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Environmental philosophy: rivalry within

Summary

Environmental philosophy contains fractious elements, two of these being social ecology and deep ecology. This study highlights and elaborates upon the fact that social ecology and deep ecology actually have more in common than their respective proponents care to acknowledge, and identifies a major barrier between them which has been with environmental philosophy since its inception some 30 years ago and still persists to this day, namely the biocentric-anthropocentric divide.

Omgewingsfilosofie: interne spanning

Sosiale ekologie en diep ekologie is twee deelgebiede in omgewingsfilosofie wat mekaar onderling sterk opponeer. Wat ek hier aantoon en beredeneer, is eerstens dat sosiale ekologie en diep ekologie meer met mekaar in gemeen het as wat hulle onderskeie woordvoerders wil erken. Tweedens dat die groot kloof wat tussen hulle bestaan, ooreenstem met die spanning tussen biosentrisme en antroposentrisme, wat omgewingsfilosofie sedert sy ontstaan 30 jaar gelede tot vandag toe kenmerk.

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Environmental philosophy is a very recent addition to the philosophical genre, its genesis being almost simultaneous with the American proclamation of the first Earth Day in 1970. The main thrust of environmental philosophy, also called environmental ethics, is that if man's abuse of the natural environment, the earth's life-support system, continues unabated then many, if not all, of the planet's life forms face the possibility of untimely extinction. Motivated by this possibility, philosophers, primarily in America, but also in other parts of the world, began in the early 1970s to address environmental degradation. This took the form of a biocentric (nature-centred and opposed to man-centred) environmental ethics. Since that time biocentric environmental ethicists have been almost completely absorbed with attempts, which continue to this day, to satisfactorily explain and defend their position. My own current research is grounded on the assumptions that environmental ethics is a very important area of philosophical concern that should not be permitted to wither away, and that unless significant reform is encouraged and effected this fate is likely to overtake it.

To avoid this, it is essential to heighten awareness of the importance of environmental philosophy and in this way to encourage more philosophers to research the subject with a view to advancing measures for its reform. Two positions within environmental ethics, social ecology (anthropocentric and reasonably well known) and deep ecology (biocentric and very well known), both regarded as being in the radical mould, are examined for their commonalities and differences. In so doing, a destructive element, the rivalry between anthropocentrism and biocentrism in environmental philosophy, is highlighted. There are three sections to this study. The first and second sections contain accounts of the background and the theory of social ecology and deep ecology. The third presents a review of the elements they have in common and those upon which they differ significantly.

1. Social ecology

Murray Bookchin, the architect of social ecology, was born in New York in 1921 of immigrant parents who had been active in the Russian revolutionary movement in Tsarist times.

His biography, written by Janet Biehl, further reveals that he belonged to the Communist Youth Movement in the 1930s, was in the US Army until 1940, and was involved with the United Auto Workers (a highly libertarian union). He then became a libertarian socialist and worked closely with German exiles (dissident Marxists) in New York. He was writing on ecological issues in the 1950s, and his first book published in the USA, *Our synthetic environment* (1962), preceded Rachel Carson's *Silent spring* by six months. His subsequent books include *The ecology of freedom* (1982), *Remaking society* (1989) and *The philosophy of social ecology* (1990). Marshall (1992: 602) cites Bookchin as the thinker who has most renewed anarchist thought and action since World War II, having combined traditional anarchist insights with modern ecological thinking.

Anarchist thinking is deceptive in that it is not about revolution *per se*. The revolutionary element is there as a means to an end, that end being the complete freedom of the individual so as to attain an ideal form of existence, universal brotherhood in a communitarian society. Anarchy is from the Greek *anarkhos* meaning "without a ruler", and in ordinary English usage means the absence of law and order, resulting in disorder, lawlessness and chaos, the direct consequence of the absence of government. In anarchist theory and practice, anarchism entails overthrowing the existing government in order to obtain a society free of any form of government. Although anarchism takes a number of forms, anarchists are united by a body of common assumptions which include the understanding that man is naturally capable of living in freedom and social accord. Although not all may agree that man is naturally good, all would agree that man is naturally social. Living in society, anarchists maintain, emerged with man as he evolved from the animal world. This leads them to the view that if society is a natural outcome, those who impose man-made laws are the enemies of society (Woodcock 1971: 22-3).

Due to the conception of the natural origin of society, almost all anarchists reject Rousseau's social contract and Marx's authoritarian communism with its dictatorship of the proletariat. Four major revolutionary events prompted the rise of anarchism: the Enlightenment (the intellectual revolution of the eighteenth century), the Industrial Revolution (beginning in Britain in 1760), the American War of Independence (1775) and the French Revolution (1789).

Four men were instrumental in shaping the concept of anarchism: William Godwin (English, 1756-1836), Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (French, 1809-1865), Mikhail Bakunin (Russian, 1814-1876), and Prince Peter Kropotkin (Russian, 1842-1921). All four were prolific writers endowed with a great sense of purpose. Godwin, regarded as one of the great libertarian thinkers, was not a revolutionary and resisted any appeal to violence. He was "thrown up by the vortex of the French Revolution ... [and he] sank when it subsided" (Marshall 1992: 191). Proudhon, of peasant origin, was self-educated, learned Hebrew, Latin and Greek, read widely, wrote prolifically and became a lifelong critic of existing society, wanting to install in its place, through the proletariat, a new moral and social order (Joll 1979: 46, 50). The dignity of labour and its exploitation by the capitalist system runs through all Proudhon's writings. The idea of the worker's mission in the world is the basis of all subsequent anarchist thought (Joll 1979: 51). Bakunin and Kropotkin were both of the Russian nobility and were both jailed, at different times, in the Peter and Paul Fortress in St Petersburg for their revolutionary writings and actions.

Marshall (1992) believes Kropotkin to have been the most profound anarchist thinker of the nineteenth century, basing this view upon his attempt to ground anarchism in science and to move anarchism towards communism (Marshall 1992: 309). Murray Bookchin (1990: 253) describes his anarchism-based social ecology as:

> emerging out of a classical philosophical tradition which picks up the organismic thread in Western ontological philosophy that runs from Aristotle to Hegel, the social tradition initiated by Marx and Kropotkin, and the historical perspective opened up by the age of democratic revolution. It tries to advance a definition of nature as an evolutionary phenomenon, in contrast to the largely ahistorical images that abound in much of the current ecological literature.

M Bookchin's *The philosophy of social ecology: essays on dialectical naturalism* (1990) and P Marshall's *Demanding the impossible: a history of anarchism* (1992) explicate the concept "social ecology". Bookchin is concerned with the relationship between human society and nature. To further this relationship he rejects conventional reason which has produced, among other things, destructive technologies. He endorses dialectical reason, as developed by Hegel, which is supportive of the understanding that existence is developmental, that is, always in the stage of becoming.

Dialectical reason, in conjunction with ecology and the concept of evolutionary development, shapes dialectical naturalism. Dialectical naturalism adds an evolutionary perspective to ecological thinking and is distinct from Hegel's dialectical idealism and Marx's dialectical materialism. In dialectical naturalism potentiality inheres in all things, and all are in the process of becoming, of developing, thus there can be no end to development.

Development is therefore a continuum and the continuum is cumulative, containing the entire history of a particular phenomenon. Just as potential exists naturally in phenomena, it exists naturally in society for the development of progress and happiness and this should be explored to educe a more rational social dispensation. Dialectical naturalism, linked with the phenomenal world of being and becoming, contains an ethical element (inherent in the world itself) and entails the view that ecological problems stem from social problems. Biological nature or "first nature" is the cumulative evolution of complex life-forms. The fossil record tells the evolutionary story of extraordinary fecundity and orderly continuity in nature. "Second nature" is human society and human nature, the outcome of evolution in first nature. Second nature is exemplified by hierarchy, class, the state, private property, and a competitive market economy that obliges economic rivals to grow at the expense of each other or perish. From Bookchin's anarchist viewpoint this is, to say the least, a disturbing set of circumstances. To address this, Bookchin offers free nature. Free nature is the name he has given to a new social and ecological order, still to be realised, which it is hoped will result in an ecological society.

Bookchin, as Marshall (1992: 604) writes, places himself in the utopian tradition and says that the power of utopian thinking lies in a vision of society that questions all the presuppositions of present-day society. Inspired by the ecological principles of unity in diversity, spontaneity, and complementarity, Bookchin names his new ecological/anarchist society *ecotopia*. The establishment of such a society would entail a cultural as well as a social revolution.

A new ecological sensibility needs to develop in the place of all hierarchical and domineering modes of thought. Ecological sensibility would be accompanied by a new animism from which a re-spiritisation of the natural world would follow. In *ecotopia* there would be freedom and equality, the latter based on the inequality of capacities, needs and responsibilities, which results in, and it is intended to result in, an equality of unequals. *Ecotopia* would practice anarcho-communism, which presupposes the abolition of private property, the distribution of goods according to individual needs, the dissolution of commodity relationships, the rotation of work, and a reduction in the time devoted to labour (Marshall 1992: 611-3).

According to Bookchin the dominance of male over female has also contributed to the current ills of society. He believes that the male/female relationship in modern society should not be tolerated and suggests that a return to a matriarchal society may be a way of saving humanity. Necessitarian nature (whereby necessity is being defined as unrelenting lawfulness and compulsion), whose ordered functioning enabled modern scientific laws, is theistic in origin, placing man above nature. Necessitarian nature is hierarchical, a model for hierarchical human society.

Against necessity Bookchin offers the autonomous individual's freedom to shape material life in a form that is ecological, rational and artistic. Freedom enables the individual to go from desire to happiness and then to pleasure, the latter being the satisfaction of sensuous and intellectual desires. Pleasure is a spiritual as well as a physical condition since the essence of ecology, as Bookchin sees it, is a return to earthy naturalism (Marshall 1992: 612).

An ecological ethic of freedom cannot, Bookchin says, be separated from politics. Diversity, he suggests, could be the source of freedom in nature, together with participatory evolution, in which species play an

active role in their own survival and change. Participatory evolution, Bookchin acknowledges, is at odds with the usual inferences of Darwinian evolution. Biocentrism, natural law, anti-humanism, and deep ecology represent, as far as Bookchin is concerned, puerile thinking of the worst kind. Biocentrism makes humans and viruses equal citizens of a biospheric democracy.

When biocentrists, anti-humanists and deep ecologists assert that life-forms have rights to life and fulfilment they are introducing human concepts from the social sphere into the natural world. Human intervention in nature is inevitable, according to Bookchin, and ecological ethics involves human stewardship of the planet. And it follows that Bookchin refutes any suggestion of a biospherical democracy. Mankind is Bookchin's focal point, and mankind's logical connection with nature is encapsulated in the phrase "human consciousness is nature rendered self-conscious" — this succinct and arresting phrase is used frequently by Bookchin and is attributed by Marshall (1992: 603) to Aristotle and to Johann Fichte, both of whom saw human consciousness as a manifestation of nature. Humanity, then, is a product of natural evolution as well as a moral and ecological agent. This being so, human beings have a clear responsibility toward the natural world, arising from the unique qualities they possess.

What has been said so far concerning deep ecology gives a very bland summary of Bookchin's views. This quotation from Bookchin, writing in the newsletter *Green Perspectives* under the heading "The crisis in the ecological movement", will redress the balance:

> There is a major dispute in the ecology and Green movements today. It is a dispute between social ecology and deep ecology, the first, a body of ideas that asks that we deal with human beings primarily as social beings [...] the second that sees human beings as 'vicious' creatures who are subject almost entirely to the forces of nature and are essentially interchangeable with lemmings, grizzly bears (a favourite species) or for that matter, with insects, bacteria and viruses (Bookchin 1988: 2).

Bookchin goes on to stress that the differences between social ecology and deep ecology cannot be brushed aside. He then gives a brief review of the two positions. Social ecology, he says, focuses on the need to eliminate hierarchical relationships, emphasises the just demands of the oppressed and calls for their freedom. It explores the

possibility of harmonising our relationship with nature. It demands sweeping changes that will abolish capitalism and replace it with an ecologically oriented society based on free, confederated, humanly scaled communities in which people will have direct control over their personal and social lives.

Marshall (1992: 608) writes that Bookchin recognised the development of ancient Greek civilisation as a great step forward for humanity. He admired the Greeks for having a teleological view of nature, for not separating ethics and politics and for placing technology (*techne*) in an ethical context. He admired the Greek city-state, the *polis*, as it exemplified face-to-face democracy in action. It also marked the beginning of Western civilisation, Western philosophy and ethics. Consequently Bookchin berates those who turn to Oriental philosophy for inspiration, as our philosophical heritage is clearly occidental and not oriental. Deep ecologists, Bookchin writes, overlook the profound social differences that divide human from human. They see human beings as a biological lump called humanity which is presumably spiritually impoverished and anthropocentric in believing that the world was made by a god exclusively for human enjoyment and human ends.

With regard to Bill Devall and George Sessions' *Deep ecology: living as if nature mattered* (1985) Bookchin notes that it signals a shift from the social to the spiritual. Thereafter, Bookchin (1988: 3) says, the authors take "a complete nose-dive into Buddhism, Taoism, the Christian tradition [...] and very significantly, Malthusianism". The economic forces which divide so much of humanity into the exploited and the exploiter are replaced by the sterile phrase "conflicting world views". The few social issues with which Devall and Sessions began, fade into paeans to wilderness and critiques of natural resource conservation:

> Besides a host of platitudes, what we need in addition to communing with nature and dissolving our burdensome selves into a cosmic organic wholeness, Devall and Sessions emphasise, is to turn our 'opponent into a believer' (1985: 200). In short, we need the personal touch: a festival of warmth, rituals, and a good dose of religion that tries to pass for politics (Bookchin 1988: 3).

Bookchin considers that the *Earth First!* movement and its eponymous periodical draw all the logical conclusions from deep ecology which Devall and Sessions attempt to bury under metaphors, sutras, and poetic evocations. *Earth First!* means what it says: the earth comes before people. According to the periodical's editor, David Foreman, people are superfluous, perhaps harmful and definitely dispensable. The central problem which deep ecology confronts, according to Bookchin, is population growth. The impact of capitalism is mentioned only once, and that in passing.

If a market economy cannot produce cars, Bookchin says, it will produce tanks. If it cannot produce clothing it will produce missiles. These are basic principles of a grow-or-die economy, of which, as far as Bookchin is concerned, deep ecologists are apparently oblivious. Deep ecologists speak of a technological society instead of capitalism, concealing the social relationships in industrial society, which is akin to

> [throwing] cosmic stardust over [the] economic laws that guide capital expansion which Marx so brilliantly developed in his economic writings, and [replacing] economic factors with zoological metaphors (Bookchin 1988: 5).

Herein lies the regressive character of deep ecology and *Earth First!*, in Bookchin's view. To call for a return to the Pleistocene, as *Earth First!* has done, to degrade humanity as so many misanthropic anti-humanists and biocentrists have done, is not only atavistic but crudely reactionary. A degraded humanity will only yield a degraded nature, as our capitalistic society and our hierarchical history have amply demonstrated (Bookchin 1988: 6). If we are to bring society and nature into accord with one another we must develop a movement that fulfils the evolutionary potential of humanity and society. We should turn the human world into a self-conscious agent of the natural world:

> All the eco-babble of Devall, Sessions, Naess and their acolytes aside, if we do not intervene to act creatively in nature [...] we will betray everything of a positive character that natural evolution itself endowed us with — our potentially unprecedented richness of mind, sympathy, and conscious capacity to care for nonhuman species. Given an ecological society, our technology can be placed as much in the service of natural evolution as it can be placed in the service of a rational social evolution (Bookchin 1988: 5).

Bookchin, stressing the characteristics that make mankind unique among the earth's life-forms, ends this brief acquaintance with his merging of society and ecology. It is time now to hear from the deep ecologists.

2. Deep ecology

From Alan Drengson's article "Ecophilosophy, ecosophy and the deep ecology movement" (1999) elucidates three related concepts. The aim of ecophilosophy is ecosophy or ecological wisdom. Ecophilosophy fosters deeper and more harmonious relationships between place, self, community and the natural world. Naess's (1973: 95-100) original definition of ecosophy is as follows:

> By an ecosophy I mean a philosophy of ecological harmony or equilibrium. A philosophy, as a kind of Sofia (or) wisdom, is openly normative, it contains [...] rules, postulates, value priority announcements and hypotheses concerning the state of affairs in our universe. Wisdom is policy wisdom, prescription, not only scientific description and prediction. The details of an ecosophy will show many variations due to significant differences concerning not only the 'facts' of pollution, resources, population etcetera but also value priorities.

In 1973, the deep ecology movement was introduced by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess. Environmentalism emerged as a popular grass-roots political movement in the 1960s with the publication of Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring*. Those already involved in conservation and preservation efforts were joined by many others concerned about the detrimental environmental impact of modern industrial technology.

Naess's article in *Inquiry* (1973) was preceded by a talk in Bucharest at the Third World Future Research Conference (1972) in which the background of the ecology movement was discussed. A mountaineer who had climbed in many parts of the world, Naess had had the opportunity to observe political and social action in diverse cultures. He identified two distinct forms of environmentalism. One he called the "long-range deep ecology movement" and the other the "shallow ecology movement". The "deep" movement involves deep questioning, right down to fundamentals, while the shallow stops before the ultimate level. The platform principles of the deep ecology

movement (DEM) emerge from below, and so deep ecology is called a grass-roots movement (in the Gandhian tradition), as opposed to "top-down" hierarchies.

In his paper Naess explained the difference between the short-term shallow and the long-range deep ecology movements in broad terms. The distinctive aspect of the deep ecology movement is its recognition of the inherent value of all living beings, and of the inherent worth of diversity of all kinds. This awareness is used to shape environmental policies and actions. We must make fundamental changes in basic values and practices or we will destroy the diversity and beauty of the world, and its ability to support diverse human cultures. In order to state the shared objectives of the movement, a platform is usually put forth, presenting general principles intended to unite the movement. Naess and others such as Sessions have proposed a set of eight principles to characterise the deep ecology movement as part of the general ecology movement (1984). These principles are endorsed by people from a diversity of backgrounds who share common concerns for the planet.

The Platform Principles of the Deep Ecology Movement:

- The well-being and flourishing of human and non-human life on earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent value). These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes.

- Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realisation of these values and are also values in themselves.

- Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital human needs.

- The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of human population. The flourishing of non-human life requires such a decrease.

- Present human interference with the non-human world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening.

- Policies must therefore be changed. These policies affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present.

- The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to

> an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between big and great.
>
> • Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation to directly or indirectly try to implement the necessary changes.

Sometimes people confuse the "deep ecology movement", as described above, with Naess' own ultimate ecocentric philosophy Ecosophy T. It is on the basis of Ecosophy T that Naess personally supports the platform principles of the deep ecology movement. Ecosophy T is deeply influenced by Norwegian *friluftsliv* (a movement celebrating outdoor life), Gandhian non-violence, Mahayana Buddhism and Spinozan pantheism. T refers to Tvergastein, Naess's mountain hut in Norway, where much of Ecosophy T was worked out. The T also refers to the Norwegian word for interpretation (*tolkning*) which is central to his philosophy of language and communication.

A basic norm in Naess's Ecosophy T is "Self-realisation! — for all beings". The Self to be realised for humans is not the ego, or self (lower case s), but the larger ecological Self. This self/Self distinction has affinities with Mahayana Buddhism. Naess says we can realise our ecological Selves in a number of ways, particularly by extension of identification. He assumes the person to be well integrated and to have a healthy ego so as to avoid projection of the small self and its shadow. The exclamation marks the fact that this is not mere description, but describes something that ought to exist. Naess regards Self-realisation as the basis for his own lived ecosophy, and urges others to develop their own ecosophies. His own approach is to extend his sense of identification to a larger sense of Self. Human beings can naturally connect with a much larger sense of Self, transcending ego, by extending our sense of identification to a wider sphere of relationships. It is not difficult to identify with other living beings. Many other authors have developed ecosophies very similar to Naess's, based on the idea of extending awareness and care to a larger ecological Self. However, other supporters of the deep ecology movement have ecosophies which do not start with "Self-realisation!".

Drengson says that he and Warwick Fox have both observed that the extension of self and the idea of the ecological Self, overlap in many ways with work in transpersonal psychology. Fox called these

self-realisation types of ecosophies transpersonal ecologies. Today we call them transpersonal ecosophies and their psychological study is transpersonal ecology. Creation theology (which has a long history as a minority tradition in Christianity) is a transpersonal ecology. In the form of a Christian philosophy and practice, creation theology finds the Christ principle and the power of love revealed in the ongoing creation of the world and requires us to revere this. A Mahyana Buddhist, concerned for the deliverance of all sentient beings, can also easily support the deep ecology movement principles.

No supporters of the deep ecology movement could be anti-human. Some vociferous environmentalists who claim to be supporters of the movement have said and written things that are misanthropic in tone. They have not explained how such statements are consistent with a commitment to platform principle number one, which recognises not merely the worth but the inherent worth of all beings, including human beings. Supporters of the deep ecology movement support Gandhian non-violence in word and deed. Naess claims to be a supporter of the ecofeminist, social ecology, social justice, bio-regional and peace movements. He believes that the platform principles of the deep ecology movement are broad enough to be inclusive to this extent.

Another dispute has centred on the critique of anthropocentrism offered by some supporters of the deep ecology movement. Feelings of warmth and admiration for other human beings are consistent with the principles of the deep ecology movement. What is inconsistent is a refusal to recognise the inherent worth of other beings. Such a refusal permits the exploitation and destruction of life forms purely for human convenience and profit. Anthropocentrism as a bias against other life forms fails to recognise that we are part of these lives and they are part of ours. Our human self in the deepest sense is inseparable from the earth from which we have grown. Anthropocentrism is objectionable when it emphasises "Humans first!" regardless of the consequences to other beings. If one accepts the platform principles of the deep ecology movement, one is committed to respecting the intrinsic values of richness and diversity.

This in turn leads, according to Drengson, to a critique of industrial society. Industrial culture represents itself as the only acceptable model for progress and development. However, application of this

model and its financial and technological systems to all areas of the planet results in the destruction of habitat, the extinction of species, and the destruction of indigenous cultures. If we do not accept the industrial development model, Drengson goes on to say, endorsing the deep ecology platform principles might lead us to study the ecosophies of aboriginal and indigenous people so as to learn from them values and practices that can help us to dwell wisely in neighbouring places. Supporters of the deep ecology movement embrace place-specific, ecological wisdom and vernacular technology practices. No one philosophy and technology is applicable to the whole planet (Drengson 1999: 1-9). Drengson's article appears to have been written, in part, to evoke support for the deep ecological movement.

The article "Deep ecology: a new philosophy of our time?" by Warwick Fox (1984) offers more detail. Fox introduces deep ecology by noting its eclecticism. He says that if he were to omit Buddhist visionaries and Taoist physics, mystical traditions, and new physics (post-1920s), he might well have missed the central intuition of deep ecology. Fox distinguishes between shallow and deep ecology in that shallow ecology views human beings as separate from their environment, the source of all value, and non-human beings as of instrumental value only. Shallow ecology is accordingly anthropocentric and supports the belief that the environment should be preserved because of its value to human beings (Fox 1984: 194). Deep ecologists see organisms as knots in a biospherical net or as in a field of intrinsic relations. The non-anthropocentric view of humanity is advanced as just one strand in the web of life. The intrinsic value of non-human members of the biotic community is recognised, as is their right to pursue their own evolutionary destinies, and this is taken as an intuitively clear value axiom. This is in sharp contrast to the view that human beings are the source of all value, a view which is regarded by deep ecologists as arrogant conceit (Fox 1984: 194). Shallow ecology endorses mechanistic materialism. Deep ecology criticises mechanistic materialism and seeks to replace it with "unity in process", meaning that all things are fundamentally related and that these interrelationships are in a "process" of dynamism, of instability, of novelty, of creativity (Fox 1984: 194-5). This conception, Fox continues, lends itself to an organismic understanding which in turn leads to

panpsychic or pantheistic conceptions rather than dead-matter conceptions of the non-human world (Fox 1984: 195). Western philosophers such as Spinoza, Whitehead and Heidegger are often invoked to assist in the articulation of deep ecology's vision of the world.

Deep ecology has great respect for Eastern spiritual traditions and the myths of non-Western peoples. Deep ecology therefore stresses the interconnection between ethics and metaphysics and recognises that an ecologically effective ethics can arise only from a "more persuasive and more enchanting cosmology than that of mechanistic materialism" (Fox 1984: 195). Shallow ecology endorses a policy of economic growth for all societies. Deep ecology seeks to address the existing social, political, and economic order and to substitute ecological sustainability. The key concepts of deep ecology's social, political and economic vision are a just and sustainable society which exhibits the following characteristics: concern for carrying capacity, as well as for cultural and biological diversity; local autonomy and decentralisation; soft energy paths; appropriate technology; re-inhabitation, and bioregionalism. Re-inhabitation means learning to live in and care for an area degraded by industrial development. Bio-regions are areas with common characteristics of soils, flora and fauna. These bioregions should replace nation-states as the fundamental unit in which human beings live. The human carrying capacity of each bioregion should be determined so that they can be supported adequately for their needs and intrude on their environment only minimally (Fox 1984: 195).

Deep ecologists are willing to trust their inner voices in the hope that the dominant social paradigm (within which the moral community is situated) will disintegrate — although in a creative rather than a destructive manner (Fox 1984: 196).

I should note here that the disintegration of the dominant social paradigm is a necessary prelude to the establishment of bioregions in a creative manner and that this process is akin to Bookchin's vision which necessitates, in the first instance, the overthrow of the existing social, economic and political order. The central intuition of deep ecology is that there is no ontological divide in the world. The world is not divided existentially into subjects and objects or into human and non-human. Deep ecology rejects the dualism which has been the dominant theme of Western philosophy, in favour of unity. Deep

ecologists identify their position with Taoist and Zen teachings and with the new physics, the former erasing any duality of being, and the latter reinforcing this view. What is structurally similar in these cosmologies (both the mystical traditions and the new physics) is that they have a view of the universe as a "seamless web" (Fox 1984: 196). New physics conceives of space as a tremendous ocean of energy in which matter itself is merely a small ripple. We are therefore required to adjust our understanding of matter, for what is implied is a reality far beyond what we call matter (Fox 1984: 196).

The mystical traditions and the new physics generate what could be called an ecological awareness of the fundamental inter-relatedness of all things and events, of an unbroken wholeness that denies the idea of a world of separate and independently existing parts (Fox 1984: 196-7). There is thus a shift in thinking from the classical Greek and Cartesian concepts of the universe as essentially atomistic, divisible, static, non-relativistic and comprehensible by reductionism. Deep ecology embraces this shift from the old to the new. The ontology can now be described as dynamic, fluid, holistic, interdependent, self-consistent, paradoxical, probabilistic, infinitely over-determined and seamlessly linked to the consciousness of the observer (Fox 1984: 198). Deep ecology's concept of biospherical egalitarianism has the effect of condemning as anthropocentric Christian ethics, Western secular ethics such as utilitarianism, and modern economic theory (Fox 1984: 198).

Recently, there have been attempts to develop a practical ecological ethics. This would include the intrinsic value of the non-human world, as well as the belief that human beings are not the bearers of all value and that complex organisms (whales, dolphins, etcetera) possess comparable value. The main thrust would be to maximise the richness of experience in general and this includes the richness of experience of the non-human world (Fox 1984: 198). But the reality is, as Naess points out, that value conflicts can never be completely avoided in practice, for in the process of living, human beings and non-human beings are involved in some form of killing, exploitation and suppression (Fox 1984: 198). This poses a challenge to deep ecologists and unless they employ a workable definition of anthropocentrism they may well become known as the advocates of Procrustean

ethics (producing conformity through violence or ruthless methods) as they attempt to fit all organisms into the same dimensions of intrinsic value.

Perhaps, Fox continues, deep ecologists have lost sight of the "process" in their concept of "unity in process", for any process produces uneven distributions including different values that have various attributes. These attributes in the "process of the world" (Fox 1984: 199) may be money, information, complexity of relations etc. If this were not the case there would be no process, only a uniform and lifeless field. Consequently it should be clear that the central intuition (unity in process) does not entail an understanding that intrinsic value is spread evenly across the entire membership of the biotic community. So in situations of genuine value conflict, justice is better served by not subscribing to ecological egalitarianism. However, the lesson of ecology, in the shallow sense, is that we do share one another's fate, as we all share the fate of the earth. The message of deep ecology is that we ought to care deeply about the fate of the earth, not because it affects us, but because it is us (Fox 1984: 200).

To conclude this section, I should like to quote four extracts from Devall and Sessions's *Deep ecology: living as if nature mattered* (1985) which vividly characterise the deep ecology movement:

- Naess believes there are too many humans on the planet (<http://www.envirolink.org/enviroethics/deepindex2.html>).
- "[...] in *Deep Ecology*, we ask whether the present society fulfils basic human needs like love and security and access to nature. And in so doing, we question our society's underlying assumptions" (<http://www.envirolink.org/enviroethics/deepindex2.html>).
- "Ecological consciousness and deep ecology are in sharp contrast with the dominant world view of technocratic-industrial societies, which regards humans as isolated and fundamentally separate from the rest of nature, as superior to, and in charge of, the rest of creation. But the view of humans as separate and superior to the rest of Nature is only part of larger cultural patterns. For thousands of years, western culture has become increasingly obsessed with the idea of dominance, with dominance of humans

over non-human Nature, masculine over feminine, wealthy and powerful over the poor, with dominance of the West over non-Western cultures. Deep ecological consciousness allows us to see through these erroneous and dangerous illusions" (<http://www.envirolink.org/enviroethics/deepindex2.html>).

- "[...] Insofar as these deep feelings are religious, deep ecology has a religious component, and those people who have done the most to make societies aware of the destructive way in which we live in relation to natural settings have had such religious feelings" (<http://www.envirolink.org/enviroethics/deepindex2.html>).

I now turn to the commonalities and significant differences that exist between social ecology and deep ecology. This discussion will serve to illustrate my contention that social ecology and deep ecology have more in common than their proponents care to acknowledge.

3. The common elements and significant differences between social ecology and deep ecology

3.1 Common elements

- Social ecology and deep ecology were each initiated by a single individual, and endorse the freedom of the individual.
- Both social ecology and deep ecology are eclectic, drawing on a wide spectrum of ideas in support of their theories.
- The overthrow of the present social, political and economic order in the Western world is advocated by both social ecology and deep ecology — social ecology by means of revolution, deep ecology by non-violent means (these are different methods of effecting the same end, the demise of a system, in order to replace it with another).
- Both social ecology and deep ecology propose a return to a simple communitarian lifestyle — for deep ecology, this should be in bioregions replacing nation-states, and for social ecology in communities free of any form of government.
- Social ecology and deep ecology are both utopian in that they project an image of an ideal society which is not apparently realisable

now, or in the near future. Furthermore, to overthrow a particular government, whether by revolutionary or non-violent means, is a major undertaking. To attempt this on a global scale would be a monumental task which could presumably not be accomplished without enormous bloodshed and vastly increased environmental damage.

- Both social ecology and deep ecology support the understanding that man is a product of the evolutionary process of nature.
- Both movements attach great importance to human and non-human diversity and are committed to the welfare of the non-human world.
- Equally, social ecology and deep ecology both denounce hierarchy and domination, including the dominance of the human male over the human female.
- Social ecology and deep ecology both have a religious emphasis — that of social ecology derives from ancient animism, the belief that spirits inhabit all of the natural realm, rivers, mountains, etc, and that of deep ecology finds its source in Christianity and in Eastern religions.

3.2 Significant differences

- Social ecology is politically driven while deep ecology is spiritually driven.
- Social ecology's view is anthropocentric; that of deep ecology is biocentric.
- Social ecology regards hierarchy as its primary target, whereas deep ecology regards human population reduction as its primary target.

As has been shown, the elements common to social ecology and deep ecology far outweigh the differences between them. But the differences remain significant.

The first significant difference between social ecology and deep ecology is that although Bookchin's social ecology embraces animism, it is primarily politically driven, while deep ecology is primarily spiritually driven. This distinction produces, on the one hand, a politically inspired worldview dependent upon matters of fact (social

ecology) and, on the other, a religiously inspired worldview, dependent upon human intuition and theological inspiration (deep ecology).

The second significant difference is that the biocentrism of deep ecology includes the concept of biospherical egalitarianism (the equal intrinsic value of all members of the biosphere) which has the effect of condemning as anthropocentric Christian ethics and Western secular ethics such as utilitarianism and modern economic theory (Fox 1984: 198). Thus the biocentrism of deep ecology evokes a contradiction between the approval of Christianity and Christian ethics on the one hand and their condemnation as anthropocentric on the other.

With regard to the approval of Christianity, it will be recalled that Drengson wrote of certain ecosophies as being transpersonal ecologies. He called Christian creation theology such an ecology, because it takes the form of a Christian philosophy that finds the Christ principle and the power of love revealed in the ongoing creation of the world. Drengson wrote in the same paragraph about the supporters of deep ecology and cited ecofeminists, social ecologists and Christians. While it is clear that ecofeminists and Christians are supporters of deep ecology, why would social ecologists be included? Pepper (1996: 31) writes that support for deep ecology comes from social ecologists and eco-socialists because deep ecology is that deep ecology, like social ecology, contains elements of anarchism (Pepper 1996: 31) in its determination to overthrow the current Western social, economic and political order. Social ecology's solution to the hierarchy and aggression of state-dominated patriarchal societies is to eliminate hierarchy and patriarchy so as to recreate a "natural" society.

Drengson (1999: 1-9) also wrote on anthropocentrism, that it represents a refusal to recognise the inherent worth of other beings and promotes exploitation and destruction of life forms purely for human convenience and profit. His objection to anthropocentrism also includes its emphasis of "Humans First!". This is the opposite of "Earth First!", the activist arm of deep ecology.

At this point, another contradiction arises in deep ecology. "Earth First!" is identified by List (1993: 2) as a form of radical environmentalism. Radical environmentalism, according to List, is a wilderness fundamentalism backed up by deep ecology and biocentrism which makes wilderness and wild species the focus of uncompromising po-

litical action. This takes the form of environmental civil disobedience, ecotage and monkeywrenching. Environmental civil disobedience refers to the type of non-violent direct confrontation initiated by Greenpeace. Ecotage means the sabotaging of environmental abusers, in the main corporate polluters. This is effected by the instigation of law suits, boycotts, marches, strikes and harassment. Monkeywrenching refers to the active sabotaging of the machinery of the industrialised state. As an example of "Earth First!" in action, List (1993: 255) relates the arrest of David Foreman, founder of "Earth First!", by the FBI for conspiring to sabotage two nuclear power plants and a facility that manufactures triggers for nuclear bombs. This form of monkeywrenching by "Earth First!" potentially puts great numbers of innocent human beings and many other species at risk of a nuclear explosion. Yet the first of Naess' platform principles for the deep ecology movement is "the well-being and flourishing of human and non-human life". The attempted sabotage of nuclear power stations thus contradicts deep ecology's first principle.

The third significant difference between the two movements is that social ecology regards hierarchy as a primary target while deep ecology aims primarily at the reduction of the human population. With respect to social ecology and its primary target, hierarchy, Marshall (1992: 604) notes that Bookchin, not wanting to use the clichéd language of the past (proletariat, masses, class, exploitation) preferred the term hierarchy to class, and domination to exploitation. By hierarchy (which was to be overthrown in order to bring about a communitarian society), Bookchin meant not only a social condition but a state of consciousness. It involved the cultural, traditional and psychological systems of obedience and command as well as the economic and political systems of class and state. Bookchin based his arguments for a free society on the findings of anthropology, and on human history and prehistory. Bookchin suggested that hierarchy and domination arose in the division of labour of the hunter-gatherers of prehistory, while a sense of community and co-operation became important in agricultural society. With regard to deep ecology and its primary target, the reduction of the human population, Devall & Sessions (1985) quote Naess as saying: "I think we must have no more than 100 million people if we are to have the variety of

cultures we had one hundred years ago" (<http://www.envirolink.org/enviroethics/deepindex2.html>).

Neither deep ecology nor social ecology is without fault. In his article "Social ecology, deep ecology, and liberalism", diZerega (1993: 313-4) presents two criticisms of Bookchin's social ecology. The first is that Bookchin does not understand the problems of scale, and the second that his view of competition and co-operation in the market economy and in nature is too simplistic, indicating that he understands neither markets nor ecosystems.

The problem of scale relates to Bookchin's concept of a free society, *Ecotopia*, in which people will live in small communities. diZerega contends that the positive aspects of small communities stem from everyone's knowing and being interested in everyone else, as do the negative aspects: that people in small communities are traditionally hostile to strangers, that large cities (in comparison with small communities) generally spawn creativity in the arts and sciences, that small communities have historically been the scene of countless feuds and petty wars, and that a complex modern economy cannot possibly be based on face-to-face small communities (diZerega 1993: 314-6). diZerega (1993: 316) also notes that small communities require impersonal co-ordinated infrastructures for the distribution of goods and services. A number of diZerega's comments are clearly justified, yet he appears to be thinking of the economies of small communities as smaller versions of large modern market economies. Bookchin's concept of small communities is markedly different in that it is based on anarcho-communism, which entails the abolition of private property, the distribution of goods according to individual needs, the dissolution of commodity relationships, the rotation of work and the reduction of the time devoted to labour.

In Bookchin's free society, as Marshall (1992: 613-4) writes, everyone would receive the basic minimum on which to live and would give freely without any consideration of return. The market economy would be transformed into a moral community, changing the way in which members relate to one another. Care, responsibility and obligation would be the new terminology, replacing interest, cost and profitability. The basic units of a federated society of communes (ecocommunities) would be designed to comply with local

ecosystems and there would be a balanced mix of small-scale agriculture and small-scale industry. Marshall gives a much more extensive view of Bookchin's communitarian ideas but enough has been stated here to show that Bookchin and diZerega have very different views regarding small communities. It must also be borne in mind that Bookchin is not creating a blueprint for the actual establishment of ecocommunities in the immediate future; he is writing about an *Ecotopia*, a vision of what things could be like (although he does believe the vision to be attainable).

diZerega also criticises Bookchin's view of competition and co-operation, as they occur in the market and in nature, as too simplistic, indicating that he understands neither markets nor ecosystems. When Bookchin writes about market relationships, diZerega says, the market is competitive rather than co-operative. diZerega, on the other hand, maintains that the market is competitive as well as co-operative and he details various levels of market competitiveness, including competition between all goods offered for sale, between producers of similar goods, and between the businesses selling the goods. Bookchin's dismissal of competition is necessary, says diZerega (1993: 320-2), if his utopia is to sound plausible, but it is bad ecology and bad social science. Writing about co-operation in the market system, diZerega (1993: 322) says that there must be co-operation between suppliers of raw materials and those who produce the goods. This is obviously the case, but if the suppliers are in one country and the producers in another, as is so often the case today, then co-operation depends upon communication. And this would seem to be substantiated by the fact that businessmen are constantly flying all over the world to communicate face-to-face in order to cement interpersonal relations and to secure or further contractual arrangements. diZerega (1993: 322) also notes that co-operation should exist in a firm's internal organisation and that this is increasingly recognised. But this, I suggest, all has to do with the firm's policy and little to do with co-operation in the market system. Early economists fascinated with how outcomes beneficial to society, could arise from narrowly self-interested motives produced theoretical models based on the self-interested man. Today this figure is called "economic man" and he dominates economic theory to the extent that he has blinded most

economists to many co-operative possibilities within the market (diZerega 1993: 322). Of these many possibilities diZerega cites only two: successful worker-owner co-operatives and successful Spanish co-operatives. diZerega's focus then turns back to Bookchin and he writes:

> co-operation and competition do not exist along a continuum, nor are they opposites; who competes, who co-operates and how are the relevant questions when examining any social institution, not whether competition or co-operation exist. Both do and probably always will (diZerega 1993: 322-4).

In summing up, diZerega (1993: 325) notes that Bookchin's social ecology stretches the process of nature and "mutilates those of the market, so that he may fit them into the facile categories of dialectical naturalism". What Bookchin proposes is limited and this affects his criticism accordingly. diZerega's criticism of Bookchin's contention that the market is competitive while ecosystems are co-operative may be taken as fair comment.

Certainly social ecology is not without blemish, as Marshall (1992: 622) confirms:

> For all the shortcomings of his Hegelian teleology, his naturalistic ethics, his faith in modern technology and his confidence in the prospect of economic abundance, Bookchin stands as an outstanding social thinker. His style may be difficult at times and his tone unduly virulent, but his thought is remarkably fresh and stimulating. Above all, he has brilliantly renewed anarchist theory and practice by combining libertarian and utopian ideas with ecological principles in the creative synthesis of social ecology.

diZerega (1993: 331), writing on deep ecology, which he supports, says deep ecologists argue that ecological reasoning is a radical challenge to Western Prometheanism as it promises to reintegrate humanity into the natural world. In this sense, diZerega continues, deep ecology is biocentric rather than anthropocentric.

4. Conclusion

This brief investigation into environmental philosophy was undertaken to heighten awareness of the importance of this branch of philosophy; an importance which cannot be overstated, for as humanity's expectations of the good life have grown apace, so too have our numbers. In combination, these two factors have placed more and more pressure on the earth's fragile life-support system. Secondly, as a human generation is approximately thirty-five years, almost a whole generation has passed since environmental philosophy began, and another generation will soon begin. Although it has been shown that there are many similarities between the two positions discussed, rivalry persists. The generation that initiated environmental philosophy should not bequeath it to the next generation still blighted by the division between anthropocentrism and biocentrism.

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