

## Possible Political Problems of Earth-Based Religiosity

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Biblical monotheism, which celebrates a Divine that transcends Creation, was an extraordinary historical development. By desacralizing Creation, Judaism and subsequently Christianity challenged animism and paganism, which are intuitively more understandable religions, insofar as their gods are contained within the cosmos. Early Christians cut down the sacred groves and chased the ancient gods from the temples, many of which became sites for Christian churches. In early modern times, the non-sacred character of Creation was emphasized by Reformation Christians, such as John Calvin, who encouraged Western “man” to “develop” Creation.<sup>1</sup> Despite the shocks delivered to Christian anthropocentrism by the Copernican and Darwinian revolutions, and despite a significant decline in the number of believing Christians, most contemporary Westerners continue to regard humans as morally and intellectually superior to all other beings. In effect, Western man has taken over the creative role of the Biblical divinity. Unfortunately, because humans lack divine wisdom, they have developed weapons, economies, and consumption patterns that are causing significant ecological damage.

To further limit such damage, a number of radical environmentalists—including some deep ecologists and ecofeminists—call for Western man to end his arrogant attitude toward nature, embrace an eco-friendly spirituality, and become a “plain citizen” of the sacred Earth community, the all-embracing “web of life.” Radical environmentalists often look to non-Biblical, neo-pagan religions for spiritual guidance in developing a non-domineering spiritual attitude toward nature. Contemporary neo-pagans such as Starhawk, who recall Christianity’s persecution of ancient paganism and who are concerned about modern man’s violence against nature, affirm that the divine is present in all phenomena, rather than solely in a transcendent deity.

Because spiritual issues are so often found in the writings of deep ecologists, Bron Taylor maintains that deep ecology has a broadly spiritual component. One leading deep ecologist, Bill Devall, however, has sharply criticized this claim.<sup>2</sup> Arne Naess maintains that the basic premises for an "ecosophy" or ecological philosophy can be either philosophical or spiritual/religious. Hence, a secular or non-spiritually oriented kind of deep ecology is possible in principle. Nevertheless, in fact, virtually all of the prominent versions of deep ecology (including Devall's) do involve spiritual premises or at least a significant spiritual component. In view of the strong case that Taylor makes for his account of deep ecology, and in view of his obvious sympathy for it, Devall's reaction is puzzling. Perhaps he is concerned that overemphasizing the spiritual dimension of deep ecology will make it less attractive to secular-minded people who care deeply for the fate of the Earth. Or perhaps he has become uneasy about linking deep ecology too tightly in particular with an Earth-based spirituality, in light of the concerns that I have raised elsewhere and will pursue in this essay.<sup>3</sup>

In recent decades, the Gaia hypothesis has given sustenance to neo-pagan visions of the Earth as a Goddess, as the divine, self-organizing ecosystem in whom all things are born and into which they return at death. One commentator writes that:

Neopaganism capitalizes on the difficulty human beings have of conceiving of a God simultaneously external to the universe and yet personal and present. Neopaganism finds it easier to see God, humanity, and nature as a continuum. In [Alain] de Benoist's words [...], paganism assumes that the universe is alive. It is a divine being, and this world-soul is the sole true being--there is no other. It is imperishable, uncreated, without beginning or end. This god or world-soul accomplishes itself in and through the world: the creature is consubstantial with the creator. If there was anything that could be called a creation, it was certainly not a

creation in the Christian sense of the world. Rather it was nothing more than the beginning of a new cycle in the world's history.<sup>4</sup>

Many modern people do not believe that terms like the 'divine' and the 'sacred' refer to anything. I myself take it for granted, however, that talk about the divine is meaningful talk, and that renewing humanity's relationship with the divine could play a significant role in resolving or at least in minimizing contemporary environmental and social problems. In this essay, however, I voice my concern about the possible consequences of the fact that such Earth-based religiosity tends to view the divine as wholly contained in or as immanent within the cosmos itself, rather than as transcending the cosmos as well as being somehow present in it. Most neo-pagans and radical environmentalists are insufficiently aware of the potentially dark side of such an immanentistic view of the divine. One such sinister potentiality was realized in National Socialism, which can be understood in part as a perverted religion of nature, which rejected Jewish and Christian otherworldliness as well as progressive political ideologies (communism, socialism, liberalism) that are indebted to Christian ideas about divine purpose actualizing itself in history. Unhappily, National Socialism was in some respects a "green" movement.<sup>5</sup>

I became cognizant of the green side of the Nazi movement only a decade ago, in the process of coming to terms with the Nazi affiliation of Martin Heidegger, whose work I had once used to inform and to promote the deep ecology movement. Although the anti-modern, anti-Enlightenment, anti-industrial, and nature-revering rhetoric of the Nazis in the early 1930s was largely betrayed by their subsequent commitment to rearmament and industrial productivity, the Nazi government passed environmental laws that were the most far-reaching in the developed world at that time. In other words, Nazi reverence for and identification with nature were not merely opportunistic. Affirming that humanity is but one strand in the great web of life, Nazi ideologues trumpeted the now infamous slogan, Blut und Boden ("Blood and Soil"), which may be understood as a racist version of bioregionalism. The Nazis condemned Judaism and Christianity for being nature-hating,

life-despising, and otherworldly. The Nazis were hardly alone in exhibiting anti-modernist, pro-nature, and even neo-pagan sentiments in the early twentieth century. The Nazi movement's jingoist militarism, masculinist fantasies, and anti-Semitism help explain why Nazism made such dreadful use of sentiments that were shared by people with no sympathy at all for National Socialism. In another essay, I have described in more detail the ecofascist dimension of National Socialism.<sup>6</sup>

Some of my friends in the environmental movement have been dismayed by my recent excursions into the topic of ecofascism. Indeed, because environmentalism is under attack from so many angles, my examination of this topic may seem gratuitous. Obviously, I think the issue is important. Moreover, I believe that consideration of it should come from within the ranks of people who call themselves environmentalists, as I do. In what follows, I do not wish to say that ecofascism or right-wing environmentalism are inevitable outcomes of Earth-oriented religions, or that people concerned about the sacred dimension of their own homelands are somehow crypto-Nazis. The loss of a sense of place, as Wendell Berry has argued so eloquently, is one of the regrettable outcomes of modernity.<sup>7</sup> As I noted above, ecofascism involves militaristic and xenophobic dimensions that are not discernible in most forms of bioregionalism, deep ecology, and ecofeminism. Indeed, because the United States is the world's most liberal democracy and has the highest percentage of church-going Christians of any industrial nation, chances may seem slim that something like a neo-pagan ecofascism could ever arise here.

My discussion of the possibility of ecofascism is more than a cautionary tale, however, since neo-fascist movements are in fact on the rise again in Europe and constantly threaten to move Green political parties in a right-wing direction, as Oliver Geden has made clear in his recent work, Rechte Oekologie: Umweltschutz zwischen Emanzipation und Faschismus (Right Wing Ecology: Environmental Protection Between Emancipation and Fascism).<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, in the context of a social and ecological crisis in the United States, I can imagine the emergence of proto-fascist forces that might appropriate and redefine

ideas that are currently used rather innocently and naively by some radical ecologists, neo-pagans, and New Agers. The writings of the neo-pagan, anti-Christian, Friedrich Nietzsche, were put to use by the Nazis, despite Nietzsche's own sharp criticism of anti-Semitic movements in his own time, a few decades before the emergence of the Nazi Party. Anyone familiar with American political paranoia, especially after the collapse of the external enemy of communism, must take seriously the prospect of collectivist movements that--under the misleading banner of "Christian individualism"--would draw upon immanentistic ideas (for example, "sacred blood" that must not be contaminated) to promote draconian solutions to environmental, political, and economic problems supposedly caused by racial mixing and immigration.

In describing National Socialism as a "green" version of neo-paganism armed with Panzer tanks and inflamed by anti-Semitism, my point is not to say that contemporary deep ecologists, ecofeminists, and neo-pagans are proto-fascists. Were I to say this, I would be abetting criticisms made by such anti-environmental groups as the Wise Use Movement, with which I have little sympathy. Moreover, contemporary radical ecologists and neo-pagans are sufficiently variegated and at odds with one another, that they can be housed under one conceptual roof only by ignoring important distinctions. My point is to remind people who do promote an immanentistic, Earth-based religiosity that one version of such religiosity can be and has been put to appalling uses. Thus informed, contemporary Earth-based religionists would be capable not only of anticipating and deflating the criticisms of anti-environmental groups, but also of critically re-examining the adequacy of their own views about the relationships among humankind, nature, and the divine.

For modernists, including liberal capitalists and communists alike, neo-paganism or Earth-based religiosity is problematic not least because of its cyclical view of history. Such religiosity, attuned as it is to the cycles of the seasons and the movements of the planets, looks in askance at the linear view of history that moderns have taken over from the Biblical tradition. Insofar as neo-pagan National Socialism explicitly rejected the linear-

progressive reading of history, liberals and Marxists have long been critical of neo-paganism. If pre-World War II reactionary movements condemned progressive views about history, so did postwar postmodern critics. Such critics argue that a history that leads up to Auschwitz, the Gulag, H-bombs, and ecological devastation cannot be “progressive.” Instead, so postmodern theorists maintain, the idea of progress has been deeply ingrained in totalizing movements that have justified political and social oppression. Though I myself once drew similar conclusions, I am skeptical of them today. For one thing, even though National Socialism made use of modern industry and technology, its social and cultural orientation were largely pre-modern. Although the Nazis may have been influenced by the “totalizing” tendencies that emerged in the French Revolution, the Nazis were clearly opposed to Enlightenment views of human progress, especially those views that emphasized the sanctity and freedom of each individual person. Today, I defend a progressive reading of history, although I also believe that such a reading must provide an adequate account of the political horrors and ecological destruction of the twentieth century. In what follows, in the context of my discussion of the dangers of Earth-based religiosity, I will examine such a progressive reading that contains a spiritual dimension, unlike the official doctrines of modern secular ideologies. This spiritual dimension involves panentheism, which regards the divine as being simultaneously present in the cosmos and transcendent of it.

Ecofeminist Christian theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether has demonstrated that spiritual reverence toward creation or nature is compatible with panentheism, according to which the divine is simultaneously transcendent and immanent.<sup>9</sup> By way of contrast, some kind of pantheism or animism has characterized many pagan, traditional tribal, and neo-pagan religions, but the extent of such pantheism is not complete. Many traditional tribes, e.g., the Lakota Sioux with Wakan Tanka, conceived of a transcendent divinity as the eternal source of all phenomena. Moreover, some contemporary neo-pagans may best be described as panentheists rather than as pantheists. Nevertheless, many neo-pagans or Earth-based religionists either renounce, or are tempted to renounce the transcendent dimension of

divinity, because they are so critical of the devastating ecological consequences that have arisen in societies influenced by religions with an otherworldly orientation. Of course, many civilizations without a transcendent divinity, including ancient China, were responsible for much ecological destruction. Nevertheless, a theme found in much Earth-based religiosity is that a re-sacralization of nature and a rejection of the transcendent God is needed in order to halt the ecologically-suicidal activity of commercial civilization.

In my critical examination of Earth-based religiosity, I use two different lenses: Martin Heidegger's ontology and Ken Wilber's transpersonal philosophy. As we shall see, even though Heidegger and Wilber sharply disagree about historical teleology and the merits of modernity, they agree that Earth-based religiosity risks adhering to a one-dimensional or "flatland" ontology, the immanentistic or this-worldly orientation of which conceals the transcendent dimension. Paradoxically, by giving so much credence to the naturalistic view that humankind is merely one organic thread in the great web of life, some proponents of Earth-based religiosity end up affirming, or at least drawing heavily upon, a version of scientific materialism, which was conceived by the very modernism of which they are otherwise so often critical. In other words, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, modernists have much in common with those radical environmentalists and neo-pagans who subscribe to an immanentistic Earth-based religiosity. Despite Heidegger's critique of modernity's one-dimensional ontology, however, he himself can be understood as neo-pagan, insofar as he abandons the transcendent concept of God and envisions the gods as immanent within finite historical worlds.

#### The Heidegger Connection

One wing of the countercultural revolt that began in the 1960s sought to liberate oppressed Others of all sorts, including blacks, Hispanics, women, animals, and even nature itself. Curiously, however, some counterculturalists who used the vocabulary of revolution, liberation, emancipation, rights, and social progress, did not take seriously how much this vocabulary was rooted in modernity, which some counterculturalists sharply criticized for its

"domination" of nature. Indeed, to the consternation of historically-informed liberals and socialists, some counterculturalists believed that modernity was inherently flawed and would thus inevitably lead to social and ecological catastrophe. For such counterculturalists, including a number of radical environmentalists, real liberation meant not merely gaining voting rights for blacks or equal employment rights for women, but rather throwing off the yoke imposed by the whole social, political, economic, industrial, and technological apparatus of modernity, in order to generate lifestyles that would bring human beings into closer relationship to each other, to nature, and to the sacred. I am personally familiar with this yearning for greater simplicity, for an end to the desecration of nature, and for an alternative to mainstream churches that tend to ignore God's presence in and concern with extra-human aspects of Creation. Although appreciating the passion and concern exhibited by these sentiments, I now regard some of them as rather confused and possibly dangerous.

For years, I published essays that condemned technological modernity, even though I simultaneously supported various liberation movements that were manifestations of its most positive dimension, i.e., its drive to liberate humankind from the scourges of ignorance, poverty, and political oppression. My fascination with Martin Heidegger's thought was crucial in my failure adequately to use this positive aspect of modernity to offset my condemnation of its ecologically-destructive practices. Much of my critique of modernity was derived from Heidegger, who--by the early 1930s, when he became affiliated with National Socialism--interpreted technological modernity, including modern science, as the nihilistic culmination of 2500 years of cultural degeneration. Democracy, rationalism, socialism, communism, capitalism, empiricism, universal human rights--all of these were, for Heidegger, not signs of human progress, but instead symptoms of Western humanity's decline, understood as an increasing loss of contact with Being. Ostensibly, this gradual loss led the West to be governed by a one-dimensional ontology that forces things to show themselves only as raw materials for enhancing the power of the technological system, the primary goal of which (despite talk of "improving" the human estate) is power for its own

sake. According to Heidegger, the control obsession that originated in Western thought has become a planetary destiny in the twentieth century. Under the guise of movements promising human liberation and fulfillment, humankind has been reduced to the status of a clever animal, as defined by thinkers like Darwin and Freud. Nature, in turn, has been reduced to the status of a gasoline station for fueling ever more gargantuan industrial projects. Modern humanity has become blind to the fact that our capacity for understanding what things are involves an openness to that which transcends all things: the being of entities.<sup>10</sup>

Although my environmental concerns led me to use Heidegger's thought to justify a radical ecological critique of technological modernity, my interest in various civil rights movements forced me to downplay his strongly anti-democratic views. Many other people, including the leading counterculturalist Herbert Marcuse, who studied with Heidegger, shared this ambivalent attitude toward modernity. The 1987 disclosures about the extent and duration of Heidegger's affiliation with National Socialism, however, forced me to make a more responsible and internally coherent assessment of his (and thus my own) views about modernity. In doing so, I arrived at the following two conclusions.

First, it was no accident that Heidegger could so readily interpret his own thought as being consistent with National Socialism, for he agreed with its view that Western history involves a long decline from classical (especially Greek) antiquity, that modernity was the culmination of that decline, and that the only remedy for it was a revolution that involved the "complete transformation of our German Dasein [Heidegger's term for human existence]."<sup>11</sup> Second, despite enthusiastically supporting Hitler's movement, Heidegger criticized Nazi ideologues, since--as their biological racism demonstrated--they usually adhered to some variety of scientific naturalism. In Heidegger's view, however, naturalism was itself another manifestation of modernity's one-dimensional ontology, and hence could not provide an alternative to modernity. The material power of modernity was inversely related to its spiritual ignorance. Blind to humanity transcendent dimension, which

differentiates humans from other beings, modern humans conclude that they are nothing but animals involved in a struggle for survival in the face of the overpowering forces of nature.<sup>12</sup>

From Heidegger's viewpoint, Nazi worship of natural forces and their celebration of the inchoate impulses of "blood" kinship were not a recovery of ancient ways, at least not ancient Greek ways, since the latter were in touch with the transcendent domain, even though they could not articulate it. According to Heidegger, the Greeks did not worship nature understood in modern terms as material substances and processes, but rather celebrated nature understood as physis, that is, as awe-inspiring presencing, appearing, or manifesting. This manifesting constitutes what Heidegger calls the "being" of entities (Sein des Seienden), and what the ancient Greeks (supposedly) experienced as the self-disclosure of entities, their entry into presence from concealment. Such presencing or being is not experienced by non-human animals, which allegedly lack the ontological openness necessary for such presencing to occur.

Influenced by German idealism, which distinguished between the natural and the historical domains, Heidegger criticized Nazi ideologues for portraying humans merely as intelligent animals, governed by natural laws and struggling for survival in competition with the rest of life on Earth. In the end, Heidegger concluded that the historical reality of National Socialism was another dreary instance of modernity's naturalistic humanism, which seeks to gain control of everything through science, technology, and industry. Many commentators have noted that National Socialism contains two apparently contradictory elements: a fascination with nature-worship, on the one hand, and a commitment to industrial technology, on the other. Jeffrey Herf uses the term "reactionary modernism" to describe this complex tension within Nazi ideology.<sup>13</sup> According to Heidegger, however, the dominant ideology of National Socialism was not reactionary, but modernist. Because Nazi efforts to resurrect pagan divinities like Wotan and to restore blood ties to the land occurred within the context of a general commitment to some form of modern materialism or naturalism, Heidegger believed that those efforts were hopelessly confused and incapable

of restoring Germany's relationship with the transcendent. In his view, humankind could establish an appropriate relationship with nature only after discerning that nature, physis, involves a transcendent dimension that is overlooked by modern naturalism.

In the 1940s, Aldo Leopold would call humans "plain citizens" of the land, but in the 1930s Heidegger insisted that humans--far from being "plain citizens"--were unique. Humans exist as the opening in which things can manifest themselves and in this sense "be." Scorning Nazi ideologues who promoted a materialistic religion of nature, Heidegger encouraged the Nazi to put their conceptual and spiritual houses in order by adopting his own philosophy, which emphasized the transcendent and non-naturalistic dimension of human existence and "nature" alike. For Heidegger, even though an eagle has far better eyesight than a human, the former cannot discern the "beauty" of an entity or a landscape, for beauty (like meaning, intelligibility, and purpose) can be discerned only by those who can comprehend the being of an entity, i.e., who can encounter the entity as entity. Being "is" not itself an entity or a property of an entity, but rather names the ontological event in which an entity presents or reveals itself. In a conclusion that is repellent to the modern sensibility, Heidegger asserted that humans cannot adequately be defined as animals. He maintained that homage should be given neither to the complex processes and forces of material nature, nor to the gods who supposedly correspond to those forces, but rather to transcendent being, by virtue of whose radiance entities can appear as entities within a specific historical epoch.

Like Kant, Hegel, and Schelling, Heidegger maintained human interaction with nature and the divine mediated by cultural, linguistic, and technological means.<sup>14</sup> Far more so than did Heidegger, however, the German idealists wrestled with the issue of the relationship between a transcendent, eternal God and a finite, material nature. Indeed, Heidegger renounced the transcendent Biblical God, replacing Him with the gods sung by the neo-pagan poet, Hölderlin. Supposedly, these gods help to found and orient the finite worlds opened up through human existence, which is sustained by a transcendent

ontological dimension that is not of human origin. My efforts to read Heidegger as a forerunner of deep ecology were met with resistance by some deep ecologists, who regarded Heidegger's emphasis on human existence as a residual form of the anthropocentrism that is allegedly responsible for modernity's destructive treatment of nature. Heidegger himself, however, would have been equally critical of contemporary Earth-based religiosity, insofar as it is influenced by the same naturalism that discloses nature as complex material systems and humans as clever animals.

Unfortunately, despite rejecting the biological racism that he regarded as central to the historical form actually taken by National Socialism, Heidegger not only ardently supported the movement during the 1930s, but continued to revere its "inner truth and greatness" long after the movement had led Germany to self-destruction and had murdered millions of innocent people in the process. Attempting to make sense of all this, Jacques Derrida suggests that Heidegger was guilty not of biological racism, but rather of metaphysical racism, according to which the German language--more than any other--is profoundly linked with ancient Greek.<sup>15</sup> From this perspective, the "inner truth and greatness" of National Socialism meant nothing less than that Germany was capable of initiating an historical epoch as great in its own way as the era established by the ancient Greeks. Heidegger's own aspiration was to become the spiritual leader of the Nazi revolution, which could then carry out its true mission of awakening German existence from its blindness to the transcendent being of entities. The sheer scale and awful consequences of Heidegger's political misjudgment (not to mention his postwar silence about the Holocaust) has led many people to conclude that his thought is little more than an apology for fascism.<sup>16</sup>

Though understanding the reasons for this conclusion, I cannot agree with it. Efforts must be made to identify those aspects of Heidegger's thought that led him to support the Nazi movement, but efforts must also be made to study aspects of his thought that retain their importance despite his own politically perverted application of them. The

political problems with his thought can be traced to two major factors: first, his linguistic racism and nationalism; second, his view that Western history involves ontological degeneration, which ends in the materialism and naturalism that are essential to all modern political ideologies. During the past decade, I have looked for a way of understanding human existence that, on the one hand, avoids nationalism and racism, but that retains what is valid about Heidegger's idea of the transcendent dimension of human existence and nature; and, on the other hand, affirms the progressive dimension of modernity, but that acknowledges its destructive attitude toward the natural world and its dissociative attitude toward the human body, emotions, and the female. I have found that Ken Wilber's writings accomplishes much of this.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, Wilber provides a more satisfying account of the divine than does Heidegger.

#### The Wilber Connection

I read Ken Wilber's remarkable book, Up From Eden: A Transpersonal View of Human Evolution, in the early 1980s, when I was still seeing the world through the Heideggerian lens.<sup>18</sup> The book was important to me for at least three reasons. First, it demonstrated that the transcendent dimension of human existence could be explained not only in Heidegger's terms, but also in terms that were consistent with the "perennial wisdom," defined in part as the esoteric dimension of the great religious traditions, about which Heidegger had little positive to say after about 1930. Second, the book showed me a way to reconcile my critical view of modernity (as causing so much ecological destruction) with my positive view of modernity (as promoting emancipation from ignorance, poverty, and political oppression). Finally, in contrast to Heidegger's lack of interest in cosmology and his denial that human history is an evolutionary process by which humankind is actualizing some hidden potential, Wilber's book offered a teleological view of the development of consciousness, a view that took into account both neo-Hegelianism and modern cosmology.

In several other books, but especially in his recent work, Sex, Ecology, Spirituality: The Spirit of Evolution, moreover, Wilber acknowledges the problematic and destructive character of modernity's treatment of nature. He maintains, however, that the solution to such treatment lies not in returning to a pre-modern attitudes and beliefs, including neo-paganism, but instead in consolidating the positive gains of modernity and subsequently moving beyond its limits.<sup>19</sup> Like Heidegger, Wilber holds that human existence involves a transcendent dimension that enables people to be free and self-conscious, and thus to encounter entities as entities. As a neo-Hegelian, however, and thus unlike Heidegger, Wilber reads human history as a broadly progressive process which moves from prepersonal to personal and eventually to transpersonal modes of awareness. The transpersonal means the "personal plus," i.e., states of consciousness that include the personal or egoic, but go beyond the limitations of such consciousness, including its strong attachment to its own perspective on matters. Wilber regards thinkers like Hegel as exhibiting a mode of awareness that synthesizes various perspectives that may otherwise seem contradictory. Such a perspectival "vision-logic," according to Wilber, opens the way for genuinely transpersonal modes of awareness.

Wilber maintains that modernity's democratic ideals and institutions do not represent a decline from some earlier and preferable condition, but express and help to consolidate the personal mode of consciousness, which Wilber regards as superior to the prepersonal mode. In the prepersonal mode, people are less capable of distinguishing themselves either from their tribe or from the natural environment. Some followers of Earth-based religions praise prepersonal existence as being "closer to nature," especially when contrasted with modernity's abstract, complex, dualistic, and anthropocentric egoic consciousness. Wilber argues, however, that if neo-pagans have nostalgia for the prepersonal past, they are misguided. Those who yearn to return either to the natural womb or to prepersonal social relations not only promote regressive attitudes that fail to understand human consciousness and its teleological trajectory, but also refuse to assume

the moral and historical responsibility that belongs to beings who are self-conscious, historical, and thus capable of being aware of the transcendent dimension of things.

Wilber warns against committing the pre/trans fallacy, which involves confusing prepersonal states with transpersonal states.<sup>20</sup> The pre/trans fallacy involves thinking that dualism in all its unhappy manifestations, including the dualism between humanity and nature, can be overcome by returning to the state of innocence characteristic of infancy, that is, by returning to Eden. Wilber maintains, however, that far from being the solution to the problem of dualism, returning to the womb/infancy/Eden (that is, to prepersonal existence) amounts to an error that is fatal psychologically and socially, no matter how attractive such a return might otherwise seem. Wilber encourages people not to regress, but instead to progress toward more integrated states of awareness that embrace what is valid about the prepersonal and personal levels of awareness, even while moving beyond their limitations. The provocative title of his book, Up from Eden, emphasizes that the development of self-conscious in the Garden of Eden was a fall "upward," even though it led to expulsion from the state of infantile innocence. Spiritual development involves an evolutionary process that brings an end to infantile bliss, leads one into the increasingly anxious and alienated states of individual personhood, and finally guides one toward transpersonal states that integrate at a higher level the things that were separated in personal states of consciousness.

By criticizing "retro-romantic" or neo-pagan longings for an idyllic prepersonal way of life, and by emphasizing the progressive evolution of consciousness--a development that must be supported by appropriate improvements in material, social, political, and cultural arrangements--, Wilber might seem to be just another modernist who spurns the supposedly apocalyptic fantasies of environmentalists. In fact, however, unlike many proponents of modernity, he agrees that there is an ecological crisis, which is the leading symptom of modernity's self-destructive effort to dominate the body, emotions, the female, and "nature" in general. In Up From Eden, Wilber maintains that the ecological crisis results from two interrelated trends of human evolution, especially as it has occurred in the West. First, in

the process of achieving a personal or individuated state of consciousness, modern Western "man" increasingly dissociated himself from everything that he associated with the previous (thus "lower") stage of consciousness, i.e., nature, body, female, emotion. But, such dissociation is not a necessary consequence of achieving individuation, because a person can learn to differentiate himself/herself from the body, emotions, and nature, without dissociating himself/herself from them. Second, the process of individuation brings with it an increasing sense of mortality, which gives rise to ever more intense death anxiety. To some extent, Wilber concludes, the Western project of "dominating" nature is a manifestation of a culture-wide denial of death: by controlling nature, Western man proposes to overcome mortality.

In Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, an enormous and complex work that cannot be summarized here, Wilber continues to affirm that there is an ecological crisis, but de-emphasizes the role played by death anxiety in the modern subject's assault on nature.<sup>21</sup> Instead, he takes a somewhat different approach to explaining modernity's destructive treatment of nature. This approach leads to a conclusion that has interesting parallels with how Heidegger, in the 1940s, criticized the "historical reality" of National Socialism. Just as Heidegger maintained that Nazis enamored of nature adhered to their own version of modernity's metaphysical naturalism, so too Wilber concludes that "retro-romantics adhere to their own version of modernity's metaphysical naturalism, the Great Mechanical World-System, the "web of life" of which humankind is but a strand. Other critics have noted that radical environmentalists often appeal to ecological science to support their views, even while otherwise condemning modern science for regarding nature as an object to be controlled and exploited.<sup>22</sup> Wilber, however, goes on to argue that most "retro-romantics" (including followers of Earth-based religions) and modernists alike share a one-dimensional ontology, according to which the cosmos is composed of complex material processes. (Arguably, however, neo-pagan divinities are not reducible to a one-dimensional materialism, though they are usually immanent in the cosmos, not transcendent of it.) In this respect, too,

Wilber agrees with Heidegger's contention that National Socialism was metaphysically "the same" as other modern political ideologies that adhere to a materialistic ontology, which is incapable of recognizing the domains that transcend the physical and the organic. Wilber differs from Heidegger, however, in affirming that modernity achieved many of the social and political goals conducive to the development of personal consciousness, which is itself the precondition for moving to a more integrated, transpersonal level of consciousness. For Wilber, National Socialism differed from liberal democracies both by repudiating the ideals and constitutional guarantees of individual liberty, and by denying that Western history involves an advance over earlier periods of human history.

Wilber's progressive reading of natural evolution and human history leads to another important disagreement with Heidegger. We recall that Wilber and Heidegger concur that human existence involves a transcendent dimension ignored by modern materialism. To some version of such materialism most moderns adhere, whether they be liberal democrats, communists, socialists, fascists, or most kinds of radical environmentalists. But liberals, communists, and socialists all warn against regressing to premodern forms of social organization, while Nazis celebrate tribal forms of organization in which a homogeneous "folk" celebrate their blood-ties with the sacred landscape. Liberals, socialists, and communists (at least in principle) affirm that modernity has emancipatory aims that are important enough to justify the loss of tribal forms of social organization. In the 1930s, however, Heidegger favored overthrowing democratic principles and establishing an authoritarian regime, even though he criticized those Nazis who described this process as the renewal of Aryan paganism. For Heidegger, democracy had to be pushed aside in order to make possible the recovery of something truly primordial: not ancient blood ties, but instead the German relation with being.

Some proponents of Earth-based religiosity, like many other people faced with the trials and tribulations of modern life, yearn for a simplified tribal life in closer proximity to the land. Wilber, however, cautions against giving in to such yearnings, since doing so

would encourage the regression to prepersonal modes of awareness and the rise of corresponding authoritarian social structures that would undermine the positive achievements of modernity, including individuated personhood and constitutional democracy. Heidegger was anti-modern in being anti-democratic and in denying a developmental view of history; moreover, he was neo-pagan in rejecting the Biblical tradition and in calling for the arrival of new gods to generate a new world to replace the non-world of technological modernity. Nevertheless, in calling for the Germans to repeat ancient Greece's generation of a world, he was asking them to prepare for a new encounter with the transcendent, i.e., with the being of entities that transcends even the gods.

Some Earth-based religionists might criticize Heidegger's view of the transcendent, just as some deep ecologists criticize his infatuation with the Greeks, whose anthropocentrism and mind-body dualism helped to give rise to the ecological crisis. From Wilber's perspective, however, Heidegger's view of the Greeks had the virtue of affirming that they were in touch with the transcendent domain, though he meant by the transcendent is not the Absolute, which Wilber maintains is celebrated under various names by most of the world's great spiritual traditions, with the exception of wholly immanentistic traditions. Many followers of Earth-based religions would regard Heidegger's quasi-transcendentalism as problematic, because it has too much in common with traditional transcendentalism, which so often promotes the contempt for nature that has helped to justify modernity's ecologically destructive practices.

If Heidegger and Wilber disagree about the nature of the transcendent, they also differ with regard to the self-understanding of modern humankind. Heidegger often writes that humankind elevates itself to the status of a titanic subject that regards everything as an object for domination. Ostensibly, this virtual self-deification of the human subject resulted from loss of contact with the transcendent domain on which human existence depends. Forgetting that the human is not a "thing" at all, but rather the historical-temporal nothingness or openness in which things can first reveal themselves and thus "be," modern

humankind conceives of itself as one thing among others: a clever animal. Seeking to deny its own mortality and finitude, the clever animal uses rationality as the instrument both for guaranteeing its survival, and also for taking total possession of the planet and the universe beyond.

Although Wilber could agree with much of this explanation, in Sex, Ecology, Spirituality he adopts a rather different approach to understanding the modern human subject and its world-conquering ambitions. Wilber suggests that the apparent human arrogance which leads to an assault on nature is itself the symptom of moderns who seek to compensate for the realization that the Great World System postulated by natural science (and adopted in various ways by most modernists, environmentalists, and many Earth-based religionists) has no place for the human subject. As Nietzsche remarks in The Genealogy of Morals, “Since Copernicus, man seems to have got himself on an inclined plane--now he is slipping faster and faster away from the center into--what? into nothingness? into a ‘penetrating sense of his nothingness’?”<sup>23</sup> By unleashing the world-shaping power of his rationality, Western "man" desperately attempts to demonstrate that he is not nothing, that he does exist, despite not having any place in the world system described by the very same modern science that makes possible his efforts to control nature.

On the basis of the foregoing analysis, Wilber would contend that the ecological crisis and the crisis of modern nihilism can be solved only by re-establishing a place for subjectivity in the cosmos. Without acknowledging his own transcendent subjectivity, Western man will continue trying to "prove" himself through ever more extravagant "conquests" that may prove fatal to the human species and very damaging other life forms. To be sure, not all Western men, much less all Western people, exhibit the aggressiveness, arrogance, and acquisitiveness of those who run modern corporations and governments, but perhaps they feel most acutely the absence of their own significance and thus particularly strive to demonstrate it by being “successful,” even if this involves undermining the biosphere on which human life depends.

Many Earth-based religionists, by way of contrast, maintain that by affirming their allegedly transcendent subjectivity, Westerners would simply reinstall the humanity-nature dualism established by Greek philosophers and Christians many centuries ago. Instead, modern people must adopt a more humble attitude and acknowledge that they are merely one strand among many in the great web of life. In poetry favored by some deep ecologists, Robinson Jeffers identifies himself with the “divine nature of things,” where “divine” is understood as the great organism or the organic whole.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, Wiccan author Starhawk writes that

spirit, sacred, Goddess, God--whatever you want to call it--is not found outside the world somewhere--it's in the world; it is the world, and it is us. Our goal is not to get off the wheel of birth nor to be saved from something. Our deepest experiences are experiences of connection with the Earth and with the world.<sup>25</sup>

Some ecofeminists, such as Charlene Spretnak, hold that a Goddess-oriented spirituality does not have to be wholly immanentistic, but can also be transcendent in conceiving of the divine as “the sacred whole, or the infinite complexity of the universe.”<sup>26</sup> This “infinite complexity” may mean much the same as the great world-system, which for Wilber does not involve the transcendent dimension. Elsewhere, however, Spretnak speaks of the Divine in a way that seems to include the transcendent dimension. Like Wilber, moreover, Spretnak believes that the ecological crisis is in part the consequence of the “loss of meaning” of modern life, including the loss of subjectivity and interiority. Wilber makes clear, however, that portraying humans as simply one strand in the cosmic web or as a function in the great cosmic-system does nothing to solve this crisis of meaning, since naturalistic science already portrays humankind in this way. This naturalistic self-interpretation has proven to be unsatisfying to many people, including--if their behavior is

any indication--the aggressive industrialists and politicians who are often held responsible for causing so much environmental damage.

Wilber is not alone in pointing out that many early modern people began turning their eyes away from Heaven and toward the Earth, when they concluded that modern science might enable them to control their destiny by mastering the forces of nature. Renouncing the aspirations of those ascending to the transcendent world beyond, moderns increasingly chose the path of descending to the material plane. Concluding that only the material world exists enabled them not only to liberate themselves from the political constraints of otherworldly religions, but also enabled them to focus all available energy on controlling the material world in order to improve human well being. Anyone familiar with the hunger, disease, poverty, ignorance, and sectarian violence in early modern Europe can appreciate the enthusiasm with which so many intelligent people greeted the emancipatory projects of modernity. Material abundance, military power, and (relatively) democratic institutions alone, however, have not been able to satiate the human desire for something non-material, i.e., for the transcendent.

Wilber contends that many followers of Earth-based spirituality have also renounced the path of Ascent in favor of the path of Descent, though for a somewhat different reason. They believe that an otherworldly orientation creates a binary opposition in which the immaterial soul is regarded as superior to the material body. Ensouled "man" thereby justifies his domineering treatment of body, woman, and nature. Despite having some validity, this argument runs into difficulty when one takes into account the increasing agnosticism and atheism of modern elites who controlled science, industry, banking, and technology. Far from being otherworldly, they were becoming heavily invested in materialistic ideology. One might retort that they were motivated by the Protestant work ethic, but this approach does not satisfactorily address the fact that modernists are materialists, not transcendentalists. By adopting their own version of modern science's materialistic world system, many radical environmentalists with neo-pagan leanings end up

in partial metaphysical agreement with modernists. According to Wilber, however, if the path of Ascent is denied and if the transcendent dimension is rejected, the only direction left for a materialistic people is ever greater consumption of material goods (an infinite “ahead”), which can never satisfy the yearning for the non-material.

As a non-dualist, Wilber maintains that the divine is fully present in each phenomenon, but that the divine cannot be exhausted by any such phenomenon. Transcendent subjectivity is neither a human product nor a possession, but rather the emergence of a divine possibility that has been moving toward self-actualization in cosmic history. Humans go astray, though understandably and perhaps unavoidably, by thinking that their own egos are identical with transcendent subjectivity, i.e., the mortal ego is God incarnate. For moderns who have renounced the transcendent dimension, the mortal ego must strut about as what Freud called the "prosthetic god," decked out with mechanical equipment that extend ordinary human capacities. For such a god, there is no genuine transcendence, only ever greater material power. This desperate god, ignorant of its relationship to the transcendent divine, and yet dissociated from body, nature, emotions, and the female, attempts to conquer the world, but risks destroying the conditions needed for human life.

Reconciling corporeality with transcendent subjectivity has always been difficult for human beings, who are always tempted to renounce such subjectivity in favor of a view of humankind and divine that are "closer to nature." If Wilber is right, however, only an evolution of transpersonal consciousness will enable humankind to reintegrate that which has been dissociated--body, female, emotions, nature--in the development of personal consciousness. And transpersonal consciousness involves the recovery of the forgotten transcendent dimension. Hence, for Wilber, efforts of Earth-based spiritualists to revivify pagan religions and tribal rituals are misguided, especially when such efforts take place within the context of a materialist ("flatland") ontology. Using such rituals to encourage people to come closer to nature, while defining nature as the "web of life" will not only fail

to satisfy the widespread human yearning for authentic transcendence, but may also encourage highly problematic regressive tendencies in the psychological and social domains. A more satisfactory path, in Wilber's view and in my own, calls for the reconciliation of Ascent and Descent, transcendence and immanent, spiritual and material.

In my opinion, Wilber achieves a great deal in his critical analysis of modernity, Earth-based religiosity, and the ecological crisis. He manages to include much of what is worthwhile in Heidegger's views about the transcendent domain, while discarding the anti-modernist sentiments that led Heidegger into such political trouble. Moreover, Wilber's view of the transcendent includes important aspects of spiritual traditions that Heidegger--as a modernist despite himself--either rejected or adopted only in limited ways. Also, Wilber's neo-Hegelian evolutionary cosmology takes into account the fact that contemporary science seems to be pointing toward a recovery of the transcendent, though about all this I have only been able to comment only in passing. Wilber's contention that modernists and radical environmentalists alike adopted the materialistic world-system of an earlier phase of modern science, and that this world-system deprives many humans of a satisfactory sense of personal and group significance, allows him to conclude that nothing good will come of well-meaning efforts to "re-sacralize" nature, unless the transcendent dimension of nature, humankind, and the divine is first rediscovered and reaffirmed.

### Critical Appraisal of Wilber's Approach

Wilber's work has attracted a number of criticisms, not least because of its feisty and sometimes acerbic style.<sup>27</sup> Here, I address three major complaints. The first concerns his contention that there is an "evolution" of consciousness. Critics charge that this contention justifies a "totalizing" narrative that privileges the very same Western institutions that have justified destruction of natural areas and oppression of indigenous peoples. The second complaint concerns a conclusion that Wilber draws from his notion of consciousness evolution: contemporary efforts to regain contact with living nature and the

divine by exploring shamanic practices and reviving paganism are regressive and dangerous. Wilber draws this conclusion, even though he himself once suggested that shamans were the first to achieve transpersonal awareness. The third complaint is that Wilber's ontology does not provide a place for divinities, demons, angels, souls, and spirits, at least some of which included not only in neo-pagan cosmology, but also in the cosmology of most major religions. To the extent that such beings transcend the material plane, and to the extent that neo-pagans acknowledge and worship some of these beings, it would seem that there is a transcendent dimension to neo-paganism. Hence, neo-pagans cannot easily be understood as agreeing with moderns that the Great World System is no more than complex material processes.

Gus diZerega, a political theorist who seeks to synthesize neo-pagan spirituality with Hayekian evolutionary liberalism, has offered the most probing ecologically-oriented critique of Wilber's evolutionary transpersonalism.<sup>28</sup> DiZerega's critique is especially important in view of the fact that, like Wilber, he celebrates the positive social achievements of modernity and affirms that the divine involves immanence and transcendence, but unlike Wilber he is more receptive to the possibility that neo-pagan rituals and shamanic practices may involve authentic and non-regressive encounters with the divine. DiZerega, a Wiccan elder who studies and practices shamanism, maintains that Wilber is wrong to characterize virtually all neo-pagans (and, by association, deep ecologists and ecofeminists) as promoting an immanentistic spirituality without any appreciation for or recognition of the transcendent dimension. The issue at hand involves a question that can only be decided by empirical research, which I am only beginning to undertake: What are the doctrines and beliefs of contemporary neo-pagans?

In his essay, "Nature Religion and the Modern World," di Zerega diagnoses the problem of modernity in terms reminiscent of Wilber's own diagnosis: "The modern world's spiritual crisis is not about misery but meaninglessness.... What has taken [the place of salvation religions] is a belief in progress towards a secular paradise promising

unending material consumption.”<sup>29</sup> According to diZerega (and many other people) consumerism is a form of idolatry that confuses having things with being in appropriate relation to the divine, which alone can provide meaning to human life. Regarding the immanent-transcendent issue, diZerega points out that all English traditional covens begin with the following blessing called “The Dryghton”:

In the name of Dryghton, the ancient Providence  
Which was from the beginning and is for all eternity  
male and female, all-powerful, changeless, eternal.  
  
In the name of Our Lady of the Moon  
and the Lord of Death and Resurrection,  
  
In the names of the Mighty Ones of the four quarters,  
The Kings of the Elements:  
  
Blessed Be this place and this time and they who are with us.<sup>30</sup>

If Dryghton names a transcendent divine who is also present in nature, diZerega’s form of neo-paganism would be more like pantheism than pantheism, although diZerega himself concedes that many neo-pagans are pantheistic.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, in answer to the charge that neo-paganism encourages personal or social regression, diZerega contends that neo-pagan revival proves attractive to well-educated, financially secure, and technologically proficient people who cannot find satisfaction with mainstream religions, not least because such religions have still not embraced a “creation-centered” spirituality, in a version that can be reconciled with traditional “salvation-oriented” spirituality.<sup>32</sup> In certain natural settings and in connection with rituals designed to invoke divinities, many neo-pagans report experiencing a powerful divine presence. Such presences are often understood to be important but intermediary divinities, not the transcendent source of all phenomena. Wilber’s ontology, however, does not seem able (or willing) adequately to accommodate the spiritual entities--gods and goddesses, angels and demons--that are so often encountered by

spiritual adepts in various traditions. Moreover, in his interpretation of Plotinus, whom Wilber regards as the greatest Western exemplar of the non-dual vision that he himself promotes, Wilber tends to overlook passages in which Plotinus refers to gods and spirits.

Curiously, insofar as Plotinus was the last great pagan philosopher, Wilber himself may be viewed as a neo-pagan insofar as he celebrates Plotinus as the great Western representative of the non-dualism that Wilber himself promotes. Christian theologians, despite their appreciation for Plotinus' spiritual insight, must finally reject his view that Creation "emanates" from the Divine One, since emanationism does not properly address the doctrine of divine transcendence, nor does it take into account the Biblical doctrine according to which God chose to create the world. Christian panentheism, then, would have to acknowledge that God is a divine Person who chose to generate Creation, and that Creation is not itself divine, though it is a manifestation of divine goodness. What distinguishes Wilber's neo-Platonism from more typical neo-paganism, however, is his resolute insistence that the Absolute radically transcends all phenomena, even though It is also present in them.

For reasons mentioned above, many neo-pagans are wary of Wilber's notion of the evolution of consciousness, but some practitioners are willing to take this notion seriously, so long as Wilber himself is willing to consider the possibility that Wicca and shamanism are authentic efforts to "recover" important dimensions of sacred experience that were unnecessarily repressed by the emergence of salvation religions. Is it possible that before taking a further step in the evolution of consciousness, Western humankind needs to "loop back" to prior stages in order to integrate what has been forgotten? This is an important question, to which I have no ready answer. A related question is worth considering: Given that mainstream religions are losing their strength in the Western world, and given that they have helped contribute to problematic attitudes toward Creation or nature, is it not appropriate and inevitable that, at this historical juncture, many spiritually-thirsty Westerners would be exploring non-Western and neo-pagan alternatives to Christianity and Judaism?

That Wilber would answer this question affirmatively is evidenced by his own exploration of various non-Western and neo-pagan traditions. In view of his concerns about the possibility of social and psychological regression (re: the pre/trans fallacy), however, he warns that exploration must constantly be on the lookout for the narcissistic temptation of moving toward prepersonal states. Yet, he must also resist those critics who, failing to distinguish between the transpersonal and the perpersonal, conclude that Wilber's own pursuit of spiritual non-dualism amounts to a regression, a flight from reason. In Up From Eden, we read:

[T]he New Age critics [i.e., proponents] often tend to confuse pre-egoic and trans-egoic and thus end up championing not only truly transpersonal endeavors, which is admirable, but also the most grossly pre-egoic movements, which is perfectly disastrous. And the orthodox critics, such as Christopher Lasch and Peter Martin, champion the same confusion, but in a reverse way: after presenting excellent analyses of the widespread present-day pre-egoic trends toward narcissistic absorption, they ruin their whole presentations by lumping transpersonal endeavors with pre-personal pursuits. One is tempted to say, "A plague on both their houses," except that both are partially correct, and their half-truths need to be brought together in a comprehensive view.<sup>33</sup>

I share Wilber's concerns about the possibility that some explorations of neo-paganism might encourage regression to pre-personal states, precisely at a moment when it is appropriate to encourage responsible personhood, involving mutual exchange of recognition and respect. I am more open than is Wilber, however, to the possibility that exploring neo-paganism and non-Western traditions may contribute to the overall goal of the development both of more integrated modes of consciousness and of the corresponding

social institutions. Moreover, despite my own concerns about ecofascism, I concede that experimenting with neo-paganism in the context of a traditionally liberal society does not pose the same kind of threat posed by the anti-Semitic, völkisch, immanentistic religion of nature promoted by National Socialists in the context of a traditionally illiberal society that, faced with an enormous political and economic crisis, also had to contend with militant nationalism and anti-Semitism. Like Wilber, however, I also believe that contemporary neo-pagans and other Earth-based spiritualists must remember that neo-paganism has been used for destructive political purposes in our century. For many Nazis, socially reactionary policies based on Nazi neo-paganism were perfectly compatible with high-tech industry and weaponry. High educational attainments and favorable attitudes toward technology, then, are by no means a guarantee that people will not succumb to the appeal of a nature-oriented religious movement that promises to relieve them of the onerous moral responsibilities taken for granted by salvation-religions, which emphasize that humans cannot and should not follow the “laws of nature.” As self-conscious historical agents who are both embraced by nature and transcend it, humans are destined to play a different role on this planet than animals lacking such historical self-consciousness.

In this century, many people have been attracted to the totalitarian movements because they promise to relieve people of the burden imposed by individual moral responsibility. Nazi “anti-progressivism” and Soviet “progressivism” both proved to authoritarian regimes that were completely opposed to Enlightenment modernity’s celebration and defense of the inalienable rights of persons. Insofar as the modern concept of the person finds its roots in Christianity, which emphasizes that only humans were made in the image of the transcendent God; and insofar as the modern person can and must act in ways that irrevocably shape linear history, a concept that is also rooted in the Biblical faiths, one can well understand why modern liberals are even more suspicious of neo-paganism than they are of Christianity: arguably, neo-paganism undermines the notion of human specialness and discards the idea that history is progressive. Even if conceding all this,

however, neo-pagans could reply that it was the Renaissance revival of classical paganism that eventually broke the power of the Church dogmatism, opened the way for the renewal of scientific investigation, reaffirmed the worth of individuals in their earthly lives, and helped to pave the way for modern democracies.

Agnostic liberal humanists, moreover, would contest Wilber's notion that cosmic and human history are somehow the manifestation or actualization of a Divine potential. Although insisting that the Divine is somehow present in history, Wilber makes the following concession to the liberal humanist: the greatest revolution possible today would be the global institutionalization and consolidation of the modern ideal of the rights of persons. According to Wilber, were the great majority of people to act as free adults, willingly acknowledging the personhood, rights, and responsibilities of everyone else, this would constitute a major step toward solving the ecological crisis, much of which is explicable in terms of militarism, nationalism, and inhumane/illegal economic practices. The next step, however, would be the emergence of transpersonal modes of being, in which the needed work of reintegration could begin taking place. Since both diZerega and Wilber are both respecters of persons, and since both are working to accomplish the necessary reintegration, though in somewhat different ways, I regret that they often seem to talk past one another.

Although I appreciate the motivation behind and force of many of the criticisms made of Wilber's work, I remain convinced that he has made an enormous contribution to the contemporary discussion of the divine, nature, and humanity. Wilber makes clear that modernity's crisis of meaning cannot be solved neither by a spasm of life-denying transcendentalism and otherworldly yearning, nor by a renewal of immanentistic nature-religiosity, but rather by developing a multi-dimensional, non-dual ontology that allows room for experiencing the transcendental and subjective domains that have for so long been neglected. Human awareness makes possible discernment of dimensions hidden to the view of the most far-seeing bird and unnoticeable by even the most sharp-nosed hound. Such

discernment enables people to realize that material nature, however incredible its beauty, organization, and complexity may be, is only one manifestation of a divine with infinite dimensions. A truly deep spirituality acknowledges the absolute depth dimension of reality, a depth dimension certainly not discernible in world-system of modern materialism (“the web of life”), and not adequately discernible in the cosmic world-soul of neo-paganism.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In this essay, whenever I use the term “man” or “man’s,” I do so to emphasize that I have in mind human males under patriarchy, not the human species in general.

<sup>2</sup> See Bron Taylor, “Resacralizing Earth: Pagan Environmentalism and the Restoration of Turtle Island,” in American Sacred Space, ed. David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); Devall, “How Radical and How Deep the Resistance” (a review of Bron Taylor, ed., Ecological Resistance Movements [Albany: SUNY Press, 1995]), The Trumpeter, Vol. 12, No. 4 (Fall, 1995), 201-203; Taylor, “Ecological Resistance Movements: Not Always Deep but if Deep, Religious: Reply to Devall,” The Trumpeter, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Spring, 1996), 98-103; Devall, “Response to Bron Taylor’s Criticisms of my Review of Ecological Resistance Movements,” The Trumpeter, Vol. 13, No. 3 (Summer, 1996), 147-150. Bron Taylor has recently written another insightful essay, “Earth and Nature-Based Spirituality: From Radical Environmentalism to Scientific Paganism,” unpublished, 1988.

<sup>3</sup> Michael E. Zimmerman, “Ecofascism: A Threat to American Environmentalism?” in The Ecological Community, ed. Roger S. Gottlieb (New York: Routledge, 1996).

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Molar, The Pagan Temptation (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 125.

<sup>5</sup> See Robert Pois, National Socialism and the Religion of Nature (London and Sydney: Croom Helm Publishers, 1986). On the other hand, James M. Rhodes, in The Hitler Movement (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1980), interprets National Socialism not as an instance of perverted neo-paganism, but rather as the latest outbreak of a millenarian, apocalyptic, Gnostic revolution, influenced by St. John’s Book of Revelation and the writings of Joachim di Fiore.

In “Ruralism or Environmentalism?” Environmental Values, 5 (1996), 47-58, Avner de-Shalit distinguishes between a nostalgic, anti-modernist, right-wing that he describes as “ruralism,” and a future-oriented, progressive, ecologically-informed, anti-species-istic

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movement that he calls “environmentalism.” In de-Shalit’s view, National Socialism-- especially as described by Anna Bramwell in Ecology in the 20th Century (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989)--was a variety of ruralism, not of environmentalism proper. Although there is some truth to de-Shalit’s position, the situation is more complex than he proposes. For example, some National Socialist ideologues condemned anthropocentrism for failing to understanding that humans are only one aspect of the great system of life. Moreover, a number of contemporary environmentalists are simultaneously well-informed about ecological science and are anti-anthropocentric, but share elements of ruralism. Today’s environmentalists want to portray their movement as progressive, Thanks to Andrew Light for bringing this essay to my attention.

<sup>6</sup>Zimmerman, “Ecofascism: A Threat to American Environmentalism?”

<sup>7</sup> See Wendell Berry, The Unsettling of America (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1977) and The Gift of Good Land (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1981).

<sup>8</sup> Berlin: Elefant Press, 1996. See also Janet Biehl and Peter Staudenmaier, Ecofascism: Lessons from the German Experience (San Francisco: AK Press, 1995).

<sup>9</sup> Rosemary Radford Ruether, Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing (HarperSanFrancisco, 1992).

<sup>10</sup> See Michael E. Zimmerman, Heidegger’s Confrontation with Modernity (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

<sup>11</sup> Cited in Guido Schneeberger, Nachlese zu Heidegger (Bern: Buchdruckerei AG. 1962), p. 150.

<sup>12</sup> See Michael E. Zimmerman, “Ontical Craving vs. Ontological Desire,” in From Phenomenology to Thought, Errancy, and Desire, ed. Babette E. Babich (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1995), 501-523.

<sup>13</sup> Jeffrey Herf, Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984). It is difficult to estimate the importance of this book.

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<sup>14</sup> See Steven Vogel, “Habermas and the Ethics of Nature,” in Gottlieb, The Ecological Community, 175-192, for a helpful articulation of the theme that “nature” is always encountered within a social world. See also, Vogel, Against Nature: The Concept of Nature in Critical Theory (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996).

<sup>15</sup> Jacques Derrida, De l’esprit: Heidegger et la question (Paris: Editions Gallilé, 1987), 119.

<sup>16</sup> See Alan Milchman and Alan Rosenberg, eds., Martin Heidegger and the Holocaust (Humanities Press, 1994). On Heidegger's relationship with National Socialism, see my essay, “The Thorn in Heidegger's Side: The Question of National Socialism,” The Philosophical Forum, Vol. XX, No. 4 (Summer, 1989), 326-365.

<sup>17</sup> For an earlier assessment of Wilber’s views on the ecological crisis, see my essay “A Transpersonal Diagnosis of the Ecological Crisis,” ReVision, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Spring, 1996), 38-48.

<sup>18</sup> Ken Wilber, Up From Eden (Boulder: Shambhala, 1981).

<sup>19</sup> Ken Wilber, Sex, Ecology, and Spirituality (Boston: Shambhala, 1995). See also Wilber, A Brief History of Everything (Boston: Shambhala, 1996).

<sup>20</sup> See Wilber, “The Pre/Trans Fallacy,” in Eye to Eye: The Quest for the New Paradigm (Boston: Shambhala, 1996), 198-243. In his first book, No Boundary (Boulder: Shambhala, 1979), Wilber himself commits this fallacy, by suggesting that the non-dual awareness to which so many spiritual seekers aspire is achieved by reuniting with the ground from which all things emerge.

<sup>21</sup> Fortunately, Roger Walsh has provided an excellent summary of Sex, Ecology, Spirituality in his essay, “Developmental and Evolutionary Synthesis in the Recent Writings of Ken Wilber,” ReVision, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Spring, 1996), 9-24.

<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, many environmentalists criticize the mechanistic and abstract outlook of ecosystem ecology.

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<sup>23</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, The Genealogy of Morals, trans. Walter Kaufmann in Basic Writings of Nietzsche (New York: Modern Library, 1968), 591.

<sup>24</sup> Robinson Jeffers, as cited in George Sessions, “Spinoza and Jeffers on Man in Nature,” Inquiry, 20 (1977), 481-528. Cited material is from 512. For further discussion of Sessions and Jeffers, see Michael E. Zimmerman, Contesting Earth’s Future: Radical Ecology and Postmodernity (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 210-212.

<sup>25</sup> Starhawk, “Power, Authority, and Mystery: Ecofeminism and Earth-Based Spirituality,” in Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism, ed. Irene Diamond and Gloria Feman Orenstein (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1990), 73-86. Cited passage is on 73.

<sup>26</sup> Charlene Spretnak, States of Grace: The Recovery of Meaning in the Postmodern Age (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991), 136. For further discussion of this issue see Zimmerman, Contesting Earth’s Future, 233-275.

<sup>27</sup> See Ken Wilber and the Future of Transpersonal Inquiry: A Spectrum of Views, ed. Donald Rothberg and Sean M. Kelly, ReVision, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Spring, 1996); Vol. 19, No. 1 (Summer, 1996); Vol. 19, No. 2 (Fall, 1996). The ReVision articles have been published separately as Ken Wilber in Dialogue, ed. Rothberg and Kelly (Wheaton, Illinois: Quest Books, 1998). In The Eye of Spirit: An Integral Vision for a World Gone Slightly Mad (Boston: Shambhala, 1997), Wilber reprints his “reply to critics” from the third issue of the ReVision series, and adds a number of essays, including some that answer criticisms made elsewhere.

<sup>28</sup> Gus diZerega, “A Critique of Ken Wilber’s Account of Deep Ecology and Nature Religions,” The Trumpeter, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Spring, 1996), 52-71; diZerega, “Social Ecology, Deep Ecology, and Liberalism,” in Critical Review, Vol. 6, Nos. 2-3 (Spring-Summer, 1992), 305-370; diZerega, “Toward an Ecocentric Political Economy,” The Trumpeter, Vol. 13, No. 3 (Fall, 1996), 173-182; diZerega, “Deep Ecology and Liberalism:

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The Greener Implications of Evolutionary Liberal Theory,” The Review of Politics, Vol. 58, No. 4 (Fall, 1996), 699-734.

Along with D.H. Frew, diZerega has raised disturbing questions about Wilber’s scholarly practices in Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, including interpolating (without indication in the text) a sentence from Emerson’s Nature, and quoting a line from Plotinus without citing the source of the quotation. The problem here is that the quotation doesn’t square with the translation of the Enneads (by Inge) on which Wilber says that he relied in interpreting Plotinus. On these issues, see diZerega, “Accuracy, Honesty, Spirituality: A Response to Ken Wilber” (unpublished MS). Also see D.H. Frew, “The Whole and the Parts: Ken Wilber’s Treatment of Plotinus in Sex, Ecology, Spirituality” (Internet: alexandria@world.std.com). A copy of the entire exchange between Wilber and Frew can be obtained from Frew at: DHF3@aol.com. Wilber has indicated that he will acknowledge and correct these problems in Volume II of his Kosmology trilogy.

<sup>29</sup> Gus diZerega, “Nature Religion and the Modern World” (unpublished essay), 8.

<sup>30</sup> This prayer was shared with me by diZerega, who is a third degree Gardnerian Elder in the Wiccan tradition. Because this prayer has been made public, diZerega informs me that I can reprint it here. Personal communication, February 24, 1997.

<sup>31</sup> In an unpublished book manuscript, Pagans and Christians in the new Millenium, diZerega emphasizes even more strongly that neo-paganism acknowledges a transcendent dimension.

<sup>32</sup> On creation-centered spirituality, see Matthew Fox, The Coming of the Cosmic Christ (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988). Although appreciative of what Fox is trying to achieve, ecofeminist theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether has expressed concern that Fox does not adequately take into account the insights of the soteriological (and thus transcendent-oriented) message of Christianity.

<sup>33</sup> Wilber, Up From Eden, 327-328.

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<sup>34</sup> My thanks to Gus diZerega, Ken Wilber, and Bron Taylor for helpful suggestions that improved this essay.