston notes, "Cultures are a radically different mode" from the ecosystem and thus demand different criteria for judgment and action. "Relations between individual and community have to be analyzed separately in the two communities," he writes. "To know what a bee is in a beehive is to know what a good (functional) bee is in bee society, but...nothing follows about how citizens function in nation-states or how they ought to."

Accordingly, "It may be proper to let Montana deer starve during a rough winter, following a bonanza summer when the population has edged over carrying capacity. It would be monstrous to be so callous about African peoples caught in a drought. Even if their problems are ecologically aggravated there are cultural dimensions and duties in any solution that are not considerations in deer management."[47] Ethical considerations aside, the differences in the sources of the two events cannot be forgotten. No one has demonstrated that famine in Africa is any more than the result of social conflicts and capitalist looting. Those sources must be attended to before we can begin to judge the related environmental factors.

Callicott seems to concur with Rolston, arguing that "our recognition of the biotic community and our immersion in it does not imply that we do not also remain members of the human community...or that we are relieved of the attendant and correlative moral responsibilities of that membership, among them to respect universal human rights and uphold the principle of individual human worth and dignity. The biosocial development of morality does not grow in extent like an expanding balloon, leaving no trace of its previous boundaries, so much as like the circumference of a tree," with its concentric rings. A land ethic is not inhumane, and it need not compel people to morally reprehensible acts towards other human beings to protect nature, he argues,

[47] Callicott, "Intrinsic Value," pages 156–158; Rolston, "Duties," pages 264–265. Here the political terminology, even more than the natural resources terminology, reveals once more the limitations so far of environmental philosophy as radical critique.

and he points to primal peoples and other traditional societies as providing "rich and detailed models" for interaction with nature.[48]

Biocentrism cannot therefore replace a social critique or social solidarity. Our recognition of our kinship and community with nature goes hand in paw with our understanding of the global "planetariat" that we have become since the original rupture in primitive society and the origins of the state megamachines. To turn away from the long, rich traditions of communal revolt and from solidarity with other human communities in their ongoing struggle for freedom would be as violent an error as to deny the biosocial roots of our connections to the land. (This is why the anarchists and marxists who reject the land connection and defend industrialism while blaming only the fragmentary "economic" factors of capitalism for the crisis are as much an obstacle to liberation as the most reactionary misanthrope. They want a petrochemical industrialism that is "worker-owned-and-operated"; they want the chain saw that is presently shredding the basic planetary life supports to be managed or "appropriated"

[48] Callicott, "The Conceptual Foundations," pages 207208. Naess' DE is more in line with such views than it is with catastrophist misanthropy. In "The Deep Ecological Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects," he writes that terms such as "anthropocentrism," "human chauvinism," and "egalitarianism," "usually function as slogans which are open to misinterpretation" because they "are sometimes interpreted as denying that humans have any 'extraordinary' traits, or that in situations involving vital interests humans have no overriding obligations toward their own kind. They have!" As an example of "shallow ecological" thinking, in fact, he lists the attitude that seeks "to defend one's borders against 'illegal aliens," and contrasts this view with the idea of "a long range, humane reduction" of population—something with which few radical feminists would probably have any quarrel.

As for Ethiopians and Central Americans—the focus of much of the controversy around EF! spokesmen's statements—one could point to Naess' statement, "Cultural diversity is an analogue on the human level to the biological richness and diversity of life forms" (in Philosophical Inquiry, Winter-Spring 1986, pages 19–22). One would assume that DE values the cultural diversity of the little ethnic groups being swept away by famine and inter-imperialist war and works to defend them as it would other life forms. Compare the intent of Naess' statements to the moral idiocy of another article by Mr. Ann Thropy, in which he dismisses ethical discourse as "merely the rattling of our ancestors' bones," since "modern ethical discourse is bound up with industrial values." Ethics should be disregarded, along with justice and freedom, in the population debate. "Justice and freedom and all higher values are at home only in a decentralized, anarchistic setting, which presupposes Earth as a wilderness." Otherwise such concerns only "propagate [technology's] power relations." Defending the "courage" of the Neo-Malthusian anti-immigration proponents, he concludes that ethical discourse (and with it obligations to human community) is only meaningful if it is "directed against [technological] culture in its totality" ("Overpopulation and Industrialism," *EF! Journal*, March 1987). So much for a "philosopher" who denies his is a "totalizing" position. Mr. A's logic is Orwellian: to achieve freedom, we must sacrifice freedom, to achieve well-being, we must sacrifice well-being; ethics make sense only in a hypothetical world in which they would never have any reason to be tested. The distant moral good, the ends, justify all and any means.

In the Canadian DE journal *The Trumpeter,* Naess writes that Foreman "emphatically denies" that he advocated "letting Ethiopian children starve to death." One can only assume that Foreman has "emphatically denied" this to Naess in private because while he has not gone out of his way to repeat it, he has never denied it publicly.

by a workers' state, or perhaps workers' councils, or even more evanescently, by "desire" itself.)

I think of a drawing frequently printed in the *EF! Journal* showing a modern monkeywrencher in a sock hat and bandanna standing among a group of armed Indians to reflect one such connection with our communal past. Let me ask our misanthropic friends: were the tribal peoples resisting euro-american civilization for anthropocentric or biocentric reasons? Are the ones resisting in Brazil, Malaysia and elsewhere today doing so for anthropocentric or biocentric reasons? The meaninglessness of this question in the face of the organic reality of primal societies should make my point clear. Their motives must be ours: when we resist Leviathan we are responding to the planet within us. Despite Bookchin's marxism, rationalism and oblique defense of technology and progress, and despite the negative role he has played in the recent controversies, one cannot deny the good sense of his comment in the concluding section of his response to his critics in Earth First! that "If we cannot 're-enchant' humanity, we will never 're-enchant' nature."[49]

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[49] Murray Bookchin, "Yes!—Wither Earth First?" in the September 1988 *Green Perspectives* (P.O. Box 111, Burlington, VT 05402). Bookchin, like other writers discussed here, combines brilliant insight and absurdities. His Post-Scarcity Anarchism, for example, is a weird mixture of utopian vision and spirit leavened with the most naive and technocratic praise of modern technology, particularly cybernetics, but even of enormous hydropower projects and nuclearism. Could it be an enormous and perhaps fragile ego that kept Bookchin from publicly and unambiguously distancing himself from such views in later works, for example, the murky but provocative Ecology of Freedom? So he has some of the flak coming that he has received.

One predictable but nevertheless deserved thrashing comes from Bill McCormick in the Fall 1988 issue of *Kick It Over* (P.O. Box 5811, Station A, Toronto, Ontario, M5W 1P2 Canada). Of course McCormick's piece is inaccurate in many ways, since it leaves out Bookchin at his best, in later work, and even accuses Bookchin of views that he has specifically rejected. But Bookchin has himself to blame since his polemics against DE have tended to collapse into the very traditional leftism that he bridles at being accused of defending. For example, see his article, "When the Earth Comes First, People and Nature Suffer," in the August 3, 1988 *Guardian*. "Technology in itself does not produce the distortions between the anti-ecological society and nature," he writes, apparently ignorant of or willfully ignoring the profound work that has been done over the last few decades on the nature of mass technics and its development into a global system, a total environment. "To speak of a 'technological society,' or an 'industrial society' as Devall and Sessions and Earth First! persistently do, is to throw cosmic stardust over the economic expansion which Marx so brilliantly developed in his economic writings and replace economic factors by zoological metaphors. Herein lies the utterly regressive character of 'deep ecology'..." he argues for his leftist audience. To portray the critique of technology as a dogma of deep ecology, which actually is light-years from a radical critique of technology (as my first essay, which Bookchin has read and praised, off the record, demonstrates), must either be a conscious mystification or the worst kind of sloppiness. But if anything is "utterly regressive," it is his dismissal of the concept and critique of the technological system by reverting to marxist "economic factors." This is only the other side of the false coin in DE circles that vaguely criticizes technology while ignoring capital as if capital and mass technics were not interlocking aspects of the same system. (For an excellent discussion of the limitations of marxism in critiquing technology, see Langdon Winner's Autonomous Technology, Ellul's The Technological Society and The Technological System, and Lewis Mumford's *The Myth of the Machine.* Many of the pamphlets of Jacques Camatte, particularly *The Wandering of Humanity*

Compare this to Foreman's desire "to get beyond good and evil," which "only exist in relationship to human activities," and the implication that he would like to pretend that he is not human. Referring to Leopold's dictum on a thing being right when it preserves biotic integrity and "wrong when it tends to do otherwise," he concludes, "I think human beings are the only factor that does otherwise." The silliness of this remark in biological terms has been demonstrated adequately above, but a view that indiscriminately denounces human beings and rejects any obligations to the human community has questionable ethical implications. It brings to mind Hitler's comment that "Nature is cruel, therefore we too can be cruel."[50]

Of course, to defend humanity is not necessarily to argue that everything and anything is permissible to human beings as far as nature goes, that we can exploit and destroy nature as long as "poor anarchists" do it and not rich capitalists. A reverence for life that defends biodiversity and ecological integrity is vital. But we defend the planet both for ourselves and for the other. Our revolt against this civilization goes far beyond an imperative to "invent moral reasoning of a new and more powerful kind," as Wilson puts it, for moral reasoning is inadequate, as inadequate as it has been in stopping people from exterminating whole human populations. Our biophilia must be linked to the unfettering of our own wildness and to the breakdown of the repressive apparatus and character armoring, the external and internal modes of domination. It means nurturing those subjective forces and communities capable of withstanding capital and recreating a visionary, free society beyond the demands of Power.

Another comparison comes to mind that will shed light on the deep problems of the catastrophist vision of deep ecology represented by Mr. A. In the interview cited above, Foreman declares that he has decided that "it's not my job to try to devise a sustainable society...my job is to be a warrior, to protect natural diversity where I can, and to articulate the philosophical basis for that warrior approach. I hope other people such as the back-to-the-landers come up with good techniques on how to live. That approach is needed too. But it is not what I can do." We only need mention in passing the compartmentalized character of this view that some should go on being warriors while others work on "how to live" and creating a sustainable society. We should also note his hint that creating a new way of life somehow hinges on "good techniques" rather than a deep social transformation of human relations not only with the rest of nature but with one another.

What is more important is the lack of criticality towards this warrior philosophy, as if saving wilderness were a weekend (or a weekday) job that occurs only out in

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and *Against Domestication,* are also very useful. See also the back issues of the FE on the technology question.)

Likewise, Bookchin's blanket condemnation of primitivism, right at the time when the animist wisdom of primal people is being vindicated by the crisis in civilization, is grotesque. But I plan to discuss this at greater length in a future review of a number of Bookchin's books.

[50] Foreman, interview in *The Animals' Agenda;* Hitler quoted in *Unmasking the Powers,* by Walter Wink (Fortress Press, 1985).

the woods, while we continue to live in essentially the same way as always the rest of the time. This attitude seems to underlie as well the sense among many DE adherents that struggles against megatechnic projects in the cities or against nuclearism (let alone against militarism, racism and oppression) are "shallow ecology" or "anthropocentric" issues, while preservation and wilderness defense are deep, biocentric issues. Again, one can see the same mechanistic dichotomy at work.

We should compare this to some observations by David Ehrenfeld, certainly an "anti-humanist" of impeccable credentials, who writes in a very thoughtful essay on the current mass extinction spasm that wilderness protection "is a weak reed" and "active management and intervention" even weaker—though he has no intention of giving up either of those desperate, rearguard measures. Studying preserves today, Ehrenfeld points out, one can find all the signs of environmental degradations. "You can fence out people," he notes, "but you cannot fence out their effects...alien introduced pests, acid rain, ozone, insecticide residues, drifting herbicide, heavy metals, atmospheric particulates—these effects and creations of our society can be anywhere and everywhere on Earth." The fact that pesticides are blowing off Texas cotton fields and Russian wheat fields and ending up in the waters of Isle Royale National Park in Lake Superior illustrates Ehrenfeld's point emphatically. In a line very relevant to our discussion, he concludes that "the ultimate success of all conservation will depend on a revision of the way we use the world in our everyday living when we are not thinking about conservation."[51]

So how do we re-enchant the human world (even if our own vision extends far beyond it), since that world is the key to the problem and its resolution? I have no confidence in catastrophism or warriorism; if anything they may impede a social struggle capable of creating the conditions for proper rehabitation of the planet. (Advocating or celebrating mass human die-offs through pestilence and famine is certainly not going to convince people to create a radical opposition to ecological destruction.)

I am not objecting to anyone's choice to work in one area of what are multiple layers of the crisis—it depends on where you are and what is possible, and the defense of wilderness is critical. To lose wilderness is to lose everything, to cut our connections with the past, with the universe. I am more concerned in this critique with the "warrior philosophy" that does not recognize the connections between social struggles, ecological struggles and the war going on in daily life to resist being dehumanized by the planetary work pyramid. Such a philosophy turns wilderness into an ideological icon but does not necessarily do what is best for wilderness.

[51] David Ehrenfeld, "Life in the Next Millennium: Who Will Be Left in Earth's Community?" in *The Last Extinction,* pages 174–176.

Ah, Wilderness

The idea of wilderness and its utilization in political discourse is a complex and problematic question; the contention that "only wilderness" can resolve the problem of power and thus guarantee freedom has to be looked at critically. If human welfare can be used by elites as an "alibi" to accumulate power, certainly wilderness can as well, and in fact it has been so employed in the process of nation- and empire-building in the U.S. from the beginning (though in varying ways as the circumstances required).

(In any case the scenario of a repressive civilization originating out of the "alibi" of human welfare is not particularly convincing, given that most of the subjects of this mutated social organism had to have been left materially and spiritually impoverished by it. The emergence of hierarchy and domination, of alienation from self and other, has obscure origins that we will probably never understand with absolute certainty, but it must have been represented as the achievement of the people's place within a "natural order" and a submission to "nature" itself. Civilization was built because the gods (having become the reification of nature) willed it, not because of the ideology of some ancient welfare state. Thus "wilderness" as a representation of the nonhuman other or of nature's deepest order—may have been an earlier justification for the emerging state, rather than any notion of human well-being.)

Clearly the idea of wilderness had to long precede the mutation of civilization. This recognition of the nonhuman other in nature is contemporaneous with human selfhood, self-awareness, and had to exist in a dialectical tension with the social world of culture. A certain precariousness in human life would account for an ambivalence in the human personality towards wilderness, both internal and natural. An Innuit shaman told the explorer Knud Rasmussen, "We fear the cold and the things we do not understand. But most of all we fear the doings of the heedless ones among ourselves." Ambivalence had to exist in attitudes toward nature (as well as toward the social) long before civilization. So civilization—supposedly in the form of agriculture and herding—did not create wilderness, causing humans to see themselves "as distinct from nature" for the first time, as Roderick Nash and others, including writers appearing in the pages of the FE, have argued.[52]

Paleolithic hunters appear to have considered themselves as both a part of and distinct from the rest of nature, or they wouldn't have symbolized the correspondence between culture and nature on cave walls. Hopi cultivators, on the other hand, who engage in small scale agriculture (horticulture may be a preferable term here), consider themselves as much a part of the natural world as the Innuit or the late Pleistocene hunters. The violence of separation that emerges with civilization, turning the culture of nature and the nature of culture into enemies, is not so easily explained. The in-

[52] See Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind,* page xiii; John Zerzan, "Agriculture: Essence of Civilization," in FE #329, Summer 1988. For an excellent critique of Zerzan as well as Zerzan's response, see Bob Brubaker, "Remarks on Zerzan," FE #330, Winter 88–89. See "The Question of Agriculture," in this issue, [FE #331, Spring, 1989] for my discussion of the agriculture thesis of Zerzan.

tegrated symbiosis between culture and this nonhuman other represents two sides of human personhood, which sees itself as distinct from and yet integrated into the web of nature, and which finds means of reestablishing this balance and affirming both aspects of this personhood within and beyond the social context.

H.P. Duerr's book *Dreamtime* is the most sophisticated and the most stunning treatise on this relationship that I have seen. This brilliant inquiry reveals how "the fence or hedge, separating the domain of the wilderness from that of culture was not an insurmountable boundary to the archaic mind." Surveying primal traditions, Earth Mother cults, shamanism, witchcraft and other related perspectives, he shows how people found ways to know themselves by crossing over to that other. "As late as the Middle Ages," he writes as an example, "the witch was still the hagazussa, a being that sat on the Hag, the fence which passed behind the gardens and separated the village from the wilderness. She was a being who participated in both worlds." Christian civilization and later rationalist scientism chased this witch off the fence and fortified it against the irrational, against wilderness, chasing her "from the boundary of culture into the wilderness, from dusk into night." This of course brought its attendant revenge, the nightmares brought by the Dream of Reason and its denial of the other.

But for primal and archaic peoples, this boundary was not unsurpassable. "Those who wanted to live consciously within the fence, had to leave the enclosure at least once in their lives. They had to roam the forests as wolves, as 'savages.' To put it in more modern terms, they had to experience the wilderness, their animal nature, within themselves." This was not in order to surrender altogether to this wilderness but rather with the idea of a return to a human world, to culture. Seeing can only take place "if you smuggle yourself in between the worlds." Trying to permanently give up culture for that other is to make the mistake of the man of Yaqui legend who wanted so badly to fly that he exchanged his clothing for the plumage of a willing buzzard. Duerr relates, "As it turned out, the buzzard had a lot of difficulty with those clothes, and the Indian hopped helplessly from one branch to the next in search of a dead animal to eat. After both had suffered for six days and nights, each took back his own garments." Through such stories primal peoples recognized the different levels of experience that were their own animal and cultural natures.

To try to obliterate this difference with a desire for total "oneness" is to generate a simulation of otherness or an ideological image of a "return to nature." It is to push the hedge further back into the wilderness—a kind of colonization that undermines the delicate balance, and ends either in an ideology of sociobiologism or hierarchical religion. Rather, one must go into this wilderness, the culture of nature, in order to understand the nature of culture, in order to return, reborn to human society. Such an experience reaffirms, rather than nullifies, one's obligations and connections to the human world.

Following this path, we are told, the Siberian Tungus shaman "runs out into the wilderness, or his 'soul' travels down the kin river...to the spirits of the ancestors. His tambourine acts as his companion, assuming the shape of an eider goose or a pike, and

he uses the drumstick as a rudder. Finally he reaches the 'shaman tree of his clan,'" where the animal mother swallows his soul and gives birth to it in animal shape. He has now come to know his animal side, his wildness. "For he cannot know his human side until he also becomes aware of what it is not."[53] This internal planethood is what the Mexican and Guatemalan Indians, all of them cultivators, by the way, call the nahual.

The Tungus shaman and Guatemalan Indians lived in undeveloped areas, in close proximity to nature, carrying wilderness within them. To those who arrived in the Americas from the east in their great ships, or who went in caravans into the Siberian "wastes" from the west, these native peoples were themselves a component of a wilderness now transformed into a negative image of the travelers' own repression. But most certainly these lands inhabited by wild peoples were anything but "an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man [sic], where man himself is a visitor who does not remain," in the words of the preservationist-inspired U.S. Wilderness Act of 1964.[54] In this physico-geographical reduction, wilderness becomes an uninhabited land and nothing more, while civilization remains as it is, unquestioned. Yet this wilderness was always inhabited by people, who took their understanding of otherness to an entirely different level.

As Chief Luther Standing Bear observed, "We did not think of the great open plains, the beautiful rolling hills, and winding streams with tangled growth, as 'wild.' Only to the white man was nature a 'wilderness' and only to him was the land 'infested' with 'wild' animals and 'savage' people. To us it was tame. Earth was bountiful, and we were surrounded with the blessings of the Great Mystery. Not until the hairy man from the east came and with brutal frenzy heaped injustices upon us and the families we loved was it 'wild' for us. When the very animals of the forest began fleeing from his approach, then it was that for us the Wild West' began."[55]

It wasn't the existence of the physical wilderness in and of itself that guaranteed the kind of subjectivity and social relations allowing native peoples to live in relative harmony with the Earth, or the state would not have emerged in the first place anywhere. And while there may be some relationship in some cases between agriculture and herding and the emergence of repressive civilization, these elements alone are not enough to explain that emergence. Whatever the circumstances of origins, one can see a generalized expansion of the complex of civilization, the repression of nature externally and internally, with all the attendant destructive results.

When the european christian wanderers arrived on the shores of this Turtle Island, they were running away from a repressive civilization while carrying its bacillus with them. They went searching for lost paradise, but when they found it, they could see

[53] Duerr, *Dreamtime*, pages 46, 64–65, 105.

[54] Quoted by David Brower, "Foreword," in *Voices for the Wilderness,* edited by William Schwartz (Sierra Club/Ballantine Books, 1969), page xii.

[55] Luther Standing Bear, quoted in *Touch the Earth,* edited by T.C. McLuhan (Touchstone, 1971), page 45.

nothing but a threatening "howling desert," waiting to be reduced to ashes, to money. The invaders, whose own planethood had been violently stamped out of them, do not appear to have benefited much from the wilderness. They constructed a rapacious empire and slave-based civilization and despoiled the land faster than any previous civilization in history.

Wilderness and Colonial-Settler Ideology

This search for and terror of Eden underlies the deep ambivalence in american history and character, and illustrates why the discourse of wilderness in this country has always been problematic. In the beginning, of course, the motive was to beat back the natural world, that "hideous and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts and wild men," in the words of the Puritan William Bradford (no relation), "for which way soever they turned their eyes (save upward to the heavens) they could have little solace or content in respect of any outward objects...and the whole country, full of weeds and thickets, represented a wild and savage hue."

Mixed in strangely with this view was the constant theme of the abundant beauty and grandeur of the new world. The invaders described America as a "virgin land," but as Francis Jennings has shown so admirably in The Invasion of America, the land was more widowed by the arrival of the europeans than it was "virgin." Both images of the land as "teeming with savages" or empty were ideological justifications for conquest; in either case the reality of the people there was completely discounted. Richard Drinnon illustrates these alternating visions in his remarkable book *Facing West*, as when the explorer Thomas McKenney wrote during an expedition that they would soon be "beyond the limits of civilization...where we shall be alone among the mountains, and forests, and lakes." Drinnon comments, "An oneiric Crusoe, McKenney imagined himself on the brink of a plunge into a world without people." Another explorer declared the Great Plains unfit for human habitation "and then had discussed the Indian tribes living in this 'Great American Desert.'"

The schizophrenia in the character of U.S. culture can be explained at least in part by this manipulation of the wilderness theme and the deep ambivalence toward the land. In colonial-settler ideology, the land went from being a hostile presence to be cleared to a source of strength of character in the attempt by euroamericans to carve out an authentic cultural independence from Europe. It became a common theme to contrast an exhausted, over-civilized Europe with a vibrant, wild America; Charles Fenne Hoffman's comment on a trip west in 1833 that he revered a "hoary oak" more than a "mouldering column" was typical. What were all the Roman temples and feudal castles, with their associations of despotism and superstition, he mused, "to the deep forests which the eye of God has alone perfected, and where Nature, in her unviolated sanctuary, has for ages laid her fruits and flowers on His altar!" "Employing wilderness," Roderick Nash comments on this passage, "Hoffman invested America with a history." This, of course, is a history written by the conquerors. In light of our present discussion,

one could say that employing wilderness, DE tends to deny and conceal history from the point of view of the conquered.[56]

With the closing of the frontier, the early stirrings of U.S. imperial adventure beyond its own shores, and the final conquest and military subjugation of the native peoples, the attitude of colonial-settler culture toward the land began to change significantly. Wilderness went from being an adversary to becoming the foundation for a new nationalist mystique. This demanded first of all the suppression of the native american in discourse now that the people themselves were crushed' by force of arms; indeed, their invisibility has tended to remain a factor in the preservationist movement and its literature.[57] When President Grant signed the act designating over two million acres of Wyoming to be Yellowstone National Park, his army was waging a genocidal war against the Apaches in the southwest, the Modocs in California, and various tribes on the Plains. In 1890, the year that John Muir's articles calling for a national park at Yosemite appeared in national magazines, the U.S. Cavalry massacred the Ghost Dancers at Wounded Knee.

Despite the undeniably visionary character of Muir's writings on wilderness, this new attitude toward the land quickly became a centerpiece of U.S. nationalism. Theodore Roosevelt, who spent every available moment of his free time slaughtering wild animals (during a year-long visit to Africa, for example, he killed and shipped back to the U.S. over 3,000 "specimens" of wildlife), was to write that the frontier experience was central to the formation of the national character, which in turn was in danger of being "overcivilized" and thus of losing its original strength. Civilization could not survive in his estimation without wilderness values. "As our civilization grows older and more complex," he explained, "we need greater and not less development of the fundamental frontier values."[58]

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[56] Bradford quoted in Frederick Turner, *Beyond Geography: The Western Spirit Against the Wilderness* (Viking, 1980), page 208; Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire-Building* (New American Library, 1980), pages 166, 202; Frances Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (Norton, 1976); Nash, pages 73–74.

[57] Nash's book is valuable, but it is significant that the voices of native peoples are essentially left out. This is a book about the attitudes of the conquerors, not the conquered. Two revealing examples will indicate the problem. "Initially, Indians were regarded with pity and instructed in the Gospel, but after the first massacres most of the compassion changed to contempt." (page 28) This passage is incredibly obtuse; one can only wonder at the glib reference to the original "pity" felt towards the native people, who had in the beginning kept the hapless invaders from perishing (see Jennings). And the ambiguous reference to massacres is complicit with the bloodbath which is the whole panorama of American history. Who, after all, perpetrated the first massacres? So much for the "classic study of America's changing attitudes toward wilderness." Likewise Nash's remark, "In the struggle for survival many existed at a level close to savagery, and not a few joined Indian tribes." Horror of horrors! But, Roderick, you must know that they never had it so good! As valuable as this book is, it should only be read with Turner, Drinnon, Jennings, and Fredy Perlman's impassioned anti-history Against Leviathan close by as antidotes to its own "cant of conquest."

[58] Quoted in Nash, page 150.

This became a major theme of preservation in the U.S., that strength of character and freedom depended on preserving wilderness. Only government control could guarantee such preservation in Muir's view, and in this tradition conservationists and preservationists alike have rarely if ever challenged fundamentally the existence of this civilization but rather have tried to carve out a place for wilderness within it. Thus the idea of wilderness as a protective buttress for civilization is an integral part of the preservationist tradition.

This point of view is reflected in environmental writer Mark Sagoff's claim that the duty to preserve nature is an obligation "to our cultural tradition...to our national values, to our history..." And Wallace Stegner, describing the wilderness as "a part of the geography of hope," would declare it "the thing that helped to make an American different from, and, until we forget it in the roar of our industrial cities, more fortunate than other men." Commenting on these statements from two prominent and representative environmental writers, Nash emphasizes the relationship of wilderness to freedom, noting that the Puritans and Mormons were examples of a breaking away that "found freedom in wilderness."[59] Compare this colonial-settler conception of carving out freedom from the physical landscape—in the cases cited, civilization and its attendant plagues were simply transferred to a new setting and the visions of the native american Luther Standing Bear or of the Siberian Tungus shaman. More, much more, ends up concealed by such a perspective than is discovered about either wilderness or the empire that is presently completing wilderness' destruction on every level.

"A simple scarcity theory of value," notes Nash in a revealing passage, "coupled with the shrinking size of the American wilderness relative to American civilization, underlies modern wilderness philosophy."[60] One can perceive the same ambiguous tradition in Dave Foreman's refusal to support the essentially anti-imperial, antiwar Sanctuary movement today on the grounds that the refugees will put pressure on "the resources that we [sic] have here in the USA," or Edward Abbey's call to use the U.S. Army to seal off borders. One can also see that despite the positive qualities of an affirmation of wilderness and a reverence for the natural world, no understanding of the social context or of the real relations of power in society necessarily flows from such attitudes.

This is why, without a critique of imperial history and capital, the preservationist movement either accepts the coexistence of industrial capitalism and wilderness, or slides into survivalism and "catastrophist" misanthropy. This is in spite of a significant undercurrent of anti-capitalist refusal in Transcendentalism and preservationism, for example, Thoreau's condemnation of "the commercial spirit" as an infecting virus, or Muir's attack on "selfish seekers of immediate Mammon," or Lyman Abbot's comment, "The national habit is to waste the beauty of Nature and save the dollars of business." One can also point to Aldo Leopold's call for "revolt against the tedium of the merely

[59] Quoted in Nash, page 262.
[60] Nash, page 249.

economic attitude toward land," Earth First!'s anti-business rhetoric, and Arne Naess' remark that private land ownership would disappear in a deep ecological society.

Yet such rhetoric does not go far enough in exposing the institutional realities of the power complex or the interconnections between the assault against wilderness and the daily operations of capital. So preservationists argued during their campaign in 1966 to prevent the Grand Canyon from being dammed, that coal-fired power plants and nuclear power plants could supply power "at less cost" than a hydropower project in the Grand Canyon. In a similar vein, many wilderness defenders appear to have no social critique of mass technics, as when Gary Snyder expresses his ideal as "computer technicians who run the plant part of the year and walk along with the elk in their migrations during the rest," or when Wallace Stegner argues that wilderness preservation can prevent "a headlong drive into our technological termite life," failing to mention how the "termite" civilization itself must be dismantled. Others, like Paul Shepard, appear to advocate a termite-life in dense metropoles with a kind of periodic vision quest to the wilderness as a way to preserve both wilderness and human sanity, as if this scheme would ultimately do anything to enhance the kind of subjectivity and community that would learn to live with and revere nature and nature within. It is a physico-geographical and technological solution to what is ultimately a human problem.[61] And DE, allegedly the "radical" wing of preservationism, mixes apocalypse with Capra's computers, Abbey's Chinese Wall at the U.S.-Mexico border, and Foreman's "concerned" life-boat triage of the hungry to conserve resources.

Of course, the survivalism of the DE catastrophists is only a fringe of DE, itself only a fringe of the preservationist movement. But if DE activists are more radical in their attempts to move beyond the conciliatory reformism of the mainstream, liberal environmental movement, their catastrophist spokesmen slide into escapism in their view that no human intervention, no human modification of the land, and apparently no cultivation or technics are acceptable. Such a vision not only leads to misanthropy, but ultimately to paralysis. Nature (and human beings) will have a better chance with a vision that defends wilderness within a context of human values, with social transformation as its end. Even if we believe that wilderness protection is the foremost value, our fight would still be in what is left of our habitat where we are, in the cities and the countryside, and in the terrain of the social. If we all follow Muir's advice to find our instruction in the wilderness, none of it will survive.

Furthermore, our responsibility to the land goes beyond the defense of wilderness to all the land. "In country," said Aldo Leopold, "as in people, a plain exterior often conceals hidden riches, to perceive which requires much living in and with." For most people, such country is what will move them to deeper identification with the planet. This idea should not be disparaged by an ideologized concept of wilderness. Most of

[61] Thoreau, Muir and Abbot quoted in Nash, pages 87, 158, 166; Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac,* page 203; Naess quoted in R. Sylvan. For the Grand Canyon reference, see Nash, page 231; Stegner quoted in Nash, page 247; Paul Shepard, *The Tender Carnivore and the Sacred Game* (Scribners, 1974).

us now live in cities, but there is every possibility that we can dismantle them and allow nature to renew herself in our midst and within us. The proverbial burst of wildflowers in an abandoned lot, the rows of ailanthus (the "Trees of Heaven" we call ghetto palms) breaking through the concrete and deserted buildings, are signs of hope and transformation. We cannot save ourselves unless we preserve the wild, wide world; we cannot save the world unless we save ourselves. The question is a serious one: are we interested only in making the dramatic gestures of beautiful losers, or do we want to succeed in transforming the world? If the latter is to be possible, the defense of wilderness must be linked to social revolution, and not to an elitist and (defeatist) lifeboat ethics.

Saving Ourselves

To save ourselves: to restore the land, to restore ourselves to the land. None of us is absolutely certain how to bring this vision about. And so a sense of humility, in the face of the urgent constellation of challenges that lie before us, is called for. An ethic of respect for the land is emerging as the shadows lengthen over civilization. As Theodore Roszak writes in Person/Planet, "We are finally coming to recognize that the natural environment is the exploited proletariat, the downtrodden nigger of everybody's industrial system." But we are the land and must renew our connection to it. "For the Earth is not merely a factor of production; she is a living thing that makes an ethical claim upon our loyalty. Our identity is organically woven into her history; she has generated us out of herself, nurtured, shaped, and sustained us...And she will be heard."[62] Every scar on the Earth's body, every broken thread in its tapestry, diminishes us, undermines our own evolutionary destiny. To save ourselves we must save the Earth. To save the Earth, we must find a way to create a humane, egalitarian and ecologically sustainable society. If we cannot, we will continue around this vortex created by urban-industrial capitalism down to extinction and poison this planet beyond recognition. It may even be already too late, but there is still life in us, so we keep on.

The DE catastrophist argues that feeding the starving and saving the wilderness are mutually impossible. Claiming the moral high ground by proposing to represent all the species that will allegedly be destroyed by the continued existence of our present population, he suggests that any intervention into nature, any agriculture, is the product of a "humanist" resourcism that automatically turns a living world into an assortment of inanimate, disconnected materials or resources. Secondly, he repeats the Neo-Malthusian view that "any way you look at it," present population numbers necessitate the continuance and expansion of industrialism and industrialized agriculture. Human well-being and wilderness must inevitably collide: either humanity completely levels what is left of wilderness, or it must rapidly reduce its numbers by ninety percent or more. Any other vision is "humanism," an alibi for repressive civilization.

[62] Roszak, Person/Planet, pages 32, 273.

In response to the first objection, it should be noted that deep ecologists eschew resourcism ritualistically, perhaps for consumption by the gullible. But even biocentrism does not escape the resource idea, as when George Sessions characterizes DE as "resources for all species." Naess' view that the "vital needs" of people must be met shares in this essentially alternative resourcist formulation (even if for many of his followers, the "vital needs" of some, as in Animal Farm, are more important than the "vital needs" of others). Many deep ecologists have no qualms about manipulating resourcism as a political tactic, either, for example when Devall and Sessions note that "it is sometimes tactically wise to use themes of national or energy security to win political campaigns."[63]

Along the same lines, DE self-righteously derides each and every notion of stewardship of nature, regardless of its source or intent. All such ideas—from the most technocratic and instrumental to the recognition of a tragic responsibility based on inordinate human power over the rest of creation—are lumped together as "human chauvinism," with "non-interference" posited as the deep ecological alternative.

Yet Naess writes, "The slogan of 'non-interference' does not imply that humans should not modify some ecosystems as do other species. Humans have modified the earth and will probably continue to do so. At issue is the nature and extent of such interference." Elsewhere he writes of the "basic intuition in deep ecology that we have no right to destroy other living beings without sufficient reason" (emphasis mine). And in another essay he explains that the equality of all species is one of "principle," but that "any realistic praxis necessitates some killing, exploitation, and suppression." There is not much one can do with a principle that collapses before any "realistic praxis," but how to decide where to draw the line ethically on what is appropriate killing, appropriate exploitation, appropriate suppression?

Sessions elaborates that "Naess explains his intuition of ecological equality by saying 'the right to live is one and the same for all organisms, but vital interests of our nearest have priority of defense."[64] This loophole allows for all kinds of rationalizations—presumably even those of the catastrophist deep ecologists who argue for the preservation of North America (and its people) from the onslaught of foreigners Abbey has described as "culturally-morally-genetically impoverished."[65] The same loophole allows

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[63] Sessions, "DE and the New Age"; Sessions and Naess, "Basic Principles of DE," in *Deep Ecology,* pages 70–72; Devall and Sessions, *Deep Ecology,* page 5. Thus DE becomes a vanguardist movement with a secret "maximum program" while accepting the expediency of manipulative, right-wing "minimum program" campaigns for consumption by the "masses." So "anarchists" like Mr. A can argue that even anarchy must depend on the opportunistic orchestration of racist, authoritarian, statist hysteria.

This is pure Orwellian doublethink.

[64] Sessions and Naess, "Basic Principles," in *Deep Ecology,* page 72; Naess, "Interview with Arne Naess," in *Deep Ecology,* page 75; Naess quoted in Sylvan, page 14; Sessions, "DE and the New Age."

[65] Edward Abbey, "Immigration and Liberal Taboos," in *One Life at a Time, Please* (Holt, 1988). For a discussion of Abbey's unsavory role in all this see E.B. Maple, "Ideology as Material Force: Earth First! and the Problem of Language" (FE #328, Spring, 1988), and "Edward Abbey: We Rest Our Case" (Summer 1988 FE). When a correspondent wrote to the *EF! Journal* questioning the sale of Abbey's

deep ecologists to ostensibly reject stewardship while actually only proposing an alternative brand—lobbying politicians, "righteous management" practices (Devall and Sessions), restocking native species, and elaborate wilderness proposals. (One such proposal for a California wilderness published in the *EF! Journal* allowed for the continued existence of a U.S. military missile range along the border of the wilderness! What happened to "no compromise in the defense of Mother Earth" in that case?) "Noninterference" is obviously a piety: the dilemma of stewardship of some kind may be an unfortunate fact of life that we have to confront and define at least for the time being, reflecting as it does the unavoidable power that human society has to affect nature for better or worse. Doing or non-doing, protecting, leaving be or intervening, putting up fences or not, are all decisions that bring social and ecological consequences.

The second objection is even more groundless. Are people starving and is the land being contaminated because human population has "overshot" carrying capacity, as DE, both "official" and unofficial, has argued? This was precisely the ideology that my first essay critiqued thoroughly, and the very argument that deep ecologists have so miserably failed to answer. It has simply been reaffirmed as a matter of faith that "five billion large mammals of the species homo sapiens" cannot exist without industrialism and the subsequent poisoning of the planet and demise of biodiversity. There has been no substantive response (and in fact there has been almost no response whatsoever) to my discussion of the question of world hunger or of the Malthusian "overshoot" argument—itself the absolute epitome of a resourcist ideology that reduces complex social and historical conflicts to a question of numbers-crunching and units of energy.

In his book *Where the Wasteland Ends* (a book the deep ecologists recommend without, apparently, having read it very carefully), the anti-industrial anarchist Theodore Roszak addresses this very question of population and this modern civilization's addiction to urban-industrialism. "I know there are those who fear that any effort to scale down urban-industrialism will leave us with a world of starving millions," he writes. "The population explosion has become for many the iron imperative for all-out industrial expansion." Roszak's words are aimed at those who defend mass technology and technocratic control, but it is interesting to note that the catastrophist argument is but the flip side of the technocratic justification. Like the crassest bureaucratic planner, the DE catastrophist accepts at face value industrialism's commercial for itself, that

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book containing this racist, even fascist line, Dale Turner, the assistant editor, thanks the letter-writer for bringing up "an important and unfortunate misconception that has brought EF! a lot of shit. In a variety of forums, Abbey has clearly stated that he's the victim of a typo. His manuscript described the current flood of immigrants from south of the border as generically impoverished people, a dispassionate but accurate term that suits the majority of U.S. immigrants from any part of the world." Even if one were to believe this cock-and-bull line, it would make Abbey's quote "culturally-morally-generically" (rather than genetically) impoverished. So the editor and the novelist believe that Latin Americans (in fact, the majority of all immigrants) are culturally and morally impoverished. With whom do they compare the Hispanicized Indians fleeing the death squads—the morally and culturally enriched citizens of Gringolandia? Turner writes, "Of course, some people will never believe anything Abbey says..." Then again, Dale, some choose to believe anything he says, won't they? (*EF! Journal*, Samhain 1988.)

only it can keep the people of the world alive, that we cannot exist without the factory system, just as others have argued that we cannot exist without compulsion, the state and the police. Otherwise, the argument goes, ninety percent of the world's population would (or in the catastrophist variant, should) die.

But it is not the expansion of industrialism that feeds the hungry, Roszak observes. "The urban-industrial dominance is the disease, not the medicine." Industrialism guarantees that the Earth will be starved and poisoned before its pseudo-promise is achieved. Roszak does not dismiss the serious concern of population growth, and perhaps it is worth repeating that I never did either. In words very similar to those I wrote before I had seen his book, Roszak continues, "There is of course an absolute limit to how many people the earth can support. And if we reach it, not even super-industrialism will prevent disaster." But it is industrialism that must be opposed; "the simple, fearful truth is: our overdevelopment has far more to do with the world's miseries, past, present, and future, than the supposed overpopulation of the poor...Any discussion of world poverty that does not come round to demanding a radical change in our habits of consumption and waste, our tastes, our profligate standard of living, our values generally, is a hypocrisy. There are no technical answers to ethical questions."

Where DE has criticized industrial forms of life, I have no quarrel with it. I share this view. But DE's lack of critique of capitalism and its Malthusian mystifications undermine its critique of industrialism. "Those who anguish over a starving mankind on the easy assumption that there just is not enough land and resources to feed the hungry might do well to pay a special kind of visit to their local supermarket," writes Roszak. There they would see the vast array of luxury foods stolen from the poor nations of the world, the industrial junk foods and the wasteful packaging. "Then on the way home, ponder the land areas we have used up for streets, freeways, and parking spaces—all of it capable of producing food, but now sacrificed to the needs of traffic. Consider how much more of it is covered over by stores, factories, warehouses, shopping centers and dumping grounds which exist only to process, store and merchandise consumer goods that are of less true social value than the land they take out of cultivation. Consider too the amount of arable soil we give up to the wasteful urban pattern of one-family private yards, patios, and swimming pools..." Roszak ponders "how much of this could be reclaimed" along with good agricultural land that is presently subsidized to not produce, and how much land has been given over to militarism, the space program, and a host of other industrial activities that don't keep starving millions alive but rather undermine sustenance in order to keep a completely parasitic machine in operation?"[66]

Neither the more liberal nor the catastrophist wing of DE provides much at all in the way of a social critique of this exterminist machine, which is why they tend to take for granted the pretense that it serves some homogeneous human "need," capital's biggest Big Lie. The "humanism" that DE decries is only a window dressing on this

[66] Roszak, *Where the Wasteland Ends,* pages 404–407.

civilization's bloody history of plunder, massacre and devastation. No development schemes, no poisoning of waters, no squandering of the soil, no leveling of forests and no mass exodus of human populations occurs as a response to human "need" but rather to continue the accumulation of capital. As the adage goes, money talks, bullshit walks. To confuse the operations and propaganda of the megamachine with those liberatory, ecological societies we are capable of becoming is not only to mystify the sources of the crisis we are experiencing but to divert us from discovering the actual means by which we might create such societies. It reduces people at best to carrying out heroic but isolated rearguard actions and at worst to a kind of despair that cheers on the latest epidemic while stoically awaiting extinction. (See "Cheerleaders for the Plague" in this issue, FE #331, Spring, 1989.)

Such a perspective is as much an evasion of our ecological responsibilities as it is of our social responsibilities, since protecting the tree of evolution includes protecting the pattern of human cultures that has emerged from human consciousness, itself a miraculous and profound development stemming from that tree. The basis for our responsibilities to the rest of nature is itself embedded in our social responsibilities. Denying them is to deny one's humanity. That, however, is not a viable basis for action, but a dangerous pose. How can we turn this society around? Little or nothing that we value in ourselves or in the natural world will sustain the precipitous collapse that looms before us all, a collapse which the DE catastrophist like those feckless individuals who wander out onto the barren seabed left empty by the receding waters just before a tidal wave—has come to advocate.

A "Strategic Knowledge"

Mr. Ann argues that DE seeks a kind of "strategic knowledge" that is "based on our existence here and now in this society" as a response to the ecological crisis. His is "an ethic of resistance, a 'negative ethics' which flows out of the threat of the environment crisis." But it is worth asking from where he derives his picture of the "here and now" of this society, his terms, his judgment as he wrote in the *EF! Journal*, that "What matters is not ethical rectitude, but wilderness." In the same article he dismisses those who criticize his view that AIDS is a blessing as "academics" who only defend wilderness "because they feel this commitment increases their ethical stature." His reasoning is different: "Radical, biocentric environmentalism goes beyond ethics to an identification with non-human entities which motivates wilderness protection even when this means going against traditional ethical standards..."[67] In other words, everything is permissible to the biocentric warriors—even lining up with the oppressors against the oppressed, with the polluters against the polluted, if the protection of even one preserve can be negotiated. Here can be seen the implications of a "strategic knowledge," and the fact that DE, despite its claims to the contrary, says nothing about what kind

[67] See "Miss Ann Thropy Responds to 'Alien-Nation," in the Yule 1987 *EF! Journal*.

of society would be appropriate for living on this Earth. Such moral indifference spells a dead-end for environmentalism.

"Today, as in the past," writes Langdon Winner in his recent book The Whale and the Reactor, "ideas about things natural must be examined and criticized not only for ways they help us understand the material world, but for the quality of their social and political counsel. Nature will justify anything. Its text contains opportunities for myriad interpretations. The patterns noticed in natural phenomena and the meanings given them are all matters of choice. We must learn to read contemporary interpretations of the environment and ecology as we read Hobbes, Locke, or Rousseau on 'the state of nature,' to see exactly what notion of society is being chosen. When that is done, natural and social forms can be evaluated separately, a practice that an awareness of many past mistakes strongly recommends. It is comforting to assume that nature has somehow been enlisted on our side. But we are not entitled to that assumption."[68]

The collapse of the global ecosystem as we know it is not a far-fetched prospect. The Earth's vital signs are showing increased, profound stress, and we have no idea at what point what thresholds will be crossed. We will only inherit the consequences. The catastrophists may well have their catastrophe, which is to say their triumph, but it will be pyrrhic indeed. The possibility that human societies can be transformed in time also seems remote, not because we are too many, but because of the social chaos, the entropy that goes in capital's wake. The fact that "five billion mammals of the species homo sapiens" is a matter of serious concern, but five billion linked to the work machine and a large number of them unable to see beyond it to an ecological vision and to genuine health and freedom is far more significant and ominous. It is not so much population numbers but rather the social entropy created by capitalism that is the greatest threat to our survival.

Hence one can understand the misanthropy evinced by EF!ers; I have often shared in that same sense of frustration, rage, despair and disgust. "Man, that exterminator," writes E.M. Cioran, "has designs on everything that lives, everything that moves: soon we shall be talking about the last louse." But at least Cioran's is not a selective misanthropy that celebrates doom on the one hand and makes recommendations to border guards in the next breath. Elsewhere he writes in a mode deeper and more despairing than the smug misanthropy of the catastrophist, "Serenity being conceivable only with the eclipse of our race, let us meanwhile leave off martyring each other for trifles..."[69] Cioran's advice merits consideration. Misanthropy at its most searing depths proves the misanthropy of deep ecologists to be little more than a vestige of the humanism (as they define it) that they claim to despise. By renouncing freedom and dignity in a program of "salvation" they would reduce us all to the position of survivalists murdering our rivals around the doorways to our bunkers.

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[68] Langdon Winner, *The Whale and the Reactor: A Search for Limits in an Age of High Technology* (University of Chicago Press, 1986), page 137.

[69] E. M. Cioran *The New Gods* (Quadrangle, 1974), page 106 and *The Fall Into Time* (Quadrangle, 1970), page 120.

On the other hand, there is a possibility that we can bring about a revolutionary social-ecological transformation, that our grandchildren or great-great-grandchildren may inherit an Earth which is slowly mending itself, renewing itself. We have a chance, but we must find a way to articulate a dramatic appeal to the people who presently languish under the spiked wheels of the megamachine, who make it go and yet have no stake in it, who have nothing to lose and a world to gain: the oppressed, landless, contaminated, irradiated, and alienated planetariat, the people who will recover the planet and rediscover their own planethood. And if we cannot, the catastrophe will already have occurred, and nature will surely do the rest.

George Bradford
January 1989

A research text dump on Christopher Manes' philosophy
2 February 1986