

What Can Continental Philosophy Contribute to Environmentalism?

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Answering the question posed above is difficult for many reasons, not least of which is that both “continental philosophy” and “environmentalism” are notoriously complex. For the purposes of this essay, I define the former as recent European philosophy influenced by thinkers such as Hegel, Marx, and Nietzsche, and by movements such as phenomenology, the most environmentally-pertinent exponents of which were Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty.¹ Continental philosophy has played such a major role in shaping what is known as “postmodern theory” that I shall use the terms virtually interchangeably in what follows. I define “environmentalism” as the variegated twentieth century movement seeking to limit or even to halt human destruction of the natural environment, especially “wilderness,” and to limit or even to halt industrial pollution and other practices that threaten the health and well-being of human and non-human organisms. Of particular interest to readers of this essay is the theoretical aspect of environmentalism, i.e., environmental philosophy, which seeks to theorize, guide, and legitimate the practices and aims of environmentalism in its various forms.

Some noted continental philosophers, such as Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse, have criticized industrial modernity for causing undue destruction of the natural world, but many other leading continental philosophers have exhibited little interest in protecting “nature” in ways that would jive with environmentalism.² One reason for this is political. Environmentalism did not become a major movement in Germany until the 1970s, in part because of political suspicion related to National Socialism’s perverted use of “green” rhetoric (including the relation between pure blood and pure land, Blut und Boden) to justify its racist practices. Indeed, because of his affiliation with

National Socialism, Martin Heidegger's critique of the technological domination of nature has less standing than it might have had otherwise.³ These historical links between reactionary regimes and environmental concerns, however, do not suffice to explain why postwar left-wing and liberal democratic European politicians viewed nature either as a resource for human development or as a threat to humankind, not as an end in itself worthy of respect and protection.

The fact is that an exploitative view of nature is a hallmark of modernity. Left-wing and liberal moderns who are concerned about environmental problems maintain that protecting wildlife habitat and reducing environmental pollution require improvement of economic and political conditions throughout the world, especially in developing countries. In other words, moderns hold that existing socio-economic theory can generate practices, ranging from governmental regulation to free market environmentalism, that can significantly improve environmental conditions while enhancing human well-being.⁴ Many continental philosophers, even while sharply criticizing modernity for various reasons, remain modernists insofar as they focus their critical thinking on reducing oppression in the human world, while not taking into consideration humanity's unnecessarily destructive treatment of the non-human world.

Faced with relative lack of explicit concern about nature on the part of many continental thinkers, American commentators have taken two somewhat different approaches to showing that continental thought does have pertinence for theorizing and guiding environmentalism. The first approach, which has had mixed results, involves showing how the work of some leading thinker—such as Nietzsche, Merleau-Ponty, Foucault, or Heidegger—may be read as consistent with environmental practice and theory.⁵ The second approach applies major themes of contemporary continental philosophy or postmodern theory to environmental practice and theory.⁶ In what follows, I will examine both approaches, although I humbly acknowledge the impossibility of providing an adequate treatment of this complex topic in such a short space. Moreover, I acknowledge that a middle-aged, white, male, Western university professor must set

aside any pretensions to a comprehensive treatment of my subject matter. I hope at least that my remarks help to generate fruitful reflection and discussion.

Speaking of limitations imposed by perspective, I should like to note that writings by continental thinkers and postmodern theorists whose ideas may have pertinence to environmentalism are often so complex that they are inaccessible to most environmentalists. Even sympathetic professional commentators have difficulty in “applying” to environmental issues the daunting conceptual schemes at work in much of continental philosophy. Some continental theorists envision themselves as opening up new socio-cultural “imaginaries” and dismantling existing “territories” that are harmful to non-humans, but such concept-heavy practices offer meager perches for people without theoretical background.⁷ Of course, philosophers are supposed to make distinctions and raise questions that seem pointless to healthy common sense. The discussions found in the papers collected in this volume, however, may also be forbidding to those who lack our special training. The present essay is no exception, despite my effort to write clearly. Philosophers interested in improving the world, however, must also be able to share their insights in a way that non-specialists can understand.

If the work of a contemporary French or German philosopher does happen to affect environmental activism, this often occurs only indirectly, as when an American who studies continental philosophy also happens to have an interest in environmental activism. Years ago, for instance, some Earth First!ers seeking to preserve U.S. wilderness began using Heidegger’s notion of “letting things be.”⁸ This notion was made known to them by academics, including the present author, who had interests in deep ecology and connections with Earth First!ers.⁹ Other environmental activists, put off by Earth First!’s (erstwhile) focus on wilderness, and concerned instead about the consequences that industrial pollution and other eco-hazards were having on women, men, and their families, have been influenced by ecofeminists who have attempted to inform activism with ideas drawn from continental philosophy’s critique of Euro-theo-logophallo-androcentrism. Some types of ecofeminism are more compatible with continental

philosophy than is deep ecology, because the latter usually emphasizes anti-anthropocentrism and wilderness-protection, whereas the former emphasize the need to alter social structures and cultural formations so that humans can care for nature, while simultaneously utilizing it in socially beneficial and equitable ways. Some ecofeminists have embraced postmodern theory's general theme of valorizing "difference" as a way of affirming the worth of nature, women, non-white humans, emotions, and others that have been marginalized by being on the wrong side of modernity's binary dualisms.¹⁰ Other ecofeminists, however, have criticized white male postmodern theorists for sometimes undermining feminism, and white male environmentalists for focusing more on wilderness preservation than on social justice issues, including environmental racism.¹¹

Over emphasis on wilderness is hardly a problem for continental philosophers, who were typically raised in places that have not had any land resembling "wilderness" for centuries. Even those French thinkers who praised nature, including Rousseau and Lévi-Strauss, had in mind not wild nature (as in the Brazilian rain forest that made Lévi-Strauss uncomfortable), but instead the pastoral nature of the French countryside. Of course, many well-known contemporary French philosophers are far from being even pastoralists. Instead, they apparently regard "nature" as little more than the closely-cropped trees that line certain grand boulevards in Paris.

Contemporary American, Australian, and New Zealand environmental philosophers, in contrast, were raised in cultures significantly influenced by recent pioneer experience. The experience and conception of nature shared by descendants of colonists, then, differ from the experience and conception of nature shared by European contemporaries.

The approach taken by English-speaking eco-philosophers influenced by continental thought also differs from the approach taken by Anglo-American analytic eco-philosophers, who have typically sought to justify extending moral standing to non-human beings (animals, plants, ecosystems, mountains, rivers). Such moral extensionism draws upon the three major ethical traditions of the modern English-speaking world: natural rights, utilitarianism, and deontology.

This ethics-oriented approach inevitably tends to focus on individual (human or non-human) and becomes increasingly distorted as efforts are made to apply it to complex wholes such as ecosystems. The difficulties faced by French philosophers trying to understand Anglo-American environmental ethics are manifest in Luc Ferry's book, The New Ecological Order.¹² His criticisms of Anglo-American moral extensionism and radical environmentalism (including deep ecology and ecofeminism) reveal only a partial understanding of these varieties of environmental philosophy. Ferry himself favors an anthropocentric stance toward nature, but most contemporary French philosophers do not subscribe to the "anthropocentrism vs. anti-anthropocentrism" debate that is central to much of American environmental philosophy, whether the latter is influenced by continental or Anglo-American thought. Instead, as Kerry Whiteside has shown, French philosophers tend to conceive of environmental problems as components of larger social and political issues, with regard to which nature is not an independent variable or external totality so much as it is a complex social phenomenon, a human construct.¹³ Many environmentalists, of course, are put off by such a claim.

Some common ground between environmentalism and postmodern theory may be discerned in calls during recent decades for marginalized Others (humans or non-humans) to "resist" domination at the hands of social elites, who justify their privileged positions on the basis of essentialism, foundationalism, or appeal to ultimate origin. Although this approach may do some useful work, environmentalist theorists and practitioners often push it too far. Some environmentalists, for instance, purport to speak for a marginalized or threatened natural being e.g., the Bengal tiger, but without always appreciating the extent to which the tiger's "voice" is constituted by an unowned act of ventriloquism.¹⁴ That is, the environmentalists projects his or her voice or perspective into the jaguar, without fully acknowledging that alternative and conflicting voices could also be thus projected, including those of local people who have different attitudes toward large predators with whom they have to live. Other environmentalists deconstruct the alleged essentialism and foundationalism that legitimate domineering norms,

beliefs, and institutions, including those associated with liberal humanism and Marxism, which unapologetically exploit the natural world.

Peter Quigley has argued, however, that deconstruction of a governing norm or institution is often followed by an essentializing and valorizing of the norms and institutions of the allegedly marginalized Other. As an example, Quigley comments on Jim Cheney's essay, "Postmodern Environmental Ethics," according to which the "mythic language" of indigenous people provides a more direct or authentic revelation of "nature" than does the abstract language (e.g., science, economics, politics, social theory) used by modern elites to dominate human and non-human Others.¹⁵ Present in this claim, as both Quigley and Mick Smith have pointed out, are not only nostalgia for an allegedly innocent era in which humans dwelt harmoniously with nature., but also an inadequate understanding of the complex contours of modern thought.¹⁶ Politically reactionary potential is clearly discernible in total condemnations of modernity, which strike a chord among those moderns who resent the responsibilities involved in being historically self-conscious moral agents.¹⁷

Additionally, missing from Cheney's claim about mythic language is the recognition that all language and culture influence how both people and nature can appear.¹⁸ Quigley observes:

As is typical in gestures of resistance, even though Cheney correctly critiques the power structure, he attributes too much significance to language that is opposed to this particular manifestation of power. In sum, there is no need to privilege this language by unduly ascribing a superior reality to it. This localized language does not contain truth, but its existence and form testify to the power of dominant discourse. The texts of interest to Cheney have significance because of their usefulness to Cheney in relation to (totalizing) texts that he opposes.¹⁹

In recent years, the postmodern critique of domination has helped to inform the important and growing environmental justice movement.²⁰ That same critique, however, also involves in some cases a problematic critique of hierarchy. For instance, postmodern theorists who celebrate Nietzsche often conveniently ignore the extent to which he made rank-ordering central to his understanding of life, defined as the Will to Power. Some postmodern theorists admit that there are hierarchical structures in nature, at least, e.g., a cell is more complex than an atom, and an organism more complex than a cell. Other theorists, however, concerned about the oppressive effects of social hierarchy, commit a performative contradiction by condemning all hierarchy, including conceptual hierarchy, while simultaneously promoting their own position as preferable or superior to the one being criticized.²¹ Robert Frodeman argues that a related problem for anti-hierarchalists is providing a plausible account of social organization, without including some hierarchical schemes and some coercive practices.²² In social terms, it is important to distinguish between legitimate hierarchies and dominator hierarchies, but discarding hierarchy altogether is incoherent.²³

Many thinkers from a host of historical eras have conceived of the cosmos, including humankind, in hierarchical terms.²⁴ Drawing on Plotinus, Erich Jantsch, Sri Aurobindo, and many others, Ken Wilber has recently proposed that the cosmos be characterized by the following hierarchy, which goes from lower to higher (less comprehensive to most comprehensive): physiosphere (physical reality), biosphere (which includes but goes beyond the physiosphere), noosphere (which includes but transcends physiosphere and biosphere), and theosphere (which includes but transcends all spheres). Insofar as humankind embodies a new stage in terrestrial evolution, the noosphere, humans cannot be conceived as merely “part” of nature, like mountains, rivers, plants, and animals. Instead, humans in some sense embrace or include all of this, but transcend it by holding up a clearing in which things can not only show themselves as things, but can be transformed in extraordinary ways by human intervention.²⁵ Citing Habermas, Wilber

argues that human history itself is characterized by personal, social, and institutional development, from prehistorical tribal society to contemporary liberal democracies. Humans understand nature quite differently in these historical epochs, with modernity having the most exploitative view of all, because of its tendency to dissociate nature (and body, female, emotions) from mind rather than to differentiate between mind and nature.²⁶

Repudiating such hierarchical views, some environmentalists portray humankind as merely one of many branches on the vast evolutionary bush, no branch of which is in a privileged position with regard to any other branch.²⁷ Those who rely upon this image, however, tend to overlook the fact that it was fashioned by human beings, the only beings so far as we know that are capable of generating images and narratives about terrestrial and cosmic evolution.²⁸ Humanity's linguistic, cognitive, and practical capacities distinguish us in important ways from other living beings, despite our long-term evolutionary kinship with them. Humankind's exceptional capacities have led almost every culture to remark upon the strangeness, wonder, burden, and terror of being human. Many environmentalists, however, fear that acknowledging the disclosive, constitutive, and constructive powers of humankind will simply reaffirm the hierarchical position—anthropocentrism--that has long justified human domination of the non-human world. Recognizing that humankind's remarkable capacities distinguish us from other beings, however, does not justify reckless destruction of and violence against ecosystems, habitat, and individual organisms. In addition, developing a plausible evaluative scheme--for example, one that acknowledges greater worth on the part of beings with greater complexity--provides a basis for the difficult moral choices that humans, who must use non-human beings in order to live.²⁹

Continental philosophers influenced by Hegel and Marx (and few have not been!) emphasize the difference between nature and history. Humankind alone can develop an explicit culture, the norms and practices of which transcend the natural domain. Hegel and Marx anticipated postmodern theory by emphasizing that nature is not adequately conceivable as an

independently existing Other, but instead appears only in accordance with the human practices that constitute the world. Hence, those who attempt to justify a given practice or institution by calling it “natural” fail to understand that humankind is free to devise practices and institutions that do not accord with so-called natural practices or principles of organization. Some American environmental philosophers do not agree with this perspective, in part because they share natural science’s realistic conception of nature, in part because they grew up in a culture whose founders defined themselves in terms of their relation with wilderness, understood as nature unmodified by humankind,³⁰ and in part because they believe that nature’s otherness transcends the socio-linguistic categories that represent them.

As environmentalists have discovered, postmodern theory’s critique of foundationalism cannot be restricted to anthropocentrism and hierarchalism, but can be extended easily to foundational eco-concepts such as wilderness, nature, harmony, and stability. Arguably, wilderness is a cultural-social construction, not a pre-given and independently existing reality.³¹ Empirical research, moreover, has demonstrated that native Americans significantly modified the North American continent prior to contact with European settlers.³² Hence, the idea of pristine wilderness seems conceptually and factually groundless, even though wilderness has played and continues to play a definitive role in American environmentalism.³³ In an influential book, Bill McKibben mourns the “end of nature,” but fails to take seriously the possibility that the end of pristine nature occurred long ago.³⁴ In the nineteenth century, Marx asserted that the only natural phenomena not altered by human labor are a few coral reefs off the coast of Australia. Today, of course, even those reefs have been altered by human practices, perhaps including anthropogenic global climate change. By defining wilderness as land untouched by human practices, environmentalists undermine the legitimacy of protecting land that has somehow been interfered with (thus “violated”) by humans. Conservation biologist Michael Soulé, retorts, however, that even if there are no habitats or ecosystems that have not been altered by humans, some regions are less altered than others, and such regions merit protection from further alteration.³⁵ Hence,

even though native Americans hunters have altered the population and habitat of polar bears for centuries, many people would say that the bears—and their habitat—are worth preserving from destruction by either indirectly by anthropogenic global warming or directly by oil drilling.³⁶

Shifting trends in environmental science have challenged yet another cornerstone of environmentalism: ecosystem theory. According to the ecosystem ecology developed by Frederic Clements and refined by Eugene Odom, the harmony, balance, and integrity of ecosystems are threatened by industrial pollution and by human population growth that deprives species of habitat. In the 1970s, American environmentalists used the scientifically-validated vocabulary of harmony and balance to push for landmark legislation to protect the natural order. Decades before postmodern theorists were deconstructing nature, environmental scientists had begun to question ecosystem theory for other reasons. In the 1950s, ecosystem ecology began to be displaced by population dynamics, which Henry Gleason first proposed in the 1920s. According to Gleason and others, ecosystems have no independent reality, but instead are incidental byproducts of the self-serving activities of billions of individual organisms.³⁷ Moreover, biological processes are characterized not by cooperation, harmony, order, integrity, and predictability, but instead by competition, disharmony, chaos, catastrophe, and unpredictability. As population dynamics undermined the ontological status of ecosystems, postmodern theory began proclaiming the constructed character of “wilderness” and “nature.”

If nature itself is constantly changing and has long been constructed by human beings, why should people be prevented from reconstructing nature according to their own ambitions and ideas? Further, if biological processes are unpredictable, chaotic, and often destructive, can we predict with any certainty the consequences of making changes in the biosphere? Many environmentalists reply that damage caused by human intervention is often more destructive and rapid than that caused by typical ecological events. Yet, even the once taken for granted claim that the planet is headed for anthropogenic environmental doom is now being challenged. Researchers with respectable environmental credentials argue that environmental and social

conditions worldwide are gradually improving, despite serious challenges that remain to be addressed.³⁸

The challenge to ecosystem ecology occurred around the same time that socialist ideology was being challenged by the rise of strong individualism and market economics.³⁹ Many environmentalists believe that large scale narratives are needed to provide critical understanding of the dire ecological consequences of multinational corporations and the global movement of capital. Postmodern theorists, however, often criticize such narratives for marginalizing and/or oppressing everything that doesn't fit into their totalizing schemes. Rupert Murdoch and other multinational figures, of course, happily ignore such theoretical musings and operate according to their own grand narratives of globalization. Environmentalists, too, need narratives of their own to criticize the behavior of multinationals. The (daunting) task is to provide narratives sufficiently coherent to justify and to provide outlines for action in view of a host of competing economic interests, local socio-cultural perspectives and interests, and the claims of natural science.⁴⁰

Postmodern social theorists criticize the extent to which the natural sciences have reified nature, by portraying it as independent of human culture and society. According to those theorists, such technological-scientific reification not only denies the cultural dimensions of environmental problems, but also furthers the abstract modernization and globalization that undermine aspects of the local that are worth preserving. In their illuminating anthology, Risk, Environment and Modernity, for example, Scott Lash, Bronislaw Szerszynski, and Brian Wynne note that in reformulating “sustainable development” the Brundtland Report (1987) “insisted that notions of global equality, justice and basic human rights were intrinsic aspects of the environmental issue. In principle, this resonated with the constructivist, culturalist insistence that the environmental issue is fundamentally an issue of human relations, and thus of culture and politics.”⁴¹ Unfortunately, however, these “politically enlarging ideas ... were met not by recognition and revolution but by grandiose ideas of ‘Managing Planet Earth’ by technocratic

expertise....⁴² The issue of global warming was framed by natural scientists who “called unselfconsciously for deterministic social-scientific predictions of human inputs to the climate system for up to centuries ahead.... Human society and culture was thus in effect reduced to a behavioral stimulus-response mechanism.”⁴³ Naïve natural-scientific assumptions about “brute facts” not only mask the extent to which environmental problems have social and cultural roots, we are told, but also unduly privilege technocratic expertise in a way that ignores the extent to which local people have superior knowledge of environmental issues that directly affect them.⁴⁴ For postmodern social theorists, nature is best regarded as a socio-cultural construction, not as an independent given.

Although acknowledging that environmental problems often have social roots, many environmentalists are suspicious of the more general idea that nature is disclosed, constituted, and even constructed through human social practices, conceptual categories, and linguistic conventions. Jacques Derrida has famously written that there is nothing outside the text, where "text" stands for representations and interpretations that can be generated only through human language, even if human beings are no longer authorial, self-grounding subjects. Mick Smith has observed, however, that such apparently strong assertions do not commit one to anthropic idealism.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, even as some people have discerned in continental philosophy a basis for affirming and respecting the otherness of nature, still others suspect that continental philosophy effaces that otherness, by reducing nature to what can be encountered within the confines of human categories.⁴⁶

According to Jean Baudrillard, the effacement of nature has reached such a point that we have entered a condition of hyper reality. Today, an avalanche of photographs, digital images, and website seem to constitute "reality." As virtual reality technology becomes ever more sophisticated, simulacra--images to which no original entities correspond--will open up domains in which no reference will be made to what people used to call "nature."⁴⁷ From this perspective, the answer to Lawrence Tribe's provocative question, "What's wrong with plastic trees?" is:

nothing at all. Ever more sophisticated versions of Disney World may be the wave of the postmodern future. This future is not inevitable, but creating an alternative will not be achieved by yearning for pre-modern eras in which humankind supposedly experienced nature more “directly.” By romanticizing premodern social formations, we ignore their dark sides, which range from short life spans to oppressive cultural practices that few moderns or postmoderns would tolerate. Without adhering to a linear notion of progress, one can make a good argument that many social norms have improved over the centuries. Criticizing modernity is important, so long as doing so does not lead one to its important achievements that should be preserved in any constructive vision of postmodernity. Modernity’s arrogant anthropocentrism ought not to be replaced with a naïve biocentrism. Humankind is gifted with extraordinary capacities that inevitably alter terrestrial evolution for good and ill. Failing to acknowledge those capacities, and pretending that we are merely “part” of nature like animals and plants, will prevent humankind from taking appropriate responsibility for the powers that it now wields and the even greater powers soon to be at hand.⁴⁸

Steven Vogel, an effective proponent of the idea of the social construction of nature, writes that modern German thought has generated two opposing attitudes toward nature. One attitude, the Hegelianism that animated Marx’s thought, holds that nature must be understood as a social construct, literally fashioned by human labor. Hegel accorded to nature the status of spirit externalized in space, but he insisted that nature can be known only in terms of humankind’s historically-formed categories, not as an independent and pre-existing totality to which humankind must subsequently establish a relationship. Hegel’s follower, Marx, like his counterparts among industrial capitalists, regarded nature almost exclusively as the raw material that humankind can and must transform to actualize human potential.

Vogel points out that the other modern German attitude toward nature is found in romanticism and Lebensphilosophie, for which

“nature” and more generally that which is Other than the human or social take on a positive sign, and contemporary science and technology are criticized on completely different and even opposite grounds—not because they fail to acknowledge the human character of the world that surrounds us but rather because they violate the world’s otherness, its specificity as an ontological realm beyond the human and not finally graspable by it.⁴⁹

Vogel argues that these two very different approaches to nature—one emphasizing nature as a social construct, the other emphasizing nature as Other to the merely human—are responsible for major tensions and even contradictions within the critical theory of Adorno, Horkheimer, and Marcuse, who attempted to counter Marxism's objectifying attitude toward nature. Adorno, for example, affirmed a natural Otherness that eludes the totalizing grasp of rationality, while Marcuse sought a new, non-objectifying kind of science. Vogel has argued, however, that such efforts were misguided. It makes no sense to speak of humans encountering nature apart from the socially-generated concepts and practices within which alone humans can encounter anything whatsoever. In particular, humans cannot discover values that inhere essentially in natural phenomena, independently of how those phenomena are apprehended by human beings. Humans inhabit a communicative social world in which other life forms (so far as we know) are incapable of participating. Even the term "domination" makes sense only when applied to interhuman relationships. Vogel, then, criticizes those environmentalists who in venerating nature’s alleged Otherness fail to discern “the human character of that which appears to be nonhuman.”⁵⁰ Emphasizing that nature is “literally socially constructed” insofar as it is the product of human labor, Vogel writes:

The environment we inhabit is to a remarkable extent a “built” environment: the mark of the human can be found on almost everything we see. More generally [...], it is through our practical activity, socially organized and historically variable as it is, that the world we inhabit comes to be, and for this

reason that world and our relationship with it necessarily possesses a normative component. To say this is to reject dualism: the “natural” world and the social one are not distinguishable, because the Umwelt, the surrounding world of “nature,” is itself in various senses the product of social practices.⁵¹

The normative component mentioned by Vogel concerns what he regards as the appropriate way to conceive of environmental ethics. Given humankind’s constitutive role in the formation of the world as experienced, humankind has enormous responsibility for that world. That values arise only within human discourse and practices does not mean that humans have to engage in a dominator form of anthropocentrism; indeed, people value diverse species and healthy ecosystems not merely for prudential reasons, but also because they value those things for themselves. “The realness and resistance of the world, the difficulty of labor, call us towards a modesty with respect to our practices, deriving from a sober and even chastened recognition of the inevitable limits of planning and the essentially unpredictable consequences of our actions.”⁵²

I respect Vogel’s analysis, which affirms the nobility of modernity, even while acknowledging its drawbacks, especially in regard to how nature is treated in industrial regimes. I have some reservations as well, however.⁵³ Influenced by Marx, Vogel emphasizes that humans construct nature, whereas I--influenced by Heidegger—emphasize that humans disclose nature as well as construct it. For Marx, human labor transforms both humankind’s perceptual-cognitive faculties and natural phenomena in such a way that humankind literally reproduces itself and its world. For Heidegger, in contrast, humankind exists both as and within a clearing that humankind alone does not generate. Within the clearing, beings can manifest themselves in various ways, partly determined by the perspectives and practices of a particular historical epoch. Speaking of disclosing, rather than constituting or constructing beings, however, acknowledges that the beings disclose aspects of themselves, even though human perception, cognition, and practice influence such disclosure.

Curiously, reading Heidegger as a kind of realist is compatible with two contrasting views of humanity's relation to nature.⁵⁴ On the one hand, by countering an over exuberant social constructivism that invites anthropocentric exploitation of nature, Heideggerian realism encourages people to let things manifest themselves according to their own constitution, rather than as flexible raw material for the domineering human subject. On the other hand, as Thomas J. Sheehan has argued, Heideggerian realism is also consistent with the view that the history of Western metaphysics culminates in technological modernity's capacity for total disclosure and manipulation of all beings. According to Sheehan, Heidegger's notion that humankind neither could nor should penetrate nature's "holy wildness" was a product of his personal views, which were conservative and anti-urban. The inner logic of Heidegger's ontology, however, compels the conclusion that humankind will inevitably gain total understanding and control of natural phenomena. According to Heidegger, beings are inclined to manifest themselves within the clearing in and as which humankind exists. Far from being sources of alienation and destruction, then, modern science and technology make possible the ultimate self-realization of humanity's nature-disclosing and nature-manipulating capacities.⁵⁵

Viewing humankind as the interpreting and disclosing being, however, does not have to lead to the striking, anti-green conclusion indicated by Sheehan. Indeed, a critical realism is consistent with Merleau-Ponty's insight, described by David Abram, according to which perceptual depth is not merely posited by the human mind, but is instead "already there." "Depth...is the announcement of our immersion in a world that not only preexists our vision but prolongs itself beyond our vision, behind that curved horizon."⁵⁶ For Merleau-Ponty human language is a higher order elaboration of the logos at work in the languages spoken by myriad forms of life with which humankind shares planet Earth. I prefer to understand logos in terms of the immanence of the divinity whose self-unfolding characterizes cosmic evolution. Humankind has co-evolved with the rest of life on earth, such that we may justifiably speak not only of the "social construction of nature," but also of the "natural construction of humankind." By nature,

however, I mean—and Merleau-Ponty does as well—not an accidental concatenation of material particles in motion, but instead an intelligible cosmos. Seeking to overcome subject-object dualism, Merleau-Ponty believed that humans are the world thinking itself, that “the human intellect is a recapitulation or prolongation of a transcendence already underway at the most immediate level of bodily sensation....”⁵⁷ In speaking of the common “flesh” of the world, so Abram argues, Merleau-Ponty “returns transcendence to the carnal world of which this [human] body is an internal expression.”⁵⁸

Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of embodiment offers a way of reintegrating humankind in the carnal world. In my view, however, transcendence does not so much arise from the carnal world, as it does emerge through it. No slight is intended toward other mammals, each of which is whole and complete, when I say that complex language lets our species move much further into the noosphere than any other (known) species. Although humans experience themselves within the “depth” of the already-there world, they are also capable of experiencing an interior depth as vast as that of the physical cosmos. Mind and flesh are the interior and the exterior aspects of the same being. Although intertwined, mind and flesh cannot be reduced to one another.

Most religious traditions maintain that the human person is constituted by body (soma), mind or soul (psyche), and spirit (pneuma). Merleau-Ponty attempted to overcome mind-body dualism by his phenomenology of reflexive flesh, and arguably was also exploring the spiritual dimension of flesh. Buddhism and Eastern Orthodoxy explicitly maintain that through integrating body, mind, and spirit, human beings are capable of becoming divinities. According to both traditions, different kinds of bodies correspond to different modes of awareness. The relatively gross material body corresponds to waking consciousness, but subtle bodies correspond to higher modes of consciousness, such as the psychic, subtle, and causal. The glorious light body (Sambhogakaya) of the Bodhisattva and the transfigured light body, revealed by Christ on Mt. Tabor, show what occurs, so we are told, when the human person is suffused with spirit.

Eastern Orthodoxy maintains that Christ's incarnation not only opens the way for human divinization, but also affirms the sacredness of all creation.⁵⁹ Immanent spirit embraces within itself all modes of appearance, interior and exterior, that arise in cosmic evolution. Abuse of creation, then, is an affront to the Creator. Drawing on such doctrines, Bartholomew, the present Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople, has strongly affirmed the duty of Christians to care for Creation.⁶⁰

Mahayana Buddhism maintains that a more integrated consciousness and a correspondingly transfigured body arise together through spiritual practices that simultaneously increase wisdom and compassion.⁶¹ Growing wisdom reveals that all phenomena—including planets, plants, and persons—are totally interdependent and lacking in inherent or substantial reality. Growing compassion leads one to intercede skillfully to reduce the suffering experienced by sentient beings, all of which exist interdependently. Without resorting to a discourse of intrinsic value, or to an ontology of essences or substances, contemporary Buddhists argue that informed compassion should be central to environmentalism.⁶² Buddhists also indicate that many environmentalists would suffer less by acknowledging the insubstantial, temporary, and fleeting quality of all phenomena, including the ones to which environmentalists are so attached and thus strive so mightily to save. Actions arising out of attachment, aversion, and fear often have unintentionally negative consequences. Hence, Buddhists counsel that environmentalists engage in practices that on the one hand lead to greater wisdom and non-attachment, but on the other hand increase compassion. If postmodern theory's critique of modernity were explicitly motivated by the aim of helping to reduce suffering and to make possible more fully-realized experience for all sentient beings, postmodern theory would be regarded as a more constructive enterprise.

A constructive postmodern theory would also contribute to a re-enchantment of the world, without thereby fostering personal, psychological, or social regression. The world was dis-encharmed when modern natural science persuaded Western elites that the universe is a

meaningless totality of matter-energy, and that humankind is an accidentally evolved species that invents gods as comforting, but pathetic illusions in the face of an ultimately pointless existence. Environmentalists often accept the validity of such naturalism in part because they want to align themselves with modern natural science, and in part because they think that denying transcendent domains will protect nature from arrogant anthropocentrism, humanity-nature dualism, and other-worldly contempt for nature. Unfortunately for environmentalism, Ken Wilber argues, the same naturalism is the basis for “the modern industrial ontology,” according to which “nature is the ultimate reality, nature alone is real.”⁶³ Dressing up naturalism with systems theory does not differentiate it from the very same naturalism that portrays nature as a complex mechanical totality that humankind can analyze and dominate. Eighteenth century lumières were already fond of describing nature as the great clockwork system. Arguably, naturalism cannot adequately account for human consciousness and interiority in general, some naturalists-cum-environmentalists ascribe to nature a sacred aspect that they vow to protect. Wilber maintains, however, that “the nature worshipped by the Eco-Romantics is the flatland nature of industrialization..... The worship of Gaia is a product, and an action, of industrialization, and the worship of Gaia perpetuates the empirical-industrial paradigm.... It perpetuates the collapse of the Kosmos....”⁶⁴ According to Wilber, a restored Kosmos would account for human consciousness as a highly evolved instance of virtually universal interiority, and would describe nature as a manifestation of Nature understood as absolute Spirit. From this perspective, humankind evolved with, is part of, and depends upon physical-organic nature, but is characterized by an emergent level of consciousness that transcends physical-organic nature.

In addition to having difficulties in accounting for human consciousness, naturalism has struggled to account for the ethical “ought.” Environmentalists who adhere to naturalism, however, often claim that humans ought to curb their striving to maximize fitness by gaining control over most of the Earth. If we are merely one kind of organism among countless others, however, why ought we—apart from merely prudential considerations—to limit our strivings?

One way to answer this question is to admit that reflective consciousness and morality are extraordinary phenomena that transcend naturalistic categories. Humans can and ought to reduce suffering, to respect life, to care for one another. Postmodern theorists rightly criticize naturalism for its inability to account for human experience. In conversation with such theorists, environmentalists may concede that humans are part of nature, and yet transcend it as well. In conversation with spiritual traditions that emphasize either compassion or the sacredness of all phenomena, environmentalists may explain that such transcendence may make distinguish humans, does not provide them with a license to treat phenomena—human or non-human--with contempt.

An appropriately re-encharmed cosmos requires a new cosmology, or perhaps competing cosmologies and “universe stories,” each one informed in its own way by insights drawn from many domains, including the natural science, philosophy, culture, and religion.⁶⁵ Unfortunately by regarding both religion and science with suspicion, most postmodern theorists have ignored developments in theology, speculative philosophy, and cosmology that that could contribute both to constructive forms of postmodernism and to sophisticated kinds of environmentalism.⁶⁶ Today, a number of cosmologists maintain that many of the basic constants of the universe were so fine-tuned from the start, that it exhibits what appears to be design.⁶⁷ Indeed, proponents of the anthropic principle maintain that the universe is ordered in such a way that it inevitably brings forth self-conscious beings who can reflect upon the origin and purpose of the universe itself.⁶⁸ That is to say, the fact that there are physicists who try to understand the universe is a very significant fact about that universe. Life was not predestined to evolve on Earth, but the emergence of life seems to have been preordained to arise somewhere, perhaps in many different parts of this incomprehensibly vast universe.

Following an ancient tradition, some theorists suggest that evolution is preceded by involution, in which spirit empties itself into the matter-energy that erupts with the Big Bang. Evolution refers to how the spirit remembers itself by developing the complexity required for

self-consciousness. Involution and evolution take place within a clearing that includes, but ultimately transcends matter-energy and space-time. This clearing, which makes possible the manifestation of each particular mode of being, eventually reveals itself through the self-awareness that evolves in humankind (and perhaps other such beings).⁶⁹ Atom, star, planet, cell, molecule, organ, organism, ecosystem, self-conscious animal, culture—each is worthy in and of itself, as Holmes Rolston III has argued, not merely insofar as it is useful for some higher, more inclusive mode of being.⁷⁰

The extraordinary fine-tuning of the universe can be explained either as an astonishingly improbable accident, or else as an intentional feature.⁷¹ According to theologian Nancey Murphy, what tips the scale toward intention is the ancient and universal phenomenon of religion. Often grounded in mystical experience of transcendent unity, religion expresses the widespread conviction that cosmos and humankind are manifestations of a spirit that both transcends and is immanent in all phenomena.. Organized religion's sorry record of oppression and dogmatism understandably led Enlightenment moderns to dismiss the whole affair as superstitious nonsense. Given that most of the best minds of the preceding millennia were convinced that the cosmos is the visible manifestation of what is both sacred and invisible, however, moderns may have thrown out the baby with the bath water. Although I do not have time to argue the point here, an important aspect of a constructive postmodernism could be taking religion seriously not merely as an interesting cultural practice, but also as giving institutional expression to profound and to some extent verifiable insights.

If in fact the universe does exhibit some design and telos, humankind may no longer think of matter/energy, life, and conscious life as meaningless accidents. Humankind may once again regard itself as a microcosm of the macrocosm, although in a way informed by the insights of modernity and postmodernity. The new self-understanding would clash with the naturalism that has led many moderns to conceive of themselves as psycho-physical organisms lacking any relation to transcendent spirit. Despite having renounced religion, however, moderns did not lose

their thirst for transcendence. Instead, they translated it into various, often ruthless quests for historical or horizontal transcendence, in the form of material and political progress that provide (illusory) security against personal and species mortality.⁷² Recoiling against the other-worldly medieval ascent tradition, moderns descended with a vengeance to this world. The global counterculture of the 1960s, which so influenced postmodern theory, rebelled against allegedly progressive ideologies, whose New Jerusalem not only lacked personal ecstasy, but also brought about environmental destruction and social alienation. All too often, countercultural postmodernists reveled in criticizing modernity's dark side, while ignoring its important contributions, including critique of religious dogmatism, affirmation of political rights, improvement of human material well-being, expansion of knowledge of nature and society, and legitimation of personal domains of judgment.

Only gradually have some postmodern theorists begun to affirm what is noble about modernity; and only slowly are they emerging from the long shadow cast by Nietzsche's proclamation of the death of God. Hent de Vries describes a recent turn toward religious matters among some leading French thinkers, including Jean-Luc Marion and Jacques Derrida.⁷³ Whereas early Derrida aligned himself with the a-theism consistent with Heidegger's critique of onto-theology, later Derrida manifests a strong interest in the messianic tradition that calls for divine justice and transformation in the face of worldly injustice and obstinacy.⁷⁴ Derrida's neo-messianic approach—"Let justice come!"—may be summoning a world in which violence, oppression, and exploitation of all beings—humans and non-humans alike—are minimized. It remains to be seen, however, whether such messianic anticipation is capable of engaging in dialogue with contemporary cosmology in such a way as to contribute to a sophisticated postmodern environmentalism. The messianic tradition would be suspicious of the neo-Platonism informing aspects of the constructive postmodernism envisioned by Wilber, whose influence on the present essay should be clear to those familiar with his work. No other current theorist,

however, at least so far as I know, manages as well as he does to integrate modernity and postmodernity, sacred and profane, humankind and nature, spirituality and science.

The sophisticated environmentalism being developed by Wilber and other integrative thinkers takes into account postmodern theory's critiques of power, foundationalism, and essentialism, contemporary speculation about cosmic teleology, current research in consciousness studies, and insights from spiritual traditions. Philosophical theory and natural science are cognitive-reflective enterprises with whose methods the reader is familiar. But what about the methods associated with gaining spiritual insights? When I read the first version of this essay at the inaugural meeting of IAEP in Denver, Colorado, in 1998, I used the term "yoga" to refer to a wide variety of meditative and contemplative practices that provide access to phenomena not available through cognitive activity alone. Here, one may call to mind Plato's metaphors for the kinds of knowledge made possible by "dialectical" consciousness that transcends ordinary rationality. Philosophers are understandably skeptical of truth claims that can be generated and verified only by contemplative practices that purport to go beyond the powers of ordinary cogitation. Nevertheless, the skeptic who makes the venture of engaging in the rigorous practice needed to alter the clearing will at least be in a position to evaluate first-hand the truth claims in question. Analogously, to validate the truth claims of high-order physics, one must engage in rigorous practice for many years. Ordinarily, we take the word of the physicists, rather than become physicists ourselves, because the claims made by physicists seem borne out by modern technology. Why not take the word of spiritual practitioners, then, insofar as their claims are borne out by their behavior?⁷⁵

One reason is that spiritual insight alone does not prevent moral failing and political blindness. Heidegger's dark political engagement, which he justified on the basis of deeper, experientially-based insight into the truth of Germany's situation in 1933, reminds us of the dangers posed by those who ground politics in spiritual experience, rather than in democratic discussion and alternatives. Likewise, many Japanese Zen masters –ostensibly fully

enlightened—used Buddhist concepts to support Japanese militarism, nationalism, and xenophobia for many years leading up to and also during World War II.⁷⁶ These and other disturbing examples of spiritual teachers gone astray make clear that we need constructive postmodernisms, not constructive pre-modernisms. Constructive postmodern environmentalisms should seek insight from spiritual traditions, but only as part of a wider dialogue with modern science, philosophical inquiry, and democratic politics.

Continental philosophy, which I have been largely equating with postmodern theory, represents a mixed blessing for contemporary environmentalists. Because of suspicions about the totalizing objectives of modern natural science, postmodern theorists often ignore or important scientific fields ranging from ecology to cosmology. In contrast, however, environmentalists have to take into account the sciences that study the “nature” that environmentalists want to protect. The postmodern critique of foundationalism and anthropocentrism can do useful work in challenging arrogant assumptions about humanity’s relation to non-human beings. Yet, environmentalists often adopt uncritically postmodern theory’s totalizing critique of modernity, which invites naïve celebration of supposedly eco-friendly premodern societies, the shortcomings of which are conveniently-ignored. The same critical buzz saw that undermines modernity’s anthropocentric institutions, moreover, calls into question such crucial environmental concepts as wilderness, ecosystems, and even nature. Hence, environmentalists often contend that postmodern theory affirms a subtle kind of anthropocentrism, according to which nature is merely a social construct arising through human language, culture, and practices.

A constructive postmodern theory, however, will integrate the hermeneutics of suspicion, the critique of foundationalism, contemporary cosmology, the noble achievements of modernity, and empirically-grounded spiritual insights in a way that contribute to more sophisticated environmentalisms, the kind that skillfully promote the well-being of all human and non-human life, as well as the habitats that sustain them. It would be unwise, however, to hold one’s breath while waiting for widespread acceptance of postmodern cosmologies and environmentalisms. At

first, they will prove attractive primarily to some members of educated elites in developed societies. This fact, however, should not be a source of discouragement. As Nietzsche pointed out, the work of philosophers is often untimely. In the meantime, a great deal can be accomplished on environmental fronts with the relatively anthropocentric and modernist (free market and regulatory) approaches that appeal to the large majority of Americans and Europeans. It may be more difficult to environmentalism to those in premodern societies or in societies that are in the process of adopting their own versions of modern concepts, practices, and institutions. North American history during the past few centuries shows that people are often more focused on improving their economic status than they are on caring for the natural environment. Postmodern environmentalists, however, will recognize and promote the work of activists in so-called developing countries who have had success in helping local people to define economic, social, and cultural improvements in ways that are reconcilable with the long-term well being of plants, animals, and habitat.⁷⁷

¹ See Simon Critchley's excellent book, Continental Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

² See Felix Guattari, The Three Ecologies, trans. Ian Pindar and Paul Sutton (London: Athlone Press, 2000); Jonathan Maskit, "Something Wild? Deleuze and Guattari and the Impossibility of Wilderness," Philosophy and Geography, 3 (1998). 265-83; Maskit, "'All in Post': On Michael Zimmerman's Contesting Earth's Future," in Research in Philosophy and Technology, 18 (1999), 175-87; Patrick Hayden, "Gilles Deleuze and Naturalism: A Convergence with Ecological Theory and Politics," Environmental Ethics, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Summer, 1997), 185-204; Verena Andermatt Conley, Ecopolitics: The Environment in Poststructuralist Thought (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), chapter six, "New Ecological Territories," 91-107; Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, Dialectic of Enlightenment (New York: Continuum, 1988); Herbert Marcuse, One Dimensional Man (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964).

³ See Michael E. Zimmerman, "Rethinking the Heidegger--Deep Ecology Relationship," Environmental Ethics, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Fall, 1993), 195-224.

⁴ See Michael E. Zimmerman, "A Strategic Direction for 21st Century Environmentalists: Free Market Environmentalism," Strategies, 13, No. 1 (2000), 89-110.

⁵ The results are mixed in part because these thinkers may be portrayed as more or less eco-friendly, depending on the perspective of the person doing the interpretation. For example, see Max Hallman, "Nietzsche's Environmental Ethics," Environmental Ethics, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Summer, 1991), 99-126, and Ralph R. Acampora, "Using and Abusing Nietzsche for Environmental Ethics," Environmental Ethics, Vol. 16, No. 2 (Summer, 1994), 187-194; essays

by Wilhelm Schmid, Martin Drenthen, Barry Allen, Simón Royo Hernández, Steven T. Brown, and David Michael Levin in the special “Nietzsche’s Ecology” section of New Nietzsche Studies, Vol. 5, 1/2 (Spring/Summer, 2002); Graham Parkes, “Staying Loyal to the Earth: Nietzsche as an Ecological Thinker,” in Nietzsche’s Futures, John Lippitt, ed., (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), 167-188; Parkes, “Nature and the ‘Redivivised’: Mahayana Buddhist themes in Thus Spoke Zarathustra,” in Nietzsche and the Divine, John Lippitt and Jim Urpeth, eds. (Manchester, UK: Clinamen Press, 2000); Parkes, “ ‘Floods of Life; around ‘Granite of Fate’; Emerson and Nietzsche as Thinkers of Nature,” ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance, Vol. 43, 1st-4th Quarters (1997), 207-240; and George Stack, Nietzsche and Emerson: An Elective Affinity (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1992), *passim*. On Merleau-Ponty, see David Abram, “Merleau-Ponty and the Voice of the Earth,” Postmodern Environmental Ethics, ed. Max Oelschlaeger (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), 57-77; Monika Langer, “Merleau-Ponty and Deep Ecology,” in Ontology and Alterity in Merleau-Ponty, ed. Galen A. Johnson and Michael B. Smith (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1997), 115-129; articles collected in Chiasmi International, Merleau-Ponty: From Nature to Ontology, Vol. 2 (2000). On Foucault, see Thomas H. Birch, “The Incarceration of Wilderness: Wilderness Areas as Prisons,” Environmental Ethics, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Spring, 1990), 3-26, and the essays in Discourses of the Environment, ed. Eric Darier (Malden, Mass: Blackwell, 1999). On Derrida, see Robert Briggs, “Wild Thoughts: A Deconstructive Environmental Ethics,” Environmental Ethics, 23, No. 2 (Summer, 2001), 115-134; and Charlene Spretnak, States of Grace: The Recovery of Meaning in the Postmodern Age (HarperSanFrancisco, 1991). On Heidegger, see Michael E. Zimmerman, “Toward a Heideggerian Ethos for Radical Environmentalism,” Environmental Ethics, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Summer, 1983), 99-132; Zimmerman, “Rethinking the Heidegger--Deep Ecology Relationship”; Bruce V. Foltz, “On Heidegger and the Interpretation of Environmental Crisis,” Environmental Ethics, Vol. 6, No. 4 (Winter, 1984), 323-338; Foltz,

Inhabiting the Earth: Heidegger, Environmental Ethics, and the Metaphysics of Nature Atlantic Highlands, N.J. : Humanities Press, 1995); Laura Westra, “Let It Be: Heidegger and Future Generations,” Environmental Ethics, Vol. 7, No. 4 (Winter, 1985), 341-350; Leslie Paul Thiele, “Nature and Freedom: A Heideggerian Critique of Biocentric and Sociocentric Environmentalism,” Environmental Ethics, Vol. 17, No. 2 (Summer, 1995), 171-190; and Frank Schalow, “Who Speaks for the Animals? Heidegger and the Question of Animal Welfare?” Environmental Ethics, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Fall, 2000), 259-272. These citations constitute only a sample of the available literature.

⁶ See my book, Contesting Earth’s Future: Radical Ecology and Postmodernity (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), for an extensive critical analysis of such application.

⁷ See for example Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

⁸ Martin Heidegger, “On the Essence of Truth,” in Basic Writings, ed. and trans. David F. Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 125.

⁹ For an interesting critique of deep ecology from the perspective of postmodern theory, see Peter C. van Wyck, Primitives in the Wilderness: Deep Ecology and the Missing Human Subject (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997).

¹⁰ For examples of these positions, see some of the essays collected in Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature, ed., Karen J. Warren (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).

¹¹ In her informative work, States of Grace: The Recovery of Meaning in the Postmodern Age, Charlene Spretnak thinks it is no accident that a white male would deconstruct the authorial subject at precisely the moment when women were beginning to find and to assert their own voice. The postmodern deconstruction of nature and erasure of the subject are simply the latest version of the age-old masculinist practice of effacing nature, body, emotion, and mortality.

¹² Luc Ferry, The New Ecological Order, trans. Carol Volk (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995).

¹³ See Kerry H. Whiteside, Divide Nature: French Contributions to Political Ecology (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002). In this excellent history of postwar French ecological thought, Whiteside indicates how notion of nature as a participant in human affairs has been explored by Michel Serres, whose book, Le Contrat Social, calls for nature to be represented along with humans in a new kind of assembly. Despite sharing some similarities with Anglo-American moral extensionism, Serres's approach moves in a somewhat different direction. See also Conley, Ecopolitics: The Environment in Poststructuralist Thought.

¹⁴ See Donna Haraway, "The Promises of Monsters: A Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate/d Others," in Cultural Studies, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, Paula Treichler (New York: Routledge, 1992), 295-337.

¹⁵ See Jim Cheney, "Postmodern Environmental Ethics: Ethics as Bioregional Narrative," Postmodern Environmental Ethics, ed., Max Oelschlaeger (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), 23-42.

¹⁶ Mick Smith, "Cheney and the Myth of Postmodernism," in Postmodern Environmental Ethics, 261-276. For my own critique of Cheney, see Contesting Earth's Future, 294-313.

¹⁷ See Michael E. Zimmerman, "'Ecofascism: A Threat to American Environmentalism?'" in The Ecological Community, ed. Roger S. Gottlieb (New York: Routledge, 1997), 229-254, and Oliver Geden, Rechte Ökologie: Umweltschutz zwischen Emanzipation und Faschismus (Berlin: Elefant Press, 1996).

¹⁸ Peter Quigley, "Rethinking Resistance: Environmentalism, Literature, and Poststructural Theory," in Postmodern Environmental Ethics, 173-191.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 184.

²⁰ See the informative essays in Global Ethics and Environment, ed. Nicholas Low (London and New York: Routledge, 1999).

²¹ See Ken Wilber, A Brief History of Everything (Boston: Shambhala, 1996).

²² Robert Frodeman, "Radical Environmentalism and the Political Roots of Postmodernism: Differences that Make a Difference," in Postmodern Environmental Ethics, 121-135; citation is from 125.

²³ See Ken Wilber, A Brief History of Everything,

²⁴ See Charles Birch and John Cobb, Jr., The Liberation of Life: From the Cell to the Community (Denton, Texas: Environmental Ethics Books, 1990).

²⁵ Ken Wilber, Sex, Ecology, Spirituality (Boston: Shambhala, 1995).

²⁶ Ken Wilber, Up From Eden: A Transpersonal View of Human Evolution (Boulder: Shambhala, 1983).

²⁷ Warwick Fox, following Stephen Jay Gould, emphasizes this point in Toward a Transpersonal Ecology (Boston: Shambhala, 1990).

²⁸ For a critical examination of environmental narratives and metaphors, see Rom Harré, Jens Brockmeier, and Peter Mühlhäusler, Greenspeak: A Study of Environmental Discourse (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 1999).

²⁹ See Birch and Cobb, The Liberation of Life.

³⁰ For an overview of this issue, see J. Baird Callicott and Michael P. Nelson, eds., The Great New Wilderness Debate (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998).

³¹ See William Cronon, ed., Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996).

³² See Shepard Krech III, The Ecological Indian: Myth and History (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1999).

³³ Many Americans came to see "wild and free" nature as symbolizing the liberty enshrined in national lore and ideology. From this conservative viewpoint, the modern quest to conquer nature—e.g., by damming rivers and reducing forests to tree farms--corresponds to

efforts to deprive people of their freedom—e.g., by ensnaring them in government regulations and corporate structures. See John R.E. Bliese, “Traditional Conservatism and Environmental Ethics,” in Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology, eds. Zimmerman, et al. (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2001), 376-391.

³⁴ Bill McKibben, The End of Nature (New York: Anchor Books, 1989). See Steve Vogel’s excellent critique of McKibben’s position, “Environmental Philosophy After the End of Nature,” forthcoming in Environmental Ethics.

³⁵ Michael 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). For my review of this interesting anthology, see “The Postmodern Challenge to Environmentalism,” Terra Nova, 1, No. 2 (Spring, 1996), 131-140. See also Robert Elliot, Faking It: The Ethics of Environmental Restoration (London and New York: Routledge, 1997).

³⁶ One of Donella (Dana) Meadows, final postings, before her untimely death in February, 2001, concerned the growing threats to polar bears in the Arctic. See “Polar Bears Naked,” in Grist Magazine, www.gristmagazine.com/grist/citizen/citizen020501.stm

³⁷ See Michael G. Barbour, “Ecological Fragmentation in the Fifties,” in Cronon, Uncommon Ground, 233-268, and Donald Worster, “The Ecology of Order and Chaos,” in Environmental Ethics, ed. Susan J. Armstrong and Richard G. Botzler (New York: McGraw Hill, Inc., 1993). For an important critique of the politics of American environmentalism, see Alson Chase, In a Dark Wood: The Fight Over Forests and the Rising Tyranny of Ecology (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1995).

³⁸ Most recently, see Bjorn Lomborg, The Skeptical Environmentalist (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). Despite harsh reviews by some scientists and environmentalist, Lomborg makes a strong case for his claim that environmental and human well being are both gradually improving.

³⁹ See Worster, “The Ecology of Order and Chaos,” and Barbour, “Ecological Fragmentation in the Fifties.

⁴⁰ But see Roger Paden, “Against Grand Theory in Environmental Ethics,” Environmental Values, Vol. 3 , No. 1 (1994) 61-70.

⁴¹ Scott Lash, Bronislaw Szerszynski, and Brian Wynne, Risk, Environment and Modernity: Toward a New Ecology (London: Sage Publications, 1996), 4. See also Graham Woodgate and Michael Redclift, “From a ‘Sociology of Nature’ to Environmental Sociology: Beyond Social Construction,” Environmental Values, Vol. 7, No. 1 (February, 1998), 3-24.

⁴² Lash, et. al., Risk, Environment and Modernity, 6.

⁴³ Ibid., 6.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 7. Concerning the issue of local vs. expert knowledge, see in ibid., Brian Wynne, “May the Sheep Safely Graze? A Reflexive View of the Expert-Lay Knowledge Divide,” 44-83.

⁴⁵ Mick Smith, “To Speak of Trees: Social Constructivism, Environmental Values, and the Future of Deep Ecology,” Environmental Ethics, Vol.. 21 (Winter, 1999), 359-376.

⁴⁶ For a history of how competing ideas of nature have shaped “the complex material and cultural relationship between Europe and the rest of the world,” see David Arnold, The Problem of Nature: Environment, Culture, and European Expansion (Blackwell: Cambridge, 1996).

Quotation is from viii.

⁴⁷ Jean Baudrillard, Simulacra and Simulation, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).

⁴⁸ Many environmentalists, however, resist this approach, which would seem to deprive them of the status of innocent protectors of nature’s otherness. Following Foucault, however, one could argue that environmentalists, far from being righteous champions of righteous champions of nature, are motivated by power-interests of their own. Environmentalists make truth claims about this eco-calamity or that scientific fact, but such truth claims must be regarded with

suspicion, since they are power enhancing perspectives. In effect, environmentalists are the mirror image of industrialists. Industrialists defend their practices by appealing to pragmatic benefits (providing jobs, offering a useful product, paying taxes), moral and political justification (publicly-held corporations have a legal and moral obligation to protect the fiduciary interests of their stockholders), and scientific findings that challenge the sky-is-falling claims made by environmentalists. Likewise, environmentalists defend their criticism of industrialism by appealing to practical benefits (a clean and healthy natural environment produces more jobs, reduces human health problems, and preserves the biosphere needed for all life), moral and political justification (other life forms have a right to exist, so governments must set limits on what industry can do to the natural world), and scientific findings that reveal the onset of global climate change and the accelerating loss of species. The relentless hermeneutics of suspicion reveal that environmentalists, instead of holding the high moral ground, are much the same as other power-motivated contestants struggling to achieve social primacy for their perspective.

⁴⁹ Steven Vogel, Against Nature: The Concept of Nature in Critical Theory (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996), 5.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁵² Steven Vogel, "Nature as Origin and Difference: On Environmental Philosophy and Continental Thought," Philosophy Today, Vol. 24, Supplement (1998), 169-181; citation is from 178. This excellent essay must be taken into account by every serious environmental philosopher.

⁵³ See also David W. Kidner, "Fabricating Nature: A Critique of the Social Construction of Nature," Environmental Ethics, Vol. 22, No. 4 (Winter, 2000), 339-358.

⁵⁴ For a defense of the claim that Heidegger was a kind of realist, see Trish Glazebrook's recent essay, "Heidegger and Scientific Realism," Continental Philosophy Review, Vol. 34, 2001, 361-401.

⁵⁵ See Thomas J. Sheehan, "Nihilism/Jünger/Aristotle," in Phenomenology: Japanese and American Perspectives, ed. Bert C. Hopkins (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998), 273-316.

⁵⁶ Abram, "Merleau-Ponty and the Voice of the Earth," 60. See also Abram's award-winning book, The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World (New York: Vintage Press, 1997). See also Mick Smith, "Lost for Words? Gadamer and Benjamin on the Nature of Language and the 'Language of Nature'," Environmental Values, Vol. 10, No. 1 (2001), 59-75.

⁵⁷ Abram, "Merleau-Ponty and the Voice of the Earth," 62.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁵⁹ See Eric D. Perl, "'...That Man Might Become God': Central Themes in Byzantine Theology," in Heaven on Earth: Art and the Church in Byzantium, ed. Linda Safran (Pennsylvania State Press, 1998); Gerhart B. Ladner, God, Cosmos, and Humankind (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995); John Chryssavgis, "The World of the Icon and Creation: An Orthodox Perspective on Ecology and Pneumatology, in " Christianity and Ecology, ed. Dieter T. Hessel and Rosemary Radford Ruether (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

⁶⁰ For Bartholomew's speeches on this topic, see environmental page of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople: <http://www.patriarchate.org/visit/html/environment.html>

⁶¹ See Lama Thubten Yeshe, Introduction to Tantra (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1987), and Reginald A. Ray, Secrete of the Vajra World: The Tantric Buddhism of Tibet (Boston: Shambhala, 2001).

⁶² See Buddhism and Ecology, ed. Mary Evelyn Tucker and Duncan Ryuken Williams (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

⁶³ Wilber, A Brief History of Everything, 274.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 276.

⁶⁵ See David Ray Griffin, ed., The Reenchantment of Science (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988), David Ray Griffin, Reenchantment without Supernaturalism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000); and Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, The Universe Story (HarperSanFrancisco, 1992).

⁶⁶ For a defense of speculative philosophy against postmodern theory, see Robert Neville Cummings, The High Road Around Modernism (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992).

⁶⁷ As an example of many studies, see M.A. Corey, God and the New Cosmology: The Anthropic Design Argument (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1993).

⁶⁸ See John D. Barrow and Frank J. Tipler, The Anthropic Cosmological Principle (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

⁶⁹ On these matters, see Wilber, Sex. Ecology. Spirituality, *passim*.

⁷⁰ Holmes Rolston III, Duties to and Values in the Natural World (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988). Rolston defends his value-realism in “Nature for Real: Is Nature a Social Construct?” in The Philosophy of the Environment, ed. T.D.J. Chappell (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), 38-64.

⁷¹ See Nancey Murphy, Reconciling Theology and Science: A Radical Reformation Perspective (Kitchener, Ontario: Pandora Press, 1997).

⁷² See Ken Wilber, Up From Eden (Boulder: Shambhala, 1983).

⁷³ Hent de Vries, Philosophy and the Turn to Religion (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

⁷⁴ See for example Jacques Derrida, “Faith and Knowledge: the Two Sources of ‘Religion’ at the Limits of Reason Alone,” trans. Samuel Weber, in Religion, ed. Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996). For an excellent account of the religious dimension of Derrida’s thought, see John D. Caputo, The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).

⁷⁵ On the comparison between the validity of natural scientific knowledge claims and those advanced by spiritual practitioners, see Ken Wilber, The Marriage of Sense and Soul: Integrating Science and Religion (New York: Random House, 1998).

⁷⁶ See James W. Heisig and John C. Maraldo, Rude Awakenings: Zen, the Kyoto School, and the Question of Nationalism (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), and Brian Victoria, Zen at War (New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1997).

⁷⁷ See several of the essays in Nicholas Low, ed., Global Ethics and the Environment (London and New York: Routledge, 1999).