

## On Reconciling Progressivism and Environmentalism

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Ever since heady speculation about the practical power of early modern science led European savants to renovate the ideal of historical progress, that ideal has faced resistance from groups who have felt threatened by such progress, and has undergone crises stemming from unexpectedly untoward consequences of attempts to make political and economic progress. Especially since the 1960s, many people have asked whether the modern ideal of progress retains validity when confronted with ecological problems that may undermine the crucial progressive goal of overcoming scarcity.<sup>1</sup> The environmental crisis has generated questions such as following questions: Is an arguably finite planetary ecosystem compatible with the capitalist and socialist goal \_of using instrumental rationality to produce an infinitely expanding quantity of material goods? Will "ecological scarcity" finally block humankind's efforts to overcome material scarcity? Must freedom from want be purchased at the expense of ecological stability? Can democratic societies long survive if rapidly growing Third World populations bring about vast ecological changes in pursuing the same level of material prosperity already achieved in First World countries? Will ecological problems become the central national security issue of the 21st century?<sup>2</sup> Such questions form the background for this essay, which examines whether progressivism and radical environmentalism can be reconciled

in terms of an evolutionary teleology that is consistent both with nondual spirituality and with contemporary science.

My book, Contesting Earth's Future, was motivated by a similar concern about the sometimes anti-modernist and anti-and anti-progressive attitudes of environmentalism. Having once attempted to read Martin Heidegger's philosophy as consistent with deep ecology, I was forced to rethink that position after 1987, when evidence surfaced demonstrating that Heidegger's infamous relation with National Socialism was deeper and longer lasting than many commentators had supposed.<sup>3</sup> If Heidegger's thought was at least in some ways compatible with German National Socialism, so I asked myself, to what extent is deep ecology compatible (perhaps unwittingly) with eco-fascism? In a subsequent essay, I again attempted to warn radical environmentalists of the potential dangers of ecofascism, while also promoting a progressive reading of environmentalism.<sup>4</sup> The present essay encourages radical environmentalists in particular to tone down anti-modernist rhetoric and to embrace the constructive dimensions of modernity, even while continuing to criticize its weaknesses, including heedless environmental destruction.

Human cultures have always generated ecological perturbations, including some so great that they may have eradicated the mega fauna of North America and others that may have destroyed ancient Near Eastern civilizations. Ecological changes induced by modernity, however, dwarf anything in previous history. Modernity may be defined roughly as the recent epoch in which humanity has attempted to gain intellectual, political, and religious freedom, as well as to liberate itself from the crushing burden of material scarcity. Modernity has always had its dissenters, especially those who

condemn its instrumental rationality, which objectifies human life and turns nature into a stockpile of resources. But many more people have accepted modernity's goals, even though not always with great enthusiasm. As Robert Pippin writes, precisely by depriving nature and human life of mystery and transcendent purpose, and by reducing to the status of merely private beliefs the traditional worldviews that once formed the basis for community, modernity has forced many people to conclude that "the narrow confines of strategic and instrumental rationality" are "the best concrete, realizable hope we have got for [social] coordination."<sup>5</sup> Even though instrumental rationality marginalizes the practical realm, undermines civic virtue, atomizes human community, destroys traditional social formations, and causes vast ecological damage, then, such rationality seems to be the only attitude consistent with modernity's widely accepted view that "most of if not all human misery was scarcity (a new and quite controversial claim) and that scarcity was a solvable technical problem."<sup>6</sup>

Contemporary critics of instrumental rationality include deconstructive postmodernists and radical environmentalists, who represent the somewhat conflicting tendencies of the counterculturalism of the 1960s. Though sharing some concerns with such counterculturalists, Pippin insists that we cannot adequately understand the implications posed by the limitations of instrumental rationality (including ecological and social problems), unless we develop an adequate answer to the following question: Why did the modern idea that misery arises from eliminable scarcity triumph over the premodern idea that misery has additional causes that are more difficult to correct? Pippin is right, I believe, in asserting that modernity's project of overcoming scarcity

through the mastery of nature cannot be adequately understood simply as a technically more proficient way of accomplishing what premodern people had already been doing.

Despite retaining important links with the past, European modernity involves a novel conceptual and experiential horizon in which humanity gradually came to define itself and its relation to nature differently than before. To exploit the extraordinary productive potential of insights produced by natural science, modern "man" (here and elsewhere, I use this masculine term to emphasize the patriarchal dimension of modernity) develops a new mode of subjectivity, egoic rationality, and a related ideology, anthropocentric humanism, which portray man as the source of value, the standard for truth, and the master of nature. Modern individual man asserts his freedom, both from illegitimate political authority and religious dogmatism. He defines truth not as revelation, but rather as the product of rational inquiry, including scientific method. He assumes that modern science, combined with the energies of free men, will make possible the conquest of nature, thereby ending material scarcity. Within a few centuries, the whole planet had been transformed by the institutions, ideology, and subjectivity that arose within the audacious modern horizon.

Contemporary people operating from within this seemingly all-encompassing horizon presuppose that scarcity is humankind's major ill, and that scarcity can be vanquished by rational deliberation and advanced technology. Socialists and market liberals alike usually conclude that continued scarcity and its attendant suffering result from misguided political economies. Socialists argue, for example, that if only the means of production were collectively owned, humankind would achieve the mastery of nature needed for material abundance. Critics of modernity, including radical

environmentalists, do not deny that scarcity is an important ill, but maintain that there are important problems other than scarcity, and that a number of those problems arise from reckless efforts to overcome it. Indeed, they argue not only that attempts to generate infinite abundance will fail, because they will undermine the ecosystems on which human life depends, but that superfluous abundance in consumerist societies blocks fulfillment of other human needs. Suspecting that the tragic myth of Daedalus, not the defiant myth of Prometheus so favored by Marx, should be used to interpret modernity's effort to control nature, most radical environmentalists agree that modernity's continued reliance on technological fixes will not work in the long run, since purported solutions to yesterday's problems (e.g., using nuclear fuel to overcome a scarcity of electricity) create even greater problems (e.g., safely disposing of a surplus of nuclear waste). In other words, modern society cannot dig itself out of its ecologically-poisoned hole by using the same conceptual and practical tools employed to dig that hole in the first place. Instead, in order to behave in ecologically viable ways, humankind must enter into a post-anthropocentric conceptual and attitudinal horizon.

Although often only grudgingly, many progressives have gradually concluded that industrial economies must reform their practices in order to minimize those environmental problems that threaten human well being. Many of those same progressives, however, also suspect that radical environmentalists are socially regressive at best and ecofascist at worst, because they refuse to concede that overcoming scarcity justifies virtually any treatment of non-human beings. Demanding that humans conform to an allegedly more "natural" way of doing things, and proclaiming the need for a mystical reunion with nature, radical environmentalists ostensibly promote an anti-

humanism that--in a way similar to deconstructive postmodernism--is inconsistent with progressive views of history.

In this essay, I begin by focusing on an incident of industrial pollution in Bogalusa, Louisiana, in order to bring out aspects of the conflict between radical environmentalists and progressives. Then, I examine more closely the contention of many modernists, that radical environmentalism has affinities with nature-worshipping, reactionary movements earlier in this century. Next, I briefly show that deep ecology and ecofeminism can be read as having a "progressive" dimension, despite their criticisms of modernity's efforts to dominate nature. Finally, I analyze Ken Wilber's attempt to reconcile the best features of radical environmentalism, which accuses modernism of a mortality-denying arrogance stemming from a fear of nature and the body, with the best features of modern progressivism, which accuses radical ecology of social and psychological regressiveness, anti-humanism, and blindness to the fact that human well being inevitably requires the control of nature. Acknowledging the validity of modernity's quest for freedom from religious dogmatism, political oppression, and material want, Wilber also agrees with those radical environmentalists who argue that a renewed spirituality is necessary to transform society in the ways needed to avoid ecological catastrophe. For Wilber, however, such spirituality will result not from an ostensibly regressive union with Mother Nature, but instead from a progressive development of consciousness and the social institutions needed to support such development. Convinced that a new narrative is needed to inspire and to guide humankind in this difficult age, Wilber develops an evolutionary story that synthesizes

contemporary science, developmental psychology, and nondual spirituality. As we shall see, however, environmentalists and modernists alike are suspicious of Wilber's narrative.

In what follows, the term "progressives" will refer both to liberal capitalists and socialists; "radical environmentalists" will refer to counterculturalists who believe that capitalism and socialism must be replaced, before they produce global "ecocide," but who also retain something in common with progressives (e.g., the belief that the current situation can be improved, or that natural science generates objective truth); and "deconstructive postmodernists" will refer to counterculturalists who are unsparing in their critique of modernity, and who generally refuse (unlike most radical environmentalists) to offer an alternative and superior worldview, since they fear that in so doing they would become complicit in justifying yet another system of domination.

#### The Bogalusa Incident: A Microcosm of the Progressivism vs. Environmentalism Dispute

Let us move toward our necessarily limited examination of this complex nest of issues by analyzing a specific instance of industrial environmental contamination. On October 23, 1995, in Bogalusa, Louisiana, about sixty miles northeast of New Orleans, a railroad tank car imploded, spewing out large quantities of a poisonous chemical, nitrogen tetroxide, manufactured at the local Gaylord Chemical plant. Horrified city officials ordered the evacuation of thousands of people near the implosion site. Almost overnight, lawyers swarmed in seeking clients for class action suits against Gaylord Chemical. At the end of the week, several black leaders charged that racism had dictated evacuation procedures: allegedly, black neighborhoods were evacuated only after white neighborhoods were cleared out.<sup>7</sup> Such accusations led a Baton Rouge attorney to invite

Johnnie Cochran, one of O.J. Simpson's attorney, to establish a legal "dream team" to represent black clients in class actions suits. Although calling for an inquiry to see if racial preference had influenced evacuation patterns, Cochran chose not to exploit the potentially incendiary accusation that racism influenced rescue efforts. Instead, he remarked: "In the country right now, we're going through a great racial divide, with the Million Man March and the [O.J. Simpson] verdict. I encourage you not to let this further divide this community. That plant out there may be the culprit."<sup>8</sup>

The Bogalusa implosion and Cochran's remarks about it touch on many issues related to the crisis in modernity's progressive vision. During the past fifteen years, the ideas of environmental justice and environmental racism have emerged as potent forces demanding changes in the production and disposal of toxic substances. Louisiana, where I live, is a national leader in the amount of toxic chemical emissions.<sup>9</sup> The petrochemical corridor stretching from Baton Rouge to New Orleans is nicknamed "Cancer Alley" by environmentalists convinced that pollutants harm the health of nearby residents, many of whom are both poor and black. As blacks and other minorities have found venues in which to express their long-standing concerns about the unhealthy consequences of industrial pollution, and to charge that their communities are disproportionately affected by such pollution, they have also forced changes in the mainstream environmental movement. Long criticized for failing to include more blacks and minorities in their organizations, and accused of being more concerned about wilderness areas than about the environmental well-being of the poor and minorities, environmentalists have had to ask whether their environmental goals are compatible with progressive political aims.

Johnnie Cochran came to Bogalusa shortly after the end of the O.J. Simpson trial, whose racially polarizing verdict revealed that racial friction continues to plague American life, despite the achievements of progressive politics in the 1960s. Today's Balkanizing, identity-based politics is antithetical to progressive universalism. Despite being an exponent of cultural diversity, Cochran knows that the civil rights movement succeeded by affirming universal human rights, and that many members of that movement couched their demands for rights in the language of Biblical justice. In court, Cochran himself borrows the rhetorical style of black Baptist preaching in order to demand justice for his clients. Even though religion has played an important role in various progressive movements, progressives have unfortunately ceded the religious domain to cultural conservatives.

In my view, developing an adequate spiritual sensibility is crucial for encouraging the emergence of new forms of subjectivity and new institutions that will take into account the concerns of progressives and radical environmentalists, even while surmounting their limitations. It is well known, of course, that many commentators have viewed the modern ideal of progress as a secular version of Biblical eschatology. Religious people and progressives alike assume that human history will eventuate in a New Jerusalem, though the former expects that this new world will come about through divine intervention, while the latter pins its hopes for an earthly heaven on human reason and effort. Although a defiant anthropocentrism characterized some Enlightenment thinkers, others conceived of progress in broadly spiritual terms, as the development and dissemination of rationality, which could lead to moral perfection as well as technical

power.<sup>10</sup> Enlightenment thinkers generally agreed, however, that church and state had to be separated, since the latter was so often in league with conservative social forces.<sup>11</sup>

Becoming increasingly atheistic, many modern people adopted scientific naturalism, including Darwinism, which professed to have no need of theological or teleological principles to explain natural phenomena. Scientific socialists, following Marx's lead, were particularly critical of religion, but retained a teleological view of history. Though political considerations led liberal capitalists to be more cautious in their treatment of religion, their embrace of secular economic theories and practices left little doubt about where their real loyalties were to be found. Unfortunately, in jettisoning the spiritual insights forming the core of traditional religions, progressives may have thrown out the baby along with the bath water. Renouncing divinity as nothing more than a magnified projection of human traits, as did Feuerbach and Marx, displays an immature understanding of authentic spiritual experience. Such understanding encouraged an overestimation of humanity's place in the cosmos. Indeed, many of the social and ecological disasters of the past century may be attributable in part to progressive modernity's paradoxical ideology of naturalistic humanism, which involves both human self-assertion and self-abnegation. On the one hand, modern humankind proclaims its uniqueness and independence by dissociating itself from a meaningless nature below and an allegedly absent divinity above. On the other hand, modern humankind conceives of itself as an insignificant part of the mechanical world system, in which human consciousness is merely a puzzling epiphenomenon of material processes, though an epiphenomenon that proves useful in the hairless ape's struggle for survival.

Today, however, as mechanistic materialism is being displaced not only by quantum theory but by developments in the sciences of chaos, there emerges the possibility of a worldview that affirms the achievements of rational subjectivity, including its skepticism about the claims of revealed religion and its suspicion of the political motives of such religion, but that also interprets such subjectivity as a phase within an evolutionary process leading to a higher, more integrated level of awareness. Such a worldview, which interprets consciousness as a basic, not an accidental, feature of a teleological cosmos, holds that humankind can evolve to toward appropriate relationships with nature and divine, after having gradually dissociated itself from both. As we shall see in our discussion of Ken Wilber's work, however, such a worldview would be viewed with suspicion by modernists and environmentalist alike.

Let us return for now, however, to Cochran's remark that the chemical plant itself may be the culprit. This remark allows for several readings. As an attorney, Cochran was trying to focus attention on the corporate entity that will be the object of legal action. As a political agent, he was trying to pacify the community by unifying it against a common enemy: wealthy capitalists operating their plant in ways that risks the lives of thousands of people, white and black, in a small southern city. As a person long exposed to nightmarish scenarios about human-made ecological catastrophe, he may also have been questioning the wisdom of modernity's commitment to technological mastery over nature. Cochran may believe that human well-being cannot be achieved without a healthy natural environment, but like many other Americans he probably also believes that ecological health can be achieved without drastically altering the personal lifestyles and economic institutions allegedly necessary for economic growth.

Years ago, when the Gaylord Chemical plant was built, many community leaders--white and black alike--were probably convinced that the plant promised improved material conditions, a better educated work force, and eventually healthier social and political relations. Indeed, the civil rights movement made its greatest gains not only because it appealed to the nation's conscience, but also because unprecedented economic prosperity allowed people to act generously. During the past two decades, however, as real wages have shrunk and as conservative politics have become the rule, racial tensions have been increasing. Though diminishing incomes have resulted less from ecological problems than from structural economic changes, including the loss of industrial jobs abroad, many people--including those who need a growing economy for their own employment--wonder whether an expanding global economy is ecologically sustainable in a time of enormous human population growth. Recognizing the deleterious long-term economic and public health consequences of the petrochemical industry, but also needing gainful employment, even Louisiana's poor and poorly educated populace now questions the facile either/or: either jobs (i.e., furthering material and social human well-being) or environment (i.e., protecting nature in ways that block progress).

Long before taking environmental matters seriously, progressives--including many union leaders--supported some version of this either/or, for they presupposed that economic exploitation of nature would have only beneficial social effects. Ecological problems, including polluted air and water, were treated as economic externalities and as acceptable trade-offs for material abundance. Only in the late 1960s did some progressives begin taking seriously the environmentalists' claim that heedless "development" of "natural resources" was threatening human health as well as

undermining the biosphere on which the continued production of material wealth depends.<sup>12</sup> Today, despite a conservative political trend, most American politicians portray their views as being environmentally sound. Democratic liberals, contending that systemic reform will bring about the changes needed to avert ecological calamity, recommend a mix of governmental regulations and market mechanisms. Because improved environmental indicators demonstrate that such reforms have worked, most Americans have criticized the Republican-controlled Congress for trying to dismantle those reforms.

Socialists, of course, have little faith in the long-term consequences of such liberal market reformism. They maintain that because most ecological problems result from capitalism, such problems can only be solved by first gaining public control of industrial facilities, and then by running them in ways consistent with human well being. Neo-classical liberals, in contrast, insist that many environmental problems result from government control over natural resources and markets; hence, privatizing governmental holdings and rescinding restrictions that currently skew market processes would have positive ecological consequences. Elsewhere I have argued that free market environmentalism can contribute significantly to the goals of environmentalism.<sup>13</sup> From the viewpoint of progressives, whether socialist or free market, changing control over the means of production changes everything. Radical environmentalists argue, however, that socialists and market liberals--far from being opposites--are both anthropocentric humanists who regard nature solely in instrumental terms. Thus, changing control over the means of production would generate social changes, but not basic changes in attitudes about the status of non-human beings.

Progressives reply that in portraying humankind as no more important than any other strand in the "cosmic web," radical environmentalists promote anti-humanistic views that are all too compatible with reactionary politics. Turning our attention once again to Louisiana, we recall that racial animosity--fueled by reactionary politics and by economic fears--led many white voters to support David Duke's campaign for governor in 1991-1992. Duke gained most of his support by using a racist analysis to explain the real economic fears of many white voters, but the neo-Nazi Duke also claimed to be an environmentalist. During his campaign, he did not emphasize his belief that there is a link between pure land and pure blood. Contemporary neo-Nazis in Germany, however, also playing on widespread economic concerns, are far more explicit about resurrecting the Nazi motto of Blut und Boden: the pure blood of the German Volk is inextricably tied to and dependent on healthy land.<sup>14</sup> Demanding the expulsion of foreigners who supposedly take away jobs and land from Germans, and who allegedly pollute the blood of Germans by marrying them, reactionary groups are resurrecting the "green" themes that were part of Nazi ideology.<sup>15</sup>

Aware that National Socialism was both anti-modern and in some ways ecofascist, progressives have traditionally been wary of the anti-modernist sentiments among radical environmentalists. Progressives exhibit merely prudential concern about how humans treat non-human beings, not only because progressives believe that control of nature is necessary to overcome scarcity, but also because they usually believe that humanity's rational faculty sharply differentiates humans from (other) animals. Modern social theorists denied that the cultural domain could be understood in terms of natural causality. As Michael Redclift and Ted Benton write:

In one move, the opposition between nature and culture (or society) made room for social sciences as autonomous disciplines distinct from the natural sciences, and undercut what were widely seen as the unacceptable moral and political implications of biological determinism. The firm categorical opposition between nature and culture has, of course, been subsequently reinforced by the twentieth century's continuing experience of biological determinism in practice--in eugenic projects of 'racial hygiene', in successive waves of resistance to women's social and political demands, and, most infamously, in the rise of European Nazism.<sup>16</sup>

Many progressives fear that radical environmentalists, in emphasizing the interdependence between humans and other life forms and in demanding "rights" for non-human beings, are undermining the humanity-nature distinction, which serves as an impediment to racism and biological determinism. As Jeffrey Herf has pointed out, however, the political terrain here is complex.<sup>17</sup> In pre-1933 Germany, for example, concern about the industrial impact on nature had been the province primarily of nature romantics and political reactionaries (the two groups having some overlapping members), but the catastrophic consequences of Nazism and its "religion of nature" led many reactionaries in the postwar era to adopt a mildly, if resignedly, pro-modern, pro-industrial stance. Curiously, however, by the 1960s the ecological and social consequences of industrialism led many critics, including some with progressive ties, to conclude that modern technology (whether capitalist or state socialist) is inherently

domineering. Such a conclusion contradicts Marx's faith in the emancipatory promise of industrial technology.

### How Criticism of Modernity Influences Environmentalism

Since the emergence of modernity, there have been many attacks on and revolts against it, some completely anti-modern, others with a more nuanced attitude toward modernity. The influential critical theory of Horkheimer and Adorno is an example of the latter. Writing during World War II, these theorists concluded that the humanity-nature distinction which constituted one aspect of progressivism had been marginalized by another aspect, namely, scientific naturalism. The same science that enabled the technological control of nature also allowed modern society to conceive of human beings simply as intelligent animals that could be controlled just like other animals.

Increasingly, the emancipatory struggle to overcome scarcity degenerated into the quest to control everything sheerly for the sake of control. As the culmination of the dialectic of enlightenment, modernity leads not to human emancipation, but rather to ever more cunning forms of social domination and in ecological devastation.<sup>18</sup>

Second-generation critical theorist Jürgen Habermas concedes that instrumental rationality has overstepped its legitimate boundaries, by colonizing the ethical and aesthetic domains which in modern times are supposed to exercise their own legitimate kinds of reason, but he insists that instrumental rationality rightly seeks to establish the scientific truths and to develop the technological means needed to overcome scarcity by mastering nature. Habermas is concerned that Horkheimer and Adorno's critique of modernity too closely resembles that of Heidegger, who infamously used it to support National Socialism. Nazi ideology was reactionary in part because it sought to de-

differentiate what modernity had distinguished: natural science, ethics and politics, and aesthetic judgment and experience. Rejecting modern humanism's distinction between the domains of history and nature, many Nazis adhered to a version of scientific naturalism, according to which humans are one organism among the many competing for survival. In the Nazi Gleichschaltung, all elements of society--scientific, ethical-judicial, and aesthetic--were united and coordinated in support of this life-and-death struggle. Individual rights were sacrificed to the communal good. As social Darwinists and anti-semites heavily influenced by eugenics theories, the Nazis also sought to purify German blood by methods that culminated in the "final solution."

Despite giving allegiance to National Socialism, however, Heidegger retained the modern distinction between the historical and natural domains. Explicitly disagreeing with Nazi ideology, he insisted that humans are more than clever animals. Nevertheless, he condemned modernity for making material productivity the central human goal, and for defining freedom as self-assertive, self-grounding human autonomy. According to Heidegger's "anti-humanism," humanity is an important element in a transcendent, but non-teleological, non-progressive process that discloses the ontological horizons (i.e., demarcates what it means for things "to be") of various historical epochs. Rejecting Biblical eschatology and its modern secular variations, Heidegger denied that there is any "reason" in history, and concluded that the very search for such reason (foundation, ground) culminates in the control-obsessed era of modernity. Indeed, in the end he portrayed capitalism, socialism, and the "historical reality" of National Socialism as variations of naturalistic humanism, which views humans as animals struggling to maximize their fitness at the expense of other living beings.

For Heidegger, Western history constitutes a nihilistic degeneration from the early Greeks' encounter with the being of entities. Instead of existing as the pre-Socratics did, namely, as ontological openness in the service of the self-manifesting of entities (plants and animals, gods and mortals), Western philosophy soon became the search for an ultimate ground or foundation for entities. Following Aristotle's lead, but as corrupted by Roman and Christian doctrines, modern humanity eventually conceived of itself as an animal whose rationality enables it to understand and thus to control entities. The Cartesian ideal of self-grounding rationality brought to its climactic phase the West's metaphysical search for an ultimate ground or foundation for entities. Technological modernity is simply the working out of the claim that for something to be it must be the object for the autonomous, self-grounding human subject.

Along with Nietzsche's critique of Western efforts to gain absolute truth, Heidegger's deconstruction of Western foundationalism influenced the French counterculturalism of the 1960s, which may be roughly described as deconstructive postmodernism.<sup>19</sup> Such postmodernists, like many radical environmentalists, maintain that colonialism, suppression of cultural difference, two world wars, the Gulag, the nuclear arms race, political authoritarianism, and ecological destruction form the dark side of modernity's "emancipatory" project. The postwar liberation movements, including feminism and civil rights in the West and revolutionary anti-colonial movements in the Third World, helped to promote deconstructive postmodernism's claim that the allegedly "universal" truths of Western humanism are simply ideologies, i.e., power-enhancing perspectives of white, male, industrial, Western elites (communist and capitalist), who strive to mold the world in their own image. Though largely agreeing

with deconstructive postmodernism's critique of humanism, linear-progressive history, instrumental rationality, cultural homogeneity, and ecologically-destructive technology, many radical environmentalists resist deconstructive postmodernism's moves of deconstructing truth and portraying "nature" as a social construct. Moreover, environmentalists fear that deconstructive postmodernism's suspicion of grand narratives undermines efforts to devise critical analyses that have sufficient breadth to grasp the global complexity of multinational capitalism, which is destroying indigenous cultures and local ecosystems. Although many radical environmentalists insist that people must develop local (bioregional) narratives that give voice to interactions between human and non-human, others insist that far more encompassing narratives about the entwining of human and natural evolution are needed to offset the disenchantment of the world brought about by modern science.

Many environmentalists call on natural science to support their contention that technological modernity is destroying the biosphere, but they also recognize that science has become part of the instrumental rationality contributing to such destruction. Environmentalists' faith in scientific truth claims was greater earlier in this century, when scientific ecology used metaphors such as the "balance of nature" and "biotic communities" to describe environmental phenomena. Such metaphors were consistent with environmentalists' demand that humans were overstepping their boundaries and upsetting the balance of nature. In the past few decades, however, ecosystem ecology has been largely displaced by population dynamics, which uses metaphors like chaos, unpredictability, imbalance, and competition to describe natural processes.<sup>20</sup>

In part because of such changes in scientific ecology's representation of natural phenomena, a number of authors-- , including progressives and former environmentalists-- have contested the validity scientific "facts" used by environmentalists to support predictions of ecological calamity. These authors contend that the ecological "crisis" is not as bad as it has been portrayed. Of course, the scope of ecological damage remains hotly contested. Nevertheless, according to critics, environmentalists run the risk of crying "Wolf!" once too often.<sup>21</sup> When I was in college during the late 1960s, predictions made by leading environmentalists convinced me that by now the planet would be uninhabitable. The failure of such predictions does not mean that other doomsday forecasts will not pan out. The point here is that environmentalists use scientific "facts" and rhetorical strategies to advance their own goals. However much environmentalists may strive to represent a "general" interest, one that includes the concerns of all life, their assertions also reflect interests that call for critical scrutiny.

Environmentalists, then, must not ignore postmodernists who question the status of all truth claims, including those made by environmentalists as well as by natural scientists, and who maintain that nature is a social construct, for any encounter with nature is mediated by human categories, images, and concepts. Yet some radical environmentalists not only insist that humans can directly encounter nature in wilderness, defined as pristine nature that has been largely untouched by human hands, but also believe that people can generate truth claims that have universal validity. Many scientists and progressives share this belief. Steven Vogel, however, a sympathetic critic of critical theory, argues that progressives must affirm that nature--understood both as economic resource and as object of scientific investigation--is a social construct, because human

experience of nature is always socially mediated. According to Vogel, there is hardly anything on the planet that has not been influenced by human activity.<sup>22</sup>

Conservation biologist Michael Soulé agrees that there is no "pristine" nature. Hence, he warns that environmentalists have painted played into the hands of developers, by maintaining that wilderness--pristine nature--is the only nature worth protecting because.<sup>23</sup> If there is no such pristine nature, environmentalists would be forced to conclude that there is nothing worth protecting! Soulé maintains, however, that there are still relatively wild areas that are worth protecting, but largely because they contain a variety of endangered species, not because they show no traces of human intervention. Even though conceding that there is no untouched Nature that forms the Other to humankind, Soulé joins many progressives and radical environmentalists in resisting the current idea, inspired by a certain interpretation of Nietzsche's perspectivalism, that scientific truth claims are little more than the expression of unexamined conceptual prejudices, and personal and institutional power interests. In a world where truth amounts to the victorious power perspective, radical environmentalists and progressives fear that there would be no rational basis for preferring one assertion to another. Social critics and natural scientists presuppose that some assertions more adequately represent states of affairs than do other assertions.

Donna Haraway, an environmentally-concerned progressive with postmodern sensibilities, concedes that truth claims are always partial and perspectival, but also insists that some truth claims have more validity than others.<sup>24</sup> Empirically well-founded scientific assertions are not arbitrary pronouncements, although they cannot help exhibit some biases, A number of feminist epistemologists have argued that scientific assertions

may become more reliable to the extent that they arise from self-critical scientific communities with members who represent diverse groups and interests.<sup>25</sup> Modern science is unavoidably inflected by various (often hidden) interests, but--charitably regarded--it promotes in principle the infinite task of objectivity. In my opinion, however, natural science must be distinguished from the ideology of scientific naturalism, according to which humans are animals competing with other species for survival and power. Scientific naturalism hides its normative perspective behind the mask of scientific "truth." Somewhat surprisingly, variations of this ideology are used by progressives to support economic practices that environmentalists claim are ecologically suicidal, and by environmentalists to support political agendas that progressives regard as socially regressive.

Progressives often blend the antithetical vocabularies of anthropocentric humanism or humanistic exceptionalism (humans are unlike and superior to animals) and scientific naturalism (humans are merely clever animals) into a naturalistic humanism, which depicts humankind as having the "right" to dominate all other animals in the quest for security. Such naturalistic humanism justifies attempts to "dominate" nature. Radical environmentalists often appeal to scientific naturalism in order to emphasize the similarity between humans and other animals. As is the case with other species, so we are told, the human population can so rapidly increase that it "overshoot" its natural resources. To prevent species suicide, some deep ecologists call for drastic population reduction. In reply to the complaints of progressives and many ecofeminists that this view represents either a new Malthusianism or an obsession with controlling women,

deep ecologists insist that unless population reduction occurs now in as humane a manner as possible, draconian measures will likely be necessary in the future.

Even though condemning anthropocentric humanism and favoring scientific naturalism, many radical environmentalists subscribe to their own paradoxical version of humanistic exceptionalism. Among all life forms, humans alone are expected to curb their territorial expansiveness. Held to be morally wrong for pursuing the goals that other animals pursue naturally, humans are sometimes regarded by environmentalists as behaving "unnaturally." Indeed, one environmentalist has described humans as "natural" aliens.<sup>26</sup> Scientific naturalism presupposes, however, that humans are clever animals struggling for survival. Such naturalism would seem to have no place for normative judgments of the sort that humans ought to curb their drive to become ever fitter, though naturalism does allow that this drive succeeds best if humans take prudential measures to avoid fouling their own nest. Having little patience with such a viewpoint, progressives often conclude that radical environmentalism is simply incompatible with modernity's emancipatory aims, and is thus reactionary. A brief examination of deep ecology and ecofeminism, however, will demonstrate that things are not so simple, for progressive themes can be discerned in both these branches of radical ecology.

#### Progressive Dimensions of Two Branches of Radical Environmentalism: Deep Ecology and Ecofeminism

Proponents of modernity sometimes represent radical ecologists as irrational nature-worshippers seeking a return to cave dwelling. Fortunately, this caricature fits few radical environmentalists. Consider one of the most articulate radical ecologists, Arne Naess, who bases his version of deep ecology, Ecosophy T, on the notion that all living

things strive for self-realization.<sup>27</sup> For humans, self-realization means not egoistical self-assertion, but rather development of the intrinsic capacity for compassion, defined as taking active interest in the self-realization of all beings. To achieve genuine self-realization, people must widen and deepen their sense of identity beyond the ego, body, family, and friends, so as to embrace all forms of life. Just as self-interest leads me spontaneously to take care of my own body, so a wider identification with plants, animals, and even ecosystems will lead me spontaneously to care for them. The notion of self-realization as a wider sense of self reflects the ecological intuition that all phenomena are interrelated or at least somehow reflective of one another. Acknowledging the possible uniqueness of humankind's self-reflective capacities, Naess maintains that such gifts impose great responsibilities.

Although recommending an "ecocentric egalitarianism" according to which all beings have an equal right to flourish, Naess recognizes that humans must not only kill other beings in order to live, but insists that one should avoid taking any life except for fulfilling "vital" human needs. Recognizing that there will always be disagreement about what constitutes vital needs, Naess makes clear that consumerist society generates many non-vital needs. Hence, he calls for significant social and economic changes, though he believes that such changes must be shaped by, as much as they shape, humanity's capacity for achieving a wider identification with all life.

Naess' idea of self-realization may have something in common with the progressive teleology of thinkers like Hegel, though whereas the latter focused on the self-realization of Spirit through humankind, the former emphasizes the self-realization of all beings. In this regard, Naess shows the influence of Mahayana Buddhism, Advaita

Vedanta, and Gandhi. Modernist in recognizing the universal character of the striving for self-realization, but nonmodernist in extending the legitimacy of such striving beyond the human realm, Naess would seem to have a melioristic perspective: things can improve, if humankind realizes its potential for compassion.

Affected by nondual spirituality, Naess would answer Pippin's question--Why did modern Europeans decide that scarcity was the major ill?--as follows. The quest to eliminate scarcity was motivated not merely by justifiable concerns about human want, but also by ignorance both about other (non-material) factors that generate suffering and about the interdependence of all beings. According to Buddhism, suffering is generated by craving, especially the craving to exist. Since the ego-structure and body are mortal, the craving to exist will ultimately be disappointed. Greed for possessions beyond those needed for a decent life indicates that one is gripped by this insatiable craving. Naess also agrees with the Buddhist view that because humankind is interrelated with other forms of life, one cannot promote the long-term well being of the former by exploiting the latter.

Ecofeminists, especially Susan Griffin and other radical feminists, have their own answer to Pippin's question. Early modern European man decided that scarcity was the major ill not only because of widespread hunger and deprivation, but also because he was experiencing an intensification of the patriarchal mode of subjectivity, according to which reason and soul (the masculine) are immortal, whereas emotions and body (the feminine) are mortal. During the Middle Ages, the idea of nature as a good, bountiful mother had restricted man's exploitation of nature.<sup>28</sup> With the rise of mercantilism and rationalism in early modern times, however, and with the separation anxiety associated

with the emergence of disembodied Cartesian subjectivity, Western man began portraying nature either as lacking in reason altogether, or else as an irrational and baneful female.<sup>29</sup> This view of nature as radically other than and threatening to rational mankind invited what many ecofeminists have described as a technological assault against nature. The quest to end scarcity by dominating "mother nature," then, was a symptom of the death-denial associated with a heightened egoistic subjectivity that was dissociated from the body, emotions, the feminine, and nature.

For many ecofeminists, the primal form of domination is the domination of women by men. Hence, patriarchy can be present even in a socialist society, in which class structure has been eliminated. Modern man's exploitative treatment of nature is an extension of his domination of woman. Man justifies dominating woman because he regards her as inferior to him; allegedly, she is endowed with less of the rationality that sets humans apart from all other creatures. Less rational than man, woman is supposedly more akin to nature. This analysis enables ecofeminism to shed light on environmental racism. Karen J. Warren maintains that just as alleged intellectual inferiority justified male domination of women, and just as the greater inferiority (non-rationality) of natural beings justified technological dominion over nature, so the purported intellectual inferiority of poor, ignorant, and non-white peoples justifies their domination at the hands of white elites.<sup>30</sup> Just as women in patriarchal societies are expected to deal with bodily wastes, so racially inferior, ignorant, and/or poor people are expected to put up with having their neighborhoods, homes, and bodies polluted with industrial wastes.<sup>31</sup> Even as downtrodden Louisianans gradually gain the political muscle needed to prevent toxic wastes from being dumped in their state, however, those wastes are being shipped to

Third or Fourth World countries, whose people look very different from the families of those who own and run First World industries.

Although criticizing modernity for continuing the patriarchal attitudes that cause social and ecological damage, many ecofeminists attempt to appropriate and to redefine the emancipatory aims of modernity. In including non-human beings within the field of entities to be emancipated, however, ecofeminists transcend the conceptual limits of modern liberation movements, and have thus sought inspiration drawn from diverse sources, including goddess religions, Eastern thought, and native American traditions. This spiritual interest distinguishes ecofeminism from secular progressivism, according to which nothing (except perhaps humankind) is sacred. Though supposedly this-worldly in orientation, modern man contradicts this tendency by dissociating himself from and seeking to transcend nature, body, and woman. In this way, he arrogates to himself the transcendent features of the deceased Biblical God. Because progressive teleology's are so tainted by the dissociate, nature-dominating patriarchal narratives of self-worshipping modern man, many ecofeminists develop narratives calling for people to reconnect with that which has been lost or forgotten: spontaneity, intuition, deep natural harmonies, and the sacred immanent in nature.

Social ecologists such as Murray Bookchin, however, have criticized deep ecologists and ecofeminists for refusing to embrace a progressive teleology, and for seeking an allegedly regressive spiritual reunion with divine nature. However innocent may be the intentions of those who promote the idea of such a reunion, according to Janet Biehl, such ideas are often uncomfortably consistent with ecofascism, which maintains that humankind must enter into communion with and conform its behavior to divine

Nature. Bookchin's insightful cosmic narrative maintains that human historical activity is a development of the evolutionary-teleological activity at work in nature.<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately, Bookchin also engages in ad hominem attacks that distort the views of his "spiritual" opponents. Bookchin's atheism apparently compels him to see only regressive tendencies in discourse about the sacred, despite the fact that the two philosophers on whom he relies most heavily for his own progressive teleology, Aristotle and Hegel, reserved important roles for the divine in their thought.

#### Ken Wilber's Attempt to Reconcile Progressivism and Environmentalism

Ken Wilber has developed an even richer teleological narrative that defends the achievements of modernity, acknowledges the intrinsic worth of nature, and restores the role of the divine in cosmic evolution. Constructing an unabashedly grand narrative in the face of postmodern deconstructivists' suspicion about such narratives, Wilber assumes that only a progressive narrative--informed by contemporary science and a nondual spirituality--can generate the speculative vision capable of reconciling many of the concerns of progressives and environmentalists. Though recognizing the force of deconstructive postmodernism's critique of objective truth, Wilber insists that absolute non-dual awareness provides an infinite context capable of containing the moves that occur when modernists and postmodernists attempt to outcontextualize one another, as when Marx tried to outcontextualize capitalism, and as when deconstructive postmodernists try to outcontextualize Marxism and other progressive views of history. Only an infinite context can simultaneously admit that because all views are relative there is no historical "progress," and that such progress is nevertheless discernible in cosmic,

terrestrial, and human history as the realization of divine potential. Of course, not everyone is willing to go along with Wilber's contention that the universe unfolds within and as such an infinite context.

In Sex, Ecology, and Spirituality, Wilber affirms that modernism and environmentalism both have important insights about humankind and its relation to nature.<sup>33</sup> Environmentalists are right that industrialism is threatening the ecosystems on which all life depends; progressives are right in seeking political freedom and in trying to liberate humankind from material scarcity. If progressives discount humanity's relationship with the biosphere, however, environmentalists fail to grasp that human consciousness transcends the biosphere even though also depending on it. Despite attempting to be even-handed in his analysis, Wilber's sympathies clearly lie with progressivism, not least because he uncharitably represents deep ecology ("ecomasculinism") and ecofeminism as being more regressive than they are.<sup>34</sup> Despite oversimplifying his account of radical environmentalism, Wilber clarifies important issues about the appropriate relationship of progressivism and environmentalism.

In his earlier book, Up From Eden, Wilber answered Pippin's question--why did modernity focus on scarcity and its elimination?--in a way similar to Arne Naess and a number of ecofeminists.<sup>35</sup> According to Wilber, overcoming material scarcity became important for modern man not only because it prevented starvation, but also because it symbolized that rational-egoic subjectivity could control nature, thereby overcoming death. Death denial, then, led modern man to dissociate himself from his body, from the female, and from nature. Whereas many critics depict modern man's quest for immortality, the "God project," either as an act of hubris or as a huge mistake, Wilber

argues that this quest inevitably arose in connection with the progressive evolution of human consciousness over the ages. From the dim and magical awareness of tribes many thousands of years ago, humankind evolved varieties of group consciousness during the rise of urban civilization, until individual awareness began arising first with certain Egyptian pharaohs and later with individuals in Greece, India, China, and elsewhere. Each stage of greater separation from other people and nature, i.e., each stage of individuation, brings with it heightened death anxiety, which people deal with in ways consistent with their cultural practices and material circumstances.

In Western history, unfortunately, the important process of differentiating from nature turned into an unnecessary process of dissociating from body, nature, and female. Hence, otherworldly religions called for mortification of the flesh as a way of freeing the soul from its corporeal imprisonment. Later, as a greatly heightened separate self-sense emerged during the Renaissance and early modern times, dissociative tendencies generated both the witch trials and the quest to dominate nature. The noble goal of ending material scarcity, then, was part of an all-encompassing project of denying death both by controlling natural forces, and even more importantly by generating the wealth to which men cling as a hedge against death. Although ultimately an ineffective substitute for immortality, modern individuated subjects remain so attracted to it, that socialism has little chance of working in the way envisioned by its proponents.

In the process of dissociating himself from nature, modern man also gradually dissociated himself from the divine. The emergence of modern science's mechanical worldview, along with the idea that human freedom involves rational self-law giving without interference from any outside force, be it human or divine, led progressives to

conclude that God is either a non-intervening creator or else altogether absent. Alone as the only form of consciousness in an inert cosmos; stricken with the anxiety that accompanies modern egoic subjectivity; dissociated from his feelings, body, nature, and divine; and alienated from other people, audacious European man colonizes the planet, subjecting native peoples to his will and transforming entire mountain ranges into industrial raw materials.

Without denying modernity's drawbacks, Wilber argues that it has brought genuine progress. In many places, democratic institutions have replaced despotic regimes; the right to own property has become recognized as an important dimension of owning oneself, i.e., of being a person; scientific knowledge enables us to understand both the fact of and the causes for today's ecological problems; extraordinary productive forces have ended scarcity for vast numbers of people, and could in principle end scarcity for all. The task for an authentic "postmodern" humanity is to further the evolution of consciousness, the next stage of which involves reintegrating what has been dissociated: body and nature "below" and divine "above." Such integration does not mean giving up the gains associated with individuated selfhood, anxiety-ridden though it may be, by regressing to earlier stages of consciousness and collective-authoritarian social formations. Instead, integration involves an *Aufhebung*, in which the individuated selfhood of rational-egoic subjectivity is both included and transcended in a more comprehensive form of awareness that is open both to nature and divine.

Wilber argues that the achievement of rational bourgeois selfhood living in constitutional-governed societies is only one stage of human history, not its culminating moment. Humankind is only about halfway along in a lengthy and often painful

evolutionary process. Although emphasizing the importance of reintegrating the divine into human life, Wilber nevertheless insists that the greatest possible contemporary revolution would be the worldwide achievement of responsible personhood, constitutional democracies, and market economies, since grave social and ecological problems arise in countries where premodern, autocratic ways impede the material productivity and social institutional change necessary for the rise of modern individuals. In other words, only when the positive political and economic achievements of modernity are consolidated on a planetary basis can large numbers of people begin exploring the next, integrative phase of human history. There is a dialectical relation between material circumstances and consciousness development. Scarcity prevents people from developing their human potential, yet regressive social structures impede the development of the productive forces needed to overcome scarcity.

In Sex, Ecology, and Spirituality, which focuses on the clash between progressivism and environmentalism, Wilber offers a somewhat different account of modernity. De-emphasizing his earlier claims that science contributes to modern man's dissociation from nature, he argues instead that during the Enlightenment era science portrayed humankind as a clever animal in the vast, all-encompassing, mechanical cosmic system, which is devoid of purpose, value, and consciousness, except for its virtually inexplicable appearance in humans. In concluding that consciousness can be nothing more than a byproduct of physico-organic processes, natural science follows its basic assumption that the cosmos in general has no "interior" dimension, no "subjectivity," and nothing that includes but transcends physico-organic reality. In thus lopping off the higher levels of the Great Chain of Being, natural scientists become

ontological "flatlanders" for whom reality is limited to the material (physico-biological) planes. According to Wilber, progressives and environmentalists are both flatlanders, because they accept natural science's powerful, but constricted account of reality. For such flatlanders, humans are clever animals that can relate to nature in two possible ways: either they can dominate it in order to maximize fitness (progressivism), or they can merge with it in order to overcome the pangs of separation from the mother-ground (radical environmentalism). Neither approach is adequate, for the former leads to ecological catastrophe, whereas the latter leads to regressive psychological and social formations, possibly including ecofascism, the ecological consequences of which could be horrendous.

To avoid this unacceptable choice, Wilber inverts the naturalistic cosmology, shared by modernists and environmentalists alike, which holds that the "noosphere" (consciousness) is contained within the biosphere. Wilber maintains, however, that the biosphere is contained within the noosphere, in the sense that self-reflective consciousness both includes and surpasses the structures that previously evolved on the physical and organic planes. Consciousness constitutes a different level of reality that cannot be deduced from or understood in terms of physico-organic processes. Rejecting eliminative materialism, which reduces consciousness to the status of physico-organic events, Wilber maintains that consciousness is an emergent phenomenon that must be understood on its own terms. In attempting to re-enchant the world by affirming that cosmic evolution is teleological, Wilber also valorizes the political and scientific achievements of modernity, including its critique of revelation-based religions. Unfortunately, in the process of freeing reflexive, self-grounding rationality from the

interference of dogmatic religions, moderns went too far, for they denied altogether the transcendent dimension represented (however inadequately) by those religions.

Influenced by Plotinus, Wilber narrative that matter-energy, which arose through the Big Bang, is a manifestation or emanation of nondual, absolute spirit. Matter-energy arises from such spirit, not the other way around. Absolute spirit, which is both immanent in all things and transcends all things, acts as a "strange attractor" luring things to surpass their existing conditions, to bring forth something new. Wilber believes that contemporary science supports his contention that the emergence of life and self-conscious life are inevitable processes. Life did not have to emerge on Earth, but it necessarily occurs on many planets in the universe, because matter-energy tends to generate ever more complex, differentiated modes of being. Terrestrial life and human evolution are only local instances of intergalactic processes that will culminate in the greatest differentiation consistent with the attainment of absolute nondual consciousness.

Wilber's teleological narrative supports the emancipatory aims of modernity, but recognizes that such aims cannot be achieved by trashing the biosphere. Beyond saying that prudential considerations require better treatment of the biosphere, he concedes that environmentalists rightly intuit that the biosphere deserves respect, admiration, and care. He criticizes the neo-pagan revival of nature worship, however, because it allegedly exhibits a flatland ontology, which fails to recognize that the divine is both immanent in creation, but also transcends it. Wilber fears that certain forms of neo-paganism will undermine the achievements of modernity, including personal individuation and political universalism.<sup>36</sup>

Neo-pagans reply that in Up From Eden, Wilber's own characterization of the emerging level of consciousness ("centauric," representing the reintegration of body and mind) has important similarities to states reported by people involved in neo-paganism. Denying that they are simply regressing to earlier stages of consciousness, some neo-pagans assert that they are attempting to do what Wilber himself has called for: reintegrating what modernity has dissociated (body, emotions, female, nature) both by exploring a higher (more integrative) level of consciousness, and by redefining modern categories in a way that transforms dissociation into the differentiation needed to retain the positive achievements of modernity, including greater economic prosperity, personal individuation, and democratic institutions based on universal human rights.<sup>37</sup>

Here, it is worth comparing Wilber's critique of the new paganism with the one offered by social ecologist Janet Biehl. Like Wilber, Biehl sharply criticizes the "New Right," which for her apparently includes some postmodern theorists, neo-fascists, and eco-fascists. According to New Rightists, the ecological crisis and the suppression of national identity have been brought about by the "dualistic, homogenizing universalism" of "Semitic" religious traditions, especially Christianity along with its secularized political ideologies, liberalism and Marxism. The same universalism that led Christians to evangelize the world is at work in modernity's efforts to eliminate non-Western cultural identities. Moreover, through the unbridled technology to which it gave rise, this modern universalism is said to have perpetrated not only the destruction of nature but an annihilation of the spirit; the destruction of nature, it is said, is life-threatening in the spiritual sense as well as the physical, since when people deny pristine nature, their access to their 'authentic' self is blocked.<sup>38</sup>

Criticizing the socially splintering tendencies of the New Right, Biehl strongly defends the universalism derived from monotheism. She rejects, however, the principal claim of such monotheism: that there is a transcendent Creator. Indeed, she would agree with those environmentalists who complain that monotheism promotes an ecologically-problematic otherworldliness. Denying divine transcendence, Biehl holds that transcendence does occur both in natural evolutionary processes that give rise to greater complexity and differentiation, and in human historical activities that form a "second nature" (culture) that distinguishes humankind from first nature. In contrast, New Righters, pagans, and eco-fascists not only reject monotheistic transcendence, but also human transcendence that embodies the emancipatory universalist impulse of monotheism. For Biehl, then, the spirituality celebrated by many deep ecologists and ecofeminists can only take the form of regressive neo-paganism, according to which the divine is wholly immanent in nature. Allegedly, such spirituality calls on people to achieve "authentic selfhood" by submerging themselves into sacred mother earth.

Wilber joins Biehl in criticizing nature worship, but he would disagree both with her dismissal of spirituality and with her account of the divine toward which an advanced spirituality is directed. For Wilber, an adequate cosmological narrative must include the nondual divine, understood both as the primal source for the universe and as the final goal that lures creation to differentiate itself through evolutionary processes culminating in nondual awareness. For Wilber, the divine transcends nature, but is also immanent in it, for nature is a manifestation of the divine. Human evolution involves the painful and exhilarating process of discovering an appropriate relationship to creation and creator, immanent divine and transcendent divine, many and one. Presumably, Wilber would

concur with Rosemary Radford Ruether, who understands why many ecofeminists reject the "male monotheistic God as a hostile concept that justifies alienation from and neglect for the earth." Like Wilber, however, Ruether denies that the "god-problem" can be solved by "replacing a male transcendent deity with an immanent female one...."<sup>39</sup> She goes on to say:

We need a vision of a source of life that is "yet more" than what presently exists, continually bringing forth both new life and new visions of how life should be more just and more caring. The human capacity for ethical reason is not rootless in the universe, but expresses this deeper source of life "beyond" the biological. Consciousness and altruistic care are qualities that have some reflection in other animals, and indeed are often too poorly developed in our own species. To believe in divine being means to believe that those qualities in ourselves are rooted in and respond to the life power from which the universe itself arises.<sup>40</sup>

Today, scientists are attempting to unlock the genetic code that makes life possible, while others are moving ever closer toward developing artificial intelligence. In technological post/modernity, we may well see the rise of cyborgs that transgress existing boundaries between human and animal, and between human and machine. Surely our capacity for care will be tested by the creative ferment that will unpredictably shape human consciousness and institutions. Cyborgs may pose a threat to human freedom and they may reinforce, rather than reduce, existing social inequities, but there is no inherent reason that such technological innovations will impede rather than develop freedom, or

that they will undermine rather than contribute to the higher, more integrated forms of consciousness. Emerging technological developments may well generate forms of subjectivity, and thus to personal, social, and political problems, of a sort that cannot be imagined in terms of today's conceptual categories. Some years ago, the Dalai Lama remarked that he could see himself being reborn as a computer, if by then computers had attained enough complexity to support self-consciousness. Consciousness does not have to be restricted to organic beings.<sup>41</sup>

### Conclusion.

Ken Wilber's evolutionary narrative has some drawbacks, including indiscriminate portraying virtually all deep ecologists ("ecomasculinists") and ecofeminists as adhering to naive and misguided forms of "spirituality," which risk promoting psychologically and socially regressiveness practices consistent with eco-fascism. By so doing, Wilber ignores the extent to which radical environmentalists--including social ecologists, as well as some deep ecologists and ecofeminists--share concerns about forms of eco-spirituality that promote reactionary politics and regressive personalities. Despite such problems, Wilber's cosmological narrative manages to achieve a great deal.

Wilber acknowledges that modernity has important limitations (including social alienation and potential ecological calamity) stemming from its conclusion that material scarcity is the central problem for humankind. This conclusion is related to modernity's relatively one-dimensional cosmology, according to which humans are clever animals struggling for survival and power within an all-embracing materialistic-mechanistic cosmos. Many radical environmentalists share neo-paganism's intuition that this

cosmology lacks the spiritual sensibility needed to reveal the sacred dimension of nature, and thus reveals nature as nothing but raw material for human ends. Yet by portraying nature itself as divine, and thus by denying the transcendent dimension of divinity in which humankind has a proportionately larger share than do plants and (most) animals, some radical environmentalists may become attracted to regressive psychological and social ideas. Wilber agrees that modernity lacks spiritual sensibility, but maintains that a spirituality appropriate for today's situation must simultaneously reject otherworldly monotheism as well as this-worldly paganism, while envisioning a divine that is manifested as immanent in nature, but also as the evolutionary process by which nature transcends the physico-biological planes on the way to ever-more differentiated planes of consciousness.

Modernity has contributed to this evolutionary process by making possible greater individuation, but modernity's understandable reaction against religion's based on revelation and supportive of reactionary regimes went too far. Denying the divine altogether, whether as the source of matter-energy or as the end toward which cosmic evolution strives, modernity ends up defining progress as the ever greater control of the physico-biological plane, and thus as ever great capacity for satisfying human desire, instead of as an evolutionary process that makes possible a higher, more both a integrated level of consciousness and the social institutions consistent with that level. Satisfying material desires is surely important, but humanity's ultimate desire can never be satisfied, even by an infinite amount of material goods, for arguably what people really want is not more consumer goods, not more power over nature, not a longer life span, but eternity in the form of union with the nondual divine. The consumerist culture that wrecks social

and ecological chaos arises because so many people are using material goods to fill a void that such goods cannot fill. One can never get enough of what one doesn't really want.

If progressives must take environmental problems seriously, environmentalists must recognize the validity of modernity's emancipatory economic and political aims. Freeing people from material deprivation and political authoritarianism is a noble goal, but one that must be furthered in ways that enhance all life on this planet, whenever possible. Reconciling progressivism and environmentalism is central to a positive, postmodern awareness, which transcends customary boundaries--physical, organic, mental, artificial--in disclosing the creative principle at work in all phenomena. A prerequisite for the rise of this more integrative awareness is that the majority of people need to develop modern consciousness and institutions, although such development must avoid critical damage to the biosphere. Hence, the need for environmentalists and progressives to cooperate in reminding each other of what the other finds so important.

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<sup>1</sup> See especially Robert Paehlke, Environmentalism and the Future of Progressive Politics (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

<sup>2</sup> See Thomas Fraser Homer-Dixon's essays, "On the Threshold: Environmental Changes as Causes of Acute Conflicts," International Security, 16 (1991), 76-116, and "Environmental Scarcities and Violent Conflict," International Security 19 (1994), 5-40.

<sup>3</sup> Michael E. Zimmerman, "'Toward a Heideggerean Ethos for Radical Environmentalism," Environmental Ethics, V (Summer, 1983), 99-131; "The Thorn in Heidegger's Side: The Question of National Socialism," The Philosophical Forum, XX (Summer, 1989), 326-365; "Rethinking the Heidegger--Deep Ecology Relationship," Environmental Ethics, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Fall, 1993), 195-224.

<sup>4</sup> Michael E. Zimmerman, "The Threat of Ecofascism," Social Theory and Praxis, 21 (Summer, 1995), 207-238.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Pippin, "On the Notion of Technology as Ideology: Prospects," in Technology, Pessimism, and Postmodernism, ed. Yaron Ezrahi, Everett Mendelsohn, and

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Howard Segal (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1994), 93-113. Quotation is from p. 111.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>7</sup> Reported by Glen Justice in "Group: Gas Leak Response Racist," The Times-Picayune, New Orleans, Sunday, October 29, 1995, page B 1.

<sup>8</sup> Reported by Sara Shipley in "Cochran Fires Up Crowd for Bogalusa Class Action," The Times-Picayune, New Orleans, Friday, November 10, 1995, pp. A 1, 16.

<sup>9</sup> To give proper credit to Louisiana's petrochemical industry, I should point out that toxic emissions have declined dramatically during the past fifteen years.

<sup>10</sup> In this regard, consider the role played both by the Great Awakening and by Masonic ideals in the theory and practice of the American Revolution.

<sup>11</sup> For an excellent account of current theoretical challenges to the liberal doctrine of church-state separation, see C. Judd Owen, Religion and the Decline of Liberal Rationalism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

<sup>12</sup> A distressing example is the unprecedented ecological catastrophe wreaked by the command economies of the former Soviet bloc. Indeed, anger about the public health and economic consequences of ecological destruction was a significant factor in the revolt by Eastern European countries against the Soviet Union. See Murray Feshbach and Alfred Friendly, Jr., Ecocide in the USSR : Health and Nature Under Siege / Murray Feshbach and Alfred Friendly, Jr. (New York: BasicBooks, 1992).

<sup>13</sup> Michael E. Zimmerman, "A Strategic Direction for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Environmentalism: Free Market Environmentalism," Strategies: Journal of Theory, Culture, and Politics, 13, No. 1 (May, 2000), 89-110.

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<sup>14</sup> See Anna Bramwell, Blood and Soil : Richard Walther Darre and Hitler's "Green Party" (Bourne End, Buckinghamshire : Kensal Press, 1985).

<sup>15</sup> For a discussion of these disturbing right-wing political trends in Germany, see Janet Biehl, "'Ecology' and the Modernization of Fascism in the German Ultra-Right," in Ecofascism: Lessons from the German Experience, by Biehl and Peter Staudenmaier (San Francisco: AK Press, 1995). For a critique of the anti-modernist trends of some environmentalism, see Anna Bramwell, Ecology in the Twentieth Century: A History (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

<sup>16</sup> Introduction to Social Theory and the Global Environment, ed. Michael Redclift and Ted Benton (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> See Jeffrey Herf, "Belated Pessimism: Technology and Twentieth Century German Conservative Intellectuals," in Technology, Pessimism, and Postmodernism, 115-136.

<sup>18</sup> Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment (New York: Continuum, 1976).

<sup>19</sup> See Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut, French Philosophy of the Sixties: An Essay in Antihumanism, translated by Mary H.S. Cattani. (Amherst : University of Massachusetts Press, 1990).

<sup>20</sup> See Donald Worster, "The Ecology of Order and Chaos," in Environmental Ethics, ed. Susan J. Armstrong and Richard G. Botzler (New York: McGraw Hill, 1993), 39-49). See also Alston Chase, In a Dark Wood (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1995).

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<sup>21</sup> For example, see: Bjorn Lomborg, Bjørn, The Skeptical Environmentalist : Measuring the Real Wtate of the World (New York : Cambridge University Press, 2001) Joseph L. Bast, Peter J. Hill, Richard C. Rue, Eco-Sanity: A Common Sense Guide to Environmentalism (Lanham, Maryland: Madison Books, 1996); Ecosciam: The False Prophecies of Ecological Calamity (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993); Wallace Kaufman, No Turning Back: Dismantling the Fantasies of Environmental Thinking (New York: Basic Books, 1994); Jacqueline Vaughn Switzer, Green Backlash : The History and Politics of Environmental Opposition in the U.S. (Boulder, Colorado and London : Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997). For opposing views, see Andrew Rowell, Green Backlash : Global Subversion of the Environmental Movement (London and New York : Routledge, 1996); Michael Tobias, World War III: Population and the Biosphere at the End of the Millennium (Santa Fe: Bear & Co., 1994); and Paul R. Ehrlich and Anne H. Ehrlich, Betrayal of Science and Reason : How Anti-Environment Rhetoric Threatens Our Future (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1998).

<sup>22</sup> Steven Vogel, Against Nature: The Concept of Nature in Critical Theory (New York: SUNY Press, 1996).

<sup>23</sup> See Michael E. Soulé, "The Social Siege of Nature," in Reinventing Nature? Responses to Postmodern Deconstruction, ed. Michael E. Soulé and Gary Lease (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1995), 137-170. For a discussion of the issues raised in this book, see Michael E. Zimmerman, "The Postmodern Challenge to Environmentalism," Terra Nova, 1 (1996), 129-138. See also Neil Evernden's insightful work, The Social Creation of Nature (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

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<sup>24</sup> See Donna Haraway, Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature (New York: Routledge, 1991); N. Catherine Hayles, "Searching for Common Ground," Reinventing Nature?, 47-64.

<sup>25</sup> See many of the essays in the excellent anthology, Feminist Epistemologies, ed. Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter (New York: Routledge, 1993).

<sup>26</sup> Neil Evernden, The Natural Alien: Humankind and Environment (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1985).

<sup>27</sup> Arne Naess, Ecology, Community, and Lifestyle, trans. and ed. David Rothenberg (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>28</sup> Carolyn Merchant, The Death of Nature (New York: Harper & Row, 1980).

<sup>29</sup> See Susan Bordo, "The Cartesian Masculinization of Thought," Signs, 11 (1986), 439-456.

<sup>30</sup> Karen J. Warren, "The Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism," Environmental Ethics 12 (1990), 125-146. More recently, see Warren, Ecofeminist Philosophy : A Western Perspective on What It Is and Why It Matters. (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000).

<sup>31</sup> See my essay, "Deep Ecology and Ecofeminism: The Emerging Dialogue" in Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism, ed. Irene Diamond and Floria Feman Orenstein (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1990),

<sup>32</sup> Murray Bookchin, The Ecology of Freedom (Palo Alto: Chesire Books, 1982).

<sup>33</sup> Ken Wilber, Sex, Ecology, Spirituality (Boston: Shambhala, 1995). See also Wilber, A Brief History of Everything (Boston: Shambhala, 1996).

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<sup>34</sup> See my essay, "A Transpersonal Diagnosis of the Ecological Crisis," Ken Wilber in Dialogue, ed. Donald Rothberg and Sean Kelly (Wheaton, Illinois: Quest Books, 1998).

<sup>35</sup> Ken Wilber, Up From Eden: A Transpersonal View of Human Evolution (Boston: Shambhala, 1981).

<sup>36</sup> See my essays, "Ken Wilber's Critique of Ecological Spirituality," Deep Ecology and World Religions, ed., David Landis Barnhill and Roger S. Gottlieb (Albany: SUNY Press, 2001); and "Possible Political Problems of Earth-Based Religiosity," Beneath the Surface: Critical Essays in the Philosophy of Deep Ecology, ed. Eric Katz, Andrew Light, and David Rothenberg (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000).

<sup>37</sup> Gus diZerega, a political theorist and neo-pagan priest, maintains to the contrary that neo-paganism is consistent with progressive views. Among his many essays, see "A Critique of Ken Wilber's Account of Deep Ecology and Nature Religions," The Trumpeter, 13, 2 (Spring-Summer, 1992), 52-71, and "Deep Ecology and Liberalism: The Greener Implications of Evolutionary Liberal Theory," Review of Politics, 58, 4 (Fall, 1996), 699-734. Despite earlier sharp disagreements with Wilber, diZerega is now a member of Wilber's Integral Institute.

<sup>38</sup> Biehl, " 'Ecology' and the Modernization of Fascism in the German Ultra-Right," 34.

<sup>39</sup> Rosemary Radford Ruether, Gaia and God (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 4.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>41</sup> See Gentle Bridges: Conversations with the Dalai Lama on the Sciences of Mind, ed. Francisco J. Varela and Jeremy W. Hayward (Boston: Shambhala, 2001).

