

論 說

U.S. Environmental Politics and the
Philosophy of Ecology

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青山国際政経論集

19号 抜刷

1991, 6

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by Richard Evanoff

Environmental issues have become so popular in the United States that even President Bush has attempted to jump on the bandwagon by calling himself “The Environment President.” Despite the nearly universal cry to “save the environment,” however, the environmental movement in the United States is by no means one monolithic whole, neither in terms of ideology or tactics. Rather it is comprised of many movements and submovements with varying, and sometimes competing, ideas and strategies. The purpose of this paper is to provide an introduction to the various ecological positions which are currently being discussed and debated in the United States.¹⁾ While the attempt to provide an overview necessarily limits the amount of in-depth analysis any particular position can be given, I do hope to provide enough detail to point out some of the tensions which exist between the various approaches. I am also concerned with the practical consequences of the various theoretical formulations and with showing how various ecological ideas are being translated into political action.

Environmental Politics

A thorough understanding of mainstream environmentalism is necessary not only because of the enormous influence it has had on public policy, but also in order to fully appreciate the more recent movements which have

1) Other overviews, which the present paper is in part an elaboration on, include Howard Hawkins’ “The Politics of Ecology: Spinning the Web of Social Theory,” published in *The Guardian* (April 25, 1990), pp. 10-11, and “Shades of Green,” a special feature comprised of ten articles reprinted from various publications, which appeared in the *Utne Reader* (July/August, 1990), pp. 50-63.

sprung up as reactions against it. Mainstream environmentalism is characterized by the unspoken, but central tenet that effective environmental action can be taken by working through present governmental and economic institutions. It does not question either the legitimacy or the effectiveness of existing political structures in solving environmental problems, nor does it concern itself with the extent to which the capitalistic economic system may itself be responsible for environmental damage. It is thus “reformist” rather than “revolutionary,” in addition to being largely nonideological and unaligned with any particular political party or movement.

The primary vehicles of activity for mainstream environmentalism are private nationwide organizations, such as The National Wildlife Federation, The National Audubon Society, and The World Wildlife Fund/Conservation Foundation, which concern themselves primarily with lobbying efforts and legal action. Howard Hawkins accurately describes them as “staff-based organizations with a large, but passive, mailing-list membership that supports the staff through donations.”²⁾ The National Resources Defense Council (NRDC), for example, boasts 90,000 members which support the organization through “tax-deductible contributions,” and a “full-time staff of lawyers, scientists, and environmental specialists [which] combines legal action, scientific research, and citizen education in a highly effective environmental protection program.”³⁾ The NRDC’s publication, *The Amicus Journal*, which lists these facts, also states that the major accomplishments of the NRDC have been in the fields of “energy policy and nuclear safety; toxic substances; air and water pollution; urban transportation; natural resources and conservation; and the international environment.”⁴⁾ A bi-monthly newsletter, *NRDC Newslines*, keeps members informed of the actual progress—often in fact considerable—being made in each of these areas.

While few deny that the achievements of mainstream environmental groups have been numerous and in many cases significant, the organizations have been criticized on several grounds. The first is that the passive mailing-list

2) Hawkins, *op cit.*, p. 10.

3) *The Amicus Journal* (Winter, 1989), inside front cover.

4) *Ibid.*

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membership has no democratic voice in setting goals, priorities, or policies of the organizations; the members' only real function is to support the organizations with donations. All of the decisions are made by the "specialists" on the paid staff of the organization, effectively locking out both populist voices and local control.

A second criticism is that the emphasis on "professionalization" naturally leads to a "managerial" attitude towards correcting environmental problems. That is, most environmental problems are seen as being the result of bad policies or inadequate legislation—and thus correctable through better policies and more adequate legislation. Mainstream environmental organizations function as "special interest groups," which in the very process of focusing exclusively on environmental problems, fail to see how these problems are related to larger problems in the society. What more radical environmentalists see as the "root causes" of ecological destruction remain under the surface and conveniently out of sight. The mainstream is criticized for leaving the basic assumptions of the present social order largely intact—namely, that a high growth economy is preferable to an ecologically sustainable economy and that a higher standard of living based on consumerism is preferable to a lower standard of living emphasizing quality of life. Critics point out that the traditional values of high economic growth and the newer ecological values of environmental preservation are in mutual contradiction with each other, and therefore irreconcilable.

A third criticism is that the very process of working within the framework of existing national institutions involves questionable compromises, influence peddling, and sometimes irreconcilable conflicts of interest. The April/May 1990 issue of *Mother Jones* reported, for example, that Dean Buntrock, chief executive officer of Waste Management Inc. (WMI), a major wastehandler with a record of landfill leaks, a conviction for price-fixing, and fines totally more than \$30 million for violations of environmental regulations, was appointed a director of the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) shortly after WMI began donating money to the environmental organization. Buntrock was also reportedly able to use his position with the NWF to influence the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to soften its stance on certain waste

disposal regulations—to WMI's benefit. The interlocking directorates with corporations, as well as the reliance on corporate donations, have tainted the credibility of some mainstream environmental organizations. The same article reports that Chevron and Exxon have each donated more than \$50,000 to the World Wildlife Fund / Conservation Foundation; that the National Audubon Society increased its corporate funding from \$150,000 to nearly \$1 million between 1986 and 1989; and that there are now fourteen companies on the corporate council of the National Wildlife Federation, including Arco, DuPont, and Ciba Geigy, each paying \$10,000 to join.⁵⁾

The coziness between mainstream environmental organizations, major corporations, and government agencies has led some critics to the conclusion that corporations are cynically using their connections not only as a means of influencing public policy to their own advantage, but also to simultaneously polish their public images. Through the skillful use of advertising and public relation campaigns, corporations can portray themselves as doing their bit to protect the environment while at the same time pursuing profit-enhancing business strategies which have an opposite and detrimental effect on the environment. The sheer economic strength of corporate environmentalism puts it in a better position to manipulate public opinion—quite unlike the grassroots environmental citizens groups, which usually do not have the funds to get a nationwide hearing for their point of view. Corporate donations to nonprofit environmental groups, which are also tax write-offs, and advertising expenses can simply be regarded as part of the cost of doing business.⁶⁾

5) Reprinted in “Shades of Green,” *op. cit.*, pp. 51–52.

6) The same “image-polishing” tendencies have been observed and criticized in Japan. For penetrating critiques of the recent corporate and government-sponsored “International Garden and Greenery Exposition” in Osaka see Jim Griffith’s “Flower Expo ’90: A Frightening Vision,” reprinted from the *Japan Environmental Exchange Bulletin* in *Japan Environment Monitor* (April, 1990), p. 2, and Robert Brady’s “Expo ’90: Rubbing Our Noses In It” in *Kyoto Journal* (Summer, 1990), pp. 41–44. Instead of raising genuine ecological consciousness, the event was, in Griffith’s words, “a large-scale commercial for the various corporate and government sponsors of the event.” One display featured the huge stump of a Yakushima cedar, the irony and symbolism of which were not lost on the expo’s critics.

Recent efforts of the government to pursue environmental policies using capitalistic “market incentives” have also come under attack. An example is President Bush’s plan for curbing acid rain. Under the Bush plan, a national limit on sulfur dioxide emissions would be set, and corporations would then be issued permits giving them the “right” to pollute at certain levels. Companies which came in under the limits and did not use up all their pollution “rights,” could then sell their permits to corporations which exceeded the limits. The incentives are two-fold: the carrot is that corporations will want to pollute less in order to be able to sell their permits; the stick is that companies will want to avoid polluting at more than their assigned limits since they will have to pay extra for the right to do so. Left out of the calculation is the fact that certain levels of pollution would nonetheless be regarded as “acceptable.” The limits could be set high or low, with ample room for revision and manipulation, and could even be legally increased with increases in economic growth. Moreover, implicit social values remain unchanged: *Time* magazine’s article on the Bush plan was revealingly entitled “Giving Greed a Chance.”⁷⁾ The net result of these unchallenged assumptions is that a higher priority continues to be placed on corporate profits than on sound environmental policy.

Whether held by private groups, corporations, or the government, mainstream environmental values fit what Charles A. Reich described as “Consciousness II” mentality, that is, the trust in large, highly centralized institutions comprised of meritocratically chosen “experts” to manage both the environment and society with technology (through scientific advancement), and social control (through planning and legislation).⁸⁾ The idea that environmental problems can be solved without fundamental changes in the economic and political structures of society squares nicely both with the traditional conservative faith in the free market to achieve economic progress and with the traditional liberal notion that it is the state’s responsibility to

7) “Giving Greed a Chance: Is the ‘right’ to pollute an ecologically sound idea?” in *Time* (February 12, 1990), p. 29.

8) Cf. Charles A. Reich, *The Greening of America* (New York: Random House, 1970), pp. 62–90.

provide for the prosperity and welfare of its people. That is, both sides are allied on the implicit assumption that material progress is both desirable and achievable despite certain “unavoidable” environmental tradeoffs. It is largely this model of society and politics which is being challenged by the newer environmental groups and movements. In the process environmentalists are asking how truly democratic a representative democracy can be when it invests so much authority in central government institutions, and how “free” the free enterprise is when so much economic power remains in the hands of large corporations. The environmental movement is thus also becoming a critique of the extent to which the present social order is based more on power, money, and influence than on genuinely democratic decision-making and citizen participation.

At the same time, however, the actual accomplishments of mainstream environmentalism should not be denigrated. Some NGO's (non-government organizations) have managed to avoid close ties with both corporations and the government, thus maintaining an independent line which can be critical of both corporate and governmental policies. Some environmentalists also welcome the new attention corporations are giving to the environment and feel that their gestures, whatever the limitations, should be encouraged rather than denounced. Others see mainstream environmentalism as a “third wave” successor to earlier movements which worked for environmental protection by attempting to change public policy—the “first wave” being the conservation movement at the turn of the century which worked for the enactment of conservation laws and the establishment of a national park system; the “second wave” being the environmental movement of the 1960s and '70s which won the passage of pollution control laws and pressed for the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency.⁹⁾

Nonetheless, the very fact that the environmental crisis seems to be getting worse rather than better, has led many to believe that there are serious limi-

9) A good account of the early conservation movement is contained in Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973). The book includes an account of the emerging forces of the “second wave,” but was published before much of the legislation of the 1970s was passed.

tations to any approach which tries to solve environmental problems piecemeal without simultaneously working for deeper changes in both social attitudes and social relations. There are a growing number of grass roots and citizens groups which have sprouted up around single issues such as toxic waste, golf course construction, and trash incinerators, which Hawkins sees as having the potential to move "from plain militancy to a genuinely radical approach aimed at structural change," and notes that they "also encompass a class and racial diversity that neither mainstream environmental groups nor the more ideological ecology trends have even approached."¹⁰⁾

The fact remains, however, that such groups often restrict themselves to single issues, not to a broad political program. In particular, the "NIMBY" (not-in-my-back-yard) approach to solving local environmental problems has been criticized as elitist, on the grounds that more affluent and highly educated citizens prove better equipped to take political action, leaving poorer and less-educated neighborhoods more vulnerable as sites for incinerators and toxic waste dumps. Not only does this trend provide an example of the class-based nature of environmental problems, but it should also serve as a caution to decentrists: there is no guarantee that investing final decision-making in small democratically-controlled groups will inevitably lead to altruistic, environmentally sound policies. Ultimately, however, the attempt to "shift" environmental problems from richer to poorer neighborhoods has led both to a strengthening of environmental consciousness among lower-income groups and to a wider, more encompassing approach typified by the new slogan: NIABY (not-in-anyone's-back-yard).

Local organizations also tend to focus on problems strictly of concern to local residents without seeing how their particular problems are related to larger environmentally destructive patterns. As a consequence, they often fail to make the necessary organizational links with others in different regions which could lead towards the formation of wider movements. Nonetheless, national coalitions, such as the Citizens' Clearinghouse on Hazardous Waste and the anti-nuclear Clamshell Alliance, have been formed, although again,

10) Hawkins, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

despite their wider geographical base, these groups also tend to limit themselves to single-issue politics without offering a broader political program.

The only attempt to date to organize a broad political program aimed not only at solving environmental problems, but also at restructuring social and political relations, is that of the U.S. Green Movement, which was formed in 1984 and by 1988 had grown to a network of approximately two hundred local Green groups.¹¹⁾ The U.S. Greens have organized themselves around “Ten Key Values”: ecological wisdom, grass-roots democracy, personal and social responsibility, nonviolence, decentralization, community-based economics, postpatriarchal values, respect for diversity, global responsibility, and future focus. Recently the Greens have begun drafting position papers, called SPAKA’s (Strategy and Policy Approaches in Key Areas), which when completed and ratified will form the basis of a national “Green Program.”¹²⁾ The feasibility of holding a Green Continental Congress and formally launching an American Green Party is also being discussed.

The Philosophy of Ecology

The various problems connected with mainstream environmentalism have evoked several responses, which call both for new political formations and for a new philosophical orientation. The major philosophical positions in the emerging philosophy of ecology, which collectively represent a fresh departure in political philosophy, are presented below.

Deep ecology. The word “deep ecology” was first coined by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess and the idea was further developed in a book by the same title written by American philosophers Bill Devall and George Sessions. Essentially deep ecology critiques the reformist tendencies of mainstream environmentalism by moving away from an anthropocentric perspective to a biocentric perspective. The anthropocentric perspective, typical of

11) *In Search of Greener Times* (Fall, 1988), p. 32. Approximately 160 of these groups are officially affiliated with the Committees of Correspondence; 40 have unofficial affiliation.

12) An updated edition of the SPAKA’s has been published in *Green Letter* (Winter, 1990), pp. 53–76.

reformist environmentalism, treats nature primarily as a resource to be managed and controlled by human beings for human benefit and comfort. A biocentric perspective, on the other hand, views nature as an end-in-itself, that is, as having intrinsic value on a par with the intrinsic value of humanity.

Naess attempted to derive a deep ecological perspective from two ultimate norms: self-realization and biocentric equality. Self-realization involves the right of all beings to fulfill their inherent potential, a concept derived from humanistic psychology and similar in some respects to Aristotle's notion of *entelechy*. The "self" which is attempting to be realized should not, Devall and Sessions remind us, be understood in its usual Western sense as "an isolated ego striving primarily for hedonistic gratification or for a narrow sense of individual salvation in this life or the next" but rather as "organic wholeness."¹³ Particular "self" is thus seen as part of universal "Self"—much the same as Plotinus described *psyché* more in cosmic than in individual terms, or as the *Upanishads* saw *atman* as one with Brahman. Self-realization cannot occur in egoistic isolation, but is rather inextricably related to larger social, ecological, even metaphysical contexts which transcend the individual.

Moreover, within the "One" itself there is a fundamental equality. All that exists, exists on equal terms with everything else. This formulation provides an ethical justification for treating all of nature with reverence and respect, while at the same time allowing for the fact that "mutual predation is a biological fact of life."¹⁴ Kropotkin's model in *Mutual Aid* of species coexisting with each other in a cooperative environment replaces the Darwinian (and social-Darwinian) model of competition and survival of the fittest, even though it is recognized that species will inevitably use each other as sources of food. Ethics, as with Spinoza, cannot be seen in terms of isolated actions (eg., the act of one animal killing another for food) but only from the perspective of the whole. The act of killing plant and animal life can only be justified, deep ecologists hold, to satisfy *vital needs*—quite in

13) Bill Devall and George Sessions, *Deep Ecology* (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, 1985), p. 67.

14) *Ibid.*

contrast with the vast amounts of environmental destruction being engaged in purely to provide for *human comfort*.

Deep ecology regards itself as part of a “minority tradition” opposed to what it calls the “dominant modern worldview.” The latter is based on a continuing fascination with seventeenth-century mechanistic thinking, typified by Descartes’ desire to “make ourselves masters and possessors of nature.”¹⁵⁾ In this worldview, the universe is conceived as being strictly explainable in terms of matter and motion, and nature itself is knowable exclusively through manipulation (i.e., experiment) and mathematical abstraction. “Man is the measure of all things,” as Protagoras wrote—a theme which has repeated itself over and over again in the history of Western philosophy. The end result has been a culture based on anthropocentric, rather than biocentric values. In social terms, anthropocentric values emphasize centralized authority rather than democratic decision-making, large-scale bureaucratized institutions rather than small-scale human communities, individualism rather than self-responsibility, competitiveness rather than cooperation, production for profit rather than for the satisfying of basic human needs, government-regulation rather than self-regulation, and a narrow definition of citizenship limited to the human world rather than one which includes the entire organic community of animals, plants, etc.

In opposition to the dominant worldview, deep ecology sees itself as drawing on the “minority tradition,” comprised of such diverse historical and cultural sources as perennial philosophy, native American and other “primitive” cultures, Romanticism and American Transcendentalism, the pastoral literary tradition running from Melville’s *Moby Dick* to the poetry of Robinson Jeffers and Gary Snyder, scientific ecology, the “new” physics, the Christianity of St. Francis and other medieval mystics, Eastern religious sources such as Taoism and Buddhism, Gandhi, the philosophies of Spinoza and Heidegger (Plotinus could easily be added), the work of pioneering environmentalists such as John Muir and David Brower, and ecofeminism. Despite the surface disparities between these various sources, they all em-

15) Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 41.

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phasize the common themes of oneness, respect for nature, and a perspective which sees humanity as part of a larger whole.

Naess argues that deep ecology itself is not a monolithic ideology, but is rather based upon ultimate premises derived from various sources which, while differing among themselves, nonetheless result in similar conclusions of relevance to deep ecology. Naess writes,

What supporters of the Deep Ecology movement have (more or less) in common at a fairly general and abstract level, must not be sought at the level of ultimate premises of a given philosophy, or, more succinctly, at the level of the 'total view', but rather at a secondary level, where there is agreement on the relationship between man and nature.¹⁶⁾

At the level of ultimate premises, for example, Christianity regards life as sacred because the earth is God's creation whereas Buddhism, which is essentially nontheistic, teaches the principle of *ahimsa*—refraining from destroying life—as one of its ten precepts. Thus, at the "secondary" level, the idea that life in all its forms should be respected can be derived from both the ultimate premises of Christianity and those of Buddhism, even though those ultimate premises differ and derive from different spiritual traditions.

Nonetheless, deep ecology sees itself as offering an alternative and a challenge, not only to the dominant worldview, but also to mainstream academic philosophy. Devall and Sessions write,

Modern Western academic philosophy in the twentieth century has become very wedded to mechanistic science as its touchstone for reality and knowledge, along with a narrow preoccupation with the analysis of language, and has all but lost sight of the wisdom tradition in philosophy. Specialists in philosophy now, for example, do ethical theory entirely divorced from its metaphysical underpinnings or an awareness of the deep assumptions they are making. Philosophical specialists also ignore the history of philosophy and the cultural contexts in which the theories and ideas have arisen. All of this in its way tends to reinforce

16) Arne Naess, "Deep Ecology and Ultimate Premises" in *The Ecologist*, (Vol. 18, Nos. 4/5, 1988), pp. 128.

anthropocentrism and the existing technocratic-industrial society. Such specialists are of little help in developing the deep ecology worldview now needed.¹⁷⁾

The sociology of knowledge, which also called the presumed “valueless” objectivity of science into question, was perhaps an exception to the general tendency to isolate ideas from their social and historical contexts. Nonetheless, in an attempt to recover the “wisdom tradition in philosophy” Naess has posited the need to move attention “*from ecology to ecosophy*, from focus on science and technique to focus on wisdom.”¹⁸⁾ Ecosophy emphasizes practical ethics—“how to inhabit the earth conserving her long range, full richness and diversity of life as a value in itself”—and is thus “both a theory and a praxis.”¹⁹⁾ The point, to paraphrase Marx, is not only to understand the world but to preserve it.

The “praxis” of deep ecology has worked itself out in several ways. Naess distinguishes between three different types of individuals who are attracted to deep ecology and able to make significant contributions to it: the “naturals” who are more or less strictly concerned with environmental issues; the “spirituals” who are primarily concerned with philosophy, religion, and self-realization; and the “socials” who are chiefly concerned with the ills of industrial society and social justice.²⁰⁾ While reformist and legislative action is not entirely dismissed by deep ecology, more emphasis is placed on direct action, which operates at various levels, from changes in personal lifestyle to nonviolent protest. The most colorful group to come out of the deep ecology movement is Earth First!, known for its efforts to halt the harvesting of old-growth forests by such “monkeywrenching” techniques as sabotaging machinery used for lumbering and spiking trees to make

17) Devall and Sessions, p. 81.

18) Arne Naess, “From Ecology to Ecosophy, from Science to Wisdom,” unpublished manuscript adapted from a lecture presented at the International Conference in Florence, October, 1986, p. 2.

19) *Ibid.*

20) Arne Naess, “Finding Common Ground” in *Green Synthesis* (March, 1989), p. 9.

make them less vulnerable to chain saws.

Social Ecology. Social ecology can be seen not only as a self-contained philosophy in its own right, but also, in part, as a critique of and a response to deep ecology. In its emphasis on biocentrism, deep ecology has been accused of being misanthropic, more concerned about the fate of plants and animals than about the fate of human beings. Some of the more extreme statements of those identifying themselves as supporters of deep ecology have lent support to this criticism. The population problem, in particular, led some supporters to the Malthusian conclusion that famine, war, and diseases such as AIDS are desirable biological correctives to overpopulation—a stance that immediately drew criticism, particularly from social ecologists and left Greens, resulting in the toning down of some of the more extreme claims.

This exchange, however, touched off a wider debate between deep and social ecology, and partially contributed to the establishment of a Left Green Network within the larger U.S. Green Movement. Social ecologists were critical of the deep ecology emphasis on changes in personal life-style, rather than on structural social change, as the best approach to solving ecological problems. Deep ecologists in turn were uncomfortable about the leftist rhetoric of social ecologists, fearing that social ecology was an attempt to infiltrate the ecology and Green movements with Marxist ideology. Much of the debate in this area, however, was based on the erroneous tendency, common in American politics however, to regard anyone who is not “for capitalism” as “Marxist” or “communist,”—“reds in green cloaks,” as one article labeled not just the social ecologists, but the Greens as a whole.²¹⁾ In fact, social ecologists are more squarely in the anarchist libertarian tradition of Proudhon, Bakunin, and Kropotkin, which historically has been highly antagonistic to Marxism. While agreeing in part with Marx’s critique of capitalism, social ecologists differ entirely in both goals and methods, emphasizing nonauthoritarian political structures rather than a dictatorship of

21) David Horowitz, “Environmentalists are simply Reds in Green cloaks” in *National Review* (March 19, 1990), reprinted in *Utne Reader*, p. 57.

the proletariat, and decentralized decision-making rather central planning.²²⁾

The spirituality (including, but not limited to a “reverence for nature”) of some deep ecology supporters was also in marked contrast to the more positivistic approach of social ecologists. Whereas the dominant trend in political thought ever since the eighteenth-century Enlightenment has been to conceive of politics as a “science” governing the relationships between people, deep ecology based itself on an almost spiritual intuition that ecological “oneness” comprised not only relationships between people, but also relationships between all living things. Social ecology, with more grounding in the Enlightenment tradition and the various revolutionary and radical movements which grew out of it, continued to see religion and political change as antagonistic. Janet Biehl wrote, for example,

Ecology, both as a science and as a politics, is committed to demystifying all conceptions of Nature and to valuing Nature in its own right. In ecological politics as in science, the deification of Nature as Supernature should be rejected as anti-naturalistic.²³⁾

Much of the debate between deep and social ecologists was initiated by Murray Bookchin, a political philosopher who has emerged as a primary spokesperson for social ecology.²⁴⁾ In his book, *The Modern Crisis*, Bookchin described social ecology as

. . . a *sensibility* that includes not only a critique of hierarchy and domination but a reconstructive outlook that advances a participatory concept of “otherness” and a new appreciation of differentiation as a social and biological desideratum. Formalized into certain basic principles, it is also guided by an ethics that emphasizes variety without structuring

22) For a contemporary critique of Marxism from the perspective of a social ecologist see Murray Bookchin, “Listen Marxist!” in *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1986), pp. 193–242.

23) Janet Biehl, “On Theistic Spirituality” in *Green Perspectives* (January, 1989), p. 3.

24) Bookchin’s thought has continued to evolve with the publication of *The Philosophy of Social Ecology: Essays on Dialectical Naturalism* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1990).

differences into a hierarchical order.²⁵⁾

Participation and differentiation are Bookchin's key ethical precepts. Drawing on ideas first outlined by Kropotkin in *Mutual Aid* in response to Darwin's theory of competition and survival of the fittest, Bookchin applies the idea of mutualistic interaction to human societies. Cooperation, centered in small participatory communities, replaces the competition of large depersonalized societies as the fundamental ethical category. At the same time, differentiation leads to a state of stability, both ecologically and socially, since no one species, class, attitude, or whatever, dominates others.

Basing social relations on principles derived from biological relations leads to Bookchin's view of the nature and scope of individual freedom:

An ecological ethics of freedom thus coheres nature, society, and the individual into a unified whole that leaves the integrity of each untouched The social derives from the natural and the individual from the social, each retaining its own integrity and specificity through a process of ecological derivation. The great splits between nature and society and between society and individuality are thus healed.²⁶⁾

Thus both the alienation of humanity from nature and the alienation of the individual from society are primarily the result of changes in the total equilibrium, that is, the domination of one part over another part, which results in hierarchical rather than organic relationships.

Bookchin's "critique of hierarchy and domination," which goes far beyond the cursory summary given here, leads to the conclusion that ecological problems cannot be divorced from larger social and political problems. The analysis shows that the deep ecology outlook, while seeking a wholistic perspective, in fact perpetuates dualism by separating society from nature, thus remaining unaware of the link between social domination and the domination of nature. To give a concrete example, one cannot expect to solve the problem of the destruction of rain forests in Brazil without first addressing the

25) Murray Bookchin, *The Modern Crisis* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1987), p. 25.

26) *Ibid.*, p. 36.

impoverished social and economic conditions which created the problem in the first place. It is inadequate, social ecologists would say, to simply advise the Brazilian settler to “Revere nature!”

Bookchin’s vision for a nondominating, nonhierarchical social order is encompassed in his idea of libertarian municipalization, which would restructure society on the basis of local communities rather than on the basis of nation-states or multinational corporations.²⁷⁾ Municipalization includes the creation of alternative institutions in society to replace existing ones. Radical municipalism has been adopted into the principles of the Left Green Network, along with other principles of concern to social ecologists, such as ecological humanism and democratic decentralization.²⁸⁾ Decentralization is a theme found in other ecological perspectives as well, including bioregionalism, which envisions human societies constructed not on the basis of national units, but on the basis of ecologically defined areas, i.e. bioregions.

Other Philosophical Positions

While deep ecology and social ecology currently represent the two main “schools” in the philosophy of ecology, it is necessary to outline several other positions in order to complete this survey of the major philosophical trends. Space permits only a brief sketch of each.

Ecofeminism. Ecofeminism attempts to see environmental problems primarily in terms of the historical relations which have existed between men and women. It combines some of the deep ecology interest in primitive cultures by seeing ancient matriarchic societies as more “in tune with nature” and less environmentally destructive than later patriarchic societies. With the emergence of patriarchic societies—characterized by the dominance of men over women—other forms of hierarchy and domination are seen as

27) Cf. Bookchin’s pamphlet *Municipalization: Community Ownership of the Economy* (Burlington: Green Program Project, 1986). The idea of libertarian municipalization is developed at length in *The Limits of the City* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1986).

28) Cf. *Principles of the Left Green Network* (West Lebanon, New Hampshire: Left Green Network, 1989).

having developed, including the domination of man over nature and man over man, through political and economic exploitation. As with social ecology, ecofeminism sees environmental problems as being the result of deeper social problems, but some ecofeminists share the spiritual inclinations of some deep ecologists by seeking to reestablish matriarchic forms of religion, eg., a worship of "goddess."

The solution to the environmental crisis is thus inextricably linked to the solution of the problems of hierarchy and male dominance. Some ecofeminists believe that the attempt to achieve full equality with men will result in a society in which the feminine values of nurturing will prevail over male values of dominance. Others go further, however, and see the reestablishment of matriarchic societies as a necessary corrective to centuries of male domination. Some ecofeminist critics, however, reject the notion that "women are closer to nature" and question whether matriarchic societies can solve the fundamental problems of hierarchy and domination. There is no guarantee that matriarchic societies, with women dominating men, would be any less hierarchical than previous patriarchic societies. The problem, in short, is one of domination, extending from the human to the ecological spheres.²⁹⁾

Ecological Marxism. Even before communism's current crisis and decline, Marxism had been criticized by environmentalists as being no different from capitalism in its emphasis on, if not its success with, industrialism and economic advancement. The recent opening of Eastern Europe has revealed the extent to which industrial development in socialist countries has reeked as much havoc on the environment as the capitalistic system of the West, perhaps even more. Marxism in the United States has tended to sympathize with environmental concerns, but at the same time recognizes the difficulty of reconciling the goal of material advancement for the working class 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

29) Cf. Janet Biehl, "Ecofeminism and Deep Ecology" in *Our Generation*, (Volume 19, No. 2) pp. 19-31, and L. Susan Brown, "Beyond Feminism: Anarchism and Human Freedom" in *Our Generation* (Volume 21, No. 1), pp. 201-211.

threatened, and the economy will go into a tailspin if strict environmental policies are enforced.

The most promising line of argument being made by ecological Marxists is the extension of the traditional concept of exploitation to cover not only the exploitation of the working class, but also the exploitation of the environment. The primary threat to jobs and economic advancement is not environmental regulation, but, as Marxists would argue, 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 to work for the long range goal of an ecologically sound economy running at full employment. The increasing perception that environmental problems are class problems which affect the poor more than others, and that it is mostly the middle class which is picking up the tab for environmental pollution—not the ones making the profits—has also lent some credence to the Marxist critique, although the majority of Americans, even in the post-Cold-War period, continue to abhor the communist label.

While socialist countries such as the Soviet Union have begun to experiment with market economies, the traditional socialist view that production should be oriented towards genuine needs rather than towards profit is very similar to the ecological stance. The problems of overproduction, consumerism, planned obsolescence, and waste are all exacerbated by an economic system single-mindedly geared towards the pursuit of profit. With the collapse of Marxism as viable political alternative to capitalism, however, the ecology movement now has the potential of redrawing the lines of the political debate.³⁰⁾

Additional influences. Ideologically, ecologists in general and Greens in particular have tended to adopt the slogan “Neither left nor right but straight ahead.” This position is not a moderate, middle-of-the-road political stance, however, but rather a recognition of the fact that both right and

30) A new journal, *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism*, published in Santa Cruz, California by Jim O'Conner, will address ecological concerns from a Marxist viewpoint.

left perspectives have contributions to make to ecological thinking, despite the serious limitations of each. With conservatives, Greens have emphasized less bureaucracy, smaller government, limited national control (akin to Reagan's "new federalism"), and more responsibility, greater personal initiative (to be distinguished, however, from private initiative for personal gain), and increased local community involvement. With liberals, Greens are interested in larger issues of social and economic justice, ranging from the role corporations play in environmental destruction to ways of moving from representational to more participatory forms of democracy. Racism, gay and lesbian liberation, human rights, increased opportunities for women, and economic justice are also all on the Green agenda.

There are other political traditions and ideas which have the potential of contributing to ecological thought. John McClaughry sees the potential for broadening the Green appeal by exploring the "non-liberal" ideas contained in Burkean conservatism, Catholic social thought, libertarianism, distributism, and agrarianism. McClaughry sees affinities between some Green ideas and Jeffersonian democracy: the preservation of individual liberty in an age characterized by large public and private institutions; restoration of the small scale human community; a widespread distribution of private property ownership; the decentralization of economic and government power; individual and community self-help; environmental protection techniques [i.e., agrarian respect for the land]; a sound money policy to prevent the accumulation of unearned wealth; and a nongovernmental "people-to-people" foreign policy.³¹⁾

If McClaughry represents the "right" wing of libertarian thinking on ecological politics, social anarchism represents its left. The influence of classic anarchism on social ecology has already been mentioned. While the Spanish Civil War perhaps marks the end of the classical period of anarchism, anarchism as a political philosophy has continued to develop, enjoying some-

31) John McClaughry, "Some Tasks to Be Addressed by a Green Political Movement," and "The Institute for Liberty and Community." Both documents were written in 1984, and circulated by the New England Committee of Correspondence.

thing of a renaissance since the 1960's. Bookchin himself can be regarded as much as an anarchist writer as a social ecologist. Kirkpatrick Sale, writing in *Social Anarchism* in 1986, saw the possibility for ecology and anarchism to "unite and inspire a single movement."³²⁾ Like Bookchin he was impressed by the fact that there is neither hierarchy nor domination in a stable ecosystem (i.e., government and authority are absent), and he sees the ecological principles of balance, equilibrium, cooperation, symbiosis, conservation, stability, decentralization, diversity, homeorrhesis, community, and region as similar to anarchist ideas about ideal social organization. Anarchism has since contributed extensively to environmental thought, especially through the Canada-based anarchist publisher, Black Rose Books.

The variety of positions which make up the philosophy of ecology are still in the process of refining themselves and of charting out their political ramifications. Naess, rightly I think, views the primary differences not so much as antagonisms, but as proof of the diversity which is possible within the context of the whole.³³⁾ Most ecological philosophers welcome the debates which have resulted as offering an opportunity to sharpen both their ideas and their positions, while recognizing the urgency of united political action. If the goal of ecology is to provide for biological diversity, the goal of politics should be to provide for ideological diversity.

Bibliography

The following two bibliographies provide extensive references on the philosophy of ecology and Green politics, in addition to the references given in the notes:

Davis, Donald Edward. *Ecophilosophy—A Field Guide to the Literature*. San Pedro: R. and E. Miles, 1989.

"Green Bibliography," prepared and periodically updated by the Committees of Correspondence Clearinghouse (P.O. Box 30208, Kansas City, Missouri 64112 U.S.A.).

32) Kirkpatrick Sale, "Anarchy and Ecology—A Review Essay" in *Social Anarchism* (Vol. 5, No. 2, 1985), p. 14.

33) See especially Naess's comments in my interview with him, "Ecosophy: Beyond East and West" in *Kyoto Journal* (Summer, 1989), pp. 42-43.