

ARTICLE

An Overview of Western Environmental
Philosophy — II

Richard Evanoff

青山国際政経論集

33号 抜刷

1995, 2

An Overview of Western Environmental Philosophy — II¹⁾

Richard Evanoff

Religious Perspectives

Some environmental thinkers eschew mixing religion and ecology in favor of a completely secular outlook based on a naturalistic conception of the environment and human society. Religion appears otherworldly, more concerned with personal salvation and the afterlife than with the this-worldly problems of ecological destruction and social reform. Given the West's past history of religious conflict and intolerance, there may indeed be good reasons for maintaining a strict wall of separation between religion and ecological concerns. But religion simply won't "go away" from the environmental movement and there have been a number of attempts to integrate a religious perspective with a sound ecological outlook, several of which are noted here.²⁾

Reformulations of Christian Theology. Traditional religion, particularly Christianity, has been seen by some writers on environmental philosophy as being more a cause of, than a solution to, the ecological crisis. In 1967 Lynn White published an essay entitled "The Historical Roots of Our

1) This article is a revised and expanded English version of the article "*Kankyo-tetsugaku-nyumon*" ("Introduction to Environmental Philosophy") published in Japanese in *Chikyu to Kankyo Kyoiku (Earth and Environmental Education)*, volume 4, published by Tokai University Press, 1993. It also incorporates ideas from two previous articles published in this journal, "U.S. Environmental Politics and the Philosophy of Ecology" (June, 1991) and "Prospects for a Green Political Party in the United States" (November, 1991). Entirely new material has been added, however, and the present article updates these earlier efforts. Part II is presented here. Part I has been published separately.

2) See also Charlene Spretnak, *The Spiritual Dimension of Green Politics* (Sante Fe: Bear and Co., 1986).

Ecological Crisis,” which argued that orthodox Christianity posits a dualism between humans and nature.³⁾ The superiority of humans is based upon the notion that humans alone are created in the image of God. In the Bible, God tells the first humans to “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over . . . every living thing that moves upon the earth.”⁴⁾ In moving from animism to theism the Judeo-Christian tradition also denied that nature is in any way sacred. White believed that while modern Christianity is capable of generating an environmental ethic, historically it has been interpreted in ways that make nature inferior to human concerns.

Perhaps the most significant response to the charge that Christianity is antithetical to environmentalism was the “stewardship” model advanced by theologians associated with the National Council of Churches’ Faith-Man-Nature Group, which existed from roughly 1963 to 1974. These theologians interpreted the Biblical concept of “dominion” not to mean reckless domination over nature but rather the responsible stewardship of nature. The earth is a creation of God and humankind has been charged to be its caretaker. Good stewardship thus implies loving care rather than authoritarian exploitation. Richard Baer, a theologian associated with the Faith-Man-Nature Group, retained the orthodox cleavage between God and nature, but argued that the earth must be respected precisely because it is God’s creation. Critics, however, have contended that the stewardship model is ultimately anthropocentric because it continues to imply the *human management* of nature.⁵⁾

“*Creation Spirituality.*” A second reformulation of traditional Christian attitudes towards nature is that advanced by the Dominican theologian

3) Lynn White, Jr., “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis,” in *Western Man and Environmental Ethics*, ed. Ian G. Barbour (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1973).

4) Genesis 1: 28 (Revised Standard Version).

5) For a fuller account see Roderick Nash, *The Rights of Nature: A History of Environmental Ethics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), Chapter 4, “The Greening of Religion.” An extensive bibliography of Christian literature on ecological subjects is provided in Joseph K. Sheldon, *Rediscovery of Creation: A Bibliographical Study of the Church’s Response to the Environmental Crisis* (Metuchen, N. J. and London: American Theological Library Association and Scarecrow Press, 1992).

Matthew Fox. Fox's "creation spirituality" draws heavily not only on medieval mysticism (as mentioned in Part I), but also on native American religious traditions and radical social thought — a syncretic melding of influences which has frequently brought him into conflict with his Roman Catholic superiors.

The starting point for creation spirituality is panentheism: the view that God is not separate from nature, as traditional orthodoxy teaches; nor the same as nature, as pantheism suggests; but simultaneously immanent in and transcendent to nature. Thus, the divine can be found both in nature and within the human self. The presence of God within nature elicits feelings of awe and respect before nature, while the presence of God within the human self is an empowering experience which leads to love and concern not only for one's fellow human beings but also for the whole of creation. Fox's creation spirituality is not an otherworldly escape into the mystical, but rather a this-worldly experience of the immediate presence of the divine. In addition to contemplative practice (as found in both Western and Oriental forms of prayer and meditation) Fox also advocates active engagement with society. In addition to a concern for the environment, issues such as social justice and feminism are given a prominent place in creation spirituality.⁶⁾

Asian Religions in the West. For those who find it difficult to reconcile ecological concern with traditional Western religions, one option has been to look outside of the Western tradition altogether to non-Western religions such as Buddhism or Taoism. The study of Oriental philosophy in the West can be traced back to Emerson and Thoreau, but it has only been within the last few decades that indigenous forms of Oriental religions, particularly Buddhism, have begun to take root on American soil. In the last few decades Buddhism in the U.S. has matured to the point where it is less dependent on Asian cultures and more truly native in form (following the pattern of Buddhism's interactions with Chinese, Japanese, and

6) See Matthew Fox, *Creation Spirituality* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1991).

South Asian's cultures). Thus it may be more common to hear Western Buddhists, such as Gary Snyder, speak in terms of the *rights* of nature rather than in traditional Asian terms of *obligations* towards nature. The two approaches are by no means contradictory.⁷⁾

Buddhism's nondualistic, wholistic perspective is completely different, however, from the typical tendency in Western thought to make sharp distinctions between spirit and matter, divinity and creation, and the like. Through meditation practices individuals are able to discover their own "buddha-nature," which is in fact the same "buddha-nature" found in other beings, both human and nonhuman. Thus each individual is one with the whole; the self is not isolated from the rest of nature but a part of it. This interrelatedness implies that an injury to any part of nature is an injury to oneself. The cycle of birth and death continues, of course, but by freeing oneself from ego-aggrandizing desires and illusions one can come to have a compassionate relationship with the rest of nature. Buddhism's goal of finding a "middle way" between indulgence and asceticism is thoroughly consistent with the ecological idea that consumption should be geared towards the satisfaction of basic human needs rather than towards the craving of more and more consumer goods and luxuries.⁸⁾

Native American Religions. Native American spiritual traditions reflect the various cultures which flourished on the North American continent prior to the arrival of the Europeans. While Native American tribes exhibit a great deal of diversity, their cultures have historically been (in modern parlance) ecologically sustainable. Native American spiritual traditions, while varying in form and content, share a deep respect for nature. Since all of nature is seen as being filled with spiritual powers, there is a sense of community between human and nonhuman forms of life. The relationship between humans and nature is not based on exploitation for human purposes but on a sense of mutual obligation. Nature sustains humans and

7) Nash, pp. 114-116, shows how Snyder combines Buddhism with an American natural-rights perspective.

8) See also *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought*, ed. J. Baird Callicott and Roger T. Ames (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989).

humans should not take this sustenance for granted. Thus some native American tribes have the custom of offering apologies and expressing gratitude to an animal before killing it for food. The land belongs to everyone, not only to humans (who have no “property rights”) but to all forms of life.⁹⁾

The enthusiasm of some non-native Americans for Native American spirituality has led them to engage in such rituals as sitting in sweat lodges and going on vision quests. There has been a backlash among some Native Americans who view these practices as yet another attempt on the part of whites to appropriate certain aspects of Native American cultures without understanding or respecting those cultures as a whole. While there is indeed much that can be learned from Native American religions, there is perhaps a greater need for non-native Americans to revitalize their own spiritual traditions in a more ecologically sensitive way.

Goddess Worship and Neopagan Religions. A belief in Magna Mater, the Great Mother, was widespread in Paleolithic times and worship of the “Goddess” has reappeared in modern times, particularly among some ecofeminists. The symbol of the Great Mother is connected with the earth in general and the cycles of life found in the changing of the seasons and the mysteries of birth, life, and death. The Great Mother is seen primarily as a benevolent goddess, who nurtures and provides for her children, which includes all living beings. The religion of the Magna Mater held sway throughout much of human prehistory and was only supplanted by warlike patriarchal “sky-gods,” such as Zeus and Yahweh, with the rise of agriculture and civilization. Goddess worship lingered on, however, in the form of fertility cults and has resurfaced throughout later human history in various forms, often connected with “pagan” religious practices and witchcraft.

The ecofeminist, Starhawk, has been influential in her attempts to revi-

9) For a comparison of Native American and Western traditions see J. Baird Callicott, “Traditional American Indian and Traditional Western European Attitudes Towards Nature: An Overview” in *Environmental Philosophy*, ed. Robert Elliot and Arran Gare (Milton Keynes, England: The Open University Press, 1983).

talize the “old religion.” In her book, *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess*, Starhawk traces the history of goddess worship from ancient to modern times and documents the suppression that paganism and witchcraft have often suffered from the dominant religious traditions of the West.¹⁰⁾ Starhawk attempts to overcome old stereotypes about witchcraft by showing its relevance to a modern ecological perspective. Earth-based spirituality is grounded in three basic concepts: immanence (the idea that the divine is immanent in rather than transcendent to the world), interconnection (the idea that everything that exists is interrelated), and community (the idea that we have mutual obligations to each other and to nature).¹¹⁾

Philosophical Perspectives

Environmental Ethics. Environmental ethics did not emerge as an academic discipline until the 1970s. Academic conferences on the subject were organized as early as 1971¹²⁾, and in 1990 the International Society for Environmental Ethics (ISEE) was formed in conjunction with the American Philosophical Association. The ISEE publishes a quarterly newsletter which gives information about academic conferences, new publications in the field, and issues that are currently being researched.¹³⁾ *Environmental Ethics* has emerged as a leading academic journal in the field.¹⁴⁾ Environmental studies programs are now being offered at many U.S. colleges and

10) See Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979).

11) Starhawk, “Power, Authority, and Mystery: Ecofeminism and Earth-based Spirituality” in *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism*, ed. Irene Diamond and Gloria Orenstein (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1990).

12) William T. Blackstone organized a conference at the University of Georgia in February 1971 and eventually published the papers in *Philosophy and Environmental Crisis* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1974).

13) Membership information can be obtained from Professor Laura Westra, Department of Philosophy, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario N9B 3P4, Canada.

14) *Environmental Ethics* is edited by Eugene Hargrove, Department of Philosophy, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia 30602, U.S.A.

universities.¹⁵ While many programs are oriented more towards science, health, public policy, or law, there are a few which are specifically concerned with environmental philosophy. A number of books intended both to introduce and to further the field of environmental ethics have been published.¹⁶ The literature on environmental ethics is too varied and extensive to even briefly summarize here. It includes but is not limited to writers from various contemporary schools of ecological thought, such as deep ecology, social ecology, and ecofeminism.

Critiques of Western Rationality. Deep ecology initiated the debate over whether nature has intrinsic or merely instrumental value, i.e., value for its own sake or value merely for human purposes. It also presented itself as offering an alternative to the “dominant modern worldview” which arose during the Enlightenment. Critiques of the Enlightenment did not originate with deep ecology, however. In 1944 Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno (founding members of the “Frankfurt School”) published *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, which argued that Western rationality had become increasingly instrumental with the rise of modern science, placing more emphasis on pragmatic techniques for dominating nature and manipulating society than on higher values or moral goals.¹⁷

More recently Morris Berman has written a thoroughgoing critique of the modern scientific outlook. While new developments in science, such as quantum mechanics and ecology, have in fact moved beyond a mechanistic Newtonian worldview, the dominant mode of scientific thinking perpetuates a sharp distinction between observer and observed. Rather than ac-

15) See *Education for the Earth: A Guide to Top Environmental Studies Programs* (Princeton: Peterson's Guides, 1993).

16) See Nash pp. 123–124. Other volumes include Paul Taylor, *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986); Holmes Rolston, III, *Environmental Ethics: Duties to and Values in the Natural World* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988); Eugene C. Hargrove, *Foundations of Environmental Ethics* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1989); and Alan R. Drengson, *Beyond Environmental Crisis: From Technocrat to Planetary Person* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989).

17) Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Continuum, 1993 [1944]).

tively participate in the world in meaningful ways, science encourages us to passively observe the world from a distance. The result is a detached, alienated, and ultimately disenchanting perspective, which separates humanity from nature. Value is denied not only to nature, which is seen in purely materialistic and purposeless terms, but also to human experience, which itself becomes materialistic and purposeless. Berman argues that to avoid further alienation and ecological catastrophe, a reenchantment of the world is necessary. Instead of creating increasingly artificial, technology-based environments (“virtual reality” is a recent trend in this direction), humanity needs to resubmerge itself in the natural environment.¹⁸⁾

It should be noted that social ecologists have expressed a somewhat more positive attitude towards Enlightenment values. While they are equally concerned about the limitations of the modern scientific worldview, they fear that abandoning the values of rationality and freedom altogether may lead to an irrational and repressive “ecologism” with fascist overtones which would place humans in a totally subservient relation with nature. Murray Bookchin suggests that instrumental reason is not the only form of rationality developed in the West and that dialectical thinking offers an alternative not only to modern analytical methods but also to irrational nature mysticism.¹⁹⁾

Legal Philosophy. In *The Rights of Nature* Roderick Nash points out that ethics has historically evolved through various stages and that the general trend in Western society has been an expansion of rights in ever-widening circles. Whereas humankind’s earlier ethical concerns were limited to self, family, tribe, and nation, they are now being extended to include plants, animals, ecosystems, and the universe as a whole. Legislation in the U.S. has progressively granted rights to slaves, women, Native Americans, laborers, Blacks, and now, with the passage of the Endangered Species Act

18) Morris Berman, *The Reenchantment of the World* (New York: Bantam Books, 1984). A similar analysis from an ecofeminist perspective is given in Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (New York: Harper Collins, 1989).

19) See Murray Bookchin, *The Philosophy of Social Ecology: Essays on Dialectical Naturalism* (Montréal: Black Rose Books, 1990).

of 1973, to nature.²⁰ In 1972 Christopher Stone wrote *Should Trees Have Standing* in an effort to persuade the U.S. Supreme Court that wilderness areas should have legal standing in the same way that humans do.²¹ The animals rights movement has also sought to extend legal protection to animals.²² Protecting biodiversity in general is currently emerging as an important issue.

Rethinking Economics

In *The Turning Point*, Fritjof Capra suggests that contemporary economic theory is in need of a new paradigm.²³ Both capitalism and communism have been premised on the idea that growth — not only economic growth but also technological and institutional growth — is desirable and necessary for human progress. The problem, of course, is that increased production and consumption may simply lead to the more rapid depletion of resources and to more pollution and environmental degradation. In the face of these problems advocates of economic growth often argue that technology will eventually provide an answer. Most environmental thinkers remain deeply suspicious of the “technofix” mentality, however, since it ignores the fact that many of our current ecological problems are themselves the result of unchecked technological development. The burden of proof has been shifted to those who maintain what may in fact be an unrealistic and utopian faith in technology. Economic and technological growth also fuels institutional growth as witnessed by the rise of large transnational corporations and the need for more encompassing international trade agreements. Local autonomy and political control are increasingly giving way to a global market in which there are few if any real democratic checks on what transnationals — which by definition are not

20) See Chapter One of Nash, *The Rights of Nature*.

21) See Christopher Stone, *Should Trees Have Standing?: Towards Legal Rights for Natural Objects* (Los Altos: William Kaufmann, 1974).

22) See Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation: A New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals* (New York: The New Review, 1975) and Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

23) Fritjof Capra, *The Turning Point* (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), pp. 212–233.

bound to any one country — can do. Capra's critique points to the need to rethink traditional economics in a way that emphasizes both providing for genuine human needs and maintaining a healthy environment.

Green Consumerism. The “Green Consumer” movement has helped to increase awareness of the impact that purchasing decisions have on the environment, and in response to new consumer demands some companies have begun to market environmentally friendly products with “green labels.” Sandy Irvine points out that while Green consumerism can in fact have a positive impact on the environment, the movement ultimately does nothing to discourage continued high levels of production and consumption. Even eco-friendly products put a strain on resource and energy use; moreover, they can only be bought by people who have money to begin with, which makes Green consumerism an essentially middle class phenomenon with limited applicability to the poor. Irvine suggests that only by limiting the total volume of consumption and finding more equitable distribution methods can we create a truly ecologically sustainable and just society.²⁴⁾

Environmentalists who advocate limiting consumption are often criticized as wanting to push civilization back to Neandertal times. But the cries of pro-growth advocates that reversing economic growth will result in poverty and misery increasingly seem to resemble the protests of an overweight person who fears that going on a diet will kill him. Ecologists do not want to eliminate consumption, but merely to reduce it to truly sustainable levels. Modest increases in consumption for the truly poor would be compatible with this goal. Economic priorities should be shifted towards satisfying basic human needs for all rather than producing increasingly extravagant luxuries for the middle and upper classes — committing energy and resources to providing accommodation for the homeless, for example, before investing billions of dollars in high definition television.

Constantly changing fashions, advertising intended more to stimulate

24) Sandy Irvine, “Beyond Green Consumerism” in *Green Business: Hope or Hoax?*, ed. Christopher Plant and Judith Plant (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1991).

desire than to provide information, and planned obsolescence (intentionally designing products so that they break after a given period of time and the consumer has to replace them) all contribute to economic growth but they do not necessarily contribute to a higher quality of life. By curbing unnecessary consumption and making products that last longer, overall economic growth will undoubtedly decline sharply but both society and the environment will ultimately benefit. While simplifying lifestyles provides an alternative to a compulsive consumer society, it does not mean going back to live in caves. Several ecologically minded writers have suggested that “voluntary simplicity” can lead to a more satisfying inner life and a flourishing of culture.²⁵ People would no longer seek fulfillment in passive consumption but rather in active and creative forms of participation, much as they did in the past — playing baseball outdoors with friends, for example, rather than playing it alone at home on a video game.

Corporate Environmentalism and Industrial Ecology. The logic of capitalism, i.e., that production should be geared towards increasing profits rather than satisfying human needs (“We’re not in the business of making steel but in the business of making money,” as the former president of a major U.S. steel company used to say) would seem to mitigate against a strong environmental stance among corporations. Companies have discovered, however, that it is simply good PR to maintain a “green image.” At times companies make a genuine effort to improve their environmental record, as when fast food restaurants stopped packaging sandwiches in styrofoam containers. At other times, however, the effort is only lip service. “Greenwashing” is a term that is used to describe corporate practices that are intended to make a company look as if it is doing something to “help the environment” when in fact it is simply going ahead with business as usual. Roberta Olenick provides the example of tuna companies (Starkist and Chicken of the Sea are exceptions) that label cans of tuna as “dolphin safe” when in fact some of the tuna may have been caught with

25) See Duane Elgin, *Voluntary Simplicity: Toward a Way of Life That Is Outwardly Simple, Inwardly Rich* (New York: William Morrow, 1993) and Bill Devall, *Simple in Means, Rich in Ends: Practicing Deep Ecology* (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, 1988).

driftnets. Driftnets catch dolphins as well as tuna, but the companies usually do not do a thorough check on how the tuna they process is actually caught. Precisely because their standards are so lax these companies can claim that — to the best of their knowledge — the tuna they sell is “dolphin safe.”²⁶⁾

Corporate environmentalism also recognizes that it is good business to try to produce goods efficiently with a minimum amount of energy and waste. Currently there is a great deal of interest among companies in energy-saving technologies and more efficient production methods. The question of whether or not continued economic growth is truly desirable or ecologically sustainable, even with improved methods, is seldom raised. “Environmental technology” is also regarded as a hot new field for business investment. A cynic might deride this trend as allowing companies to profit both ways: first by making a mess of the environment and then by cleaning it up. Nonetheless, proponents of “green capitalism” argue that it is possible to reconcile environmentalism with the capitalistic economic system.²⁷⁾

A fairly sophisticated defense of this thesis can be found in Hardin B. C. Tibbs’ concept of “industrial ecology.” Hardin assumes, first, that economic growth is both possible and desirable, and that the developed countries have a moral obligation to help poorer nations achieve the same standard of living found in first-world countries. Second, he assumes that industry will not be attracted to any environmental agenda that will not permit them to expand both production and profits. His solution is to replace the “linear flow pattern” of present-day industrialism with a “future industrial system based on ecological principles.” Under the present linear system resources are extracted from the earth, processed as products, and later dumped as wastes. In the new system there would be a complete recycling of materials in circular fashion, with greatly reduced

26) Roberta Olenick, “Dolphin-Safe Tuna: Fact or Fish Story?” in *Green Business: Hope or Hoax?*, pp. 19–20.

27) See John Elkington and Tom Burke, *The Green Capitalists* (London: Gollancz, 1987).

input in the form of resources and output in the form of wastes (the current practice of burning garbage to generate electricity might be an example). The system would be fueled by a yet-to-be-developed hydrogen energy source. Hardin argues that products are already being designed to use less energy and fewer resources, a trend which he predicts will eventually lead to a “dematerialization” of the economy, and thus to a less exploitive relationship with nature.²⁸⁾ Total “dematerialization” is impossible, of course, and it seems likely that the sheer scale of economic activity Tibbs presupposes would still put an unbearable strain on resources.

Steady-State Economics. The economist, Herman E. Daly, has proposed an entirely different model for an ecologically sustainable economy.²⁹⁾ Daly is critical of the idea that the economy can be adequately described as a self-contained system. Even if materials were completely recycled, there would still be a tendency for energy within the system to be moving towards a state of greater entropy. Daly would like to replace fossil and nuclear fuels (which permit rapid economic growth but at high rates of entropy) with solar power (which permits a sustainable economy at low rates of entropy). Even if an unlimited energy supply could be found (such as hydrogen energy), Daly believes that further economic “development” would continue to contribute to the rapid destruction of natural ecosystems.

Steady-state economics is based on the idea that development (increases in quality) should not be equated with growth (increases in quantity). Daly compares a steady-state economy with a library that maintains a fixed number of books by replacing old books with new books when necessary. Thus while the library improves, it does not grow. Daly believes that a steady-state economy could be achieved by (1) limiting population in both the first and third worlds through exchangeable birth quotas; (2) limiting the production of goods and services through a depletion quota or tax; and (3) redistributing wealth through the establishment of minimum and

28) Hardin B. C. Tibbs, “Industrial Ecology: An Environmental Agenda for Industry” in *Whole Earth Review*, Winter 1992, pp. 4–19.

29) Herman E. Daly, *Steady-State Economics* (Washington, D. C.: Island Press, 1991).

maximum income levels. Population is not merely a third-world problem since people in the first world consume a much higher per capita percentage of the world's resources. Depletion quotas for resources at the source are preferable to pollution or carbon taxes after the fact (the method currently favored by market-oriented economists³⁰⁾). A minimum income would allow money to “trickle up” through the economy (the reverse of the now infamous “trickle-down” theory) and be an effective alternative to current welfare programs, while a maximum income would discourage luxurious consumption beyond reasonable necessity.

Daly is particularly critical of a phenomenon he calls “growthmania”: regarding the *costs* of environmental pollution and resource depletion as *contributions* to economic growth. Marilyn Waring has written, for example, that while the \$2.2 billion dollars the Exxon Corporation spent trying to clean up the Exxon Valdez oil spill — plus the millions of dollars spent on litigation — were all duly recorded as having contributed to America's G.N.P., the economic value of the plants, animals, fish, and shoreline that were destroyed was not subtracted.³¹⁾ Together with theologian John Cobb, Daly has proposed an “Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare” to replace G.N.P. The ISEW Index adds the benefits of unpaid household labor, for example, but subtracts the costs of long-term environmental damage — neither of which are presently accounted for by G.N.P. The index shows that while economic growth has increased over the past several decades, America's actual quality of life, both personally and environmentally, has declined.³²⁾

Jobs vs. the Environment. The labor movement in the United States has had an ambivalent attitude towards environmentalism. While there is an increasing tendency to sympathize with environmental concerns, labor

30) See, for example, David Pearce, Anil Markandya, and Edward B. Barbier, *Blueprint for a Green Economy* (London: Earthscan, 1989).

31) Marilyn Waring, “Measuring the Economy: People, Pollution and Politics” in *Building Economic Alternatives* (Fall, 1990), pp. 8–13.

32) Herman Daly and John Cobb, *For the Common Good: Redirecting the Economy Toward Community, the Environment and a Sustainable Future* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989).

advocates often find it difficult to reconcile the goal of material advancement for workers with the goal of environmental preservation. Unions fear that restrictions placed on environmentally destructive industries will threaten workers' jobs. Meanwhile corporations raise the chorus that businesses will suffer, jobs will be lost, and the economy will go into a tailspin if strict environmental policies are enforced.³³⁾

Recently environmentalists and labor advocates have begun to join forces, however, on the idea that the primary threat to jobs and economic advancement is not environmental regulation, but the corporations' own pursuit of profit. It is cheaper and easier for companies to export jobs overseas, to close U.S. factories, and to use corporate profits for other purposes (such as corporate raiding) than it is for them to work for the long-range goal of having an ecologically sound economy with full employment. The growing workplace democracy movement in the United States suggests that producer cooperatives and worker-owned enterprises, in which workers buy out their companies through Employee Stock Ownership Plans (ESOPs) and organize them democratically, offer a way for workers both to preserve their jobs and to protect the environments of their local communities.³⁴⁾ Ecologically minded economists have also attempted to redefine the debate over "jobs vs. the environment" to show how it is possible both to provide for the basic needs of society and to preserve the environment.

Sustainable Development. In 1987 the United Nations issued a report entitled *Our Common Future*, popularly known as the Brundtland Report, which defined sustainable development as ". . . development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."³⁵⁾ The definition seems fairly unambiguous but it has been interpreted in various and sometimes contradictory

33) See Richard Kazis and Richard L. Grossman, *Fear at Work: Job Blackmail, Labor and the Environment* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1993).

34) See *When Workers Decide: Workplace Democracy Takes Root in North America*, ed. Len Krimerman and Frank Lindenfeld (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1992).

35) World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 43.

ways. The “strong” interpretation is consistent with Herman Daly’s contention, noted above, that development should be equated with qualitative improvement rather than with quantitative growth. The “weak” interpretation, however, allows for traditional forms of growth and development to proceed as usual, provided that they can be sustained over the long term. David Orton has argued that the Bruntland Report itself favors the weak interpretation. The report advocates raising the standard of living in the third world to first-world levels through a five to tenfold increase in industrial output. Orton also charges that the report fails to give primary consideration to ecology, continues to see nature from a human-centered resourcist perspective, and avoids the problem of distributive justice between the first and third worlds.³⁶⁾

A number of writers have concluded that “sustainable development” (in the weak sense) is oxymoronic. In other words, the concepts of sustainability and development are inherently contradictory. According to Daly’s “impossibility theorem” it is naive to suppose that the earth has the resource and waste capacity to provide a growing world population with all the refrigerators, cars, and televisions commonly found in developed countries.³⁷⁾ Current development theory assumes that the first world will experience slow but constant economic growth and that rapid economic expansion in the third world will eventually enable it to catch up. A more ecological model foresees slow but constant growth in the third world, with rapid, but equitable, contraction in first-world economies. Both the first and third worlds would eventually reach roughly equal, but genuinely sustainable, levels of consumption.³⁸⁾ The first model may be easy to sell politically but is ultimately utopian and unrealistic in physical and ecological terms. The second model, while often dismissed as utopian and unrealistic politically, is in fact grounded in a sober and pragmatic analysis of

36) David Orton, “Sustainable Development: Expanded Environmental Destruction” (Saltsprings: Green Web, 1990).

37) Daly, pp. 148–153.

38) See Arne Naess, “Sustainable Development and the Deep Ecology Movement,” unpublished manuscript, 1989.

the physical and ecological limits to economic growth. Unchecked development will probably not eventually lead to a new millenium but rather to a state of ecological and economic collapse. It is precisely to avoid going back to living in caves that ecologists warn against following the pied piper of unlimited economic growth!

The current strategy of drawing third-world countries into the global market by encouraging export-based economies undoubtedly benefits third-world elites and also enables first-world countries to exploit both the cheap resources and cheap labor of the third world. This strategy often simply increases third-world debt, however, and does little to genuinely improve the lot of the needy. Rather than invest enormous sums in massive development projects that are often also environmentally destructive, a more effective — and cheaper — approach would be to encourage local production for local consumption through microloans to local entrepreneurs. Crops and goods can be produced for local consumption rather than for export, giving the poor in the third world a measure of self-sufficiency rather than increasing their dependency on global markets. Foreign investment, in any event, is often designed less to actually help the poor than to take advantage of cheap resources, low wages, and lax environmental regulations. Restoring self-sufficiency to third-world countries would also help to eliminate the export of jobs out of first-world countries and reinvigorate local economies there as well.

Political Trends

It would be a mistake to see environmental philosophy as nothing more than a set of interesting “ideas about nature.” With his concept of “ecosophy,” Naess has suggested that ecologists should seek wisdom, not merely knowledge, about the relationship between humans and the earth. Theoretical understanding can never be divorced from practical action.³⁹⁾ The point — to parody Marx — is not to merely understand the world but

39) See Arne Naess, “From Ecology to Ecosophy, from Science to Wisdom,” unpublished manuscript, 1986.

to preserve it. Four political responses to the environmental crisis are discussed here.

Grass Roots Citizens Groups. One response has been the formation of numerous grass roots environmental groups which are concerned primarily with local issues, such as preventing incinerators or toxic waste dumps from being located in one's area. Initially many of these citizens groups have a purely local focus — typified by the slogan “Not In My Back-Yard” (NIMBY). Recently, however, some groups have begun to make connections with the larger environmental movement — typified by the slogan “Not In *Anybody's* Back-Yard” (NIABY). Citizens groups represent a growing awareness among the general public of the impact environmental problems can have on everyday life. Their concentration on local issues at a local level can be an empowering experience for people who have become accustomed to a passive “armchair” democracy. Rather than rely simply on elected officials to make decisions for them, citizens groups are demanding, and often gaining, more access to the political decision-making process.⁴⁰⁾

Reform Environmentalism. A second response has been the formation of various Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), such as the Sierra Club (founded by John Muir) and Friends of the Earth (founded by David Brower). NGOs are primarily concerned with lobbying efforts to enact environmental legislation and to influence corporations to be more environmentally sensitive. While NGOs have been successful in pointing out that environmental problems transcend political ideologies and national boundaries, they essentially work within the framework of existing political and economic institutions rather question the ultimate assumptions upon which the system is based. NGOs are typically supported by a large number of dues-paying members who have no real voice in the organization. Most decisions are made by a professional staff with little input at the grass roots level.

40) See Ruth Caplan, *Our Earth, Ourselves: The Action-Oriented Guide to Help You Protect and Preserve Our Environment* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990).

Recently some NGOs have been criticized for having too cozy a relationship with environmentally insensitive corporations which use contributions to NGOs to “greenwash” their corporate images. The National Wildlife Federation, for example, receives donations from fourteen companies, including Arco (an oil company) and DuPont (a chemical company). Dean Buntrock, an executive of Waste Management Inc. — a major waste-handler with a poor environmental record and fines totaling more than \$30 million for violations of environmental regulations — was appointed a director of the National Wildlife Federation after his company began donating money to the organization.⁴¹⁾ Yet while the agenda of NGOs is often compromising, piecemeal, and reformist, their real achievements in influencing and in enforcing environmental legislation and decision-making should not be denigrated.

Direct Action. A third response has been to take direct action to prevent environmental destruction, even when this action requires one to engage in civil disobedience. As a political strategy, direct action has a long history in America, going back at least as far as the Boston Tea Party of 1773 when colonists dumped tea from British ships into Boston Harbor to protest what they believed were unfair taxes. Thoreau’s essay “Civil Disobedience” has also been an inspiration for contemporary environmental activists. Animal rights advocates from the Animal Liberation Front have liberated monkeys from research laboratories to save them from painful experiments. Activists from the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society destroyed an illegal whale processing station in Iceland and sank two whaling ships, causing \$4.6 million dollars worth of damage. Members of Earth First! have hammered iron spikes into trees and vandalized heavy equipment to make it difficult for loggers to cut down the remaining old growth forests of the United States.⁴²⁾

The latter group, Earth First!, was started by Dave Foreman in 1980 after he became disillusioned with what he felt was the ineffectiveness of

41) See Evanoff, “U.S. Environmental Politics and the Philosophy of Ecology,” *op. cit.*, pp. 69–70.

42) See Nash, Chapter 6, “Liberating Nature.”

mainstream environmentalism. Foreman had previously worked for The Wilderness Society but eventually decided that more direct forms of environmental activism were necessary. In 1987 Foreman and Dave Haywood published the book, *Eco-Defense: A Field Guide to Monkeywrenching*, which described various techniques for sabotaging lumbering operations. Foreman was arrested in 1989 by the FBI on charges of conspiring to destroy government property, although there was insufficient evidence to prove that Foreman himself had directly engaged in any of the practices described in his book. Earth First! was widely criticized, however, for its endorsement of sabotage. The group defended itself by claiming that monkeywrenching is a form of self-defense against the real violence being committed by timber companies against nature. While the present legal system protects equipment owned by timber companies, it does nothing to protect the trees which the loggers cut down. The aim of Earth First! was the reverse: to preserve the life of the forests by destroying destructive machinery. The group insisted that it was ultimately nonviolent since it directed its anger not at living beings, whether human or nonhuman, but at inanimate objects.⁴³⁾

The Green Movement. A fourth response has been the creation of a political movement on behalf of the environment. The Green movement first attracted worldwide attention in 1983 when a new party calling itself *Die Grünen* (The Greens) won twenty-seven seats in the West German parliament. The German Greens based themselves on four fundamental “pillars,” or principles: ecology, social responsibility, grass roots democracy, and nonviolence. As *Die Grünen* grew more powerful a split developed between “realos” who advocated compromising with other major parties in order to gain influence in parliament and “fundis” who wanted to maintain the Greens’ essentially oppositional stance. The split weakened *Die Grünen* and the “realos” eventually lost influence not only within their own party but also with voters. Green parties began to spring up

43) David Foreman and Dave Haywood, *Ecodefense: A Field Guide to Monkeywrenching* (Tucson: Earth First! Books, 1987). See also Edward Abbey’s novel, *The Monkey Wrench Gang* (New York: Avon, 1975).

elsewhere in Europe, North America, and Japan. While there was a great deal of variety in their platforms, Greens throughout the world attempted to develop a wholistic perspective which focused not only on environmental issues, but also on issues such as social justice, economics, and education.⁴⁴⁾

The Greens / Green Party USA evolved out of a meeting of the North American Bioregional Congress in May, 1984. American Greens have not attracted as much publicity as Green parties in other countries, primarily because their strategy has been centered more on building a strong grass roots movement than on fielding candidates for national elections. There are presently 450 local Green groups throughout the United States, many of which have successfully run candidates for local offices such as school boards and city councils. There are also five state parties with official ballot status (Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, and New Mexico). Similar to the split between “realos” and “fundis” in *Die Grünen*, the U.S. Green movement has been divided between those who favor working within the electoral system and those who prefer creating an alternative form of politics based on local citizen control.⁴⁵⁾

Greens in the United States have attempted to formulate their basic outlook in a document entitled “Ten Key Values,” which expands on the four pillars of the German Greens. The values are: ecological wisdom, grass roots democracy, social justice, nonviolence, decentralization, community-based economics, feminism, respect for diversity, global responsibility, and future focus. Politically the Greens see themselves as being neither left nor right but, as their slogan goes, “straight ahead.” The Democratic Party in the United States has traditionally advocated creating a more egalitarian society through a strong central government and expensive social programs. The Republican Party, on the other hand, has tended

44) The early history of the worldwide Green movement is documented in Charlene Spretnak and Fritjof Capra, *Green Politics: The Global Promise* (Santa Fe: Bear & Co., 1986).

45) See Brian Tokar, *The Green Alternative*, second edition (San Pedro: R. & E. Miles, 1992) and Richard Evanoff, “Prospects for a Green Political Party in the United States,” *Aoyama Kokusai Seikei Ronshu* (Tokyo: Aoyama Gakuin University, 1991).

to favor limiting the power and influence of government in order to extend more freedom to business interests. The Greens are opposed to both the “big government” approach of the Democrats and the “big business” approach of the Republicans. While they draw on Democratic values of equality and compassion and Republican values of liberty and initiative, the U.S. Greens see small, decentralized economic and political structures as being the best hope for stimulating grass roots democracy and retaining local control over both the economy and the political decision-making process.