

# ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS



AN INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL DEDICATED TO THE  
PHILOSOPHICAL ASPECTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS

SPRING 1989  
Volume 11, Number 1

89

## CONTENTS

### Features

- The Deep Ecology-Ecofeminism Debate and Its Parallels ..... Warwick Fox
- Environmental Policy and Environmental Thought: Commoner and Ruckelshaus ..... Charles T. Rubin

### Discussion Papers

- Man Apart: An Alternative to the Self-Realization Approach ..... Peter Reed
- Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique ..... Ramachandra Guha

### Book Reviews

- Jeremy Rifkin: *Time Wars* ..... Richard A. Watson
- Robert Augros and George Stanciu: *The New Biology: Discovering the Wisdom in Nature* ..... Annie Booth

A Publication of  
Environmental Philosophy, Inc.  
and  
The University of Georgia

ought to be better. While the journal's circulation is quite good for a philosophy journal, it is shockingly small in comparison with most environmental journals and magazines, which frequently are able to boast of circulations in the tens and evens hundreds of thousands. In part, the difference can be attributed to the technical difficulty of the articles in the journal, and, of course, to the fact the journal does not publish color pictures, both of which tend to discourage readership. Whatever the cause, however, the small readership of the journal, environmentally speaking, highlights a serious problem in the environmental community—that environmental ethics has as yet had little practical influence on environmental affairs and is unlikely to have much in the immediate future. Although many people working in environmental affairs—in government, business, and environmental organizations—know that a journal called *Environmental Ethics* exists, most of them have never seen a copy or read a paper on the subject, and many of them are completely unaware that there is nearly twenty years of professional writing in the area. As a result, books, special issues of journals, and conferences that claim to be inventing the field from scratch are likely to continue to appear for many years to come.

If environmental professionals, environmentalists, and other people concerned about the environment are ever finally to get beyond simply acknowledging that they need an environmental ethic, many more people have to become aware of and interested in the evolution of environmental ethics as a professional subject, and this interest has to gradually evolve into practical applications that will make a difference in environmental affairs. For this to happen, though, probably something more than increased readership of this journal will be needed, although even that would certainly help (further increases in subscribers will make money available for research and curricula development conferences and other projects that the journal and Environmental Philosophy, Inc., its non-profit owner, can currently only do on a shoestring or not at all). To make a big difference in the coming decade, it is essential that environmental ethics be taught widely throughout the country at both undergraduate and graduate levels as something more than a novelty course, and that these courses begin to have an impact not only on young people moving through the educational system into jobs in environmental affairs, but also on people already working at mid-level in their careers.

At this writing the journal is still somewhat behind schedule, but I *seem* to be catching up. Because I have been focusing on journal production, the refereeing of journal submissions continues to be intolerably and embarrassingly slow. To contributors I promise once again to try to do better—with the expectation that everything will be on schedule within another year. Thank you for your patience in the meantime. Also, to readers of this journal, without whom there would be no journal, thank you for your patience as well and for your continuing support.

## The Deep Ecology-Ecofeminism Debate and its Parallels

Warwick Fox\*

There has recently been considerable discussion of the relative merits of deep ecology and ecofeminism, primarily from an ecofeminist perspective. I argue that the essential ecofeminist charge against deep ecology is that deep ecology focuses on the issue of anthropocentrism (i.e., human-centeredness) rather than androcentrism (i.e., male-centeredness). I point out that this charge is not directed at deep ecology's positive or constructive task of encouraging an attitude of ecocentric egalitarianism, but rather at deep ecology's negative or critical task of dismantling anthropocentrism. I outline a number of problems that can attend not only the ecofeminist critique of deep ecology, but also comparable critiques that proceed from a broad range of social and political perspectives. I then proceed to argue that deep ecology's concern with anthropocentrism is entirely defensible—and defensible in a way that should be seen as complementing and expanding the focus of radical social and political critiques rather than in terms of these approaches *versus* deep ecology.

### DEEP ECOLOGY'S ECOCENTRIC EGALITARIANISM

The question of the relative merits of deep ecology and ecofeminism has recently received considerable attention, primarily from an ecofeminist perspective. This question has an obvious significance to anyone concerned with ecophilosophy and ecopolitics since it contrasts two of the most philosophically and socially influential approaches that have developed in response to ecological concerns. For deep ecologists in particular, the ecofeminist critique of deep ecology is of interest for at least two reasons in addition to the direct challenge that it presents to deep ecological theorizing. First, as I argue throughout this paper, the same criticisms that can be made of simplistic forms of ecofeminism can be applied with equal force to critiques of deep ecology that proceed from simplistic versions of a broad range of social and political perspectives—the "parallels" of my title. Second, addressing the ecofeminist critique of deep ecology provides an opportunity to further elucidate the nature of deep ecology's concern with anthropocentrism.

\*Centre for Environmental Studies, University of Tasmania, G.P.O. Box 252C, Hobart, Tasmania, 7001. Fox is a National Research Fellow at the Centre for Environmental Studies. His professional interests center on ecophilosophy, philosophy of science, the metaphysical implications of modern science, and transpersonal psychology. He thanks Robyn Eckersley for helpful discussions

Before examining the ecofeminist critique of deep ecology, which centers on deep ecology's negative or critical focus on anthropocentrism, it is important to outline deep ecology's positive or constructive focus. Deep ecology is concerned with encouraging an egalitarian attitude on the part of humans not only toward all *members* of the ecosphere, but even toward all identifiable *entities* or *forms* in the ecosphere. Thus, this attitude is intended to extend, for example, to such entities (or forms) as rivers, landscapes, and even species and social systems considered in their own right. If deep ecologists sometimes write as if they consider these entities to be living entities, they do so on the basis of an extremely broad sense of the term *life*—a sense as broad as that implied in such expressions as "Let the river live!" It is ultimately of little consequence to deep ecologists, however, whether one wishes to consider the kind of egalitarianism they advocate as one that extends only toward living entities (in this extremely broad sense) or as one that extends toward both living and nonliving entities. Either way, the kind of egalitarian attitude they advocate is simply meant to indicate an attitude that, within obvious kinds of practical limits, allows all entities (including humans) *the freedom to unfold in their own way unhindered by the various forms of human domination*.

There are, of course, all sorts of problems involved in defining such things as how far these practical limits should extend or, in many cases, even where one entity ends and another begins. But, against this, it must be remembered that deep ecologists are not *intending* to advocate a specific set of guidelines for action; they are only intending to advocate a *general orientation*. Deep ecologists not only accept but welcome cultural diversity when it comes to effecting the specifics of this general orientation. After all, "the freedom to unfold in their own way unhindered by the various forms of human domination" applies to the unfolding of human cultures too. As Arne Naess puts it, where we draw the limit between justifiable and unjustifiable interference with respect to this general orientation "is a question that must be related to local, regional, and national particularities. Even then a certain area of disagreement must be taken as normal."<sup>1</sup> For deep ecologists, the only overriding consideration is that such limits should always be worked out *in the light of* the general orientation they advocate. Naess captures the sense of this general orientation while also conveying a sense of the cultural (and personal) diversity it allows for: "A rich variety of acceptable motives can be formulated for being *more reluctant* to injure or kill a living being of kind A than a being of kind B. The cultural setting is different for

<sup>1</sup> Arne Naess, "Sustainable Development and the Deep Long-Range Ecological Movement,"

each being in each culture."<sup>2</sup> It is this general attitude of being reluctant, *prima facie*, to interfere with the unfolding of A or B—indeed, to desire that both should flourish—that characterizes the general orientation that is advocated by deep ecologists.

Deep ecologists have generally referred to this general orientation or attitude as one of "biospherical egalitarianism" or, more often (in order to suggest the intended comparison with an anthropocentric perspective more directly), "biocentric egalitarianism." However, because the prefix *bio-* refers, etymologically, to life or living organisms, it has sometimes been assumed that deep ecology's concerns *are* restricted to entities that are (in some sense) biologically alive. To correct this impression, Arne Naess and George Sessions have, in line with my preceding remarks, often pointed out that their sense of the term *life* is so broad, that it takes in "individuals, species, populations, habitat, as well as human and nonhuman cultures."<sup>3</sup> To avoid the possibility of confusion, however, I prefer to describe the kind of egalitarian attitude subscribed to by deep ecologists as *ecocentric* rather than *biocentric*. While there seems to be little reason for choosing between these terms on the basis of their ecological connotations, there are other grounds for preferring the term *ecocentric* to describe the kind of egalitarianism advocated by deep ecologists.<sup>4</sup> First, the term

<sup>2</sup> Arne Naess, "Intuition, Intrinsic Value, and Deep Ecology," *The Ecologist* 14 (1984): 202 (emphasis added). Naess fully accepts that "any realistic praxis necessitates some killing, exploitation, and suppression" ("The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary," *Inquiry* 16 [1973]: 95). For more on the relevance of tradition and culture, see Naess's paper "Self-realization in Mixed Communities of Humans, Bears, Sheep, and Wolves," *Inquiry* 22 (1979): 231–41.

<sup>3</sup> See the eight point list of "basic principles" of deep ecology proposed by Arne Naess and George Sessions and published in numerous places including George Sessions, ed., *Ecophilosophy IV*, May 1984, pp. 5–7; Bill Devall and George Sessions, *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered* (Layton, Utah: Gibbs M. Smith, 1985), chap. 5; and Arne Naess, "The Deep Ecological Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects," *Philosophical Inquiry* 8 (1986): 10–31.

<sup>4</sup> *Biocentric* and *ecocentric* are equally useful in connoting the biosphere and the ecosphere respectively and these latter terms are themselves generally used interchangeably. See, for example, G. Tyler Miller, Jr., *Living in the Environment*, 2d ed. (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1979) and R. J. Lincoln, G. A. Boxshall, and P. F. Clark, *A Dictionary of Ecology, Evolution and Systematics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). However, where a distinction is made between the terms *biosphere* and *ecosphere*, it is the latter term that is taken as the more inclusive (see Michael Allaby, *A Dictionary of the Environment*, 2d ed. [New York: New York University Press, 1983]). Naess illustrates this himself when he writes: "The deep ecology movement is of course concerned about the Earth as a whole, including landscapes which are valued independently of the life forms which happen at some time to live there. We are seriously concerned about the *ecosphere* in its widest sense, not only the *biosphere*" ("Population Reduction: An Ecosophical View," unpublished manuscript; emphasis added). I have so far found the *ecosphere/biosphere* distinction to be too vaguely defined to constitute a particularly strong argument for preferring *ecocentric* to *biocentric* on account of the former term's allegedly broader ecological connotations. Nevertheless, if this distinction could be sustained, then it would provide yet another reason for describing the kind of egalitarianism advocated by deep ecologists as *ecocentric* rather than *biocentric*.

*ecocentric*, which etymologically means *oikos*-, home, or, by implication, Earth-centered, is more immediately informative than the term *biocentric*, which etymologically means life-centered and so requires an appended explanation of the broad sense in which the term *life* should be understood. Second, the term *ecocentric* seems closer to the spirit of deep ecology than the term *biocentric*, because, notwithstanding their broad usage of the term *life*, the motivation of deep ecologists depends more upon a profound sense that the Earth or ecosphere is *home* than it does upon a sense that the Earth or ecosphere is necessarily alive (you don't have to subscribe to some ecological form of *hylozoism* to be a supporter of deep ecology).

In accordance with this extremely broad, ecocentric egalitarianism, supporters of deep ecology hold that their concerns well and truly subsume the concerns of those movements that have restricted their focus to the attainment of a more egalitarian *human* society. Deep ecologists, in other words, consider their concerns to subsume the egalitarian concerns associated, for example, with feminism (as distinct from *ecofeminism*), Marxism, anti-racism, and anti-imperialism.<sup>5</sup> In the eyes of deep ecologists, the emergence of a distinct *ecofeminism*, a distinct "green" socialism, and so on, are—at least in their best forms—attempts by feminists, Marxists-cum-socialists, and so on, to redress the human-centeredness of their respective perspectives.<sup>6</sup> Needless to say, deep ecologists welcome these developments and they recognize that *ecofeminism*,

<sup>5</sup> I am, of course, speaking here of the full realization of deep ecology's concerns, i.e., of the breadth of deep ecology's concerns *in principle*. In practice, however, deep ecologists, like everyone else, can fail to realize the full implications of their own principles. Thus, for example, deep ecologists fall foul of their own ecocentric egalitarian principles—and should be criticized *accordingly*—to the extent that they express their views in terms that are blind to, or that encourage, any form of sexism, socioeconomic elitism, racism, or imperialism. (That some writers on deep ecology employ sexist language in their work—"man" for "humans," "he" when no gender is implied, and so on—is regrettable to say the least since it flies in the face of the ecocentric egalitarian principles they are attempting to express.) A note on terminology is also warranted at this point. *Marxism* is a complex term. I am simply employing it here as a convenient way of referring to egalitarian concerns that center on issues related to socioeconomic class (under the capitalist system of production) as distinct from issues related to gender (feminism), race (anti-racism), or imperialism (anti-imperialism). Also for the sake of simplicity in the argument that follows, I employ Western imperialism as my standard example of imperialism.

<sup>6</sup> In referring to *green socialism* and to *socialists*, I am aware that the term *socialism*, considered in its own right, is today popularly construed as referring to virtually the whole range of (human) social egalitarian concerns and that the concerns of socialism and green socialism might therefore be considered as subsuming the concerns of feminism and *ecofeminism* respectively. But there are nevertheless significant differences between these approaches at the level of their theoretical flavors and emphases. The very generality of socialism's concerns means that its focus on gender related issues is less insistent than is the case with feminism *per se*. Moreover, the influence of Marxist thought upon the development of contemporary socialist movements has been such as to bequeath to these movements a tendency to see issues related to socioeconomic class (as distinct, say, from issues related to patriarchy *per se*) as "determinative in the last instance" and, hence, as representing the

green socialism, and so on have their own distinctive theoretical flavors and emphases because of the different theoretical histories that inform them. Nevertheless, they see no *essential* disagreement between deep ecology and these perspectives, *providing* that the latter are genuinely able to overcome their anthropocentric legacies.

### THE ECOFEMINIST CRITIQUE OF DEEP ECOLOGY

With respect to *ecofeminism* and deep ecology in particular, many observers agree that the two perspectives have much in common—notwithstanding their different theoretical histories.<sup>7</sup> However, some *ecofeminist* writers have begun to perceive a significant tension between their perspective and that of deep ecology. In an evenhanded examination of *ecofeminist* criticisms of deep ecology, Michael Zimmerman has presented what is probably the clearest formulation of what I take to be the essential *ecofeminist* charge against deep ecology: "Feminist critics of deep ecology assert that [deep ecology] speaks of a gender-neutral 'anthropocentrism' [i.e., human-centeredness] as the root of the domination of nature, when in fact *androcentrism* [i.e., male-centeredness] is the real root."<sup>8</sup> There seems to be wide support for the view that this represents the essential *ecofeminist* criticism of deep ecology. For example, one of the main criticisms made by Janet Biehl in her critique of deep ecology is that "For *ecofeminists* the concept of anthropocentrism is profoundly, even 'deeply' problematical. . . . By not excluding women from anthropocentrism, deep ecologists implicitly condemn women for being as anthropocentric as they condemn

<sup>7</sup> There is nothing to suggest that there is any incompatibility between deep ecology and an ecologically informed feminism in any of the works by the following authors, all of whom make explicit reference to both perspectives: Fritjof Capra, *The Turning Point: Science, Society, and the Rising Culture* (New York: Bantam Books, 1983), chap. 12; Don E. Marietta, Jr. "Environmentalism, Feminism, and the Future of American Society," *The Humanist*, May-June 1984, pp. 15-18 and 30; Bill Devall and George Sessions, *Deep Ecology*, chap. 6; Charlene Spretnak, "The Spiritual Dimension of Green Politics," appendix C in Charlene Spretnak and Fritjof Capra, *Green Politics: The Global Promise* (London: Paladin, Grafton Books, 1986); and Patsy Hallen, "Making Peace with Nature: Why Ecology Needs Feminism," *The Trumpeter* 4, no. 3 (1987): 3-14. Even those authors who do see a tension between these perspectives generally acknowledge that these perspectives at least bear a strong apparent similarity to each other. For example, Marti Kheel writes: "Since deep ecology is the philosophical system which most closely resembles *ecofeminism*, an examination of the differences between these two philosophies can be a valuable endeavour" ("Ecofeminism and Deep Ecology: Reflections on Identity and Difference," paper presented to the conference on "Ecofeminist Perspectives: Culture, Nature, and Theory," University of Southern California, 27-29 March 1987); Michael Zimmerman writes: "At first glance, deep ecology would appear to be in agreement with the feminist critique of reformist environmental ethics" ("Feminism, Deep Ecology, and Environmental Ethics," *Environmental Ethics* 9 [1987]: 21-44); and Jim Cheney writes: "On the face of it, that branch of environmentalism called the 'deep ecology movement' seems to have answered the [*ecofeminist*] call for a nonhierarchical, nondominating attitude toward nature ("Eco-

men for being—that is, for presuming to be above nature, for mastering it.” Marti Kheel also notes at the outset of her critique of deep ecology that deep ecologists are concerned to “challenge the anthropocentric world view” whereas for ecofeminists “it is the androcentric world view that is the focal point of the needed shift.” Likewise, the first difference in emphasis that Charlene Spretnak refers to in her comparison of deep ecology and ecofeminism is that of anthropocentrism versus androcentrism.<sup>9</sup>

Jim Cheney has claimed, nevertheless, in response to an earlier version of this paper, that it is wrong to regard Zimmerman’s formulation as representing the essential ecofeminist charge against deep ecology. For Cheney, “The ‘essential’ [ecofeminist] charge is not that deep ecologists focus on *anthropocentrism* whereas the problem is really with *androcentrism*; rather, the central concern is . . . that deep ecology is *itself* in some sense androcentric.”<sup>10</sup> In comparison to what I take to be the essential ecofeminist charge against deep ecology (as formulated concisely by Zimmerman), Cheney’s formulation of the essential ecofeminist charge seems to represent a significant (if somewhat confusing) concession to deep ecology, since it suggests that ecofeminists are not overly concerned about deep ecologists’ critical focus on anthropocentrism so long as deep ecologists do not formulate their critique of anthropocentrism in a way that is “itself in some sense androcentric.” But whether Cheney’s formulation represents a significant concession to deep ecology or not, my response to his charge is simple. The charge that I propose to address (as taken from Zimmerman’s analysis) is clear-cut and serious—deep ecologists cannot deny that their *negative* focus is concerned, first and foremost, with anthropocentrism, and ecofeminists cannot deny that their *negative* focus is concerned, first and foremost, with androcentrism. In contrast, the best that can be said about Cheney’s claim that deep ecology is androcentric in its very formulation is that such a claim is entirely contentious.<sup>11</sup> Cheney’s own recent attempt in *Environmental Ethics* to establish this claim is essentially based upon a misinterpretation of deep

<sup>9</sup> Janet Biehl, “It’s Deep, But is it Broad? An Eco-feminist Looks at Deep Ecology,” *Kick it Over*, Winter 1987, p. 2A (reprinted as “Deep Ignorance,” *Green Line*, February 1988, p. 12); Marti Kheel, “Ecofeminism and Deep Ecology,” and Charlene Spretnak, “Ecofeminism: Our Roots and Flowering,” *The Elmwood Newsletter*, Winter 1988, p. 7.

<sup>10</sup> Personal communication, 21 April 1988.

<sup>11</sup> Zimmerman (“Feminism, Deep Ecology, and Environmental Ethics,” pp. 38–42) provides a thoughtful consideration of the various problems associated with the kind of claim that Cheney makes. Two other authors that Cheney looks to in support of his claim are Ariel Kay Salleh (see “Deeper than Deep Ecology: The Eco-Feminist Connection,” *Environmental Ethics*, 6 [1983]: 339–45) and Marti Kheel (see “Ecofeminism and Deep Ecology”), personal communication, 21 April 1988. Zimmerman (“Feminism, Deep Ecology, and Environmental Ethics,” pp. 38–42) has pointed out major problems associated with Salleh’s critique and George Sessions (“Ecocentrism and the Greens. Part II.” *The Trumpeter*, forthcoming) has pointed out major problems

ecology as resting upon a “rights-based foundation.”<sup>12</sup> Referring to a brief paper of my own, Cheney even acknowledges in his paper (albeit in a footnote) that if (as Fox claims) deep ecology does not rest upon “the language of intrinsic value and correlated concepts of rights, . . . then deep ecology is not subject to some of the criticisms I have offered.”<sup>13</sup>

More recently, Cheney has abandoned his previous view of deep ecology and accepted that deep ecologists are primarily concerned with the development of a state of being of wider identification and, hence, with the realization of a more expansive (sense of) Self.<sup>14</sup> This understanding of deep ecology appears to have much in common with Cheney’s characterization of ecofeminism as being concerned with an ethics of love, care, and friendship as opposed to a theory of rights, justice, and obligation.<sup>15</sup> However, Cheney argues instead that the deep ecological emphasis on the realization of a more expansive (sense of) Self is a “totalizing view” that represents “the desperate endgame of masculine alienation from nature.”<sup>16</sup> What Cheney means by his highly abstract and potentially obfuscating reference to a “totalizing view” is that deep ecologists identify “with particulars only in the derivative sense that the logos of the cosmos threads its way through the cosmos, binds it together as a totality, a cosmos. Identification, for the deep ecologist, does not involve seeing or hearing the other or seeing oneself in the other, but rather involves seeing the other *sub specie aeternitas*.”<sup>17</sup>

What Cheney seems to object to in deep ecology, then, is not the emphasis on identification *per se* but rather the fact that deep ecologists emphasize identification within a cosmological context—that is, within the context of an awareness that all entities in the universe are part of a single, unfolding process. There is, however, a fundamental problem with arguing, as Cheney seems to want to, for a purely *personal* basis for identification (as opposed to a cosmological and, hence, *transpersonal* basis). Specifically, emphasizing a purely personal basis for identification—one that “leave[s] selves intact”<sup>18</sup>—necessarily implies an emphasis upon identification with entities with which one has considerable

<sup>12</sup> Cheney, “Eco-Feminism and Deep Ecology,” p. 129.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133. The brief paper of mine that Cheney refers to is “A Postscript on Deep Ecology and Intrinsic Value,” *The Trumpeter* 2, no. 4 (1985): 20–23. For a far more extensive critique of the view that deep ecology rests upon what Cheney refers to as “the language of intrinsic value and correlated concepts of rights,” see my monograph *Approaching Deep Ecology: A Response to Richard Sylvan’s Critique of Deep Ecology*, Environmental Studies Occasional Paper, no. 20 (Hobart: Centre for Environmental Studies, University of Tasmania, 1986).

<sup>14</sup> Jim Cheney, “The Neo-Stoicism of Radical Environmentalism,” unpublished early draft. This critique of deep ecology follows Cheney’s reading of my *Approaching Deep Ecology* and is, in large measure, a response to it. In a later version Cheney focuses more broadly upon the work of several writers on deep ecology, but the general argument remains the same.

<sup>15</sup> See Cheney, “Eco-Feminism and Deep Ecology,” p. 128.

<sup>16</sup> Cheney, “Neo-Stoicism.”

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

personal contact. In practice, this tends to mean that one identifies with *my* self first, *my* family next, *my* friends and more distant relations next, *my* ethnic grouping next, *my* species next, and so on—more or less what the sociobiologists say we are genetically predisposed to do. The problem with this is that, while extending love, care, and friendship to one's nearest and dearest is laudable in and of itself, the *other* side of the coin, emphasizing a purely personal basis for identification (*my* self first, *my* family next, and so on), looks more like the cause of possessiveness, war, and ecological destruction than the solution to these seemingly intractable problems. In contrast, to argue for a cosmological basis for identification is to attempt to convey a lived sense that all entities (including ourselves) are relatively autonomous modes of a single, unfolding process, that all entities are leaves on the tree of life. A lived sense of this understanding means that we strive, insofar as it is within our power to do so, not to identify ourselves exclusively with our leaf (our personal biographical self), our twig (our family), our minor subbranch (our community), our major subbranch (our race/gender), our branch (our species), and so on, but rather to identify ourselves with the tree. This necessarily leads, at the limit, to impartial identification with *all* particulars (all leaves on the tree).<sup>19</sup>

This distinction between personally based identification and cosmologically based identification certainly represents a difference in *theoretical* stance between Cheney's conception of ecofeminism on the one hand and deep ecology on the other. But whether this difference also reflects a basic difference between feminine and masculine modes of approaching the world (as Cheney wants to suggest) is a separate issue. On my reading of the literature, I do not see how anyone can—or why they would want to—deny that many women are *vitaly* interested in cultivating a cosmological/transpersonal based sense of identification.<sup>20</sup> The cosmological/transpersonal voice is a "different voice" from

<sup>19</sup> The fact that cosmologically based identification tends to be more *impartial* than personally based identification does not mean that it need be any less deeply felt. Consider Robinson Jeffers! For Jeffers, "This whole [the universe] is *in all its parts* so beautiful, and is felt by me to be so intensely in earnest, that I am *compelled* to love it" (quoted in Devall and Sessions, *Deep Ecology*, p. 101; emphasis added. Note also that the emphasis that deep ecologists place upon cosmologically based identification suggests that, strictly speaking, the kind of egalitarianism they advocate could be described as a "cosmological," "universal," or "cosmocentric" egalitarianism. However, describing the kind of egalitarianism that deep ecologists advocate as "ecocentric egalitarianism" is more relevant for almost all *practical* purposes, since human actions have thus far been and still continue to be overwhelmingly restricted to Earth, our cosmic home. In view of the likelihood of considerable increases in the extent of human activity beyond Earth, however, it should be clear from the emphasis that deep ecologists place upon cosmologically based identification that it would be a mistake to think that their egalitarian concerns are restricted to those entities that exist within Earth's ecosphere.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Dolores LaChapelle, *Earth Wisdom* (Los Angeles: Guild of Tutors Press, 1978); Dolores LaChapelle, "Systemic Thinking and Deep Ecology," in *Ecological Consciousness: From the Earthday V Colloquium*, ed. Robert C. Schultz and J. Donald Hughes (Washington

the personal voice, but it does not seem to respect gender boundaries. Moreover, as the above discussion suggests, whatever one's view of the relationship or lack of relationship between these approaches and gender, a personally based approach to identification is vulnerable to criticism from an ecocentric perspective in a way in which a cosmological/transpersonal approach is not.

Because this brief examination of Cheney's critique of deep ecology suggests that there are major weaknesses with his claim that the essential ecofeminist charge against deep ecology is actually "that deep ecology is *itself* in some sense androcentric," in what follows I therefore consider the essential ecofeminist charge against deep ecology to be the far more clear-cut and potentially far more serious charge (*vis-à-vis* Cheney's charge) that deep ecology "speaks of a gender-neutral 'anthropocentrism' as the root of the domination of nature, when in fact *androcentrism* is the real root."<sup>21</sup>

#### PROBLEMS WITH THE ECOFEMINIST AND OTHER CRITIQUES

Having established the nature of the ecofeminist charge that I am concerned to address in what follows, it is important to note that this charge is *not* directed at deep ecology's positive or constructive task of encouraging an egalitarian attitude on the part of humans toward all entities in the ecosphere, but rather at deep ecology's negative or critical task of dismantling anthropocentrism. This distinction often seems to be overlooked by ecofeminist critics of deep ecology, who, presumably, are in general agreement with the constructive task of deep ecology.<sup>22</sup> But with respect to the critical task of these two perspectives, the fact

Council of All Beings," and "Gaia Meditations (Adapted from John Seed)," *Awakening in the Nuclear Age*, Summer/Fall 1986, pp. 6–10 (both reprinted in *Revision*, Winter/Spring 1987, pp. 53–57); Joanna Macy, "Faith and Ecology," *Resurgence*, July–August 1987, pp. 18–21; Freya Mathews, "Conservation and Self-Realization: A Deep Ecology Perspective," *Environmental Ethics* 10 (1988): 347–55; Frances Vaughan, "Discovering Transpersonal Identity," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 25 (1985): 13–38 (see also Roger N. Walsh and Frances Vaughan, *Beyond Ego: Transpersonal Dimensions in Psychology* [Los Angeles: J. P. Tarcher, 1980]); and Renee Weber, *Dialogues with Scientists and Sages: The Search for Unity* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986). In arguing for a cosmologically/transpersonally based sense of identification, LaChapelle draws on Heidegger, systems theory, and Taoism; Macy draws on Buddhism, evolutionary ecology, systems theory, and transpersonal psychology; Mathews' paper is heavily Spinozist oriented; and Vaughan and Weber draw on systems ideas emerging from modern science and on Eastern and Western spiritual traditions.

<sup>21</sup> Zimmerman, "Feminism, Deep Ecology, and Environmental Ethics," p. 37.

<sup>22</sup> In a thoughtful analysis of the strengths and shortcomings of several varieties of feminism (liberal, traditional Marxist, radical, and socialist) for the development of a genuinely ecofeminist perspective, Karen J. Warren concurs that an ecologically informed feminism—"a transformative feminism"—would tie "the liberation of women to the elimination of all systems of oppression" ("Feminism and Ecology: Making Connections," *Environmental Ethics* 9 [1987]: 18). Unfortunately, however, many feminists who claim to be ecofeminists do not make their (presumed) commitment to

remains that in the absence of a good answer to the ecofeminist charge, there is no reason—other than intellectual blindness or outright chauvinism in regard to issues concerning gender—why deep ecologists should not make androcentrism the focus of their critique rather than anthropocentrism. In addressing this challenge to the critical focus of deep ecology, I first make some general remarks about a certain style of social and political theorizing and then proceed to the essential deep ecological response to this ecofeminist charge.

To begin with, deep ecologists completely agree with ecofeminists that men have been far more implicated in the history of ecological destruction than women. However, deep ecologists also agree with similar charges derived from other social perspectives: for example, that capitalists, whites, and Westerners have been far more implicated in the history of ecological destruction than pre-capitalist peoples, blacks, and non-Westerners.<sup>23</sup> If ecofeminists also agree with these points, then the question arises as to why they do not also criticize deep ecology for being neutral with respect to issues concerning such significant social variables as socioeconomic class, race, and Westernization. There appears to be two reasons for this. First, to do so would detract from the priority that ecofeminists wish to give to their own concern with androcentrism. Second, and more significantly, these charges could also be applied with equal force to the ecofeminist focus on androcentrism itself.<sup>24</sup> How does one defend the ecofeminist charge against deep ecology (i.e., that androcentrism is “the real root” of ecological destruction) in the face of these charges?<sup>25</sup> For deep ecologists,

---

an *ecocentric* egalitarianism particularly explicit, with the result that ecofeminist analyses can sometimes serve to reinforce anthropocentrism rather than overcome it. As for those ecofeminists, such as Warren, who are explicit about their commitment to an ecocentric egalitarianism, it becomes difficult to see any essential difference between their approach and that of deep ecology. As one ecofeminist-cum-deep ecologist said to me after reading Warren's article: “Why doesn't she just call it [i.e., Warren's vision of a transformative feminism] deep ecology? Why specifically attach the label *feminism* to it if she's advocating a genuinely nonprioritizing, biocentric egalitarianism?”

<sup>23</sup> When I refer to any class of social actors, I expressly mean also to refer to the culture(s) associated with that class. However, I omit writing “men and their associated cultures,” “non-Westerners and their associated cultures,” and so on simply for ease of comprehension. In referring to capitalists and, hence, the culture of capitalism, I also mean to refer to “state capitalism” as found in the industrialized communist countries (i.e., mass production geared toward the accumulation of surplus economic value and controlled by the state as opposed to private corporations).

<sup>24</sup> Indeed, even as I wrote this paper, a significant real-life example of such criticisms was being played out between the women of Greenham Common in the form of a “bitter dispute” over allegations of racism at the camp. Reports suggested that this dispute “threatens the world's most renowned peace camp after six years” (Deborah Smith, “Showdown at Greenham Common,” *The Times on Sunday*, 25 October 1987, p. 27). Karen J. Warren similarly criticizes radical feminists—that group of feminists who “have had the most to say about ecofeminism”—for paying “little attention to the historical and material features of women's oppression (including the relevance of race, class, ethnic, and national background)” (“Feminism and Ecology,” pp. 14–15).

gists, it is simplistic on both empirical and logical grounds to think that one particular perspective on human society identifies *the* real root of ecological destruction. Empirically, such thinking is simplistic (and thus descriptively poor) because it fails to give due consideration to the multitude of interacting factors at work in any given situation. (While on a *practical* level it can be perfectly reasonable to devote most of one's energy to one particular cause—if only for straightforward reasons to do with time and energy—that, of course, is no excuse for simplistic social *theorizing*.) Such thinking fails, in other words, to adopt an ecological perspective with respect to the workings of human society itself. Logically, such thinking is simplistic (and thus facile) because it implies that the solution to our ecological problems is close at hand—all we have to do is remove “the real root” of the problem—when it is actually perfectly possible to conceive of a society that is nonandrocentric, socioeconomically egalitarian, nonracist, and nonimperialistic with respect to other human societies, but whose members nevertheless remain aggressively anthropocentric in collectively agreeing to exploit their environment for their collective benefit in ways that nonanthropocentrists would find thoroughly objectionable. Indeed, the “green” critique of socialism proceeds from *precisely* this recognition that a socially egalitarian society does not necessarily imply an ecologically benign society.

An interesting example of the failure to recognize this point is provided by Murray Bookchin's anarcho-socialist inspired “social ecology” (I describe this approach as “anarcho-socialist” in inspiration because it advocates decentralism and cooperativeness and stands opposed to all forms of hierarchy). Bookchin is interesting in this context because, on the one hand, he correctly observes in the course of a highly polemical attack upon deep ecology that it is possible for a relatively ecologically benign human society also to be extremely oppressive internally (he offers the example of ancient Egyptian society), and yet, on the other hand, he fails to see that the reverse can also apply—that is, that it is possible for a relatively egalitarian human society to be extremely exploitative ecologically.<sup>26</sup> For Bookchin, to accept this latter point would be to argue against the basis of his own social ecology, since in his view a nonhierarchical, decentralist, and cooperative society is “a society that will live in harmony with nature *because* its members live in harmony with each other.”<sup>27</sup> Bookchin's presentation of social ecology thus conveys no real appreciation of the fact that the relationships between the internal organization of human societies and their treatment of the nonhuman world can be as many and varied as the outcomes of any other evolutionary process. One may certainly speak in terms of certain

---

<sup>26</sup> Murray Bookchin, “Social Ecology Versus ‘Deep Ecology,’” *Green Perspectives: Newsletter of the Green Program Project*, Summer 1987.

<sup>27</sup> This view is central to Bookchin's major statement of social

forms of human social organization being more *conducive* to certain kinds of relationships with the nonhuman world than others. Bookchin, however, insists far too much that there is a straightforward, necessary relationship between the internal organization of human societies and their treatment of the nonhuman world. To this extent, his social ecology is constructed upon a logically facile basis. Moreover, it serves to reinforce anthropocentrism, since the assumption that the internal organization of human societies determines their treatment of the nonhuman world carries with it the implication that we need only concentrate on *interhuman* egalitarian concerns for all to become ecologically well with the world—a point I take up again later.<sup>28</sup>

In doing violence to the complexities of social interaction, simplistic social and political analyses of ecological destruction are not merely descriptively poor and logically facile, they are also morally objectionable on two grounds, scapegoating and inauthenticity. Scapegoating can be thought of in terms of overinclusiveness. Simplistic analyses target all men, all capitalists, all whites, and all Westerners, for example, to an equal degree when in fact certain subclasses of these identified classes are far more responsible for ecological destruction than others. Not only that but significant minorities of these classes can be actively engaged in *opposing* the interests of both the dominant culture of their class and those members of their class most responsible for ecological destruction. Inauthenticity, on the other hand, can be thought of in terms of underinclusiveness. Simplistic analyses are inauthentic in that they lead to a complete denial of responsibility when at least partial responsibility for ecological destruction should be accepted. Such theorizing conveniently disguises the extent to which (at least a subset of) the simplistically identified oppressed group (e.g., women or the working class) also benefits from, and colludes with, those most responsible for ecological destruction (e.g., consider the case of animal destruction for furs and cosmetics consumed by Western and Westernized women, or the case of capitalists and unionists united in opposition to the antidevelopment stance of “greenies”). It can, of course, be argued in response that the hegemony of androcentrism or capitalism, for example, is such that women or unionists effectively have *no* power to choose in our society and so should not be burdened with *any* responsibility for ecological destruction. But this surely overplays the role of social determination and to that extent only serves to highlight the charge of inauthenticity. Moreover, attempting to escape

<sup>28</sup> This observation is in keeping with the anthropocentric flavor than many deep ecologists detect in Bookchin's work notwithstanding his avowed ecological orientation. In his critique of deep ecology, for example, Bookchin (“Social Ecology,” p. 21) argues that our distinctive intellectual, communicative, and social traits can be “placed at the *service* of natural evolution to consciously increase biotic diversity [and, *inter alia*] . . . foster the further evolution of new and ecologically

the charge of inauthenticity in this way directly contradicts the view of feminists or Marxists, to continue with the same examples, that women or the working class *are* capable of self-conscious direction—of being a class *for* themselves, a revolutionary class.

Yet another kind of objection to simplistic analyses of the kind to which I have been referring is that while claiming to be “ecological” or “green,” some of these critics in fact remain anthropocentric—albeit in the passive sense of serving to legitimize our continued preoccupation with interhuman affairs rather than in the aggressive sense of overtly discriminating against the nonhuman world. Advocates of these approaches say in essence: “Since the real root of our problems is androcentrism or capitalism, for example, we must *first* get our interactions between humans right (with respect to gender issues, with respect to the redistribution of wealth, and so on) and then everything else (including our ecological problems) will fall into place.” Any form of direct concern with the question of the relationship between humans and the *nonhuman* world is thus trumped by concerns about the resolution of specific interhuman problems. The nonhuman world retains its traditional status as the background against which the significant action—human action—takes place.

Not surprisingly, deep ecologists find it particularly frustrating to witness representatives of simplistic social and political perspectives waving the banner of ecology while in fact continuing to promote, whether wittingly or unwittingly, the interhuman and, hence, human-centered agenda of their respective theoretical legacies. I have already commented on Bookchin's social ecology in regard to this point. Some ecofeminist writing is also relevant here. For example, the focus of Ariel Kay Salleh's critique of deep ecology is thoroughly interhuman. “To make a better world,” she concludes, men have to be “brave enough to rediscover and to love the woman inside themselves,” while women simply have to “be allowed to love what we are.”<sup>29</sup> This conclusion follows from the fact that, in Salleh's version of feminism, women already “flow with the system of nature” by virtue of their essential nature.<sup>30</sup> Karen Warren and Michael Zimmerman have referred to this kind of approach to ecofeminism, according to which women are supposed to be “closer to nature” than men by virtue of their essential nature, as “radical feminism” (in contrast to liberal, traditional Marxist, and socialist feminism) and “essentialist feminism” respectively.<sup>31</sup> Warren correctly notes that “Radical feminists have had the most to say about eco-feminism,” and

<sup>29</sup> Salleh, “Deeper than Deep Ecology,” p. 345. In another presentation of the ecofeminist sensibility, Don Davis also concludes by reiterating this conclusion of Salleh's (“Ecosophy: The Seduction of Sophia?” *Environmental Ethics* 8 [1986]: 151–62).

<sup>30</sup> Salleh, “Deeper than Deep Ecology,” p. 340.

<sup>31</sup> Warren, “Feminism and Ecology,” pp. 13–15, and Zimmerman, “Feminism, Deep Ecology,”



both she and Zimmerman have made telling criticisms of this approach.<sup>32</sup> All I am drawing attention to here is the fact that this kind of "radical" approach simply serves to legitimize and, hence, to perpetuate our entirely *traditional* preoccupation with interhuman affairs. In accordance with the approach adopted by essentialist feminists, there is no need to give any serious consideration whatsoever to the possibility that women might, for example, discriminate against men, accumulate rather than distribute private wealth, be racist, support imperialism, or be ecologically destructive if the conditions of their historical subjugation were undone and the possibility of exercising genuine social and political power were available to them.<sup>33</sup> The upshot is that there is no need to worry about any form of human domination other than that of androcentrism. For deep ecologists, it's just another variation on the same old song—the song that reassures us that all will become ecologically well with the world if we just put this or that interhuman concern first.

I have objected to simplistic (and, hence, unecologically conceived) social and political analyses on the grounds that they are descriptively poor and logically facile, that they lend themselves to scapegoating on the one hand and are inauthentic on the other, and that even in their ecological guises, they are passively anthropocentric. Many who align themselves with the perspectives to which I have referred might well personally agree with the points I have made so far and consider that in virtue of this agreement, these objections do not really apply to their perspective. Thus, this kind of reaction can be quite common in the face of the sorts of objections I have made: "How could anyone be so stupid as to think that we ecofeminists (for example) are not also concerned about issues concerning socioeconomic class, race, and imperialism?" The problem is, however, that there is often a large gap between the alleged and often genuine personal concerns of members of a social and political movement and the theoretical articulation of the perspective that informs their movement. The fact

<sup>32</sup> Warren, "Feminism and Ecology," p. 14. See also Alan E. Wittbecker, "Deep Anthropology: Ecology and Human Order," *Environmental Ethics* 8 (1986): 261–70, which provides a number of counterinstances to Salleh's essentialist feminist claim that the suppression of the feminine is "universal."

<sup>33</sup> Stunningly obvious instances of these kinds of examples, such as the Prime Minister of England, Margaret Thatcher (the "Iron Lady"), sending warships to the Falklands, are typically explained in terms of the hegemony of androcentrism being such as to have overpowered the offending woman's essential nature. The implication is that if, as Salleh says, women could just "be allowed to love what we are," then it would no longer be possible to find such examples. Commenting on Salleh's approach, which exemplifies the essentialist feminist approach I am criticizing here, Alan Wittbecker (*ibid.*, p. 265) simply notes that Salleh "divides the sexes as if they were two species and seems to think that women have no masculine aspects. They do, and those aspects need expression for full consciousness." (Salleh's oppositional approach to matters relating to gender also comes through in the title of a more recent paper "A Green Party: Can the Boys Do Without One?" in Drew Hutton, ed., *Green Politics in Australia* [North Ryde, New South Wales:

that individual members of a social and political movement agree with the points I have made provides no guarantee whatsoever that the theoretical articulation of the perspective that informs their movement does not itself fall foul of these objections—and it is with this theoretical articulation that I have been concerned. By way of qualification, however, I do not in any way wish to assert that any of the objections I have made is necessarily fatal to the theoretical prospects of the social and political perspectives to which I have referred, since it is possible, at least in principle, for each of these perspectives to be revised or, at a minimum, suitably qualified so as not to fall foul of these objections.<sup>34</sup> But, that said, one must nevertheless be careful not to underestimate the significance of these objections, since presentations of the social and political perspectives to which I have referred continue to fall foul of them on an all too regular basis.

Variations on some (but not all) of the objections I have outlined would apply just as much to deep ecology if it were the case that deep ecologists were simply saying that humans as a whole have been far more implicated in the history of ecological destruction than nonhumans. (The ecofeminist charge against deep ecology implies that deep ecologists are saying precisely this: it turns on the contention that deep ecologists have been overinclusive in criticizing humanity *in general* for the destruction of the nonhuman world when the target of their critical attack should properly be the class of men and, of course, masculine culture in general.) However, this is *not* the essential point that deep ecologists are making, and it is here that we enter into the essential response by deep ecologists to the essential criticism made of their perspective by ecofeminists.

#### THE ESSENTIAL DEEP ECOLOGICAL RESPONSE TO THE ECOFEMINIST CRITIQUE

The target of the deep ecologists' critique is not humans *per se* (i.e., a general class of social actors) but rather *human-centeredness* (i.e., a legitimating ideology).<sup>35</sup> It is not just ecofeminist critics who miss this point. Some other critics also miss it in an even bigger way by attacking deep ecologists not simply on the grounds that they *criticize* humanity in general for its ecological destructiveness, but rather on the grounds that deep ecologists are actually *opposed* to humanity in general—that is, that they are essentially misanthropic. According to Murray Bookchin, for example, in deep ecology "'Humanity' is es-

<sup>34</sup> Where revised, such perspectives would no doubt continue to differ from deep ecology in terms of their theoretical flavors and emphases, but they would not differ from deep ecology in terms of their essential concerns. Whether these revised perspectives would be recognizable or acceptable to their earlier supporters is of course an interesting question.

<sup>35</sup> Ecofeminists, green socialists, and so on are also concerned with questions of legitimation, but, as I point out toward the end of this paper, they are generally concerned with these questions in a

essentially seen as an ugly 'anthropocentric' thing—presumably, a malignant product of natural evolution."<sup>36</sup> Henryk Skolimowski also suggests (albeit rather indirectly) that deep ecologists are misanthropic. "I find it rather morbid," he writes in *The Trumpeter*, "when some human beings [and the context suggests that he means deep ecologists] think that the human lot is the bottom of the pit. There is something pathological in the contention that humans are a cancer among the species. This kind of thinking is not sane and it does not promote the sense of wholeness which we need nowadays." In line with my remarks here, Alan Drengson, *The Trumpeter's* editor and a prominent deep ecology philosopher, intervenes immediately at this point by adding parenthetically: "And it is certainly not the thinking of deep ecologists. Ed."<sup>37</sup>

The extent to which people in general are ready to equate opposition to human-centeredness with opposition to humans per se can be viewed as a function of the dominance of the anthropocentric frame of reference in our society. Just as those who criticize capitalism, for example, are often labeled as "Communists" and, by implication, "the enemy," when, in reality, they may be concerned with such things as a more equitable distribution of wealth in society, so those who criticize anthropocentrism are liable to be labeled as *misanthropists* when, in reality, they may be (and, in the context of environmentalism, generally are) concerned with encouraging a more egalitarian attitude on the part of humans toward all entities in the ecosphere. In failing to notice the fact that being opposed to human-centeredness (deep ecology's critical task) is logically distinct from being opposed to humans per se (or, in other words, that being opposed to anthropocentrism is logically distinct from being *misanthropic*), and in equating the former with the latter, Bookchin and Skolimowski commit what I refer to as *the fallacy of misplaced misanthropy*.<sup>38</sup> Committing this fallacy in the context of

<sup>36</sup> Bookchin, "Social Ecology," p. 3 (emphasis added).

<sup>37</sup> Henryk Skolimowski, "To Continue the Dialogue with Deep Ecology," *The Trumpeter* 4, no. 4 (1987): 31. Skolimowski has previously been taken to task for the *anthropocentrism* inherent in his own approach: see George Sessions' review of Skolimowski's *Eco-Philosophy* in *Environmental Ethics* 6 (1984): 167–74. Since then Skolimowski has become a regular critic of deep ecology: see his articles "The Dogma of Anti-Anthropocentrism and Ecophilosophy," *Environmental Ethics* 6 (1984): 283–88 (Skolimowski's response to Sessions' review); "In Defence of Ecophilosophy and of Intrinsic Value: A Call for Conceptual Clarity," *The Trumpeter* 3, no. 4 (1986): 9–12 (this issue of *The Trumpeter* also carried replies from Bill Devall, Arne Naess, and myself); "To Continue the Dialogue with Deep Ecology"; and "Eco-Philosophy and Deep Ecology," *The Ecologist* 18 (1988): 124–27. I defend Sessions' reading of Skolimowski in my "Further Notes in Response to Skolimowski" *The Trumpeter* 4, no. 4 (1987): 32–34.

<sup>38</sup> Much of Bookchin's case for his (mistaken) contention that deep ecology is essentially a misanthropic enterprise rests on certain statements by one or two significant figures in Earth First!—especially Dave Foreman, the editor of that organization's self-titled journal. (Earth First! is a loosely based, activist-oriented environmental organization that claims to draw on deep ecology principles.) While supporting what I take to be the general aims of this organization, I have myself commented critically on particular aspects of its approach—at least as it comes through in the pages of its journal (work in progress). Moreover, I for one am not

criticizing deep ecology involves not just a crucial misreading of deep ecology's critical task, but also the oversight of two other considerations that contradict such a misreading. The first is that deep ecology's *constructive* task is to encourage an egalitarian attitude on the part of humans toward all entities in the ecosphere—including *humans*. The second is that deep ecologists are among the first to highlight and draw inspiration from the fact that not all humans have been human-centered either within the Western tradition or outside it. Far from being misanthropic, deep ecologists celebrate the existence of these human beings.

In making human-centeredness (rather than humans per se) the target of their critique, deep ecologists have contended that the assumption of human self-importance in the larger scheme of things has, to all intents and purposes, been the single deepest and most persistent assumption of (at least) all the *dominant* Western philosophical, social, and political traditions since the time of the classical Greeks—notwithstanding the fact that the dominant classes representing these traditions have typically adjudged themselves *more* human than others—and that, for a variety of reasons, this assumption is unwarranted and should be abandoned in favor of an ecocentric outlook.<sup>39</sup> Thus, what deep ecologists are

Dave Foreman's personal, unhistorical, and abhorrently simplistic views on population control. For example, Bookchin justifiably makes much of the fact that Foreman thinks that "the best thing [we could do in Ethiopia] would be to just let nature seek its own balance, to let the people there just starve there. . . . [Otherwise] what's going to happen in ten year's time is that twice as many people will suffer and die" (Dave Foreman, interviewed by Bill Devall, "A Spanner in the Woods," *Simply Living* 2, no. 12 [n.d.], p. 43). However, Bookchin overlooks the surely obvious fact that Foreman says elsewhere in the same interview (p. 42), "I am speaking for myself, not for Earth First!," and both he and Foreman overlook the equally obvious fact that such a view runs contrary to the deep ecological principle of encouraging an egalitarian attitude on the part of humans toward all entities in the ecosphere. In contrast to Foreman, Arne Naess says in a recent paper: "Sustainable development today means development along the lines of each culture, not development along a common, centralized line. But faced with hungry children humanitarian action is a priority, whatever its relation to developmental plans and cultural invasion" ("Sustainable Development and the Deep Long-Range Ecological Movement"). In short, it is as unreasonable for Bookchin to condemn the body of ideas known as deep ecology on the basis that he does as it would be for a critic of Bookchin to condemn the body of ideas known as social ecology on the basis of whatever personal views happen to be put forward by individual activists who support any environmental organization that claims to draw on social ecology principles. Just as deep ecologists should deal with the work of Bookchin if they seriously wish to consider the body of ideas known as social ecology, so Bookchin should deal with the work of Naess and his obvious philosophical associates if he seriously wishes to examine the body of ideas known as deep ecology. If Bookchin did so, then he would quickly see that his charge of misanthropy is totally misplaced with respect to the body of ideas known as deep ecology.

<sup>39</sup> There are two significant qualifications to be noted in this statement. First, I say "to all intents and purposes" because where these traditions have supposedly been primarily theocentric rather than anthropocentric, it has of course still been humans who have, by divine decree, had "dominion . . . over all the earth [which they are enjoined to 'fill and subdue']. . . and over every living thing that moves upon the earth" (Genesis 1:26 and 1:28). From a deep ecological perspective, personalistic kinds of theocentrism, such as the dominant form of Christianity, in which humans are made in the image of a god to whom they have a privileged personal relationship,

drawing critical attention to is the fact that *whatever* class of social actors one identifies as having been most responsible for social domination and ecological destruction (e.g., men, capitalists, whites, Westerners), one tends at the most fundamental level to find a common kind of legitimation for the alleged superiority of these classes over others and, hence, for the assumed rightfulness of their domination of these others. Specifically, these classes of social actors have not sought to legitimate their position on the grounds that they are, for example, men, capitalists, white, or Western per se, but rather on the grounds that they have most exemplified whatever it is that has been taken to constitute the *essence of humanness* (e.g., being favored by God or possessing rationality). These classes of social actors have, in other words, habitually assumed themselves to be somehow *more fully human* than others, such as women ("the weaker vessel"), the "lower" classes, blacks, and non-Westerners ("savages," "primitives," "heathens"). The cultural spell of anthropocentrism has been considered sufficient to justify not only moral superiority (which, in itself, might be construed as carrying with it an obligation to help rather than dominate those who are less blessed), but also all kinds of domination within human society—let alone domination of the obviously nonhuman world.

That anthropocentrism has served as the most fundamental kind of legitimation employed by *whatever* powerful class of social actors one wishes to focus on can also be seen by considering the fundamental kind of legitimation that has habitually been employed with regard to large-scale or high-cost social enterprises such as war, scientific and technological development, or environmental exploitation. Such enterprises have habitually been undertaken not simply in the name of men, capitalists, whites, or Westerners, for example, but rather in the

(i.e., the Sophists, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle) as distinct from the *early* Greeks, who initiated Western philosophy (i.e., the early and later Ionians, the Pythagoreans, the Eleatics, and the Atomists—often collectively referred to as the pre-Socratics), because, as Bertrand Russell has pointed out, "What is amiss, even in the best philosophy after Democritus [i.e., after the pre-Socratics], is an undue emphasis on man as compared with the universe" (Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* [London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1979], p. 90). Russell's statement is meant to refer to humanity in general, although it also applies, of course, if its sexist expression is read as representing its intended meaning (i.e., if "man" is read as "men"). It should be noted in this regard, however, that the reason why Russell's statement is true in the gender specific sense is, as I argue below, precisely because men have seen themselves as essentially *more* human than women—an observation that returns us to Russell's intended meaning in a dialectical manner. (Note also that Russell's other writings clearly suggest that he sees Spinoza as an important exception to his generalization). With respect to the major periods of Greek philosophy, Nicholas A. Horvath's overview of Western philosophy (*Essentials of Philosophy: Hellenes to Heidegger* [Woodbury, New York: Barron's Educational Series, 1974], pp. 17–46) concurs with Russell's assessment in describing early Greek philosophy as "the Cosmocentric Period or the Period of Naturalism" in contrast to "the Anthropocentric Period" of classical Greek philosophy. For excellent discussions of the anthropocentric nature of Western philosophy since the time of the pre-Socratics, see George Sessions, "Anthropocentrism and the Environmental Crisis," *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations* 2 (1974):

name of God (and thus our essential humanity—or our anthropocentric projection upon the cosmos, depending upon one's perspective) or simply in the name of humanity in general. (This applies notwithstanding the often sexist expression of these sentiments in terms of "man," "mankind," and so on, and notwithstanding the fact that certain classes of social actors benefit disproportionately from these enterprises.) Thus, to take some favorite examples, Francis Bacon and Descartes ushered in the development of modern science by promising, respectively, that it would lead to "enlarging the bounds of Human Empire" and that it would render humanity the "masters and possessors of nature."<sup>40</sup> Approximately three and a half centuries later, Neil Armstrong's moon walk—the culmination of a massive, politically directed, scientific and technological development effort—epitomized both the literal acting out of this vision of "enlarging the bounds of Human Empire" and the literal expression of its anthropocentric spirit: Armstrong's moon walk was, in his own words at the time, a "small step" for him, but a "giant leap for mankind." Here on Earth, not only do examples abound of environmental *exploitation* being undertaken in the name of humanity, but this also constitutes the fundamental kind of legitimation that is still most often employed for environmental *conservation and preservation*—it is implicit in every argument for the conservation or preservation of the nonhuman world on account of its use value to humans (e.g., its scientific, recreational, or aesthetic value) rather than for its own sake or its use value to *nonhuman* beings.

The cultural pervasiveness of anthropocentrism in general and anthropocentric legitimations in particular are further illustrated when one turns to consider those social movements that have *opposed* the dominant classes of social actors to which I have been referring. With respect to the pervasiveness of anthropocentrism in general, it can be seen that those countermovements that have been most concerned with exposing discriminatory assumptions and undoing their effects have typically confined their interests to the human realm (i.e., to such issues as imperialism, race, socioeconomic class, and gender). With respect to the pervasiveness of anthropocentric legitimations in particular, it can equally be seen that these countermovements have not sought to legitimate their own claims on the basis that they are, for example, women, workers, black, or non-Western per se, but rather on the grounds that they too have exemplified—at least equally with those to whom they have been opposed—either whatever it is that *has* been taken to constitute the essence of humanness or else some redefined essence of humanness. While it would, in any case, be contrary to the (human-centered) egalitarian concerns of these countermovements to seek to legitimate their own claims by the former kind of approach (i.e., on the basis that they are, for

<sup>40</sup> Both quotes are from Brain Easlea's erudite and inspiring book *Liberation and the Aims of Science: An Essay on Obstacles to the Building of a Beautiful World* (London: Chatto and Windus

example, women, workers, black, or non-Western per se), the pity is (from a deep ecological perspective) that these countermovements have not been egalitarian enough. Rather than attempting to replace the ideology of anthropocentrism with some broader, ecocentrically inclined perspective, these countermovements have only served to reinforce it.

It should be clear from this brief survey that the history of anthropocentrism takes in not only the assumption of the centrality and superiority of humans *in general*, but also the various claims and counterclaims that various classes of humans have made with regard to the exemplification of whatever attributes have been considered to be quintessentially human. Deep ecologists recognize that the actual historical reasons for the domination of one class by another (and here I also refer to the domination that humans as a class now exert over the nonhuman world) cannot be identified in any simplistic manner; they can be as complex as any ecological web or the evolutionary path of any organism. However, deep ecologists also recognize that claims to some form of human exclusiveness have typically been employed to *legitimate* the bringing about and perpetuation of historical and evolutionary outcomes involving unwarranted domination. In consequence, deep ecologists have been attempting to get people to see that historical and evolutionary outcomes simply represent "the way things happen to have turned out"—nothing more—and that self-serving anthropocentric legitimations for these outcomes are just that.

What the ecofeminist criticism of deep ecology's focus on anthropocentrism overlooks, then, is the fact that deep ecologists are not primarily concerned with exposing the *classes of social actors* historically most responsible for social domination and ecological destruction, but rather with the task of sweeping the rug out from under the feet of these classes of social actors by exposing the most fundamental kind of *legitimation* that they have habitually employed in justifying their position. (This distinction between a concern with classes of social actors on the one hand and the most fundamental kind of legitimation they employ on the other hand should be apparent from the fact that deep ecology has been elaborated within a philosophical context rather than a sociological or political context—which is not to suggest that deep ecology does not have profound social and political implications.) Of course, ecofeminists, green socialists, and so on are also concerned with questions of legitimation, but they are generally concerned with these questions in a different sense than deep ecologists are concerned with them. The primary emphasis of ecofeminists, green socialists, and the other social and political analysts to whom I have referred is on the distribution of power in society and the ways in which that distribution is reinforced and reproduced. In this context, references to legitimation tend not to be to the "bottom line" rationale employed by these powerful classes (i.e., to legitimation in the fundamental or philosophical sense), but rather to the ways in which

of affairs (from overtly physical forms of power such as the police and the military to less tangible forms such as economic power and the manipulation of social status). To the extent that ecofeminists, green socialists, and so on *are* concerned to expose the fundamental, philosophical legitimation employed by the classes of social actors whose unwarranted degree of power is the focus of their critique, and to the extent that this concern extends out into a genuinely ecocentric perspective, it becomes difficult to see any significant difference between what they call ecofeminism, green socialism, and so on and what others call deep ecology (such differences as remain are simply differences of theoretical flavor and emphasis rather than differences of substance).

Deep ecologists want to unmask the ideology of anthropocentrism so that it can no longer be used as the "bottom line" legitimation for social domination and ecological destruction by *any* class of social actors (men, capitalists, whites, Westerners, humans generally—or even essentialist feminists!).<sup>41</sup> Thus, those who align themselves with certain perspectives on the distribution of power in human society (e.g., feminism, Marxism, anti-racism, or anti-imperialism) misunderstand the essential nature of deep ecology if they see it in terms of their perspective *versus* deep ecology (e.g., in the case of ecofeminism and deep ecology, androcentrism *versus* anthropocentrism)—or if they criticize deep ecology on the basis that it has "no analysis of power." Rather, just as deep ecologists have learned and incorporated much from, and should be open to, a range of perspectives on the distribution of power in human society, so those who align themselves with these social and political perspectives can learn and incorporate much from, and should be open to, the deep ecologists' critique of the most fundamental kind of legitimation that has habitually been employed by those most responsible for social domination and ecological destruction.

<sup>41</sup> I include a reference to essentialist feminists here because, as Michael Zimmerman points out ("Feminism, Deep Ecology," p. 40), "In recent years, a number of feminists have favoured . . . an essentialist view [that women are essentially more attuned to nature than men] and have concluded that woman is *better* than man" (my emphasis). Karen Warren criticizes this point of view sharply ("Feminism and Ecology," p. 15): "The truth is that women, like men, are both connected to nature and separate from it, natural and cultural beings. . . . locating women either on the nature or on the culture side . . . mistakenly perpetuates the sort of oppositional, dualistic thinking for which patriarchal conceptual frameworks are criticized." But, even more fundamentally (since this is the end that such oppositional, dualistic thinking *serves*), the kind of essentialist feminist thinking that Warren criticizes perpetuates the anthropocentric assumption that some humans are more equal than